

HOSEA—WEEK 7

FORGETTING



F. Michael Slay

A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*The Cover Picture is “The Prophet Hosea” by James Tissot (1836–1902),
on display at the Jewish Museum, New York.*

Israel is forgetting every lesson they’ve learned. They forget what happened at Bethel and at Gilead and dishonor the memory. They forget lessons from ill-advised alliances that no one should ever forget.

They even forget who God is.

We’re pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

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We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

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Hosea, Week 7 — Forgetting
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1 Hosea 11:8–11 (NIV)

*“How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah?
How can I make you like Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.
I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.
For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.*

*I will not come against their cities.
They will follow the LORD;
he will roar like a lion.
When he roars,
his children will come trembling from the west.
They will come from Egypt,
trembling like sparrows,
from Assyria, fluttering like doves.
I will settle them in their homes,”
declares the LORD.”*

There’s something profound about this passage. God is being emotional here. He’s pouring His heart out. He asks rhetorically,

*How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?*

And He won’t.

*I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.*

But then comes a curious explanation.

*For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.*

What’s the point of this? Why would a mere man be more likely to destroy Israel?

Because a man who was *that* angry couldn’t hold back. The point is to emphasize His description of His anger as *fierce*. His feelings are hurt and He’s angry—angry enough to utterly destroy them all.

We tend to think that because God isn’t sinful, He’s not emotional. That’s not how it works. God’s affection is strong, vibrant, and well attested.

He doesn’t destroy Israel because He doesn’t lose His temper the way a man would.

One of the brutal facts of life is that it takes years to build things up, but only seconds to tear them down. You can destroy a career in a minute, but you can’t make one in a month. This makes our battle with our sinful nature especially frustrating. A momentary lapse can erase years of hard work.

And it isn’t just rage that wrecks things. Any of the seven deadly sins will do.

2 Hosea 11:12–12:1 (NIV)

*Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,
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.*

Winds shift direction unpredictably. That's why the wind is a common Biblical image of fickleness.

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. — Ecclesiastes 1:14 (NIV)

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. — Ephesians 4:14 (NIV)

The wind from the east of Israel is particularly rough, as that's mostly desert, plus the people of the east have been frequent enemies. So, the east wind is a common Biblical image of danger.

*Like a wind from the east,
I will scatter them before their enemies;
I will show them my back and not my face
in the day of their disaster.* — Jeremiah 18:17 (NIV)

*Would a wise person answer with empty notions
or fill their belly with the hot east wind?* — Job 15:2 (NIV)

Israel's folly is described as pursuing *the east wind all day*. Thus, Israel *multiplies lies and violence*. There's no vision. They just flip-flop around, and, of course, lie about it.

Their foreign policy is fickle and dangerous, too.

He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt

Their treaties are deals with the devil.

The lesson here is the connection between fickle policy and lying. Defending your actions means explaining why you did them. When your actions are just chasing after the wind—not based on any first principles—they can't be explained. Defending them is an exercise in baloney.

This is spin-doctoring, and Americans are frightfully good at it—so good that the truth is now often almost impossible to discern.

Ancient Israel has nothing on us. We live in an age of unclean lips.

3 Hosea 12:2–6 (NKJV)

*The LORD also brings a charge against Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
According to his deeds He will recompense him.
He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And in his strength he struggled with God.
Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed;
He wept, and sought favor from Him.*

*He found Him in Bethel,
And there He spoke to us—
That is, the LORD God of hosts.
The LORD is His memorable name.
So you, by the help of your God, return;
Observe mercy and justice,
And wait on your God continually.*

The LORD says He will punish Jacob according to his ways, and then proceeds to recite some key parts of Jacob's life. What's that all about?

The key is the line, "*He found Him in Bethel.*" Jacob first went to Bethel in Genesis 28 and found God there. But, after wrestling with God in Genesis 32, he's transformed. Then he returned to Bethel in Genesis 35. There the LORD spoke to Jacob, renamed him Israel, and revealed His own *memorable name* (Yahweh).

*So you, by the help of your God, return;
Observe mercy and justice,
And wait on your God continually.*

They need to follow in the footsteps of their forefather Jacob and return to the LORD.

