

**Listening in to the Divine Council
Open Discussion About Rebellion in Israel and Judah
Hosea 6:4 – 7:2**

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We have just witnessed the future for God's chosen people. For Israel and for Judah. We would love that to be the case right now and have the book end on a high note, but as we leap back to 720 BC, we remember that there is still a real sin problem in Israel. They are not returning the faithfulness to God, that He has given to them.

God is just. He does not wink at sin. There are consequences for sin.

But it has been glorious to bask in what it is God intends to do for His people at the end of the Tribulation and into the Millennium.

YAHWEH desires His people to be faithful because He has been faithful. "Everything that is said focuses on what Yahweh does for Israel and the individual worshipper. The history of Yahweh's people, past, present, and future, the life of the individual Israelite—in fact, the entire world—is the stage for the demonstration of Yahweh's kindness. Yahweh has decided in favor of Israel; he has promised life, care, alleviation of distress, and preservation—indeed, he has filled the whole earth with his kindness. He has thus granted fellowship with him to his people, to all mankind, to the whole world.

And this act, like the promise and assurance of future help and fellowship, is characterized by permanence, constancy, and reliability. This is what Israel and the individual Israelite hear through

Yahweh's word, including his word spoken through the mouth of his prophets. The community responds in worship, praising his kindness in hymns, confessing it, expressing their confidence and thanksgiving or pleading in laments for a new demonstration of this divine kindness." (Zobel 1986, 62)

There is a déjà vu kind of feeling as we compare what we are reading in Hosea with what we see described for us in Revelation 20.

We know that at the end of the Millennium, a glorious time, there will still be some who rebel despite living in a perfect world with Jesus Christ on the throne with His faithfulness and fulfilled promises fully on display. The consequences of that rebellion are horrid.

The transition in Hosea will be just as abrupt.

Revelation 20:7–10

"After the thousand years are over, Satan will be let loose from his prison, and he will go out to deceive the nations scattered over the whole world, that is, Gog and Magog. Satan will bring them all together for battle, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. They spread out over the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people and the city that he loves. But fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. Then the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown; and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (GNB)

We see in the book of Revelation, that same strange juxtaposition of glory and beauty followed by darkness and judgement. The pattern is simple, the heart of man is wicked.

Without Christ, we opt for destruction rather than for life. The lie of Genesis 3 is still attractive to those who do not know the Lord or who do not want to know the Lord. The amazing thing is that Israel was given demonstration after demonstration of His power, they still rebelled.

Alas! that there should ever be occasion to turn so abruptly from the glory of God's mercy to the meanness of man's sin!—from the enduring love and the well-ordered going forth of his light and salvation, to the fickleness of man's best resolutions, and to the inconstancy of his most hopeful professions!—The antithesis between this verse and the preceding one should be noted. The morning light, gloriously outbreking from the east, is God's love shining out on the darkness of the sin-stricken soul. The morning cloud and the early dew, hopeful and sweet for a moment, but soon gone up as if they had never been, are the goodness of God's inconstant people. (Cowles 1868, 32)

Hosea 6:3–4

"So let's learn, let's press on to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, As the spring rain waters the earth." "What shall I do with you, Ephraim? What shall I do with you, Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early." (NASB 2020)

This is just as abrupt as we see in Revelation. The intent is to shock us into the realization of the deadliness of sin. Sin lies to us.

Here begins a new discussion from YAHWEH, captured for us by someone who is a called prophet of God, Hosea.

The prophet is someone who has stood in the council of God and heard the final decree. He is sometimes permitted to sit in the "visitors' gallery," so to speak, and to hear the debate proceeding (Isa. 6; Job 1–2; 1 Kgs. 22), during which the heavenly beings are called upon to contribute suggestions, reports, and advice. Hosea takes us a step further as he reports on the deliberations that actually go on in the mind of the Godhead. The two questions with which the present section begins—about how God should deal, first

with Ephraim, and then with Judah—reveal to us much about God, about how he treats his chosen ones, and also about how these chosen ones respond in certain circumstances. (Beeby 1989, 71-72)

Hosea is reporting on the deliberations of the divine council and what it is he hears from God. The issue is loyalty, faithfulness on the part of the people of Israel and Judah.

