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**THE BOOK OF  
HOSEA**

# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

WITH INTRODUCTION  
AND NOTES

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

**T**HE primary object of these Commentaries is to be exegetical, to interpret the meaning of each book of the Bible in the light of modern knowledge to English readers. The Editors will not deal, except subordinately, with questions of textual criticism or philology; but, taking the English text in the Revised Version as their basis, they will aim at combining a hearty acceptance of critical principles with loyalty to the Catholic Faith.

The series will be less elementary than the Cambridge Bible for Schools, less critical than the International Critical Commentary, less didactic than the Expositor's Bible; and it is hoped that it may be of use both to theological students and to the clergy, as well as to the growing number of educated laymen and laywomen who wish to read the Bible intelligently and reverently.

Each commentary will therefore have

(i) An Introduction stating the bearing of modern criticism and research upon the historical character of the book, and drawing out the contribution which the book, as a whole, makes to the body of religious truth.

(ii) A careful paraphrase of the text with notes on the more difficult passages and, if need be, excursuses on any points of special importance either for doctrine, or ecclesiastical organization, or spiritual life.

But the books of the Bible are so varied in character that considerable latitude is needed as to the proportion which the various parts should hold to each other. The General Editors will therefore only endeavour to secure a general uniformity in scope and character: but the exact method adopted in each case and the final responsibility for the statements made will rest with the individual contributors.

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vi PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

Press and of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press the text used in this Series of Commentaries is the Revised Version of the Holy Scriptures.

WALTER LOCK  
D. C. SIMPSON

We wish to draw attention to a special feature of this volume. Canon Brown has added, in an Appendix, a new translation of the whole of Hosea, separating each prophecy from the rest and adding the probable date of each.

W. L.  
D. C. S.

## PREFACE

FOR the student of the history of religion the importance of Hosea lies in the fact that he was the first prophet to attack the sexual element in the popular religion of Israel, and that his denunciations of the mixed cultus led ultimately to the limitation of sacrifice to the one altar at Jerusalem. But this by no means exhausts the attractiveness of his oracles, either for the scholar or for the less learned reader of Holy Scripture. Apart from the literary and textual problems with which the book abounds, there is the fascination of its human interest—it contains one of the world's great love-stories—and, above all, the revelation of Divine Love, given to a little nation rushing headlong to its doom in the eighth century before Christ, and through that nation to all nations and ages, including our own. It is no exaggeration to say that in his doctrine of the Love of God Hosea comes nearer to the Gospel than any other writer in the Old Testament.

It will be seen that the editor has rearranged the order of the verses in the first three chapters, and that he has suggested or adopted many emendations of a text which is admittedly mutilated and corrupt, but that the Commentary as a whole is 'conservative' in its criticism. Thus he takes the view that chs. i and iii refer to the same woman, the prophet's wife, that she was chaste at the time of her marriage, and that she did not become unfaithful until after the birth of her third child. He has also retained as Hoseanic both the 'side-glances' at Judah and the 'hopeful passages', the one as entirely consistent with Hosea's conception of Israel as Jahveh's Bride, the other as a necessary corollary of his doctrine that God is Love. It should be added that, in the belief that Hosea lived to see at least the beginning of the end of the Northern Kingdom, the *terminus ad quem* of

the book has been brought down to c. 722, and that a tentative date has been assigned to each of the oracles.

The size of the book of Hosea, as compared with that of Isaiah or Jeremiah, has allowed the editor to pay more attention to the Hebrew text than has been possible in some of the larger commentaries in this series. It is hoped that those who read Hebrew will readily understand the system of transliteration which is explained on p. xxxv, and that the translation of the text as emended and rearranged which is printed as an Appendix will be useful, whether the reader be a Hebraist or not.

The editor sends out this Commentary after frequent interruptions and long delays, conscious of its limitations, but in the hope that it may help others to appreciate a book which has fascinated him for many years. By choice and (he believes) by vocation a parish priest, he offers it as a tardy fulfilment of a vow once made to be 'diligent in reading of the Holy Scriptures and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same', and as a humble contribution to the 'Way of Renewal' movement which is recalling both clergy and laity to the duty of worshipping God with their minds.

S. L. BROWN

*Lent, 1932*



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## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### HOSEA : THE MAN AND THE PROPHET

THE prophet's name, *Hōshēā* ('a saving' or 'a deliverance'), is identical with that of Joshua in its original form (Nu. xiii. 8) and that of the last king of Israel (2 K. xv. 30). Nothing is known of his history beyond what he tells us in chs. i and iii and what we can glean for ourselves from the rest of his book. He is described as *ben-Bēri*. As true patronymics are rare in the Old Testament, Bēri may be the name of a tribe and not his father's name. The only fact which Hosea himself has told us about his life is that he married *Gōmer-bath-Diblāim*, who, after bearing three children, to whom he gave symbolical names predictive of his country's fate, became unfaithful. After he had driven her from his home, he loved her again, bought her back, and reformed her by temporary confinement. Whether Diblaim is the name of Gomer's father or that of her birthplace we cannot say.

Another fact about Hosea which we can discover for ourselves is that he belonged to the Northern Kingdom, for Israel is 'the land' (i. 2), i.e. the prophet's land, and the king of Samaria is 'our king' (vii. 5); the places with which he was familiar are all in that region, his knowledge of the country is wider than that of Amos, who was only a visitor, and, with the exception of a number of side-glances at Judah, his interest seems to have been entirely centred on Northern Israel; his favourite name for the land is Ephraim, and his allusions show him to be acquainted with the Ephraimitic traditions represented by the document E (ii. 15, ix. 15, xi. 8, xii. 12); and only an Ephraimite could speak so intimately of the religion, morals, and politics of the Northern State or regard its fortunes with such tender solicitude. It is probable that we can go farther and say definitely, with Hölscher, that Hosea's home was in that strip of country, mountainous yet fertile, between Bethel and Jerusalem and looking over the Jordan valley, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. This would explain his interest in the hill-towns of Benjamin (Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel) in v. 8, his allusions to Mizpah (v. 1) and Adam

(vi. 7; cf. Jos. iii. 16) on this side, and to Gilgal (ix. 15, xii. 11) and Shittim (v. 2) on the other side, of Jordan, and his acquaintance with the traditions of his immediate neighbourhood: e.g. his connexion of Bethel with the story of Jacob (xii. 3 f.), his double reference to the hideous deed at Gibeah (ix. 9, x. 9), his mention of Baal-peor near Shittim as the place where the Israelites made their first contact with the religion of Canaan (ix. 10), and his naming of Admah and Zeboim as cities that shared the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (xi. 8). It is not without significance in this connexion that the only place-names outside this district which are mentioned are those of well-known cities, such as Jezreel (i. 4), Tabor (v. 1), Gilead (vi. 8, xii. 11), Shechem (vi. 9), and Samaria (vii. 1, viii. 5 f., x. 5, 7, xiii. 16). This hypothesis would also explain the familiarity of another Benjaminite, Jeremiah of Anathoth, with Hosea's teaching. And if the prophet's home was in this border-land between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, this fact would account for some, if not all, of the many references to Judah which modern critics find difficulty in accepting as Hoseanic. The similarity between Diblaim (i. 3) and Diblathaim (Nu. xxxiii. 46, Jer. xlvi. 22) suggests the possibility that Hosea's first home may have been, like Elijah's, in the country east of Jordan.

