



A fruiting vine in an Israeli vineyard

Downloaded from <https://www.pinterest.com/> Top Israel wine regions

A fruiting vineyard is a delightful sight. It presents an image of abundance and fertility, reminding us of the prolonged care and attention needed to get it to its present fruiting state, and suggesting the promise of future delight as one anticipates the coming vintage. The very existence of a vineyard is an indication of a settled and secure life: no-one plants a vineyard if they are unsure that they will possess the land in a few years' time.

Not surprisingly the images of the vine or the vineyard are often used in the Old Testament to symbolise the people of Israel and God's care for his people. For example in Psalm 80:

⁸ *You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.*

⁹ *You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.*

¹⁰ *The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.*

¹¹ *Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.*

Now in today's passage Hosea looks back nostalgically as he recalls Israel's early prosperity (*Hosea 10:1*) but he quickly moves on to remind his readers that as the nation grew to enjoy prosperity they responded with ingratitude. Although they built more altars this was a symptom of the shallowness and hypocrisy of their religion, rather than indicating religious fervour. See what Hosea had already written in chapter 8 v11:

Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning.

The *sacred stones* of v1 refer to the nation's backsliding into pagan idolatry. Hosea warns the nation that they would have to face the Lord's judgement, which would be devastating in its effect. Israel would lose its independence and the monarchy would fall. Even the altars, which had proliferated as the nation's religion became formulaic and hollow, would fall into disuse and neglect.

The remedy was for the nation to knuckle down to the serious work of "*sowing righteousness*" (v12) and "*breaking up unploughed ground.*" – in other words it must return to the values which had been neglected and once again strive to become a just society.

Hosea's message was delivered to a nation enjoying material prosperity but walking blindly and complacently towards terminal decline, due to an underlying decline in moral standards and meaningful religious practice.

Can we see any parallels with our own society and if so what are we, as Christians, to do about it?

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Prayer

Psalm 82 - A psalm about justice (*we say alternate verses*)

1 God has taken his stand in the council of heaven; ♦
in the midst of the gods he gives judgement:

**2 ‘How long will you judge unjustly ♦
and show such favour to the wicked?’**

3 ‘You were to judge the weak and the orphan; ♦
defend the right of the humble and needy;

**4 ‘Rescue the weak and the poor; ♦
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.**

5 ‘They have no knowledge or wisdom;
they walk on still in darkness: ♦
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

**6 ‘Therefore I say that though you are gods ♦
and all of you children of the Most High,**

7 ‘Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals ♦
and fall like one of their princes.’

**8 Arise, O God and judge the earth, ♦
for it is you that shall take all nations for your possession.**

**God our deliverer,
when the foundations are shaken
and justice has departed
defend the poor and needy
and give your people the strength to fight all wrong
in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

For our own government

Heavenly Father, at this time we pray for all who carry the responsibility of government. May they act with honesty and integrity, stand up and ensure justice for all and be motivated by a sense of service rather than personal or political advantage. We pray too for those who advise them formally and informally; when occasion demands may they have the courage to speak truth to power, and may those in power have the humility to act on what they are told in good faith.

Lord of justice and mercy

Hear our prayer.

For the government and people of Ukraine

Heavenly Father we continue to pray for the government and people of Ukraine, praying for a lasting peace, based on justice to all who have suffered through injury, bereavement, exile or displacement, and to those who have suffered economically. We pray that all nations and people of goodwill will continue, by word and deed, to support the vulnerable, the innocent casualties of conflict.

Lord of justice and mercy

Hear our prayer.

For the sick and needy

Loving Lord, we bring to you those who are in need at this time, whether in financial difficulty, struggling emotionally or in difficult relationships, the lonely and unloved, and those who are sick or awaiting medical attention. In a moment of silence we name before you those people whose needs we know personally.

May they feel your loving presence with them in their troubles and may that be to them a source of strength and reason for hope.

Lord of loving compassion

Hear our prayer.

And

Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come forward for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.

Communion

A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have not cared for others.

In God's holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

Silence

We say together:

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,
has harmed those who share our life,
has been hurtful to ourselves.**

**We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;
Yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus' name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises: with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere. We adore you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

Not as we would, but as we are able, we praise and thank you for the reality of his birth, the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life: for his sacrifice on the cross, the wonder of his resurrection, and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us; for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for our calling to be his people, for the hope all can find in him.

We say together:

**Remembering his life and sacrifice
we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.
Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit
so that we may indeed be your people,
and that as we share the bread and wine
we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

Please come to the rail now. We suggest you stand to receive communion and keep a suitable distance from fellow communicants.

Ending

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

A post-communion prayer, said together:

**Eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken,
you have fed us at the table of life and hope:
teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,
that all the world may acknowledge
the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The blessing

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The next S.P.A.C.E. will be on Wednesday 20th July

Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12

¹ Israel was a spreading vine;
he brought forth fruit for himself.

As his fruit increased,
he built more altars;
as his land prospered,
he adorned his sacred stones.

² Their heart is deceitful,
and now they must bear their guilt.

The LORD will demolish their altars
and destroy their sacred stones.

³ Then they will say, “We have no king
because we did not revere the LORD.

But even if we had a king,
what could he do for us?”

⁷ Samaria’s king will be destroyed,
swept away like a twig on the surface of the waters.

⁸ The high places of wickedness will be destroyed—
it is the sin of Israel.

Thorns and thistles will grow up
and cover their altars.

Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!”
and to the hills, “Fall on us!”

¹² Sow righteousness for yourselves,
reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unploughed ground;
for it is time to seek the LORD,
until he comes
and showers his righteousness on you.

These extracts from Hosea chapter 10 are used as one of the lectionary readings for today