

Lesson 3- Hosea 7 – 8: “Jehovah’s Controversy with Israel”

While the first three chapters dealt primarily with Israel from the perspective of an adulterous wife in comparison to Gomer, beginning with chp.4 the prophet’s work has been to present God’s *case against* Israel in the form of a civil suit. The *indictment* began with *Israel’s National Guilt* in chp.4, then proceeded to *Israel’s Moral Corruption* in chp.5, and to her *Insincerity* in chp.6. Now, in chps.7 - 8, the indictment turns to *Israel’s Political Corruption*.

I. *Israel’s Political Corruption, chapter 7*

Since three different entities are referred to in v.1, some attention should be given to clearly understanding their distinctions:

“*Israel*” refers to the nation in general- the people;

“*Ephraim*” is the *ruling tribe*- hence, the *kings and princes*; and

“*Samaria*” is the *capital*- the government.

With these distinctions clarified, understand the correlation that is being made in v.1. When God sought to “*heal Israel*” the nation, the “*iniquity of Ephraim*” (or the ruling tribe) is manifested and the “*evil deeds of Samaria*” (the government) prevent it. Since they all had left God out of their *thinking* (v.2a), He was likewise omitted from their actions, vv.1-2. The righteousness of God could not allow such rampant wickedness to be ignored or excused- it was *before His face*. They (collectively) are described as *thieves inside* and *bandits outside*. The rulers (*kings and princes*) are made glad with wickedness and lies, v.3.

The next verses (4-7) are difficult and hard to interpret with surety. In total, they seem to be indicating the overall treachery involved in the political schemes and assassinations of the day. It seems that in this regard they are called “*adulterers*” having told the king and his princes lies of pledged faithfulness, cf.vv.3-4. The reference to the *baker*, his *oven*, and his *bread* are equally difficult. Perhaps it is comparing the baker who prepares a hot fire and then leaves it alone while he kneads the dough and leavens it to these *political operatives* who have carefully prepared their plot to overthrow the king and then patiently wait for the opportune time to *throw him into the fire*. When v.5 references “*the day of our king*,” it probably means some special feast or ceremony that is viewed as an opportune time to strike him down. Vv.6-7 speak of *plotting* and *consuming their rulers* as well as *all their fallen kings* which seems to support the above interpretation. Likewise, the historical record of 2Kings 15 tells us that four of the last six kings of Israel were murdered.

Ephraim is mentioned again in vv.8ff. Remember from v.1 that Ephraim is the tribe from which Israel’s *rulers* are coming at this time. V.8 indicates that in addition to the *internal corruption* of politics, there was also treachery *externally*. Ephraim’s *mixing with the nations* probably does not refer to intermarriage with foreigners (though that was likely being done as well) as much as it does the *alliances and treaties the rulers of Israel sought with other nations*. The last part of v.11 especially confirms this application, but vv.9-10 again present difficult analogies. How has Ephraim become “*a cake not turned*”? Remember that ovens of that day were wood-fired and prone to having a hot spot. Thus, cakes had to be “*turned*” to not only prevent burning, but also to get them

done all the way through and around. The analogy seems to be that Ephraim is *cooked golden brown* on the side of their heathen affiliations, but *raw* on the side of God! While he *ages* (the reference in v.9 to “gray hairs”), these foreign alliances will consume *his strength* (usually associated with youth) without him even knowing it since he sees only the *good side* of his cake!

V.10 again mentions “*the pride of Israel*”, cf. 5:5 . This could refer to what *should be* Israel’s pride, Jehovah, or it could refer to what *was* Israel’s pride, idolatry and foreign alliances. Given the context, perhaps the latter is more preferable- though both could certainly *testify* to his wickedness.

V.11 returns to the prior analogy of 5:1 comparing Ephraim to *silly doves* to be *ensnared*, or *netted* by God in order to chastise them, v.12.