Though there is much in his book to make it certain that Hosea had seen from the inside the work of the priests, both as the official representatives of the cult and as judges and teachers (iv. 6-8, v. 1, vi. 9), there is not enough to lead us to suppose that he was professionally connected with them. The prophets were so closely associated with the priesthood and the sanctuaries (Welch, pp. 31 f.) that we need not postulate more than an association in this instance. T. H. Robinson suggests that the prophet may have been a baker, but the only ground for this suggestion is to be found in the striking figures of speech in vii. 6-8. Hölscher has made out a good case for Hosea's having been a peasant living on the land, showing how the daily life of a countryman provides by far the greater number of his metaphors. Thus he rejoices in the fruitful plough-land with its fertile earth. The field is his kingdom. He picks out the stones and piles them in a heap (xii. 11), and surrounds it with thorns and fence (ii. 6). He ploughs the land with oxen which he himself has trained (iv. 16, x. 11). He sows (viii. 7), and waits for

clouds and dew (vi. 4) which cause the corn to grow (viii. 7) and also weeds in the furrows (x. 4). When the harvest comes (viii. 7) the corn is threshed with the help of a heifer (x. 11) on the threshing-floor (ix. 1, 2), and separated from the chaff (xiii. 3). We see the ground corn kneaded into dough, the cakes baked in the oven, and turned lest they be burnt (vii. 4-8). There is a harvest of flax as well as of barley, and this, together with the wool, an industrious wife makes into clothes (ii. 5, 9). Grapes, figs, and olives are also grown (ii. 5, 8 f., 12, vii. 14, ix. 2), and careful watering ensures that the roots shall not be dried up and the fruit fail (ix. 16, xiii. 15). We share Hosea's pleasure in the picture of the vine with its rich fruit (x. 1), the grapes with which the thirsty traveller quenches his thirst (ix. 10), and the delight with which he plucks the first early fig (ix. 10). We watch the grapes pressed in the wine-press (ix. 2) and the olives turned into oil (ii. 5, 8).

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Hosea's *milieu* was an agricultural one, such as that which Jeremiah of Anathoth describes. But it is a remarkable fact, as Sellin points out, that the same man, whose prophecies are redolent of the soil, should glorify the nomadic life of the desert (ii. 14 ff., xii. 7 ff., xiii. 5), the leaving of which for the cultivated land of Canaan resulted in his people's religious and moral downfall (ii. 5, ix. 9 f., xi. 1-5). It would seem at first sight as if Hosea had lived in intimate relationship with the tent-dwelling Rechabites (2 K. x. 15, Jer. xxxv.), a guild or tribe famous for its puritanism and fidelity to the nomadic ideal. But it will be found on a closer examination of Hosea's point of view that this theory will not fit the facts; for it is not because of its cultivation that he regards Canaan as the land of sin—Jahveh Himself is the God of agriculture in this land (ii. 8, x. 11) and there will be abundance of corn and wine in the days to come (ii. 15, 22, xiv. 7)—but solely because it is the dwelling-place of the Baals. He is no lover of the wilderness for its own sake; he knows only too well its horrors and perils. It is the desert which slays men with thirst (ii. 3, xiii. 5); which sends the storm (iv. 19), the hot, scorching sirocco (xii. 1), to dry up the trees and springs (xi. 15); in which lion, panther, and bear lie in wait for the passing traveller (xiii. 7, 8) or from which they break into men's gardens and fields to eat up the vine and the fig-tree (ii. 12) or to carry off an animal from the herd (v. 14).

Hosea's love of the desert is due to the fact that in the early days of the nation's history Jahveh was there to the exclusion of all other gods. It was into the desert that Jahveh called Israel out of Egypt. It was there that He loved her as a son, took her in His arms, healed her little sores, and taught her to walk (xi. 1 ff.). It was there, in the days of her innocence, that He found her like grapes or the first-ripe fig (ix. 10). It was there that He fed her (xiii. 5 LXX) like a flock of sheep. Above all, it was in the desert that He spoke words of love to her and she responded to His wooing (ii. 14 f.). Sellin explains this wistful harking back to the sojourn in the wilderness partly by the prophet's opposition to the cult of the Baals, of which the Israelites knew nothing till they were about to enter into Canaan, but chiefly by the fact that, like Elisha, he left his peasant life and joined the order of the *Nebhi'im* whose work ran to some extent parallel to that of the Rechabites. This, he says, would account also for his familiarity with the history of his people and the culture which his songs and sayings display. 'No man of the common people speaks as he does.' But it is a mistake to associate inferior culture with the simplicity of pastoral life; for 'among the Hebrews, as in the Arabian desert, knowledge and oratory were not affairs of professional education, or dependent for their cultivation on wealth and social status' (W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, Lect. III). The other reasons alleged in favour of regarding Hosea as a professional prophet are not very convincing. Thus the fact that, apart from a few passages, such as ix. 9 and xiv. 1, in which he is speaking directly to the people on his own account, he always uses the Divine 'I' can be explained by the limitations of the Hebrew language, in which *oratio obliqua* is almost unknown. The same phenomenon appears frequently in Amos, who refused to be reckoned amongst the professional prophets (Am. vii. 14), and it is often accompanied by the phrase 'Thus hath Jahveh said' or the expression 'oracle of Jahveh' (see Cripps, *Amos*, pp. 78 ff.). Again, it is said that the wild passion with which most of his sayings are inspired is most easily understood if we assume that he belonged to a prophetic guild, but a better explanation may be found in a highly sensitive and emotional temperament. Of the passages in Hosea which refer to the prophets, iv. 5 is, like Is. xxviii. 7, an attack on the religious leaders of the time, and ix. 7 f. is suggestive of some incident like

that which is recorded in Am. vii. 10-17. If it be argued that in vi. 5 and xii. 10, 13 the prophets are spoken of with respect, the answer is that Hosea, no less than Amos (ii. 11, iii. 7), regards prophets like Samuel, Elijah, and Micaiah as Jahveh's gifts to His people, but that this does not prove, any more than it proves in the case of Amos, that he was personally connected with the prophetic order of his day. It seems to the present writer to be more than probable that Hosea was not a *nābh'i* in the popular sense of the word.

