

BOOK OF HOSEA

Know the LORD

In the Bible knowledge usually refers to a knowledge of God. If you acquire enough knowledge, you will understand the spiritual world around you. And with understanding you can make wise decisions. Hosea faced just the opposite: his people rejected knowledge (4:6), have no knowledge (4:1) or understanding (4:14), and have made foolish decisions such as turning from God (11:7), not listening to God (9:17), forgetting the law (4:6; 8:12) and their God (8:14), following man's command (5:11), trusting in their own way (10:13), and refusing to return to God (11:5). So Hosea encourages Israel to give up debauchery (4:11), get their priorities right (6:6), seek (10:12) and press on to know the LORD (2:19–20; 6:1–3), and walk in God's ways (14:9).

KEY VERSES

"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice, With lovingkindness and with compassion, And I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness. **Then you will know the LORD**" (2:19–20 RCL).

Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case (*rib* in Hebrew) against the inhabitants of the land, **Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land** (4:1).

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. **Since you have forgotten the law of your God**, I also will forget your children (4:6).

Harlotry, wine, and new wine **take away the understanding** [literally, *leb 'the heart'*] (4:11).

I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot Or your brides when they commit adultery, For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots And offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes; **So the people without understanding (*bin* in Hebrew) are ruined** [literally, 'thrown down headfirst'] (4:14).

Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, **And they do not know the LORD** (5:4).

Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, **Because he was determined to follow man's command** (5:11).

"Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal *us*; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage *us*. He will revive *us* after two days; He will raise *us* up on the third day That we may live before Him. **So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD**. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to *us* like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth" (6:1–3).

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (6:6).

They cry out to Me, "**My God, we of Israel know Thee!**" Israel has rejected the good; The enemy will pursue him" (8:2–3).

Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law, **They are regarded as a strange thing** (8:12).

For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities, But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings (8:14).

My God will cast them away **Because they have not listened to Him**; And they will be wanderers among the nations (9:17).

Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, **For it is time to seek the LORD** Until He comes to rain righteousness on you (10:12).

You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies. **Because you have trusted in your way**, in your numerous warriors, Therefore, a tumult will arise among your people, And all your fortresses will be destroyed, As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, *When mothers Were dashed in pieces with their children*. Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off (10:13–15).

Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; **But they did not know that I healed them** (11:3).

They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria—he will be their king, **Because they refused to return to Me** (11:5).

So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them to *the One* on high, None at all exalts *Him* (11:7).

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them (14:9).

COMMENTS

A knowledge of God comes from a close relationship with God. In this betrothal God gives a bride-price of righteousness, justice, covenant-loyalty, compassion, and faithfulness to Israel at the start of the millennial Kingdom. With this newly created character, Israel will be faithful and come to know their God (cf. Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–28).

Rib is a divine lawsuit for breach of covenant (cf. 8:1). Hosea brings charges (no faithfulness, kindness, or knowledge) on God's behalf. He is the prosecuting attorney, Israel is the defendant, and God is the Plaintiff and Judge.

Israel's ministry as "a kingdom of priests" is conditioned on obedience (Ex 19:5–6) and the knowledge of God (Hos 4:6). No knowledge, no obedience, no ministry. "Destroyed" refers to the fall of Israel in 722 BC (cf. 1:4; 10:7; 13:16).

Debauchery takes away your desire for God (*leb* refers to your will, mind, conscience, and emotions).

Hebrew *labat*, translated "ruined," probably has the sense of 'humiliated in front of others,' as in "The one who talks foolishly will be thrown down headfirst" (Prov 10:8, 10 GW). To be thrown headlong to the ground is humiliating and shows God's exasperation. This is another warning of the coming fall of Samaria and Israel to the Assyrians.

The decisions you make, habits you form, and things you do are like a net: they entangle, entrap, and keep you from returning to God. And if you don't return to God, you won't know Him. It's hard but not impossible to break free.

You can obey the commands of men or God. The former brings crushing human oppression as judgment from God.

Hosea exhorts Israel (1) to return to God, (2) to pursue and to acquire the knowledge of God, and (3) promises healing of past judgments and blessings for the suffering nation (cf. Jer 3:22). This is in keeping with the promise of blessing for obeying the covenant: "If you . . . keep My commandments . . . then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit" (Lev 26:3–4; cf. Dt 28:12).

God likes sacrifices but desires loyalty and knowing Him even more. Knowledge is more important than sacrifice.

They have deceived themselves into thinking they know God (His desires, commandments, and will). They don't.

They are not familiar with the written Scriptures—their Bible (cf. 2 Kings 22:13; 2 Chr 15:3; 17:9; 34:21).

God is forgotten when other things become the focus of your life (2:13; 8:14). "*As they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, And being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore, they forgot Me" (13:6).

God rejects them not as his people (Lev 26:44) but as ministering priests (Hos 4:6), a reference to the curses of the Covenant for disobedience (Dt 28:15–68); namely, the fifth cycle of discipline (Lev 26:27–33; cf. Dt 28:63–68).

Hosea exhorts Israel to repent, sow righteousness, and then reap kindness (*hesed*) and righteousness (promised covenant blessings) from God. They have been unproductive for years, like fallow ground. Seek God and be blessed!

Israel is reaping what they've sown and it doesn't taste good—the fruit of lies instead of the fruit of righteousness. Instead of trusting God, they trust in themselves and their military might. But they are trusting a lie; their army can't save them because God will soon bring invasion, the destruction of their fortifications, and death—as at Beth-arbel (this past event cannot be identified with certainty). Because of their great wickedness, Hosea predicts the coming death of their last king, Hoshea, and the fall of Israel to King Shalmaneser of Assyria (2 Kings 17:1–6).

Israel didn't know God healed their nation after times of apostasy and discipline (cf. 6:1; 14:4; Dt 28:35; 2 Chr 7:14).

God threatens to implement the fifth cycle of discipline in the northern kingdom for prolonged disobedience (as promised in Lev 26:27–33 and Dt 28:64–67). Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Cf. 9:17.

Preaching, exhortation, and warnings from the prophets are of no avail. No one listens, returns, or exalts God.

Be wise and walk in the ways of the LORD. This is the only path to national blessings (5:1–6:3; 10:12; 14:1–8). "Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually" (12:6).