

**WARNING: THIS IS A LONG LESSON! START EARLY!**

**Hosea 11:12 - 12:13** (Hosea 12:14 will be included with Hosea 13!)

In the section, God lays out his case against Israel and **compares their actions with the life and character of Jacob**. Unlike those who trust in Christ, the Israelites are left to face the repercussions of their actions. Even though God has tended them carefully and guarded them with prophets to speak truth in their midst, they have abandoned Yahweh and made a covenant with Assyria. As a result of forgetting God, their nation turned to corruption and neglected love and justice.

**IMPORTANT:** In order to understand Hosea 12, please read or at least peruse Genesis chapters 25 and 27-33 as follows:

- Genesis 25:19-34: The birth of Esau and Jacob.  
Esau sells his birthright to Jacob.
- Genesis 27:1-40 Jacob, with the help of his mother, Rebekah, deceives his father, Isaac.
- Genesis 27:41-46 Jacob flees from Esau to Laban (Rebekah's brother).
- Genesis 28 Jacob's dream at Bethel.
- Genesis 29 Jacob marries Leah and Rachel. These two marriages bring forth twelve sons who in time become the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Genesis 30 Through years of toil and deception, Jacob accumulates large flocks of goats and sheep.
- Genesis 31 Jacob flees Laban and heads back home.
- Genesis 32:1-21 Jacob prepares to meet Esau.
- Genesis 32:22-31 Jacob wrestles with God. His name is changed to Israel. Jacob seeks a blessing from God. He calls the place Peniel.
- Genesis 33 Jacob meets Esau.

Jacob's name means "Supplanter" or "One who supplants"; "He who grasps the heel"; "He who follows closely." These are all marks of a deceiver.

**Genesis 25:26** says, "After this, his (Esau's) brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob."

**Genesis 27:36** says, "But he (Esau) said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has **deceived** me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!"

Yahweh is the speaker [in Hosea 11:12-12:13]. He laments the deceitfulness of the entire nation ('Ephraim...Israel...Judah'). Both Israel and Judah are pretending to be loyal to God but in fact are deep in idolatry (11:12).

They are trying to attain the unattainable ('striving after wind') in seeking national prosperity and stability while disregarding Yahweh (Is America guilty of this in 2025?). The Mosaic law had long before predicted nothing but war, ravages and famine for Israel if they would not heed his law. Yet they were becoming increasingly deceitful in their betrayal of Yahweh, increasingly involved in covenants with Assyria that involved acknowledging their gods (Are we doing this in America today?) "Taking oil to Egypt" is apparently a reference to covenants made with oil, a practice that was not known in Israel but was followed elsewhere (12:1).

This deceit, violence and treachery will only bring havoc upon Israel. They are in covenant with Yahweh; God still demands that they submit to the requirements he laid upon the entire nation at the time of the covenant-making upon Mount Sinai. God will hold a lawsuit, a prosecution in which he calls Israel to account (12:2), and then issues sentence.<sup>i</sup>

#### 1. Read Hosea 11:12-12:1

Ephraim has surrounded me with **lies**, the house of Israel with **deceit**. And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One.

Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt.

a. Jeremiah prophesied during the great spiritual decline of the southern kingdom of Israel known as Judah. Read Jeremiah 2:31 along with 1 Kings 11:29-33.

i. How were the Israelites who lived both in the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom of Judah "unruly against God, and against the faithful Holy One?"

ii. Do you see any correlations in our country today? If yes, how so?

a. Read 2 Kings 16:3-4; 7-9; 17:1-6; 18:19-21.

i. Ahaz was a very wicked ruler over Judah. What great sin did he commit? Who did he turn to for help? Who should he have turned to?

ii. Hezekiah was actually a very good ruler over Judah. However, to whom did he turn rather than to the Holy One of Israel?

- iii. What is the lesson for us today from the actions of both Ahaz and Hezekiah?

Next, the mention of Jacob and his ‘ways’ and ‘deeds’ (11:11) recalls the story of the ancestor of the nation, Jacob, and leads Hosea to point to some lessons from the life of Jacob the deceiver (12:3-5). The ingrained deceitfulness of Israel is nothing new. The forefather of the nation—Jacob who was renamed Israel—was a man of ingrained and habitual deceitfulness. The people of Israel are ‘Jacob’ indeed—just like their ancestor. And yet there are other lessons to be learned from the story of Jacob. He was a deceiver and yet experienced God’s grace. The nation of Israel centuries later would do well to meditate on his entire life.

