

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — LORD'S LAMENT 7:13-16

always turned away from God's word. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him. Any person or people who trusts in their own might or wisdom will be defeated, shamed and confused. "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision" (cf. Psa. 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. How dangerous is moral decadence when we are unaware of it?
2. How can moral decadence be cured?
3. Why was Israel like a "silly dove?"
4. How did God trap Israel?
5. How did they devise mischief against God?
6. How was Israel like "a deceitful bow?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:1-7

- 1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.
- 2 They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee.
- 3 Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him.
- 4 They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold they have made them idols, that they may be cut off.
- 5 He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?
- 6 For from Israel is even this; the workman made it, and it is no God; yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.
- 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; he hath no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up.

QUERIES

- a. Who is coming "as an eagle" against the house of Jehovah?
- b. How did they set up kings but not by Jehovah?
- c. What does "sow the wind . . . reap the whirlwind" mean?

PARAPHRASE

The trumpet to thy mouth! Like an eagle upon the house of Jehovah! Judgment approaches because they have thrown off covenant relationship with Me and they have violated My laws. When these times of distress come, the people will hypocritically call upon Me to help them, professing that they know Me. But Israel does not know Me because He has abhorred and ignored the good way of God; and as a result a ruthless enemy shall overrun his land. They rebelled against My government and placed usurpers on the throne against My will. They have taken of the wealth I blessed them with and made idols in spite of My warning that I would judge them for such apostasy. Your calf-idol is loathsome and disbusting to Me, Samaria, and My anger burns toward you because of it. How long will it be until you divest yourself of this loathsome idolatry—how long can you go on living in such impurity? What makes it so abominable is Israel, the nation whom the living God chose to reveal the truth about idols, has engaged in the lies of idolatry. Israel, of all people, ought to know that idols made by the hands of men are no gods! They will know soon enough that their golden calf is no go for I will break it to pieces like I did the one at Sinai. They have sown the winds of folly and vanity, but they shall reap the whirlwinds of wrath and destruction. Israel's crops will fail; none of its grain crops will mature enough to produce any grain—there shall be great famine. Even if some were fortunate enough to produce a few heads of grain, the enemy that is about to come upon Israel would take it away from them and eat it themselves.

SUMMARY

In this chapter the prophet Hosea gives God's reasons for the imminent destruction of the northern kingdom; moral, religious and political rebellion against Jehovah God when she knew better.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . TRUMPET . . . AS AN EAGLE . . . AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . G Campbell Morgan says, "This chapter is dramatic in its method. It opens with two clarion cries; and our translators have just a little robbed the passage of its arresting character by the introduction of certain words, in order to euphony, and the making of smooth reading and sense." There is no such word as "Set" in the Hebrew text

here—that word has been supplied by the translators. Neither are the words, "he cometh," a part of the Hebrew text. Actually, the imperativeness of the call is more impressive with the supplied words omitted (as in our Paraphrase).

This "eagle" was undoubtedly a pictorialization of the successive kings of Assyria who swooped down upon Israel just a few short years after Hosea pronounced God's judgment upon her. One cannot help but remember the warning of Moses in Deut. 28:49 in the same words as these. Moses warned them if they should forget God and break the covenant and violate the revealed law of God, a nation from afar, swift as the eagle, would come upon them and destroy them. Transgressing God's covenant is much more personal than mere violation of some written statutes. To break covenant is to personally distrust and despise the One with whom you have the covenant. It is a matter of the heart and soul. This, of course, would manifest itself in scorn and disobedience to written laws of God.

