
HOSEA 8: 1 "Put the trumpet to your lips! Something like an eagle is over the LORD's house, because they have broken my covenant, and rebelled against my law.

This chapter begins with threatening some hostile invasion in short and broken sentences, full of rapidity, and expressive of sudden danger and alarm: "The trumpet to thy mouth; he cometh as an eagle," Hos 8:1. And why? For their hypocrisy, Hos 8:2; iniquity, Hos 8:3; treason (see 2Kgs 15:13, 2Kgs 15:17) and idolatry, Hos 8:4; particularly the worshipping of the calves of Dan and Bethel, Hos 8:5, Hos 8:6. The folly and unprofitableness of pursuing evil courses is then set forth in brief but very emphatic terms. The labor of the wicked is vain, like sowing of the wind; and the fruit of it destructive as the whirlwind. Like corn blighted in the bud, their toil shall have no recompense; or if it should have a little, their enemies shall devour it, Hos 8:7. They themselves, too, shall suffer the same fate, and shall be treated by the nations of Assyria and Egypt as the vile sherds of a broken vessel, Hos 8:8, Hos 8:9. Their incorrigible idolatry is again declared to be the cause of their approaching captivity under the king of Assyria. And as they delighted in idolatrous altars, there they shall have these in abundance, Hos 8:10-14. The last words contain a prediction of the destruction of the fenced cities of Judah, because the people trusted in these for deliverance, and not in the Lord their God.

Verse 1

Set the trumpet to thy mouth - Sound another alarm. Let them know that an enemy is fast approaching.

As an eagle against the house of the Lord - of this be a prophecy against Judah, as some have supposed, then by the eagle Nebuchadnezzar is meant, who is often compared to this king of birds. See Eze 17:3; Jer 48:40; Jer 49:22; Dan 7:4.

But if the prophecy be against Israel, which is the most likely, then Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, is intended, who, for his rapidity, avarice, rapacity, and strength, is fitly compared to this royal bird. He is represented here as hovering over the house of God, as the eagle does over the prey which he has just espied, and on which he is immediately to pounce.

HOSEA 8: 2 They cry to me, 'My God, we Israel acknowledge you!'

Verse 2

Israel shalt cry - The rapidity of the eagle's flight is well imitated in the rapidity of the sentences in this place.

My God, we know thee - The same sentiment, from the same sort of persons, under the same feelings, as that in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Mat 7:29 : "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? Then will I profess unto them, I never Knew You."

HOSEA 8: 3 Israel has cast off that which is good. The enemy will pursue him.

HOSEA 8: 4 They have set up kings, but not by me. They have made princes, and I didn't approve. Of their silver and their gold they have made themselves idols, that they may be cut off.

Verse 4

They have set up kings, but not by me - Properly speaking, not one of the kings of Israel, from the defection of the ten tribes from the house of David, was the anointed or the Lord.

I knew it not - It had not my approbation. In this sense the word know is frequently understood.

That they may be cut off - That is, They shall be cut off in consequence of their idolatry.

HOSEA 8: 5 Let Samaria throw out his calf idol! My anger burns against them! How long will it be until they are capable of purity?

Verse 5

Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off - Bishop Newcome translates: "Remove far from thee thy calf, O Samaria!" Abandon thy idolatry; for my anger is kindled against thee.

How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? - How long will ye continue your guilty practices? When shall it be said that ye are from these vices? The calf or ox, which was the object of the idolatrous worship of the Israelites, was a supreme deity in Egypt; and it was there they learned this idolatry. A white ox was worshipped under the name of Apis, at Memphis; and another ox under the name of Mnevis, was worshipped at On, or Heliopolis. To Osiris the males of this genus were consecrated, and the females to Isis. It is a most ancient superstition, and still prevails in the East. The cow is a most sacred animal among the Hindoos.

HOSEA 8: 6 For this is even from Israel! The workman made it, and it is no God; indeed, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

Verse 6

The workman made it; therefore it is not God - As God signifies the supreme eternal Good, the Creator and Upholder of all things, therefore the workman cannot make Him who made all things. This is an overwhelming argument against all idols. Nothing need be added. The workman has made them; therefore they are not God.