Was he an ecstatic? The older view was that, while messages came to the prophets in the form of an ecstatic experience at the beginning (e.g. Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha) and near the end (cf. Ezekiel and Zechariah) of the prophetic movement, this was not so in the intervening period. But in recent years there has been a tendency to regard all the prophets as, in some measure, ecstasies. 'Even the robust and clear-headed Amos had his visions, and the careers of Isaiah and Jeremiah, to whose personalities, however impressive in different ways, nothing abnormal seems to cling, were introduced by an experience which was anything but ordinary and which seems to deserve the name of ecstatic; and there are occasional hints (cf. Is. viii. 11) that this ecstasy was not confined to the initial experience' (*The People and the Book*, ed. A. S. Peake, pp. 206 ff.). Thus T. H. Robinson suggests the possibility of i. 2 being a genuine command received in an ecstatic state, and Hölscher asserts that ix. 7 shows that, such was Hosea's bearing, that people saw in him nothing more than a wild, vulgar ecstatic. But the present writer feels that, whatever may be said about other prophets, such as Amos and Isaiah, the case has not been made out in respect of Hosea. It would be foolish to deny that at some moments in his inspiration there was such an experience of abnormal contact with God as separated him from his fellows and warranted him in believing that he was called to deliver a Divine message to his people. Such moments are indicated in the account of the birth of his three children, in the discovery of his wife's infidelity, and in the historical events to which he alludes. Sellin has called our attention to the fact that there is no prophet through whom God seems to speak so directly as through Hosea. 'We might almost hear the talking of a mystic.' But that, to attain this condition of communion with God, he first put himself into a condition of

ecstasy is never stated. Everything seems to flow spontaneously, though often passionately and in gusts (vi. 4, xi. 8), from the God who dwells within his heart. It is a striking fact, in this connexion, that one who, according to xii. 10, puts a high value on revelation by signs and visions never mentions such signs and visions in relation to himself. Hosea may have had ecstatic experiences, but there is practically no testimony in favour of this, and the facts are explicable without it. It may well be, as Sellin suggests, that a higher fate was reserved for him: Jahveh spoke to him as He did to Moses, not in vision, dream, and allegory, but 'mouth to mouth, even manifestly' (Nu. xii. 6-8).

It remains only to say, in this connexion, that the sayings of Hosea which have been preserved reveal him as a lyrical poet, richer in imagery even than Isaiah. They show him also to be not only deeply spiritual, but deeply emotional, strong in love as in anger. 'He has scourged his contemporaries as robbers, murderers, and adulterers, and he has painted their destruction in lurid colours, but he has also found for them accents just as loving and wooing; even in the midst of the severest threats there suddenly rings out a note of warm, deep sympathy which we seldom hear in Amos' (Sellin). His frequent references to sexual matters is explained by Allwohn (quoted by Sellin) as due to a strongly-developed sex-instinct which he rigorously repressed. But it would perhaps be more true to say that in Hosea, as contrasted with Gomer and the people generally, the sex-instinct was sublimated into love of God and of man for God's sake (see Povah, *The New Psychology and the Hebrew Prophets*, ch. ix).

## II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROPHECY

Although the superscription (i. 1) is not reliable, the historical background of Hosea is sufficiently clear. He was the prophet of the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom, and stood in the same relation to Ephraim in the eighth century as that in which Jeremiah stood to Judah a century and a half later. When he first began to prophesy, the long and brilliant reign of Jeroboam II (c. 782-743 B.C.) was drawing to its close (i. 2-4). The account of this reign in 2 K. xiv. 23-9 is fragmentary and incomplete, the

compiler having no interest in 'the rest of the affairs of Jeroboam, and his martial prowess, and how he warred', but enough is said to indicate that this fourth king of Jehu's line was by far the most successful of the Northern rulers. Owing probably to the greater political movements in which Assyria, Urartu (Van), and Damascus were involved and to their preoccupation with each other (*Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. iii), he was able to extend his dominions to limits which recalled the palmy days of Solomon. 'He restored the border of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah.' With the exception of this statement and of another in *v.* 28, which is, as it stands, unintelligible and, as it is translated, probably contrary to fact, the historical books have nothing to tell us about this long reign. But the prophecies of Amos and Hosea supply much that is missing. It seems that during the peace that followed Jeroboam's victories wealth poured into the country, and the *nouveaux riches* abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of their good fortune, which they attributed to the favour of Jahveh, whose sanctuaries were thronged with eager worshippers (*Am.* iii. 15, iv. 4 ff., v. 11, 21 ff., vi. 1, 4 ff., viii. 14). This careless prosperity, combined with a scrupulous, and even joyous, observance of the externals of religion, which aroused the moral indignation of Amos, is reflected in *Hos.* i-iii. The nation was still outwardly prosperous (*ii.* 2 ff.) and there was no hint of any menace to that prosperity from outside. It was during this period, before the death of Jeroboam and his son, that Hosea's three children were born (*i.* 3-9) and his wife's moral lapse occurred (*i.* 2, *ii.* 2, *iii.* 1). It is a mistake to suppose that he became a prophet because of his sad experience with Gomer; he was already a prophet when his first child was born. Like Amos he had a foreboding of coming misfortune. This could not be accounted for by anything which he could see on the political horizon, for it was not until after the fall of the dynasty of Jehu that Assyria, in the person of Tiglath-Pileser III, became a danger to Northern Israel. His presentiment rested on a purely religious basis. He felt that, since under the present régime things had gone from bad to worse, the people having now forsaken Jahveh for other gods, the Baals and idol-images, this religious apostasy must be connected with the blood-guiltiness on which the dynasty was founded a hundred years before. Jahveh cannot continue to bless this race of murderers. The hour of judgement is at hand. 'Call his name



Jezreel', comes the message from God to the young father, rejoicing at the birth of his first child, 'for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.' The same message is repeated at intervals, as first a daughter, and then another son, are born and named respectively 'Uncompassionated' and 'Not-My-People': the royal house will fall and Israel will be repudiated and disowned by Jahveh. It is at this point, i.e. after the birth of the third child (so the present writer believes), that Hosea's wife became unfaithful (see pp. 34 ff.), and that he began to see the explanation of the sin and ruin of his people in their unfaithfulness to their God, which is the fundamental note of chs. ii—iii, and indeed of the whole book. If this view be correct, ch. iii and the song which begins at ii. 2 must be dated some four or five years after the birth of Jezreel and some six or seven years after he married Gomer. We may, therefore, assume that Hosea's first appearance as a prophet was shortly after 750 B.C.