v. 2 THEY SHALL CRY . . . MY GOD, WE ISRAEL KNOW THEE . . . When the ruthless, blood-thirsty, Assyrian hordes swoop down upon Israel, they shall instinctively call upon the God whom they have despised all these years for help. They will plead, "We know thee!" For centuries now they have "refused to have Jehovah in their knowledge . . . they have been exchanging the truth of God for lies." But they should have sought the Lord when He could be found and have called upon Him when He was near (cf. Isa. 55:6). Now it is too late, for although Israel spread forth its hands and make many prayers, God will hide His eyes and will not listen (cf. Isa. 1:15). They should have thought that a man cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time (cf. Jas. 4:1-10). We remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven . . ." (Mt. 7:21). It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), but he must believe with the heart as well as make confession with the mouth—this Israel did not do. In connection with this verse we remember the candid statement of the apostle John, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says I know him but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I Jn. 2:3-4). Israel cried, My God, we Israel know thee, but Israel was a liar! What an affront to God even today for those self-willed, sensual-living people who flagrantly disregard the commandments of God, cry, in times of

distress, My God, we know thee. They are liars and the truth is not in them. *God is known only through keeping His commandments! There simply is no other way to know God!* It should be very obvious to any intelligent person that God's commandments are found only in the Bible and for this age in the New Testament.

v. 3-4 ISRAEL HATH CAST OFF THAT WHICH IS GOOD . . . THEY HAVE SET UP KINGS, BUT NOT BY ME . . . THEY HAVE MADE THEM IDOLS . . . Israel "refused to have God in their knowledge . . ." she "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). Israel's deliberate rejection of the "good way" is exactly like that of Judah described by Jeremiah (Jer. 6:16-19)! Israel refused to "stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." They said, "we will not walk in it." Israel has cast off the good way of God for the way of idolatry that is abominable. Very soon now the worthlessness of what she has chosen will be demonstrated. Refusing the way of God in religion they also rejected His counsel in politics. This is what is happening in America, the beautiful! Men in high places have cast off the good . . . they have "set up kings, but not by Jehovah." Men have tried to rule without the counsel of God and since they have ignored all His counsel, He will laugh at their calamity and mock when panic strikes (cf. Prov. 1:24ff). During 253 years, for which the kingdom of Israel lasted, 18 kings reigned over it, out of ten different families and every one of them came to a violent end. Not once was the will of God sought in the rule of any of these kings. Even Jehu conducted his reign contrary to the will of God. The nation of Israel, so abundantly blessed by Jehovah, took of this abundance and fashioned by their own hands, gods after the likeness of pagan idols. The "god of this world, Satan," blinded their eyes with deceit and pride, and Israel loved it to be so. We quote here from the ISBE, Vol. III, pg. 1448:

"The special enticements to idolatry as offered by these various cults were found in their deification of natural forces and their appeal to primitive human desires, esp. the sexual; also through associations produced by intermarriage and through the appeal to patriotism, when the help of some cruel deity was sought in time of war. Baal and Astarte worship, which was esp. attractive, was closely associated with fornication and drunkenness (Am. 2:7-8; I Kings 14:23ff), and also greatly to magic and soothsaying (e.g. Isa. 2:6; 3:2; 8:19).

"Sacrifices to the idols were offered by fire (Hos. 4:13); libations were poured out (Isa. 57:6; Jer. 7:18); the first-fruits of the earth and tithes were presented (Hos. 2:8); tables of food were set before them (Isa. 65:11); the worshippers kissed the idols or threw them kisses (I Kings 19:18; Hos. 13:2; Job 31:27); stretched out their hands in adoration (Isa. 44:20); knelt or prostrated themselves before them and sometimes danced about the altar, gashing themselves with knives (I Ki. 18:26:28)".

The consequences of Israel's idolatry are so certain it seems as if Israel had intended it to be so. She is in a head-long plunge into destruction and does not seem to want it otherwise!

v. 5 . . . HOW LONG WILL IT BE ERE THEY ATTAIN TO INNOCENCY?

The origin of calf-worship among the Semites probably goes back beyond Abraham. The origin of animal worship is hidden in obscurity, but reverence for the bull and the cow is widespread among the most ancient historic cults. The ancient Babylonian culture (from which Abraham's ancestors came) revered the bull as the symbol of their greatest gods, Anu and Sin and Marduk. Hadad-rimmon, an Amorite deity, is pictured standing on the back of a bull. In Phoenicia, northern Syria, Moab, and other places the goddess Ishtar has the cow for her symbol, and when this nude or half-nude goddess appears in Palestine she often stands on a bull or cow. With the Hebrews calf-worship began, of course, with Aaron (cf. Ex. 32). It was perpetuated by Jeroboam I in the northern kingdom for political and economic reasons (I Kings 12:26-33; II Chron. 10:14-15).

