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Hosea 12

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Hosea 12.

Topics.

- Ephraim multiplies falsehood and violence.
- Ephraim pursues the east wind all day long.
- Jacob strove with God and prevailed.
- God's memorial name and his name to be remembered forever.
- Hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for God.
- A rich merchant loves to use false balances to oppress.
- The LORD multiplied visions to the prophets of Israel.
- Israel has given bitter provocation to the LORD.

INTRODUCTION: Hosea has been called the "death-bed prophet of Israel" because he was the last to prophesy before the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria (about 722 B.C.). His ministry followed a golden age in the Northern Kingdom, with a peace and prosperity not seen since the days of Solomon. Unfortunately, this prosperity led to moral decay, and Israel forsook God to worship idols. So God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute, whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea then explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the LORD and remained faithful to him. The book shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

HOSEA 12:1

Ephraim Multiplies Falsehood and Violence.

- **Hosea 12:1:** Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

Ephraim: became such a leader in the new Northern Kingdom (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) that in addition to their more common name Israel, the kingdom also became called Ephraim.

Ephraim feeds on the wind: (v1) the east wind in Palestine comes from Arabia and the Far East, over large tracts of sandy waste and brings a parching and scorching heat. If it continues for a long period of time the fruits, vegetation and crops are parched and famine follows so that both man and animals suffer. It was a common practise for the Orientals to compare life to the east wind. In the following verses Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jonah all speak of the east wind and show that it carries the idea of destruction, foolishness, death and suffering:

- Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? (Job 15:2).
- The east wind lifts him up (mankind) and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place (as a storm hurleth him out of his place in the KJV). (Job 27:21).

- By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish. (Psalm 48:7).
- Measure by measure, by exile you contended with them (Judah and Israel) he removed them with his fierce breath in the day of the east wind. (Isaiah 27:8).
- Like the east wind I will scatter them (Israel) before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity. (Jer. 18:17).
- When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live. (Jonah 4:8).

By extension the east wind also carries the idea of:

- Unpleasantness, hardship, suffering, destruction and emptiness
- Calamities and consuming fires of affliction.
- A self-destroying course that a person or nation sets themselves upon.
- Following after vain plans and purposes such as alliances with foreign nations and their idols and pagan gods.
- Labouring in vain, and getting nothing after all the pain of trying to succeed and produce.
- Feeding on vain hopes of man's help, when at enmity with God.
- Prayers going into the air and not being heard because they are prayers to idols and Baal's.

Ephraim pursues the east wind all day long carries the idea of pursuing:

- What is unsatisfying, unproductive and destructive.
- Things vain and things pernicious and things that is greatly detrimental.
- Those things that have no power to give people what they are seeking after.
- Malicious, harmful and spiteful courses that will bring damage rather than benefit.
- After idols, Baal's and pagan gods and seeking their counsel and help.
- The vain confidence and the hope of good things promised to themselves

Simply put pursuing after the east wind all day long carries the idea of sowing to the wind, and reaping a whirlwind (i.e., everything that has been done is destroyed).

Ephraim multiply falsehood and violence carries the idea of multiplying:

- Un-repentant sins and forsaking the truth of God.
- Falsehood, lies, deception, destruction violence and oppressions.
- Idols, and idolatrous rites and acts of worship and thereby forsaking the truth of God and God Himself.
- New friends and covenants with foreign nations.
- The hardness of their hearts against the prophets of God and God Himself.

In chapter ten Hosea said Israel had:

- Plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors (Hosea 10:13).

In all these sins Israel was guilty of adding one sort of lying to another. Lying signifies false speaking, false dealing, false belief, false opinions, false worship, false pretences and false hopes and leads to relying on things that will deceive. Israel at this time was continually accumulating lie upon lie, by which they deceived themselves. Those who multiplying these sins, multiply the cause of their own destruction this is because sin and punishment are bound together, as cause and effect. To multiply sin is, in fact, to multiply destruction. Judgment at this present time is delayed, it could be said we are living in the long day of death and the long day of grace. Man overlooks what he does not see, but, though judgment is delayed at this time wickedness is not forgotten.

Paul wrote:

- Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (Rom. 2:5).

Ephraim makes a covenant with Assyria: this prophecy was delivered about the time of Israel's seeking the aid of the Egyptian king and their violation of the covenant they had with Assyria (Hosea 12:1). This is a good example of their lies, falsehood and deceit. While they were in covenant with the Assyrians, having engaged themselves to be taxpayers to them for their help and finding the price of the taxes too oppressive, they were secretly and deceitfully seeking to make an alliance with the Egyptians. It was for this purpose they sent oil as a present to the king of Egypt, endeavouring to persuade him to assist them in shaking off the oppressive yoke of the king of Assyria. The Jews vainly thought by sending Egypt a present of their produce they could secure their future. Olive oil was a chief product of Palestine, in the following verse it is even called the land of olive trees:

- A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey. (Deut. 8:8).

