
The Book of Hosea

Part 7 by: Ronald L. Dart

At times, when you read the prophets, there's an almost melancholy sense, a sadness, a blues as it were, because you realize that God didn't want things to go the way they were going. The book of Hosea is particularly poignant because in order that we would understand this, God had his prophet to marry an adulterous woman and have children with her. God had him take her back after she committed adultery again. God did all this to underline for us the reality of what He experienced with Israel.

It's not quite correct to say that God was married to Israel literally, but He was in covenant with her and the comparison with the marriage covenant is so apt because they are both blood covenants.

So in writing in Hosea chapter 9 verse 10, God comes to a place where He says, "When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert. It was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree, it was precious, it was wonderful when I found her. I didn't expect to find her where I found her, I didn't expect to see those sweet grapes in the desert where there is no water. Look what I found," God said. "But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved."

Now it is hard sitting where we are, to really grasp what that meant, and how it affected God. In my own case my wife and I have been married for over 50 years, and I have never experienced anything like this. I think it's possible that some of you probably have, where the one you love more than anyone else in the world, has been unfaithful to you, and has enjoined themselves to somebody else and has become vile with the thing they have become involved with. It may have been a lover, it may have been alcohol, it may have been drugs, and the pain is real.

Baal Worship

We're too far removed from what actually was going on in Palestine, in Egypt, and other places in Africa in that time, in terms of Baal worship. I don't know why the men of the Bible were not inspired to be more explicit in their description. Perhaps it was because, in Paul's words, "It was a shame to even speak of what these people did in secret" (Ephesians 5:12). Maybe it's just because the Bible is a family book, so I won't go there either, but I need to leave you with at least a few bread crumbs to follow so you can draw your own conclusions.

I pulled, for an example, a little quotation from the Holman Bible Dictionary, about what Baal worship involved. It says, and I quote, "Baal worship in Canaan revolved around two themes that represent the conception of Baal that his worshiper's held. Baal was both the sun god and the storm god. He was worshiped as the sun god when the people wished to express thanks and gratitude for light and warmth and fertility. Worship of Baal as the storm god took place to appease the destructive nature of Baal, demonstrated by drought and storms that devastated the vegetation of the worshipers."

Now catch this. "The efforts to appease Baal, whenever adverse conditions prevailed, culminated in the sacrifice of human beings, usually the first born of the one offering the sacrifice. The victims were burnt alive."

"A practice in the Old Testament termed to 'pass through the fire,' references are 2nd Kings 16:3 and 2nd Kings 21:6, where it mentions that the children of Israel caused their children to 'pass through the fire,' to the god Moloch."

"Baal worship was as diverse as the communities in which he was worshiped. Each locality had its own Baal who was named after the city or the place in which he belonged. Baal was considered the owner or processor of the land on which his followers lived."

Something I had not realized about Baal is that there were many Baals, I should have picked up on it but for some reason I didn't. I was rummaging around on the internet and I found an article about 'Moloch, the god Baal', and I hadn't made this connection. I knew about Moloch, I knew about Baal, I sort of assumed that they were two different Middle Eastern gods. Moloch is the sacred bull; he was widely worship in the ancient Near East and wherever Punic culture (of or relating to the ancient Carthaginians) extended.

Baal Moloch was conceived under the form of a calf or an ox or depicted as a man with a head of a bull, elsewhere he is called Baal Moloch. I don't know why I never made the connection before, but I hadn't realized the Calf Moloch or Calf Baal connection, nor had I realized that the Hebrew word for 'calf' derives from an ancient root that means 'circle.'

Now I've always had a little problem of dissidence with the movie, 'The Ten Commandments.' It's a great movie but whenever they bring forth this golden calf, this idol, this big ole calf that they made out of gold, it just didn't work for me and I didn't know why.

It appears to me that the word 'calf' has a different meaning in Hebrew.

