

Hosea 10:1 ¶ Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

I think the word “empty” is better understood from the Hebrew as spreading out with fruitfulness as translated in some other versions considering the context of the verse. Problem was that the people of Israel considered their prosperity a result of their own actions and connected to the worship of their false gods. The more prosperous they became, the more they focused on pleasing these false gods.

Again, I think we (particularly in America) today suffer from the same faulty thinking and practices. For some reason, we want to credit self or anybody or anything else rather than Almighty God for the blessings and prosperity we enjoy.

Hosea 10:2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

Hosea 10:3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

Hosea 10:4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

“Their heart is divided” – When I read this phrase, I immediately thought of the following scripture:

Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

The Hebrew indicates that to be found “faulty” is to be found “guilty.” This makes sense in the context of these verses. God has found His people guilty of sin and rebellion and is going to bring judgment upon them that will destroy the altars at which they worship their false gods as well as the images that represent them.

It seems that the prophet is saying that the people will understand that the judgment that causes them to lose self-rule under their own king will be a direct result of their rejection of God as their Lord. They rightly realize that a king is no protection against the judgment of God.

Their history proves them to be a people quick to make promises, but not reliable concerning the keeping of those promises. Their lack of integrity has resulted in a culture that lacks justice. Hemlock is a poison, so to compare “judgment” in the land as proliferating like hemlock is describing a growing culture of corruption in judgment.

Again, I can’t help but make application to America today. In my lifetime I have witnessed “judgment springing up as hemlock” that is resulting in a growing

culture of corruption in judgment in our land. I firmly believe that this is a direct result of the determined actions by our government to remove God from our schools, our government and our courts. We the people have to accept the responsibility for allowing this cancer to grow through apathy of involvement because we were wallowing in success and prosperity that we mistakenly assumed was totally a result of our own actions. We have lost sight of the fact that it is God that provides us with the talents and provisions to succeed and prosper only according to His own purposes. Personally, I believe America was allowed to grow and prosper to help provide for the establishment of the state of Israel. We have now joined the nations in pushing for the dividing of the land—an act that God specifically identifies as one that will bring down His hand of judgment.

Joel 3:2 "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land."

Ezekiel 36:5–7 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame."

Hosea 10:5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

Hosea 10:6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

Hosea 10:7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.

Hosea 10:8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

This section of verses is basically declaring that God will show the calf idol worshipped by His people (centered in Samaria) to be an impotent false god. It will be taken captive by the Assyrians along with the people of the Northern Kingdom and given to its king as a gift. (The Hebrew declares "Jareb" to be a symbolic name for Assyria.) The people of the Northern Kingdom will be shamed because of the trust that they place in this false god. They will lose their king and the altars for their false gods will be covered over as the weeds and thornbushes take over the landscape. The shame of the people will be so great that they will wish they were dead.

Hosea 10:9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

Hosea 10:10 *It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.*

Once again reference is made to the sin of the Benjamites in Gibeah against the Levite's concubine as described in Judges 19-21. It would seem that the spiritual condition of Israel had been on a downward spiral since that time except for a few times of revival under the leadership of a few godly kings in the line of David.

The NIV Commentary indicated that the "two furrows" made reference to the double sin of forsaking God and departing from the rule of David's house. God declares that it is His desire to *chastise* His people for these sins; chastisement is punishment that is meant to correct behavior.

I thought it was interesting that a couple of translations (NIV and CJB) start verse 10 with the idea of "When I please" or "when I wish to." That is a truth that we often choose to ignore. God is very clear in His word that He works according to His own plan, His own purposes, and His own timing.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"

*Isaiah 14:24 "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have **purposed**, so shall it stand:"*

*Galatians 4:4-5 "But **when the fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

*Ephesians 1:9-10 "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **That in the dispensation of the fulness of times** he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:"*

Hosea 10:11 *And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.*

Hosea 10:12 *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*

Hosea 10:13 *Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.*

I think the point of this section is that Ephraim, the people of the Northern Kingdom, had basically experienced blessing without much adversity. The Lord is basically saying that the whole nation, both Northern and Southern Kingdoms, are going to be placed under the yoke of servitude.

The Lord declares through His prophet that if His people will sow seeds of righteousness (turn back to Him in faith and obedience), they will reap mercy (God's favor and kindness). The "fallow ground" references their stubborn, rebellious hearts. They need to seek the LORD in repentance, faith and obedience and determine to maintain that spiritual mindset until He comes and fulfills His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

Up to this point in time the people had sown seeds of wickedness and reaped a culture of immorality and unrighteousness. They had followed their leaders who had deceived them into trusting in their own strength and prowess instead of trusting God in obedience—motivated, of course, by their own greed.

Will we never learn! This scenario has been repeated over and over in the history of the nations. No man or woman can handle great power and authority and be trusted to rule with impartiality and integrity without the help of Almighty God. Those who possess power and authority of any type and exercise it apart from guidance and direction from Almighty God always seek to use it for their own gain. By nature, man is basically selfish and full of pride. The following quote from the prophet Ezekiel though describing Israel I think has universal application.

Ezekiel 22:24–27 "Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."

Hosea 10:14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

Hosea 10:15 So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Though I can't definitively point to scripture regarding this reference, it is likely a reference to the campaign of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, who conquered Samaria as recorded in 2Kings 17.

The main point of these verses is that a terrible judgment was coming upon Israel because of her sin. That judgment would result in loss of sovereignty as a nation under the rule of her own king. The throne would be completely cut off.