Olive oil with balm was among its chief exports to Tyre.

- Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, meal, honey, oil, and balm. (Ezekiel 27:17).

The land of Israel, being a land of olive oil, was famous for the best oil, of which there was a scarcity in Egypt, and therefore was a welcome present there. It was much wanted in Egypt especially since these were not common oils for trade, but rich and precious oils (it may also include precious ointments, of which oil was the basis). Even, though it was strictly forbidden by the LORD for Israel to make covenants with foreign nations and look to them for protection and security Israel sent oil as a present to Egypt to procure their friendship, their alliance, their help and their protection against their enemies, and to strengthen their kingdom. The following two verses show that Hosea had previously warned Israel against seeking security and help from Assyria and Egypt.

- When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound. (Hosea 5:13)
- Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria. (Hosea 7:11)

Israel forsook God's covenant, and instead of trusting in Him, made a covenant with Assyria their enemies and trusted in them. Then gave gifts to Egypt and looked to them for help rather than looking to God. They believed that presents get friendship, but God later used those they sought friendship with and help from and had hoped in to execute His judgments against them.

Jacob Strove with God and Prevailed.

- **Hosea 12:2-4:** The LORD has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. ³In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. ⁴He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us.

He took his brother by the heel: (v3) refers to the birth of Jacob and Esau spoken of in the following verse:

- Esau brother Jacob came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. (Gen. 25:26).

In his manhood he strove with God and with the angel and prevailed: (v3-4) means when Jacob was an adult he strove with man and God. It appears that God by His Spirit appeared to Jacob as an angel in the form of a man and wrestled with Jacob and because Jacob would not let the man/angel go until he blessed Jacob God changed Jacobs name from Jacob to Israel.

- Jacob was left alone. And *a man wrestled with him* until the breaking of the day. ²⁵When *the man (angel in Hosea 12:4)* saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you *have striven with God and with men*, and have prevailed." ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For *I have seen God face to face*, and yet my life has been delivered." (Gen. 32:24-30)

He wept and sought his favour: (v4) refers to Jacob pleading with the man/angel to tell him his name and striving with him for a blessing (Gen. 32:26-30).

Jacob met God at Bethel: (v4) refers to Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it spoken of in the following verses:

- Jacob dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³And behold, *the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.* ¹⁴Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "*Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.*" ¹⁷And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*" ¹⁸So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹*He called the name of that place Bethel*, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. (Gen. 28:12-15).
- God *appeared to Jacob* again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And *God said to him (Jacob), "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name."* So he called his name Israel. ¹¹And *God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.* ¹²The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." ¹³*Then*

God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. ¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. ¹⁵So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel. (Gen. 35:9-15).

Throughout this prophetic message Hosea is exhorting Israel to follow their father Jacob in persevering prayerfulness, which brought God's favour upon him. As God is unchangeable, He will show the same favour to Jacob's offspring as He did to Jacob, if, they like Jacob seek God. Hosea is urging Israel to follow the pattern of their father Jacob and trust in the Lord their God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob their father and in God promise to Jacob that his offspring would be like the dust of the earth, and spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in them all the families of the earth would be blessed. Hosea is exhorting them to walk with the faith that God the Almighty will be with them and keep them and not leave them until He has done what He has promised if they heed the warning of Hosea and the many other prophets God sent to them.

God will punish Judah according to their ways: (v2) sadly Judah did not heed Hosea's message but set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.).

Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods and were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again).

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

HOSEA 12:5

God's Memorial Name and His Name to be Remembered Forever.

- **Hosea 12:5:** the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name.

This verse refers to the following words God gave to Moses to say to the people of Israel:

- The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exod. 3:15).

HOSEA 12:6

Hold fast to Love and Justice, and Wait Continually for God.

- **Hosea 12:6:** So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God."

All God expects from Israel is for them to:

- Do everything from a Spirit of love, meaning always do good to others and not harm and treat people (in the kingdom of God and outside of it) with respect and decency.
- Esteem justice, meaning do what is right and treat all people fairly.
- Wait continually for God, meaning always be in an attitude that the Lord is near and coming.
- Be honest and not cheat, deceive or lie to people.
- Walk daily with the LORD and ask for His help (Hosea 12:6-7).

HOSEA 12:7-9

A Rich Merchant Loves to use False Balances to Oppress.