In the light of their deep involvements in unholy alliances and unspiritual procedure, a logical question is raised: "How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?" How long are they incapable of purity of walk before the Lord, instead of abominations of idolatry. That is to say, being bent upon backsliding, having invested so heavily of their gold and silver in idols, having defied the infinite God in their politics, having rejected the commands of the Lord, having hardened their hearts against the prophet's message, how long would it require for them to extricate themselves? How long before they would detach themselves from unrighteousness? Israel had become like the thing they loved? (Hos. 9:10). We shall deal with this principle later but here it is evident that Israel has so long loved and imitated its detestable gods it has thoroughly and irrevocably contaminated itself.

v. 6 . . . THE WORKMAN MADE IT, AND IT IS NO GOD; . . . What makes idolatry so abominable in Israel is that she, of all nations, should have known that an idol is no god. Israel had the special revelations of God in word and deed to demonstrate the nothingness of idols. What folly! What vanity! Isaiah satirically speaks of the same phenomena (Isa. 41:21-24; 44:6-22). The great apostle to the Gentiles had to deal with this as he preached to the heathen (cf. Acts 19:26; I Cor. 8:4ff, etc.). Men still deify images, philosophies and things in this twentieth century. What difference if it be a figurine or a philosophy—it is still idolatry. Any image, thing or idea that is worshipped becomes an idol. Even covetousness is idolatry!

v. 7 . . . THEY SOW THE WIND, . . . THEY SHALL REAP THE WHIRLDWIND . . . The Nation of Israel "sowed" their wild oats. They were sowing (putting their trust in) vain things, empty, useless things. This was their crop. Now they were about to reap the harvest of continued sowing of vanities—the harvest would be a whirlwind of destruction and disillusionment. Temporal things cannot satisfy (Eccl. 1:17; 2:12-17; 2:4-11; 6:2-9). Worldly things never bring rewarding harvest days of joy, peace, fulfillment, satisfaction, holiness. But more serious than that, God has so built His universe that when men sin and pervert even those things of the world, innocent enough in themselves, they will reap a whirlwind of destruction, unhappiness, disillusionment, strife and the judgment and eternal wrath of God. When God's physical laws are violated, trouble comes! When God's spiritual laws are violated, trouble comes! Israel was doing both!

God was going to bring some sort of calamity upon Israel to keep her from producing a wheat crop. If by chance a few grains of wheat should reach fruition, the enemy God was about to turn loose upon Israel would consume all that. All those material abundances in which Israel gloried and which she attributed to her false gods were about to be taken away. Perhaps then she would repent.

QUIZ

1. Where are the Hebrew people warned that if they should transgress God's law an enemy, swift as the eagle, would come upon them?
2. Why is "transgressing God's covenant" so serious?
3. How do we know Israel did not know God?
4. Describe calf-worship.
5. What is meant by the phrase "how long will it be ere they attain to innocence?"
6. Why should Israel know that an idol is no god?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:8-14

- 8 Israel is swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein none delighteth.
- 9 For they are gone up to Assyria, like a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.
- 10 Yea, though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them; and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes.
- 11 Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning.
- 12 I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing.
- 13 As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but Jehovah accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they shall return to Egypt.
- 14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces; and Judah hath multiplied fortified cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the castles thereof.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel like "a wild ass alone by himself?"
- b. Who is the "king of princes" of verse 10?
- c. When did Israel "return to Egypt?"