Hosea 6:4–7:2

“What shall I do with you, Ephraim? What shall I do with you, Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early. Therefore I have cut them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that shines. For I desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, And the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam they have violated the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously with Me. Gilead is a city of wrongdoers, Tracked with bloody footprints. And as a band of robbers lie in wait for a person, So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem; Certainly they have committed an act of infamy. In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's infidelity is there, Israel has defiled itself. Also, Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My people. When I would heal Israel, The wrongdoing of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they practice deception; The thief enters, A band of robbers attack outside, And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds surround them; They are before My face.” (NASB 2020)

While growing up, I heard that first phrase more than I wish I had. Usually after I did something...unexpected? Ok, rebellious would be a better word. It usually meant that a lecture would soon be coming.

What shall I do with you, usually followed by my entire full first, middle and last name. I always knew what the answer was too, usually it consisted of a close encounter with a wooden spoon and/or some serious quality time in my bedroom staring at the walls.

Whenever I heard this phrase, I knew I was in trouble. I have not acted in a way I was expected to act. Discipline is coming. Mom still loved me, but my actions required discipline. I needed to realize that what I did, was not something I needed to do ever again.

God is reacting no differently here. He loves His people, but it appears that expectations have not been met and discipline is in order.

There is a clear expectation of how Israel and Judah should act. They are privy to a large amount of truth and light which they have received from the God of the universe. The same God who chose them and made them into a people for Himself through multiple miracles over hundreds of years. All of His grace. He gave them life, He gave them a place to live, food to eat and a world to change on His behalf and what did they do with it?

All they had to do was exercise believing loyalty. Did they? We hear the exasperation of a loving Father in His comments.

Hosea 6:4

“What shall I do with you, Ephraim? What shall I do with you, Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early.” (NASB 2020)

This section begins with a rhetorical question from God addressed to both groups of His people, Israel as well as Judah.

He is not accusing them of no loyalty, but of a loyalty that is at best, as rapidly disappearing as water vapor is on a hot day.

Both water vapor and dew disappear once the day warms up and they are hit by the light of the sun.

Clouds bring the promise of rain, but these have faded away. Dew provides moisture but when gone, so is what little moisture provided. This is a false supply of water; the Holy Spirit is not there as there is no moisture there at all. The Spirit is not there because the relationship is not there. Jude provided a great example of this.

Jude 12

“These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;” (ESV)

The problem in Israel and Judah is that both nations were filled with religious people. They did the routine, the sacrifices, the rituals, but there was no love, no knowledge, no obedience at all with it. They had gone beyond the point of losing their first love like the church in Ephesus. Now there was no doubt, they were religious hypocrites who attested to following YAHWEH but not actually following YAHWEH.

This looks a lot like the hypocrisy seen around us today in the in many last days churches who are emulating the church of Laodicea.

Revelation 3:15–21

“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.” (NLT)

It really is simple, we are not asked to be religious, but rather to believe and be faithful. That makes all the difference.

The Israelites were religious, but their goodness was like “a morning cloud”—just form and ritual and ceremony. “As the early dew it goeth away”—that is all their religion amounted to. Many people wear religion like you would wear a loose—fitting garment; it is something they can put on or off at any time. God condemned these people because they were religious, but they did not know Him, and they had never had a transforming, life-changing, experience with Him. (McGee 1997, 637)

God’s grace has been poured out on Israel and Judah. They exist only because of His grace. They are free only because of His grace, love, and mercy. They have taken that for granted which now has God asking the question, “what should I do with you?”

They have embraced something today we would call, “cheap grace.” Graphically shown to us by Jesus in His letter to the church in Laodicea. This is not something we embrace or teach at all here. At its basic level, it is ingratitude.

