

The Prophecies of Hosea ~ Part 6

Isra'el's Wickedness

Crime is rampant in society (7:1), and none of this has gone undetected by **God** (7:2). Their sin engulfs them, literally surrounds them. No matter from what angle **God** looks at **Isra'el**, all He sees is their evil doings. But the problem is that **Isra'el** does not see herself similarly. Things are evil, but **Isra'el** is in denial. **Efrayim Shomron** (Samaria) and **Isra'el** are simply three different proper names for the nation. So, to drive home to **Isra'el** what she is really like, **Hosea** uses six brilliant similes and metaphors.

7¹ When I am ready to heal Isra'el, the crimes of Efrayim confront me, along with the wickedness of Shomron. For they keep practicing deceit; thieves break in, bands of robbers raid outside. ² They never say to themselves that I remember all their evil. Now their own deeds surround them; they are right in front of me. ³ They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the leaders with their lies. ⁴ They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker, who doesn't stoke the fire from kneading time till the dough has risen. ⁵ "On their king's special day, the leaders inflame him with wine, and he joins hands with scorners, ⁶ who ready themselves like an oven while they wait for their chance. Their baker sleeps through the night; then, in the morning, it bursts into flame. ⁷ They are all as hot as an oven, and they devour their judges. All their kings have fallen; not one of them calls out to me.

Hosea's first metaphor is an overheated oven (Hosea 7:3–7). The language in these verses is extremely obscure. **Hosea's** focus seems to be on the crimes of the leading members of society. There is a reference to a baker, an oven, and dough. The oven represents high society, the baker represents the king, and the leaven represents evil. The baker is no ordinary baker. He would need to work through the night to have bread ready in the morning. You would expect him to stay awake all night to keep the fires alive and under control, kneading the dough while the leaven works. But evidently, from verse 6, he sleeps all night. He is inactive, then wakes to find his oven is a raging inferno. The verses describe the debauchery and intrigue of court life. The king allows evil and conspiracy to flourish throughout high society and the court.

It appears that orgies were taking place at the palace. The reference to an inferno could also be an allusion to people burning with sexual desire, and the adultery in verse 4 is probably literal. Adulterous passions burn with the heat of a baker's oven, which is hotter and larger than an ordinary oven. The scene is reminiscent of **Daniel 5** when **Belshazzar** is drinking toasts to his gods from the vassals he had taken from the temple in **Yerushalayim** and of **Ben-hadad**, drinking himself drunk before a battle (1 Kings 20:16).

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⁸ "Efrayim mixes himself with the peoples, Efrayim has become a half-baked cake.

The second metaphor **Hosea** uses to describe **Isra'el** is a half-baked cake. The metaphor changes from the cooking in verses 3–6 to the cooked thing: a cake. The cake is burnt on one side and not cooked on the other.

⁹ Foreigners have eaten up his strength, but he doesn't know it; yes, gray hairs appear on him here and there, but he doesn't know it. ¹⁰ The pride of Isra'el testifies in his face, but in spite of all this, they haven't returned to Adonai their God or sought him.

The third simile **Hosea** uses is a pathetic, deluded old man. Verse 9 says, '... *gray hairs appear on him here and there, but he doesn't know it* and verse 10 says, *The pride of Isra'el testifies in his face, but in spite of all this, they haven't returned to Adonai their God or sought him.*

¹¹ Efrayim behaves like a silly, foolish dove- going to Egypt, then to Ashur for help. ¹² Even as they go, I will spread my net over them; I will bring them down like birds from the sky; I will discipline them, as their assembly was told. ¹³ Woe to them! for they have strayed from me. Destruction to them! for they have wronged me. Am I supposed to redeem them when they have spoken lies against me?

Hosea's fourth metaphor for describing Isra'el is a stupid, frantic bird (7:11). The picture is of a silly dove, never settling, never committing, going from one thing to the next. This senseless dove portrays the leadership of Isra'el frantically seeking help from a foreign power. Isra'el behaves like a stupid homing pigeon that cannot find its way home. It will not realize that **God** is the home to which it should fly.

¹⁴ They have not cried out to Me from their hearts, even though they wail on their beds. They assemble themselves for grain and wine, yet turn away from Me.

The fifth metaphor **Hosea** uses to describe Isra'el is a self-obsessed prayer (Hosea 7:14). **Isra'el** had not stopped praying. In fact, they prayed all night instead of sleeping (v. 14). But their prayers were all about them. Their prayers were like a child's tantrum: totally selfish and a self-pitying wail in which they complain about their lot. Their prayers are self-indulgent and manipulative.

¹⁵ It was I who trained and strengthened their arms, yet they plot evil against me. ¹⁶ They return, but not upward; they are like an unreliable bow. Their leaders will die by the sword because of their angry talk. They will become a laughingstock in the land of Egypt. ¹

The sixth metaphor **Hosea** uses to describe **Isra'el** is a faulty weapon. (Hosea 7:15–16). A weapon implies a life-or-death situation, so this is the most serious metaphor. All of **Isra'el's** victories came when **God** protected and equipped them for battle. It was **God** who strengthened them. **Isra'el** was utterly reliant on **God**. See Exodus 17:8-13.

Hosea reminds us that chasing after worldly gains can lead to regret and loss, especially in a fast-paced work environment. If you are consumed by work to the detriment of your spiritual life, carve out specific 'spiritual breaks' during the week. Designate time each day for prayer or scripture reading, even if it's just 10 minutes. Utilize apps or devotionals that can aid your focus. Bringing **God** into your work can foster peace and direction, prevent burnout, and ensure your efforts align with His will.

Next, we will continue to explore **Hosea**.

¹ Hosea 7:1–16.