- **Hosea 12:7-9:** A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. ⁸Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin." ⁹I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast.

Israel is totally focused on the work of their own self effort and full of self-righteousness, they say all their prosperity is a result of their own work and in all their business dealings no-one can find any wrongdoing or fault, they are without sin, but the LORD says He will reduce them to tents.

A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress: (v7) refers to Israel, they are in the heights of self-deception and are not only using false balances to cheat their customers and are oppressing their workers so they can make a greater profit, but are also cheating the poor for their own gain. Added to these abominations they are worshipping idols and Baal's and giving them credit for the prosperity of their farms, their cattle and their crops. They have forsaken the LORD and have absolutely no knowledge of what His will is or what pleases Him.

NOTE: working diligently is a principal of the LORD, but in the greater picture it is God who created the earth for our crops and gives the rain and the sun for them to grow and it was God who fought for Israel and gave them the victories even when their armies were outnumbered by

thousands. When God's people ignore Him and do not credit or thank Him for good things that come their way He is robbed of praise and honour due to Him. Following is two simple examples that we can probably all relate to:

1. When you go out of your way to do something wonderful for a friend and they are indifferent to the time and effort you have spent for their benefit.
2. The parent who goes out of their way to find a gift they know their child desires and upon giving it to them the child doesn't even thank them for it.

This is how Israel who the Bible pictures as God's son and God as their Father are treating God.

HOSEA 12:10-11

The LORD multiplied Visions to the Prophets of Israel.

- **Hosea 12:10-11:** I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables. ¹¹If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing: in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field.

Gilead: was allotted to the Reubenites, Gadites and to half the tribe of Manasseh sadly the Gileadites finally fell into gross idolatry and was led into captivity by Tiglath-pileser (King of Assyria) (Gilead is Jordan today).

Gilgal: was near the northern border of Judah, the exact location is unknown, but it is certain that the twelve altar-memorial of stones that Joshua set up at Gilgal as a reminder to the people of Israel that God dried up the Jordan River so the people could cross on dry ground and enter the Promised Land became a pagan shrine of later years against which Hosea and Amos warned the people. (Hosea 4:15) (Amos 4:4) (The story is found in Joshua chapter 4).

The stupidity of Israel: the LORD gave Israel prophets, visions and parables, but instead of heeding the messages of the LORD they turned to blocks of wood (idols) for counsel and gave pagan gods the credit for the prosperity God had given to their land, their cattle and their crops notice.

If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing: (v11) means though they may prosper for a time they will reap the judgment of God for their cheating, lying dishonesty and deception in their business practices, the oppression of their workers to make greater profits and their cheating the poor for their own gain, ultimately God will bring everything they do to ruin.

Israel's worship means nothing to God: they are offering huge sacrifices to the LORD, but to God they are like stones lying in the dirt of the ground, they count for nothing. This shines a brilliant light on the truth that honesty, love and treating others with respect and fairness and doing good means far more to God than adhering to religious holy days or giving large amounts of money. Not that these things are bad in themselves, but if the person who is strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions or giving large amounts of money is dishonest or oppressing others their offerings and the keeping of God's holy days will count for nothing to the LORD.

HOSEA 12:12-14

Israel has Given Bitter Provocation to the LORD.

- **Hosea 12:12-14:** Jacob fled to the land of Aram; there Israel (Jacob) served for a wife (Rachel), and for a wife he guarded sheep. ¹³By a prophet (Moses) the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he (Israel) was guarded. ¹⁴Ephraim has given bitter provocation; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.

Aram: became a broad term designating the lands of the Fertile Crescent from Mesopotamia to Phoenicia. Its people came out of the same Arabian reservoir of Semitic peoples as the Hebrews, and were closely related to Israel, with whom their history was intertwined, sometimes in alliance, often in conflict.

Jacob served for a wife: refers to the following verses:

- Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you (Laban) seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." (Gen. 29:18).
- Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. (Gen. 29:20).
- Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years. (Gen. 29:20).

In the twenty-first-century this love story almost seems like a fairy tale, how many men today would work seven years for their girlfriends' father before they could have her, and then another seven years to seal the deal, Jacob was indeed smitten by this beautiful young girl named Rachel.

It is emotionally painful for the LORD to accept Israel: God gave Moses the authority and power to deliver Israel from Egypt (called the house of bondage), and through prophets guarded them, but by their actions Israel has caused and incited the LORD to be against them. They have made it emotionally painful and very difficult for the LORD to accept them and even worse their deeds are so disgraceful and so gross that He is forced to declare them guilty and punish them for their wicked ways (v13-14).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.