

Hosea Chapter 12

Hosea 12:1 "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."

"The east wind" refers to the sirocco, a hot, dry wind coming from the eastern desert and causing great devastation in the land.

The picture is graphic, for Israel has given itself to feeding on what will not nourish it (idolatry), and the result is an increase in "lies and desolation."

Israel's attempted alliances with heathen neighbors were of no worth.

This prophecy was delivered at about the time of Israel's seeking the aid of the Egyptian king.

In this chapter, we see again that God is reminding Ephraim of their faults.

The worst thing they did, besides worshipping false gods, was the fact they made a treaty with a worldly country.

Hosea 12:2 "The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him."

"Jacob":

Frequently used interchangeably with "Israel" (compare 10:11; Gen. 32:28).

When Jacob is mentioned, it is speaking of all 12 tribes of Israel.

God is not a respecter of persons.

When they sin, they are judged of God, and made to pay whatever punishment God allots to them.

He is a forgiving God, but He is also a just God.

Verses 3-6

These verses remind the entire nation of the patriarch from whom they have descended.

Jacob always wanted God's best, even though he did not always seek it God's way.

“Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed:”

The allusion is to Jacob’s encounter with the Angel of the Lord at Peniel (Gen. 32:30).

Israel had forgotten Jacob’s spiritual wrestling’s with God. Israel, as did Jacob, must come to the end of itself and find its strength in God alone.

He exhorted them to follow their father Jacob’s persevering prayerfulness, which brought God’s favor on him.

As God is unchanging, He would show the same favor to Jacob’s posterity as He did to Jacob, if, like him, they sought God.

Hosea 12:3 "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:"

Whether or not the act of Jacob was beyond the strength, ordinarily given to infants in the womb, the meaning of the act was beyond man’s wisdom to declare.

Whence the Jews paraphrased, "Was it not predicted of your father Jacob, before he was born; that he should become greater than his brother?"

Yet this was not fulfilled until more than 500 years afterward, or completely until the time of David.

"By his strength he had power with God":

The strength, by which he did this, was God’s strength, as well as that by which God contended with him; yet it is well called his, as being by God given to him.

God so ordering it, that the strength which was in Jacob, should put itself forth with greater force, than that in the assumed body, whereby He so dealt with Jacob. God, as it were, bore the office of two persons, showing in Jacob more strength than He put forth in the Angel.

This is speaking of Jacob and Esau when they were born.

We remember from previous lessons, the birthright belonged to Esau, but he traded it to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup.

Even in their mother’s womb, before they were born, there was war going on between the two.

It has never stopped until this very day.

Jacob tricked His father into giving him the right hand (preferential), blessing.

Hosea 12:4 "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him [in] Beth-el, and there he spake with us;"

The angel was willing to be conquered, or Jacob could not have gotten the victory.

"The angel":

Called God (Hosea 12:3, and, Hosea 12:5), is Jehovah, Lord of hosts.

He was no created angel, but the uncreated Angel Christ, the Messiah, eternal God by nature and essence, angel by office and voluntary undertaking.

And prevailed; got the victory, went out of the field a conqueror, but not by such arms and methods as you use.

You are conquered by man because of your sins; he conquered with God by faith and prayer.

"He wept":

Not the angel, as some through mistake, but your father Jacob.

By this we know he prayed with tears, though the story says not so, with sense of his own unworthiness, with earnestness for the mercy he desired, and apprehensive of the majesty of him with whom he wrestled.

But you, quite contrary, proud as if worthy, regardless of the best part of the blessing, and earnest only for the meaner part, seek it not of God, but idols.

"And made supplication unto him":

It is Christ who is here intended.

It was no mere creature, Jacob might not have prayed to such, but it was the Creator of angels and the Redeemer of man, the blessed Jesus, to whom every knee ought to bow (Philippians 2:10).

He found him at Beth-el; either the angel found Jacob in Beth-el, as he did more than once, both before and after this time (Genesis 28:12).

It is good to be in Beth-el, in the house of God; happy are those that dwell there, and are found there living and dying, doing the will and work of God there.

Or rather Jacob found God or the angel in Beth-el; God is to be found in his own house, there he comes and blesses with his gracious presence.

Here Christ the Angel of his presence is; here he meets with his people, and manifests himself unto them.

“There he spake with us”:

As being in the loins of our progenitor Jacob (compare Psalm 66:6).

What God there spoke to Jacob appertains to us.

God's promises to him belong to all his posterity who follows in the steps of his prayerful faith.

Jacob had wrestled all night with the angel of the Lord.

Jacob was allowed to win the battle, and caused the angel to bless him.

God, through the angel, changed Jacob's name to Israel.

All of this happened at Beth-el.

"Beth-el" means house of God.

Jacob's life was changed.

He became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Hosea 12:5 "Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD [is] his memorial."

The word, here as translated and written LORD, is the special and, so to say, the proper Name of God, that which He gave to Himself, and which declares His Being.

