

Hosea 12 - Covenant with the Assyrians; Canaan

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

- (3) Israel's restoration due to God's faithfulness (Hosea 11:1—14:9)
- (B) Israel's unfaithfulness and resulting discipline (Hosea 11:12—13:16)
 - (a) Past unfaithfulness and discipline (11:12—12:14)

Hosea 12

- (a) Past unfaithfulness and discipline (11:12—12:14)

1 Ephraim **feeds on wind**, And pursues **the east wind** continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he **makes a covenant** with Assyria, And **oil is brought to Egypt**.

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1 "Ephraim feeds on the wind, chasing after the eastern winds, storing up lies and desolation day after day. They are making a contract with the Assyrians, and sending oil to Egypt.

1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

- "...feeds on wind" - pictures a nation pursuing vain efforts that do not satisfy (Cf. 8:7;

13:15)

— The precarious nature of Ephraim's futile and elusive foreign policy is exposed

- "...the east wind" - the dry, searing sirocco winds that blow from the eastern deserts; a hot desert wind that no one would desire

- "...multiplies lies and violence" - evidences of internal social injustice (Cf. 4:2; 7:1)

- "...makes a covenant" - Ephraim made treaties with Assyria and Egypt rather than trusting in God (Cf. 5:13; 7:8,11; 8:8-9; 2 Kings 17:3-4; 18:21; Is 30:7)

"...oil is brought to Egypt" - Israel's foreign policy was such that she could make a covenant with the Assyrians while at the same time export olive oil to Assyria's rival, Egypt

— Hoshea, the last king of the northern kingdom before their exile, tried to liberate himself from the oppression of Assyria by means of a treaty with Egypt (2 Kings 17:4)

— Assyria, like the sirocco blast, was not Israel's friend, but an uncontrollable power that would mercilessly consume all that stands before its fiery rage

2 The LORD also has a **case** against Judah, And will punish **Jacob** according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.

2 The LORD also has a dispute with Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.

2 The LORD accuses Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him for what he does.

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

- "...case" - *rib*, a covenant lawsuit (Cf. 2:2)
- God promised to punish Jacob in harmony with his sins
- "...Jacob" - may represent the northern kingdom here in contrast to Judah, or may refer to both kingdom since both descended from him

A Lesson from Jacob's Life

3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his mature strength he contended with God.

3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his maturity he contended with God.

3 He circumvented his brother in the womb, and as an adult he fought with God.

3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

- The Lord proceeded to teach His people the need to repent by reminding them of the experience of their forefather Jacob
- From the womb until the wrestling with an angel, Jacob (Ya'cov, heel catcher), grabbed the heel of his brother—prophetically depicting the gaining of his brother's birthright (Gen 25:26-34) and stealing the all-important blessing of the firstborn by his father (Gen 27:5-29)
- This was a preview of the grasping character that marked him for his entire life (Cf. Gen 27:35-36)
- Later in life, he also continued to contend with God
- These references to the early and later life of Jacob picture him as being a contentious person his entire life

4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and implored His favor. **He found Him at Bethel**, And **there He spoke with us**,

4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us,

4 He even fought the angel and won; he cried and prayed to him. Then at Bethel he found him, and there he spoke with us—

4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;

- At Peniel, Jacob contended with "the angel" and prevailed by weeping and pleading for Him to bless him (Gen 32:22-32)
- This was a turning point in Jacob's life because he realized he could not succeed through manipulation and trickery
- He recognized the need for God's help and turned to Him in desperation. It was the occasion of Jacob's repentance.
- God prepared Jacob for this event by allowing him to experience several years of conflict with his uncle Laban (Cf. Gen 31:42)
- "...He found Him at Bethel" - another significant event in Jacob's life was when he returned to Bethel, where God had appeared to him in a dream years earlier (Gen 28:10-22)
- This return to Bethel, and the act of worship that Jacob performed there, were in obedience to God's instruction to him to go there and fulfill his former vow (Gen 35:1-14)
- This, too, was an act of submissive obedience, and it resulted in God changing Jacob's name to Israel ("Prince with God"), blessing him yet again, and renewing the Abrahamic Covenant for him.
- "Bethel" - it is ironic that the place where Jacob got right with God was Bethel, since Bethel was the place where the Israelites had gotten wrong with Him by worshipping idols
- Jacob's return to God at Bethel provided a good example for the Israelites to get right with Him there too
- "...there He spoke with us" - Hosea reminds his contemporaries that when God spoke to Jacob at Bethel, He spoke to all the future generations in Jacob's loins (Cf. Heb 7:9-10)
- This set the stage for v5...

5 And the LORD, the God of armies, The LORD is His name.

5 Even the LORD, the God of hosts, The LORD is His name.

5 the LORD God of the Heavenly Armies— the LORD is his name.

5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

- *Yahweh*, the Almighty God of armies, even *Yahweh*, spoke to all the Israelites when He spoke to Jacob at Bethel
- He did this in that He intended the Israelites to learn from the experience of the patriarch

6 So as for you, return to your God, Maintain kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

6 Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

6 So you, return to your God; guard grace and justice, and look to your God always.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

- The lesson that God wanted the Israelites to learn was that, like Jacob, they should return to their covenant God

— They should practice kindness and justice in dealing with one another, rather than being like the old Jacob

— And they should commit to waiting in faith for God to act for them, rather than seizing control of the situation—like Jacob so often had done

7 A merchant, in whose hands are **fraudulent balances**, Loves to exploit.

7 A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, He loves to oppress.

7 "Now as for the merchant, deceitful balances remain in his hand, and he loves to defraud.

