



[Hosea 10:1-2](#)

(1) Israel empties *his* vine;
He brings forth fruit for himself.
According to the multitude of his fruit
He has increased the altars;
According to the bounty of his land
They have embellished *his sacred* pillars.
(2) Their heart is divided;
Now they are held guilty.
He will break down their altars;
He will ruin their *sacred* pillars.

New King James Version

Hosea exposes the problem between [God](#) and Israel. He describes Israel as a luxuriant grape vine sending runners in every direction, indicating a bountiful crop. It indeed produces great material prosperity, but it is consumed through self-indulgent gorging. This is God's way of showing that Israel abused its prosperity: It used its prosperity for the purposes of [idolatry](#). Its prosperity played a part in corrupting the Israelites' hearts, which is why Hosea mentions the divided or disloyal heart in context with its bountiful fruit.

A large part of this world's appeal is its offer of financial security. However, God shows there is a possible harmful, secondary effect: As people become financially secure, their attention is diverted from His purpose to vain and unimportant things. In other words, prosperity turns people's heads. There is no doubt that prosperity is good, but unless one is properly focused and disciplined, it can also be a demanding master because of its power to distract one into idolatry. Recall God's prophecy in [Deuteronomy 32:15](#), predicting that when Israel prospered, then it would rebel.

This connects with the curse of [Laodiceanism](#) because God shows in the Laodiceans

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what can happen spiritually as people increase materially. Because such people are drunk through riches' deceptive promise, their judgment is in danger of being radically altered. The Laodicean evaluates himself, saying, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" ([Revelation 3:17](#)).

He is deceived into thinking that his material prosperity proves that God approves of his conduct and attitudes. His overall conduct may not be too bad, but his poor self-analysis persuades him that he has no urgent need to [seek God](#) any further. He then merely floats, going through the motions, even feeling good about himself as he neglects so great [salvation](#) ([Hebrews 2:3](#)). His opinion of his [holiness](#) as compared with God's judgment is so far off base, it causes [Jesus Christ](#) to regurgitate him from His body.

Recall the mention in [Hosea 10:1](#) of increasing and embellishing altars just before Israel fell to Assyria. One would think that, if altars increase during this period of prosperity, then religion is flourishing. Indeed, religion flourished, as Amos, Hosea's contemporary, clearly reports (see [Amos 5:21-27](#)). However, it was not the religion God gave through [Moses](#), but idolatry that flourished! It was a corruption of that religion, for the Israelites syncretized that holy way with Baalism and other idolatries.

In [Hosea 10:2](#), God charges Israel with having a divided heart. Commentaries are at odds over what the Hebrew word translated *divided* means. Most modern translations use "false," "deceitful," or "faithless," and none of these are wrong, including "divided." The Hebrew word suggests "smoothness" or "flattering," describing people who "talk the talk" but do not "walk the walk."

[Isaiah 29:13](#) clarifies what God means: "Therefore the LORD said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.'" Their reverence for Him was mere intellectual accommodation intended to appease Him. They used the name of God frequently, saying they trusted Him, but they filled the nation with stealing, lying, and murder.

[II Kings 17:33](#) illustrates their worship: "They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods - according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away." This describes to a *T* what Israel did then and their descendants are continuing to do today. Moffatt renders this, "They worshipped the Eternal, and they also served their own gods."

This chapter reports on the behavior of the people placed in Israel after Israel's conquest and deportation by Assyria between 722-720 BC. These people, who became

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Hosea 10:1-2 (<http://www.theberean.org>) known as the Samaritans, feared the Lord but worshipped their own gods. They were afraid of God, but they did not really change their way of life. Thus, they developed a syncretic religious system, a blending of the [truth](#) of God and outright paganism. The Jews of Christ's day clearly recognized this putrid blend and despised the Samaritans for it.

What is so interesting is that, by verse 36, God is no longer reporting on the Samaritans but is addressing Israel. In other words, God is saying that He was driven to defeat and scatter Israel because they were guilty of exactly the same [sin](#) as the Samaritans! They too had blended the worship of the true God with outright paganism, utterly corrupting the relationship He had established with them.

It is urgent that we understand what is involved here because it reveals the cause of God's anger that led to Israel's defeat and scattering. *We must understand that our god is not what we say we worship but what we serve. Our god is what we give our lives over to.*

Theoretically, the Israelites did not believe in idols, but in reality, they did. They believed in a Creator God, but they worshipped Him at the shrines they erected to the Baals. While they gave lip service to the Creator, they adopted most of the Canaanitish religion with its lewd immorality, and in actual practice, patterned their life after it. In daily life, they conformed to and reflected the Babylonish system just as Israel does today. This is exactly what God warns us to flee, and the only way to come out of it is by developing and maturing in our relationship with God.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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