

# Hosea

## Chapter 6

*Israel and Judah Are Unrepentant*

**“Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. 3 Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.” 4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. 6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. 7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. 8 Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood. 9 As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests band together; they murder on the way to Shechem; they commit villainy. 10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled. 11 For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed. When I restore the fortunes of my people.**

**6:1** *let us return.* A shallow (see v. 4) proposal of repentance (using phrases from 5:13–15), in which Israel acknowledged that God, not Assyria (cf. 5:13), was the true physician (cf. 7:1). (CSB)

Hosea invites Ephraim and Judah to do right. (TLSB)

**6:2** *two days ... third day.* A brief time. Israel supposed that God's wrath would only be temporary. (CSB)

A coming day of deliverance. We would say “in a few days.” God acted in a special way on the third day on other occasions as well, most notably when He gave the Law at Sinai (Ex 19:16) and when Christ rose from the dead. (TLSB)

**6:3** *know the LORD.* A key concept in Hosea (see v. 6; 2:8, 20; 4:1, 6; 5:4). (CSB)

Hosea urges the people to strive for knowledge that begins with “the fear of the LORD.” Israel demonstrates a distinct lack of this knowledge by chasing after Baal. (TLSB)

*spring rains that water the earth.* Israel believed that, as surely as seasonal rains fell, reviving the earth, God's favor would return and restore her. (CSB)

Guaranteed natural events. For sinners, the daily and seasonal rhythms of repentance and faith bring renewal. (TLSB)

**6:4–8:14** The Lord speaks. (TLSB)

**6:4** When Ephraim and Judah join the prophet in confessing sincerely, the Lord will be very pleased. But this was not yet the case. The severity of God's anguish is evident in the two questions He poses. (TLSB)

*What shall I do ... ?* See Isa 5:4. God saw through Israel's superficial repentance. (CSB)

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

*morning cloud ... dew.* Figurative for that which is temporary. (CSB)

In contrast to the Lord's reliability (v 3), the love of God's people was transient, here today and passing away tomorrow. (TLSB)

**6:5** *hewn them.* "Struck or cut them down," as one would a tree. The Lord thus sent prophets to pierce the stubborn hearts of His people by the preaching of His Law. (TLSB)

*by the prophets.* God's spokesmen (see Jer 1:9; 15:19) had denounced the people's sin. (CSB)

*words of my mouth.* The judgments spoken by the Lord's faithful prophets. (CSB)

The prophets were God's spokesmen. Their refrain was "Hear the word of the LORD" (4:1). (TLSB)

*judgment goes forth as the light.* Ter: "Justice is the very fullness of the Deity Himself, manifesting God as both a perfect father and a perfect master: a father in His mercy, a master in His discipline" (ANF 3:308). (TLSB)

**6:6** *steadfast love.* Hebrew *hesed*, a word that can refer to right conduct toward one's fellowman or loyalty to the Lord or both—the sum of what God requires of his servants. Here it perhaps refers to both. The same Hebrew word is translated "love" in v. 4. (CSB)

*not sacrifice.* Sacrifice apart from faithfulness to the Lord's will is wholly unacceptable to him (see 1Sa 15:22–23; Isa 1:11–20; Jer 7:21–22; Am 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8; Mt 9:13; 12:7). (CSB)

God had commanded sacrifices, yet they were pleasing to Him only if they came from the heart. Jesus quotes this passage in order to condemn the Pharisees' insincerity. (TLSB)

*burnt offerings.* Iren: "It is evident that God did not seek sacrifices and holocausts from them, but faith, and obedience, and righteousness, because of their salvation" (ANF 1:484). (TLSB)

**6:7** *Like Adam.* The allusion is uncertain, since Scripture records no covenant with Adam. The NIV text note suggests a place named Adam (Tell ed-Damiyeh) at the Jordan (see Jos 3:16), as suggested by the reference to "there" at the end of the sentence. A third interpretation takes Adam as "mankind." (CSB)

Possibly a city near the Jordan River (Jsh 3:16) rather than the first human being, as evidenced by the word "there" and by the fact that other cities are named in the next two verses. That said, Scripture does not recount specifics about the people of that town breaking faith with God. (TLSB)

**6:8** *Gilead.* Possibly refers to the 50 men that came from Gilead to help Pekah assassinate the Israelite king Pekahiah (cf 2Ki 15:25). (TLSB)

The entire province being a gathering-place of wicked people. (Kretzmann)

*tracked with blood.* The allusion is unclear, but Hosea may have been referring to a more recent event than the bloodbath of Jdg 12:1–6—such as Pekah's rebellion against Pekahiah (see 2Ki 15:25). (CSB)

**6:9** *priests band together*. See notes, 4:4, 6, 9; 5:1. Hosea calls attention to a particularly heinous crime, i.e., when a gang of priests committed murder on the road to Shechem. (TLSB)

*they murder*. The specific event is unknown. (CSB)

*Shechem*. Major religious and political center, located near Mount Gerizim, just southeast of the capital city of Samaria. Joshua called the 12 tribes to a covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem just after they had occupied the Promised Land. (TLSB)

**6:11** *harvest*. A figure for God's judgments (see 8:7; 10:12–13; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13; Mt 13:39; Rev 14:15). (CSB)

The judgment (e.g., Mt 13:30, 39). In contrast to the devastation in store for Israel, however, the Lord promises a good harvest for Judah. This will come after the Babylonian exile, when He will restore the fortunes of His remnant, including the sending of Jesus, the Messiah, a descendant of the tribe of Judah. (TLSB)

*restore the fortunes*. Paralleling "heal" (7:1), the phrase refers to the restoration of the wounded national body (see Joel 3:1; Zep 3:20). (CSB)