

Hosea 10

Destruction of Idolatrous Cultic Objects

Last week in Hosea 9



Chapter 9 focused on worship and the prophets.

Israel is told not to rejoice or exult.

Their offerings will not be accepted because they are unclean and tainted by cultic practices. Israel has prostituted herself and is guilty of idolatry. Israel has abandoned the Lord.

There was a prophecy of the people being taken away to Egypt and Assyria where they will be unable to make offerings to the Lord. The bread would be like “mourner’s bread.”

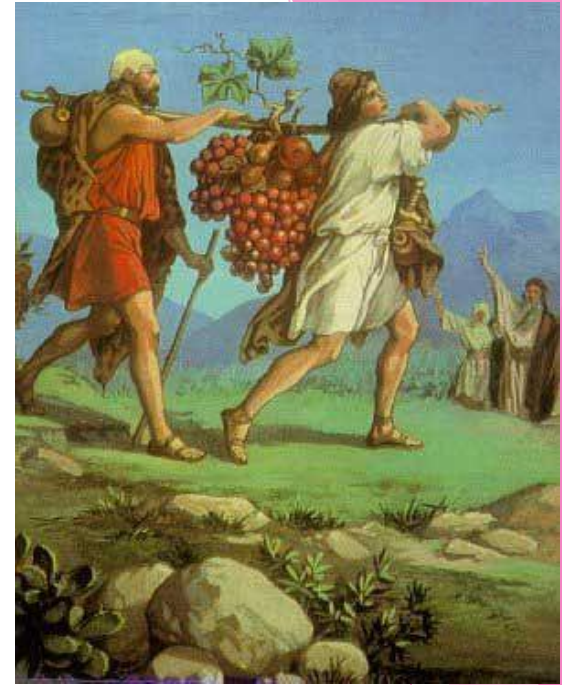
Chapter 9



- ▶ Events in the past set the stage for current woes:
- ▶ Baal Peor - Israelite men are seduced by pagan women and succumb to worship of Baal. (Num 23-25)
- ▶ Gilgal- King Saul rejects God's command twice in battles. (1 Sam 13, 1 Sam 15)
- ▶ Gibeah- atrocities noted in Judges 19-20 lead to the rape and death of a woman and ultimately to civil war that almost eliminated the tribe of Benjamin.
- ▶ The ultimate fate will be deportation and a dry, infertile, and devastated land.
- ▶ (Oh the irony! Worship of the god of fertility led to this)

Hosea 10:1-2

- ▶ Israel is a luxuriant vine whose fruit matches its growth. The more abundant his fruit, the more altars he built; The more productive his land, the more sacred pillars he set up.
- ▶² Their heart is false! Now they will pay for their guilt: God will break down their altars and destroy their sacred pillars.



Sacred Pillars?

At one time stone pillars were used as memorials, to mark a place as sacred.



Gezer
archeological site
near Judah

Gen 28: 18-22: So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You. (After his dream of a stairway to heaven)



Joshua 24:26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord. (This was at Shechem at the covenant renewal.)

Sacred Poles - Asherah Poles

- ▶ **Asherah** in *multiple* ancient Semitic religions, is a mother goddess who appears in a number of ancient sources.
- ▶ She is often referred to as the **Queen of Heaven**, or as the consort/wife or spouse of the god *El and Baal*.
- ▶ **Asherah is often thought of as a fertility goddess.** The traditional interpretation of the Biblical text is that the Israelites imported pagan elements such as the Asherah poles from the surrounding Canaanites.
- ▶ In Jeremiah 7:18 women knead dough and make raisin cakes for the Queen of Heaven.