Later God will speak of shameful acts at a place called Gilgal, but Gilgal is a common word which, again basically, is derived from a word which means 'circle.' As a result of this, this town over here will be called the 'Circle of This,' the town over there will be called the 'Circle of That,' so there's little Gilgals all over the Middle East.

I don't know what it means with any precision, but I think the golden calf was some sort of a representation of Baal, because the root meaning of the word 'calf' also means 'circle.' In English,

a 'calf' can mean a young cow, or it can mean part of your leg and it can even mean soft leather but it comes from that root in Hebrew that means 'circle.'

The big questions are why a calf, what happened to calf worship and what does this all mean?

Carthage participated in Baal worship and there the people engaged in naked orgies and they burnt children alive to Baal.

The Golden Calf

This Baal worship agrees with what Moses said happened at Mount Sinai. The account is back in Exodus 32 and you may remember the incident from the movie, where the Israelites had made their way all the way through the desert and Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai and He hadn't come back, and he didn't come back and finally everybody became very impatient about it. The people said, "Look, you brought us out here in the desert to kill the whole lot of us. We're going back to Egypt and we're going to have to make a calf, we want to make ourselves a god." So, Aaron had them gather all the gold they could possibly find. They got it all together, and they heated it up and the craftsmen went to work and crafted a golden calf. Whatever that might possible mean, it would have been some sort of an icon familiar to all of them, familiar to Egypt and probably familiar to Baal worship throughout the Middle East, if the truth were known.

Finally, when Moses came back down off that mountain and he found what had happened, he was furious, and Aaron tried to excuse himself.

You will find the account in Exodus 32 verse 22. "Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot, you know the people, you know they're set on mischief; {23} For they said to me, "Make us gods.""" Catch that, gods are plural. "Which shall go before us: as for this man Moses, the man that brought us out of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him," {24} And I said to them, "Whoever has any gold, let them take it off," and they gave it to me and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Oh really! Of course, this has always been cited by preachers with sarcasm; "We just threw it all in the fire and look, what a surprise, a calf came out of it." I don't think so, they made something, and it was a Baal that they made.

"And when," {25} "Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked to their shame among their enemies)."

This was finally too much for Moses and he pushed the whole thing over the edge. "Moses took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it" (Exodus 32:20).

He put a stop to the worship of Baal immediately on the spot.

Now where all this went and what all it meant to the children of Israel is a story that we have to tell. If you do your own concordance search of the word 'Moloch' in the Bible, you will find him designated as the god to whom the Israelites sacrificed their children.

And the same web site that I was at before said this; "Certain rabbinic writers describe a hollow bronze statue in the form of a human but with the head of an ox. According to the rabbis, children were placed in the structure which was then heated from below; drums were pounded to drown out the cries of the children."

Ephraim and Their Worship of Baal

Hosea 9 verse 11, "Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird, no birth, no pregnancy, no conception; {12} Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of everyone. Woe to them when I turn away from them!"

You know I don't think you can really quite understand what God is saying here unless you understand what they were doing to their children. They sacrificed their children in a vile way to these pagan gods. That's what they were doing so why give them any children, when they were destroying them. God says, "I'm going to dry up the womb and you're not going to have children, why should I let you have children when you're going to do this to them."

Not only were they sacrificing their children, but when their children were a little older, they also sold their little girls and sometimes their little boys into cult prostitution. So, no wonder God turned his back on them and walked away. The difference between having God look upon you as a country, as a nation, as a people with favor and having Him turn around and walk away is huge. Not many people really give sufficient thought to that.

Our Country has Been Blessed Abundantly

I honestly think that when we started out in this country, the United States of America, and we said; "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men were created equal, and were endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights." We made a tacit agreement with God, "You be our Creator God and we will build on the principles of your Word."

Oh yeah... they wanted separation of Church and state, not really. They wanted separation of religion and state, they didn't want the state imposing a religion, but never the less, we started out with the presumption of a Creator to whom we owed something. And you know, the way this nation has gone, it's hard to explain, because we don't have that much more in the way of natural resources than lots of other people, we're not smarter than many of the other people in the world but boy we have been blessed more than any nation on the face of the earth and this also is a self-evident fact.

