

Hosea

Chapter 8

Israel to Reap the Whirlwind

“Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the LORD because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law. ² Israel cries out to me, ‘O our God, we acknowledge you!’ ³ But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him. ⁴ They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction. ⁵ Throw out your calf-idol, O Samaria! My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of purity? ⁶ They are from Israel! This calf—a craftsman has made it; it is not God. It will be broken in pieces, that calf of Samaria. ⁷ “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up. ⁸ Israel is swallowed up; now she is among the nations like a worthless thing. ⁹ For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has sold herself to lovers. ¹⁰ Although they have sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them together. They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king. ¹¹ “Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning. ¹² I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as something alien. ¹³ They offer sacrifices given to me and they eat the meat, but the LORD is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt. ¹⁴ Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire upon their cities that will consume their fortresses.”

8:1 *trumpet.* Of alarm (see 5:8; Joel 2:1; Am 3:6). (CSB)

So the Lord calls out to the prophet in bidding him give a warning concerning the approach of the judgment. (Kretzmann)

your. The prophet’s. (CSB)

eagle. Or “vulture,” referring to Assyria. (CSB)

Likely refers to Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, who invaded Israel c 733–732 BC. (TLSB)

house of the LORD. The land of Israel, not just the temple (cf. Ex 15:17). (CSB)

Probably the whole land of Israel, including the Jerusalem temple. (TLSB)

covenant. The demands of the covenant. (CSB)

While God, according to His mercy, would like to live in the midst of His people, they make His presence impossible by their rebellious behavior. (Kretzmann)

8:2 ISREAL CRIES OUT TO ME – Literally, "To Me will they cry," presuming upon the relation which had formerly obtained between Jehovah and them. (Kretzmann)

we acknowledge you. But their worship of the Lord was thoroughly corrupted by pagan notions and practices, as vv. 3–6 indicate (see Am 2:4, 7–8; 3:14; 5:26). (CSB)

know You. Presumptuous and self-deluded claim. (TLSB)

But it is a dead knowledge of the head only, faith no longer being found in their midst. The Lord wants to have the entire trust of the heart, as expressed in a person's whole life, He is not satisfied with a mere external worship. (Kretzmann)

8:4–5 *made kings, but not through Me.* The northern tribes rejected the legitimate heirs to the throne of David and instead made Jeroboam their king. Thereafter, all of Israel's kings were illegitimate because they ruled outside the messianic line of Judah.

8:4 *set up kings.* After Jeroboam II, five kings ruled over Israel in 13 years (2Ki 15:8–30), three of whom seized the throne by violence (see 7:7). (CSB)

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8:5 *calf-idol.* Jeroboam I (930–909 B.C.) had set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan, saying, "Here are your gods" (see 1Ki 12:28–33). (CSB)

made idols ... calf. Jeroboam, the first king of the northern tribes, made calves of gold and set them in the cultic shrines of Dan and Bethel. The twin sins of establishing a kingly line in opposition to the messianic dynasty and worshiping idols ultimately led to Israel's destruction in 722 BC. (TLSB)

8:6 *a craftsman has made it.* For prophetic satire on idolatry see Isa 40:20; 41:22–24; 44:9–20; see also Ps 115:4–8. Aaron (Ex 32:8) and Jeroboam I had said, "These are your gods"; but Hosea said, "It is not God." (CSB)

Underlines the fragility of this idol formed by human hands. (TLSB)

8:7 *sow ... reap.* A familiar proverb about the results of doing evil (see 10:13; Job 4:8; Ps 126:5–6; Pr 11:18; 22:8; 2Co 9:6; Gal 6:7). Israel sowed the wind of idolatry and reaped the whirlwind of Assyria. (CSB)

Proverb stresses the futility of turning away from God and trusting in idols. One sowing the wind can hardly expect any harvest but a whirlwind. (TLSB)

stalk ... flour. The prophet played on the similar sound of the Hebrew words. (CSB)

Wheat or oat stalks without heads of grain cannot feed the sower because they yield no flour. Investing in the nothingness of idolatry guarantees only bankruptcy. (TLSB)

foreigners. Assyria. (CSB)

Third depiction of the futility of idol worship through farming imagery. (TLSB)

Such is the result of seeking the friendship of the enemies of God; in the end they turn upon those who depended upon them and bring destruction upon them. (Kretzmann)