PARAPHRASE

Israel is about to be completely engulfed and conquered by its enemies. When her enemies have exploited her they will despise her as one despises a worn-out and useless pot. This is about to come to Israel because she behaved like a stubborn mule in heat. In spite of all God's warnings to the contrary, she went to Assyria like a prostitute, trying to buy love from Assyria. But all these attempts at conciliation with her enemies are in vain for I, saith Jehovah, will deliver her into captivity where she shall begin to lose her national identity by reason of the exile brought about by the great Assyrian king who boasts, Are not all my princes kings! And because Ephraim has built many altars so she has multiplied her sins. And even though

I revealed to Israel myriads of commandments, a full, complete and holy law, she acted as though they did not concern her at all. As for all the sacrifices they make, they only make them because they are interested in the part of the sacrifices they eat for themselves. Thus their sacrifices, although they are many, are meaningless to Jehovah. God is cognizant of the iniquity of Israel and He will visit them with judgment for their sins. They shall return to bondage and enslavement by their enemies. Israel has misplaced his Maker and sought satisfaction rather in building spacious buildings. Even Judah has done the same and seeks security in her well-fortified cities. But I, saith Jehovah, will bring My judgment upon these nations and all these material things in which they have trusted shall be utterly destroyed.

SUMMARY

Israel has forgotten its Maker. God is going to deliver them into the hand of their enemies for obliteration as a nation.

COMMENT

v. 8-9 ISRAEL IS SWALLOWED UP . . . GONE TO ASSYRIA . . . HATH HIRED LOVERS . . . As G. Campbell Morgan says, this is a chapter of judgment. Hosea gives the reasons for the judgment which he is declaring to be imminent in five blasts upon the trumpet. First, transgression and trespass; second, false kings and princes set up to rule without consulting God; third, idolatry, the calf of Samaria set up as a center of worship; fourth, the folly of seeking safety in alliance with Assyria; fifth, false altars, and sin as the result of them. We have dealt with the first three reasons for judgment in Hosea 8:1-7. In this section we deal with the last two reasons. One notices that the reasons are stated in a climactic manner or in a crescendo—the last one being the reason of which all the others are symptoms—Israel hath forgotten her Maker.

In verses 8-9 we deal with the fourth reason for judgment—foolish alliances with Assyria. As a result of such "mixing" of God's people with ambitious heathen politicians, Israel was, for all practical purposes, "swallowed up" as a nation, losing its identity, never again to enjoy political identity. It would be well to digress here into the history of the last few years of Israel's national identity during which Hosea declared so pointedly and forcefully the impending destruction. We gratefully acknowledge using at length the work of Dr. Charles Pfeiffer, "The Divided Kingdom," chapter 7, pages 66-74, pub. Baker Book House.

After the death of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom entered a period of decline from which she could not save herself. Instability in Israel combined with the growing strength in Assyria spelled chaos and disaster for the people of the Northern Kingdom. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, reigned but six months before he was assassinated by Shallum. After a reign of but one month, Shallum was murdered by Menahem (ca. 742 B.C.). Menahem reigned for ten years in Samaria, and is remembered for his atrocities (cf. II Kings 15:16).

During the reign of Menahem, a new threat came from the east in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C. who adopted a new policy in dealing with conquered peoples. Earlier conquerors would strike, carry off slaves and booty, and return home, leaving the conquered territory to care for itself as long as the tribute was paid faithfully. Tiglath-pileser began the policy of incorporating conquered territory into his empire. Syria, Babylonia, and Anatolia were divided into provinces directly responsible to Nineveh.

Tiglath-pileser also inaugurated the policy of transporting rebellious peoples to parts of his empire where they would be powerless to unite against him. Peoples were exiled from their homelands and other exiles were brought in to the evacuated territory. In this way continuity between old and new settlers would be broken, and there would be no possibility of the older population returning to their homeland. As a result of this policy Israel, which was taken into exile by the Assyrians, lost its identity, whereas Judah, which survived until Babylonian times, could and did return to Jerusalem and thereby maintain its identity. The shifting of populations hastened the spread of Aramaic as a *lingua franca*, replacing the local tongues of the various peoples of the empire.