The term “cheap grace” was coined by a German Lutheran pastor and Nazi resister named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was hanged in 1945 by SS guards, but not before his writings had left their mark. (MacArthur Jr. 2000)

About Cheap Grace

The church that teaches this doctrine of grace thereby confers such grace upon itself. The world finds in this church a cheap cover-up for its sins, for which it shows no remorse and from which it has even less desire to be set free. Cheap grace is, thus, denial of God's living word, denial of the incarnation of the word of God. Cheap grace means justification of sin but not of the sinner. (Bonhoeffer 2001, 43)

Israel's priests affirmed sin, so do many in churches around the world today.

Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ. (Bonhoeffer 2001, 44)

Cheap grace is the affirmation and support of sinful lifestyles. Something we are seeing spread across this country today.

Because of the attitude of His own people in Israel and Judah, God asks, rhetorically, "what should I do with you?" What is it that has brought YAHWEH to this point? He has already done disciplinary actions, more than once. After setting the stage, He outlines what has been done. Just like mom would have.

Hosea 6:5

"Therefore I have cut them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that shines." (NASB 2020)

God is determined to reclaim His people, just as Hosea was determined to reclaim his wife, Gomer. So, part of the response is to state what the steps are that God is taking to do this? He begins with His word. He has sent it with His prophets. God's word is His sword (Hebrews 4:12) and in Israel He had sent faithful prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Amos and others.

When Israel finally fell to the Assyrians it was only after a long period of sinning against God's prophetic warnings. He 'warned them by my servants the prophets' (2 Kings 17:13). There was a living prophetic word coming to them; their sin involved despising prophetic oracles. (Eaton 1996, 105)

They were committed to their own hypocrisy; to the point that as we studied earlier, they were now ensnaring and recruiting others into their sinful lifestyle (Hosea 5:1). Just as we see around us today.

2 Kings 17:12-17

"They worshiped the disgusting idols in blatant disregard of the LORD's command. The LORD solemnly warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and all the seers, "Turn back from your evil ways; obey my commandments and rules that are recorded in the law. I ordered your ancestors to keep this law and sent my servants the prophets to remind you of its demands." But they did not pay attention and were as stubborn as their ancestors, who had not trusted the LORD their God. They rejected his rules, the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and the laws he had commanded them to obey. They paid allegiance to worthless idols, and so became worthless to the LORD. They copied the practices of the surrounding nations in blatant disregard of the LORD's command. They abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God; they made two metal calves and an Asherah pole, bowed down to all the stars in the sky, and worshiped Baal. They passed their sons and daughters through the fire, and practiced divination and omen reading. They committed themselves to doing evil in the sight of the LORD and made him angry." (NET)

God had used His word through the prophets to cut and hack at the sin of the people of Israel. It had reached the point that His judgements against them were like lightening from heaven. In reality, they are the promises given by Moses for disobedience; cursings.

Another way of seeing this is to consider the amount of light that Israel had received from God. They knew Him and knew of the consequences for not following Him. That light is promised consequences; judgement.

What is it that God truly desires from His people?

Hosea 6:6–7

“For I desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, And the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam they have violated the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously with Me.” (NASB 2020)

The people of Israel were confused. They were thinking that ritual was the path to salvation. Loving loyalty was not defined in that manner in the law.

In verse 4 we saw the true character of their loyalty, like rapidly disappearing vapor. But the term used, *ḥesed* (hesed) is defined or tied up in interpersonal relationships.

