

Hosea 07 - Israel's Domestic Sins; Israel's Sinful Foreign Policy

II. Wayward nation and faithful God (Hosea 4:1—14:9)

(1) Israel's adulterous unfaithfulness (Hosea 4:1—7:16)

(G) Condemnation of Israel's rebellion (7:1-16)

(a) From the rulers: domestic rebellion (7:1-7)

(b) From the nation: international rebellion (7:8-16)

Hosea 7

(G) Condemnation of Israel's rebellion (7:1-16)

(a) From the rulers: domestic rebellion (7:1-7)

1 When I would heal Israel, The wrongdoing of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they practice deception; The thief enters, A band of robbers attack outside,

1 When I would heal Israel, The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they deal falsely; The thief enters in, Bandits raid outside,

1 “When I was healing Israel, Ephraim’s sin was uncovered, along with Samaria’s wickedness. While they craft lying schemes, the thief invades, and the gang of thieves plunders outside.

1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

- God longed to restore Israel to a place of blessing, but His efforts were met with new outbreaks of sin and crimes

— Their widespread deceit and robbery epitomized their lack of regard for the covenant (Cf. Ex 20:15); they were living a lie...

— The prophets He sent to them (including Hosea) were ineffective in stemming the tide of rebellion; the people had rejected their messages and further hardened their hearts.

— The people lied to one another and stole from each other. These two crimes are a synecdoche for civil and social injustices in general.

2 And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds **surround them**; They are before My face.

2 And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face.

2 It never occurs to them that I remember all their sin. Now their actions have caught up with them, and they have my attention.

2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

- The Israelites apparently hoped that the Lord would not hold some of their sins against them, but He remembered all their wickedness

- "...surround them " - totally engulfed them

— Is 5:18: Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.

— They overlooked the fact that God sees and remembers (Ps 14:2-4; 50:16-21)

3 With their wickedness they make the king happy, And the officials with their lies.

3 With their wickedness they make the king glad, And the princes with their lies.

3 They please the king with their evil, and the princes with their dishonesty.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

- A godly ruler was to oppose all forms of wickedness within his kingdom (Cf. Ps 101), but these leaders delighted in it

— The political leaders' were pleased with the wickedness of the people because it made it easier for them to get away with their sins

Qualifications of Leadership

Prov 16:12: It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, For a throne is established on righteousness.

- The abandonment of righteousness weakens the seat of government and the stability and security of the nation

Prov 29:4: The king gives stability to the land by justice, But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.

- The issue of bribery is at root the issue of private truthfulness and acting on principle as opposed to being driven by expediency
- When integrity is forsaken, justice is overthrown

Prov 29:12: If a ruler pays attention to falsehood, All his ministers become wicked.

- The minimizing of truthfulness corrupts others so that the entire government becomes corrupt
- A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (Gal 5:9; 1 Cor 5:6)

4 They are all adulterers, Like an oven heated by the baker, Who stops stoking *the fire* From *the time* the dough is kneaded **until it is leavened**.

4 They are all adulterers, Like an oven heated by the baker Who ceases to stir up *the fire* From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

4 All of them are adulterers— they burn like an oven prepared by the baker, who has ceased stoking it until the dough is leavened.

4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

- The Israelites as a whole were adulterers; their passion for wickedness was like the fire in a baker's oven: very hot and constantly burning

- "...until it is leavened" - this figure of speech is tremendous. The baker had his oven ready but didn't bring up the heat until the dough was kneaded and ready to bake

— Here God is not talking about spiritual adultery but about gross immorality. They had formerly kept their sin under cover, but now they are like an open oven, hot with passion.

— These are not "harmless acts between consenting adults" that our society would make them out to be: they are passions inflamed by sin that eventually destroys the ones affected by them.

Background for Hosea 7:5-7

Verses 5-7 describe the assassination of one or more of Israel's kings, an example of the passion for wickedness just illustrated. Hosea saw this happen 4x: Shallum assassinated Zechariah; Menahem assassinated Shallum; Pekah assassinated Pekahiah; and Hoshea assassinated Pekah (2 Kings 15:10,14,25,30).

Between 752-732 BC four of Israel's rulers were assassinated (Cf. 2 Kings 15). Not only the murders of Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah, but it may also refer to the disastrous reign of Menahem, who allowed Israel to become a vassal of Assyria (2 Kings 15:19) and prophetically to Hoshea (who was soon to be imprisoned by Assyria; 2 Kings 17:4).

5 On the day of our king, the officials became sick with the heat of wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers,

5 On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers,

5 "On the king's festival day the princes got drunk from wine, so the king joined the mockers.

5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

- The "day [of the festival] of our king" probably refers to a special celebration in which the ruler was the center of attention

- The king caroused with his princes, who are called scorers probably because they were completely under the influence of wine (Cf. Prov 20:1)
- While they partied with the naive king, they plotted his overthrow

6 For their hearts are like an oven As they approach their plotting; **Their anger smolders** all night, In the morning it burns like flaming fire.

6 For their hearts are like an oven As they approach their plotting; Their anger smolders all night, In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.

