

Hosea 12:1 ¶ Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

I think the truth being conveyed in this verse is that Ephraim is rejecting God and pursuing status and security in relationships with other nations—i.e., Egypt and Assyria. In fact, they were courting the support of each using lies and deceit. While making a covenant with Assyria, they were currying the favor of Egypt with bribes. It is truly amazing that they would seek such alliances in light of a history of God's proven power and authority on their behalf.

I almost missed the emphasis on the fact that Ephraim was "increasing" in lies and destruction. When I looked at the Hebrew, "abundance" and "be full of" stood out to me. I am reminded of how the scripture uses leaven as a type of sin and how just a little sin can multiply quickly.

1 Corinthians 5:6 ".... Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

I think it is interesting that specific reference is made to the "east wind," which is often a reference to the desert siroccos that are usually quite destructive. In courting favor and protection with the heathen nations and their false gods, the people of Ephraim were asking for trouble. They were set apart as God's chosen people, and such actions always result in His judgment.

Hosea 12:2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

The prophet now also declares that the actions of the people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, were positioning them for judgment as well. In referencing Jacob, I think the LORD is making reference to the whole nation—Ephraim and Judah. Point is made that the LORD will ensure that His punishment will fit the crime; the people will reap just judgment in accordance with their actions.

Hosea 12:3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

Hosea 12:4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Bethel, and there he spake with us;

Hosea 12:5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD *is* his memorial.

Jacob was the son through whom the LORD chose to birth the twelve tribes or families that formed the nation of Israel. Point is made that Jacob was a fighter from the very beginning. He grabbed the heel of his brother as he was being birthed giving evidence of a struggle between brothers that their progeny continue to this day. During his journey to return home with his family, he wrestled with a man that I believe the biblical record identifies as the pre-incarnate Jesus and showed great strength and tenacity in seeking His blessing.

*Genesis 32:24–30 “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: **for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.**”*

Isn't it sad that Jacob's descendants didn't treasure God's blessing with as much strength and tenacity. I think it is important to note that Jacob did not force God to bless Him; God chose to reward his struggle. When I saw the statement that Jacob “wept and made supplication,” I couldn't help but think of some verses in James.

*James 4:32 “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet **ye have not, because ye ask not.** Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”*

The Lord never changes. This tells me that Jacob wanted God's blessing, and his motives were judged righteous. It is God's desire to bless those that choose to follow Him in faith and obedience.

Deuteronomy 5:29 “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”

Psalms 103:17–18 “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

Luke 17:6 “And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

The prophet then references when Jacob took His family to Bethel to build an altar according to God's direction. It was at this time that God gave Jacob the name of Israel and reiterated His promise to give His descendants the land of Israel. After reading several translations, I think the ASV gives the best understanding of verse 5: “*even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial name.*”

Genesis 35:9–15 “And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called

any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel."

God's promise still stands; it has never been revoked. Though the people of Israel have suffered His judgment, the land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people and God will one day restore them to their land never to be uprooted again.

Hosea 12:6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

The prophet now calls out for the people of Ephraim to follow the example of their father Jacob. This is emphasized by the Hebrew for the word "turn"; it makes reference to returning to your beginnings. To keep "mercy" is an encouragement to reverence God with obedience and devotion. To keep "judgment" is a reference to keeping His divine law—living according to His will as revealed in His word. To wait on God continually is to place all your hopes and expectations in Him. To place your hopes and expectations in anyone or anything other than Almighty God will always result in failure and disappointment.

Hosea 12:7 ¶ *He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.*

Hosea 12:8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: *in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.*

Verse 7 is a statement of Ephraim's dishonest business practices as well as an indictment against them for taking pleasure in oppressing others to their own benefit. Isn't it interesting that verse 8 reveals that the people do not acknowledge their sinful practices. The NIV Commentary concluded that "they had devised loopholes in the law to justify what they had been doing." That makes sense to me as I look at the same tactics being used yet today in America—even in so-called "Christian" businesses.

People often mistake success and prosperity as a mark of God's approval. Though God does indeed allow many of His children to prosper in this world, He also allows many to suffer in this world with a unique opportunity of gaining special treasure for eternity. I am reminded of the words of Jesus as recorded by Luke.

Luke 18:25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

I think it is important to note that the people of Ephraim were just following the prevalent business culture of the times. The children of God, however, are supposed to live according to the morals established by their Father in heaven—not according to the Father of lies—the devil.

John 8:44 “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Hosea 12:9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

I am sure that the introductory words of verse 9 were treasured by Hosea. God would never reject His people or break His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob even when the people rejected Him. He had brought them forth from Egypt as a great nation, and He will one day establish them in homes (from the Hebrew) in Israel in accordance with that covenant.

“as in the days of the solemn feast” – I think this is referencing that time in which the people actually participated in the feast, the Passover, with a desire to honor God in the process. Because of the context of the verse and the reference to God’s deliverance of the people from Egypt, I think this is what Ezekiel was referencing as he wrote about keeping Passover in Messiah’s future kingdom.

Ezekiel 45:21 “In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.”

Hosea 12:10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

The reading of this verse is hard in all of the translations I checked. I think the context of the passage positions this as a statement from God that He had raised up prophets to warn them to repent and to declare the consequences for refusing to do so. Some of the prophets ministered through an inspired message, others were given visions to reveal God’s word, and still others were used to act out object lessons. Point being made—you cannot claim ignorance of your sin or of knowing God’s will.

Hosea 12:11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

Gilead to Gilgal would seem to be a reference to the whole of Ephraim from east to west (relative to the Jordan River). The introductory question is rhetorical—the obvious answer being “yes.” The fact that they were offering sacrifices on a multitude of altars in a place other than the temple at Jerusalem as instructed by God was proof of their sin.

Hosea 12:12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

Hosea 12:13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

I needed help on these verse; I just could not find the relevance to the context. JFB's Commentary connected them to the previous verse as a reminder of their roots in Jacob—the deceiver. That made sense to me; the Lord usually uses the name of Jacob as a negative and the name of Israel as a positive connotation in referencing His people. Though he had to suffer for his deceit, he did not lose the blessing of God connected with the unconditional covenant made with his grandfather.

A similar comparison can be made regarding the suffering of the people in Egypt and God's deliverance of them through the leadership of Moses. Though their circumstances were harsh and, from the human point of view, an indictment of God's rejection of them, His deliverance was assured as promised to Abraham.

Genesis 15:13–14 “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

Again, we see that God's way are not our ways. What seemed like a bad thing was, in fact, a part of God's plan to bless His people.

We must also note, however, that the people who were delivered from Egypt also rebelled against God, and the nation was spared through the intercession of Moses, but they were judged for their unbelief and not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Numbers 14:11–23 “And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times,

and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:"

God's judgment was righteous and just; the punishment fit the sin.

Hosea 12:14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

It was the fact that Ephraim rejected God and the covenant they had made with Him that would result in their judgment. God always judges righteously in accordance with one's sin—be it individual or nation.