Ephraim Will Bring Her Children To The Slayer

God said, "I've had it with you." Continuing in Hosea 9 verse 13, God says, "I've seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, but Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer."

{14} Give them, O LORD; what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry."

In our case, God had nothing to do at all in being a slayer. He didn't have to lift a finger. Our woman has aborted their own children and left themselves dry. We did the slayers' work for Him.

Verse 15, "Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal," and there is that word 'circle' again, "I hated them there, because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house, I will no longer love them. All their leaders are rebellious. {16} Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring."

God didn't have to do it, not with us, we do it for Him. When a surgeon will partially deliver a child and then kill it before it comes completely into the world, that is what we call 'partial birth abortion.' God doesn't have to, we, our people, do it for Him.

I'm still trying to figure out exactly what the moral difference is between killing that child as it is coming out of the womb and killing the live child as it lies on the table in the delivery room? I'm working on that and haven't gotten there yet. If you have some ideas, drop me a note and tell me.

God Hates The Wicked

"Because of all their wickedness I hated them." Now verse 17 of Hosea 9, "My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him, they will be wanderers among the nations."

I've said this before; I really don't think we can understand how depraved Israel had become, unless we weigh the consequences of the things that happened to them. When you read that, you begin to realize it was pretty bad for God to react the way He did to them.

Circle of Sacred Stones

Hosea 10 and verse 1, "Israel was a spreading vine, he brought forth fruit for himself, and as his fruit increased, he built more altars; as his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones. {2} Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bare their guilt. The LORD will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones."

Something occurred to me that never had occurred to me before. When I had discovered these hints in the Hebrew to the problems of the 'circle' that these people were creating, suddenly it comes to mind, a circle of sacred stones that were erected in the Salisbury Plains in England, they call them, Stonehenge. This tradition of circles, sacred stones is something that has shot through pagan societies in the Bible. Well the times were different back then, and we have only partial knowledge of the time but every so often a sentence will pop up out of the Bible and just hit you, and events or circumstances in the real world will rise up and say, "Oh. Oh, look at this, I hadn't seen that before."

They go on in Hosea in verse 3, "Then they will say "We have no king because we did not revere the LORD, but even if we had a king, what could he do for us?" They make a lot of promises; they take false oaths and agreements."

Oh my, have you ever watched a political debate on television and you get a line of about 10 candidates or however many it is. They ask them questions, they make political speeches and say, "When I am made president I will do this or I will do that." Oh yeah, they make promises, and take false oaths and they get up there on the day of their inauguration and they put their hand on the Bible and lie through their teeth.

Then God said this, "Therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field." I'm reading from the NIV, the New International Version.

That is the sentence that jumped out at me, because that's where we are, right now. Our leadership has gone down a road where they can't help us any longer. They make promises, they take false oaths and they make agreements and they can't come close to fulfilling them. As a result of this vacuum of leadership, what do we get? We have lawsuits springing up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.

I saw a commercial or an advertisement not long ago that said, "The cost to the average family of lawsuit abuse in this country, is like thirty-five hundred dollars apiece." What could you do with thirty-five hundred dollars? Would that be of any value to you at all? Well that is what all these lawsuits springing up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field means to you, in real terms to your pocket book.

Bethel And Her Calf Idol

The people who lived in Samaria, the capital of the ten northern tribes of Israel, led by Samaria said in Hosea 10 verse 5, "They fear for the calf idol of Bethaven."

Here we go back again to this idol, a picture of a calf. Really, when I think of things that are harmless and you know I think of a little calf, a new born calf wandering around on his spindly little legs, as harmless as any creature in God's creation, as vulnerable as anything God ever made to predators. This is what people make an idol out of? That doesn't make sense to me, so consequently, I think it's something else.

Bethaven, well that's the name that God attached to Bethel, which is where the first one of these calf idols was set up, after the house of Israel had separated from the house of Judah.

