

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8, Hosea 9

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8, Hosea 9, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Hosea 9 discusses Israel's unfaithfulness to God, symbolized by their syncretistic religious practices at harvest festivals held at threshing floors and winepresses. **Oswalt connects these agricultural rituals** to Israel's idolatry and their attempts to manipulate God. He highlights Israel's rejection of God's unique nature, contrasting their actions with God's unwavering love. **The lecture also explores the consequences** of Israel's actions, including spiritual starvation and exile, emphasizing the hypocrisy of their rituals and the ultimate triumph of God's plan. **Finally, the lecture concludes** with a call to Christian optimism and trust in God's power, even amidst societal decay.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Minor Prophets → Hosea).**



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3. Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8, Hosea 9

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided source, "Oswalt_Hosea_EN_Session08.pdf", with relevant quotes:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Hosea 9

Overview:

This session focuses on Hosea chapter 9, delving into the sins of Israel, the nature of God, and the consequences of syncretism. Dr. Oswalt provides historical context for the agricultural practices of the time (threshing floors and wine presses) and uses them to illuminate the religious practices of the Israelites. He argues that Israel's downfall stemmed from their unfaithfulness to God, their syncretistic worship, and their misplaced trust in pagan practices. He draws parallels to contemporary society, highlighting the danger of ritualism without genuine faith. The session concludes with a hopeful note emphasizing God's ability to redeem even in the face of seemingly overwhelming corruption.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Agricultural Context:

- **Threshing Floors:** Located on hilltops, places for separating grain from husks. Also significant as "high places" for worship, whether in praise of good harvests or placation of gods during bad harvests.
- "The grain is cut and brought in and piled in piles on the tops of those hills on the threshing floors... then an oxen or in this case, chapter 10 is going to talk about Israel as a heifer who is driven around on top of the pile of grain to husk it..."
- **Wine Presses:** Located in valleys, used to press grapes, symbolizing the end of the harvest. Often associated with fertility orgies.
- "The wine press, on the other hand, is down in the valley...the wine press is a great place for fertility orgies."

1. Syncretism and Unfaithfulness:

- **Mixing Paganism with Yahweh Worship:** The Israelites were not abandoning Yahweh entirely but were mixing pagan practices with their Yahweh worship, creating a syncretistic system. This mixing was unacceptable to the God of Israel.

- “They're not abandoning Yahweh to worship Baal. They're just mixing it all together... They're doing their religious rituals as the Bible commands in an attempt to manipulate God.”
- **God's Uniqueness:** The core issue is Israel's failure to grasp that Yahweh is unique and unlike other gods. He is not to be manipulated or associated with fertility cults.
- “Your God is not like the other gods... The God who has revealed himself to you is not part of this world... He is not sexed. He cannot be manipulated by magic.”
- **Syncretism's Impact:** Syncretism demanded absolute loyalty, and Israel failed in this aspect, seeking fun on the threshing floors while their God expected a different kind of behavior.
- “Yes, you could worship Baal and Asher. You could worship Baal and Zeus. Yeah, it was not a problem. There are many gods, and the gods express themselves in many ways, but not this one.”
- **Consequences of Unfaithfulness:** God will cause their harvests to fail, not just literally, but also spiritually, because their practices are not expressions of or gifts from God.
- "The threshing floors and the wine presses will not feed the people. The new wine will fail them... they will not because they're not from God. They're not an expression of God. They're not a gift from God."

1. **Hypocrisy of Ritualism:**

- **Ritual Without Heart:** The Israelites were meticulously performing rituals but without true devotion or understanding, rendering them unclean before God.
- “Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners. All who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves. It'll not come into the temple of the Lord.”
- “They worshiped him with their mouths, but their hearts were far from them.”
- **The Nature of Defilement:** True defilement comes not from external factors, like eating with unwashed hands, but from the heart.
- “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander. These are what defile a person.”

