

The Prophecies of Hosea ~ Part 9

Prediction of Captivity

10¹ *Isra’el was a luxuriant vine, freely putting forth fruit. As his fruit increased, he increased his altars; as his land got better, he improved his standing-stones.* **2** *Their heart is divided; now they will bear their guilt. He will break down their altars and destroy their standing-stones.* **3** *For now, they will say, "We have no king, because we didn't fear Adonai—and what could a king do for us, anyway?"* **4** *They mouth words, swearing falsely, making treaties. Thus, judgment spreads like poisonous weeds in the furrows of a field.*

Hosea speaks in verses 1–8. Although once a **lush vine** (cp. Isaiah 5; John 15), **Isra’el** only yielded **fruit for itself**. They had turned the **Lord’s** blessings into gifts for the calf idols of **Ba’al**. Rather than producing fruit for harvest, they were **devious** and acted like **poisonous weeds** (cp. Deuteronomy 32:32; 2 Kings 4:39; Jeremiah 2:21). They recognized no external authority (**no king**), but pretended to worship **God** with **false treaties**.

5 *The inhabitants of Shomron are frightened of the calf-gods of Beit-Aven. Its people mourn over it; its priests tremble over it, over its glory, which has left it.*

The **inhabitants of Shomron** feared **the calf of Beth-Aven**, which refers to the calf god worshiped at **Bethel**. Mourning (possibly over the mythological “death” of the god in the dry season) and rejoicing (possibly over his rising again) were likely part of fertility worship.

6 *It will be carried to Ashur as a present for a warring king. Efrayim will be put to shame, and Isra’el be ashamed of his own advice.*

For an account of **Isra’el’s** troubles with **Ashur**, see 2 Kings 15:19–20, 29; 17:3–6.

7 *Shomron’s king will perish like foam on the surface of the water.*

The life of sin is transitory.

8 *Destruction will come to the high places of Aven, that is, to the sin of Isra’el. Thorns and thistles will grow over their altars; and they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"*

When the **high places** were destroyed, the people would cry out to be buried by the very places of their idolatry (Deuteronomy 12:2; Luke 23:30).

9 *"Since the days of Giv’ah, you have sinned, Isra’el. There they took their stand. For these arrogant people at Giv’ah, war was insufficient punishment.*

God speaks in verses 9–15. Allusions to **Giv’ah** in 9:9 and 10:9 (see also 5:8) recall the civil war occasioned by a **Levite’s** concubine being raped, murdered, and cut into pieces (Judges 19–21). Like **Shamron**, **Giv’ah** was a hill with a fortress; it served as **Saul’s** capital during his kingship but was later deserted. So it represents both depravity and militarism and may have figuratively referred to **Shamron**.

10 *When I wish to, I will discipline them; and the peoples will be gathered against them to discipline them for their two crimes.* **11** *Efrayim is a well-taught cow— it loves to tread the grain, and I have spared her fair neck. But I will put Efrayim in harness, Y’hudah will have to plow, Ya’akov will harrow his own land.*

Calves were sometimes allowed to walk atop fresh grain stalks that had been laid out on the ground to separate the husks from the kernels (Micah 4:13). Little effort was involved, and the calves could eat some of the grain (Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18). **Isra'el** would cease to be like the calf and would have to plow with the yoke of discipline.

¹² If you sow righteousness for yourselves, you will reap according to grace. Break up unused ground for yourselves, because it is time to seek Adonai, till he comes and rains down righteousness upon you. ¹³ You have plowed wickedness, reaped iniquity, and eaten the fruit of lies. Because you trusted in your own way, in your large numbers of warriors,

The exhortations to *sow ... reap*, and *seek* are essentially identical in meaning. **Isra'el** was to seek *righteousness ... faithful love*, and *the Lord*. This recalls the threefold charge against **Isra'el** in 4:1 and summarizes a life that pleases **God**. But **Isra'el** had sought *wickedness ... iniquity*, and *the fruit of lies*. The latter is probably the “false fruit” of idolatry and military power, which looks good (Gen 3:6) but is unsatisfying and poisonous (Hos 10:4).

¹⁴ turmoil will erupt among your peoples, and all your fortresses will be destroyed; just as Shalman destroyed Beit-Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to pieces right along with their children. ¹⁵ Thus will be done to you, Beit-El, because of your great wickedness; at dawn the king of Isra'el will be completely cut off. ¹

The identities of **Shalman** and **Beth-Arbel** are uncertain, but **Shalman** may refer to the **Assyrian** king **Shalmaneser**. **Hosea**'s hearers were apparently familiar with the incident. **At dawn** would be when the battle started.

In a fast-paced workplace, it's easy to prioritize results over relationships, mirroring **Isra'el's** waywardness in **Hosea**. When faced with a challenging project, remind yourself to engage your team actively. Schedule regular check-ins to ensure everyone feels valued and heard, thus nurturing a sense of unity and purpose. This approach will build trust and guide you all back to collective success, reflecting **God's** intention for His people to work harmoniously and as a community.

Next, we will continue to explore **Hosea**.

¹ Hosea 10:1–15.