

Hosea 6:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.

Analysis

The cryptic statement 'Gilead is a city of workers of iniquity, polluted with blood' indicts a specific location for systemic evil. Gilead, east of the Jordan, was a Levitical city and city of refuge (Joshua 20:8), meant to protect the innocent. That it became 'traced with blood' (aqqubah mi-dam) suggests the opposite: rather than sanctuary, it offered violence. The term 'workers of iniquity' (po'aley aven) describes deliberate, habitual evildoing—not accidental sin but institutional wickedness. This may reference priestly corruption (v. 9 mentions priests murdering), political intrigue, or perversion of justice. When institutions designed for righteousness become engines of oppression, society faces catastrophic moral inversion. This principle recurs: religious leaders corrupting their office provoke God's fiercest judgment (Matthew 23, James 3:1).

Historical Context

Gilead's specific historical crimes aren't detailed, but the region had violent history: Jephthah's conflicts (Judges 11-12), civil war between Gilead and Ephraim, and border disputes. As a frontier territory, it faced frequent raids and political instability. The city of refuge system (Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 19) was designed to prevent blood feuds and ensure justice—that Gilead perverted this sacred function made the sin especially heinous. Hosea's contemporary Amos also denounced Gilead's violence (Amos 1:3, 13). This demonstrates how institutions meant to reflect God's character can be corrupted, requiring prophetic denunciation and ultimate divine judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What institutions in my context, including churches, have been corrupted from their righteous purpose?
2. How do I respond when religious leaders or systems designed for good perpetuate evil?

Interlinear Text

גִּלְעָד תֵּן כִּלְעָד פְּעָלִי וְאַנְּשָׁה עַלְעָד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

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H1568 H7151 H6466 H205 H6121 H1818

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 12:11 (Sin): 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.

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