

# **Hosea**

## **Chapter 7**

Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people, whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed. They practice deceit, thieves break into houses, bandits rob in the streets; <sup>2</sup> but they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me. <sup>3</sup> “They delight the king with their wickedness, the princes with their lies. <sup>4</sup> They are all adulterers, burning like an oven whose fire the baker need not stir from the kneading of the dough till it rises. <sup>5</sup> On the day of the festival of our king the princes become inflamed with wine, and he joins hands with the mockers. <sup>6</sup> Their hearts are like an oven; they approach him with intrigue. Their passion smolders all night; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. <sup>7</sup> All of them are hot as an oven; they devour their rulers. All their kings fall, and none of them calls on me. <sup>8</sup> “Ephraim mixes with the nations; Ephraim is a flat cake not turned over. <sup>9</sup> Foreigners sap his strength, but he does not realize it. His hair is sprinkled with gray, but he does not notice. <sup>10</sup> Israel’s arrogance testifies against him, but despite all this he does not return to the LORD his God or search for him. <sup>11</sup> “Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless— now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria. <sup>12</sup> When they go, I will throw my net over them; I will pull them down like birds of the air. When I hear them flocking together, I will catch them. <sup>13</sup> Woe to them, because they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, because they have rebelled against me! I long to redeem them but they speak lies against me. <sup>14</sup> They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail upon their beds. They gather together for grain and new wine but turn away from me. <sup>15</sup> I trained them and strengthened them, but they plot evil against me. <sup>16</sup> They do not turn to the Most High; they are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because of their insolent words. For this they will be ridiculed in the land of Egypt.

**7:1** *heal.* See 5:13; 6:1; 11:3; 14:4; Jer 51:8–9. (CSB)

When the Lord attempted to remove their corruption. (Kretzmann)

*sins.* See 4:8; 5:5; 8:13. (CSB)

*Ephraim.* Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

*exposed ... revealed.* God sees them. (CSB)

Ironically, the more earnestly the Lord seeks to heal Israel, the more the iniquity of Ephraim becomes evident. (TLSB)

*crimes.* See v. 3. (CSB)

*Samaria.* Another name for the northern kingdom, of which Samaria was the royal city, selected by Omri to be capital of Israel (1Ki 16:24). (CSB)

Capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, this city reeked of evil deeds. (TLSB)

*deceit.* See Jer 6:13; 8:10; probably refers to both feigned repentance and treacherous foreign alliances. (CSB)

So that intercourse became impossible because no man could trust the other. (Kretzmann)

*thieves.* See 4:2. (CSB)

*bandits.* See 6:9; Ge 49:19; Jer 18:22. (CSB)

Terror reigns in town and countryside, as thieves plunder houses and bandits rob travelers on the highway. (TLSB)

**7:2** *I remember.* All is open before the Lord (see Ps 90:8), but the wicked believe God does not see (see Ps 10:6, 11; 14:1; Eze 8:12). (CSB)

Nothing is hidden from the Lord. He sees and remembers even secret misdeeds. (TLSB)

**7:3** The deplorable spiritual condition of the nation is revealed in the fact that the king and princes actually delight in the evil being done. (TLSB)

*delight the king.* Probably in conjunction with one of the palace revolts (see 2Ki 15:8–30). (CSB)

*king ... princes.* Paired also in 3:4; 8:4; 13:10. (CSB)

*lies.* See 11:12; Ps 59:12; Na 3:1. (CSB)

A fact which shows that the highest ranks of the people were infested with the corruption. (Kretzmann)

**7:4** Sinful Israel is compared to an oven stoked so hot that the baker no longer needs to stir the fire while kneading the dough and letting it rise. (TLSB)

*adulterers.* See 3:1; 4:2, 13; Jer 9:2; Eze 23:37. (CSB)

The spiritual and moral condition of the entire people being the very lowest. (Kretzmann)

*fire.* A metaphor for political intrigue (see vv. 6–7). The fire was banked until ready to use; then it broke out. (CSB)

*baker.* Perhaps the leader of the conspiracy. (CSB)

The adulterous and idolatrous lust of the people was inflamed to such an extent that it was like a baker's oven which was already at such an extreme heat that he could omit adding more fuel while the fermentation of his bread was finished. (Kretzmann)

