

Hosea Chapter 9

Verses 1-6: Hosea enumerates the features of the Lord's banishment to Assyria: loss of joy (verses 1-2); exile (verses 3-6); loss of spiritual discernment (verses 7-9); declining birth rate (verses 10-16); and abandonment by God (verse 17).

In stark contrast to the plentiful harvest Israel was accustomed to, the "threshing floor, winepress," and "new wine in" Israel's coming harvest would no longer produce a satisfying crop because their idols could not give them what they needed.

"Nettles" and "thorns" would surround them. And in exile, Israel would eat the "bread of mourners", bread considered unclean because it come from a house of death.

Hosea 9:1 "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as [other] people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor."

It was customary and right for people to rejoice at harvest time. Israel, however, was commanded not to do so, because she attributed the abundance she experienced on the "cornfloor" (Hebrew "*goren dagan*", a place where the harvest of grain was processed), to the idols she worshiped, instead of God who sent it. The harvest festivals were probably accompanied by shameful fertility acts (4:13-14).

There is no rejoicing in sin. Sin brings great sorrow. The instant the sin is committed, guilt sets in and sorrow from that guilt begins. This is almost as if God is saying, the least you could do is be sorrowful for your sin.

This could have taken place at harvest time, which was generally a time of rejoicing, because the cornfloor was mentioned. They wanted all the blessings of God, but they were not willing to be faithful to God. God promised to bless them, if they kept His commandments. Since they had not kept His commandments, they did not deserve a blessing.

Hosea 9:2 "The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her."

(In verses 1 and 2), were the very places where sacred prostitution took place in an attempt to cause Baal to bring prosperity.

This is just saying that their sin has brought judgment from God, and their vineyards and their crops will fail.

Hosea 9:3 "They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean [things] in Assyria."

"They": Who worship idols, and give my glory to them, depending on them, and ascribing to them what I alone give them.

“Shall not dwell in the Lord’s land”: Though they have been in possession many years, and though now they seem out of fear of losing it, being great at home and in peace with neighbors abroad, yet in midst of this prosperity and security.

Let them note it, they shall not much longer dwell in the Lord’s land, which God gave them according to promise. With express condition that they should obey him and fear him, and Him only, (Deut. 6:2-3), and with express menace of exile and ruin if they forgot God, (Deut. 8:19-20). This land, which is the Lord’s propriety and theirs only on condition. And this condition broken, shall be their possession no longer.

Ephraim shall return to Egypt; many of Ephraim, for it is not meant of all or the most part. But of the more timorous, wary, and who consult their safety beforehand. Many shall flee into Egypt, and shift out of the enemies’ reach (Hosea 9:6).

“They shall eat unclean things in Assyria”; the residue that fled not into Egypt shall be carried captives. And in Assyria be forced to eat forbidden meats, called here unclean, such as polluted the eater.

We know from past lessons, that Egypt symbolizes the world. Notice, in the verse above, the LORD has taken the Promised Land back from Israel since they did not keep their covenant with God. It really did not matter anymore about the eating of unclean things, because they had broken fellowship with God. God would not accept the fact they were keeping the dietary laws, any more than He would accept them sacrificing to Him. They will actually be captive in Assyria.

Hosea 9:4 "They shall not offer wine [offerings] to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices [shall be] unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD."

“Bread of mourners . . . polluted”: Food eaten on the occasion of mourning was considered unclean, defiling anyone eating it (Deut. 26:12-15).

In Assyria, they would not be able to keep any of the offerings and sacrifices. As we said, even if they did keep them, God would not accept these offerings of obligation. God has turned His back on them and their offerings. Worship that is done out of obligation only, is unacceptable to God. Even the thought of sacrificing will just bring sadness for their lost fellowship.

Hosea 9:5 "What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?"

What will you do in your captivity, when any of your solemn or festival days come? When you shall find yourselves far from your own country, without temple, without prophets, without priests, without sacrifices, and without solemn assemblies; what will be your sentiments? You will doubtless be willing to abstain from labor on those days, as you were accustomed to do; but your masters will not permit that, but force you to your customary employments. Though the Israelites of the ten tribes were schismatics (differences in opinion or belief), and did not go up to the temple at Jerusalem, they omitted not to celebrate, in their own manner, the feasts of the Lord

in their own country. And as these solemnities were always accompanied with festivity and rejoicing. It must have been a great mortification to them to be no longer able to celebrate them in the land of their captivity.

There will be nothing for them to do on these special days, but mourn for the things that could have been. They would be away in a foreign land, away from their temple and their God.

Hosea 9:6 "For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant [places] for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns [shall be] in their tabernacles."

“Memphis”: An ancient capital of Egypt known for its tombs and pyramids.

The world is not interested in continuing the worship in the temple. The temple and the temple grounds will grow up with weeds. The captors have no special desire to keep the temple grounds nice and pretty. They did not regard the God of the Israelites. Those of Israel, themselves, would be carried captive into a foreign land, far away from their temple.

Verses 7-8: The prophets were God’s inspired messengers and watchmen (Ezek. 3:17; 33:1-7), yet Israel considered them fools and madmen.

