

Hosea Chapter 7

Verses 1-7

“An oven heated by the baker”:

This refers to the schemes of the wicked.

Like a baker who kneads his “dough,” keeps it warm by “night” as he sleeps, and then with the dough raised, bakes the bread, so the wicked lay their plots and await the opportune time to carry out their conspiracy against the crown.

Four of Israel’s last six kings were assassinated.

Hosea 7:1 "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 heal “Israel” (also referred to here as “Ephraim” and “Samaria, the capital city).

“Samaria”:

As the capital, Samaria represents the northern kingdom.

God's desire all along, was to heal Israel.

We have talked a great deal about the will of man.

Even though God wanted to heal them, they had to be willing to give up the worship of false gods, as we said in an earlier lesson.

In the time of Jeroboam II, they made a calf and put it in their place of worship as symbolizing God.

Hosea 7:2 "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."

But Israel continued to sin and did not remember that her wicked deeds were “before” His “face” (Ezek. 8:12).

The omniscient God is aware of everything that people do.

The heart of man is what he is.

It is desperately wicked, or it is stayed upon God.

In the case of those of Israel, they were desperately wicked.

Their sins are the very things that cause this terrible judgment to come upon them.

Hosea 7:3 "They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies."

The evil awakens no alarm, but rather sympathy and gladness, in the breasts of their kings and rulers, who are ready to follow suit in all deeds of violence.

“With their lies”:

These were false accusations brought in against the more innocent, or by false reports made of their words and actions, representing them as ridiculous or foolish, amusing them into infamy.

This was a corrupt society.

The king was even pleased at the corruption.

The king and the princes were just as involved as the people themselves.

Verses 4-7

The civil leaders’ evil lust burned so passionately all night, that the prophet repeatedly described it like a consuming oven (compare verses 4, 6-7), so hot that the baker could forgo stirring the fire during the entire night and still have adequate heat for baking the next morning.

Hosea 7:4 "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."

Both spiritually and carnally, and this latter adultery is that which here is charged on the courtiers and people of Israel.

“As an oven heated by the baker”:

This vice is grown raging hot among them, as you see the fire in an oven, when the baker, having called up those that make the bread, to prepare all things ready.

And the whole mass is leavened, he doth by continued supply of fuel to heat the oven to the highest degree.

So does adultery among this people grow by degrees to raging flames.

The whole mass of the people is leavened with this vice also, as well as the court.

And every one inflamed with this unclean fire, as the oven heated by the baker.

“After he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened”:

Having kneaded the dough, and put in the leaven, he lets it alone to work till the whole mass is leavened, taking his rest in the meanwhile.

As the former clause expresses the vehement desire of the people after adultery, spiritual or corporeal.

This may signify their continuance in it; or rather the willful negligence of the king, priests, and prophets, who, instead of awaking them out of their sleep on a bed of adultery, let them alone in it, until they were all infected with it.

"Leaven" speaks of sin.

The fact that it is leavened means it has risen to the height of sin.

This adultery, again, is spiritual adultery.

They are unfaithful to God.

The kneading speaks of working the leaven down.

It does not stay down.

The sin is too great.

Hosea 7:5 "In the day of our king the princes have made [him] sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorers."

Their holy days, like those of so many Englishmen now, were days of excess.

"The day of their king", was probably some civil festival; his birthday, or his coronation-day.

The prophet owns the king, in that he calls him "our king."

He does not blame them for keeping the day, but for the way in which they kept it.

Their festival was turned into an irreligious and anti-religious carousal; making themselves like "the brutes which perish."

And tempting their king first to forget his royal dignity, and then to blaspheme the majesty of God.

“The princes have made him sick with bottles of wine:

“That is”, the courtiers who attended at court on such a day to compliment the king upon the occasion, and to drink his health.

Drank to him in large cups, perhaps a bottle of wine at once; which he pledges them in the same manner, made him sick or drunk.

