

What is the Connection Between Israel and Jesus?

[Hosea 11](#)

Hosea, Day 20

*When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.*

*Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.*

- Hosea 11:1-4, ESV

Hosea 11:1 is one of the most controversial verses in the Bible. In Matthew 2:13-15, we read of Joseph's flight to Egypt with Mary and the baby Jesus:

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." (ESV)

Matthew is quoting Hosea 11:1 and saying that Jesus' escape to Egypt was the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy. Critics of the Bible say Matthew is misquoting Hosea, and even believers struggle to understand how Hosea 11:1 could be viewed by Matthew as a prophecy of the Messiah.

To understand why Matthew is not misusing Hosea 11:1, we have to understand the connection between Israel and Jesus in the Bible. You probably know Jesus was Jewish, a descendant of Abraham from the Tribe of Judah. You probably also know that He was the long-awaited Messiah, the promised Holy One of Israel. But the connection between Israel and Jesus in the Bible is actually much deeper and richer.

In the deepest and truest sense, Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel, and Israel was the foreshadowing of Jesus. Israel was called to be the son of God and the light of the world, but as a nation, they failed miserably. They were a disobedient son, and their light was actually darkness. God had graciously established and led them, but they had walked away again and again.

And so Jesus came to do all that Israel had failed to do. Jesus came to be the true Israel of God, the Son of God and Light of the World. And at every point where Israel failed, Jesus brilliantly succeeded, even in coming up out of Egypt. Israel came up out of Egypt, guided and protected by God, and they wandered away in unfaithfulness. Jesus came up out of Egypt, guided and protected by God, and He honored God and followed Him faithfully all of His life. Thus, He fulfilled Hosea 11:1 in a way that Israel never did.

Yet we should not think simply that Israel failed and Jesus succeeded. We should see that God foresaw and foreordained all of this from the very beginning. In other words, God always knew Israel would fail his mission

and that Jesus would come to fulfill it. So this makes all of Israel's history a dark foreshadowing of the brilliant dawning of the Light of the World.

In the [Tabletalk devotional on Hosea 11:1](#), Ligonier takes the unpacking of this verse one step further:

"The good news of the gospel tells us that we can be the true Israel of God as well. If we are in Christ, we share in the privileges and relationship He enjoys as God's true Son. We are not sons of God by nature; rather, we are sons of God by adoption, His beloved children in Christ. As such, we inherit all of the promises given to old covenant Israel. Those promises of God that Israel would rule over her enemies and enjoy abundant covenant blessings (for example, [Isa. 14:1-2](#))—those promises are for all of God's people, the true Israel of God consisting of Jews and Gentiles who are united to Christ by faith alone. In Him we are the true Israel of God, heirs of the glorious destiny promised to God's old covenant people ([Zeph. 3:14-20](#))."