

Hosea 12 Commentary

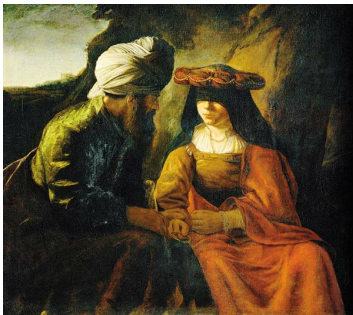
PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

Hosea 12:1
Hosea 12:2
Hosea 12:3
Hosea 12:4
Hosea 12:5
Hosea 12:6
Hosea 12:7
Hosea 12:8
Hosea 12:9
Hosea 12:10
Hosea 12:11
Hosea 12:12
Hosea 12:13
Hosea 12:14



Hosea's Unconditional Love for Gomer



Source: ESV Global Study Bible

OUTLINE OF HOSEA

I. The Prodigal Wife, Hosea 1:1-3:5

- A. Her Unfaithfulness, Hosea 1:1-11
- B. Her Punishment, Hosea 2:1-13
- C. Her Restoration and Israel's, Hosea 2:14-23
- D. Her Redemption, Hosea 3:1-5

II. The Prodigal People, Hosea 4:1-14:9

- A. The Message of Judgment, Hosea 4:1-10:15
1. The indictment, Hosea 4:1-19
 2. The verdict, Hosea 5:1-15
 3. The plea of Israel, Hosea 6:1-3
 4. The reply of the Lord, Hosea 6:4-11
 5. The crimes of Israel, Hosea 7:1-16
 6. The prophecy of judgment, Hosea 8:1-10:15
- B. The Message of Restoration, Hosea 11:1-14:9
1. God's love for the prodigal people, Hosea 11:1-11
 2. God's chastisement of the prodigal people, Hosea 11:12-13:16
 3. God's restoration of the prodigal people, Hosea 14:1-9
- Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#) - page 1292

Hosea 12:1 Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is carried to Egypt.

- feedeth: Ho 8:7 Job 15:2 Jer 22:22
- he daily: Ho 11:12
- and they: Ho 5:13 2Ki 15:19 17:4-6 Isa 30:6,7

Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, And oil is carried to Egypt.

Ryrie - feeds on wind. Lit., shepherds the wind (i.e., runs in vain to Egypt and Assyria for help). At the same time that she makes a covenant with Assyria, she exports olive oil to Assyria's rival, Egypt. Israel played both ends against the middle and would herself soon be trapped.

Matthew Henry - Verses 1-6. Ephraim feeds himself with vain hopes of help from man, when he is at enmity with God. The Jews vainly thought to secure the Egyptians by a present of the produce of their country. Judah is contended with also. God sees the sin of his own people, and will reckon with them for it. They are put in mind of what Jacob did, and what God did for him. When his faith upon the Divine promise prevailed above his fears, then by his strength he had power with God. He is Jehovah, the same that was, and is, and is to come. What was a revelation of God to one, is his memorial to many, to all generations. Then let those who have gone from God, be turned to him. Turn thou to the Lord, by repentance and faith, as thy God. Let those that are converted to him, walk with him in all holy conversation and godliness. Let us wrestle with Him for promised blessings, determined not to give over till we prevail; and let us seek Him in his ordinances.

Hosea 12:2 The LORD also has a dispute with Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds.

- a controversy: Ho 4:1 Jer 25:31 Mic 6:2
- and will: 2Ki 17:19,20 Isa 8:7,8 10:6 Jer 3:8-11 Eze 23:11-21 Eze 23:31,32
- punish: Heb. visit upon, Ho 2:13 8:13 9:9 Isa 10:12 24:21 *marg:
- according to his doings: Isa 3:11 59:18 Mt 16:27 Ro 2:6 Ga 6:7

The LORD also has a dispute with Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds. Although Hosea's primary audience was the Northern Kingdom, Judah would not escape God's scrutiny or judgment. Here "Jacob" is used not merely of the patriarch himself but, as is frequently the case in Scripture, as a representative name for all his descendants, encompassing both the Northern Kingdom (Israel/Ephraim) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). God would judge His covenant people impartially, repaying them according to their conduct. His judgment would be just, reflecting the principle that each person and the nation as a whole would reap the consequences of their deeds (cf. Gal. 6:7-8).

Hosea 12:3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his maturity he contended with God.

- took: Ge 25:26 Ro 9:11
- had: etc. Heb. was a prince, or, behaved himself princely, Ge 32:24-28 Jas 5:16-18

In the womb he took his brother by the heel,

And in his maturity he contended with God. This alludes to Jacob's lifelong spiritual struggle, culminating in his wrestling with the Angel of the LORD at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-30). Hosea traces this struggle back to Jacob's earliest days, recalling that even before birth he grasped his twin brother Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26), revealing his determined and tenacious nature. The same persistence that characterized Jacob's natural disposition was ultimately transformed into spiritual perseverance as he wrestled with God, sought His blessing, and emerged a changed man with the new name Israel. Jacob's life illustrates how God can redeem natural strength and stubborn determination, transforming them into steadfast faith and dependence upon Him.

