

Hosea 13:9-11

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-13/hosea-139-11/>

The LORD announces Israel's destruction because the people turned against Him. God will destroy their military and political establishments, leaving them with no source of help.

As the LORD continued His indictment of the Israelites, He lamented their defeat and addressed them directly: *It is to your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help* (vs 9). The Israelites would be destroyed because of their willful act of turning against their Suzerain God, Yahweh (I Am). The natural consequence from a culture of exploitation and violence is *destruction*. Such a culture eats itself. Further, Israel's covenant with God prescribed that if they broke the covenant and sunk into pagan exploitation, they would be devoured by foreign invaders (Deuteronomy 8:19-20, 28:49-50).

Verse 9 describes the LORD as Israel's *help*. The LORD was Israel's only *help* because He was the one who redeemed them from Egyptian bondage long ago, guided them through the wilderness wandering, and led them into the Promised Land. And because God blessed Israel beyond measure (Deuteronomy 32:10–14), the people became proud and turned against Him.

The Hebrew word translated *help* is “ezer.” It is the same word used to describe the role of the woman:

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”
(Genesis 2:18)

This demonstrates that the woman's design and assigned role is a high and lofty calling, that is part of God's image. God is a *help* (“ezer”). Most of the time when “ezer” is used in the Old Testament, it refers to the character of God. Therefore, to demean women in their natural design is to denigrate God.

The people of Israel arrogantly fabricated idols and worshiped them instead of worshiping the LORD their God. Idol worship is a form of self-justification; we talk ourselves into believing something we know isn't true in order to justify our behavior. In the case of paganism, idol worship justified exploitation and pursuit of sensual appetites at the expense of others (Hosea 4:2).

So, as the LORD lamented Israel's destruction, He reminded them that He was their only source of *help* (“ezer”). Therefore, Israel's low esteem for God and their allegiance to Baal would bring their destruction. Israel's only helper would turn into their adversary, as per their covenant agreement, acting as a ferocious lion to tear them into pieces (vv. 7–8).

Having lamented Israel's destruction, the LORD then used irony to ask Israel, *Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities* (vs 10)? The inferred answer is “Your king

won't save you." The fulfillment of this prophecy that Israel's *king* would become impotent to *save* them might have been fulfilled when Hoshea was king of Israel. The "king of Assyria shut him up and bound [Hoshea] in prison" (2 Kings 17:4b). This was because Hoshea stopped paying tribute to Assyria, based on a deal he made with Egypt (2 Kings 17:4a). Subsequently:

"Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria."
(2 Kings 17:5-6a)

Hosea's question shows that Israel's *king* would be impotent to *help* them when God sent an enemy to invade Israel's cities. The Israelites had trusted in their military establishment (Hosea 8:4) while ignoring their true source of *help*, which is the LORD. But their military leaders would become powerless in the face of God's judgment (Hosea 10:14, 11:6). God would implement the cursing portion of their covenant agreement, which they chose to neglect (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

The LORD paralleled His question of *Where now is your king* and asks a similar rhetorical question: [where are] *your judges of whom you requested*, "*Give me a king and princes*"? (vs 10)?

This second question might refer to the four hundred and fifty years of self-governance, when judges ruled in Israel. God gave Israel leaders called "judges" in that era who "delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them" (Judges 2:16). When Israel asked for a king instead of God's judges, God said they were rejecting Him, that He might rule over them (1 Samuel 8:7). God is asking not only *where now is your king* who would deliver them, but also where are their *judges* who delivered them in the past. The answer is that Israel has neither.

God promised judgement on Israel for requesting a king. God told them the kings would turn to tyrants and oppress them, and when they cried out for help He would not answer, because He had given them what they asked for (1 Samuel 8:18).

Israel's words best capture the essence of their plea:

"There shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."
(1 Samuel 8:20)

So, in the book of Hosea, God reminded the people of what He did at that time: *I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath* (vs 11).

Though offended by the people's plea, which implied their rejection of His sovereign authority (1 Samuel 8:7), the Suzerain God granted their wish (1 Samuel 8:22). This led to Israel's oppression (Hosea 4:2). But now God has judged the king; He *took him away*. It was the king of Assyria who captured Israel's king, defeated their army and exiled its people. But God takes credit for the event, given that He appoints all authorities (Romans 13:1, Proverbs 21:1).

The LORD reminded the Israelites of their request to show how rebellious they had been throughout their history (Acts 7:52). They had thus accumulated sins for so long, and now their consequence was at hand. They had broken their covenant with God, and now the corrective provisions would be invoked (Deuteronomy 8:19-20, 28:15-68).

The phrases *I gave you a king* and *I took him away* used in verse 11 show that God alone controls the affairs of men. God alone is the King of kings who holds the initiative in the rise and fall of human kings. God's *wrath* pours out on all unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). In Romans, Paul explains that God's *wrath* is a progressive removal of God's protection, such that those who seek the paths of wickedness reap their own destruction. Being captured by lust leads to addiction which leads to a debased mind (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

In this case of the era of Hosea, Israel is suffering the natural consequence of choosing the pagan culture of exploitation, justified through pagan worship, which has led to a culture in Israel of deception, exploitation, and violence (Hosea 4:2). But now they will also be turned over to a foreign nation, who will exploit the leaders as they have exploited their own people. This is pursuant to biblical principles of justice (Matthew 7:2). It is also in keeping with the covenant agreement Israel made with God, where they promised to obey His commands (Exodus 19:8).

Biblical Text

⁹ ***It is your destruction, O Israel,
That you are against Me, against your help.***

¹⁰ ***Where now is your king
That he may save you in all your cities,
And your judges of whom you requested,
“Give me a king and princes”?***

¹¹ ***I gave you a king in My anger
And took him away in My wrath.***