
HOSEA 12: 1 Ephraim feeds on wind, and chases the east wind. He continually multiplies lies and desolation. They make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt.

The prophet, in very pointed terms, describes the unprofitableness and destruction attending vicious courses; particularly such as Ephraim pursued, who forsook God, and courted the alliance of idolatrous princes, Hos 12:1. Judah is also reprov'd, Hos 12:2. He is remind'd of the extraordinary favor of God to his father Jacob, in giving him the birthright; and exhorted, after his example, to wrestle with God (the Angel of the covenant, the same unchangeable Jehovah) for a blessing; and to love mercy and execute justice, Hos 12:3-4. Ephraim is accus'd of pursuing practices that are deceitful, although pretending to integrity, Hos 12:7, Hos 12:8. God then threatens to deprive this people of their possessions, Hos 12:9, as they had reject'd every means of reformation, Hos 12:10, and given themselves up to gross impieties, Hos 12:11. And, as an aggravation of their guilt, they are remind'd from what humble beginnings they had been rais'd, Hos 12:12, Hos 12:13. The Divine judgments about to fall upon Israel are declar'd to be the result of great provocation, Hos 12:14.

Verse 1

Ephraim feedeth on wind - He forms and follows empty and unstable counsels.

Followeth after the east wind - They are not only empty, but dangerous and destructive. The east wind was, and still is, in all countries, a parching, wasting, injurious wind.

He daily increaseth lies - He promises himself safety from foreign alliances. He "made a covenant with the Assyrians," and sent a subsidy of "oil to Egypt." The latter abandoned him; the former oppress'd him.

HOSEA 12: 2 The LORD also has a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds he will repay him.

Verse 2

The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah - The rest of the prophecy belongs both to Judah and Israel. He reproaches both with their ingratitude, and threatens them with God's anger. In order to make their infidelity the more hateful, and their malice the more sensible, he opposes to them the righteousness, obedience, and piety of their father Jacob. He recalls to their minds the benefits they had received since they returned from Egypt. He speaks afterwards of their kings; and how, in their ingratitude, they refus'd to have him for their monarch. Having mention'd this fact, he subjoins reflections, exhortations, invectives, and threatenings, and continues this subject in this and the two following chapters. - Calmet.

HOSEA 12: 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he contended with God.

Verse 3

He took his brother by the heel - See on Gen 25:26 (note); Gen 32:24 (note), etc.

HOSEA 12: 4 Indeed, he struggled with the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication to him. He found him at Bethel, and there he spoke with us,

Verse 4

He had power over the Angel - Who represented the invisible Jehovah.

He wept, and made supplication - He entreated with tears that God would bless him; and he prevailed. The circumstance of his weeping is not mentioned in Genesis.

He found him in Beth-el - It was there that God made those glorious promises to Jacob relative to his posterity. See Gen 28:13-15.

HOSEA 12: 5 even the LORD, the God of Armies; The LORD is his name of renown!

Verse 5

The Lord is his memorial - He is the same God as when Jacob so successfully wrestled with him.

HOSEA 12: 6 Therefore turn to your God. Keep kindness and justice, and wait continually for your God.

Verse 6

Therefore turn thou to thy God - Because he is the same, and cannot change. Seek him as faithfully and as fervently as Jacob did, and you will find him the same merciful and compassionate Being.

HOSEA 12: 7 A merchant has dishonest scales in his hand. He loves to defraud.

Verse 7

He is a merchant - Or a Canaanite; referring to the Phoenicians, famous for their traffic. Ephraim is as corrupt as those heathenish traffickers were. He kept, as many in all ages have done, a weight and a weight; a heavy one to buy with and a light one to sell by.

HOSEA 12: 8 Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found myself wealth. In all my wealth they won't find in me any iniquity that is sin."

 Verse 8

I am become rich - They boasted in their riches, notwithstanding the unjust manner in which they were acquired.