Ryrie - Like Jacob, Israel and Judah were deceitful but could turn to the Lord as he did at Bethel. See Gen. 25:26; 32:24-28.

Hosea 12:4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us,

- angel: Ge 32:29 48:15 Ex 3:2-5 Isa 63:9 Mal 3:1 Ac 7:30-35
- made: Ge 32:9-12 Heb 5:7
- found: Ge 28:11-19 35:9
- spake: Ps 66:6 1Th 4:17 Heb 6:13-18

Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed This refers to Jacob's unforgettable encounter with the Angel of the LORD at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-30), on the eve of his reunion with Esau. There Jacob wrestled through the night, refusing to let go until he received God's blessing. His "prevailing" did not mean that he overpowered God by his own strength; rather, he prevailed because he clung to God in humble, persevering faith. As a result, God changed his name from Jacob ("heel-catcher," "supplanter") to Israel, declaring, "for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28). Hosea recalls this event to remind his hearers that the patriarch who once relied on his own strength was transformed into a man who learned to depend entirely upon God.

He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us, Hosea recalls Jacob's humble response after wrestling with the Angel of the LORD. The once self-reliant patriarch was broken, weeping and earnestly seeking God's favor rather than relying on his own strength. Jacob later returned to **Bethel** ("House of God") in obedience to God's command (Gen. 35:1), where God reaffirmed His covenant, confirmed his new name Israel, and renewed His promises (Gen. 35:9-15). Before this reaffirmation, however, the death and burial of Deborah beneath the oak of weeping (Allon-bacuth, Gen. 35:8) marked a solemn moment of loss and transition. From that place of sorrow came renewed blessing, as God again declared Jacob's name to be Israel and reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant. Hosea uses this history to remind his readers that just as God graciously restored Jacob after his brokenness, so He will one day restore the nation of Israel after its repentance, fulfilling His covenant promises in the future.

Hosea 12:5 Even the LORD, the God of hosts, The LORD is His name.

- Even: Ge 28:16 32:30
- is: Ex 3:15 Ps 135:13 Isa 42:8

Even the LORD, the God of hosts, The LORD is His name.

Hosea 12:6 Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

- turn: Ho 14:1 Pr 1:23 Isa 31:6 55:6,7 Jer 3:14-22 La 3:39-41 Joe 2:13 Zec 1:3 Ac 2:38 26:20
- keep: Ho 4:1 Pr 21:3 Isa 1:16 58:6 Jer 22:15 Am 5:24 Mic 6:8 Zec 7:9 Zec 8:16 Jas 1:27 2:13
- wait: Ge 49:18 Ps 27:14 37:7 123:2 130:5-7 Isa 8:17 30:18 40:31 La 3:25,26 Hab 2:3 Zep 3:8

Therefore, return to your God In keeping with the true prophetic tradition, Hosea issues a heartfelt call for the nation to **return** to

the LORD in genuine repentance. This appeal reveals that God's judgments are never arbitrary or vindictive. His discipline has a redemptive purpose: to awaken His people to their sin, bring them to repentance, and restore them to covenant fellowship. Throughout Scripture, God's judgment is often the pathway to mercy for those who humble themselves and return to Him. His ultimate desire is not destruction but repentance, forgiveness, deliverance, and restoration (cf. Isa. 55:6-7; Joel 2:12-13; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

Hosea 12:7 A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, He loves to oppress.

- a merchant: or, Canaan, Eze 16:3 Zec 14:21 Joh 2:16
- the balances: Lev 19:35,36 Pr 11:1 16:11 Am 8:5,6 Mic 6:10,11 1Ti 6:9,10

A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, He loves to oppress. The word translated "merchant" is literally "Canaanite" (Heb. kena'ani). While it came to denote a merchant because the Canaanites were known for their commercial activity, Hosea's choice of words is almost certainly intentional. Israel had entered the land of Canaan, but tragically Canaan had entered Israel. Instead of driving out the Canaanites and their corrupt practices, Israel adopted their values, becoming characterized by dishonesty, greed, and exploitation. Their false balances symbolize fraudulent business practices, while their love of oppression reveals hearts devoted to unjust gain rather than covenant faithfulness. The nation that was called to display God's righteousness had become indistinguishable from the pagan culture around it, illustrating the tragic consequences of spiritual compromise. (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Mic. 6:10-11).

Hosea 12:8 And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No iniquity, which would be sin."

- Yet: Job 31:24,25 Ps 49:6 52:7 62:10 Zec 11:5 Lu 12:19 16:13 1Ti 6:5,17 Rev 3:17
- I have: De 8:17 Isa 10:13,14 Hab 1:16 2:5,6
- in all: etc. or, all my labours suffice me not; he shall have punishment of iniquity in whom is sin
- they: Pr 30:12,20 Jer 2:23,35 Mal 2:17 3:13 Lu 10:29 16:15
- that: Heb. which

And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me No iniquity, which would be sin"

Hosea 12:9 But I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, As in the days of the appointed festival.

