

# A Treacherous Bow

Hosea 6:4 – 7:16

Imagine being a parent. You love your children more than anything. You want nothing more than to shower them with love, the wisdom to succeed, and protection from anyone or anything that might seek to harm them. But... they refuse to listen to you. In fact, they persist in doing the opposite of what you say. No matter what you say or how you say it, they keep going down a road of heartache and destruction. Shaking your head, you might quietly ask yourself, "What am I going to do with this rebellious child of mine?" God asked some similar questions.

Read Hosea 6:4-6.

God had given the Children of Israel everything they needed for success.

1. Read the following verses and summarize **some** of what God had done for His people up to this point.

Exodus 3:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Exodus 13:18,21 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Exodus 14:22-30 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Exodus 16:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 17:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 19:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 20:22,24 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Exodus 28:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 34:10-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Exodus 40:34-38 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Joshua 21:43-45 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Read Leviticus 26:1-13 and briefly summarize the blessings God intended to give the people of Israel.

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3. Read Leviticus 26:16-33 and briefly summarize the judgment and discipline that would befall them if they did not remain faithful to Him.

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4. Now, go back and carefully read Leviticus 26:14-15. List what they would have to do for judgment and discipline to come upon them.

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It is often said that the God of the Old Testament is full of wrath, while the God of the New Testament is a God of love. But that couldn't be further from the truth. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God has always been long-suffering and compassionate. He never disciplined or judged His people past the point of their repentance. The moment they cried out to Him, He delivered them. He is a loving Father who disciplines His children for their own good.

5. What is the purpose of BOTH the Old and New Testaments? (2 Timothy 3:15)

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6. Before we continue, take a moment to reflect on God's personal pursuit of you. Consider the times He has shown long-suffering, discipline, mercy, and grace; then use the space provided to journal your thoughts.

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7. How does God describe His wayward children in Hosea 6:4?

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The word *faithfulness* in this verse is the Hebrew word *hesed*, which is also translated as *mercy* in Hosea 6:6. It is defined as the affection of Israel to love God, and show piety (deep reverence and devotion to God, holy, and characterized by outward action).

8. **THINK:** What do you think God meant to express about Israel's devotion to Him with these two similes?

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9. How did God deal with their here today, gone tomorrow affection that was plagued with insincerity and empty rituals? (v. 5)

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**Hewn** – metaphorical hew in pieces, figurative of attacking people by agency of prophets

**Slain** – of God's slaying in judgment (stern and inscrutable)

**Judgments** – sentence, decision of judgment

10. **THINK:** What do you think God’s judgments “are like light that goes forth” means?

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**Knowledge** – in the highest sense, knowledge of God (including obedience)

11. Judgment was never what God wanted. What did He want? (v. 6) Remember that the word translated *mercy* is the Hebrew word *hesed*.

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Israel’s number one priority was to “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deut. 6:4-5 NSAB) Following the law, recognizing the feasts, and the giving of offerings and sacrifices were all meant to be expressions of that love. Now they served other gods while offering empty rituals to the One True God. Hosea reminded the people of his day that God desires *hesed*. Jesus reminded the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13 and again in Matthew 12:7 of the same thing, and we also need to be reminded today. Too many of us spend the majority of our time serving other gods while merely fulfilling our Christian obligations.

12. Pray and ask the Lord to show you where your heart is divided, then ask yourself if you are ready to turn away from those idols to serve the One True God with wholehearted godly affection and devotion, which is always characterized by obedience.

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Read Hosea 6:7-11.

13. Verse 7 starts with the word *but*; ‘But like men’ (or Adam). What did the priests do instead? (v. 7-9)

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14. How did God summarize the condition of Israel? (v. 10)

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**Harvest** – what is reaped, figurative of punishment

15. **THINK:** Why do you think God continually warned Judah? (v. 11)

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Have you ever watched as someone made one bad decision after another, only to end up fully entangled in a life of sin and thought to yourself, “I would never do something like that”? If so, you have a lot in common with the people of Judah. They looked at the mess that was Israel and shook their heads in disgust. This is where the slope of bad decisions starts.

16. Read the following verses and record what you learn about a prideful and haughty spirit.

Proverbs 11:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Proverbs 18:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Proverbs 21:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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One hundred and thirty-six years later, Judah found themselves in Babylonian captivity. While they were allowed to return to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, seventy years later, the Roman Empire destroyed Judah and Jerusalem in 70 AD. One thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight years ago, Israel ceased to exist as a nation.

Read Hosea 7:1-3.

