

## HAFTARAH EXHORTATIONS:

# Haftarah VaYetze

by Mark Huey    posted 06 December, 2008    www.outreachisrael.net

Hosea 12:13-14:10

### “Return, Restoration, Resurrection”

The story of Jacob leaving Beersheba and heading to Haran to find a wife, after he and his mother Rebekah had conspired to steal the blessing of Isaac from Esau, continues a pattern in Scripture of sibling rivalry that goes all the way back to Cain and Abel. In that case, Cain's anger toward his brother erupted in murder. Many generations later, the half-brothers Ishmael and Isaac had similar rivalry issues, but their wise father Abraham handled their problems with great aplomb. When Abraham's time to die arrived, whatever differences that existed between these two sons were sufficiently resolved, so that they could both participate in the burial of their revered father.

Arriving at the generation of twins from the union of Isaac and Rebekah, we see that the rivalry blossoms once again between more than just brothers, but two companions in the womb during Rebekah's pregnancy. Although the same age, these two men are very different in their predilection toward the Almighty: Esau follows his fleshly inclinations, and Jacob seeks after the spiritual aspects of life. Certainly the Sages were considering these peculiarities when they selected the passages from Hosea to reflect upon, in light of this Torah passage (Genesis 28:10-32:3) that highlights some of Jacob's struggles with his father-in-law Laban. Hosea was a notable prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was in constant tension with the Southern Kingdom of Judah. One can see the parallel of sibling rivalry manifesting itself on a much larger scale with the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

The opening verses begin with a summation of not only Jacob's departure to find a wife, but are followed by references to Moses as a prophet and the Exodus, with a conclusion that speaks specifically to the transgressions of Ephraim:

“Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, and Israel worked for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*. But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt, and by a prophet he was kept. Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and bring back his reproach to him” (Hosea 12:12-14).

When you read these passages in the final chapters of Hosea, much more than sibling rivalry is being discussed. In many regards, the contrasts between those who seek after the temporal, physical pleasures—versus the eternal, spiritual pursuit of God—are made. The negative consequences of seeking after human kings or alliances with foreign powers are declared over Ephraim by Hosea. Death by sword and devastation to children and pregnant women, come as a result of not trusting in the Lord.

*“It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help. Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested, ‘Give me a king and princes’? I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up. The pains of childbirth come upon him; he is not a wise son, for it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb. **Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting?** Compassion will be hidden from My sight. Though he flourishes among the reeds, an east wind will come, the wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; and his fountain will become dry and his spring will be dried up; it will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article. Samaria will be held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open” (Hosea 13:9-16).*

Weaved into this description is a reference to the power of Sheol, and God's ability to redeem people from the realm of death. God has the ability to resurrect His people from the dead, even if they have perished due to their unwise choices like those of the Northern Kingdom

living in Samaria. Death in the Scriptures has many aspects, ranging from a cessation of physical life processes, to exile, to being removed from God's presence.<sup>1</sup> Here in Hosea, the issue is the impending judgment upon the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim and the captivity that will follow. This is a realm of exile.

Hosea 13:14 is referred to by the Apostle Paul in his teachings to the Corinthians about the resurrection, many of whom did not understand that physical death was not the end for Believers. You may recognize how this passage may be quoted to comfort family and friends at funerals:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, '**DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?**' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

Paul describes the resurrection of the dead and how "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). The Northern Kingdom would experience exile via the punishment God was required to place upon it for sin, but is promised to be restored by God (Hosea 14:4-8). Judah and Ephraim stand as proxies for all humanity (Hosea 6:7), whose salvation is to be found in an event encompassing three days (Hosea 6:1-2; cf. Romans 6:3). When the resurrection comes for Believers who have died in faith, our Father's masterful plan for the ages will move ahead and the exile will finally be over! It will not just be His people entering into His Kingdom on Earth—but His Kingdom of Israel.

When this happens, one's perishable mortal body will be transformed into an imperishable immortal body—a truly awesome reality to contemplate! In Titus 2:13 Paul describes this as "the blessed hope." Knowing that this is to come in the future should be great encouragement as you live your life here on Earth, *and hopefully try to capture some elements of that future to come right now*. However, there is a severe admonition that must be considered as you contemplate resurrection from the dead.

Within the scope of Hosea's prophecies, God in His mercy toward the wayward Northern Kingdom pleads for them to return to Him. Confession of iniquity and transgressions, and appealing to God for His mercy with praise on one's lips, is what the Holy One wants from His people. He does have the ability to raise people from the dead and usher them into His Kingdom—but do you recognize this fact by giving Him glory and serving Him with all of your being?

**"Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips. Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, 'Our god,' to the work of our hands; for in You the orphan finds mercy. I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. Those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is**

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: N.T. Wright describes in his book *Surprised by Hope*, "In Genesis, and indeed for much of the Old Testament, the controlling image for death is exile. Adam and Eve were told that they would die on the day they ate the fruit; what actually happened was that they were expelled from the garden" (New York: HarperCollins, 2008, p 95).

discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them" (Hosea 14:1-9).

If you wisely choose to serve Him, then you will learn to understand and discern His ways. You will not only seek Him like Abraham, and increasingly over his life like Jacob/Israel, but you will learn to actually walk in His ways. Of course as we know from reading *VaYetze* this week, it often requires a lifetime to finally get our priorities straight. Jacob had to go through many trials during the course of his life before he came to the point of total surrender. For the Northern Kingdom, God had to use the Assyrians to send them into exile. Yet, there is a promise that in the end, all of Israel will be restored.

Where do you find yourself? Do you trust in your human abilities to navigate the vagaries of life? Do you rely upon your temporal, physical abilities and talents for enjoying life? Or is it your God-given talent that you rely upon to make life work, with Him being the source of your strength? If you rely upon Him, then you should be able to experience some of that future Kingdom of God now on Earth. *Call upon the only One who can restore you from exile.* Desire to know Him and His ways, sincerely desiring to serve Him.

Jacob eventually saw the way. Hosea was given a glimpse. Paul experienced it up close and personal. Each of them testified to this with their lives! **And so may each of us seek a return and restoration that the resurrection will ultimately bring us into!**

Until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey (B.A., Vanderbilt University in History and Graduate Studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) is the Director of Outreach Israel Ministries ([www.outreachisrael.net](http://www.outreachisrael.net)). He is the author of several books, including: *TorahScope, Volumes I & II*, and *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot*. He is also co-author of *Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study*.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.