
HOSEA 7: 1 When I would heal Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, also the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief enters in, and the gang of robbers ravages outside.

Here God complains that though he had employed every means for reforming Israel, they still persisted in their iniquity, without fearing the consequences, Hos 7:1, Hos 7:2; that those who ought to check their crimes were pleased with them, Hos 7:3; and that they all burned with adultery, as an oven when fully heated, and ready to receive the kneaded dough, Hos 7:4. The fifth verse alludes to some recent enormities; the sixth charges them with dividing their time between inactivity and iniquity; the seventh alludes to their civil broils and conspiracies; (see 2Kgs 15:10, 2Kgs 15:14, 2Kgs 15:25); the eighth to their joining themselves with idolatrous nations; and the ninth describes the sad consequence. The tenth verse reproves their pride and open contempt of God's worship; the eleventh reproves their foolish conduct in applying for aid to their enemies; (see 2Kgs 15:19; 2Kgs 17:4); the twelfth and thirteenth threaten them with punishments; the fourteenth charges them with hypocrisy in their acts of humiliation; the fifteenth with ingratitude; and the image of the deceitful bow, in the sixteenth verse, is highly expressive of their frequent apostasies; and their hard speeches against God shall be visited upon them by their becoming a reproach in the land of their enemies.

Verse 1

When I would have healed Israel - As soon as one wound was healed, another was discovered. Scarcely was one sin blotted out till another was committed.

The thief cometh in - Their own princes spoil them.

The troop of robbers spoileth without - The Assyrians, under different leaders, waste and plunder the country.

HOSEA 7: 2 They don't consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds have engulfed them. They are before my face.

Verse 2

They consider not in their hearts - They do not consider that my eye is upon all their ways; they do not think that I record all their wickedness; and they know not their own evil doings are as a host of enemies encompassing them about.

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

Verse 3

They make the king glad - They pleased Jeroboam by coming readily into his measures, and heartily joining with him in his idolatry. And they professed to be perfectly happy in their change, and to be greatly advantaged by their new gods; and that the religion of the state now was better than that of Jehovah. Thus, they made all their rulers, "glad with their lies."

HOSEA 7: 4 They are all adulterers. They are burning like an oven that the baker stops stirring, from the kneading of the dough, until it is leavened.

Verse 4

As an oven heated by the baker - Calmet's paraphrase on this and the following verses expresses pretty nearly the sense: Hosea makes a twofold comparison of the Israelites; to an oven, and to dough. Jeroboam set fire to his own oven - his kingdom - and put the leaven in his dough; and afterwards went to rest, that the fire might have time to heat his oven, and the leaven to raise his dough, that the false principles which he introduced might infect the whole population. This prince, purposing to make his subjects relinquish their ancient religion, put, in a certain sense, the fire to his own oven, and mixed his dough with leaven. At first he used no violence, but was satisfied with exhorting them, and proclaiming a feast. This fire spread very rapidly, and the dough was very soon impregnated by the leaven. All Israel was seen running to this feast, and partaking in these innovations. But what shall become of the oven - the kingdom; and the bread - the people? The oven shall be consumed by these flames; the king, the princes, and the people shall be enveloped in the burning, Hos 7:7. Israel was put under the ashes, as a loaf well kneaded and leavened; but not being carefully turned, it was burnt on one side before those who prepared it could eat of it; and enemies and strangers came and carried off the loaf. See Hos 7:8, Hos 7:9. Their lasting captivity was the consequence of their wickedness and their apostasy from the religion of their fathers. On this explication Hos 7:4-9, may be easily understood.

HOSEA 7: 5 On the day of our king, the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine. He joined his hand with mockers.

HOSEA 7: 6 For they have prepared their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait. Their baker sleeps all the night. In the morning it burns as a flaming fire.

HOSEA 7: 7 They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges. All their kings have fallen. There is no one among them who calls to me.

Verse 7

All their kings are fallen - There was a pitiful slaughter among the idolatrous kings of Israel; four of them had fallen in the time of this prophet. Zechariah was slain by Shallum; Shallum, by Menahem; Pekahiah, by Pekah; and Pekah, by Hoshea, 2 Kings 15. All were idolaters, and all came to an untimely death.

HOSEA 7: 8 Ephraim, he mixes himself among the nations. Ephraim is a pancake not turned over.

Verse 8

A cake not turned - In the East having heated the hearth, they sweep one corner, put the cake upon it, and cover it with embers; in a short time they turn it, cover it again, and continue this several times, till they find it sufficiently baked. All travellers into Asiatic countries have noted this.

