

Daddy, Are We There Yet?

Hosea 6:1–3 a parallel with the 5:13–15: *no one to heal; I will tear, go away, carry off; return to my place; no rescue until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.*

6:1–3: Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

Is there hope for the wicked? Are these words from the people enough to make the lion come out of his lair? The ride will be rough before the children of Israel arrive at their destination. Their loving father is at the wheel, but his righteous anger is not yet appeased. There is something missing in their cry of hope.

First, You Must Acknowledge Guilt

What Sin?

Fickle in their love, which is gone like the marine layer or morning mist (6:4)

Ritualistic in their worship, not true worship (6:6)

Faithless to their covenant (6:7)

Violent and bloody robbers, thieves, adulterers, bandits and murderers (6:8–10)

Treacherous liars (7:1)

Angry mockers (7:5–6)

King-killers (devour their rulers) (7:7)

Syncretists who mix pagan religions with worship of the true God (7:8)

Wanderers from God (7:13) and rebellious children (7:13)

Self-pitying whiners who won't repent (7:14)

Worshippers who use pagan religious practices for relief of guilt (gash themselves, 7:14)

Plotters of evil against God (7:15)

Deceived about how to repent (7:16)

Unreliable, proud, insolent, full of lying talk (7:13,16)

Whose Sin?

The Priests

Villainous priests plot to rob and murder (1:9) – villainy (1:8–10)

It seems that most of the text refers to the priests (first mentioned in 6:9) and it is natural that God would reserve his fiercest anger for the priests!

Image used to describe the priests: a red-hot oven – full of wicked passion
Apparently, the priests had fallen into line with a variety of political intrigues.

The Rulers

The kings and princes are delighted by the anger of those who are carrying out their commands (7:3); full of intrigue; it seems they are plotting, with the priests, to overthrow a king and set a new one in place. They devour the kings (7:7). During the time of Hosea, nearly every king of Israel was assassinated by a usurper of the throne. Zechariah ruled only 6 months when he was assassinated by Shallum, who ruled 1 month before being assassinated by Menahem, who lasted 10 years. His son Pekahiah reigned for 2 years before one of his officers, Pekah assassinated him. Pekah took 50 men of Gilead to kill Pekahiah, and many scholars think this is the incident referred to in Hosea 6:7ff. For the history of the kings, see 2 Kings 15:8ff. Of all these kings except Shallum (who didn't live long enough for an evaluation!) it is said that they "did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat."

Jeroboam's sins: set up two golden calves and goat idols at Bethel and Dan; built shrines on the hilltops, made priests of anyone who wanted to be one; made parallel feasts to the ones God ordained; sacrificed to the calves in Bethel. The main sin is taking the people away from true worship of the Lord and setting up his own worship system. Jeroboam had also spent time in Egypt, so may have been using Egyptian worship habits as part of his syncretism.

This letter was probably written during the latter part of Hosea's ministry, around 733.

The People

Amazingly vivid pictures: Half-baked bread; mouldy bread, a silly dove, a faulty bow
(more next week: *futile farm, useless pot, wild ass, shepherd of the wind.*)

Where?

- In the cities (Adam, Gilead, Shechem, Samaria)
- On the Roads
- Throughout the Land (North – Samaria/Ephraim and South – Judah, and to the east of the Jordan – Gilead). During this time, Assyria had a chokehold on most of the regions of the land of Israel. Only a small area around Samaria was holding out somewhat. God also used Samaria to punish Judah during the reign of Pekah, who killed 120,000 Judean soldiers and enslaved the women and children "in a rage that reaches to heaven" – see 2 Chron 28:5–7
- Their deeds surround them (7:2) Disaster is closing in.

When?

- Day and Night (references to dawn, spring, morning cloud, late night parties; "all night their anger smolders and in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire" – 7:6

Why?

- **Hard-hearted:** hearts far from God, who desires steadfast love (6:6); fail to call on the Lord (7:7); don't seek him (7:10); don't cry from the heart (7:14); commit whoredom (7:10); mix with pagans (7:8)

- **Rebellious**—eager for wickedness, drunkenness, assassinations, plots, lies etc. strayed and rebelled (7:13)
- **Ignorant**—no knowledge of God (7:6); fail to consider God’s character (7:2); doesn’t realize what’s happening to him spiritually (7:9)

David Hubbard puts it well:

Yet...and this is the indictment to which the entire passage has been building since 5:8—none of the priestly leaders calls to Yahweh for any real solution. Every other expedient has been tried: military invasion (5:8–12), foreign intrigue (5:13), sham repentance (6:1–3) and murderous conspiracy (6:7–9; 7:3–7). God, who has not spoken directly since 7:2, now voices both his pain and wrath at such monumental insult. What has a people come to when its religious leaders bank on a chain of wicked incompetent men to provide salvation and then murder them when they fail? “The Supreme sin,” this has been called: “they have tried to go on their own without Yahweh.”¹

Then, You Must Understand Judgment

- The people express hope in the certainty of God’s mercy:

“Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.” (6:3)

- Yet there is another certainty: God will not forget evil

I have hewn them by the prophets; slain them by the words of my mouth; my judgment goes forth as the light (6:5); their princes will die by the sword; derision in the land of Egypt (7:14).