To make any man drunk is criminal, and especially a king; as it was also a weakness and sin in him to drink to excess, which is not for kings, of all men, to do.

Or it may be rendered, "the princes became sick through the heat of wine".

“He stretched out his hand with scorers”:

Meaning the king, who, in his cups, forgetting his royal dignity, used too much familiarity with persons of low life, and of an ill behavior, irreligious ones.

Who, especially when drunk made a jest of all religion; scoffed at good men, and everything that was serious.

And even set their mouths against the heavens; denied there was a God, or spoke very indecently and irreverently of him.

These the king made his drinking companions, took the cup, and drank to them in turn, and shook them by the hand.

Drunkenness goes with sin.

Wine dulls the senses, and causes one's will to be weak.

At all sorts of celebrations, such as the birthday of the king, there were drunken parties.

Not only did this wine make them not able to make good decisions, but it gave them a false sense of security as well.

This wine dulled their senses for the evil sins they committed.

The sad thing is the fact that the king joined the princes in this.

Verses 6-7

Even the kings and princes in Israel were wicked, with hearts that burned “like an oven” for more power.

This likely refers to the assassination of four Israelite kings during Hosea's life (see 2 Kings 15:8-26).

Hosea 7:6 "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire."

He gives the reason of their bursting out into open mischief; it was ever stored up within.

They "made ready":

Literally, "brought near".

"Their heart":

Their heart was ever brought near to sin, even while the occasion was removed at a distance from it.

The "oven" is their heart; the fuel, their corrupt affections, and inclinations, and evil concupiscence, with which it is filled.

"Their baker":

Their own evil will and imagination, which stirs up whatever is evil in them.

The prophet then pictures how, while they seem for a while to rest from sin.

It is but "whiles they lie in wait;" still, all the while, they made and kept their hearts ready, full of fire for sin and passion.

Any breathing-time from actual sin was no real rest; the heart was still on fire.

"In the morning":

Very early, as soon as the occasion came, it burst forth.

So the evil concupiscence in these men's hearts, made hot like an oven, rests all night, devising mischief on their beds.

Either against the chastity of their neighbors' wives, or against the lives of others, they bear an ill will to.

Particularly against their judges and their kings (as Hosea 7:7); seems to intimate.

And in the morning this lust of uncleanness or revenge is all in a flame, and ready to execute the wicked designs contrived (see Micah 2:1).

They have turned their hearts over to sinful lust.

Lust feeds upon itself, and gets hotter and hotter.

The lust of this sort springs into action, when it breaks forth in flame.

Hosea 7:7 "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 are fallen":

Four of Israel's final 6 kings were murdered by usurpers.

Anyone who opposed them, they removed from authority.

The judges and prophets were not supposed to be subject to the king, or the people, but they have all been done away with.

There is no one to cry out to God for the people, when the religious leaders are removed.

Sometimes people have fallen so far, it is difficult for them to reach out to God.

This was certainly the case here.

Verses 8-9

At Israel's invitation, foreign nations made debilitating inroads into her national and religious life.

This intrusion was making her like "a cake not turned," burned on one side and raw on the other.

Payment for this foreign assistance would "devour" her strength (verse 9), and make her old and feeble without noticing it.

Hosea 7:8 "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned."

By his alliances with the heathen, and by imitation of their manners, he is himself become one of them.

He has thrown off all the distinctions, and forfeited the privileges of the chosen race.

“Cake not turned”:

Referring to the destructive effect of foreign influences.

Ephraim was consumed by the unhallowed fire of Baal-worship, with all its passion and persistent or excessive pursuit of sensual pleasures and interests.

A cake burnt on one side to a cinder, and on the other left in a condition utterly unfit for food.

So the activity of foreign idolatries and foreign alliances, and the consequent unfaithfulness to Israel’s God, are the nation’s ruin.

This is speaking of God's people mixing with the heathen people around them.

It also is speaking of a cake that had been cooked with uneven heat.