Hosea 9:7 "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know [it]: the prophet [is] a fool, the spiritual man [is] mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred."

The people of Israel ignored and derided Hosea, calling him a “fool” and “insane”.

This "visitation" is speaking of the day of judgment which came upon them. God has judged them, and found them guilty of spiritual adultery. The prophet will not have to warn them any further. The prophet, spoken of here, is the false prophet who was still promising good times.

The spiritual man and the false prophet had been bringing flattering messages to the people, and the people had accepted it for the truth. They were not only full of sin (idolatry), but they were lacking in love, as well. They were an angry, unloving society. It sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? Preachers preaching to itching ears are not warning their people even now.

Hosea 9:8 "The watchman of Ephraim [was] with my God: [but] the prophet [is] a snare of a fowler in all his ways, [and] hatred in the house of his God."

In reality, Hosea was a watchman, sounding the alarm for God of coming danger for His people (Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7).

We went into great depth on the watchman in the 33rd chapter of Ezekiel. This is speaking of the very same thing. Ephraim should have been the watchman, because he had received the right

hand (spiritual), blessing from God. A good watchman informs the people of impending danger. A bad watchman sees no danger coming. The true prophet is always with God. His message is God's message. Those involved in sin hate the true watchman, or true prophet. They do not want to hear of the coming judgment.

Hosea 9:9 "They have deeply corrupted [themselves], as in the days of Gibeah: [therefore] he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins."

“Gibeah” (compare 10:9). Israel’s sin is likened to the gross evil of the men of Gibeah. A reference to their heinous rape of the concubine (Judges 19:22-25), an infamous and unforgettable crime (Judges 19:30).

This is speaking of their corruption being as bad, as it had been in the days of Gibeah. There is an account of the terrible thing that happened at Gibeah in the 19th chapter of the book of Judges. It is a very foul blot on Israel's character. Read from verse 10 on, to get the full account. This is terrible that Israel has fallen to this low life-style. God must punish them for this evil.

Hosea 9:10 "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: [but] they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto [that] shame; and [their] abominations were according as they loved."

Finding “grapes in the wilderness” and “firstfruits on the fig tree” symbolizes God’s joy in establishing His covenant with Israel in the days of Moses. Sadly, Israel quickly turned away from God and went to “Baal-peor”, where they worshiped other gods (Numbers 25:1-5).

When God heard the cry of the family of Jacob in Egypt and rescued them, they were like this wild grape. They were untamed. They lived as captives in a strange land. They had not received God's law at that time. The "fig tree" symbolizes Israel. God was pleased with them in the beginning. He had chosen them as His family. They did not stay faithful to God, but wandered away.

Long before their sin in Gibeah, they sinned against God at Baal-peor. They chose to worship this false god, instead of the One True God. This Baal was a Moabite false god. It seemed the sins connected with this worship were sensual sex sins.

Verses 11-14: Reminiscent of the imprecatory psalms, Hosea prayed that God’s blessing would be withdrawn, in the figure of withholding children, the ultimate earthly blessing.

Hosea 9:11 "[As for] Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception."

Ephraim had parted with God, his true Glory. In turn, God would quickly take from him all created glory, all which he counted glory, or in which he gloried. When man parts with the substance, his true honor, God takes away the shadow, lest he should content himself therewith,

and not see his shame. And, boasting himself to be something, abide in his nothingness and poverty and shame to which he had reduced himself.

"Fruitfulness," and consequent strength, had been God's special promise to Ephraim. His name, Ephraim, contained in itself the promise of his future fruitfulness (Gen. 41:52). With this Jacob had blessed him. He was to be greater than Manasseh, his older brother, "and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. 48:19).

"From the birth": Their children were to perish at every stage in which they received life. This sentence pursued them back to the very beginning of life. First, when their parents should have joy in "their birth," they were to come into the world only to go out of it. Then, their mother's womb was to be itself their grave; then, stricken with barrenness, the womb itself was to refuse to conceive them.

"From the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception": That is, some of them, as soon as they were born. While others in the womb, being aborted. Or, however, when they should, or as soon as they did, come from thence. And others, as soon as conceived, never come to anything; or not conceived at all, as Kimchi interprets it, the women being barren.

God has given them many reasons why they should have this terrible thing happen to them. Ephraim had received the right hand blessing from God, and yet, they turned from God into terrible sin. They have grown into something horrible in the sight of God.

Hosea 9:12 "Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, [that there shall not [be] a man [left]: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!"

God had threatened to deprive them of children, in every stage before or at their birth. Now, beyond this (he tells them), as to those who should escape this sentence, he would bereave them of them, or make them childless.

"There shall not be a man left": There shall be a total extinction of them and their memory; or else, I will cut them off from among men, as the phrase will bear.

"Woe also to them when I depart from them!" To complete their misery, I will leave them, I will depart from them. It is sad to lose children, it is sadder to lose their God.

"Yea, woe also to them": When I depart from them; withdraw my presence, favor, and protection from them; or remove my Shekinah from them, as the Targum; and leave them to the spoil and cruelty of their enemies, which would be a greater calamity and judgment than the former.