6 For they have stirred up themselves like an oven as they lie in ambush. Their baker sleeps through the night; in the morning, the oven will be blazing like a fire.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

- "...Their anger smolders" - it is similar in thought to v4 and carries along the comparison of their hearts to an oven

— The Masoretic text reads, "their baker sleeps" (Cf. KJV)

— The NIV rendering, "Their passion smolders," requires a slight emendation of the Hebrew

One might paraphrase v6: "When they approach the king, their hearts, like an oven, contain a fire. Just as the fire burns lowly while the baker is inactive, so their scheme remains a secret. But when their time for action comes, the destructive plot is realized, just as a fire in an oven blazes forth when the time for baking arrives."

7 All of them are hot like an oven, And they consume their rulers; **All their kings have fallen.** None of them calls on Me.

7 All of them are hot like an oven, And they consume their rulers; All their kings have fallen. None of them calls on Me.

7 They all burn like an oven; they have consumed their judges; all their kings have fallen—not even one of them calls on me.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

- "...All their kings have fallen" - all of Israel's past kings had fallen

— Every Israelite king who followed Jeroboam II was assassinated except Menahem and Hoshea (Cf. 2 Kings 17:3-6)

— There were nine different changes of dynasty in their short history

— This prophecy was likely given during the tumultuous times during Israel's final kings (c752-722 BC)

A significant contrast: Judah had a few good kings—in fact, five kings of Judah led in revivals. God had chosen and promised to bless the line of David; He made no such promise to the kings of the divided kingdom in the north.

(b) From the nation: international rebellion (7:8-16)

8 Ephraim is himself thrown about with the nations; Ephraim has become **a round loaf not turned over**.

8 Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned.

8 "Ephraim compromises with the nations; he's a half-baked cake.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

- "...a round loaf not turned over" - a pancake that is not turned would be cooked on one side only

— Ephraim launched a "half-baked" foreign policy (v8-12): Israel had formed alliances with foreign nations (v11; 8:9)

— These alliances caused them to import heathen customs and pagan gods into Israel

— Israel had become like all the other nations, rather than distinctive as God had intended (Ex 19:6)

— Burnt and black and one side, and soggy and runny on the other

— Essentially, Israel was worthless, not what God intended or what could nourish others

— She was crusty toward Yahweh but soft toward other nations

9 Strangers devour his strength, **Yet he does not know *it***; Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, Yet he does not know *it*.

9 Strangers devour his strength, Yet he does not know *it*; Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, Yet he does not know *it*.

9 Foreigners have consumed his strength, and he hasn't noticed. Furthermore, his head is sprinkled with gray hair, but he doesn't realize it.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

- "...Yet he does not know *it*" - these alliances (and tributes) depleted their resources, but the Israelites were ignorant of this

— The nation is compared to an elderly man who has failed to notice the gradual effects of the aging process (loss of physical strength, graying hair)

This loss was epitomized by the tribute payments that were an excessive drain on its wealth and economy (2 Kings 15:19-20; 17:3) as well as the costly Syro-Epharaimite War, in which she allied with Syria (Is 7:2). Like Samson, when, for sensual pleasure, he had

betrayed the source of his strength and God had departed from him, Israel knew not how or wherein his alliances with the heathen had impaired his strength.

10 Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God, Nor have they sought Him, despite all this.

10 Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God, Nor have they sought Him, for all this.

10 Israel's arrogance testifies against him; but they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him in all of this.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

- Despite Israel's weakness, they were too proud to return to Yahweh and seek His help
- They were living in their past glory days instead of the present
- This entire section refers to the years following King Jeroboam II, which saw the weakening of Israel through sin

11 So Ephraim has become like a gullible dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

11 So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

11 "Ephraim is also like a silly dove, lacking sense: They call out to Egypt, and turn toward Assyria.

11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

- In her efforts to arrange foreign alliances, Israel could be compared to a dove, which exhibits little sense
- The dove is a bird known for its silliness and naiveté (Cf. Matt 10:16)
- Expediency and human wisdom, marked by vacillation, had guided Israel's foreign policy for years, rather than the will of God
- Under Menahem (~743 or 738 BC) Israel submitted to Assyrian sovereignty (2 Kings 15:19-20)
- Pekah (~734 BC) joined a coalition against Assyria, which Tiglath-Pileser III violently crushed (2 Kings 15:29)
- There are encryptions in the text of Is 7 that highlight some background on this [see *Cosmic Codes*, p.48]
- Hoshea (~732-722 BC), after acknowledging Assyrian rulership for a time, stopped tribute payments and sought an alliance with Egypt (2 Kings 17:3-4a)
- This act of rebellion led to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17:4b-6), the inevitable result of a foreign policy which for 20 years had been characterized by

vacillating and expedient measures...like a silly dove, flying to and fro

12 When they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will **discipline** them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.