It was well done on the one side, and the other side of the cake was raw.

This is speaking of a person whose life is not consistent.

He proclaimed to love God and to live for God, but he played around with the worship of false gods at the same time.

He was unstable in all of his ways.

Hosea 7:9 "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth [it] not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."

The past tense may refer to the invasions of Tiglath-pileser.

Both Egypt and Assyria had come to regard Israel as a small earthenware pot between iron pots.

“Strangers have devoured his strength”:

I.e., he has less power to resist aggression, less treasure, less land, smaller population.

The signs of senility are upon him.

Grey hairs, themselves the effects of declining age and tokens of decay, are the forerunners of death.

"Thy grey hairs are thy passing-bell," says the proverb.

This is saying that the sin crept in without him being aware of it.

Such a person turns gray one hair at a time, and does not realize he is gray until after it is complete.

The sinful nature came in a little at a time and he was not even aware of it until it was too late.

Hosea 7:10 "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."

His pride convicted him.

All the afflictions of God humbled him not; yea, they but brought out his pride, which "kept him from acknowledging and repenting of the sins which had brought those evils upon him, and from "turning to God and seeking to Him" for remedy".

People complain of their "fortune" or "fate" or "stars," and go on the more obstinately, to build up what God destroys.

To prop up by human means or human aid what, by God's providence, is failing.

They venture more desperately, in order to recover past losses, until the crash at last becomes hopeless and final.

“Nor seek Him for all this”:

God had exhausted all the treasures of His severity, as before, of His love.

He Himself marvels at His incorrigible and disobedient servant, as He says in Isaiah, "Why should ye be stricken anymore?

Ye will revolt more and more" (Isaiah 1:5).

How is this?

It follows, because they have "no heart."

They were so sure of their standing with God; they did nothing to assure its continuance.

They thought of themselves as God's chosen people and they felt they were beyond being judged of God.

Pride of this kind comes just before a fall.

They had overlooked the necessity of maintaining their standing with God by their faithfulness.

They took God for granted and began seeking thrills with false gods.

Verses 11-12

Like a dove, reputed to lack good sense (compare Matt. 10:16), so Israel had sought assistance from Egypt and Assyria, rather than from the LORD, who would ultimately trap her (compare 8:9-10).

Hosea 7:11 “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.”

No creature is less able to defend itself than the dove, which flies from the bird of prey to the net of the fowler.

In this powerful metaphor, we have a political allusion.

King Hoshea (19th and last king of Israel), is called Ausih on the Assyrian monuments.

Having usurped the throne after the murder of Pekah, he “purchased his recognition as king of Israel by giving a large present to the Assyrian monarch” (730 B.C.).

“They call to Egypt”:

Instead of "calling to" God who could and would help, they "called to Egypt" who could not, and "went to Assyria" who would not.

So God complains by Isaiah,

"To Me, thou hast not called, O Jacob" (Isaiah 43:22).

This was their folly; they called not to God, who had delivered them out of Egypt, but, alternately, to their two powerful neighbors, of whom Egypt was a delusive promisor, not failing only, but piercing those who leant on it; Assyria was a powerful oppressor.

A "silly dove" is unaware of the danger of flying head long into a net.

Ephraim has forgotten their help is in God.

They seek help from Egypt (world), and from Assyria.

They are heading for their own trap.

Hosea 7:12 "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."

Best rendered: “whenever they go”.

The ultimate ruin produced by this policy of dependence on foreign states and of double dealing intrigue was even at this early stage foreseen by the prophet, and portrayed under the simile of Jehovah's net snaring the unwary bird.

"I will spread my net upon them":

As fowlers spread the net, watch the birds, and cast it over them to catch them, so will God do to Ephraim.

So he did with Israel when he accepted the alliance of Shalmaneser, and turned tributary.

And again, when Israel sought by Egypt's help to get out of the snares of their vassalage to Shalmaneser, who revenged the conspiracy with a total captivity.

