

**UNIT 8 H O S E A LESSON 6****HOSEA 6: - 7:16.**

The remainder of Chapter 6 and of Chapter 7 is a heaping up of Israel's sins.

**Hosea 6:7-11.**

The sins enumerated in 6:7-10 are presented as evidence that Israel lacks the essential qualities which Yahweh requires in her relationship with Him (6:6). This section has been referred to as a sort of "miniature guidebook" to the geography of Israel's sin and guilt. Hosea moves from one location to another as he catalogues the crimes which indict his beloved country. Interpretation of this section is difficult. Incidents which were infamous in Hosea's day are now unknown or at best uncertain.

Evidence of Israel's crimes can be found at the sanctuaries - Adam, Gilead and Shechem. The use of the word Adam here is difficult but it is probably a place-name (cf. Joshua 3:16). The priests are responsible for all sorts of villainy, including the abuse of Shechem, an ancient city of refuge for unintentional murder (Joshua 20:7). Immorality, probably associated with temple prostitution, is evident in the house of Israel, which many scholars read as in Bethel, the leading shrine. Judah also shares in the wickedness and will reap her own judgment.

**Hosea 7:1,2.**

Yahweh's efforts to heal his people only reveal their guilt more clearly.

**Hosea 7:3-7.**

This section serves admirably as a transition from Israel's moral defections to an inevitable consequence, corrupt political conditions. Both evils are portrayed in these verses.

The king is surrounded by loose unscrupulous nobles; adultery, drunkenness, conspiracies and assassinations are the rule. No one in the court thinks of appealing to God for guidance. This passage probably reflects conditions about 745 to 737 BC three kings, Zechariah, Shallum, and Pekahiah had all been murdered by their successors and the monarchy and court were obviously corrupt.

In verses 5-7 we see the people anointing the new king and accepting his ministers and the families that swept into power with him, but all the time with lies and treachery in their hearts. Their loyalty lasts as long as their advantage dictates. Just as the heat of the baker's oven is allowed to moderate until the dough is ready, so their anger is restrained until their time is ripe. Then the treacherous plotters sit at the table of the doomed king plying him with wine until the moment of his assassination.

**Hosea 7:8-16.**

Israel's internal anarchy was matched by her faithless foreign policy. In Pekah's rule (737-732 BC) Egyptian aid was sought and during Menahem's (745-738 BC) and Hoshea's rule (732-724 BC) alliances were formed with Assyria and later with Egypt. As Yahweh's covenant people, Israel should have turned to Him and not to other powers.



It should have been fundamental for Israel that no foreign alliances were possible. The reason was quite simply that in those days the secular state did not exist, and so in practice it was impossible to distinguish between a state and its gods. In a treaty of peace between Rameses II of Egypt and Hattusilis, the Hittite king, it is a thousand of their gods on either side who are the witnesses to and guarantors of it. So even a treaty on equal terms with a neighbouring country would have involved for Israel a recognition of the other country's deities as having reality and equality with Yahweh. To turn to Assyria or Egypt for help implied of necessity that their gods were more effective than the God of Israel. This then explains the bitterness of Hosea's attack on Israel's contemporary foreign policy in 7:8-16.

The language of verses 4 and 8 leads some to postulate that Hosea was a baker by trade. 'A cake not turned' (verse 8) is one only half-baked. So Israel's policy was half-hearted religion and politics. The characteristics of the people were neither Israelitish nor foreign but half and half. As a result the national character was fickle and inconsistent, lacking decisiveness and a sense of direction.

Some scholars suggest that the phrase "half-baked" seems to miss the point. Normally the half-baked can, with some skill, be saved and baked through. Here, however, one side was so overbaked and charred that the whole was fit for nothing. While the visible part was normal, in fact the whole was ruined.

'The pride of Israel' (verse 10) - the arrogance which blinds the nation to its approaching fate. Despite the apparent signs of decay, 'for all this', Israel does not return to God.

Verse 12 is a statement, following the metaphor of verse 11, that God will bring Israel into the trap she sought to avoid by her political manoeuvrings. Israel is "like a dove (or pigeon)", silly and without a sense of understanding, "calling to Egypt, going to Assyria" (v.11). Hosea considered alliances with either Egypt or Assyria as the rejection of Yahweh.

In Eastern proverbs the dove is notorious for its simplicity, largely because of its apparently aimless flight, which repeatedly seems to take it from danger to danger, out of the frying pan into the fire. It is not as though there had been any fixed purpose in Israel's foreign policy.

But just as the pigeon-owner takes precautions that his birds do not get lost, so Yahweh was watching over Israel, not to save them but to punish them. They will land in His net, and he "will bring them down like the birds of the air". (v.12.)

The longing of God for Israel's return and the continual affront to His love by their failure to do so keeps recurring as in verses 10,13 ("I would redeem them, but....."). Again Israel's failure to perceive Yahweh as the giver of her goods is a reflection of her failure to know and understand His nature (Verses 14 and 15). Israel's failure finally lies here. Wicked leadership, an easy religion, a reliance on material help ends finally in a nation held up to derision, exiles in a strange land.

Israel's most heinous sin was "turning to Baal" (vv. 13,16a). Also instead of petitioning Yahweh "sincerely" (v.14) for grain and wine they "throw themselves down and wail and gash themselves" after the manner of the followers of Baal. (cf. 1 Kings 18:26-28). The Israelites thought of Yahweh as absent like Baal and sought by various techniques to summon Him to get help for their crops. For Israel to seek strength through alliances with Egypt and Assyria and to turn away from Yahweh to Baal, was to disdain and deny the revelation of God in their history. In turning to Baal Israel was



guilty of treachery, like a warped bow that does not shoot straight, whose arrow does not hit the target. Their death will bring derision (v.16) from the Egyptians whose help they had alternately sought and scorned.

**QUESTION 1:**

According to Hosea's "miniature guidebook" (6:7 - 7:1) what notorious crimes had Israel committed in past days which so vitally affected her present relationship with Yahweh?

**QUESTION 2:**

From 7:3-7 what came first in Israel, political decay and disintegration or moral laxity and corruption? Which is first in any day and age?

**QUESTION 3:**

From Hosea's point of view were foreign alliances a matter of politics or religion? Explain your answer.

**QUESTION 4:**

In 6:10, 7:1,8 Israel (in some versions) is referred to as "Ephraim". Explain Hosea's usage of this word (re-reading the notes of Lesson 4 will help).

**QUESTION 5:**

What two analogies are used of Israel in 7:8-12? Briefly explain what they mean.

**QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:**

As Yahweh's covenant people, Israel should have turned to him and not to other powers. (Who did Israel turn to instead?) How far is this a practical policy? Are there any ways in which it may be applied to individual or church life and even national life today?