

# Hosea 4:4-19

1. Three groups of people are rebuked in the following verses:
  - a. Priests – the priests are found guilty and will be punished
  - b. Common people – the people (“my people”, *ammi*) are not blamed because they are relying on the priests, but the priests have failed
  - c. Women – the women are given a pass concerning their whoredom because the men are doing the same immorality which is what is actually causing the women to sin.
2. “my people” (as in “not my people” or *Lo-Ammi*) is seen in:
  - a. 4:6 – “my people” (*ammi*) perish for lack of knowledge or healthy teaching from the priests
  - b. 4:8 - priests feed upon the sins of “my people” (*ammi*)
  - c. 4:12 – “my people” (*ammi*) inquire of a piece of wood
3. Here the people have become the priests’ people due to the priests’
  - a. Greed
  - b. Negligence

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

1. This begins a new section after 4:1-3
2. In 4:1-3 Israel has been accused of serious social crimes and unrestrained evil. But, here Hosea admonishes that no one should blame the people or society for their perverted condition. YHWH contention is with the priests. The priest have failed.
3. The line translated as, “For your people are like those who bring charges against a priest” is revealing that the people the priest are ministering to (“your people”) are living such corrupt lives that their very lifestyle actually bring charges against the priests who are responsible for these people.
  - a. The people are evidence against the priesthood
  - b. 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 Paul uses the Corinthians as evidence of his success in ministry when he writes:

“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our<sup>[a]</sup> hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”
  - c. There is no point in one man accusing another man because ultimately the problem is the priest who have neglected, allowed or instructed the people to live this way.

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

1. The priest’s judgment is that they will “stumble” because their doctrine/philosophy/worldview cannot sustain them.
2. Likewise, the prophet will also stumble because they are false. (This is not referring to the prophets sent by the Lord who have remained faithful.)
  - a. 4:11 tells why the priests are so incompetent at walking.
    - i. The priests have become senseless and incapable of reason because of:

1. Prostitution –
  - a. spiritual – idols, false religion, false reality
  - b. physical – sexual immorality
2. Wine –
  - a. Spiritual drunkenness on the world (materialistic, greed, etc.)
  - b. Physical drunkenness (excessive alcohol.)
3. “your mother” is the society.
  - a. Because the spiritual leaders lacked Truth, which resulted in their own “stumble”, the nation of Israel will be destroyed.
  - b. The institutions (priesthood, prophets, legal, ect.) that have sided with the corrupt priesthood will be overthrown.
  - c. The nation of Israel is the Lord’s people or “my people” (*ammi*). This leads into the next verse...

**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.**

1. Why is Israel destroyed?
  - a. Israel lacked knowledge
  - b. Israel lacked knowledge because the priests failed to teach
  - c. Israel is destroyed because the priests rejected Truth, the Word of God, and, instead provided some pagan instruction (worldview, religion, etc.)
2. “Destroyed” refers to the wrath of the Lord in judgment.
3. “Knowledge” is not general education, but the Word of God.
  - a. The revelation of the Lord and His character have been rejected
  - b. This True “knowledge” has been replaced with false reality and empty philosophies (which are idolatry)
4. God rejects the priesthood because they rejected him
5. God forgets “your children” which could be:
  - a. The family (lineage) of the priests
  - b. The people (Israel) the priests were responsible for. The “children” are those who followed the corrupt priesthood.

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

1. The priest had shown signs of growth in number and wealth which the priest considered evidence of the worthiness of their ways.
2. So, the more the priests prospered, the more they indulged in their false reality (sin).
3. The priests exchanged the glory of YHWH (his character, his Word, his Truth, his Reality) for empty and false realities.
  - a. Romans 1:23 – “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.”
  - b. Romans 1:25 – “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.”
4. What the priests chose as “glory” the Lord will reveal it as “shame”

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

1. The word “sin” is also the Hebrew word for “sin offerings” (Ex. 29:36; 30:10; Lev. 4:8, 20; Ezek. 43:21) which would mean the priests were greed for more sin offerings at the sanctuary where the priest would divide and eat the sin offerings as their payment.
2. “iniquity” or “wickedness” could refer to the corrupted Israel sacrificial system
  - a. “wickedness” will appear again in the altered name for Bethel (“house of God”, beth el) when it is called Beth-Aven (“house of wickedness” or “house of deception”)
3. Basically, the priests were profiting from the people having been deceived by the corrupt religious system.

