

Hosea 11.1-9 develops the metaphor of God as the affectionate but wronged father who can't bring himself to give up the wayward child.

Israel is the beloved child, and more than that from God's perspective, "my child." The poet uses paradigmatic images of parent-child relationships with learning to walk, feeding, healing, getting down to the child's height and guiding the child. These are all familiar to any parent, as is the feeling that they are rejected and their efforts unknown and unappreciated.

With this very human parental image of God set, verses 5-7 abruptly change to pronounce woes upon the people who have failed to follow God who then ignores his people. Just as abruptly, God has second thoughts and cannot abandon his child and spares them his wrath. Paradoxically he is said to do this because he is God not man, when it is his heart that recoils and the anthropomorphic father image that explains God's compassion. The poet uses the most human and familiar images of parenthood to explore an aspect of God's relationship with wayward Israel.