HOSEA 8: 7 For they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. He has no standing grain. The stalk will yield no head. If it does yield, strangers will swallow it up.

Verse 7

They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind - As the husbandman reaps the same kind of grain which he has sown, but in far greater abundance, thirty, sixty, or one hundred fold; so he who sows the wind shall have a whirlwind to reap. The ventral seed shall be multiplied into a tempest so they who sow the seed of unrighteousness shall reap a harvest of judgment. This is a fine, bold, and energetic metaphor.

It hath no stalk - Nothing that can yield a blossom. If it have a blossom that blossom shall not yield fruit; if there be fruit, the sower shall not enjoy it, for strangers shall eat it. The meaning is, the labors of this people shall be utterly unprofitable and vain.

HOSEA 8: 8 Israel is swallowed up. Now they are among the nations like a worthless thing.

Verse 8

Now shall they be among the Gentiles - They shall be carried into captivity, and there be as a vessel wherein there is no pleasure; one soiled, unclean, infectious, to be despised, abhorred, not used. The allusion is to a rotten, corrupted skin-bottle; a bottle made of goat, deer, or calf hide, still commonly used in Asia and Africa. Some of them are splendidly ornamented. This is the case with one now before me made of a goat's skin well dressed, variously painted, and ornamented with leather fringes, tassels, etc. In such a bottle there might be pleasure; but the Israelites are compared to such a bottle, rough, ill-dressed, not ornamented, old, musty, and putrid. This shows the force of the comparison.

HOSEA 8: 9 For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has hired lovers for himself.

Verse 9

They are gone up to Assyria - For succor.

A wild ass alone by himself - Like that animal, jealous of its liberty, and suffering no rival. If we may credit Pliny and others, one male wild ass will keep a whole flock of females to himself, suffer no other to approach them, and even bite off the genitals of the colts, lest in process of time they should become his rivals. "Mares singuli faeminarum gregibus imperitant; timent libidinis aemulos, et ideo gravidas custodiunt, morsuque natos mares castrant." - Hist. Nat., lib. viii., c. 30. The Israelites, with all this selfishness and love of liberty, took no step that did not necessarily lead to their thralldom and destruction.

Ephraim hath hired lovers - Hath subsidized the neighboring heathen states.

HOSEA 8: 10 But although they sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them; and they begin to waste away because of the oppression of the king of mighty ones.

Verse 10

For the burden of the king of princes - The exactions of the Assyrian king, and the princes of the provinces.

HOSEA 8: 11 Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they became for him altars for sinning.

Verse 11

Many altars to sin - Though it does not appear that the Jews in Babylon were obliged to worship the idols of the country, except in the case mentioned by Daniel, yet it was far otherwise with the Israelites in Assyria, and the other countries of their dispersion. Because they had made many altars to sin while they were in their own land, they were obliged to continue in the land of their captivity a similar system of idolatry against their will. Thus they felt and saw the evil of their idolatry, without power to help themselves.

HOSEA 8: 12 I wrote for him the many things of my law; but they were regarded as a strange thing.

Verse 12

I have written to him the great things of my law - I have as it were inscribed my laws to them, and they have treated them as matters in which they had no interest.

HOSEA 8: 13 As for the sacrifices of my offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; But the LORD doesn't accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity, and punish their sins. They will return to Egypt.

Verse 13

They sacrifice flesh - Bp. Newcome translates thus: "They sacrifice gifts appointed unto me, and eat flesh." They offer to their idols the things which belong to Jehovah; or, while pretending to offer unto the Lord, they eat and drink idolatrously; and therefore the Lord will not accept them.

They shall return to Egypt - Many of them did return to Egypt after the conquest of Palestine by Shalmaneser, and many after the ruin of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; but they had in effect returned to Egypt by setting up the worship of the golden calves, which were in imitation of the Egyptian Apis.

HOSEA 8: 14 For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send a fire on his cities, and it will devour its fortresses."

Verse 14

Israel hath forgotten his Maker - And therefore built temples to other gods. Judah had lost all confidence in the Divine protection, and therefore built many fenced cities. But the fire of God's anger burnt up both the temples and the fortified cities.