

Hosea 13:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel;
but when he offended in Baal, he died.

Analysis

The tragic reversal: 'When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died' (ke-daber Ephrayim retet nasa hu be-Yisra'el wa-ye'esham ba-Ba'al wa-yamot). Ephraim (Joseph's son, representing the Northern Kingdom) once commanded respect—his words caused trembling, he was lifted up. But Baal worship brought spiritual death. The Hebrew 'asham (offend/become guilty) indicates covenant violation bringing guilt and liability to punishment. 'He died' refers not just to political collapse but spiritual death—separation from God, the source of life. Romans 6:23 declares 'the wages of sin is death.' Idolatry doesn't merely displease God; it severs the relationship with Him who is life itself (John 14:6). This demonstrates that apostasy from the living God always leads to death—spiritual, and often temporal.

Historical Context

Ephraim's prominence traced to Joshua (Ephraimite), Samuel (based in Ephraim), and the region's central location and fertility. When Jeroboam I (Ephraimite) led the northern secession, Ephraim became synonymous with the Northern Kingdom. Their size and influence were immense—yet Baal worship, introduced systematically by Jeroboam's calves and intensified under Ahab and Jezebel, led to their destruction. By Hosea's time (mid-8th century BC), despite material prosperity under Jeroboam II, spiritual death was evident: moral corruption, injustice, and idolatry pervaded society. Within decades, Assyria conquered and

deported them (722 BC)—fulfilling this prophecy. Power and prominence mean nothing when covenant with God is broken.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does my society's or church's past faithfulness compare to its present spiritual vitality?
2. What 'Baals'—false gods, ideologies, or values—have I allowed to bring spiritual death to my soul?

Interlinear Text

רֹאֵב	אֶפְרַיִם	תָּמִימָה	אָמַת	נָשָׁא	הַיָּה	בִּשְׁרָאֵל
spake	When Ephraim	trembling	he exalted			himself in Israel
H1696	H669	H7578	H5375			H3478

וַיַּאֲשַׁד	בְּעֵל	לִימָתָה:
but when he offended	in Baal	he died
H816	H1168	H4191

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 11:2 (Parallel theme): As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.