What about the footsteps of our forefathers—the apostles? They turned the world upside down for Christ. How did they do it?

By doing what Hosea 12:6 says. *Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.*

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. — Acts 2:46–47 (NKJV)

They're waiting! It's their response to this:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." — Acts 1:4–5 (NKJV)

But waiting isn't the endpoint; it's not the goal. The waiting is waiting on God, waiting for His direction—to know what's next. It's not a command to be couch potatoes. In the case of the apostles, God effectively told them what's next through a persecution that scattered them.

That's how they took the gospel to the ends of the earth.

4 Hosea 12:7–10 (NKJV)

*“A cunning Canaanite!
Deceitful scales are in his hand;
He loves to oppress.
And Ephraim said,
‘Surely I have become rich,
I have found wealth for myself;
In all my labors
They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.’*

*“But I am the LORD your God,
Ever since the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents,
As in the days of the appointed feast.
I have also spoken by the prophets,
And have multiplied visions;
I have given symbols through the witness of the
prophets.”*

God is accusing Ephraim of something much worse than just not following Him. He’s accusing them of being Canaanites (or at least acting like them).

They’re thinking like atheists. They can use *deceitful scales* and still say, “*They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.*” How is that even possible?

It’s only possible if there isn’t a God that sees all. Their deceitful scales evade human detection. That’s thinking like an atheist.

*“But I am the LORD your God,
Ever since the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents,”*

God needs to do much more than just get them to stop whoring after other gods.

They need to learn that He’s real.

Most sins can be described as thinking like an atheist.

Consider adultery. That’s often described as a moment of weakness. Is it not also a moment of atheism? How can anyone do that while being conscious of God? It would surely “ruin the moment.”

This highlights how deeply sick we are. All our sins are just as stupid. Our minds simply don’t work right when it comes to sin. We doubt things that we know are true even if we don’t realize it.

Doubt was the key to Adam and Eve’s first sin in the garden. It was the serpent’s point of attack. That’s why he started with trick questions. He had to get them confused about the meaning and trustworthiness of what God had said. Only then could he say, “*You will not surely die,*” without getting laughed at.

Sin clouds our minds to an amazing extent. Doubt and confusion are the essence of how sin works. Its goal is to undermine our faith. Faith is the opposite of doubt and confusion.

Now faith is being sure of what is hoped for and certain of what we do not see. — Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

5 Hosea 12:11–14 (NKJV)

*Though Gilead has idols—
Surely they are vanity—
Though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal,
Indeed their altars shall be heaps in the furrows
of the field.
Jacob fled to the country of Syria;
Israel served for a spouse,
And for a wife he tended sheep.*

*By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of
Egypt,
And by a prophet he was preserved.
Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly;
Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his
bloodshed upon him,
And return his reproach upon him.*

God is especially offended by the way Ephraim (Israel) doesn't treasure its history. This passage recites some of Israel's history to remind them of how personal it all is. Gilead is one of the special places in the life of Jacob, where God directly intervened to protect him.

And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad." — Genesis 31:22–24 (NKJV)

The idols in Gilead are a slap in the face.

Christian history is just as precious. We know about the apostles from the book of Acts, but after that, our knowledge thins.

We have mountains of information from the next few centuries, yet few Christians even know the names of the great saints who came after the apostles.

Here's a list of the great church fathers and their writings. They resolved the doctrines of our faith and defeated many misunderstandings and heresies. They also wrote the creeds we recite.

<https://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>

These writings are beyond precious. We read Shakespeare, but how many of you have read "City of God" by Saint Augustine of Hippo?

To get a taste of the treasures these saints produced, just start at the beginning of the writeups linked above—about Clement of Rome. It's a great read.

Similarly, the works of the Reformation saints should be required reading. Then there are the Irish saints, who kept Christianity alive through the dark ages. We know even less about them than the other two groups.

We need the Lord to raise up people like them today.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. When have you seen something valuable ruined in an instant?
2. What common form of deception drives you nuts?
3. How do you wait on God?
4. Can you see a connection between your own sin and confusion?
5. Who is your favorite post-apostolic Christian?