

**TOTAL COLLAPSE**

**HOSEA 9:10 - 10:15**

**<sup>10</sup>Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I discovered your ancestors. But they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to a thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.**

**<sup>11</sup>Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a flock of birds – no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! <sup>12</sup>Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them until no one is left. Woe to them indeed when I depart from them!**

**<sup>13</sup>Once I saw Ephraim as a young palm planted in a lovely meadow, but now Ephraim must lead out his children for slaughter. <sup>14</sup>Give them, YHWH – what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.**

**<sup>15</sup>Every evil of theirs began at Gilgal; there I came to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their officials are rebels.**

**<sup>16</sup>Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will kill the cherished offspring of their womb.**

**<sup>17</sup>Because they have not listened to him, my God will reject them; they shall become wanderers among the nations.**

The fact that Israel is here spoken of in the third person reinforces the suggestion made in regard to 9:7-9 that Hosea is banished from uttering his oracles in public. Perhaps now he is communicating with his disciples.

Verse 10 joins earlier passages as a divine lament. 'Israel' here is not restricted to the northern kingdom. It refers to the people with whom YHWH developed an intimate love-relationship in the wilderness (compare Deuteronomy 32:10). He delighted in them as one delights in an early fig. The lament is in the 'But' of verse 10. Israel's apostasy began at 'Baal-peor' (Deuteronomy 4:3; Numbers 25:1-5).

Earlier, Hosea likened Ephraim to a bird leaving its nest to find its security elsewhere (see 7:11-12). Now Ephraim's former glory is scattered. All hope of life is gone. Not only will nothing be born. There will be no pregnancy; not even conception (verse 11). Even the children they already have offer them no future. They will die. And, to climax the tragedy, YHWH will 'depart from them' (verse 12). The love affair is over. All that remains is 'slaughter' (verse 13).

Following his rejection (9:7-9), Hosea tries to intercede (as a prophet must) with YHWH. His prayer (verse 14) sounds awful, but having no more children is better than suffering the threats of verses 11-13.

In verses 15-16 YHWH continues his words to Hosea, reminding him of the evil that was there right at the beginnings of Israel's presence in the promised Land. Gilgal was the first camp established (see 4:15). The last words of verse 15 raise the possibility that Hosea has in mind the connection between the first king, Saul, and Gilgal (see 1 Samuel 11:15; 15:12, 21). YHWH's love has been exhausted. He will carry out his threats.

In verse 17 it is Hosea who speaks. He accepts YHWH's judgment and decision. It is justified by the fact that 'they have not listened to him' (see Deuteronomy 6:4). 'My God', he declares, 'will reject them'. They are destined to 'become wanderers among the nations'.

Absent from this passage are any indications of Hosea directly challenging his contemporaries. Rejected from public life (see 9:7-9), he appears to be reflecting on things with his disciples (perhaps including the early Deuteronomists).

He recalls the luxury that prevailed during the reign of Jeroboam II – a luxury that was obvious in the cult, but not in observance of the covenant. ‘Their heart is false’ (verse 2). They may call on YHWH (see 2:16-17; 6:3; 8:2), but they have no intention of doing God’s will. God will ‘break down their altars and destroy their pillars’ (verse 2).

The people accepted Hoshea as king without regard to God’s will (see 8:4). Hosea foresees the time when they will just as readily reject him (verse 3). All their talk, all their lies, all their attempts at finding security in treaties, will come to nothing because where there should be justice there are only poisonous weeds. There are echoes here of Amos 5:7 and 6:12.

At Bethel, called again Beth-aven’ (house of wickedness’; see 4:15; 5:8), the residents of the royal city, Samaria, worship the calf (see 8:5-6), covered in the ‘splendour’ of gold. Their god, their shame, will be carried into exile as tribute to the king of Assyria (verse 6).

Hosea foresees the destruction of Samaria and the deportation of its king (verse 7).

All the cult centres of ‘wickedness’ (‘Aven’) will be destroyed.

There is no escaping the devastation. Such will be the horror of it that people will long for death rather than have to endure it (see Luke 23:30; Revelation 9:6).

**<sup>1</sup>Israel was a luxuriant vine that yielded its fruit. The more fruit he produced, the more he supplied for the altars. As his country improved, he improved his pillars.**

**<sup>2</sup>Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. He himself will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.**

**<sup>3</sup>Indeed, now they will say: “We have no king, for we do not fear YHWH, and a king— what could he do for us?”**

**<sup>4</sup>Uttering words. Committing perjury. Making treaties. So justice springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.**

**<sup>5</sup>The inhabitants of Samaria worship the calf of Beth-aven. Indeed, its people shall mourn for it, and its idolatrous priests exult because of its splendour. Indeed, it departs from it.**

**<sup>6</sup>The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.**

**<sup>7</sup>Samaria is destroyed. Its king is swept away like a twig on the surface of the water.**

**<sup>8</sup>The high places of Aven, of Israel’s sin, will be destroyed. Thorn and thistle grow on their altars. They will say to the mountains, “Cover us”, and to the hills, “Fall on us.”**

**<sup>9</sup>Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel. Nothing has changed. Will not war overtake them in Gibeah, because of the transgressors?**

**<sup>10</sup>I will come to punish them; nations shall be gathered against them when they are punished for their double iniquity.**

**<sup>11</sup>Ephraim was a trained heifer that loved to thresh. When I passed by and noticed her fair neck, I wanted to harness Ephraim. Judah must plough; Jacob must harrow.**

**<sup>12</sup>Sow for yourselves justice; reap covenant love. Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek YHWH, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. <sup>13</sup>You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies.**

**Indeed, you trusted in your power and in the multitude of your warriors. <sup>14</sup>Thus the tumult of war shall rise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle when mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. <sup>15</sup>Thus it shall be done to you, O house of Israel, because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.**

Hosea begins by reasserting YHWH's earlier judgment in regard to Gibeah (see 9:9 and commentary). The kind of behaviour condemned at Gibeah has continued in Israel. YHWH will certainly 'come to punish them'(verse 10). The 'double iniquity' of Gibeah is their repetition in the present of the behaviour for which they were condemned in the past.

YHWH found Ephraim. He noticed her fair (strong) neck and judged she would be of use, so he wanted to harness her to cultivate his land (Canaan). Judah was part of God's plan as well, as Hosea is thinking of YHWH's choice of his people (Jacob). Or is 'Judah' inserted here by a later scribe?

The metaphor is clarified in verse 12, where, once again, Ephraim is being directly addressed. YHWH wanted his land to 'reap covenant love'. To do this 'justice' must be sown. Oh that they had sought YHWH. He would have rained down justice upon them. But No! 'You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies'(verse 13; see Deuteronomy 27:19).

Instead they relied on their military strength. All this can lead to is war. Israel has already lost the area bordering on the Mediterranean (Dor), Galilee and the Valley of Jezreel (Megiddo) and the area to the east of the Jordan (Gilead). Hosea foresees the loss of 'all your fortresses'(verse 14). We have no information about the destruction of Beth-arbel by Shalman apart from Hosea's comment here. If Hosea is referring to an action of the Moabite king, Shalamanu, there is no other extant record of it.

Hosea threatens a similar fate to the royal house. In fact King Hoshea was taken captive by Shalmaneser V before the beginning of the siege of Samaria (see 2Kings 17:4).