Hesed always designates not just a human attitude, but also the act that emerges from this attitude. It is an act that preserves or promotes life. It is intervention on behalf of someone suffering misfortune or distress. It is demonstration of friendship or piety. It pursues what is good and not what is evil. Thus the most appropriate translation of *ḥesed* is “goodness,” “grace,” or “kindness.” (Zobel 1986, 51)

The mistake of the people consisted in their notion that sacrifices were sufficient to gain Yahweh's favor. What Yahweh delights in, i.e. that which will gain his favor, is love; cf. 1 Samuel 15:22, in which obedience is emphasized. This love is not love for God as distinguished from love for one's fellow-men, but both.—[Knowledge of God and not burnt-offerings] Here, as in many places in this piece, we have an example of Hosea's ability to make a perfect parallelism. Knowledge of God and love of God go together. (Harper 1905, 286)

YAHWEH desires *hesed* over sacrifice. Especially sacrifice the way it was being done in Israel. Rather than it being the pouring out and expression of a grateful soul to the Lord, as a means of expressing *hesed*, loyalty and faithfulness; sacrifice had become a bargaining chip, a point of negotiation with God in order to get what you want. This is how the world operates.

If I do this God, then you are obliged to answer me. This reflects the way the gods of the nations operated, not YAHWEH.

What ancient idol worshippers believed was that the objects they made were inhabited by their gods. This is why they performed ceremonies to “open the mouth” of the statue. The mouth (and nostrils) had to be ritually opened for the spirit of the deity to move in and occupy, a notion inspired by the idea that one needs to breathe to live. The idol first had to be animated with the very real spiritual presence of the deity. Once that was done, the entity was localized for worship and bargaining. (Heiser 2015, 35-36)

It is the lack of love and knowledge of God among the people that is tragic, not the presence of burnt offerings and other sacrifices. Hosea offers here a critique of sacrificial ritual when it is not rooted in a covenantal ethos and where it is seen as a means of inducing a deity to act. In this way of speaking, Hosea joins other prophets and voices that see sacrifice and the public cultus as divinely given gifts to be used with gratitude, not as ritual coercion. (Dearman 2010, 197)

The enemy perverting prayer is not a problem only seen in the Israel and Judah of Hosea's time; it has carried onto today. Jesus confronted this problem in His ministry. He used a question from His disciples

as a means to correct some bad theology going around at the time regarding prayer and provide us instruction as well. His model prayer.

Jesus outlined six things for us in His model prayer.

1. Do not pray to attract attention to yourself and how spiritual you are.
2. Seek God privately and listen.
3. KISS – Keep it simple. God remembers, we don't. He is God and does not need to be approached formulaically.
4. Approach Him on His terms, not yours. Verbosity and repetition do not count.
5. Praise
6. Promises

Jesus model prayer when spoken out loud takes less than a minute.

Some of us have been taught that a certain formula must be used, or you must pray in a specific fashion in order to be heard. That is what leads to ritual and removes us from the joy and spontaneity that comes with relationship.

Matthew 6:6–15

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (ESV)

Think about it, why do we create these rituals and formulas for our time with the Lord yet when we talk to a friend, we simply call and start talking.

I do not ever remember having to burn a candle, bow and then ask for forgiveness just to talk to my grandpa. I did not have to tell him grandpa how many times I did something wrong to him and when the last time I talked to Him was. But there are some who think that is how you approach God.

We need to, like Israel was being encouraged to, look at our relationship with our Lord and be wary of those places we may have turned something into a ritual. He answered my prayer the last time I prayed here so I always pray here now, type of stuff. God was real to me at the beach so let's erect a shrine and pray there only.

Hosea 6:7

“But like Adam they have violated the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously with Me.” (NASB 2020)

Have you ever had someone who did you wrong? I mean really did you wrong, so wrong that you use that incident as a marker for all future encounters? We all do this in one form or another.

If you have ever been badly hurt by someone, you tend to withdraw a bit before trusting again. If you get hurt enough times, you cease trusting entirely and gravitate to becoming a loner.