The name Ephraim means double fruit. They were a very fruitful nation. They were blessed with children from God. It appears that their vast numbers would diminish greatly, because the Lord would take away their fruitfulness. The blessings of God were removed from them, because of their worship of false gods. When God departs from them, their blessings are replaced by curses.

Hosea 9:13 "Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, [is] planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer."

“Ephraim”: The kingdom of Israel.

Tyrus; of which see (Ezek. 26 Chapters 27 and 28); a very rich, well-fortified, and pleasant city, and secure too. That afterward held out thirteen years’ siege against all the power of the Babylonian empire in Nebuchadnezzar’s time.

Is planted in a pleasant place; is now well provided, seems invincible, is as secure as Tyrus was in her prosperity; perhaps reckons either strength shall break the enemies, or money buy friends, or the magnificence and beauty of their places and dwellings shall be some safety to them; but all this shall avail nothing.

“Shall bring forth his children to the murderer”; though a multitude of children to send forth in mighty armies against the enemy, yet it will be but a sending them out to the slaughter. God is departed from them, and will not go out with their armies, so they shall fall by the sword of the enemy.

The children of Ephraim will no longer be protected by God, and they will fall prey to the murderer. The land God had given them was beautiful, as the city of Tyre had been. God took His blessings away, and the young males in the land were killed.

Verses 14-15: Hosea spoke of a “miscarrying womb and dry breasts” to show Israel that their worship of the fertility god Baal (who promised offspring to his worshipers), would bring them only barrenness and divine judgment

Hosea 9:14 "Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts."

The prophet here speaks as one greatly agitated, and at a loss what to say upon what he had just heard; but at last concludes with beseeching God rather to let the women be barren, or miscarry. Or, if they brought forth children and have no milk in their breasts to give them, that they might die soon after their birth. Rather than that they should grow up to be slain by their enemies before their parents’ eyes. Or carried into captivity; or as it is expressed in the foregoing verse, that their parents should be driven to the hard necessity of bringing them forth for the murderer.

“Give them a miscarrying womb”: The days are coming when the barren womb will be a blessing; give this, O Lord; it is less misery to have none, than to have all our children murdered by a barbarous enemy (Luke 23:29).

“Dry breasts”: Not to starve the children born, but it is a further explication of the former; dry breasts are symptoms of a barren womb, whether by abortion or non-conception, by one or other.

Prevent these woeful effects of our enemies' unjust rage, and of thy most righteous displeasure against us, O Lord.

When God removes from the people, the blessing of the womb removes, as well. One of the blessings God had promised, if they followed after Him, was to bless the fruit of their womb. When God removed His blessing, the womb was cursed. The mothers did not carry healthy children to full term, but lost the children to miscarriage.

Hosea 9:15 "All their wickedness [is] in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes [are] revolvers."

“Gilgal”: As a center of idol worship (compare 4:15), the place was representative of Israel’s spiritual adultery. Therefore He had rejected them from intimate fellowship.

God first began to know of their evil ways at Gilgal. It seems they were evil, even in their spirit. This had been the place Abraham made covenant with God. It had been the place of the renewal of that covenant by the people on the way to the Promised Land. The 12 memorial stones had been set up here also. This place, where God had met with His people, had become a place of much sorrow to Him. They had developed the worship of the calf at this very place. Gilgal became the center for their sin. Suddenly, God's great love for Israel is turned to hate.

Hosea 9:16 "Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay [even] the beloved [fruit] of their womb."

“Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up:” Though Ephraim had a beautiful geographical situation, and experienced the abundant blessing of God, yet barrenness of land and womb, as well as near extinction, awaited them.

God is so angry with them, that even the children they bear will not live. The wrath of God has come forth upon them. God even smote the root.

Hosea 9:17 "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

“Wanderers”: God promised global dispersion for disobedience (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64-65).

They are scattered throughout many nations, because of God's great anger toward them.

Hosea Chapter 9 Questions

1. Why was Israel forbidden to rejoice?
2. Sin brings great _____.

3. What makes the author believe this might have been at harvest time?
4. Why did they not deserve a blessing?
5. What is verse 2 saying?
6. Egypt symbolizes the _____.
7. Why was it not important, if they ate unclean things at this time?
8. They will be held captive in _____.
9. God has turned His back on _____ and their _____.
10. Worship that is done out of _____ only, is unacceptable to God.
11. What is verse 5 saying?
12. What will happen to their temple of worship?
13. What is the "visitation" of verse 7 speaking of?
14. What prophet is spoken of in verse 7?
15. What was wrong with their message?
16. Where do we find a good lesson on the watchman?
17. What does the right hand blessing symbolize?
18. Why do those in sin hate the true prophet or watchman?
19. Where do you find the story of Gibeah?
20. What is Israel spoken of, as being like, in verse 10?
21. When had Israel been like the wild grape?
22. The fig tree symbolizes _____.
23. The name Ephraim means _____.
24. Why were the blessings of God removed from them?
25. What happened to the young males of Ephraim?
26. What curse is spoken upon them in verse 14?
27. Why was Gilgal remembered?

28. When was God's love for them turned to hate?
29. Ephraim is smitten, their _____ is dried up.
30. Why will God cast them away?