- I that: Ho 13:4 Ex 20:2 Lev 19:36 26:13 Nu 15:41 Ps 81:10 Mic 6:4
- yet: Ge 25:27 2Sa 7:2 Jer 35:7 Heb 11:9-13
- as in: Lev 23:40-43 Ezr 3:4 Ne 8:15-17 Zec 14:16-19 Joh 7:2

But I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, As in the days of the appointed festival. The LORD reminds Israel that He has been their covenant God ever since He redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. Despite their persistent unfaithfulness, He had remained faithful to His covenant. Yet because they had forgotten Him, He would cause them to **live in tents** again, not as a joyful celebration but as a consequence of judgment. Israel's fortified cities would be destroyed, forcing the people into the uncertainty of exile. The imagery recalls the **Feast of Booths** (Tabernacles), when Israel lived in temporary shelters to remember God's faithful provision during the wilderness journey after the Exodus (Lev. 23:42-43). Their coming exile would become another wilderness experience, but this time one of discipline designed to humble them, remind them of their dependence upon the LORD, and ultimately prepare them for restoration. Just as God preserved Israel during the first wilderness sojourn, He would preserve a remnant through this second "wilderness" until His covenant purposes were fulfilled.

Hosea 12:10 I have also spoken to the prophets, And I gave numerous visions, And through the prophets I gave parables.

- have also: 1Ki 13:1 14:7-16 17:1 18:21-40 19:10 2Ki 17:13 Ne 9:30 Jer 25:4 Am 7:14
- multiplied: Nu 12:6 Joe 2:28 Ac 2:17 2Co 12:1,7
- used: Ho 1:2-5 3:1 Isa 5:1-7 20:2-5 Jer 13:1-14 19:1,10 Eze 4:1-5:17 Eze 15:1-8 20:49
- ministry: Heb. hand

I have also spoken to the prophets, And I gave numerous visions, And through the prophets I gave parables.

Hosea 12:11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? Surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps Beside the furrows of the field.

- iniquity: Ho 6:8 1Ki 17:1
- surely: Jer 10:8,15 Jon 2:8
- they sacrifice: Ho 4:15 9:15 Am 4:4 5:5
- their altars: Ho 8:11 10:1 2Ki 17:9-11 Jer 2:20,28

Is there iniquity in Gilead? Surely they are worthless. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps Beside the furrows of the field

Hosea 12:12 Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep.

- Jacob: Ge 27:43 28:1-29:35 De 26:5
- Israel: Ge 32:27,28
- served: Ge 29:18-28 31:41

Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep Hosea recalls the events recorded in Genesis 29, reminding Israel of the humble beginnings of their forefather. After fleeing from Esau, Jacob arrived in **Aram** (Paddan-aram) as a fugitive with nothing. There he labored faithfully as a shepherd for seven years to marry Rachel, only to be deceived by Laban and required to serve another seven years for her (Ge 29:18-30). Far from being a powerful or wealthy man, **Jacob** was a servant who endured hardship, toil, and exploitation while trusting God to fulfill His promises. Hosea contrasts Jacob's humble dependence upon the LORD with the pride and self-sufficiency of his descendants, reminding Israel that the nation owed its existence entirely to God's gracious provision rather than to its own strength or accomplishments.

Hosea 12:13 But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept.

- Ho 13:4,5 Ex 12:50,51 13:3 1Sa 12:8 Ps 77:20 Isa 63:11,12 Am 2:11,12 Mic 6:4 Ac 3:22,23 7:35-37

But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept

Hosea 12:14 Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him And bring back his reproach to him.

- provoked: 2Ki 17:7-18 Eze 23:2-10
- most bitterly: Heb. with bitternesses
- therefore: 2Sa 1:16 1Ki 2:33,34 Eze 18:13 24:7,8 33:5

DECLARATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE

Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him And bring back his reproach to him Hosea concludes this chapter with a solemn declaration of divine justice. Through persistent idolatry, injustice, and covenant rebellion, Ephraim had deliberately provoked the LORD to righteous anger. Therefore, God would leave his bloodguilt on him,

meaning Israel would bear full responsibility for her violent crimes and covenant violations. No longer would her guilt be overlooked or deferred; the consequences of her sin would fall upon her own head. Likewise, God would bring back his reproach to him, repaying Israel with the shame, disgrace, and humiliation that her sinful conduct deserved. The nation that had dishonored God among the nations would itself be dishonored. This verse underscores a timeless biblical principle: sin always carries consequences, and unless guilt is removed through God's gracious provision, the sinner must bear its penalty himself (cf. Num. 32:23; Gal. 6:7-8).