

Hosea 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Analysis

This verse catalogs covenant violations using the Decalogue's structure: 'swearing' (false oaths, violating God's name—3rd commandment), 'lying' (false witness—9th commandment), 'killing' (6th commandment), 'stealing' (8th commandment), 'committing adultery' (7th commandment). The Hebrew rhythm emphasizes comprehensive lawlessness: 'aloh we-kahhesh we-ratsohh we-ganobh we-na'oph (cursing and lying and murdering and stealing and adultery). The phrase 'they break out' (paratsu) suggests violent overflow—sin unchecked, society descending into chaos. 'Blood touches blood' (damim be-damim naga'u) indicates unceasing bloodshed, one murder following another. This total moral collapse demonstrates what happens when knowledge of God vanishes (v. 1)—without reverence for YHWH, all ethical restraints dissolve.

Historical Context

Israel's final decades were marked by political assassinations (six kings in 30 years, most murdered), corrupt justice, oppression of the poor, and religious syncretism. The social fabric disintegrated as covenant structures collapsed. Hosea's indictment echoes the pre-flood era ('violence filled the earth,' Genesis 6:11) and Judges period ('everyone did what was right in his own eyes,' Judges 21:25). Archaeological evidence from this period shows military buildup and fortifications suggesting pervasive violence. This moral chaos preceded Assyria's

devastating invasion (722 BC), demonstrating that national sin invites divine judgment through historical processes.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does my society reflect similar moral decay, and what is the church's prophetic responsibility?
2. Do I recognize that personal and corporate knowledge of God is the only foundation for ethical order?

Interlinear Text

אָל הַ	וְכַשׁ	וְכָצַח	וְגָבַ	וְנָאֵר
By swearing	and lying	and killing	and stealing	and committing adultery
H422	H3584	H7523	H1589	H5003
פָּרַצוּ	בְּדַם יָם	בְּדַם יָם	נִגְעוּ:	
they break out	and blood	and blood	toucheth	
H6555	H1818	H1818	H5060	

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 6:9 (Parallel theme): And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

Jeremiah 6:7 (Parallel theme): As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.

Hosea 7:1 (Parallel theme): When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

Micah 7:2 (Blood): The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

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