Here is the thing, God created man, He also created the heavenly hosts, and where has rebellion been seen, in both groups. Some of the heavenly host rebelled and man did also. So, we come to verse 7 and God brings up the king and leader of all covenant breakers, Adam the treacherous.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”” (Genesis 2:16–17, ESV)

The covenant that Adam transgressed was not the Mosaic Covenant, which the Israelites and Judahites had violated. It was the arrangement with Adam that God had specified for life within the Garden of Eden, the Adamic Covenant (Gen. 2:16–17). Ever since Adam, all people, including God’s people, have dealt treacherously with Him by trying to seize the sovereignty from God because they doubted His love for them. (Constable 2003, Ho 6:7)

It is never a good thing when your compared with Adam on this point and in the very next line, are accused of treachery. “This treacherous unreality of devotion is nothing new. It is but one case of the very problem which has provoked Yahweh to send his prophets with ominous messages of divine wrath. Through the ‘opposition prophets’ Yahweh has waged war against his people precisely because their past has been a record of an all-too-fleeting *hesed*.” (Mays 1969, 97)

Unlike Adam, who was in Eden, the abode of God, whose treachery perverted the garden and resulted in immediate exile, Israel, as we saw earlier, has turned their land into the nexus of evil. They are actively catching and perverting those who enter, recruiting their children and neighboring countries to come on in and sin along with them. Israel had become a sanctuary for evil and debauchery. If God was against it, they did it.

The next few verses give us a tour of the various locales of evil in the land.

Hosea 6:7–10

“But like Adam they have violated the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously with Me. Gilead is a city of wrongdoers, Tracked with bloody footprints. And as a band of robbers lie in wait for a person, So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem; Certainly they have committed an act of infamy. In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim’s infidelity is there, Israel has defiled itself.” (NASB 2020)

What we see here is “a sort of miniature guidebook to the geography of sin in Israel; going from one place to another it catalogues the famous crimes of various localities as an indictment of the whole nation. Its interpretation is fraught with problems. The text is difficult, and, beyond that, the incidents which were infamous in Hosea’s time are unknown. So the allusions remain enigmatic. 6:11b–7:2 is a lament over the impasse between Yahweh’s willingness to restore his people and their total identification with evil.” (Mays 1969, 99-100)

An example of what we see here would be using geography combined with known recent crimes to create a picture of wickedness that all would be familiar with. Let’s use some recent history and our own country as an example.

But like Rome, Greece and most of Europe, they have violated the agreements made with God, agreements made at their founding. There, in Washington DC they have dealt treacherously with Me. The west coast and the northeast are places of wrongdoers tracked with bloody footprints. And as a band of robbers lie in wait for a person, so a band of religious leaders encourage murder and holy war on the way to New York. Certainly, they have committed an act of infamy. In the house of this nation, in Washington DC, I have seen a horrible thing. The people’s infidelity is there. This nation has defiled itself.

Ok, now we understand what it is that Hosea is relating here. He is bringing in recent events in Israel as a means of reflecting how a series of unconnected events are the beginning of consequences for the nation. The result of sowing the wrong type of seed and reaping the consequences. They reflect where it is the people truly are.

I wonder what disconnected events we see taking place around us today that are nothing more than the shadows of what will be taking place in judgment during the Tribulation.

The picture being drawn is reminiscent of what will be shown to the Prophet Ezekiel just prior to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He was shown things by God that left no doubt as to the sin of the people living in Jerusalem as Babylon besieged the city.

Ezekiel 8:7–18

“And he led me toward the doorway of the court. And he said to me, “Son of man, dig.” And I dug, and look! A door! And he said to me, “Enter, and see the transgressions that they do here.” And I entered and looked, and look! Vain abominations and all the idols of the house of Israel were carved on it all around. And seventy men from the elders of the house of Israel: Jeconiah son of Shaphan stood in the middle of them, before their face, and each had his censer in hand, and the vapor of the incense ascended. And he said to me, “Have you seen, O son of man, what things the elders of the house of Israel are doing, each of them in their hidden bedchamber? Because they have said, ‘The Lord does not see. The Lord has left the land.’” And he said to me, “You will see yet greater lawlessness that these people are doing.” And he led me to the doorway of the gate of the house of the Lord that looks to the north, and look! Women seated there, wailing for Tammuz! And he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen? And yet you will see practices worse than these!” And he led me into the interior court of the house of the Lord and toward the front-door space of the temple of the Lord, between the Elam and between the altar, were about twenty men; their backsides were toward the temple of the Lord and their faces opposite, and they were bowing to the sun. And he said to me, “Have you seen, son of man? Is it a small thing for the house of Judah to be doing the transgressions that they have done here? Because they have filled the land with lawlessness! And look; it is as if they are mocking! And I will treat them with wrath. My eye will have no pity, and I will show no mercy.”” (Lexham Press 2020, Eze 8:7-18)

