

Hosea 8:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

Analysis

The devastating indictment of idolatry: 'For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.' The logic is irrefutable: Israel's golden calf (likely at Bethel, representing Samaria/Northern Kingdom) was crafted by human hands, therefore cannot be deity. The Hebrew emphasizes the absurdity: a 'workman' (*harash*) made it, so it's not 'Elohim' (God). Isaiah 44:9-20 elaborates this mockery: using the same wood for fire and idol-carving demonstrates the irrationality of idolatry. The promise 'shall be broken in pieces' (*shevavim yihyeh*) uses intensive plural: it will be utterly shattered. When Assyria conquered Israel (722 BC), they destroyed these shrines. Idols cannot save because they're not God—a principle Paul applies to all false objects of ultimate devotion (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Historical Context

Jeroboam I established golden calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30) to prevent northern tribes from worshiping in Jerusalem, explicitly saying 'Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt'—blasphemously attributing the Exodus to idols. This sin led Israel into persistent idolatry for the kingdom's entire existence (2 Kings 17:21-23). Though possibly intended as pedestals for YHWH (similar to ark's cherubim), they functioned as idols and violated the second commandment's prohibition of images. The calves echoed Aaron's golden calf (Exodus 32), repeating that sin at the national level.

Assyria's conquest fulfilled Hosea's prophecy, scattering Israel and ending the northern kingdom permanently.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What modern 'idols'—created things I treat as ultimate—need to be recognized as powerless and broken?
2. How do I discern when religious traditions or forms, though not inherently evil, have become functional idols?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל	וְהוּא	חָכֵם	עָשָׂה הוּא	וְלֹא
H3588	For from Israel H3478	H1931	was it also the workman H2796	made H6213	H3808
	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	הוּא	כִּי	שִׁבְּרָם יָם	יְהוָה
	it therefore it is not God H430	H1931	H3588	shall be broken in pieces H7616	H1961
	עַל גֵּל	שָׁמְרוֹן:			
	but the calf H5695	of Samaria H8111			