12 When they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.

12 When they go, I'll cast my net over them. I'll bring them down, as one shoots birds in the sky. I'll chasten them, as the assembly has already heard.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

- While Israel sought out alliances with all the naiveté of a dove (v11), the Lord would come like a wise and well-equipped fowler and trap them

- "...discipline" - *yasar*, speaks of the loving instruction of a parent for his child (Deut 8:5; Prov 19:18; 29:17; Cf. Heb 12:5,7)

— Worst of all, Israel's policy had no place for the Lord (cf. v7,10); consequently, He would intervene in judgment

13 **Woe** to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would **redeem** them, but they have spoken lies against Me.

13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.

13 Woe to them— because they have run away from me. Ruin to them— because they have sinned against me. Even though I redeemed them, they spread lies against me.

13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

- "Woe" - *'oy*, a cry of despair; a word reserved for the introduction of judgment upon heathen nations (Num 21:29; Is 3:11; Jer 48:46; Cf. Matt 11:21; Rev 8:13)

— Despite the Lord's longing desire to redeem them, they had spoken lies against Him; thus, He would just them for straying from Him like sheep from their Shepherd

— Destruction would be their punishment because they rebelled against Him

- "...redeem" - *padah*, is used frequently to describe the deliverance from Egypt (Cf. Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 24:18; 2 Sam 7:23; Ps 78:42; Micah 6:4)

— It is a term from commercial law that refers to reclaiming or ransoming of an obligated person by means of a payment

— God's desire was to redeem them from destruction, but they only spoke lies about His desire and ability to redeem them

- This is why they made foreign treaties: to defend themselves since they thought Yahweh would not or could not
- The God of the Exodus is unchanged in His will, but because of Israel's lies, there will be no "exodus" from the Assyrian danger
- However, according to 13:14, God's intervention will one day effect a full redemption for the nation

14 And they do not cry to Me from their heart When they **wail** on their beds; For the sake of grain and new wine **they assemble themselves**, They turn against Me.

14 And they do not cry to Me from their heart When they wail on their beds; For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves, They turn away from Me.

14 They will not cry to me from their heart— instead, they wail on their beds. They gather together to eat and drink, turning away from me.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.

- When the people cried out, it was not in prayer to God but out of self-pity over their miserable condition

- "...wail" - *yala!*, they howled and cut their bodies as they mourned over the crop failure. Israel's rejection of the Lord is illustrated here.

— The nation desired a plentiful crop (grain and new wine) but refused to exhibit wholehearted devotion to God without which agricultural prosperity was impossible

- "...they assemble themselves" - the reading in the NIV margin ("they slash themselves," following the LXX and some Heb. mss.) seems better than "They assemble themselves."

— They cut themselves to obtain food and drink from their idols, but they had turned away from Yahweh, the only One who could provide their needs

— Cutting oneself was a sign of mourning (Cf. Jer 16:6; 41:5; 47:5) forbidden by the Law because of its pagan associations (Deut 14:1)

— The prophets of Baal cut themselves in an effort to arouse Baal, the storm god, to action (Cf. 1 Kings 18:28)

15 Although I trained *and* **strengthened their arms**, Yet they devise evil against Me.

15 Although I trained *and* strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me.

15 "Though I have taught them and strengthened their arms, nevertheless they plot evil against me.

15 Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

- "...strengthened their arms" - it was Yahweh who had taught His people how to be strong

- He also had made them strong militarily (Cf. Ezek 30:24-25), as in Jeroboam's reign (Cf. 2 Kings 14:25-28)
- However, Israel used what He had given them to sin against Him, treating Him as their enemy
- Israel's rebellion also revealed her ingratitude. The Lord had bound (disciplined, trained) and strengthened their arms.
- Elsewhere the expression "strengthen the arms" can refer to divine bestowal of military might (Ezek 30:24-25)

Despite experiencing divine aid in battle, Israel treated God like an enemy. The phrase "imagine mischief against Me" suggests intense hostility and ill will. Similar language is used to describe Joseph's brothers' schemes to destroy him (Gen 50:20).

16 They turn, *but* not upward, They are like a **loosebow**; Their officials will fall by the sword Because of **the insolence of their tongue**. This *will be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

16 They turn, *but* not upward, They are like a deceitful bow; Their princes will fall by the sword Because of the insolence of their tongue. This *will be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

16 They return—but not to the Most High. They are like a defective weapon. Their princes will fall by the sword because of their raging tongue, and they will be a laughingstock in the land of Egypt."

16 They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

- Israel had looked to other nations for help, but they had not turned their hearts and eyes to heaven to seek the Lord's help

"...a loose bow" - Israel was like a faulty bow. Such a weapon is unreliable because it fails to respond properly to the archer.

— In the same way Israel's hostile response to God's grace demonstrated her unreliable, disloyal character (Cf. Ps 78:57)

— The nation's leaders, who had rejected their true source of strength (Cf. v15) would be destroyed in battle because of their pride

- "...the insolence of their tongue" - refers to a formal denunciation or curse. Israel's rejection of divine aid (Cf. v13) in favor of foreign alliances is compared to a verbal reproach against God.

— Ironically Israel would become an object of derision among the Egyptians, whose aid they had foolishly sought (Cf. v11)