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

1. The punishment for the corrupt priest will be the same as the punishment for the sinful people
2. What the priest have done to the people, the Lord will do to the priest.

**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**

1. The word “increase” is the basic meaning of “break out”
2. The priests trusted their false reality (religion, Baal) for their success in family, herds, crops, prosperity, but they would not be satisfied

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

1. This verse is a short proverb that Hosea inserted to close this section:  
“Prostitution, wine, and new wine take away the heart”
2. Immorality and wine take away the ability to understand
3. Their very behavior took away their ability to evaluate and make corrections
4. “heart” refers to the person’s character, will, reasoning.
5. POINT: This kind of immorality (sexual, drunken) both physical and spiritual rot the soul and confuses the mind

**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.**

1. They have turned to idolatry which includes the worship of created things (nature) instead of the Creator.

**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.**

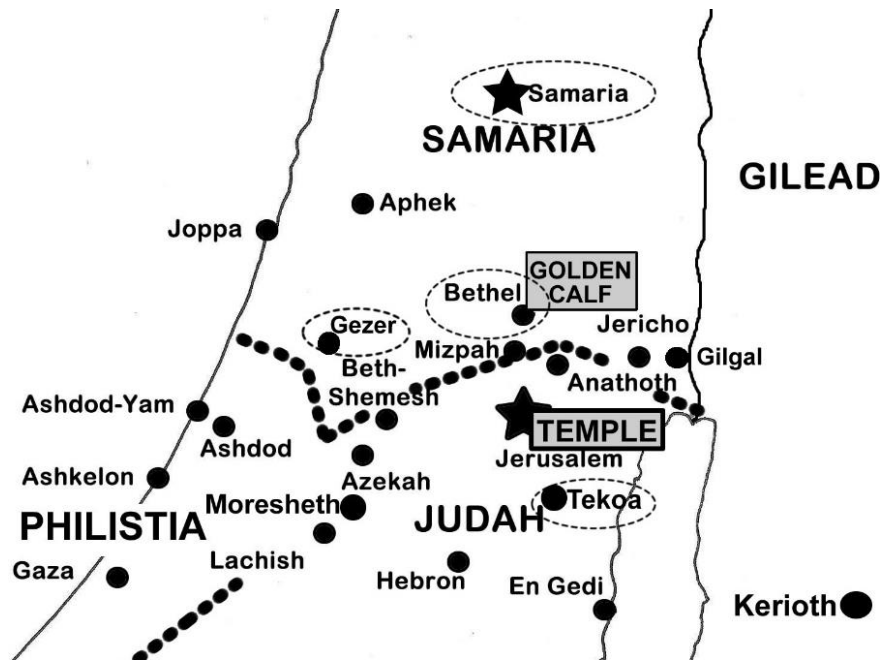
1. These outdoor worship services were done in a beautiful setting and very appealing.
2. The daughters and the brides commit adultery, but in the next verse it was the men who led them into this.

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.

1. God will not punish the women for adultery because it was the men who were instigating it.

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.”

1. Judah is warned NOT to follow.
2. Warning to avoid:
  - a. Gilgal – place of Joshua’s circle of rocks, circumcision and first Passover in the Land. This had become an outdoor shrine. Likely very beautiful, but corrupted.
  - b. Beth-aven – is an altered form of the place name Bethel (house of God). Beth-aven means “house of wickedness)
  - c. “As the Lord lives” – just as the people were using the places that honored YHWH for Baal worship, they were also using oaths and his name as a cover for their pagan idolatry.



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.

1. “Ephraim” is a common name for Israel
2. “Leave him alone” means give up trying to help. Israel is a lost cause. It’s over.

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

1. They drink until they are finished, then they turn to sexual immorality.
2. The leadership lives this way in this wicked cycle

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