I will spread my net over them” and “discipline them (7:12).

I remember all their evil. Their deeds surround them; they are before my face (7:2).

This is the awful truth –we all must stand before the face of the lion!

- “The pride of Israel testifies to his face”

The word translated “pride” can also be translated “excellency.” Think: My baby is the “pride of my life!” Does this phrase refer to Israel’s arrogance that is “testifying” to itself about sin or is it God (elsewhere called the pride of Israel) who is testifying against Israel?

Hosea 5:5 *The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt; Judah also shall stumble with them.*

Hosea 7:10 *The pride of Israel testifies to his face; yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this.*

One commentator puts it this way:

“The pride of Israel” is capable of two interpretations. It may mean Israel’s vainglorious self-confidence, which is so hateful to Jehovah, and as it were testifies against Israel....

¹ From David Hubbard, *Hosea*, 136, including a quote from M.E.W. Thompson, *Situation and Theology*, 72.

But it is more natural to take the phrase as a title of Jehovah ...borrowed probably from Amos 8:7. How does Jehovah "testify against" any one? The answer is furnished by Ruth 1:21, "Jehovah hath testified against me, and Shaddai hath afflicted me." ... Hosea means that Jehovah has spoken one of those words which kill (6:5)—has delivered a judgment by which Israel shall "fall."²

Amos 8:7–10 *The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?" "And on that day," declares the Lord GOD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.*

Matthew Poole's Commentary: chooses "arrogance," but describes the "God" interpretation:

The pride of Israel: it might have been rendered, the excellency or glory of Israel; and so, referred to God, it would be a prediction that God himself would witness against Israel. God is said to swear by the excellency of Jacob, Amos 8:7, i.e. by himself. Thus interpreted, it would very well accord with what follows in this and the following verses.

^{YLT} **Amos 6:8** *Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by Himself, An affirmation of Jehovah, God of Hosts: I am abominating the excellency of Jacob, And his high places I have hated, And I have delivered up the city and its fulness.*

^{NIV} **Ezekiel 24:21** *Say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary-- the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.*

Hos 6:2,10 (pride of Israel) Israel can't survive the roaring testimony and judgment of God. No other witness is needed, nor could any other witness condemn Israel without, in turn, *being condemned*. This witness is "in their face" and they cannot turn away the indictment. All Israel, all Judah, with their priests, kings, rulers and people stand condemned—as do we!

Then, You Must Repent — Finally, the Real Third Day Will Come

- "Third day" often emphasizes an important, "soon to arrive" event

and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.... On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Ex 19:11,16

*Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. **On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen***

² <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/hosea/5.htm>

years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." 2 Kgs 20:5–6

- It was also considered to be the time measure when there is absolutely no doubt of death, yet the body had not quite begun to deteriorate.

*Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until **the third day**, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Mt 27:64*

- The notion of “third day” is highlighted by Jesus himself about the ultimate THIRD DAY. Jesus makes a direct parallel between his own death and resurrection and Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish:

*For just as Jonah was **three days and three nights** in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth. Mt 12:40*

And Jesus sends a message to Herod:

“Say to this fox, Lo, I cast forth demons, and perfect cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am being perfected.”^{YLT} Lk 13:32

Hosea 6:2 may be the clearest passage on which the original disciples based the church’s first confession of faith, passed on to and then by the Apostle Paul. In each statement, we read “according to the Scriptures”

*“That Christ died for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day **in accordance with the Scriptures**...” 1 Cor 15:3–4*

So when will the third day come? Are the people’s hopes at the beginning of Hosea 6 in vain? Notice what is missing in 6:1–3 when compared to 5:15: *Repentance!* We are reminded of the book of Judges – the people rarely repent. They “wail on their beds” but don’t return, they are distressed, but don’t repent. They do not seek the Lord God and obey him with all their heart. There are many “third days” in the history of God’s people, but there is one final “THIRD DAY.” Only the sinless prophet, the sinless priest, the sinless son, the sinless king, the sinless man can truly come into God’s presence without being judged. Yet he is the one who, instead of representing God (as did Hosea) in administering the words that kill, stands in the prisoner’s dock to be crushed himself by the punishment due for the sins of his people. In our passage, even the temporary “third day” has not yet come. They are still experiencing the first and second days. We have a sure hope, having the witness of Christ’s resurrection. Nonetheless, in our “first and second day” experience, we must seek to know and love the Lord who will not roar at us on the day of his vengeance. He has loved us with all his heart!

*I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, **with all my heart and all my soul**. "For thus says the LORD: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them. Jer 32:41–42*

May we love and serve him with all our heart!