When Tiglath-pileser came to the throne he faced challenges to his power from Babylonia to the south, and Urartu (Armenia) to the north. He put down revolts in these areas, enforced Assyrian control, and even extended his rule as far as the region of Mt. Demavend, south of the Caspian Sea. Beginning in 743 B.C. Tiglath-pileser conducted campaigns in Syria where he was opposed by a coalition of states headed by "Azriau of Yaudi," a name which may be translated "Azariah of Judah." Scholars have debated whether this Azriau of Yaudi could be the Biblical Azariah, or Uzziah who ruled Judah from 783 to 742 B.C. If so, we would assume that Azariah/Uzziah

was the outstanding leader of the Syria-Palestine area following the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (*ca.* 746 B.C.). Azariah/Uzziah spent his last years as a leper, with his son Jotham functioning as king. If Azriau of Yaudi was Azariah/Uzziah, then he remained the power behind the throne during the period of his leprosy, and he became the center of opposition to the Assyrians in their campaign of 743-742 B.C. Presumably Azariah/Uzziah died soon after the campaign. No further mention is made of him in the Assyrian annals.

Cyrus Gordon argues that Azriau was not the Judean king, but a native north Syrian who ruled a city state in the area named Yaudi, or Samal. Eduard Meyer suggested that Azriau was an Israelite adventurer who had journeyed northward and established himself among the Aramean states of that region.

By Tiglath-pileser's time the Assyrians had developed siege warfare into an effective weapon. Battering rams and other devices for breaching strong city walls struck terror into the people of western Asia. By 738 B.C. Tiglath-pileser was collecting tribute from Asia Minor, Syria, the Phoenician cities, an Arab queen named Zabibe, Rezin of Damascus, and Menahem of Israel. Menahem gave Tiglath-pileser (Biblical Pul) "a thousand talents of silver that he might help him to confirm his royal power" (II Kings 15:19). While Menahem had little choice, the Biblical text implies that he felt that prompt payment of tribute might cause Assyrian king to look favorably on his kingdom over Israel.

Menahem's willingness to court Assyrian favor to strengthen his hold upon the throne was bitterly resented in Israel. When his son Pekahiah took the throne (738/737 B.C.), opposition flared into the open. One of his officers, Pekah ben Remaliah, assassinated Pekahiah and seized the throne. Pekah had the help of a company of Gileadites (II Kings 15:25) who shared his anti-Assyrian sympathies. He may also have had the tacit support of Rezin, king of Damascus, and certain of the Philistine leaders who resented the pro-Assyrian policies of Menahem and Pekahiah. In the event of trouble with Assyria, they doubtless hoped for Egyptian help.

As soon as Pekah was on the throne of Israel he revealed his anti-Assyrian bias. Judah, now ruled by Jotham, the son of Azariah/Uzziah, chose to follow an independent policy and refused to join Pekah and Rezin in their opposition to Assyria.

A showdown came under Jotham's son, Ahaz, when Rezin and Pekah attacked Jerusalem, determined to remove Ahaz from his throne and install a ruler of their choice, Ben Tabeel (Isa. 7:1-9). At the height of the crisis, Isaiah tried to encourage Ahaz with the assurance that God would not allow the Davidic line to be obliterated, and that the kingdoms ruled by Rezin and Pekah would quickly fall to Assyria (Isa. 7:10-17). Indeed, Assyria was the rod of God's anger (Isa. 10:5) to punish Israel because of her idolatry.

While Pekah and Rezin were besieging Jerusalem, other parts of Judah were exposed to the enemy. Uzziah had fortified the port of Elath (Ezion-geber) on the Gulf of Aqabah, but now the Edomites drove out the Israelites and occupied the port city. The traditional (Massoretic) text of II Kings 16:6 states that the Arameans (A.V. "Syria") took Elath, but many scholars, including the translators of the R.S.V., think that "Aram" was misread for "Edom" by copyists of ancient manuscripts. The two words are almost identical in Hebrew. It is clear, from II Chronicles 28:17, that Edomites invaded Judah during the reign of Ahaz. Philistines also took advantage of Judean weakness by invading Judah from the west (II Chron. 28:18). Thus Ahaz was confronted with invasions of Arameans and Israelites from the north, Philistines from the west, and Edomites from the south.

Although Isaiah had counseled faith in God, Ahaz chose a more mundane way of resolving his problems. He sent tribute to the Assyrian king, and asked Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid (II Kings 16:7, 8). While this appeared to be the solution to an immediate problem, it had disastrous results. Tiglath-pileser probably would have come without Ahaz' appeal, but the appeal gave the invasion a type of legitimacy it did not deserve.