The vengeance which Hosea had predicted for the royal house was soon fulfilled. Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, was slain by Shallum of Jabesh after a reign of only six months, and the dynasty of Jehu perished, like that of Omri before it, in blood. A month later, Shallum was murdered by Menahem, a Gadite, who carved his way to the throne with ferocious cruelty. There he remained for six years, thanks to the support of Assyria, to whose victorious king, Tiglath-Pileser III, he did homage in 738 and paid 1,000 talents of silver, levied from 'the mighty men of wealth' whom Amos had denounced. It is probable that it was resentment against this pro-Assyrian policy which brought about the death of Menahem's son, Pekahiah (c. 737-735), for his murderer and successor, Pekah, son of Remaliah, commander-in-chief of the army, seems to have taken part in the formation of an alliance between the little Western-Asiatic states which hoped to find support in Egypt against the common danger. As Jotham of Judah refused to join the coalition, Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel went to war against him. Judah was so hard pressed that Ahaz (contrary to Isaiah's advice) made himself a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser and called him to his assistance. The Assyrian, quick to take advantage of the situation, besieged and captured Damascus (c. 734-732) and ravaged both Galilee and all the land east of the Jordan (c. 733). The Northern Kingdom, now limited to mid-Palestine,

west of the Jordan, was saved for a time by the insurrection of Hoshea, the son of Elah, a creature of Tiglath-Pileser, who murdered the anti-Assyrian Pekah and paid heavy tribute for the throne which he usurped. After he had reigned for a few years, lured by false promises of support from Seve, king of Egypt, he allowed himself to be persuaded to revolt against Shalmaneser V, with the result that the Assyrian came down to Ephraim, seized Hoshea and put him in prison. Samaria, his capital, held out gallantly for two years, but the end came under Sargon in 722, when the city was reduced, 27,290 people being deported and Northern Israel made into an Assyrian province.

This is the framework into which the later ministry of Hosea must be fitted, but how long this part of his work continued is a matter of dispute. The older view, still held by Sir George Adam Smith and others, was that, so far as the prophecies contained in his book are concerned, it stopped short of the year 734 B.C. In support of this view it is said that there is no allusion either to the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion of Judah under Pekah and Rezin or to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileser. Galilee and Gilead are still part of the body politic (v. 1, vi. 8, xii. 11). But there is much to be said for Alt's theory (adopted by Sellin) that v. 8—vi. 6 refers to the former event, and also for the theory that Ephraim is used more frequently for Israel in the latter part of the book, because after Tiglath-Pileser's conquests it was more than ever the real kernel of the kingdom. Of the references quoted above, v. 1, as we shall see, probably belongs to the reign of Jeroboam, and vi. 8 to that of Menahem or Pekah, while the text of xii. 11 is admittedly uncertain, but, if it is correct, it may well refer to the *past* sins of Gilead. If Alt's theory should not be found acceptable, it may be remarked that the argument from silence about a particular episode in the history of his time does not prove that Hosea's activity did not extend beyond the reigns of Menahem and his son. Hölscher's general impression that all the confusion and distress of the twenty years before the fall of Samaria are reflected in Hosea's words, and that a rough kind of chronological sequence may be detected in the oracles as we have received them seems to be more than probably correct. At first we see the people rejoicing light-heartedly and the priests enriching themselves by the cult (iv. 7-10), but the farther we read the more we are overshadowed by the complaints which the

people vainly address to Jahveh. The distress of the time makes an alliance with Assyria necessary (v. 13). Treachery, murder, and regicide are the order of the day (vi. 7 f., vii. 3-7, viii. 4, 10, x. 3 f., xiii. 10 f.). Then there is another foreign power whose favour they try to secure by gifts, viz. Egypt (vii. 11, xi. 5, xii. 1; cf. viii. 13, ix. 3, 6). Ever closer appears the catastrophe, ever clearer the form which the judgement will take: destruction at the hand of the enemy (viii. 3), deportation to Egypt and Assyria (ix. 3, 6, 15), the days of vengeance have come (ix. 7), the peoples are gathered together against Israel (x. 10), until at last we hear the hideous conclusion, 'Samaria is laid waste (LXX) . . . by the sword they have fallen; their babes have been dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped up' (xiii. 16). 'If', says Hölscher, 'Hosea has himself arranged his sayings in chronological order, who can deny that he may have seen the events of 722?' There can be no objection to this suggestion on the ground of age; for, if the prophet was a young man in 750, he would not be more than fifty years old when the end came.

Sellin, while admitting the possibility that Hosea might have seen the last agonies of his people, does not commit himself to a date later than 725. But he is very bold in assigning dates to the various sections of the book. Thus i-iii and iv-v. 7 belong to the reign of Jeroboam, the former on account of i. 5 and the latter because there is as yet no political enemy in view; v. 8-vi. 6 refers 'undoubtedly' to the Syro-Ephraimitish war; vi. 7-vii. 2 and vii. 3-7 fall in the reign of Pekah, while the rest of the book from vii. 8 onwards reflects the times of Hoshea. This, Sellin says, is seen especially in ch. x, where he finds allusions to the after-effects of the amputation of the kingdom and the appointment of Israel's last king by the grace of Assyria. The designation 'Ephraim' or 'Samaria' suggests that Israel had become a little vassal state, and the frequent references to Egypt (vii. 11, ix. 3, 6, xi. 5, xii. 1) point to a time when the people had begun to hope for help from this quarter. Finally, the desperate note of xiii. 4-11 and 12-16 bring us to the last great distress of 725 when King Hoshea's fate was sealed. Though we cannot accept these conclusions with the same confidence as that with which they are given to us, owing to the obscurity of many of the allusions, it will be found that they make a good working hypothesis and to that extent help us the better to understand Hosea's message.

## III

## HOSEA'S DOCTRINE OF GOD

We cannot be sure, in view of opinions recently expressed, that Hosea's immediate predecessor, Amos, was the first prophet to proclaim an ethical monotheism: it is possible that Elijah, and even Moses, were monotheists in their day and generation. Nor can we be sure that Amos was a thoroughgoing monotheist in the sense, for example, that Deutero-Isaiah was, because he nowhere denies the existence of other gods. But that his belief in the superiority of Jahveh was so absolute as to be practically belief in His omnipotence, and ethical monotheism to all intents and purposes, and that, even though he might have been appealing to a truth that had long been known, he gave this truth a new emphasis and proclaimed it in a most uncompromising way, no one would deny.

