

HOSEA 7:8-16

ANY EXCUSE WILL DO!

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First, a show of hands...

Has anyone tried Amway or another multi-level marketing business? How did that go for you? One message that was repeated at the big rallies is that “any excuse will do,” meaning that if one of the people you’ve sponsored into the business (your “downline”) didn’t want to do something difficult, that person might droll on and come up with any number of reasons for inaction, but in reality, “any excuse will do.” We were discouraged from coming up with elaborate excuses and instead, simply do what we intended and said we would do.

In this passage, God through Hosea points out many excuses Israel is relying on to explain their ungodly decisions and behavior. I have put the words **“BUT,” “YET”** or **“BECAUSE”** in **bold red** in the New King James Version so you can recognize the excuses Israel is relying on. I count seven in these nine verses, and I will summarize them at the end.

This section continues Hosea’s indictment of Israel’s political and spiritual unfaithfulness, still tied to the **marriage metaphor** in which Israel behaves like an unfaithful spouse.

Hosea 7:8–10

8 “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

9 Aliens have devoured his strength, **BUT** he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, **YET** he does not know it.

10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, **BUT** they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this.

Explanation:

- “Mixed himself among the peoples” refers to political alliances and cultural/religious compromise with pagan nations.
- “Cake unturned” (like flatbread baked on stones) means burned on one side and raw on the other—useless and inconsistent.
- Foreign alliances (especially Assyria and Egypt) have “devoured his strength,” that is, drained Israel politically and economically.
- “Gray hairs” symbolize decline and approaching judgment, yet Israel remained unaware.
- Israel’s pride testifies against him and prevented repentance.
- Despite obvious consequences, they refused to seek God.

Q: Why do people often fail to recognize spiritual decline?

Q: Why does pride prevent repentance?

Readers for:

Deuteronomy 7:1–4 — Warning against mixing with pagan nations.

1 Kings 11:1–8 — Foreign influence leading to idolatry.

James 4:4 — Friendship with the world is hostility toward God

Hosea 7:11-12:

11 “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard.

Explanation:

King Menahem allied with Assyria; later, King Hoshea reached out to Egypt (2 Kings 15-17). These contradictory alliances with rival empires made Israel like a confused dove flying from one place to another. Their political schemes would actually lead them into divine judgment.

Q: How would God “bring them down like birds of the air”?

Q: What does “a silly dove” reveal about Israel’s decision-making?

Q: Where do people seek security instead of God today?

Readers for:

Isaiah 31:1 — Trusting horses and chariots instead of God.

Psalms 9:15–16 — Nations caught in their own nets.

Hosea 7:13-14a

13 “Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, **BECAUSE** they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, **YET** they have spoken lies against Me.

14 They did not cry out to Me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds.

Explanation:

- The tragedy is not merely political failure but spiritual rebellion.
- God had redeemed Israel, yet they betrayed Him.
- Their prayers were ritualistic and centered on their needs.

Q: What distinguishes sincere prayer from superficial prayer?

Q: Why do crises often produce temporary religiosity?

Readers for:

Isaiah 1:2 — Children who rebelled against their Father.

Isaiah 29:13 — Honoring God with lips but not heart.

Joel 2:13 — Rend your hearts, not garments.

Hosea 7:14b-16

14b “They assemble together for grain and new wine, they rebel against Me;

15 Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, **YET** they devise evil against Me;

16 They return, **BUT** not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Explanation

- God had empowered Israel militarily and nationally, yet they rebelled against Him.
- Israel's repentance was misdirected and insincere.
- **“Like a deceitful bow”** suggests unreliable or crooked behavior.
- Their leaders would fall because of their arrogance.

Q: What safeguards keep success from producing rebellion?

Q: What does true or false repentance look like?

Readers for:

Deuteronomy 8:17–18 — God gives power to gain wealth.

Jeremiah 5:7 — Blessings leading to betrayal.

Hosea 8:7 — Sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

Summary:

In Hosea 7:8–16, the prophet portrays Israel as spiritually compromised, politically confused, and morally blind. Like a **half-baked cake** and a **senseless dove**, the nation had lost its identity and chased security through foreign alliances rather than faith in God. Though God had strengthened and redeemed them, their pride prevented repentance. Their prayers were superficial, their repentance insincere, and their leaders arrogant. Consequently, divine judgment was inevitable, demonstrating that misplaced trust and spiritual compromise lead to national and spiritual collapse.

Major Themes in Hosea 7:8–16

1. **Spiritual Compromise** with pagan influences.
2. **Spiritual Blindness**, failing to recognize their decline and danger.
3. **Misplaced Trust** in political alliances.
4. **Insincere Repentance** motivated by crisis rather than devotion.

The **seven excuses** I found:

1. Ephraim doesn't realize that foreigners are sapping his strength (v.9a)
2. Ephraim doesn't realize his hair is sprinkled gray, indicating weakness, decline and pending judgment (v.9b)
3. Despite Israel's arrogance testifying against him, he doesn't return to the Lord or search for Him. (v.10)
4. Destruction is coming because they have rebelled against God (v.13a)
5. They speak lies against God even though He longs to redeem them (v.13b)
6. They plot evil against God even though He trained and strengthened them (v.15)
7. They are a like a faulty bow because they've turned from the Most High (v.16)

Applications:

1. **Faith** requires wholehearted devotion, not partial obedience.
2. **Spiritual decline** often occurs gradually and unnoticed.
3. **Attempts to evade God** often lead directly into His discipline.
4. **Humility** is the gateway to repentance.

**THANKS FOR LISTENING,
AND,
KEEP COMING BACK!!**

