

Hosea 7:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Analysis

Returning to nothing: 'They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.' They turn (שׁוב, shuv) but not 'ל' (al, to/toward) Most High—turning without destination, reform without repentance. The simile: like **קְשֵׁת רַמִּיָּה** (remiyyah qeshet, deceitful/slack bow)—weapon failing when needed, arrow missing mark. Leaders fall by sword because of tongue's rage (**זָהָם לְשׁוֹנוֹם**, za'am leshonam)—arrogant speech against God or deceitful diplomacy. Egypt mocks them—those whose help they sought become their scoffers. This demonstrates futility of superficial change. Only Spirit-wrought transformation truly turns us to God (Acts 26:18).

Historical Context

Israel's repeated attempts at reform without genuine repentance characterize their history. The 'deceitful bow' perfectly describes unreliable alliance partner—Israel oscillating between Egypt and Assyria, trusted by neither. Hoshea's appeal to Egypt while vassal to Assyria (2 Kings 17:4) proved disastrous. The 'rage of their tongue' may reference blasphemous arrogance or diplomatic deception. That Egypt—ancient oppressor—mocks them demonstrates complete reversal: from delivered people to derided nation. Archaeologically, Israel disappears from historical record after 722 BC—ultimate derision. This demonstrates that turning without repenting to God leads nowhere productive.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does 'returning but not to the Most High' describe superficial reformation that changes behavior without transforming heart?
2. What makes a person or community a 'deceitful bow'—unreliable, failing when needed—and how does Christ make us trustworthy?

Interlinear Text

לֵא	יָשַׁבְוּ	לְ	עַל	שְׁתִּים	בָּוֹא
They return	H3808	but not to the most High	H5920	bow	H1961
	H7725				H7198
רָמִים	הַ	יַפְלֵל	בְּחַבְבָּה	שְׁרִירָה	מִזְרָחָם
they are like a deceitful	shall fall	by the sword	their princes	for the rage	
H7423	H5307	H2719	H8269	H2195	
לְשׂוֹן	מִ	לְעֵגָם	בָּאָרֶץ	מִצְרַיִם:	מִצְרַיִם:
of their tongue	this	shall be their derision	in the land	of Egypt	
H3956	H2097	H3933	H776	H4714	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 78:57 (Parallel theme): But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Hosea 9:3 (References Egypt): They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.

Psalms 73:9 (Parallel theme): They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

Ezekiel 23:32 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

Psalms 12:4 (Parallel theme): Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

Hosea 9:6 (References Egypt): For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

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