In all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me - This is frequently the language of merchants, tradesmen, etc. None are so full of professions of equity and justice, while all the time they are endeavoring to overreach, both in buying and selling. "Sir, I cannot afford it at that price." "It is not mine for that money." "I assure you that it cost me more than you offer." "I am sorry I cannot take your money; but if I did, I should lose by the article," etc., etc., etc. I have heard such language over and over, when I knew every word was false. Truth is a sacred thing in the sight of God; but who regards it as he should? There are, however, many noble exceptions among merchants and tradesmen. Bp. Newcome gives another turn to the subject, by translating: - "All his labors shall not be found profitable unto him,

For the iniquity wherewith he hath sinned."

HOSEA 12: 9 "But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt. I will yet again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast.

Verse 9

And I - the Lord thy God - I who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, will again make thee to dwell in tabernacles. This appears to be a threatening. I will reduce you to as miserable a state in the land of your captivity, as you often were through your transgressions in the wilderness. This was the opinion of some of the ancients on this verse; and the context requires it to be understood in this way. I do not think that the feast of tabernacles is referred to.

HOSEA 12: 10 I have also spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the prophets I have used parables.

Verse 10

I have also spoken - I have used every means, and employed every method, to instruct and save you. I have sent prophets, who spake plainly, exhorting, warning, and beseeching you to return to me. They have had Divine visions, which they have declared and interpreted. They have used similitudes, symbols, metaphors, allegories, etc., in order to fix your attention, and bring you back to your duty and interest. And, alas! all is in vain; you have not profited by my condescension. This text St. Paul seems to have had full in view, when he wrote, Heb 1:1 (note): "God who, at Sundry Times and in Divers Manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets." See the note on the above.

Dr. Dodd supposes that there are three distinct kinds of prophecy mentioned here:

1. Immediate inspiration, when God declares the very words.

2. Vision; a representation of external objects to the mind, in as lively a manner as if there were conveyed by the senses.

3. Parables and apt resemblances.

HOSEA 12: 11 If Gilead is wicked, surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls. Indeed, their altars are like heaps in the furrows of the field.

Verse 11

Iniquity in Gilead - Gilgal and Gilead are equally iniquitous, and equally idolatrous. Gilead, which was beyond Jordan, had already been brought under subjection by Tiglath-Pileser. Gilgal, which was on this side Jordan, shall share the same fate; because it is now as idolatrous as the other.

Their altars are as heaps - They occur everywhere. The whole land is given to idolatry.

HOSEA 12: 12 Jacob fled into the country of Aram, and Israel served to get a wife, and for a wife he tended flocks and herds.

Verse 12

Served for a wife - Seven years for Rachel.

For a wife he kept sheep - Seven years for Leah; having been cheated by Laban, who gave him first Leah, instead of Rachel; and afterwards made him serve seven years more before he would confirm his first engagement. Critics complain of want of connection here. Why is this isolated fact predicted? Thus, in a detached sentence, the prophet speaks of the low estate of their ancestors, and how amply the providence of God had preserved and provided for them. This is all the connection the place requires.

HOSEA 12: 13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved.

Verse 13

By a prophet (Moses) the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet (Joshua) was he preserved - Joshua succeeded Moses, and brought the Israelites into the promised land; and when they passed the Jordan at Gilgal, he received the covenant of circumcision; and yet this same place was now made by them the seat of idolatry! How blind and how ungrateful!

HOSEA 12: 14 Ephraim has bitterly provoked anger. Therefore his blood will be left on him, and his Lord will repay his contempt.

Verse 14

Therefore shall he leave his blood upon him - He will not remove his guilt. These are similar to our Lord's words, Joh 3:36; Joh 9:41 : "He that believeth not on the Son of God, shall not see life, for the wrath of God Abideth On Him" - shall not be removed by any remission, as he rejects the only way in which he can be saved. Because ye say, We see; therefore, Your Sin Remaineth, i.e., it still stands charged against you. Your miseries and destruction are of your own procuring; your perdition is of yourselves. God is as merciful as he is just.