The description of Jacob is not in chronological order. It picks out what happened at his birth (3a), then jumps to an incident that took place at Peniel (3b-4b), and then goes back to what happened at Bethel (4c-4d). The three incidences point to three things Israel needs to recall.<sup>ii</sup>

## 2. Read Hosea 12:2-5. The charge against Israel!

- a. Recall Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:22-31). Thus, God is just in bringing a charge against all of Jacob’s descendants who live in both Israel, the northern kingdom and Judah, the southern kingdom. What is the charge that God is forced to place over Israel?
- b. Jacob came out of the womb grasping his brother’s heel and he went on to be one who grabs through deception virtually his entire life. Yet, God chose this flawed man to be the one of the fathers of the nation of Israel. What does this tell you about God? Does this give us hope? Explain.
- c. Recall from Genesis 32:22-31 how Jacob wrestled with the ‘man’? \*\* This was a difficult time in his life when he was returning home and would have to face his brother, Esau, whom he had deceived more than once. Jacob was fearful.
  - i. Explain how this difficult time proved to be one of the greatest blessings in his life? List two blessings Jacob received (Genesis 32:27-30).
  - ii. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7. Why does God so often allow, or even cause, difficulties in a godly man’s life? What God’s purpose in these difficult trials?

iii. How does this encourage you?

\*\* Many theologians believe this man was actually the preincarnate Christ who appeared as a man. This is called a Christophany—the manifestation of God in the flesh in the Old Testament. Thus, Jacob was wrestling with God.

The Israel of Hosea's time had Jacob's grasping character, but when would they be like him and grasp hold of God, with Jacob's intensity, emotion and entreaty?<sup>iii</sup>

- d. What happened at Bethel when he was fleeing from Esau (Genesis 28:10-21)? How did God bless him? How is this a picture of the grace of God toward a sinner? How does this encourage you?
  
- e. Read 2 Chronicles 30:9. Like Jacob, what was the only hope for Israel at the time of Hosea? What is the only hope for America in 2025?

Two names point to the power and graciousness of God. God is 'Lord Almighty' or 'the Lord who is omnipotent'—Lord Sabaoth as we have in Romans 9:29 and James 5:4. The phrase strictly means 'Lord who is hosts'. The Hebrew does not have a 'construct-genitive'\*\* ('of hosts') but has two nouns in apposition\*\*\* ('God who is hosts'). The idea is not that God is lord 'of' something (armies? Stars and planets? Bits and pieces of creation?) but leads us to think of God as full of unbounded powers and resources. He has within himself 'hosts' of potentialities and assets, capacities and energies, which give him the wherewithal to meet every situation with effortless ease. 'Lord Almighty' is the translation that grasps the heart of the matter...

This is what God had showed himself to be in Israel's history. He had taken the twister, Jacob, and turned him into a 'prince with God'. He had taken a community of enslaved suffering descendants of Jacob in a pagan Egypt and had rescued them by the blood of the lamb. Hosea points them to their own history. Let the nation believe in the God of Jacob. Let the nation believe in the God who rescues by grace. And then (12:6) let them turn back to God.<sup>iv</sup>

\*\*Construct-genitive meaning: a grammatical construction where a noun takes a specific form ("construct state") to indicate **a possessive relationship with another noun.**

\*\*\*Apposition is a grammatical construction in which two elements, typically noun phrases, are placed side by side to provide additional information or clarification about one another. It serves to provide extra information, identify, or modify the meaning of the first element.

3. Read Hosea 12:6-13.

b. Read the following:

Joel 2:12-13: "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity."

Zechariah 1:3: "Return to me," declares the LORD Almighty, "and I will return to you."

- i. What is Israel called back to in verse 6 and who is willing to help them?
- ii. What do you learn from this personally? Have there been times when you needed to return to the Lord in repentance? Are you in such a place now?
- iii. What message do you think Hosea would have for America today?

c. In verses 7-8 they are accused of self-sufficiency and using false balances. What examples can you see of this in our nation today? Is Israel very different compared to societies that exist today?

d. Read Revelation 3:14-20—Jesus' letter through John to the church of Laodicea. Some theologians believe this is the letter Jesus would send to the church in America today.

- i. Explain what is meant by the following descriptive phrases of the Laodicean church:
  - Lukewarm
  - Wretched, pitiful and poor

- Blind
  - Naked
- ii. Explain the remedy for this same church by the following descriptive phrases:
- Buy from me gold refined in the fire (Matthew 13:44-46)
  - So you can become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)
  - White clothes to wear to cover your shameful nakedness (Isaiah 61:10)
  - Salve to put on your eyes so you can see (1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:15; 4:3-4)
- iii. Revelation **3:20** depicts Jesus standing outside knocking on the door of the church hoping someone will let him in. Explain how this verse, as well as the descriptive phrases above, depict the modern church in America. Where is Jesus standing in relation to many, many churches in America? Do you belong to one of these churches? If yes, what should you do (John 10:5)?
- e. How will Ephraim (Israel) be punished in verse 9 (when they wandered in the desert for 40 years they lived in tents)? What feast is likely being referenced here (cf. John 7)?