Was Hosea a monotheist as truly as was Amos? In answer to this question, it may be said (1) that the God of Hosea was as omnipotent as the God of Amos, when He chose to exert Himself. Thus His power over nature is seen in the fact that He was the giver, as well as the withholder, of nature's gifts (ii. 8 f., 21 ff., iv. 3, ix. 2; cf. Am. iv. 6 ff., viii. 8, ix. 5), and in His control over history in the many wonderful things which have happened in Israel's national life, especially in the deliverance from Egypt (xi. 1, xii. 9, xiii. 4 f.; cf. Am. ix. 7). But it must be admitted (2) that the monotheistic idea is not formulated in Hosea with the same clarity as in Amos. The reason for this is to be found in the limitations set by the main theme of the book, which is the relation of Jahveh to His chosen people. Jahveh is Israel's God (i. 9, v. 4, xiii. 4) and Israel is Jahveh's people (i. 9, iv. 6, xi. 7): this formula defines and limits Hosea's theology. It was Jahveh who led Israel out of Egypt (xi. 1, xiii. 4), found him in the wilderness (ix. 10), and gave him the land of Canaan for pasture and satisfaction (xiii. 5 f.). When he prospered (x. 1), it was Jahveh who strengthened his arm (vii. 15), and watched over him (v. 3). He became Lord and Husband of the land, instead of the Baals, and the land became His wife (ii. 2). He was the giver of all good gifts, the fruitful earth with its corn, must, and oil, and all the wealth of agriculture (ii. 8 ff.). It is this close relationship between Jahveh and the land

or people of His choice which dominates Hosea's conception of God and overshadows the universal point of view. He notices the existence of the nations, but he is not interested in them as Amos was, except as a source of temptation to his people and as powers which will chastise Israel. This self-imposed limitation of outlook also explains Hosea's apparent lack of interest in the individual. Occasionally, it is true, he draws a distinction between the people as a whole and single members of the race, as when the latter are incited to expostulate with the former (ii. 2), or when the former pursues and seduces the latter (iv. 15 ff., v. 1 f., ix. 13 b). But, generally speaking and with these exceptions, he seems to address himself either to the people as a whole or to its official representatives, the priesthood and the royal house. He does so because his sole interest is in Israel the nation as the object of Jahveh's love.

#### *His Denunciation of the Mixed Cultus*

When Hosea says (ix. 1 a) or implies that Israel's religion is unique and superior to the religions of other nations, he is not original: the thought is found in the stories about Elijah and in the Jahvistic tradition. His originality lies in the contrast which he draws between the true worship of God and the local cult of the high places, and in his characterization of the latter as not worship of Jahveh at all, but whoredom and adultery. To understand Hosea, it is necessary to remember that never was worship more fashionable or its duties more punctiliously performed than in his day, and to have in one's mind some idea of its nature. On bare mountains, and on hills under spreading trees, near the villages, and sometimes near the threshing-floors (ix. 1) there were 'high places' (iv. 13, x. 8), each with an altar for sacrifice (iv. 19, viii. 11, x. 1 f., 8). By the side of the altar stood the *maṣṣēbhāh*, a stone pillar (iii. 4, x. 1), and the *'āshērāh*, a wooden pole, as symbols of God's presence, representing the older sacred stone and sacred tree. Sometimes there were also images of the deity (iv. 17, viii. 4, xi. 2). These were in the form of calves at Bethel and Dan (1 K. xii. 28 f.; cf. Hos. x. 5, xiii. 2), but whether they ever took any other form, we cannot say. To these 'high places' the people resorted and there was much merriment there (cf. Am. v. 23), especially on holy days (ii. 11, ix. 1). They rejoiced on the day of Jahveh's feast (ix. 5), at the new moons, and on the sabbaths (ii. 11, v. 7, ix. 5). Then the

women and girls appeared in festal attire, adorned with rings and jewels (ii. 13), and, as the people offered libations to Jahveh (ix. 4) and sacrificed sheep and oxen (v. 6) they enjoyed their meal of roast flesh (viii. 13); for was not the deity whom they worshipped the giver of all material blessings (ii. 5, 12)? But, when drought and famine filled them with anxiety, they used to howl and cut themselves with knives, in the hope of regaining his favour (vii. 14 LXX). Too often at these 'high places' there was loose conduct and unbridled lust. This was encouraged by the priests, who drew their income from the cult (iv. 8), and by intercourse with the sacred prostitutes (iv. 14), who could be hired by any one on payment of a love-gift (viii. 9, ix. 1)

This worship, described so vividly by Hosea, is the old local cult of Baal which the children of Israel had learnt from the Canaanites. In the popular religion Jahveh has come to be regarded as Baal, the god of fruitfulness, to whom the gifts of nature and the sacrifice of virginity are offered. The people do not admit this identification: they declare that they are Jahveh's people and that Jahveh is their God, and they are proud of the relationship (v. 6, vi. 2 f., vii. 14, viii. 2, ix. 1, 5). 'But [says Hosea] this Jahveh whom they worship has the features of a Baal, is in fact a Baal, a god of sensuality, of earthly joy and power, a god who is closely attached to the land of Canaan' (Sellin). Worship of him is, therefore, adultery against Jahveh, their true God, who led them out of Egypt and loved them in the wilderness. They have committed adultery against Him ever since they left the desert and first set foot on Canaanitish soil (ix. 10). Adultery, unfaithfulness, and desertion of their true Husband—these are pictures which Hosea uses to describe the popular worship of his day, and they are nowhere painted so beautifully as in that early poem, which seems to have been composed with the cult only in mind and without reference to the political events described in the later chapters (ii. 2-13).

Accordingly, Hosea denounces the whole system of Israel's worship as a lie against Jahveh (vii. 13), and the 'high places' where it is practised as places of sin which call for divine judgement (iv. 15, 19, v. 1 f., viii. 11, ix. 6, x. 1 f., 8, xii. 11). Their local Baals are powerless to help them; for it is not they who supply them with the fruits of the earth, but Jahveh (ii. 5, 8). Those who trust in them will be put to shame (iv. 19), and their gods

will look on helplessly when they see the land being made desolate (ii. 10). In all this denunciation there is one subject to which he constantly returns, that of the cult-images, in his view the most senseless and irreligious feature of Israel's worship. To Amos the calves were merely part of an elaborate system which Jahveh despised as a trivial matter compared with right conduct, but to Hosea, who had a deeper insight into their true character, they were the very symbols of apostasy. So he attacks these images of Baal (for such they really are; cf. xi. 2, xiii. 1 f.) with bitter scorn. They are artificial gods, the work of men's hands (viii. 6, xiii. 2). They shall be smashed into splinters (viii. 6) or carried as a present to King Jareb (x. 6). He describes priests and people as in anguish over their loss (x. 5) and waxes sarcastic over the spectacle of human beings kissing calves (xiii. 2).

#### *His Arraignment of the Government and its Policy*

The mixed cultus is Israel's chief sin in Hosea's eyes, but there are two others which he never tires of scourging, and both are described as unfaithfulness to Jahveh: (1) coquetting with foreign nations, and (2) the government of his day.