**7:5** *festival of our king.* Probably a coronation or birthday that became a drunken party. King Elah died in drunkenness (1Ki 16:9–10). (CSB)

Likely the day on which an Israelite king ascended the throne. (TLSB)

*princes became sick.* Self-indulgent princes downed so much wine that they became sick. (TLSB)

*he.* Sadly, the king himself joined with those whose drunken festivities effectively mocked the Lord. (TLSB)

*mockers.* See Pr 21:24. Isaiah (28:1–8, 14) condemned Israel's drunkenness and her scoffers. (CSB)

Accepting their company with a ready spirit, making them his boon companions, so that everything which men hold sacred was dragged in the dust. (Kretzmann)

**7:6–7** Like the fire in an oven that does not go out overnight, so the hearts of those planning intrigue continue to smolder as they sleep, only to blaze up again in the morning. Sinful desires flame up into sinful deeds. (TLSB)

**7:6** The intrigue was kept secret until a suitable time. (CSB)

That is, as men bring fuel for an oven, so they have brought their hearts into their cunning; **their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.** The baker is the ringleader, who inspires passion, who starts the conspiracy; the night provides a time of rest, so that the passion of idolatry, which burns throughout, may break forth with new strength and fierceness after the interval. When the evil thoughts of their hearts have fully matured, when they find time and opportunity for the execution of their plans, then they carry them out with eagerness. (Kretzmann)

**7:7** ALL OF THEM...HOT – Aflame with the various passions to which they have yielded themselves. (Kretzmann)

*rulers ... kings.* Four kings were assassinated in 20 years, Zechariah and Shallum in a seven-month period (2Ki 15:10–15). (CSB)

*devour their rulers* During Hosea's ministry, four Israelite kings were overthrown within 12 years. (TLSB)

The references probably being to the time when the last kings of Israel, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah, followed one another in quick succession. (Kretzmann)

*none of them calls on me.* The reason for the shameful situation. (CSB)

Neither king nor prince nor people called on the only One able to help in this time of upheaval. The Lord was utterly forgotten. (TLSB)

For even the great calamities in which they found themselves did not cause them to repent. (Kretzmann)

**7:8 MIXES WITH THE NATIONS** – Refers to Israel's attempts to ally with foreign nations rather than the Lord. These alliances proved to be entangling snares rather than means of escape. (TLSB)

*flat cake.* A metaphor describing unwise policies. Baked on hot stones (cf. 1Ki 19:6), the cake was burned on the bottom and raw on the top. (CSB)

Griddle cake, probably sweetened with honey or a syrup made from grapes, dates, or figs. (TLSB)

The entire cake is then not fit for eating. (Kretzmann)

*not turned.* Burned on one side and raw on the other, i.e., defective and unusable. (TLSB)

**7:9 Strangers.** Foreign nations (e.g., Assyria and Egypt) are strangers because they do not know the Lord. (TLSB)

**SAP HIS STRENGTH** – Partly on account of the wars waged against Israel, partly as a consequence of the heathen ways which had been adopted in the northern kingdom, **and he knoweth it not**, he was not even aware of his unfortunate condition. (Kretzmann)

*hair ... gray.* He was old before his time, but ignored the danger signals. Tribute to Tiglath-Pileser (2Ki 15:19–20, 29) and to Egypt had sapped the country economically. (CSB)

Sign of aging and loss of vigor. (TLSB)

*he knows it not.* Sums up the feeble, blinded spiritual condition of Ephraim. (TLSB)

**7:10** *pride of Israel testifies to his face.* Israel's arrogant disdain for the Lord is clear and brings no positive effect. (TLSB)

*return.* See 3:5; 5:4; Am 4:6–11. (CSB)

Hosea's emphasis. (TLSB)

*search.* See 2:7; 5:6. (CSB)

The situation was like that of which also other prophets complain when they state that the people have become hardened to the chastising hand of the Lord. Cp. Is. 9, 13; Jer. 5, 3. (Kretzmann)

**7:11** *dove.* See 11:11, where a different image is intended. (CSB)

The people lack discernment. They desperately flutter in all directions, looking for help. Scripture does not always use symbols in the same sense. Contrast with Mt 3:16. (TLSB)

One which is too simple to notice the snare of the fowler. (Kretzmann)

