

Hosea 12:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

Analysis

Gilead iniquity, Gilgal sacrifice: 'Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.' Rhetorical question: is there אָוֶן (aven, iniquity) in Gilead? Answer: surely שָׁוֵם (shav, vanity/worthlessness). At Gilgal they sacrifice שְׁבָרִים (shevarim, bulls); their altars like גַּלְּגָלִים (gallim, heaps) in furrows. This demonstrates multiplied false worship: geographic breadth (Gilead, Gilgal) and numeric excess (altars like stone heaps). More religion without true relationship intensifies guilt. Only Christ's once-for-all sacrifice ends need for multiplied altars (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Historical Context

Gilead (Trans-Jordan territory) and Gilgal (Jordan Valley site) both became centers of false worship despite originally significant in redemptive history. Gilead was Israelite territory; Gilgal site of covenant renewal (Joshua 4-5). Archaeological evidence shows cultic activity at both locations. The 'altars like heaps' suggests ubiquitous high places—every field had altar, every town worship site. This proliferation, rather than demonstrating devotion, revealed confusion and syncretism. Hosea earlier condemned Gilgal (4:15, 9:15). This demonstrates that multiplying religious sites/activities apart from true covenant relationship compounds rather than resolves guilt.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does proliferating worship sites ('altars like heaps in furrows') reveal religious confusion rather than genuine devotion?
2. What does God's condemnation of multiplied sacrifices teach about quality versus quantity in worship?

Interlinear Text

בְּגִלְגָּל לְקִדְמָה אֵם תְּגִלְעֵד אָא אֵל אָרֶן שְׁוֹר וְאֵשׁ
H518 in Gilead Is there iniquity H389 surely they are vanity H1961 in Gilgal
H1568 H205 H7723 H1537

תְּלִמְמִים עַל מִזְבְּחֹתָם כְּפָלִים שְׁוֹר יְמִינָם
bullocks they sacrifice H1571 yea their altars are as heaps H5921 in the furrows
H7794 H2076 H4196 H1530 H8525

שְׂדֵה:
of the fields
H7704

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 6:8 (Sin): Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.

Hosea 8:11 (Sin): Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

Hosea 4:15 (Parallel theme): Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

Hosea 9:15 (Parallel theme): All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolters.

Hosea 10:1 (Sacrifice): Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

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