Nor can there be likelihood or possibility these fugitives should escape when it is God's net, and he spreads it, his almighty power, his all searching wisdom, and his just vengeance, that follows them.

"I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven":

Though they attempt to fly, yet as fowls in the net they shall certainly fall, I will bring them down; as he did when they were gathered into Samaria as a net, and there made prisoners, and thence carried captives.

"I will chastise them":

Thus they shall be punished.

"As their congregation hath heard":

Both from the law of Moses which they had with them, and as they had heard from my prophets which I have sent unto them.

I will, saith God, make good my word.

Just as the silly dove is caught in the net unexpectedly, they are caught in the trap of their own making.

They were unaware that Egypt, or Assyria, was not where their chastisement would come from, but from God.

God could use any country He chose to for the carrying out of His chastisement.

They had angered God with their actions.

Hosea 7:13 "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."

"I have redeemed them":

From Egypt and their other enemies.

They have left the safety of their God and sought others.

The safest place for a bird is in his own nest.

The destruction comes on them, because they have transgressed God's law.

God was their redeemer.

They have become unfaithful to Him.

It appears their lying here, is a denial of God.

Hosea 7:14 "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."

"Howled upon their beds ... assemble themselves":

The former phrase may speak of appeals to pagan fertility gods upon beds of sacred prostitution, while the latter, if the marginal reading is correct, harkens to Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:28).

It appears, from this verse, they cried upon their beds at night, but did not direct those cries to God.

At least they did not cry for Him with their hearts.

Their hearts were far from God.

This "assembling themselves for corn and wine" could be speaking of some false worship they were involved in.

To rebel against God, is to rebel against His authority.

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams."

Jesus said the following, which actually is the same statement.

John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

They did not keep God's commandments, because they did not love God.

They rebelled against Him.

Hosea 7:15 "Though I have bound [and] strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me."

Though I "bound" (trained) "and strengthened" Israel's "arms", yet the people still trusted idols (Ezek. 30:24-25).

It was God who had made them strong in the first place.

They did not realize who had really helped them.

They did not know who their friend was.

They looked to the world for answers that only God had the answer to.

Hosea 7:16 "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."

"A deceitful bow" has every appearance of being good, but the arrows that it propels miss the intended target.

God has wonderful things for Israel, but they have continuously mistaken His favor for favoritism and have misused His blessings for their own ends.

The military language here probably alludes to the victories the LORD had given His people in battle (2 Kings 14:25-28).

Their denying God got them into the difficulty they were in.

A deceitful bow is one that sends an arrow in another direction other than to the target.

You may aim at one thing, and hit another with a deceitful bow.

You cannot trust that bow.

They have missed the target.

They are not even smart enough to come back to God for help.

They have returned to their idol worship.

"Derision" means speak unintelligibly.

Hosea Chapter 7 Questions

1. What was God's desire all along?
2. Why did God not heal them?
3. What terrible thing had they done in the time of Jeroboam the second?
4. What reveals what a man is?
5. What causes the terrible judgment to come upon them?
6. What unusual thing is said, in verse 3, about the king?
7. Leaven speaks of ____.
8. The fact that it is leavened, means what?
9. The princes have made the king sick with _____ of _____.
10. What does too much wine do to you?
11. What have they turned their hearts over to?
12. What is verse 6 speaking of?
13. What did they do with those who opposed them?
14. What does verse 8 say Ephraim had done?
15. What is wrong with the cake of verse 8?
16. What type of person does this cake describe?
17. What happened to his strength?
18. What is meant by the gray hairs being here and there upon him?
19. What was their problem mentioned in verse 10?
20. What had they overlooked?
21. What does a "silly dove" do?
22. Where would their chastisement come from?

23. God redeemed them, and how did they repay Him?
24. Why did they not keep God's commandments?
25. ____ had made them strong in the first place.
26. Who had they looked to for answers?
27. They returned, but not to the _____. _____.
28. What got them into their difficulty?