(1) Time and again Israel has forgotten its God, its only Saviour in time of trouble, and trusted in men, seeking alliances with Egypt and Assyria (vii. 11), perhaps also with Syria (v. 11). With his practical vision, Hosea sees the vanity of political help (xii. 1). The only result of these dealings with foreign countries is that Israel is being exploited (v. 13, vii. 9, x. 6), and a day will come when the weapons which the pro-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian parties have called to their assistance will be turned against themselves (vii. 12, ix. 3, xi. 5 f.). But the main ground of his indictment is the religious one: Israel has become like other nations (vii. 8, viii. 8), and sent love-gifts to them (viii. 9), thereby losing its distinctive character as Jahveh's bride (Welch, pp. 116 f.).

(2) Many of the sins which Hosea denounces seem to be either due to, or aided and abetted by, the kings; e.g. the cult (v. 1), land-grabbing (v. 10), debauchery (vii. 3 ff.), reliance on foreign powers (vii. 16), and trust in military prowess (x. 13 ff.). But it would not be true to say that Hosea was opposed to the monarchy

as such ; for ix. 9 and x. 9, sometimes quoted in favour of this view, are better explained as referring to the shameful deed at Gibeah (Ju. xix-xxi), and there are texts which suggest that he regards the loss of the king as a calamity (iii. 4, x. 15, xiii. 10 ff.). It is probable that he is only condemning the kings of his own time. These kings from Jehu downwards (i. 3 ff.) are not kings by God's grace. He describes how they are murdered and their places taken by usurpers (vii. 3 ff.), and pours scorn on all these changes of dynasty (xiii. 10 f.), which are only another indication of unfaithfulness to Jahveh. Their kings had been overthrown, that men might learn to turn to Him for help (vii. 7), but, whenever one king was murdered, their first impulse was to elect another. 'Their kingdom, so far as it was the outcome of their self-confidence and fed their self-reliance, was an evil thing.' It was evil also because 'it was the ruling class, with the king at their head, who were leading Ephraim to rely on the foreigner, and so to prove their distrust of Jahveh's power' (Welch, pp. 118 f.). Such kings, raised to the throne through palace revolutions, and kept there by appealing now to Egypt, now to Assyria (vii. 11), were powerless to help when help was needed (x. 3, xiii. 10). Soon the people would be saying, 'We have no king' (worthy of the name, x. 3), and they would cease from anointing kings and princes (viii. 10 LXX), for in exile they would have no king (iii. 4) but the Assyrian (xi. 5).

It is not surprising that, with a wicked and unstable government such as this, there should be a complete absence of law and order, and that morality should be at a low ebb. There are allusions to particular events of which we should like to know more ; e.g. the breaking of the treaty at Adam, the bloody deed at Gilead, the murder on the way to Shechem (vi. 7 ff.). It may be, however, that these are references to incidents which happened in the past (see p. 61). But it is sufficiently clear that murder and bloodshed, burglary and highway robbery, breach of treaties and breaking of oaths, drunkenness and unchastity were rife (iv. 2, 11, 18, vii. 1, x. 4). We miss the senseless luxury of the rich, the oppression and exploitation of the poor, and the unfairness of the judges which Amos denounced ; but otherwise the tale of sin is much the same as that which the earlier prophet reckoned against the people.



*Ignorance and Forgetfulness of God*

Hosea is not content, as Amos was, with rebuking these sins and vices; he traces them to their source, the hidden springs of character, the motives that make men good or evil. 'There is', he says, 'no *faithfulness*, nor *piety*, nor *knowledge of God* in the land' (iv. 1). *Faithfulness* means honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, and *piety* (*pietas*) is the courtesy and consideration which men who love God show to each other (see separate note, p. 47). These qualities are absent from Israel, because they do not *know Jahveh* (cf. ii. 8, 20, iv. 1, 6, 11, v. 4, vi. 3, 6, vii. 11, xi. 3). This is true in the ordinary sense of the word. 'You cannot love a person with whom you are not acquainted in any way. And Israel utterly failed to recognize that Jahveh was different from the Baals' (Robinson, p. 80). But, for Hosea, knowledge of God is not merely an intellectual acquisition or a theological creed, it is an understanding of His power, influence, and character, based upon spiritual experience and displaying itself in conduct. It is the sum of what men should aspire to (ii. 19 f., vi. 3), and it is the lack of it which is the cause of all evil. If vice and corruption are rampant, and the people are possessed by the spirit of whoredom, this is but the result of their not having had the experience of God in their heart (Buttenwieser, pp. 247 ff.).

This ignorance of God Hosea ascribes to two causes: the people's own vice and the negligence of the official leaders of religion. 'Habitual vice destroys a people's brains [iv. 11, 12]. . . . Lust blinds them to the domestic consequences of their indulgence in the heathen worship [iv. 14]. . . . Again, their want of political wisdom is due to their impurity, drunkenness, and greed to be rich [vii, *passim*]. . . . Such license corrupts the natural intelligence of a people' (G. A. Smith, p. 352). But the fault does not lie entirely with the people. The priests are also to blame; for not only do they set a bad example (iv. 4, 9) by their scandalous conduct (iv. 7 ff., v. 1 f., vi. 7 ff.), but they are so busy with the easier and more lucrative work of conducting the unspiritual worship of the Baals (iv. 8), that they have neglected their primary duty of teaching. Because the priests have forgotten Jahveh's *Tōrāh* or Direction (iv. 6), the people have sinned against this *Tōrāh* (viii. 1) or declared it to be impossible to understand (viii. 12), and are perishing for lack of knowledge (iv. 6). These references

are interesting as indicating that Hosea recognizes that, besides the voice of God speaking through him, there is another revelation of His will in the instruction given by the priests, and that he is not attacking the priesthood as such, but the priesthood as it has become.

But there is yet another means by which Jahveh has sought to reveal Himself, viz. the events of the past. 'These Hosea never tires of recalling. More than other prophets, he recites the deeds done by God in the making of Israel. So numerous are the references that from them alone we could almost rebuild the early history' (G. A. Smith, pp. 354 f.); cf. xii. 3-6, 12 f., xi. 1, xi. 3 f., ix. 10, ii. 15, ix. 9, x. 9, xiii. 4-6, xii. 9. Here, too, the people are charged with ignorance. It is not, however, ignorance of the facts themselves, but what G. A. Smith describes as 'ignorance of the Character which shines through the facts'.

