

“Israel’s History of Deceit & Disobedience”

Hosea 12

8.13.23

“Like father, like son” is an expression that indicates that fathers and sons look like each other or that sons behave like their fathers. Many years ago, I was working on my laptop in the dining room. As I was working away listening to worship music, out of the blue Mac came and sat in a chair right next to me. **[Show picture]** Like father, like son.

If the father is a good man to say “like father, like son” is a compliment to the son. But if the father is badly behaved and has a poor reputation, to say “like father, like son” is not a positive comment.



Sometimes it is not just the father’s behavior that is passed down one generation; sometimes good or bad behavior is passed on from generation to generation.

In chapter 12, Hosea uses Israel’s ancestor Jacob to demonstrate their behavior. Hosea is going to show how the Israelites acted just like Jacob. And then Hosea is going to show how Jacob changed his ways but the Israelites had not. Jacob became a man of God; the Israelites remained far from God.

In chapter 12, we will see three similarities between Israel and Jacob- “Like father, like son.” And one important difference between Israel and Jacob. Please turn to Hosea chapter 12 and keep it open as we will read it along the way. Page 758 in the red Bibles.

The first similarity:

Israel like Jacob was deceitful.

Jacob was the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham. Rebekah was having a difficult pregnancy so she sought the Lord for understanding. “The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” ²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob.” Genesis 25:22–26 (ESV)

Jacob reached up and grabbed a hold of Esau’s heel as he was being born. The name Jacob means “He grasps the heel” which is another way of saying someone who “supplants or circumvents” or someone who “deceives.” It was not a positive name back then but it sure is now.

A definition of deceit is “The deception of others by individuals, usually for the sake of their own interest, safety or pride.”

Jacob was a deceiver in life. When Isaac was old and blind, he wanted to bless his oldest son Esau. Isaac "called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, ⁴ and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.” Genesis 27:1–4 (ESV)

After Esau left, Rebekah went to her favorite son Jacob and told him to work with her to gain the first born’s blessing. At first Jacob was leery of the plan. He was concerned his father would know for sure that he was not Esau. Esau was a very hairy man. How hairy was he? He was so hairy he could go into a restaurant without a shirt and be served. He was so hairy people mistook him for Bigfoot. He was so hairy he used shampoo called, “Head & Shoulders, Arms, Knees and Toes.”

To deceive Isaac, Jacob put on one of Esau's shirts that smelled like him and goat skins to cover his arms. Isaac made Jacob come close so he could smell and touch his son to make sure it was Esau. Isaac was deceived and gave the blessing meant for Esau to Jacob. "May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. ²⁹ Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" Genesis 27:28–29 (ESV)

As soon as Jacob left, Esau showed up with the meal that he had killed and prepared. Esau asked for his dad's blessing. Isaac responded, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." ³⁶ Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Genesis 27:35–36 (ESV)

Jacob was a deceiver. His bad example was to challenge the Israelites that they were "like father, like son."

Hosea writes, "Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One. ¹ Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt. ² The Lord has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. ³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God...⁷ A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress." Hosea 11:12–12:3, 7 (ESV)

Israel was known for their lies and deceit by God. They multiplied falsehood. They cheated others, often those who were poor, by using false balances used in the marketplace to weigh goods and money. The Israelites were using weights too heavy

when selling goods, meaning the customers had to pay more than what it actually cost. And they would use weights too light when they bought goods- meaning they paid less than the price. They were deceiving customers and those that sold goods. They were gaining wealth by deception.

In any act of deceit is a lie. “The book *The Day American Told the Truth* says that 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial, and 36 percent lie about important matters; 86 percent lie regularly to parents, 75 percent to friends, 73 percent to siblings, and 69 percent to spouses.”

God hates lying and deceit because they are not acts of love. Love seeks the best for others. Lying and deceit seeks the best for self at the expense of others. “You will destroy those who tell lies. The Lord detests murderers and deceivers.” Psalm 5:6 (NLT),

“No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.” Psalm 101:7 (ESV)

God never lies. He never deceives. As God’s children we are to resemble Him. Like Father, like son or like father, like daughter.

Do you resemble Jacob and Israel with a habit of lying and being deceitful? The Lord sees and is not pleased. Repent. Speak the truth. Don’t deceive. Do right and He will take care of your needs.

The second similarity:

Israel like Jacob took matters into his own hands.

Jacob got ahead by taking advantage of his brother Esau. He tried earlier by grabbing at his brother’s heel as he exited the womb. But that didn’t work.

When the brothers were older, Esau had been out hunting, trying to get meat for the family and was hungry. He needed a Snickers but it didn't exist yet. Jacob used his brother's hunger against him. "Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" Genesis 25:29–30 Jacob, responded like someone who works at Chick-Fil-A, "My pleasure" and handed his hard working brother the stew right?

Nope, verse 31, "Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." To ask for the birthright meant Jacob had been plotting how to get it for a while. He wanted first born status. ³² Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." Genesis 25:32–34 (ESV)

It was a big deal to be the first born son. The birthright consisted of a double portion of the father's inheritance. The first born was also given authority over the others in the family. When the father died, the oldest son would be in charge.

Esau wasn't going to starve to death. He could put his hunger in check and hustle home where mom would give him some food. But Esau cared more about his stomach than his privilege. Hebrews 12:16 (The Message) gives the warning, "Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God's lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite."