Both the Bible and Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions report the events that followed. *The Assyrian Annals* state:

[As for Menahem I] overwhelmed him [like a snowstorm] and he . . . fled like a bird, alone, [and bowed to my feet (?)]. I returned him to his place [and imposed tribute upon him, to wit:] gold, silver, linen garments with multicolor trimmings, great . . . I received from him. Israel (lit. "Omri-land") . . . all its inhabitants [and] their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king, Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them. I received from them ten talents of gold, and thousand talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.

Tiglath-pileser first moved down the seacoast (734 B.C.). He passed through Israelite territory and punished the Philistine cities, particularly Gaza, for their part in resisting Assyrian encroachments. Tiglath-pileser then moved southward and established a base at Wadi el- 'Arish ("The River of Egypt") the natural boundary between Egypt and Palestine. This was his means of isolating Egypt and keeping Egyptian arms out of the conflict in Palestine.

The next year (733 B.C.) the Assyrians were again in Israel. Galilee and Transjordan were overrun and large segments of their populations were deported (II Kings 15:29). Megiddo was destroyed and rebuilt as a provincial capital. G. Ernest Wright has described the palace-fort which served as the headquarters of the Assyrian commandant:

It was some 220 feet long and at least 157½ feet wide, though part of its eastern side may long since have tumbled down the side of the hill. The stone walls of the fort were very thick, varying from 6½ to 8¼ feet wide. The plan suggests a large interior courtyard, surrounded on at least three sides by rooms.

The Assyrians divided the occupied territory of Israel into three provinces. Transjordan comprised the province of Gilead. The province of Megiddo included Galilee, and Dor served as headquarters for Assyrian control of the coastal plain.

Doubtless at the instigation of the pro-Assyrian members of the court of Israel, or even of Tiglath-pileser himself, an Israelite named Hoshea ben Elah (II Kings 15:30) murdered Pekah. Hosea became a vassal of Tiglath-pileser.

In 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser took Damascus and summoned Ahaz and other vassal princes to pay homage to him. It was on this occasion that an altar in Damascus so impressed Ahaz that he had a large model of it made and sent to Uriah, the High Priest in Jerusalem, with instructions to have a replica of it made and placed in the Temple court (II Kings 16:10-16).

Tiglath-pileser ravaged the city of Damascus. He executed Rezin and deported much of its population. The territory of the Aramaic kingdom of Damascus was divided into four Assyrian provinces.

Shortly after Shalmaneser V succeeded his father Tiglath-pileser as king of Assyria, Hoshea of Israel withheld tribute and sought an alliance with Egypt. Hoshea made an alliance

with So (II Kings 17:14), Egyptians Sib'e, known from Assyrian texts as a *virtan* or commander-in-chief serving one of the rival rulers of Egypt. This was a fatal mistake for Hoshea, for Egypt was in no position to offer effective aid against Assyria. In 724 B.C. Hoshea appeared before Shalmaneser, still hoping to come to terms. The Assyrians were convinced that they could not trust Hoshea, so they took him prisoner and occupied the land of Israel except for the city of Samaria which withstood siege for two more years.

While the siege of Samaria was in progress, Shalmaneser died. His successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of Samaria. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. It is this fact that has given rise to the idea that there are "lost tribes" which either have turned up in the past or will turn up at some future day. As a matter of fact many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their deportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews.

Samaria was organized into an Assyrian province under an Assyrian governor. Sargon's inscriptions tell us of revolts that broke out in Hamath, Gaza, and other provinces, including Damascus and Samaria, but the Assyrians were in firm control and insurrection was quickly put down. In succeeding years Samaria was repopulated in accord with Assyrian policy of transplanting peoples: "And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities" (II Kings 17:24).

From the standpoint of orthodox Jewish thought these people had an eclectic faith: "So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away" (II Kings 17:33). They brought their local cults with them to Samaria, but when settled there they sought to learn "the law of the god of the land" (II Kings 17:27). The Assyrians permitted a priest to teach the Yahwistic faith of Israel, although Israel disowned them (II Kings 17:34-41). Jesus however, dared to

speak of "The Good Samaritan," and to identify himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. A few hundred Samaritans survive to this day.