*senseless.* See Jer 5:21. Menahem turned to Assyria (2Ki 15:19–20), and Pekah to Egypt. Hoshea alternated in allegiance to both (2Ki 17:4). (CSB)

**7:12** *my net.* The Lord himself was the hunter—not the nations—and Israel was certain to be caught. (CSB)

Using the foreigners as His instruments to carry out His punishment upon them; (Kretzmann)

*report.* The discipline should come as no surprise, since the prophets often warned the assembled people of impending judgment. (TLSB)

**7:13–15** *against Me!* The Lord repeats this phrase to show how deeply grieved He is by His children's sin. (TLSB)

**7:13** *Woe.* Often used in conjunction with threats of judgment (see 9:12). (CSB)

Mournful cry heard at the death of a loved one. The Lord laments the destruction of His people. (TLSB)

*Destruction.* See 9:6; Isa 13:6. (CSB)

They have rebelled and thereby forsaken Him, who is the only One who could and would help them. (Kretzmann)

*redeem*. See 13:14; also used for deliverance from Egypt (see, e.g., Ex 6:6; Mic 6:4). (CSB)

*lies*. Possibly of ascribing prosperity and destiny to gods other than the Lord. (CSB)

Insincere. (TLSB)

By both words and actions, in seeking help elsewhere. (Kretzmann)

**7:14** *wail*. See Joel 1:13. (CSB)

Might refer to a ritual performed during Baal worship. (TLSB)

With cries of sleepless anguish, after the usual manner of their kind, resorting to extremes in order to make an impression. (Kretzmann)

*gash themselves*. On Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal cut themselves as part of their idolatrous ritual (1Ki 18:28). The Israelites did the same here, hoping to ensure good crops. (TLSB)

*grain and new wine*. See 2:8, 22; 9:1–2. (CSB)

Their one thought and object being to fill their stomachs with the best products of the land. (Kretzmann)

**7:15** *I trained them*. As children (or, perhaps, as troops). (CSB)

The Lord strengthened Israel militarily, yet Israel betrays its ally, the Lord. (TLSB)

Teaching them where to get and how to use their strength. (Kretzmann)

*strengthened them*. Lit. “strengthened their arms” (see Eze 30:24–25). (CSB)

**7:16** *Most High*. See 11:7. (CSB)

Israel turned to Baal and to other nations for help rather than to the Lord. (TLSB)

*faulty bow*. See Ps 78:57. The arrow missed the mark; Israel missed her purpose for being. (CSB)

Such a weapon is incapable of shooting straight; its arrows do not hit the target. (TLSB)

Whose string has lost its tenseness and cannot carry the arrow to its mark. (Kretzmann)

*princes*. High-ranking officials who, when captured by the enemy, were among the first to be executed. (TLSB)

*ridiculed.* Egypt would fail to assist Israel and then would belittle God's power (see Dt 9:28). (CSB)

When Israel's leaders fell, Egypt laughed in ridicule. (TLSB)

The Egyptians themselves ridiculed them on account of the weakness revealed in their overthrow. That is ever the result of man's turning to men for help, for the very ones upon whom he depended for assistance will jeer at his fall. God is the only One in whom we may safely place all our trust. (Kretzmann)

*Egypt.* See 8:13; 9:6; 11:5. There is no record of a forced exile of large numbers to Egypt. Some captives were taken there (2Ki 23:34; Jer 22:11–14), and some fugitives voluntarily went there (2Ki 25:26; Jer 42–44). A return from Egypt is envisioned in 11:11; Isa 11:11; 27:13; Zec 10:10. (CSB)

**Chs 6–7** Though Hosea earnestly encourages Ephraim and Judah to return to the Lord, his pleas continue to fall on deaf ears. Rather than trusting the Lord, Israel's leaders persist in seeking help from foreign nations such as Assyria and Egypt. Sadly, even committed Christians manifest the same kind of stubbornness and inability to overcome their weaknesses. And so it is that the Lord still deals with us today as He dealt with wayward Israel. He continues to call us to repentance so that we might return to Him, confess our sin, trust in His pardoning love, and again be reminded that Jesus, the Lamb of God, has forgiven us. • Come, then, let us return to the Lord. Let us press on to know Him and His steadfast love. May we humbly pray, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, and grant me peace." Amen. (TLSB)