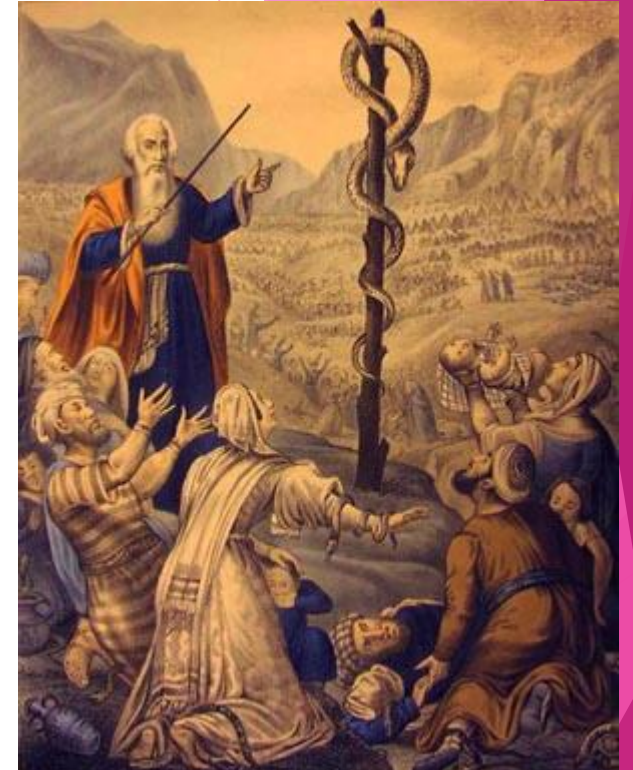
2 Chronicles 34:1-5

¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ² He did what was right in the LORD's sight, walking in the way of David his father, not turning right or left. ³ In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a youth, he began to seek after the God of David his father. Then in his twelfth year he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the asherahs, and the carved and molten images. ⁴ In his presence, the altars of the Baals were torn down; the incense stands erected above them he broke down; the asherahs and the carved and molten images he smashed and beat into dust, which he scattered over the tombs of those who had sacrificed to them; ⁵ and the bones of the priests he burned upon their altars. (Reigned 641-610 BC)



Moses and the Bronze Serpent

- ▶ When the Israelites were bitten by snakes in the desert, God commanded that a bronze serpent be hung on a pole. The people who looked at it in faith would live (Numbers 21:9). But later in history, the bronze snake became an idol, so it had to be destroyed (2 Kings 18:4).
- ▶ Another sacred pole.....



Hosea 10:3-4

▶ For now they will say,
“We have no king!
Since we do not fear the LORD,
the king—what could he do for us?”



Israel no longer acknowledges a divine King. Worse than lack of knowledge, this is apostacy; a choice, a lack of all faith in the power of the LORD.

▶
4 They make promises,
swear false oaths, and make covenants,
While lawsuits sprout
like poisonous weeds in the furrows of a field!



They commit perjury and false promises and treaties. Justice too has been perverted.

Hosea 10:5-6



- ▶ The inhabitants of Samaria are afraid for the calf of Beth-aven; Its people mourn for it and its idolatrous priests wail over it, —over its glory which has departed from it.



Mourning a calf, or Baal, refers to a myth about the death of Baal

- ▶ ⁶ It too will be carried to Assyria, as an offering to the **Great King**. **Ephraim will be put to shame, Israel will be shamed by his schemes.**



The gold calves are being taken to Assyria as payments of tribute. It was hoped that this would prevent total destruction of Israel. The Great King is the Assyrian King.

Mourning Baal... a Canaanite myth

- ▶ Mourning Baal may refer to a Canaanite myth where Baal goes to battle with Mot, the personification of Death.
- ▶ Mot defeats Baal. Then Ananth, **the goddess of love and war and the sister of Baal**, brutally kills Mot, grinds him up and scatters his ashes.
- ▶ Baal returns to Mount Saphon.
- ▶ Mot, having recovered from being ground up and scattered, challenges Baal again.
- ▶ Baal refuses to battle again. Mot submits to Baal's power and authority.
- ▶ Baal rules again!



Baal, god of storms and fertility



No image for Mot-
god of death, drought and
Infertility.

Hosea 10:7-8



- ▶ Samaria and her king will disappear, like a twig upon the waters.



The king brought shame on Israel. Like a piece of wood washed away in a flood the king will be driven away by Assyrians.

- ▶
⁸ The high places of Aven will be destroyed, the sin of Israel; thorns and thistles will overgrow their altars.



Aven is Beth-Aven, a derogatory term for Bethel. These are the “altars of sin” mentioned earlier in Hosea.
¹²

Shame and loss
of King and places of worship-

Then they will cry out to the mountains,
“Cover us!” and to the hills, “Fall upon us!”

