

Like an Eagle
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Hos 8:1

(BHS)	(NKJV)
אֶל-חִקְךָ שֹׁפָר	Set the trumpet to your mouth!
כַּנְשֹׁר עַל-בֵּית יְהוָה	<i>He shall come</i> like an eagle against the house of the LORD,
יַעַן עָבְרוּ כְרִיתִי	Because they have transgressed My covenant
וְעַל-תּוֹרַתִי פָשְׁעוּ:	And rebelled against My law.

New King James has “He shall come” in italics because it is inferred from the Hebrew, not spelled out in words. So don’t hurt yourself looking for it. (“Set” should be in italics too.) You may recognize *shophar* as “trumpet” in line 1. Remember *berit* (line 3) is “**covenant**.” And *tôrāh* in line 4 is “law.” Line 2 reads, “as-the-eagle against-(the)-house-of Yahweh.”

Two things make line 2 interesting. *Nesher* can denote any of several kinds of birds. Although it probably means “eagle” here, some translations gloss, “vulture.” ESV does so, even though ESV usually glosses *nesher* as “eagle” elsewhere. See my [ESV commentary](#) on Hosea.

The other interesting thing about line 2 is the “house of Yahweh.” It can’t mean Solomon’s Temple because it concerns the northern kingdom. The best explanation, oddly, is that the kingdom itself is called the house of Yahweh. (See also 9:5). But this identification seems a bit obscure. The picture of an enemy coming like an eagle against the house of Yahweh actually has more vivid and poignant clarity long after Assyria fulfilled this prophecy.

After the fall of the northern kingdom, the story of redemption continued only with the southern tribe of Judah. As generations progressed, the spiritual

conditions that Hosea described asserted themselves once more, this time in Jerusalem. They did not worship Yahweh with a golden calf religiously like the northern tribes, but they did believe their own brand of religiosity would endear them to God. Jeremiah was the prophet at this later time, desperately trying to accomplish in Judah what Hosea ultimately failed to do in the north: save the people by influencing them toward repentance. But the people had an “idol” that gave them false confidence: the House of the LORD.

Uncannily and surprisingly “fulfilling” Hos 8:1, an enemy did come as an eagle against this later “house of the LORD.” Ezekiel refers to Nebuchadnezzar as an eagle (17:3, 12). See also Dan 7:4. Who would have thought that even Yahweh’s own Temple would be razed as a consequence of Judah’s infidelity? Jeremiah said, “Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD’” (7:4). Because the Temple was in their midst, they felt safe. We can well imagine faithful Jews later in exile, soberly reflecting on Hos 8:1—seeing in it an oracle against Solomon’s Temple by the eagle: Nebuchadnezzar.

Will you indulge me even further? One symbol of Rome’s military might was the Aquila, or Roman Eagle. This Eagle destroyed the second Temple in AD 70. Jesus predicted this would happen (Matt 24:1 – 2). Thus Hos 8:1 can also be read in the light of an even later raptorial destruction of the house of the LORD.

Three times over. It seems that history repeats itself as many times as necessary. How many times does it take to make the point? This is the point:

an outward, visible religion is not enough. Certainly it is sufficient for idols and pagan gods, but not for the God of Hosea, and not for Jesus.

Israel worshipped a golden calf and thought that Yahweh was pleased (Hos 8:5). Jerusalem imagined that since they had the Temple they were safe. And in Jesus' day, the religious leaders thought that their outward keeping of the law was what God wanted—so they felt justified in killing the Son of Man! But the true and living God wants our hearts. We are supposed to be inwardly conformed to his image. Despite our many failings, if we trust him and listen to him, we are set.

Set for that final day that is still coming, when we will experience the ultimate meaning of our verse. Hosea 8:1 begins, “Set the trumpet to your lips!” The Son of Man sends his angels blowing on trumpets to gather the elect (Matt 24:31). The apocalyptic Eagle dooms the targets of the trumpet blasts (Rev 8:13). At the last trumpet, the dead will be raised imperishable with death swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:52 – 54). The Lord will descend at its sound (1 Thess 4:16). Then the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of Christ forever and ever (Rev 11:15). And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Amen!