

Hosea 9:7-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-9/hosea-97-9/>

Hosea tells Israel that the time of judgment has arrived. It has come upon her because she has been hostile toward God's prophets and has sunk very low in morals, even to the level of gross exploitation and murder, as evidenced by reference to a story from Judges.

Israel's wicked deeds demanded God's retributive justice, per the terms of the covenant agreement into which Israel had entered, and the prophet warned her of the nearness of the impending time when the terms of their agreement would be invoked. The people of Israel were apparently oblivious to their covenant agreement with God, having forgotten and grown dull (Hosea 8:12). It seems that they thought their sacrifices to God were sufficient to appease God (Hosea 8:11-13). This section begins with the prophet confronting Israel with an imminent message of judgment, saying, *the days of punishment have come, the days of retribution have come* (vs 7).

The Hebrew word translated *punishment* indicates oversight and responsibility. The Hebrew word translated *retribution* indicates a payment. These terms indicate that Israel has a covenant responsibility to walk in God's ways, which they promised to do (Exodus 19:8). His ways are clearly spelled out (Hosea 8:12). This could be summed up as loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself (as Jesus stated, in Matthew 22:37-39). Israel had clearly violated their responsibility, as set forth in Hosea, as particularly pointed out in Hosea 4:2, where the land had filled with violence. The consequence for disobedience was also clearly spelled out (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). It was now time for the payment to come due.

These two parallel lines *days of punishment have come* and *days of retribution have come* reinforce each other as they emphasize the nearness of God's justice. Since God's judgment had *come*, the people of Israel needed to get ready for it.

So, the prophet admonished them, saying, *Let Israel know this!* (vs 7). This statement not only reinforced the pending judgment, but also specified *Israel* as its target. Because *Israel* claimed to *know* the LORD but did not acknowledge His authority or practice what was good (Hosea 8:2), she would now *know* judgment.

Israel's failure to *know* God by following His ways is perhaps best demonstrated in the way she rejected God's spokesmen. For her, *the prophet is a fool, the inspired man is demented* (vs 7). The phrase *inspired man* is literally the "man of the spirit." It is used as a synonym for the term *prophet* (1 Samuel 21:13-15). Hosea told his audience that the *inspired man* was *demented*, meaning that he was treated as insane.

A true *prophet* was someone who received a call from God to be His spokesman. He was an authorized envoy for God and was supposed to be "held in honor" because he would speak the truth (1 Samuel 9:6). However, the high claim of the *prophet* to be an authentic mediator of the LORD was not always accepted. Those who refused to obey God often challenged the authority

of the true prophet and failed to treat him with dignity. This was the norm for Israel; they typically did not heed the prophets (Acts 7:52).

So, as was typical, in Hosea's days the Israelites treated the *prophet as a fool* (vs 7). All this happened, Hosea added, *because of the grossness of your iniquity, and because your hostility is so great* (vs 7). The people's *hostility* toward God's prophets coupled with the *grossness* of their *iniquity* caused them to fall under God's judgment. The word translated *grossness* indicates a multitude, that their iniquities were greatly multiplied. It would seem the two would go together. A people hard of heart against God's word and His ways (Hosea 8:12) would naturally multiply their sins in living apart from His ways.

As with the previous verse, verse 8 continues to speak with irony. Just as the people of Israel say *The prophet is a fool*, so they also say *Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a prophet* (vs 8). It seems Israel was fully justified in their own eyes. They were doing their sacrifices (Hosea 8:11-13). So in their own minds, they had appeased God, and were like *a watchman and a prophet* themselves.

In ancient Israel, a *watchman* was responsible to guard a city to make sure it was well protected against outsiders (Psalm 127:1). Similarly, a *prophet* was a *watchman* because his task was to warn God's people of the impending danger so that they might repent before experiencing God's judgment (Jeremiah 6:17). It seems Israel considered that they were performing this function fine, on their own. But from God's perspective, their ways were fully evil (Hosea 9:7).

Yet the snare of a bird catcher was in all his ways, and there was only hostility in the house of his God (vs 8). They might have been good at self-justifying, but their *hostility* toward the ways of God, their willful ignorance of His law and His ways (Hosea 8:12) caused them to stumble. When they followed their own ways, they were constantly like a bird caught in the *snare of the bird catcher*. Sin creates its own judgement. The progression of sin is lust (Romans 1:24) followed by addiction (Romans 1:26) ending in a depraved mind (Romans 1:28). Their hostility toward God's ways led them to a path of exploitation and violence (Hosea 4:2).

Israel's spiritual condition was quite dark in Hosea's days because *they have gone deep in depravity as in the days of Gibeah* (vs 9). The reference to *Gibeah* here is striking because it shows a similarity between Israel's level of corruption in the days of Hosea and the crime committed in *Gibeah* during the period of the Judges. The particular crime in view is recorded in Judges 19 and may have been well known to Hosea's audience since he only made passing reference to it.

In Judges 19, we learn about a Levite's concubine who became a prostitute and left her home. The Levite was trying to restore her when nightfall came on them. So, they had to stay overnight in the Benjamite city of *Gibeah*. There, some "worthless fellows" of the city "raped" the Levite's concubine and "abused her all night until morning" (Judges 19:22, 25). The next day the Levite found out that his concubine was dead. So, he "took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel" (Judges 19:29). This action resulted in a civil war that nearly annihilated the tribe of Benjamin

(Judges 19–21). Israel had sunk very low in morals during the period of the Judges; in the days of Hosea, she was this low once again.

It is also possible that the *depravity as in the days of Gibeah* references when Israel chose its first king. *Gibeah* was the hometown of King Saul. When the people asked for a king, God said that “they have rejected Me from being king over them” (1 Samuel 8:7b). Similarly, Israel had rejected God from being their Suzerain (ruler) and had violated their covenant with Him.

Therefore, God’s judgment was approaching quickly. God would punish Israel for her current corruption and apostasy. Hosea made it clear when he said that God would *remember their iniquity*, He would *punish their sins* (vs 9). That means the Israelites would be held accountable for their evil actions. God was going to judge them for their sins, according to the terms of their covenant agreement (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The day of reckoning had arrived.

Biblical Text

**⁷ The days of punishment have come,
The days of retribution have come;
Let Israel know *this!*
The prophet is a fool,
The inspired man is demented,
Because of the grossness of your iniquity,
And *because* your hostility is *so* great.**

**⁸ Ephraim *was* a watchman with my God, a prophet;
Yet the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways,
And there is *only* hostility in the house of his God.**

**⁹ They have gone deep in depravity
As in the days of Gibeah;
He will remember their iniquity,
He will punish their sins.**