

Hosea 10:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

Analysis

Empty words and false covenants: 'They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.' They speak **דְּבָרִים** (dibberu devarim, spoken words)—mere talk without substance. Swearing falsely (**אֲלֹות שָׁוָא**, alot shav) when cutting covenant (**בְּרִית**, berit). Result: judgment springs up (**קָרָשׁ** (kharosh, like hemlock/poisonous weed) in furrows. This demonstrates that faithless words and broken covenants produce poisonous fruit. Truth and covenant faithfulness are foundational; their absence poisons society. Only Christ speaks truth perfectly (John 14:6), establishing new covenant on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

Historical Context

Israel's political instability involved constant treaty-making and breaking: swearing allegiance to Assyria then Egypt, making covenants with no intention of keeping them. 'False swearing' violates the third commandment (Exodus 20:7) and characterizes dishonest society (Jeremiah 5:2, 7:9, Zechariah 5:4). The agricultural metaphor—poisonous hemlock in plowed furrows—describes ironic reversal: where wholesome crops should grow, poison sprouts. Similarly, where justice should flourish, corruption spreads. Amos similarly condemns: 'ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock' (Amos 6:12). This demonstrates that societal corruption begins with leaders' faithless words and broken promises.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do 'empty words' and 'false swearing' in leadership poison entire societies?
2. What does judgment 'springing up as hemlock' teach about how corruption multiplies from small beginnings?

Interlinear Text

דִּבְרֵי	דִּבְרֵי יְמִינֵיכֶם	אֲלֹוֹת	שְׁוִיאָה	כְּרָתָה	בְּרִית
They have spoken	words	swearing	falsely	in making	a covenant
H1696	H1697	H422	H7723	H3772	H1285

וְפָנֶיךָ	כְּרָאשָׁךָ	מִשְׁפָּט	עַל	תְּלִימִים	שָׂדֵין
springeth up	as hemlock	thus judgment	H5921	in the furrows	of the field

| H6524 | H7219 | H4941 | | H8525 | H7704 |

Additional Cross-References

Amos 5:7 (Judgment): Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Amos 6:12 (Judgment): Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

Hosea 4:2 (Parallel theme): By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

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