“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.”  
(Hosea 10:1)

Oh yes, I understand this.  I know it because it’s my own story.  And I wish I could say that it’s the story of a younger Bob.  But somehow I know it’s also the story of the now-me.  This is the season called “Lent,” a perfect time to acknowledge the truth.  Now is the time to admit that I’m still struggling.

Israel was a spreading vine.  Prosperous.  Successful.  Happy.  
But this healthy vine brought forth fruit for... himself.

So the LORD will demolish their altars, destroy their sacred stones.

I, Bob Zurinsky, am a spreading vine.  I grow freely.  Good things in this world are always within my reach.  For a variety of reasons, it is not hard for me to get ahead.  It’s not hard for me to get what I want.

But this ability is exactly the problem.  It’s the root of all evil, as Jesus said in slightly different words.

I know that every interaction I have with people is an opportunity for me to “bring forth fruit for myself.”  Or not.  Every purchase I make, every choice of where to go or who to talk to—every single moment holds the choice between taking this life for my own consumption, or giving it away.  Using each person I meet for my own needs.  Or giving life.

I know what it feels like to be the person who is discarded by another’s lack of care.  I know what it means to be the one who discards.

Lord help me.

Lord help us all.