The text of vv.13-16 is much easier to understand. V.13 identifies *destruction* as their end because of *rebellion* and *lies* against Jehovah. The “*lies*” probably refer to their attributing His gifts to their *idolatrous lovers*, cf.2:8ff. However, note the last part of the verse that underscores God’s desire to “*redeem them.*” But their conduct has prevented His redemption of them, cf. Heb.6:4-7. The *insincerity* of Israel’s repentance, which was introduced in 6:1-6, is made very clear here in v.14. It was for the *grain* and *new wine* that they *wailed on their beds*, rather than in repentance for their sin. Likewise, v.16 indicates that their *turning* was back to the *physical blessings* that God had removed, instead of turning *spiritually back to Him in repentance*. The “*deceitful bow*” is one that misses its mark. Israel’s *turning* had likewise missed its mark, cf. 2Cor.7:10. Therefore, *treachery* would continue to befall their *princes* (the young and strong who would otherwise be their future leaders). Hosea attributes all of this to “*the insolence of their tongue*”- which likely refers to their arrogant boasting (cf. 2:5ff) and *lies against Jehovah* (v.13b). Though they turned to Egypt for help, the Egyptians would only mock them as Assyria carried them off.

II. Israel’s Doom Pronounced: *They Go to Assyria!* Chapter 8

An alarm is to be sounded- “*put the trumpet to your lips!*” v.1 proclaims. Assyria will *swoop down* on Israel as *an eagle* because they have *transgressed* and *rebelled* against God’s covenants and law.

Again in v.2 we see the protestations of Israel concerning her allegiance to God, but the next few verses show the contrary:

v.3, they *rejected the good*;

v.4, they appointed kings and princes of their own (not one of which had served Jehovah), rather than God’s, choice and used their God-given wealth to create idols;

vv.5-6, through *idolatry* they have become *incapable of innocence*; and

v.7, they “*sow the wind.*”

Therefore, they “*reap the whirlwind*” and “*the calf of Samaria will be broken,*” vv.6b-7avv.6b-7a.

Previously in this chapter, Israel's destruction is put in future tense, cf. v.3. But now beginning with v.8, it is described as having already occurred, v.9. The nation is literally in the process of being *swallowed up* by Assyria. They have *gone up to Assyria* for help but will be instead consumed. Jehovah will "*gather them up*" v.10.

The importance of v.11 needs to be understood. God had decreed that when they settled in Canaan, He would appoint for them one place in which they were to build an altar and sacrifice to His name, read Deut.12:5-11. But now, as Ephraim has "*multiplied altars for sin*" by erecting and maintaining additional sites, sin has also been *multiplied in every facet of their lives*. The original departure from God's command in one area has precipitated violations in all other areas! In all of this, God's law has been "*regarded as a strange thing,*" v.12.

Even the *gifts* that were sacrificed, presumably to God, were eaten by the participants in violation of His law, v.13. Therefore, not only will He "*take no delight*" in their sacrifices, He will "*remember their iniquity*" and "*punish them for their sins.*" Their *return to Egypt* was not literal, but figurative, cf.11:5. They would *return to the slavery of Egypt* by going to Assyria! The *palatial dwellings* of Israel would then be consumed, v.14.

Lesson 3- Study Questions for “Jehovah’s Controversy with Israel,” Hosea 7 – 8

Chapter 7

1. To whom do each of the terms “*Israel*,” “*Ephraim*,” and “*Samaria*” actually refer in vv.1ff? What is the implication of this?
2. Regardless of the specifics and difficulties of the *metaphors* used in vv.4-7, what seems to be the overall point or points of them?
3. How has *Ephraim* become “*a cake not turned*,” v.8?
4. How has *Ephraim* become “*like a silly dove*,” v.11?
5. What 3 reasons are specified in v.13 for Ephraim’s *destruction*? What do each of them imply?
6. From vv.14-16a, what’s *wrong* with Ephraim’s “repentance”?
7. How was Ephraim like “*a deceitful bow*,” v.16?
8. What do you think are the *lessons for us* from this chapter?

Chapter 8

9. What does v.1 mean, “*Put the trumpet to your lips!*”? Why should this be done?

10. In v.2 *Israel* proclaims its innocence, or at least proffers a reason they should be spared. But what *specific sins* do vv.3-7 list?

11. What does v.8 mean? (cf.vv.9-10)

12. Read and think carefully about v.11. How, or in what way is this statement to be understood?

13. From vv.12-13, how did Ephraim *regard* and *react* to God’s *law* and *sacrifices*?

14. Why does the last part of v.13 say that Ephraim/Israel would “*return to Egypt*” since 11:5 plainly states that they “*will not return to the land of Egypt; but Assyria- he will be their king...*”?

15. What lessons do you think we should learn from this chapter for *ourselves*?