7 He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

- "...fraudulent balances" - a merchant who used dishonest scales loved to oppress his customers

— Similarly, Israel's oppression of others was traceable to her pride in riches

— Much of Israel's dealings with the nations involved trading contaminated by deceit

— The Israelites considered their wealth a blessing from God, which they interpreted as due to their cleverness and His approval of their lifestyle. Instead, it was due to His grace, and in spite of their sins.

8 And Ephraim said, "**I have certainly become rich**, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No wrongdoing, which *would be sin*."

8 And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No iniquity, which *would be sin*."

8 Ephraim claims, 'I have become rich, I have made a fortune! Because of all my wealth, no one will find any iniquity or sin in me.'

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

- A description of their sense of well-being, power, and prestige under Jeroboam II

— When prosperity had arrived, Ephraim took it as an indication that nothing was amiss (Zech 11:5)

- "...I have certainly become rich" - monetary success has never been an accurate barometer on one's status before God (Ps 37:16; Prov 11:4; 23:4; Eccl 8:11-14; Matt 5:45)
— This was also the emblem of the Laodicean Church (Rev 3:17)

9 But I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in **tents** again, As in the days of the **appointed festival**.

9 But I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, As in the days of the appointed festival.

9 "Yet I remain the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I will make you live in tents again, as in the festival of that name.

9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

- Yahweh reminded His people that He had been their God since before the Exodus

— Having now forgotten the source of their blessings, it's back to the tents...He was able to make them revert to a humble wilderness lifestyle again

- "...tents" - '*ohel*, stresses the inconvenience, the unsettledness, and the anxiety of living in land not their own

— Full circle: delivered out of Egypt and bondage; but now, back in because of covenant disobedience. This is clearly an allusion to the coming captivity of Israel.

- "...appointed festival" - the feast is probably the Feast of Tabernacles, where they remembered their wilderness wanderings by living in booths (Lev 23:42)

Rhetorical Devices

10 I have also spoken to the prophets, And I provided many visions, And through the prophets I **spoke in parables**.

10 I have also spoken to the prophets, And I gave numerous visions, And through the prophets I gave parables.

10 I spoke to the prophets, giving revelation after revelation, and employing parables in the prophetic writings.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

- The Lord reminded them that He had spoken to them through prophets many times (Cf. 9:7; 11:2)

— He had given the prophets visions, and they had taught their lessons to the Israelites

— Nevertheless, in spite of so many exhortations to return to the Lord, the people did not respond

11 **Is there injustice in Gilead?** Certainly they are worthless. In **Gilgal** they sacrifice bulls, Yes, their altars are like stone heaps Beside the furrows of a field.

11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? Surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps Beside the furrows of the field.

11 "There's iniquity in Gilead, isn't there? They have become truly vain. They sacrifice bulls in Gilgal; their altars are like piles of stone in furrowed fields.

11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

- "Is there injustice *in* Gilead?" - Gilead is the place that should be a balm to heal the wound, but instead it was a place of sin

- "...Gilgal" - worthless Israelites were sacrificing bulls and expensive offerings on numerous altars they had built there

— The number of pagan "altars" at Gilgal was as great as the piles of stones that farmers gathered beside their furrows

— When farmers plowed the rocky land, they gathered up the stones they plowed and stacked them by the furrows

— The use of "Gilead" on the west side of the Jordan and "Gilgal" on the east side represented the whole nation

Another Lesson from Israel's History

12 Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep.

12 Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep.

12 Jacob fled into the land of Aram; Israel served there to obtain his wife, tending sheep to gain his wife.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

- The Lord reminded the Israelites again of their humble origins

— Jacob was a refugee who migrated to the land of Aram, where he had to work to pay for a wife, and did so by tending sheep (a humble occupation, Deut 26:5)

— Jacob was even lower than a despised shepherd: he was the servant of his father-in-law

13 But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, And by a prophet he was protected.

13 But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept.

13 "By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was rescued.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

- Later the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt and kept them alive during their wilderness wanderings by using a prophet: Moses (Cf. Deut 18:18)

- The Israelites, as well as Jacob, had experienced hardship while in a foreign land. By implication Israel should not have despised the prophets that Yahweh had sent them since Moses (Cf. v10).
- Furthermore, they should remember that they could return to these conditions if they were not careful

14 Ephraim has provoked God to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his guilt for bloodshed on him And bring his disgrace back to him.

14 Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him And bring back his reproach to him.

14 Ephraim has stirred up violent anger; therefore the guilt of his blood will remain on him, and his Lord will repay him for his contempt."

14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

- In spite of God's mercies, the Israelites had provoked the LORD to bitter anger with their idolatry (Cf. Deut 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16,21; Judges 2:12; 1 Kings 14:9,15)

— Consequently, He would not remove the guilt of their sins by forgiving them, but would pay them back with punishment and shame. This was the sentence of their divine Judge.