**Heal** – figurative, heal hurts of a nation, involving restored favor and forgiveness

**Samaria** – the capital city of Israel

17. When it was in God’s heart to heal and forgive Israel, what was revealed to be in their hearts, versus a heart of repentance? (v. 1)

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18. What was at the root of this unbridled sin? (v. 2)

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Somewhere along the line, they forgot that God sees and knows everything. They assumed that as long as they continued to offer sacrifices and observe the Lord’s feasts, their extracurricular activities would not be a big deal. We might be able to hide our sin from the people at work, from our friends, and perhaps even from our closest family members, but we cannot hide anything from the Lord.

19. Be honest. What sins have you justified or overlooked because you have convinced yourself they aren’t that big of a deal? What about right now, what sin are you fighting to not recognize as sin in your own life? Remember that God’s heart is to heal and forgive you. What will you do?

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20. Read Romans 13:3-4. According to these verses, what is the role of the appointed authority over a nation?

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21. How did the iniquity and wickedness of Israel affect their leaders? (Hosea 7:3)

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22. **THINK:** What role do you think Israel's leadership played in Israel's downfall?

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23. Read the following verses and record what you learn about the impact of good and bad leadership.

Proverbs 11: 3

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Proverbs 16:12

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Proverbs 28:2

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Proverbs 29:18

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God uses three more similes to describe Israel's lust, pride, and foolishness.

24. Read Hosea 7:4-7 and answer the following questions.

a. How did the people of Israel prepare their hearts? (v. 6a)

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The *heart* is the seat of man's appetites, emotions, and passions. In other words, they were heating up their appetites, emotions, and passion.

b. Who heats the oven (heart)? (v. 4b)

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c. Describe the actions of the baker. (4c, 6c)

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It seems there is a period of rest described, in which the fire is no longer stirred. During this time, the baker kneads the dough and allows it to rise while he sleeps.

d. But what is the status of the oven (heart) in the morning? (6d, 7a)

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e. What is the status of the person? (6b)

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25. **THINK:** If a person has prepared his appetites, emotions, and passions by heating them, then waits while the dough leavens (leaven always represents sin in the Old Testament), what do you think they are lying in wait for?

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The Apostle Paul describes his struggle with sin as wanting to do right but doing wrong (Romans 7:18-20). But here, God describes the people of Israel, including their rulers, as people who prepared their hearts for sin and looked for opportunities to carry out their unbridled passions.

26. Read Hosea 7:8-10. **THINK:** The cake mentioned in verse 8 is similar to a pancake. What do you think is meant by the phrase, people have mixed themselves with other nations and become like a 'cake unturned' (hard and burnt on one side, raw and soft on the other)?

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Israel's sin had taken away all their sense. Like an unturned pancake, they were good for nothing. They welcomed foreigners to be their spouses and protectors, but those foreign nations took all their strength and resources for themselves.

Read Hosea 7:11-16.

27. Why did God compare Israel to a silly dove? (v. 11) \_\_\_\_\_

28. Note what God did and record how Israel responded to Him.

God	Israel
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	13b,d
I redeemed them	v. 13f
I disciplined and strengthened their arms	v. 15

29. Record the tragic choices of Israel. (v. 14 and 16)

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They wailed upon their beds, but didn't cry out to the One who loved them. They returned, but not to the One True God, and so they became a treacherous bow that always misses its mark.

# A Closer Look at Humility and Pride

Hosea 7:10

30. Skim through all the chapters we have studied so far and list all the examples of Israel's pride.

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Pride can have two meanings. Positive pride would be taking pride in a job well done or when your grandson wins the championship football game.

31. Read Galatians 6:4 and 2 Corinthians 7:4. What are the examples of positive pride in these passages?

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There is also the pride that God hates. This is the pride we see in Hosea. This kind of pride is sinful because it credits us instead of God, who deserves all the glory.

32. In your own words, what do you think leads to sinful pride, and what are the characteristics of a prideful person?

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As Israel's history shows us, pride leads to forgetting the Lord and everything He has done. To be prideful is to be haughty, arrogant, conceited, and self-seeking. Satan was kicked out of Heaven because of pride.

33. Read the following verses. What do you learn about pride?

Psalm 10:4

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Proverbs 21:24

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Proverbs 16:18

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34. Now read Proverbs 16:19. What is better?

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Wrongful pride is a sin and does not bring glory to God. Yet, we all struggle with it. If we didn't, Jesus would not have needed to instruct us to deny ourselves so that we could follow Him.

If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.

- C.S. Lewis

35. In what areas do you find yourself struggling with pride? How can you give God the glory He deserves instead?

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36. Read the following verses. What do they teach you about humility, and what are you being called to do according to these scriptures?

Proverbs 27:1-2

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Romans 12:3

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2 Corinthians 10:17-18

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Philippians 2:3

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It has been said that humility cannot be pursued; it must be realized. It is by looking into God's perfect Word that we realize we are prideful, and it is by looking at His perfect Son that we realize what it means to be humble.

37. Read Philippians 2:5-11. Finish your study with a commitment to live like Jesus.

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