- **Futile Offerings:** Their offerings do not please God and will not bring them spiritual cleansing or grace. This is compounded by the coming exile which will remove their means to offer those rituals anyway.
- "The present sacrifices that they are offering do not please him; do not make them clean in his sight, and the day is coming when there won't be any."

1. Human Alliances and Their Failures

- **Fickle Nature of Human Alliances:** Alliances with foreign nations, like Egypt, will ultimately fail as human beings are fickle, driven by their own interests.
- "What's the problem with human alliances? They're humans... Humans are fickle by nature."
- **Self-Serving Goals:** Nations pursue their own self-serving goals instead of the common good, making alliances unreliable.
- "It's not a question of making deals that will be in our interest, no. It's a question about using people to achieve our goals."

1. Rejection of the Prophet & Moral Corruption:

- **Ignoring the Warning:** The people reject the prophet's message, seeing him as a fool or a maniac because their minds are corrupted by sin.
- "Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac."
- **Sin's Distortion:** Sin distorts understanding to the point that truth seems foolish and wickedness seems normal, leading to a society that mirrors Gibeah's corruption.
- "Their thinking has become nonsense. Sin becomes so ingrained that anything that stands against it seems foolish."
- **Degradation and Becoming Like Sin:** By dedicating themselves to sin, Israel has degraded themselves, becoming as vile as the detestable things they love.
- "They dedicated themselves... to that shameful thing... They sold themselves to what would shame them... and they became as vile as the thing they loved. Sin, you see, is not merely something we do. It's something we become."

1. Consequences and God's Judgment:

- **Loss of Fruitfulness:** God's initial joy in Israel, like finding grapes in the desert, has turned to disappointment as Israel has become fruitless. Their focus on fertility rites will yield the opposite: barrenness.
- "When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert... When I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree."
- **God's Withdrawal:** God will withdraw his affection from them. He will no longer feel the natural affection that he once had for them.
- "I will no longer love them... the affection that I felt for you when I found you in the desert like grapes or like early figs, you've killed it."
- **Exile and Rejection:** They will face exile, become wanderers, and lose their children, not necessarily through direct action of God but due to the consequences of their choices.
- "They will be wanderers among the nations."

1. Contemporary Relevance

- **Parallel to Today:** Dr. Oswalt draws a parallel between Israel's sins and the modern world, highlighting the danger of ritualism without meaning, moral degradation, and the rejection of truth.
- **Hope and Optimism:** Despite the bleak picture, he urges Christians to live in eternal optimism, trusting in God's creative and redemptive power.
- "I think the Christian response is to live in eternal optimism... We serve God...we should be prepared... live with confidence, with expectation for what he could do, for what he might do, and go for it."

Quotes Highlighting Key Themes

- **On Syncretism:** "They're not abandoning Yahweh to worship Baal. They're just mixing it all together. So, they're doing their religious rituals as the Bible commands in an attempt to manipulate God."
- **On Uniqueness of God:** "Your God is not like the other gods. The God who has revealed himself to you is not part of this world... He is not sexed. He cannot be manipulated by magic."

- **On Hypocrisy of Ritual:** "They worshiped him with their mouths, but their hearts were far from them."
- **On the Nature of Sin:** "Sin, you see, is not merely something we do. It's something we become."
- **On Hope:** "We need to live with confidence, with expectation for what he could do, for what he might do, and go for it... We win."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's analysis of Hosea 9 provides a stark warning against the dangers of syncretism, ritualism without true faith, and moral degradation. It also provides a call to genuine faith and a reminder of God's redemptive power. This chapter is not just an ancient history lesson, but a timeless teaching that is highly relevant to today's challenges and opportunities. The session emphasizes the importance of true devotion to God and the need to live with a hope-filled attitude.