For additional information on the political and religious circumstances of the northern kingdom, Israel, at this time, see our Special Study five, pages 59 to 73.

Israel, "the apple of God's eye" (cf. Deut. 32:10; Psa. 17:8; Songs 2:3; Zech 2:8), will become a despised, worn out, cast off pot (vessel). Her pitiful condition would hardly arouse any envy or greed on the part of the nations surrounding her after God finishes His judgment upon her.

One of the main reasons for the impending downfall is her flirtation with Assyria. Instead of trusting in Jehovah, Israel felt more secure in making political and military alliances with Assyria. Although it involved her in virtual "satellite" relationship at first and eventually in total captivity and exile, she ran to Assyria and actually paid tribute to the heathen nation in order to obtain its favor. She was like a stubborn, wild ass in heat. She was like a prostitute who sells her favors for "love" or security. She hired Assyria to "love" her! But hired lovers soon grow cold in their affections. And it was only a short time until Assyria, Israel's hired lover, turned on her and became an unmerciful enemy.

v. 10 . . . AMONG THE NATIONS, NOW WILL I GATHER THEM . . . AND THEY BEGIN TO BE DIMINISHED . . . Appeasing one's enemies at the sacrifice of truth and righteousness has never worked and it never will because it violates eternal, moral principles of God which sustain and protect the destinies of men and nations. And though Israel should pay political "blackmail" she would still lose her national identity. Eventually, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were scattered all over the face of the earth "among the nations" and remain so to this day! It all began when Assyria rose to world dominance, when the king of Assyria called himself "king of princes" (cf. Isa. 10:5ff).

v. 11 . . . EPHRAIM . . . MULTIPLIED ALTARS FOR SINNING . . . God had decreed that there was to be only *one* altar and that was at Jerusalem. Only there would He accept sacrifices; only there were His priests to officiate. So then, as many altars as Israel reared (at Dan and Bethel and other centers also), so often did they repeat their sin. That God considered their altars and their renegade priesthood a sin, one need only refer to I Kings 12:30; 13:33-34. The only thing that could ever result from worshipping at these altars was sin against God!

v. 12-13 I WROTE FOR HIM THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS OF MY LAW . . . THEY SACRIFICE FLESH AND EAT IT . . . THEY SHALL RETURN TO EGYPT . . . Their sin could not be excused on the grounds of ignorance. God had revealed His truth to them over and over again, in divers portions and divers manners (Heb. 1:1). By Moses, by the priests, by the kings, by the prophets, day after day, year after year they were instructed in the law (ten thousand times). Furthermore the law was extensive enough to cover every behavior of life, every thought, deed and motive. But it was "counted as a strange thing." The law to Israel was foreign, strange, alien and of no concern. In just what way it was "strange we do not know. Perhaps Israel felt the true Mosaic law was anachronistic, that is, out of date—"old fashioned." Good enough for their forefathers who lived rather primitive lives, but outdated for contemporary Israel. This is as modern as the twentieth century! Perhaps Israel felt the Mosaic law politically inexpedient. After all, a change in worship and priesthood was Jeroboam's plan to instill national pride in the northern kingdom's citizens. Perhaps Israel just didn't want to keep the law because it was too binding and would not suit their materialistic greed. This is indicated by verse 13 of our text. The Israelites brought their sacrifices regularly to the places of worship but they did it selfishly, in a mood of indulgence, multiplying the sacrifices in order to multiply indulgences. But God is not dead, neither is He asleep, nor does He forget. God records their deeds of iniquity and they must receive His payment for their sins. God prepares to visit upon them the moral consequences of their rebellion against justice and truth and righteousness. They shall return to bondage (represented symbolically by Egypt) and slavery in the hands of an ungodly, cruel, pagan nation. There is an interesting allegory of the "foundling child" in Ezekiel 16 concerning God's rescue of Israel and Judah from Egypt in the days of Moses and His sustenance of them and their unfaithfulness to Him—read it!

v. 14 ISRAEL HATH FORGOTTEN HIS MAKER, AND BUILDED PALACES . . . This is the one sickness for which all the others are mere symptoms. But had these people really forgotten God in the usual sense of the word? By no means! Men cannot forget God. They can deny Him, but in so doing they are still remembering Him! Men do not forget God intellectually; morally, yes, but intellectually, no! How then had Israel forgotten God? The Hebrew word used for "forgotten" means literally, "mis-laid" and perhaps this will help us understand their moral predicament. Everyone knows what it is to mislay something.