The facts of history should have revealed to them that Jahveh was a God who loved His people and expected His people to love Him in return. He had loved them from the earliest times. Ever since the day when he led them out of Egypt, he had called them, taught them to walk, borne them in His arms, drawn them with cords of a man, with bands of love (xi. 1-4). Again and again Hosea points to this act of love, this free choice whereby Jahveh found their fathers like grapes in the wilderness, like the first-ripe fig on the fig-tree (ix. 10). And, because He loved His people, and had chosen them as a bridegroom chooses his bride, Jahveh had thought of the relationship between them as an intimate relationship of mutual love, of heart to heart. For the essence of true religion, according to Hosea, is not to be found in any outward acts of worship, but in spiritual experience, not in sacrifices and burnt-offerings, but in love of God, faithfulness to Him, and the surrender of the heart to Him (iv. 1, 6, vi. 3, 4, 6, vii. 14, viii. 2, x. 12, xii. 6). But wherever he looks, in the political, social, and religious life of the people, he sees nothing but unfaithfulness and adultery. This, too, is illustrated in the history of the past. Before they actually reached the Promised Land they dedicated themselves to Baal (ix. 10), and, as soon as they began to prosper there, they forgot Jahveh (xiii. 6) and served the local Baals, the paramours who stole their hearts away from Him (ii. 5, 7, 10, 12 f.). Israel's love for Jahveh has been evanescent as a morning-cloud (vi. 4). They have been false to Him (v. 7,

vi. 7), deceitful (vii. 16) like their ancestor Jacob (xii. 3). If in their misfortunes they have cried to Him, it was not out of love for Him that they did so; it was for the corn and wine that the Baals had failed to provide (vii. 14).

### *The Inevitability of Judgement*

Since this people has forgotten Jahveh it must be reminded of His existence. 'Into Israel's insensibility God must break with facts, with wounds and horrors they cannot evade' (G. A. Smith, pp. 358 f.). Till He so acts, their own efforts to know Him (vi. 3), and their protest that they do know Him (viii. 2), are vain. And, since this people remains unfaithful and refuses to be reformed, it must be punished. Hosea has struggled for the soul of his people by a merciless exposure of its sins and apostasy; but, because he sees them possessed by the spirit of whoredom (v. 4) and refusing all opportunities of escape (xiii. 13), he knows that the judgement which he announced in his early days as a prophet (ch. i) must come. Their adultery has turned Jahveh's love into anger, the anger of outraged love, fiercer than the anger of outraged justice which we find in Amos, an anger that is almost cruel (v. 14, xiii. 7 ff.), and repentance is hid from His eyes (xiii. 14).

Judgement is inevitable and cannot be long delayed. Simile after simile speaks of the nation's weakness: Israel is moth-eaten and rotten (v. 12), sick and full of sores (v. 13), a half-baked scone (vii. 8), a worthless pot (viii. 8), grey-haired (vii. 9), and withered at the roots (ix. 16). But the form which the judgement will take varies from time to time as in most of the prophetic books. Too much stress must not be laid on the approach of Assyria as determining the form of Hosea's threats, because, even in his later prophecies, he mentions Egypt as well (ix. 3, 6, xi. 5). The fact is that he is not concerned to make exact predictions. He knows for certain that Israel will be overthrown, and that it will be overthrown by Jahveh. The God who gave them the land was to cast them out of it (ix. 15), but he was not much interested in the means by which He was to cast them out. Egypt and Assyria were symbols of Jahveh's chastisement, as they were symbols of Israel's unfaithfulness, and nothing more than symbols. Apart from a few announcements such as that Palestine will be turned into a wilderness (iv. 3, ix. 6, x. 8, xiii. 15), or that Israel shall be

destroyed by the peoples (vii. 16, viii. 1, x. 10 *b*, 13-15, xiii. 16), it is always Jahveh Himself who is the adversary (i. 5, ii. 2-13, v. 12, 14, vii. 12, viii. 13, ix. 12, 14, x. 10 *a*, xiii. 7 *f*.).

But, though the form of the judgement varies with the prophet's mood, it is possible, reading between the lines, to see (as Hölscher suggests) a kind of climax; for the doom which at first appears vaguely as the devastation of the land and its places of worship (ii. 2-13, iv. 3, 19, v. 7) appears more clearly as time goes on as destruction by a cruel enemy (vii. 16, viii. 3, 7, x. 13 *ff.*, xi. 6), and deportation into a foreign country (ix. 3, 6, xi. 5, 11). Having lived through the first acts of the tragedy of Samaria, with prophetic vision (and it may be even with his own eyes) he sees the curtain fall on the last and most horrible act of all (x. 8, xiii. 16).

#### *After Judgement, Salvation*

Was this Hosea's last word? We cannot believe it, though there are many eminent critics who take the view that the so-called 'hopeful' passages, such as i. 10—ii. 1, ii. 14-23, and ch. xiv, have been inserted by a later hand. Hosea felt, probably from the first (i. 2-9), that the judgement was irrevocable, and that he was sent to pronounce not to avert it; yet, because of his conception of God and of His working in history, it seems impossible that he could have considered the fall of Samaria to be the end of all Jahveh's interest in Israel. 'My people' is part of every message from God (cf. even iv. 12, xi. 7), whether the word be actually spoken or not. He represents the relationship between Jahveh and the nation as a marriage (i. 2, iii. 1), as a relationship of love, and as such he reverts to it again and again, even in his later prophecies (ix. 10, xi. 1, xiii. 5). Love for Israel is an ineradicable trait of the Divine Being, and that love is shown by the fact that, while Jahveh can punish, and even hate (ix. 15), He cannot entirely destroy the people of His choice (xi. 8 *f*.). It is the knowledge that the judgement is coming from this God who cannot give up loving Israel that fills Hosea with hope; for he is convinced that if His earlier intervention in history, whereby He called the nation into existence, revealed His love for it, His next intervention will be a further manifestation of the same love. In other words, 'Hosea's belief in a better world to come is really

the corollary of his declaration that God is Love' (Buttenwieser, p. 241).<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the view taken in this commentary is that Hosea regarded the judgement as a means to an end, a clearing of the way for a new and better Israel. Jahveh will follow His people, and be with them in all the trials through which they will have to pass, until He has changed their heart and regained their affection. The prophet is as certain of this in the earlier years of his ministry as in the later, the only differences between i. 10—iii. 5 and xiv. 1-8 being that while the one picture has the wilderness as the scene of discipline, the other requires exile in a foreign country as its background, and that while the earlier passages consider the discipline from the standpoint of the workings of Jahveh's love, the latest considers it more from that of the change of heart which chastening will effect. Whether the scene be laid in the wilderness or in the exile, the prophecy is the same: after judgement, salvation; reformation, not destruction. We hear it in the passage which follows the story of the renewal of Hosea's own marriage (iii. 1-5, i. 10—ii. 1) and in the songs about the chastening of the faithless Israel (ii. 2-13) and the wooing of her Divine Husband (ii. 14-23). We hear it again in the later prophecies (xi. 7-11, xii. 6, xiv. 1-8). When Israel has been cast out of Jahveh's land (ix. 15) and has become a wanderer among the nations (ix. 17, xii. 9), a people without king or cult (iii. 4), and has learnt to cast away its reliance upon foreign help, its own strength, and its false worship (xiv. 4), there will be a great future for that people. This will be seen in a renewal of the love-relationship, broken now by no apostasy (ii. 14-23), in a new and united Israel (iii. 5, i. 11), and in a new religious experience, one of prayer and of intimate communion with Jahveh (ii. 6 f., 15 ff., 19 f., xiv. 2-8).