“The LORD is his memorial”:

Or his name, Jehovah, which belongs to this angel.

The Son of God, as to his divine Father; and which is expressive of his divine existence.

Of his eternity and immutability; this is his memorial, or the recorder which puts his people in all ages in remembrance of him.

What he is, what an infinite, almighty, and all sufficient Being he is.

And he is always to be believed in and trusted, and to be served, adored, and worshipped.

We saw in the verse before this, Jacob was sorrowful for his past.

We now see salvation has come to him through covenant with God.

It is not Israel that is God's memorial, but God that is Israel's memorial.

Hosea 12:6 "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."

A genuine “return” to God would involve a commitment to “mercy” (6:6; 10:12; Micah 6:8), “and justice” as well as true dependence on the LORD (“wait on thy God continually”; Psalm 27:14).

Their repentance has to do with man, but the greatest repentance for them or us, is to repent and be brought back into right standing with God. God is never very far away. Turn to God, and He is there. This is saying that salvation is a continual thing. Once a person receives salvation, they must continue to walk in that salvation.

Psalms 27:14 "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Hosea 12:7 "[He is] a merchant, the balances of deceit [are] in his hand: he loveth to oppress."

“He is a merchant (Hebrew *Kenaar*, Canaanite merchant).

Rather than being like God, Israel is like the Canaanite and the Canaanite deities they had adopted.

Because the Canaanites were known as traders, the word “merchant” came to be used synonymously with “Canaanite” (Ezek. 16:29; 17:4; Zeph. 1:11).

Though she denied it (verse 8), Israel had become materialistic, filled with greed, and fond of dishonest gain.

God always cautioned His people to deal with just weights.

Leviticus 19:36 "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I [am] the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."

One of the ways you could determine who belonged to God, was by the way they conducted themselves in business.

Proverbs 11:1 "A false balance [is] abomination to the LORD: but a just weight [is] his delight."

Those who oppress their neighbor are not godly people.

Hosea 12:8 "And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: [in] all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that [were] sin."

Literally, "I am simply rich."

As if he said, "the only result of all this, with which the prophets charge me, is that 'I am become rich:' and since God thus prospers me, it is a sure proof that he is not displeased with me, that 'no iniquity' can be 'found in me;'" the ordinary practical argument of men, as long as God withholds His punishments, that their ways cannot be so displeasing to Him.

"I have found me out substance":

The same thing, with a vain boast of what is not in his wealth and substance.

If in his gain he assumed his own only to himself, it were praiseworthy; that is, if he took to himself with shame the sinful manner of acquiring it; but he takes the praise to himself, and forgets God; boasts of his wit, though he cannot of his honesty.

"In all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin":

Finally, he hugs himself in the apprehension of close and crafty carriage of all his affairs, that no great fault, no crime, can be found in it to deserve a reproach or punishment.

That he hath more reason to believe all is well since it doth prosper, than to suspect any great miscarriage which should deserve punishment.

So this people do at once flatter themselves into security, fearless of punishment, and into hardened obstinacy in sin incapable of amendment.

There is not one place in the verse above, that God is given credit for making Ephraim rich.

Ephraim thinks he has done this himself.

Proverbs 30:12 "[There is] a generation [that are] pure in their own eyes, and [yet] is not washed from their filthiness."

Ephraim thought he was perfect.

He did not feel any guilt for the sins he committed.

This is a dangerous place to be in.

Those who know they are guilty of sin, seek a Savior.

Verses 9-14

This historical retrospective of God's saving role in Israel's history includes their time in "Egypt" (Exodus 20:12; Lev. 23:42-44), the story of "Jacob" (Genesis chapters 28 to 31), and a "prophet," Moses (Num. 12 Chapters 6 to 8), and the anger that the current idol worship of "Ephraim provoked."

For this, the people were about to suffer (Isa. 65:7).

Hosea 12:9 "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."

At the annual Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles (Deut. 16:13-15; Num. 29:12-38), Israel dwelt in tents to commemorate her 40 years of wilderness wanderings.

In captivity, she would be forced to live in them permanently.

During the time of the solemn feast, they dwelt in tabernacles.

Sometimes, they are called booths.

This could also be speaking of them dwelling in tents.

This is just indicating an uncertain dwelling place.

Abraham gave up his house and dwelt in tents.

He was looking for a city whose maker was God.

Hosea 12:10 "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets."

"I have also spoken":

Here is an aggravation of their guilt, that it was not through ignorance that they sinned, but in defiance of God's revealed Word.

The prophets did not speak their own words.

They spoke the words God put into their mouths.

God had given visions to warn them as well.

The similitudes in the ministry of the prophets were things like Isaiah walking naked and barefoot in the street.

The prophet was showing in the physical, the spiritual condition of the people.

Another very good example of that was Jeremiah wearing the yoke around his neck, when he ministered.

The similitudes could be also speaking of the parables of things, like the vineyard that were given.

