
HOSEA 10: 1 Israel is a luxuriant vine that produces his fruit. According to the abundance of his fruit he has multiplied his altars. As their land has prospered, they have adorned their sacred stones.

This chapter treats of the same subject, but elegantly varied. It begins with comparing Israel to a fruitful vine but corrupted by too much prosperity, Hos 10:1. It next reproves and threatens them for their idolatry, Hos 10:2; anarchy, Hos 10:3; and breach of covenant, Hos 10:4. Their idolatry is then enlarged on; and its fatal consequences declared in terms full of sublimity and pathos, Hos 10:5-8. God is now introduced complaining of their excessive guilt; and threatening them with captivity in terms that bear a manifest allusion to their favourite idolatry, the worshiping the similitude of a calf or heifer, Hos 10:9-11. Upon which the prophet, in a beautiful allegory suggested by the preceding metaphors, exhorts them to repentance; and warns them of the dreadful consequences of their evil courses, if obstinately persisted in, Hos 10:12-15.

Verse 1

Israel is an empty vine - Or, a vine that casteth its grapes.

He bringeth forth fruit - Or, he laid up fruit for himself. He abused the blessings of God to the purposes of idolatry. He was prosperous; but his prosperity corrupted his heart.

According to the multitude of his fruit - He became idolatrous in proportion to his prosperity; and in proportion to their wealth was the costliness of their images, and the expensiveness of their idol worship.

True is the homely saying of old Quarles: - "So God's best gifts, usurp'd by wicked ones,

To poison turn, by their con-ta-gi-ons."

Another poet, of a higher order, but worse school, says: -

Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.

Ovid.

Of which the words of St. Paul are nearly a literal rendering: - Ριζα γαρ πανθων των κακων εστιν η θιλαργυρια. "For the love of money is the root of all these evils" 1Tim 6:10.

Pity that this beautiful metal, on which God has bestowed such a large portion of mineral perfection, and then hid in the earth, should, on its being dug up by man, become the incentive to so many vices, and draw away his heart from the Creator of all things, and the fountain of ineffable perfection and goodness.

HOSEA 10: 2 Their heart is divided. Now they will be found guilty. He will demolish their altars. He will destroy their sacred stones.

Verse 2

Their heart is divided - They wish to serve God and Mammon, Jehovah and Baal: but this is impossible. Now God will do in judgment what they should have done in contrition, "break down their altars, and spoil their images."

HOSEA 10: 3 Surely now they will say, "We have no king; for we don't fear the LORD; and the king, what can he do for us?"

Verse 3

We have no king - We have rejected the King of kings; and had we any king, he would be of no service to us in this state, as he would be a captive like ourselves; nor could we have the approbation of God, as we now justly lie under his displeasure.

HOSEA 10: 4 They make promises, swearing falsely in making covenants. Therefore judgement springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.

Verse 4

They have spoken words - Vain, empty, deceitful words.

Swearing falsely - This refers to the alliances made with strange powers, to whom they promised fidelity without intending to be faithful; and from whom they promised themselves protection and support, notwithstanding God was against them, and they knew it. All their words were vain, and in the end as bitter as gall.

Judgment springeth up as hemlock - As our land lies without cultivation, so that we have nothing but noxious weeds instead of crops; so we have no administration of justice. What is done in this way is a perversion of law, and is as hurtful to society as hemlock would be to animal life. All this may refer to the anarchy that was in the kingdom of Israel before Hoshea's reign, and which lasted, according to Archbishop Usher, nine years. They then, literally, "had no king."

HOSEA 10: 5 The inhabitants of Samaria will be in terror for the calves of Beth Aven; for its people will mourn over it, Along with its priests who rejoiced over it, for its glory, because it has departed from it.

Verse 5

The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear - According to Calmet, shall worship the calves of Beth-aven; those set up by Jeroboam, at Beth-el. Fear is often taken for religious reverence.

The people thereof shall mourn - On seeing the object of their worship carried into captivity, as well as themselves.

And the priests thereof - כַּמְרִים kemarim. The priests of Samaria, says Calmet, are here called kemarim, that is, black coats, or shouters, because they made loud cries in their sacrifices. Instead of יגילו יגילו yagilu, "they shall rejoice;" learned men propose ילילו ילילו yalilu, "shall howl," which is likely to be the true reading, but it is not supported by any of the MSS. yet discovered. But the exigentia loci, the necessity of the place, requires some such word.

HOSEA 10: 6 It also will be carried to Assyria for a present to a great king. Ephraim will receive shame, and Israel will be ashamed of his own counsel.

Verse 6

A present to King Jareb - See on Hos 5:13 (note). If this be a proper name, the person intended is not known in history: but it is most likely that Pul, king of Assyria, is intended, to whom Menahem, king of Israel, appears to have given one of the golden calves, to insure his assistance.

HOSEA 10: 7 Samaria and her king float away, like a twig on the water.

Verse 7

Her king is cut off as the foam - As lightly as a puff of wind blows off the foam that is formed below by a fall of water, so shall the kings of Israel be cut off. We have already seen that not less than four of them died by assassination in a very short time. See on Hos 7:7 (note).

HOSEA 10: 8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed. The thorn and the thistle will come up on their altars. They will tell the mountains, "Cover us!" and the hills, "Fall on us!"