The idea YAHWEH is expressing here in Hosea is that there should be no doubt of what it is He will do with Israel and with Judah. He asked the rhetorical question at the beginning of “what should I do with you,” and now with what He has laid out to us, we have an idea of just what that should be.

Israel is not alone in this either. Remember, we began with Israel and Judah. Israel has gone out of their way to become a landscape of evil.

Hosea 6:10–11

“In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim’s infidelity is there, Israel has defiled itself. Also, Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My people.” (NASB 2020)

Israel is ritually unclean, morally impure, and no longer capable of being what the Lord had intended for them as a nation, to point others to YAHWEH. They were now part of the problem as they had willingly defiled themselves.

Hosea reminds Judah...you too.

A harvest awaiting Judah could go, at this point in the history of that nation, either way. They could continue to follow down the path that has been recently outlined for them by King Ahaz, one of the worst kings in the history of Judah, or they still could repent and return to the Lord.

They are not forgotten. What to do with them is still contingent upon how they react to what is going to happen in Israel. A harvest is appointed. Judah will reap what they sow, what will that be?

The question of the harvest waiting for Judah continues with the question of when will God restore the fortunes of His people. His grace is still there, He wants to restore, but their sin is in the way.

Hosea 6:11–7:2

“Also, Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My people. When I would heal Israel, The wrongdoing of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they practice deception; The thief enters, A band of robbers attack outside, And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds surround them; They are before My face.” (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH wants to heal Israel. He reflects what His heart says, but fact finding continues and the findings are not consistent with repentance.

Hosea 7:1b

“...The wrongdoing of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they practice deception; The thief enters, A band of robbers attack outside,” (NASB 2020)

The Lord longed to heal Israel, but when He thought about doing so new evidences of her sins presented themselves. (Constable 2003, Ho 7:1)

The Special Prosecutor is ready to discontinue his investigations, but recent findings have changed his plans.

To someone on the outside looking in, it appears that “whenever Yahweh has mercy on his people, their pious outward appearances are not followed by appropriate deeds; rather there is theft and robbery within and without. Such deeds are characteristic of their lack of genuine, reflective repentance. Israel has not considered that Yahweh’s judgment intends to tear her loose from her wickedness and return her to the covenant.” (Wolff 1974, 124)

Every time God begins to show His love to Israel, they turn away and reject Him. This is reflective of what Hosea was going through with Gomer. Maybe this time she will be faithful, maybe this time she will stay with me, but no, not until he bought her out of the slave market.

Accordingly the verse indicates that Yahweh’s dilemma is resolved by the needs of justice and realism. Only when the nation’s guilt is exposed and the moral depravity to which, as a matter of plain fact, they have stooped is acknowledged (v. 2) does healing become possible. The verse indicates, then, in a remarkably subtle way, a shift in the definition of Yahweh’s healing activity. It is the perverted will of men that he must change and that function cannot be accomplished by superficial means (so again R. Eliezer). (MacIntosh 1997, 251)

Hosea 7:2

“And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds surround them; They are before My face.” (NASB 2020)

Before repentance takes place, God does indeed remember all of the evil they do. Its literally in His face and He wants that to be the case for Israel as well. But with repentance, something else happens.

Psalms 103:9–14

“He does not keep on rebuking; he is not angry for ever. He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs. As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who honour him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us. As a father is kind to his children, so the LORD is kind to those who honour him. He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust.” (GNB)

He forgives us when we repent and then chooses to forget our sin.

Romans 8:1–4

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (ESV)

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