

When Israel Was A Child
By Trey Sullins

A newborn baby is a precious sight to behold. They are so innocent that you might wish you could remove all the problems of the world for them. The love that we can have for a precious child is the same which God had for His children of Israel. Hosea 11 paints a beautiful picture of just how loving and caring God was for His people.

The vast depth of God's love is immediately seen. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1). This first verse reminds us that God sought out Israel and saved them from Egyptian captivity. The very next verse says, "As they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images." Very shortly after God saved the people from Egypt, they rejected the prophets and leaders sent by God. This continued for years and years as they consistently turned to the "Baals" and "carved images." But then you see the patience of God's love in the next verse: "I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them" (Hosea 11:3). Even while they rejected and abused His love, God still sought to help and heal them like any loving parent would. God endured a people like this and still loved them for numerous years and even to today God still loves His people! In 1 John 3:1 the Bible says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" After several thousand years of His creation disappointing and rejecting His paternal love, He still is waiting and ready to call us His children. Oh, how deep the love of God truly is!

The love of God was not just in words, but in action. God sought out his people and desired to save them and nurture them. "I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them" (Hosea 11:4). God drawing them with gentle cords means that He led them out of the danger. Notice also the cords He drew them with were "bands of love." The reason why He did this was to "take the yoke from their neck." God did not sit idly by and wish for good to come to them, but He actively picked them up and lead them away from their bondage. Finally, He "stooped and fed them." Rather than allowing helpless Israel to fend for themselves, God continually provided their needs for them. This active love carries over even to His people today. In 1 Peter 5:7 the Bible says, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." God is always there for us to guide us with gentle cords and provide for us the things which we need.

His love also displayed great mercy upon Israel. When we read verse 8 and 9 of our text this becomes very clear. In relationship to His people God asked, "how can I give you up" and "How can I hand you over?" Israel's sins demanded punishment, but God's desire to see His people blessed, pushed for mercy. The result of this is seen when God said, "My heart churns within Me. I will not again destroy Ephraim." After the great lengths to which Israel went in their rejection of God, He was still mercifully watching over them. God's mercies continue into the New Testament as well. Ephesians 2:4 describes God as "rich in mercy" which indicates that even after thousands of years of mercy, He still has more to give.

When God looks upon His creation, He sees a people whom He wants to save and bless. He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). Because of this He has consistently shown the depth

of His love through great actions and mercy. What we must do is be like the remnant of Israel. The majority of God's child, Israel, chose evil, but the remnant remained faithful to Him through it all. Let us strive to love God just as much as He loves us.