You have not forgotten it, but you have mislaid it. This is the idea. The Hebrew word is *shakakh* and is used in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:10; 8:11; 9:1, 4, 7. Taking all these passages together we learn that the word means "personal neglect, self-satisfaction that comes from such neglect and the self-righteousness which issues from remembering only self." It also stems from that independence which causes us to say that because of our righteousness and uprightness of heart God has blessed us, and has given us these things; and so God is put out of sight, *mislaid*.

How do men come to *mislaid* God? First, they give an intellectual assent to the fact of His existence without seeing to it that their conduct corresponds with their assent. God forgotten in this sense, mislaid, lost as an active power, touching life, conditioning it, driving it, building it up! Second, after God is mislaid, man begins to substitute, to fill the vacuum thus created in his life by building. Hosea says Israel builded palaces—the word translated literally would be "spacious buildings." The passion of the nation came to be to build big things. How up-to-date the prophet is! Man fills the vacuum in his life today by just such action. The passion for bigness is a symptom of capacity for the eternal, for God; and when men have mislaid God, then they try and build big things without God. Today we are building big government, big military, big industry, bigger homes, bigger automobiles, bigger United Nations, bigger everything and it is all unconsciously symptomatic of a mental and spiritual vacuum created by "forgetting God!"

Judah's forgotten God was replaced by "fortified cities." Here was a quest for security, an attempt to secure safety. The passion for safety is a symptom of the sense of peril! What do we all want? Security. Security against what? The lack of God, and the hopelessness that results from it. Our hopeless hippies carry signs today bearing the statements of hopeless philosophers of a generation ago, like, "There is no cure for birth or death save to enjoy the interval—Santayana . . ." Hosea's message is as relevant as our contemporary scene. We have mislaid God, and now we are building skyscrapers ("spacious buildings") and enormous defense mechanisms ("fortified cities"). These things would not be so wrong in themselves if God were central in the picture. Humanity erases God from the picture and then gropes after the spacious and fights for the secure, and never makes anything so big but that the sky laughs at it; and never secures itself for one five minutes from a possible outbreak of devastation or anarchy.

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — LORD'S LAMENT 8:14

We cannot get away from God. We have mislaid Him. He is at our elbow. We may be oblivious of Him, we may pretend to be doing without Him, but all the while we are living and moving and having our being in Him. In his hand our breath is. And according to our relationship to Him, He will bless or blast. If we mislay God, we can run up our sky-scrapers, we can multiply our battleships; but we cannot escape the slow but sure judgment of God.

QUIZ

1. Recite as completely as you can the history of Israel from Jeroboam I to the captivity of Israel.
2. What does Hosea mean, "Israel hath hired lovers?"
3. What is the meaning of "ten thousand things of my law?"
4. In what way does the prophet use "Egypt" to mean the captivities?
5. What does the word "forgotten" mean in verse 14?
6. How did Israel seek to fill the vacuum of a forgotten God? Judah?

LOVE REBUKING 9:1—13:16

REPROVING—
ISRAEL FORSOOK GOD

TEXT: 9:1-9

- 1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples; for thou hast played the harlot, departing from thy God; thou hast loved hire upon every grain-floor.
- 2 The threshing-floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her.
- 3 They shall not dwell in Jehovah's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.
- 4 They shall not pour out wine-offerings to Jehovah, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted; for their bread shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of Jehovah.
- 5 What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of Jehovah?
- 6 For, lo, they are gone away from destruction; yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them; their pleasant things of silver, nettles shall possess them; thorns shall be in their tents.