

# Hosea

## Chapter 8

*Israel Will Reap the Whirlwind*

**Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law. 2 To me they cry, “My God, we—Israel—know you.” 3 Israel has spurned the good; the enemy shall pursue him. 4 They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction. 5 I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? 6 For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it; it is not God. The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces. 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it. 8 Israel is swallowed up; already they are among the nations as a useless vessel. 9 For they have gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey wandering alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. 10 Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up. And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute. 11 Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning. 12 Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing. 13 As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt. 14 For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; so I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour her strongholds.**

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

*your*. The prophet’s. (CSB)

*vulture*. 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)

*know 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)

*presumptuous and self-deluded claim*. (TLSB)

**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. (CSB)

**8:4** *set up princes.* 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)

*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. (TLSB)

**8:5** *calf.* 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)

*spurned your 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 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)

*yield no 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)

*strangers.* Assyria. (CSB)

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

**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 hired 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)

*writhe 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** *multiplied 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** *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)

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

*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 city*. 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)