God had used everything within His power to reach them, before it was too late.

Hosea 12:11 "[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."

"Heaps in the furrows":

As gathered and piled stones would dot a farmer's field, so Israel multiplied her stone altars across the land.

"Gilgal" means "a heap of stones," so this is a play on words.

Yes, there was iniquity in Gilead.

Gilead was the mountain region east of Jordan.

They have caused the anger of God to come against them, because they have sacrificed to idols in Gilead.

They had sacrificed bullocks to strange false gods.

They have made altars as memorials to false gods.

"Heaps" have to do with establishing covenant and heaping rocks up as a memorial.

Verses 12-14

The reference to Jacob's wanderings to Syria and Israel's sojourn in Egypt should cause Ephraim to confess her pride, recognize her humble origins, and acknowledge that only by God's gracious power were they made a nation.

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

Or, "field of Syria; the same with Padan-aram; for "Padan", in the Arabic language, as Bochart has shown, signifies a field; and "Aram" is Syria, and is the word here used.

"Jacob fled ... served":

Though ye pride yourselves on the great name of "Israel," forget not that your progenitor was the same Jacob who was a fugitive, and who served for Rachel fourteen years.

He forgot not ME who delivered him when fleeing from Esau, and when oppressed by Laban (Gen. 28:5; 29:20, 28; Deut. 26:5).

“And Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep”:

And so the last clause is supplied by the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi: this was after his flight into Syria, and before he fled from Laban, whom he served seven years for Rachel.

And then he continued to serve Laban by keeping his sheep seven more years, as his agreement.

Though it may be understood of his two wives, thus; he served seven years for a wife.

For Rachel intentionally, but eventually it was for Leah; and then he kept sheep seven years more for his other wife Rachel.

The history of this is (in Genesis 29:1).

Genesis 28:5 "And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother."

He had not taken a wife of the heathen women around him, as his brother Esau did, but went to his uncle's, and found a wife of the same faith.

He worked as a shepherd.

Hosea 12:13 "And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved."

Moses is here referred to, and there is, perhaps, a hint that the LORD would yet again save Israel from worse than Egyptian bondage by the words and warnings of a prophet.

“And by a prophet was he preserved”:

By the same prophet Moses was Israel preserved at the Red sea, and in the wilderness; where they were kept as a flock of sheep from their powerful enemies, and brought to the borders of Canaan's land.

The prophet that led them out of Egypt was Moses.

Moses prayed, and God rained Manna from heaven for them to eat.

God, through Moses, brought them 40 years through the wilderness with no lack in their life.

God preserved them, to set them up as an example of His family to the whole world.

Hosea 12:14 "Ephraim provoked [him] to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him."

“Ephraim provoked ... (the Lord) most bitterly”:

Literally, "with anger and disappointments," i. e. with most heinous sins, such as are most grievously displeasing to God, and were a most bitter requital of all His goodness.

"Wherefore shall he leave" (or, "cast") "his blood" (literally, "bloods"), "upon him."

The plural "bloods" expresses the manifoldness of the bloodshed.

It is not used in Holy Scripture of mere guilt.

Ephraim had shed blood profusely, so that it ran like water in the land (see the notes above at Hosea 4:2; 5:2).

“Leave his blood upon him”:

Not take away the guilt and penalty of the innocent blood shed by Ephraim in general and to Molech in particular.

“His reproach shall his Lord return unto him”:

Ephraim's dishonor to God in worshipping idols, God will repay to him.

That God is "his Lord" by right redemption and special revelation to Ephraim only aggravates his guilt, instead of giving him hope of escape.

God does not give up His claim to them as His, however they set aside His dominion.

Instead of Ephraim being extremely grateful for what God had done for him, he rebelled against God over and over.

God forgave him over and over and gave him another chance.

Whatever happens to Ephraim, he has no one to blame but himself.

His blood and punishment are brought on himself.

His idolatry has gone too far.

God has brought punishment.

Hosea Chapter 12 Questions

1. God is reminding Ephraim of their _____.
2. What was the worst thing they did, besides worshipping false gods?
3. What is God, besides a forgiving God?
4. When is verse 3 speaking of?
5. Who did the birthright belong to?
6. What was the preferential blessing?
7. Who had Jacob wrestled all night with?
8. Where did this happen?
9. What does the name mean?
10. Who is His memorial?
11. What advice did he receive in verse 6?
12. God always cautioned his people about _____ weights.
13. A false balance was an _____ to the LORD.
14. What things could the tabernacles, in verse 9, imply?
15. What is the mention of the tabernacles indicating?
16. The prophet's words were actually _____ Words.
17. Name some of the similitudes given?
18. Is there iniquity in Gilead?
19. What terrible thing were they doing there?
20. What is meant, in verse 12, about "serving for a wife"?
21. Who did he work for?
22. What kind of work did he do?
23. What had Ephraim done?
24. What was his punishment for that?