8:8 Israel was chosen to be God's own people (Ex 19:5; Am 3:2), but since she had conformed to the other nations, she lost her special identity and so became worthless to God. (CSB)

swallowed up. Like the crop devoured by strangers (v 7), so Israel is to be swallowed up by Assyrian invaders. (TLSB)

a useless vessel. Under David and Solomon, Israel was a strong nation, possessing at least 2,000 chariots. But now the fractured nation is a mere shell of what it once was, an emptied vessel headed for the garbage heap. (TLSB)

8:9 *a wild donkey.* Image of unbridled promiscuity. (TLSB)

Ephraim has sold herself to lovers. For the "prostitute's fees" of Assyrian protection. Menahem (2Ki 15:19) and Hoshea (2Ki 17:3), kings of Israel, paid tribute to Assyria. (CSB)

8:10 Even though Israel paid tribute to Assyria, that would not buy her security, for God would send judgment by the king of Assyria. Israel's real "enemy" was the Lord himself (see 2:8–9, 13; 7:12). (CSB)

hire allies. Refers to alliances Ephraim made with nations such as Syria and Assyria. These were her illicit "lovers" (v 9), to whom she would vainly look for help. (TLSB)

writhes because of the tribute. Israelite King Menahem paid Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria 1,000 talents (c 37 tons) of silver as tribute (2Ki 15:19–20), an attempt to stave off Israel's destruction. One can understand how kings and princes would have squirmed as they paid such a large sum of extortion money. (TLSB)

8:11 *built many altars.* To Baal. (CSB)

Though the Lord had commanded Israel to offer different sacrifices (see pp 170–71), Ephraim’s multiplication of altars resulted in an increase of sinning in the land because the people were using most of these altars for idol worship. (TLSB)

8:12 WROTE FOR THEM – Literally, I presented to him a myriad of My Law, the many precepts by which the Israelites might fulfill His will. (Kretzmann)

laws by the ten thousands. Israel’s disobedience was not simply the result of a lack of knowledge (cf 4:6) but a conscious disregard of God’s will. Thousands of new laws would not have helped. (TLSB)

strange thing. The people are so far from the Lord that His teachings now seem foreign to them. (TLSB)

8:13 they sacrifice meat and eat it. In some of the sacrifices and offerings prescribed by Moses, the worshiper and priests were supposed to eat part of the meat. The rest was considered to be the Lord’s portion and was burned (e.g., Lv 7:11–27; Dt 12:7; see pp 170–71). (TLSB)

eat the meat. Some of the sacrifices were partly eaten by the offerer and priests (see Lev 7:11–18; Dt 12:7; Jer 7:21). (CSB)

not pleased with them. See note on 6:6. (CSB)

Intending it as a burnt offering; the Lord, however, looks upon it as a slaughtered animal, not as a sacrifice in His honor, because the right condition of the heart is missing. (Kretzmann)

Egypt. Israel, who had trusted in Egypt and Assyria, was to go back to “Egypt,” i.e., into bondage in a foreign land, primarily Assyria (see 9:3). (CSB)

return to Egypt. For Israelites the mention of Egypt called to mind captivity. When Hosea speaks of that nation here, therefore, the people instantly understood his warning that a new captivity was coming, this time in Assyria. (TLSB)

8:14 Israel has forgotten. The cause of all their problems (cf. Jdg 2:10). (CSB)

built palaces ... fortified many towns. Israel’s trust was not in her Maker but in what she herself had accomplished. (CSB)

The rich and powerful built luxurious palaces. Therein, they sought comfort and security. Cf Am 6:4–7. (TLSB)

fire. See Am 1:4, 7, 10, 14; 2:5.

Palaces and cities of Israel were burned to the ground by the enemies whom the Lord sent. (TLSB)

When men forsake and deny the Lord, relying upon their own ability and power instead, the Lord destroys the fortresses of such a false confidence; for He is a jealous God and will not tolerate any one but Himself to be acknowledged as the supreme Being in heaven and earth. (Kretzmann)

Ch 8 Topping the list of Israel's misdeeds is idolatry—their rejection of the Creator and their devotion to calves made of gold. Sadly, we, too, begin to fall into idolatry whenever we fear, love, and trust anything or any person more than the true God. Admitting that, we should also remember that the same God threatening to punish idolatry is also the One whose forgiving love and sustaining Spirit never fails. • Heavenly Father, may Your grace, which works powerfully in Word and Sacraments, strengthen our determination to have You first in our lives. May we ever think and pray, “Lord, keep me true to You in thought, word, and deed. Help me to fear, love, and trust in You above all things.” Amen. (TLSB)