

The Love That Never Gives Up ✨

Hosea 11:1–11

God made Israel “my child” (v.1). Hosea was a prophet active in the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC. He deliberately begins by describing the relationship between God and the people as something like adoption. This is likely a warning to the northern kingdom of Israel, which had become arrogant, calling itself “children of the living God” (2:1). God once rescued the Hebrews, who were in slavery, from Egypt. Yet when they returned to a land flowing with milk and honey, they began to worship Baal, the local deities. It was God who took Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Israel), weak like a small child, by the hand and led him as a father would—and yet...

Livestock such as oxen and horses were fitted with yokes for farming, and they were also used to carry loads when travelling. It was God who removed the yoke so that they could eat easily, and who cared for them with tenderness. Was it the result of forgetting such love? The northern kingdom of Israel would be destroyed by the great empire of Assyria. Even so, God says, “How could I give you up?”(v.8). He will not destroy them like Admah or Zeboiim

(neighbouring cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; Gen. 19:24. God is not one who is swayed by emotions like human beings. When God raises His voice, even those who have been scattered in all directions (the Diaspora) will return to God to worship. They will dwell securely in the land of Israel.

God never forsakes human beings, His created creatures. Human beings have limits. No matter how admirable a person may be, if their love is ignored, their heart is shaken; they may even come to harbour resentment ("the greater the love, the greater the hatred"). But God the Creator is different from human beings and never abandons us. The atonement—God sending his only Son Jesus into this world to die as a substitute for sinners—is the ultimate expression of God's love. In these days, when conflicts continue and it is easy to become discouraged, let us begin the new year without forgetting the love of God that continues to be poured out upon us.