**Commentary by Michael Eaton:**

Sinners against redemption is especially grievous (12:9-12).

The constant theme of Hosea's prophecy is that the sin of Israel is sin against love, sin against God's redemption.

It is one thing for a Canaanite to be a Canaanite; **it is another thing for the people of Israel to become like Canaanites**. God takes seriously his ownership of his people. Israel may have become a Canaanite, but Yahweh is still Yahweh! Israel is sinning against the God who had redeemed him by the blood of the lamb. It is a serious matter to sin against one's redemption. Only the people of God can sin this way, 'profaning the blood of the covenant' (Hebrews 10:29). What will God do? He will put them through some of the processes of redemption again. It is not that the blood can be shed again. If we sin willfully there is no other blood that can be shed. The redeeming blood can only be shed once! So God does not take them back to Egypt and have the lamb die for their redemption again.

But he can take them back to the wilderness! Their 'Canaanite' way of life must end. They will lose their privilege of residence in houses and will go back to living in tents, just as they do when they keep the Festival of Tabernacles.

Verse 10 continues the theme of sinning against redemption. They sinned against prophecy.<sup>v</sup>

- f. Explain how the Israelites sinned against prophecy (Forth-telling: hearing the word of the Lord: "Thus saith the Lord!"). Read Romans 2:12 along with Luke 12:47-48. What does it mean to **sin against knowledge** and why is this more egregious than sinning in ignorance? How do you apply this warning to your own life as a follower of Christ?
  
- g. Skim Genesis 27:41-46 and Genesis 29. Jacob fled from Esau and headed north to Aram where he worked for many years for a wife. How does this relate to God's treatment of Israel in Hosea?

When Jacob was running away from home because of the deceitfulness that had brought threats of violence against himself, what disgrace it brought! He had to run away in humiliation and dishonor ('Jacob fled...'); it led to fourteen years of arduous and difficult work for a hard-hearted uncle ('Israel worked to get a wife'); despite the great oracle (Genesis 25:21-23) that had come to his mother at the time of his birth he was working to pay off a debt ('to pay for her...') and there was little sign of any great future ('...he looked after sheep').

The deceit of Jacob brought nothing but disgrace and delay in God's purpose. The Israel of Hosea's time is tacitly invited to learn a lesson. God has chosen the nation. He is not planning to abandon his purpose, but as originally there was nothing but disgrace, and delay of Israel's

usefulness for Jacob when he approached life with deceit, so the nation too will face disgrace, toil, and degradation while it continues in deceitful ways.<sup>vi</sup>

- h. Similar to Jacob guarding sheep for a wife, the Lord guarded Israel by a prophet. Who is the prophet referred to in verse 13?
  
- i. What is the terrible fate for Ephraim in verse 14?

Just as God sent a prophet by the name of Moses to rescue his people, so God is now sending a prophet by the name of Hosea.

Yes, the deceiver can turn out well! Hosea gives them a hint; they are hearing a prophet now—Hosea himself. The descendants of crafty Jacob had been rescued by a prophet before. They are still ‘deceitful Jacob’ but let Hosea’s words sink in and let them be rescued by a prophet again. God is still the ‘God of Jacob’. He still has an unshakable plan for Israel, but for that plan to come to realization, repentance and submission to God is required.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Think/Grow/Live**

1. What temptations do we face as individuals today to create wealth through unjust means? What about on a national level?
  
2. God calls Israel to turn back to love and justice with his help. How does this apply to the Church today?
  
3. Think of a wrongdoing that was never accounted for. How should you think about it in light of the cross?
  
4. Israel was accused of ‘feeding on’ and ‘pursuing’ the wind. What activities do people get caught up in today that are equally purposeless and without substance?



## Prayer Points

- Thank God for the history of Israel which can be of huge encouragement to us.
- Thank God that he has now spoken definitively through Christ.
- Pray that as a Church, with God's help, we would pursue love and justice while we wait for Christ.
- Thank God, that through faith in Christ, our wrongdoings will not be repaid to us.

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<sup>i</sup> Eaton, 171-172.

<sup>ii</sup> Eaton, 172-173.

<sup>iii</sup> Eaton, 174.

<sup>iv</sup> Eaton, 175-176.

<sup>v</sup> Eaton, 178-179.

<sup>vi</sup> Eaton, 181.

<sup>vii</sup> Eaton, 182.