- ▶ Those who survive the war, deportation, droughts and lack of fertility will no longer wish to live.



Luke 23:27-30



- ▶ ²⁷ A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, ²⁹ for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.’ ³⁰ At that time people will say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ ³¹ for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?”

Hosea 10:9-10

“The meaning is not certain!”

- ▶ Since the days of Gibeah
you have sinned, Israel.
There they took their stand;
will war not reach them in Gibeah?
Against a perverse people
¹⁰ I came and I chastised them;
Peoples will be gathered against them
when I bind them to their two crimes.

What are the two crimes?

1. The two golden calves placed at Bethel and Dan by the king?
2. Sins at Gibeah are now doubled by Gibeah's guilt at the time of Hosea's prophecy?
3. Sins of rape and murder at Gibeah as a symptom of serious sins against God?
4. Violence at Gibeah followed by a civil war that almost eliminated the tribe of Benjamin? The rift remains between tribes with Israel and Judah waging war against each other.
5. They have forsaken the Lord and practiced idolatry?
6. The meaning of *two crimes* is uncertain!



Hosea 10:11-12

Return to the vineyard metaphor

▶ Ephraim was a trained heifer, that loved to thresh;
I myself laid a yoke upon her beautiful neck;
I will make Ephraim break ground, Judah must plow,
Jacob must harrow for himself:

Not a wild animal, but a strong capable type able to work. Each of the tribes must prepare their own land for crops.

▶
¹² “Sow for yourselves justice, reap the reward of loyalty; break up for yourselves a new field, for it is time to seek the LORD, till he comes and rains justice upon you.”

Rather than corruption, war and idolatry prepare a field for justice and seek the LORD

Amos 5:21-24

I hate, I despise your festivals,

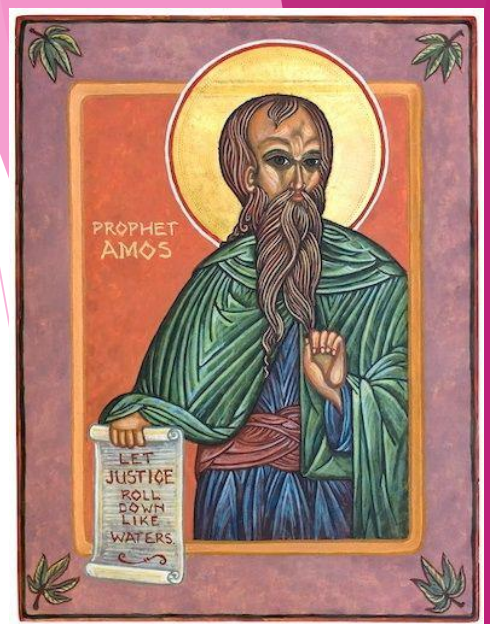
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.



Hosea 10:13-15

▶ But you have plowed wickedness, reaped perversity,
and eaten the fruit of falsehood.

SIN

Because you have trusted in *your own power*,
and in your many warriors,

Pride!

¹⁴ The clamor of war shall break out among your people
and all your fortresses shall be ravaged

Chariots were used in war. Israel had 2000 chariots

As Salman ravaged Beth-arbel on the day of war,
smashing mothers along with their children.

¹⁵ So it will be done to you, Bethel,
because of your utter wickedness:

At dawn the king of Israel will utterly disappear.

EVEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN WILL SUFFER OR DIE.

SUMMARY

Israel was “planted” by the LORD and was full of potential. Indeed she thrived. The more prosperous she became, the more time was spent on “updating” the places of worship.

These places had become “altars of sin” complete with golden calves and sacred poles. The people mourn for Baal in the myth of his death, a death he overcomes.

What Israel, Judah and Ephraim need to **sow is justice and righteousness** rather than war and wickedness.

Ultimately the Lord will punish. The shrines will be destroyed. There will be war. The king will vanish and even women and children will suffer and die.

Let us pray Psalm 91:9-16

- ▶ Because you have made the LORD your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
¹⁰ no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
- ▶ ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
- ▶ ¹⁴ Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
¹⁵ When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