Verse 8

The high-places - Idol temples.

Of Aven - Beth-aven.

The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars - Owing to the uncultivated and unfrequented state of the land, and of their places of idol worship, the people being all carried away into captivity. "And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, And to the hills, Fall on us." "This sublime description of fear and distress our Lord had in view, Luk 23:30, which may be a reference, and not a quotation. However, the Septuagint, in the Codex Alexandrinus, has the same order of words as occurs in the evangelist. The parallelism makes the passages more beautiful than Rev 6:16; and Isa 2:19 wants the animated dramatic form. That there is a reference to the caverns that abounded in the mountainous countries of Palestine, see the note on Isa 2:19 (note)." - Newcome.

HOSEA 10: 9 "Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah. There they remained. The battle against the children of iniquity doesn't overtake them in Gibeah.

Verse 9

Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah - This is another reference to the horrible rape and murder of the Levite's wife, Jdg 19:13, Jdg 19:14.

There they stood - Only one tribe was nearly destroyed, viz., that of Benjamin. They were the criminals, the children of iniquity; the others were faultless, and stood only for the rights of justice and mercy.

HOSEA 10: 10 When it is my desire, I will chastise them; and the nations will be gathered against them, when they are bound to their two transgressions.

Verse 10

When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows - "When they are chastised for their two iniquities," i.e., the calves in Dan and Beth-el. - Newcome. But this double iniquity may refer to what Jeremiah says, Jer 11:13 : "My people have committed two evils." -

1. They have forsaken me.
 2. They have joined themselves to idols.
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HOSEA 10: 11 Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh; so I will put a yoke on her beautiful neck. I will set a rider on Ephraim. Judah will plough. Jacob will break his clods.

Verse 11

Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught - One thoroughly broken in to the yoke.

And loveth to tread out - Goes peaceably in the yoke; and is pleased because, not being muzzled, she eats of the corn.

I passed over upon her fair neck - I brought the yoke upon it, that she should not tread out the corn merely, but draw the plough and drag the harrow. These operations of husbandry are all referred to here, with some others. Ephraim shall tread out the corn, that there may be seed for the fields.

Judah shall plough - That the furrows may receive it.

Jacob shall break his clods - Harrow - that the seed may be covered with the mould.

Israel very frequently made great depredations on Judah; and as this heifer loved to tread out the corn, and not plough, it is therefore added that he should be made to plough, be put under the yoke, namely, that of the Assyrians. What is added, "Judah and Jacob shall plough for themselves," means,

that Judah should not now plough for Israel, but for himself; as Israel shall no more make depredations upon him. - Dodd.

HOSEA 10: 12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness. Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and rains righteousness on you.

Verse 12

Sow to yourselves in righteousness - Let the seed you sow be of the best kind, and in just measure.

Reap in mercy - By the blessing of God on this ploughing, sowing, and harrowing, you may expect a good crop in harvest.

Break up your fallow ground - Do not be satisfied with a slight furrow; let the land that was fallowed (slightly ploughed) be broken up again with a deep furrow.

For it is time to seek the Lord - This should be immediately done: the season is passing; and if you do not get the seed in the ground, the early rain will be past, and your fields will be unfruitful.

Rain righteousness upon you - God will give you the early rain in due time, and in proper measure. Here are the metaphors, and the application cannot be difficult.. Here are ploughing, fallowing, sowing, harrowing, watering, reaping, threshing, and feeding on the produce of well-directed labor. All may be applied to the human heart, and the work of God upon it. Correction, contrition, conversion, receiving the grace of Christ, bringing forth fruit, etc.

HOSEA 10: 13 You have ploughed wickedness. You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, for you trusted in your way, in the multitude of your mighty men.

Verse 13

Ye have ploughed wickedness - Ye have labored sinfully.

Ye have reaped iniquity - The punishment due to your iniquity.

Ye have eaten the fruit of lies - Your false worship and your false gods have brought you into captivity and misery.

Because thou didst trust in thy way - Didst confide in thy own counsels, and in thy mighty men, and not in the God who made you.

HOSEA 10: 14 Therefore a battle roar will arise among your people, and all your fortresses will be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth Arbel in the day of battle. The mother was dashed in pieces with her children.

Verse 14

Shall a tumult arise - The enemy shall soon fall upon thy people, and take all thy fortified places.

As Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel - Some think that this refers to Jerubbaal, or Gideon's victory over Zalmunna, general of the Midianites; see Jdg 7:8. Others think that an allusion is made here to the destruction of Arbela, a city of Armenia, by Shalmaneser, here called Shalman; and this while he was only general of the Assyrian forces, and not yet king. I think the history to which this refers is unknown. It seems that it was distinguished by some remarkable ferocities.

The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children - But when, where, how, and by whom, still remain unknown. Conjecture in such a case must be useless.

HOSEA 10: 15 So Bethel will do to you because of your great wickedness. At daybreak the king of Israel will be destroyed.

Verse 15

So shall Beth-el do unto you - This shall be the consequence of your idolatry.

In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off - Suddenly, unexpectedly. Hoshea, the king of Israel, shall be cut off by the Assyrians. There are some allusions to facts in this chapter, which cannot be easily verified, as we have not sufficient acquaintance with the history of those times.