4. Briefing Document, Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8, Hosea 9

Hosea Chapter 9 Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two primary agricultural locations mentioned in the text, and what activities are associated with each?
2. According to the text, what are the four (or possibly five) sins of Israel discussed in the previous chapter (Hosea 8)?
3. Why does the prophet instruct Israel not to rejoice in their harvest festivals?
4. What is meant by the statement "Man shall not live by bread alone," in the context of this passage?
5. What is the "hypocrisy of ritualism" described in this chapter?
6. What is the double meaning in the statement "They'll not pour out wine offerings to the Lord, nor will their sacrifices please them"?
7. Why does Hosea say that relying on Egypt for help is futile?
8. According to the text, why is the prophet considered a fool or maniac by the people?
9. What is the significance of the references to Gibeah and Baal Peor in relation to the sins of Israel?
10. How does the text describe the people's relationship to their sin, and how does this concept connect to the idea of becoming like what one loves?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The threshing floor is on the tops of hills, where grain is processed and where pagan gods are worshipped. The wine press is down in the valley, where grapes are pressed and fertility orgies take place.
2. The sins are: making kings without God's approval, worshiping Yahweh as a calf idol, making foreign alliances with Assyria and Egypt, engaging in religious rituals to manipulate God, and forgetting their maker to build palaces and fortified towns.

3. Israel is not to rejoice because their joy is based on a false understanding of God and because they have been unfaithful to him, mixing the worship of Yahweh with pagan fertility practices.
4. This means that material abundance alone cannot satisfy spiritual needs, and that genuine sustenance comes from a right relationship with God, not simply good harvests.
5. The hypocrisy lies in performing religious rituals without genuine devotion or a transformed heart. Their worship is corrupted and does not please God. It is a means of grace they have perverted.
6. It refers to the fact that their current sacrifices are insincere and displease God, but it also speaks to the coming exile when the physical ability to make offerings will be lost.
7. Relying on Egypt is futile because human alliances are inherently unreliable. Furthermore, Egypt will gather them for burial, rather than save them from Assyria.
8. The people's hearts and minds have become so corrupted by sin that they no longer recognize truth and see prophetic warnings as foolish or nonsensical.
9. Gibeah represents extreme corruption and moral depravity, while Baal Peor highlights how the Israelites willingly embraced shameful idolatry. These stories illustrate the depth of Israel's moral decline.
10. They are described as having fallen in love with sin, becoming like the detestable things they love, indicating that sin transforms one's nature, rather than being merely a list of wrong actions.

Essay Questions

1. Explore the concept of syncretism as presented in Hosea 9. How does the blending of Yahweh worship with pagan practices reflect the Israelites' misunderstanding of God, and what are the consequences of this syncretism?
2. Analyze the critique of ritualism in Hosea 9. How does the prophet argue that outward religious acts are insufficient without inner transformation, and what relevance does this critique have for contemporary religious practices?
3. Discuss the significance of harvest imagery in Hosea 9, especially as it relates to the themes of idolatry and unfaithfulness. How does Hosea use the image of the threshing floor and wine press to describe the spiritual state of Israel?
4. Examine the theme of God's love and rejection in Hosea 9. How does God express both his affection and disappointment with Israel, and what does this tension reveal about the nature of divine justice and human responsibility?
5. Considering both the historical context of ancient Israel and the contemporary world, assess the applicability of Hosea's message. In what ways might Hosea 9 serve as a warning and a call to faithfulness today?

Glossary of Key Terms

Threshing Floor: A level area, often on a hilltop, where grain is threshed (separated from its husks) using animals or tools; also a site for worship.

Wine Press: A place, usually in a valley, where grapes are crushed to make wine; associated with fertility and pagan rituals.

Syncretism: The blending of different religious beliefs and practices, especially the mixing of Yahweh worship with pagan customs.

Ritualism: The practice of religious rituals, especially when they are performed without genuine devotion or understanding, sometimes just going through the motions.

Ahav: Hebrew word for affection, often associated with love based on attraction and feelings, sometimes carnal in nature.

Hesed: Hebrew word often translated as loving-kindness or steadfast love, describing a loyal, committed love based on a choice or covenant.

Baal Peor: A fertility god associated with shameful practices and idolatry.

Gibeah: A city in Benjamin, known for extreme violence and moral corruption.

Ephraim: A common name for the northern kingdom of Israel.