HOSEA 7: 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he doesn't realise it. Indeed, gray hairs are here and there on him, and he doesn't realise it.

Verse 9

Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not - The kingdom is grown old in iniquity; the time of their captivity is at hand, and they are apprehensive of no danger. They are in the state of a silly old man, who through age and infirmities is become nearly bald, and the few remaining hairs on his head are quite gray. But he does not consider his latter end; is making no provision for that eternity on the brink of which he is constantly standing; does not apply to the sovereign Physician to heal his spiritual diseases; but calls in the doctors to cure him of old age and death! This miserable state and preposterous conduct we witness every day. O how fast does the human being cling to his native earth! Reader, hear the voice of an old man: -

O my coevals! remnants of yourselves,

Shall our pale withered hands be still stretched out?

Trembling at once with eagerness and age;

With avarice and ambition grasping-fast

Grasping at air! For what hath earth beside?

We want but little; nor That Little long.

HOSEA 7: 10 The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they haven't returned to the LORD their God, nor sought him, for all this.

Verse 10

The pride of Israel - The same words as at Hos 5:6 (note), where see the note.

HOSEA 7: 11 "Ephraim is like an easily deceived dove, without understanding. They call to Egypt. They go to Assyria.

Verse 11

Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart - A bird that has little understanding; that is easily snared and taken; that is careless about its own young, and seems to live without any kind of thought. It has been made, by those who, like itself, are without heart, the symbol of conjugal affection. Nothing worse could have been chosen, for the dove and its mate are continually quarrelling.

They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria - They strive to make these their allies and friends; but in this they showed that they were without heart, had not a sound understanding; for these were rival nations, and Israel could not attach itself to the one without incurring the jealousy and displeasure of the other. Thus, like the silly dove, they were constantly falling into snares; sometimes of the Egyptians, at others of the Assyrians. By the former they were betrayed; by the latter, ruined.

HOSEA 7: 12 When they go, I will spread my net on them. I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will chastise them, as their congregation has heard.

Verse 12

When they shall go - To those nations for help: -

I will spread my net upon them - I will cause them to be taken by those in whom they trusted.

I will bring them down - They shall no sooner set off to seek this foreign help, than my net shall bring them down to the earth. The allusion to the dove, and to the mode of taking the fowls of heaven, is still carried on.

As their congregation hath heard - As in their solemn assemblies they before have heard; in the reading of my law, and the denunciation of my wrath against idolaters.

Bishop Newcome translates: "I will chastise them when they hearken to their assembly." That is, when they take the counsel of their elders to go down to Egypt for help, and trust in the arm of the Assyrians for succor.

HOSEA 7: 13 Woe to them! For they have wandered from me. Destruction to them! For they have trespassed against me. Though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

Verse 13

Wo unto them! - They shall have wo, because they have fled from me. They shall have destruction, because they have transgressed against me.

Though I have redeemed them - Out of Egypt; and given them the fullest proof of my love and power.

Yet they have spoken lies against me - They have represented me as rigorous and cruel; and my service as painful and unprofitable.

HOSEA 7: 14 They haven't cried to me with their heart, but they howl on their beds. They assemble themselves for grain and new wine. They turn away from me.

Verse 14

They have not cried unto me with their heart - They say they have sought me, but could not find me; that they have cried unto me, but I did not answer. I know they have cried, yea, howled; but could I hear them when all was forced and hypocritical, not one sigh coming from their heart?

They assemble themselves for corn and wine - In dearth and famine they call and howl: but they assemble themselves, not to seek Me, but to invoke their false gods for corn and wine.

HOSEA 7: 15 Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet they plot evil against me.

Verse 15

Though I have bound and strengthened their arms - Whether I dealt with them in judgment or mercy, it was all one; in all circumstances they rebelled against me.

HOSEA 7: 16 They return, but not to the Most High. They are like a faulty bow. Their princes will fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Verse 16

They return, but not to the Most High - They go to their idols.

They are like a deceitful bow - Which, when it is reflexed, in order to be strung, suddenly springs back into its quiescent curve; for the eastern bows stand in their quiescent state in a curve; and in order to be strung must be beaded back in the opposite direction. This bending of the bow requires both strength and skill; and if not properly done, it will fly back, and regain its former position; and in this recoil endanger the archer - may even break an arm. I have been in this danger myself in bending the Asiatic bow. For want of this knowledge not one commentator has hit the meaning of the passage.

Shall fall by the sword - Their tongue has been enraged against Me; the sword shall be enraged against them. They have mocked me, (Hos 7:5), and their fall is now a subject of derision in the land of Egypt. What they have sown, that do they now reap.