Israel was playing a dangerous game with their enemies Assyria and Egypt. Instead of going to God, they took matters into their own hands. Verse 1, "...They make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt." The word covenant should light up your brain. Israel had a covenant with God and yet they broke it and instead made a covenant with their enemies. They put their trust in a covenant with a wicked nation. Well, not completely, for they sent olive oil to Egypt to hedge their bet. If they could

make an alliance with Egypt then maybe if Assyria turned on Israel, Egypt would come and help. Or if Egypt attacked, maybe Assyria would come to their aid.

How do you respond when a problem or situation arises? Do you quickly engage your brain to try and find a solution or do you go to God for His wisdom? Or do you only go to God IF you cannot get yourself out of the situation?

If that is how you operate, then you are taking matters into your own hands. You are demonstrating independence from God. You are trusting in yourself which does not please God. What pleases God is when you come to Him right away; when you seek His face and His wisdom.

The third similarity:

Israel like Jacob was proud.

Jacob was proud. He got the things he wanted through his own shrewd dealings. Most of his life, Jacob was in control. He thought he was smarter than others.

Like father, like son, Israel too was proud. "Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin." Hosea 12:8 (ESV) Israel thought too highly of their abilities to accumulate wealth. They thought they were self-made people who became rich by their own skill. Their habitual lying and deception hardened their hearts so that they could not see their own sins. Notice the end of verse 8, "In all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin."

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."

Proud people will not submit to God. They live their lives by whatever rules they want. A loving Heavenly Father will help proud people get a dose of reality because He is opposed to the proud. He will remind us that “He is God and we are not.”

We see the similarities in Israel and Jacob. Now let’s look at one very important difference- a difference that makes all the difference in the world.

The difference,

Israel was not like Jacob who turned back to God.

Hosea describes what Jacob did in 12:4–5 (ESV), "He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us— ⁵ the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name."

Jacob, his four wives and 11 children were heading back to his hometown. Taking matters in his own hands, he sent word to Esau. “And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, ⁴ instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’” ⁶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.” ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, ⁸ thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.” Genesis 32:3–8 (ESV)

Jacob wasn’t sure he could talk his way out of this mess. So Jacob turned to God. “And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of

Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. ¹² But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" Genesis 32:9–12 (ESV),

Jacob remembered God's promise to him in Bethel years earlier when he escaped to Uncle Laban's home.

Even though he prayed, Jacob went back to his scheming how to deceptively bribe Esau by sending him a large gift of animals. He set his animals and family in multiple groups with the less important in the front. He would be the furthest back by himself. That night he crossed the Jabbok River to be by himself. That night God appeared as a Angel of the Lord and wrestled with Jacob throughout the night until morning light rose. Jacob "overcame" or prevailed over the angel—not in the sense of defeating him but in getting the blessing he wanted as he "wept and begged for his favor" (Hos. 12:4). It was after that struggle that the angel of the Lord said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Genesis 32:28

Jacob was no longer called heel grabber or deceiver. He was to be called Israel.

The Israelites struggled with God. They fought against His commands, His covenant. And here they were in a dire predicament- Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south and instead of repenting and going back to God like Jacob, they kept digging a bigger sin hole for themselves.

Hosea stops to remind the Israelites exactly who this God is. Verse 5, "The LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name." Hosea 12:5 (ESV). Whenever you see LORD in all caps in your Bible that is the word for Yahweh- the name God gave to Moses from the burning bush. The "God of hosts" refers to the God of the angel armies. God is the Commander in Chief over the angelic army- the greatest army in existence. No human army is their rival. That includes Assyria or Egypt.

Hosea called them to return back to God and do good. “So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.” Hosea 12:6 (ESV)

You may think that turning back to God is all our work. But God is involved in helping you to turn back. Maybe He brings difficulties like health or financial issues or relationship issues to bring you back. Sometimes it requires that He remove the idols that you have been leaning on so that you can look up and see He is present and then turn back.

Even though the Israelites were faithful to idols and unfaithful to God; even though they dishonored God and cheated His people; even though He sent prophets to call them back and they treated His spokespeople horrendously; even though they trusted in other countries instead of Him, God wanted them back. He wanted them to return to Him and was doing His part to help them come to their senses and return.

Israel didn't return to God and the rest of chapter 12 describes the consequences of their disobedience.

Application:

First, Hosea teaches us that it doesn't matter what you have done. It doesn't matter if you have lived like Israel or worse, God is committed to your repentance because He loves you. He wants the best for you and your best is being right with God. Return back to God. He is waiting to reconnect with you.

Second, act in love toward God and others and work for justice. You cannot have a close relationship with God and cheat or lie or deceive others. There is a direct correlation between our acts and our hearts. Out of a good heart comes good things. Out of an evil heart come evil things.

Gary Smith writes, "Most of us do not think...deceptions and lies are the tricks of criminals, lawyers on TV, and a few bad used-car salesmen. The fact is, even "good religious" people who go to church and sing beautiful songs of commitment and love to God sometimes use deceit in what they say. They lie to God and deceive other church members."

As Christ followers, we are to resemble Jesus. He never cheated people or lied or deceived. He was full of grace and truth.

The world is a deceitful place. The world is full of lies. The world is saying right is wrong and wrong is right. God is looking for His children to walk in grace and truth. Can you be counted on? We you be a light in a darkened world?

Let's pray

o.b.g.