Verse 5, "The people who live in Samaria will mourn over it and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendor because it had taken them into exile, {6} It will be carried into Assyria as a tribute to the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be ashamed of its wooden idols."

And the only idols I know of, that were wood, were the asherah poles, the images of that goddess, that fertility goddess, who supervised the prostitution of little children.

God's Wrath On Evil People

It's too bad that so many people have slandered God in the way He dealt with Israel in the Old Testaments and other nations. Now I call it slander because basically what some people have talked about is this wrathful God of the Old Testament who went around killing people all the time and what they don't consider is how wretched and evil the people were and what provocation they had offered to Him.

Continuing in Hosea 10 verse 7, "Samaria, the capital of Israel, and its king will float away like a twig on the surface of the waters, {8} The high places of wickedness will be destroyed, it is the sin of Israel. Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars and they will say to the mountains, cover us and to the hills fall on us."

Types and Antitypes

Now, its passages like this that make me stop and think. When is the time that Hosea is aiming at? Well, there is no question that he's talking about his own generation of people. He is writing right in the time of the greatest prosperity in Israel, they're flying high, but their fall is not very far into their future.

The language Hosea uses here, reflects out later in the Bible, at a totally different time. With the full realization that at times things that have happened in the past, are what people call 'types' in the Bible, they are types of a later antitypes. They are like little models of what is going to happen at another time in the future. It's hard to say why anybody in Hosea's day would say to the mountains "cover us" and to the hills "fall on us," but when you come all the way down to the book of Revelation towards the end of the Bible, we need to notice what it says.

Revelations 6 verse 15: "The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the chief captains, the mighty men, every slave, every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us. Hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath has come and who will be able to stand.""

So, at the very least I conclude, Hosea's prophecy, directed at Ephraim in those days, is a type of what is yet future for us.

Verse 9 of Hosea 10, "Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel, and there you have remained. Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?"

I told you the story about Gibeah, that wretched, miserable story in the previous article, about the rape of a man's concubine that took place overnight. It was a terrible thing, as bad as Sodom and it nearly wiped out the tribe of Benjamin.

God says, {10} "When I please, when I get ready, I will punish them; nations will be gathered together against them to put them in bonds for their double sin. {11} Ephraim is like a trained

heifer that loves to thresh grain, so I will put a yoke on her fair neck. I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods."

You're going to be like slaves, doing agriculture, in somebody else's country, but here is what you ought to do.

"Sow for yourself righteousness," {12} "reap the fruit of unfailing love, break up your unplowed ground, it's time to seek the LORD until he comes and showers righteousness on you."

There's a lot in that verse, for one thing, there are two aspects of that first sentence. One is, living the life allows us to love, "Sow for yourself righteousness and reap the fruit of unfailing love." Your own. The other thing is, "Living the life" allows God to love us and to create a relationship with us, that we want and that He wants. Another thing that comes out of this verse is, that we can't achieve righteousness ourselves any more that we can make a seed grow. It has to be showered on us; but we have to sow. It is wrong to say that's there nothing we can to do. We have to do our part and sow righteousness.

God goes on to say to Israel in verse 13, "You have planted wickedness, and you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors."

You thought you could fight it on your own, didn't you?

God continues in verse 14, "But the roar of battle will rise against your own people so that all your fortresses - will be devastated, as Shalman devastated Betharbel in the days of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children. {15} And so it will happen to you, O Bethel, because your wickedness is so great."

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that God's people sometimes fail in acknowledging the fact that He has feelings?
2. Why is it so hard to learn from the mistakes of our ancestors?
3. Do we have a modern form of Baal Worship today?
4. Did you know that there were different Baals?

5. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's idea of what the golden calf probably was?
6. What ideas do you have about the golden calf, and why a calf?
7. Do you see God as a wrathful God in the Old Testament, or as a Father that was very patient and forgiving?
8. How does one "sow righteousness"?