Moloch: An ancient god to whom child sacrifices were made, often associated with the Hinnom valley.

Gehenna: The Hinnom Valley where human sacrifices were made, often considered a type of hell.

Winnowing Fork: A basket with a long handle used to throw grain into the air on a windy day, separating the husks from the grain.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Hosea, Session 8, Hosea 9, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Hosea Chapter 9 & the Sins of Israel

1. **What is the significance of the threshing floor and wine press in Hosea 9?** The threshing floor, typically located on a hilltop, was where grain was separated from husks. It also became a place of pagan worship to honor gods believed to be responsible for the harvest. The wine press, often in valleys, was where grapes were crushed, with fertility orgies often associated with the end of the harvest season. These sites, meant to celebrate God's blessings, became locations for idolatry and unfaithfulness.
2. **What specific sins of Israel are highlighted in this chapter, building on previous chapters?** Building on prior sins like setting up kings without God's approval, calf idol worship, foreign alliances, and syncretistic religious practices, Hosea 9 adds the sins of rejoicing like other nations (particularly in pagan harvest festivals), unfaithfulness to the unique revelation of God, the hypocrisy of ritualism, and reliance on human alliances. The chapter also underscores the rejection of God's prophets and their warnings, the idolization of sin, and the loss of children both physically and spiritually.
3. **How does the text explain the statement "The threshing floors and the wine presses will not feed the people?"** The text explains this both literally and metaphorically. Literally, God is going to cause the harvests to fail. Metaphorically, the pagan harvest festivals, though associated with abundance, will not nourish the people spiritually because they are not from God. The people's focus on worldly and idolatrous celebrations leaves them spiritually empty, even if their physical needs are met. The lack of a true relationship with God leads to a spiritual famine.
4. **What is meant by the "hypocrisy of ritualism," and how does it relate to the concept of cleanness?** The hypocrisy of ritualism refers to the act of performing religious duties and sacrifices without genuine devotion or a transformed heart. The people were following Levitical law in the ritualistic sense but their hearts were far from God and engaged in immorality. They were not truly consecrated to the Lord. In this case, ritual cleanness, without spiritual purity, does not please God or make the people clean. Instead, these hypocritical acts defile them. True cleanness comes from a pure heart, not merely outward religious acts.

5. **What is the significance of Israel turning to Egypt for help, and how does it reflect their larger problem?** Israel's turning to Egypt (or other nations) for help highlights their lack of faith and trust in God. This reliance on human alliances demonstrates their tendency to seek solutions through political maneuvering instead of God's guidance, indicating a fundamental lack of understanding of the unique character of their covenant relationship with God. It reveals a misplaced trust and an abandonment of their divine relationship.
6. **How does Hosea describe the people's response to the prophets' warnings, and what does this reveal about the nature of their sin?** The people respond to the prophets' warnings with mockery and hostility. The prophet is considered a fool, and their messages are seen as foolish and nonsensical. This response reveals how deeply ingrained sin is within their culture. Their corrupted thinking has distorted their perception of truth, where what is right is deemed idiotic. It shows their hearts have become hardened to the point of despising the truth, a consequence of their many sins.
7. **What does the text mean when it says they "dedicated themselves to shame" at Baal Peor?** When the Israelites dedicated themselves to Baal Peor, it signifies they fully committed to sinful and degrading practices. It shows that they did not just get involved in it; they dedicated themselves to it. They chose behaviors that would not glorify humanity and actually degrades it. They essentially chose to embrace behaviors that caused them shame because they had become attracted to sin and it was affecting them in a way they did not realize.
8. **Given the bleak picture of Israel's sin and impending consequences, what hope is offered, and what is the Christian response?** While the text emphasizes the serious consequences of sin, there remains hope rooted in God's character and actions. There is the hope that like Israel in exile, it may lead to a return to God. The Christian response should be one of eternal optimism rooted in confidence in God's sovereignty and ability to transform. This includes living with expectation and hope, even in the midst of a broken world, and with the understanding that God remains creative and at work in the world, and that through Him we win.