#### IV

#### LATER INFLUENCE OF THE BOOK

We hear nothing of the effect which Hosea's message produced on his hearers, except that there is a hint of persecution (ix. 7 f.). But that there were some who were moved by his burning words

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<sup>1</sup> See Additional Note, pp. 25 ff.

is proved by the fact that they were collected and preserved for future generations. Whether the prophecies were taken to Judah and there interpolated with references to the Southern Kingdom, as some scholars hold, or whether they were treasured up by a school of prophets who belonged to the remnant left by Sargon after the destruction of Samaria, we cannot say. There are some who see the influence of Hosea and his disciples in the presentation of Israel's history as it appears in the later writer or (writers) of the Elohist school, known as E<sup>2</sup> (for instances see Burney, *Judges*, p. xlv), and assign the Deuteronomic revival to the same Northern influence.

If the main body of Deuteronomy (chs. xii-xxvi) is the product of the seventh century, as most scholars still believe, or of the sixth century, as Kennett and Hölcher have recently argued, the influence of Hosea on that book can be clearly traced. His insistence on a worthy conception of God, and his consequent denunciation of the idolatrous worship of his day, will have done much to prepare the way for the reforms that followed. His conviction that Jahveh is Israel's God, and that the fundamental thing in religion is that which Jahveh in His love has done for His people, finds an echo in the writings of the Deuteronomists, and his teaching that Jahveh expects *hesedh* as well as justice towards one's fellow-Israelites is the basis of Deuteronomic ethics. If Welch makes good his claim that Dt. xii-xxvi is the product of the religious movement led by the earlier prophets from Samuel onwards, we shall have to reverse the process and trace the influence of Deuteronomy on Hosea and his successors. But the time for such a reversal has not yet arrived.

Hosea's influence on Isaiah may be seen in the latter's attitude towards the cultus (i. 10-17) and in his opposition to foreign alliances (e.g. vii, xxviii, xxx-xxxii); and it may be that Is. i. 23, v. 29, xxx. 1-5, and xxxi. 1-3 are reminiscent of Hosea's written words (cf. Hos. ix. 15, v. 14, vii. 13-16, and xiv. 3 respectively), but these similarities are dismissed by Sellin either as plays on words or wise sayings which pass from mouth to mouth or as due to the fact that the two prophets were contemporaneous and dealing with the same kind of situation.

It is in Jeremiah of Anathoth in the following century that Hosea's influence is most deeply impressed. 'In Hosea he found not only a teacher, but a spirit kindred to his own. Both were

men of exceptionally tender and emotional temperament, sympathizing intensely with the people on which they were constrained to pour out the vials of divine judgement. . . . There was an ancestral bond between them inasmuch as Hosea was a native of North Israel from which Jeremiah's family had come', and it may be that the two prophets had a common home (see p. xii). 'What Hosea had learned through the bitter experience of his home life led Jeremiah early to renounce the hope of marriage, because he felt himself to be like his predecessor the prophet of a nation's dying agony (xvi. 1 ff.). They are the two martyr prophets of the O.T., men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the most deeply exercised in spiritual religion of all the prophets of Israel' (Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, pp. 21 f.). That the younger prophet was indebted to the older for many of his ideas and for the imagery in which he clothed them (e.g. his conception of Jahveh as the Husband of His people, his characterization of the worship of other gods as fornication and adultery, his idealization of the sojourn in the wilderness as the time when Israel's relation to Jahveh was perfect) may be seen in the following parallels, which are by no means exhaustive :

Jer. ii. 2 ff., iii. 8	Hos. i-iii, vi. 4, xiii. 5
ii. 8	iv. 4 ff., v. 1, vi. 9
ii. 18	vii. 11
ii. 31 ff.	i. 2, ii. 2 ff.
iii. 22	xiv. 1, 4
iv. 3	x. 12
v. 30, xviii. 13, xxiii. 14	vi. 10
vii. 9	iv. 2
vii. 22 f.	vi. 6
ix. 12	xiv. 9
xiv. 10	viii. 13, ix. 9
xxx. 9	iii. 5
xxx. 22	ii. 23

Hosea's symbol of the marriage relationship reappears in Ezekiel xvi and xxiii, where Jerusalem's idolatry is denounced as fornication and adultery. It is clear also from a comparison of iii. 5, i. 10-12, and ii. 18 with Ez. xxxvii. 22-7, xxxiv. 23-5 that Ezekiel had the 'restoration' passages of Hosea before him as he spoke or wrote, the reminiscences being too obvious to be evaded

(Melville Scott, pp. 95 ff.). The wooing in the wilderness of ii. 14 f. also reappears in Ez. xx. 35 f. ; cf. xvi. 60. And it is worth mentioning, perhaps, that in ch. xxiv we find the same kind of double grief, domestic and public, as in the pages of Hosea.

Hosea's work, then, was not in vain. The nation, it is true, was deaf to his appeal, and the exile became its grave instead of the place of its renewal. But the message was preserved and handed on. It passed from Israel to Judah, and found further expression in the teaching of Deuteronomy and of great prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But the goal and fulfilment of Hosea's ideas lay far beyond his own horizon. He had indeed proclaimed the great truth that 'the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind', but to him the object of God's love was one favoured nation in its corporate capacity, not a person, but a people personified. It was only when the love of God which was revealed through him became incarnate in Jesus Christ that it was seen to have for each believer, whether Jew or Gentile, all that personal tenderness and depth with which Hosea invests the relation of Jahveh to His people Israel.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(A list of books found valuable in the preparation of this Commentary)

Owing to the claims of parochial, diocesan, and other administrative work, the compilation of this Commentary, undertaken many years ago, has suffered long delays and frequent interruptions. For the same reason the editor has been unable to find time to read all that has been written on the subject, but he begs to acknowledge his indebtedness—an indebtedness which is indeed self-evident—to the following authors and books :

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## NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW WORDS

The use of Hebrew characters has been avoided, and Hebrew words are transliterated. No distinction has been made between *Sin* and *Samekh* (both appearing as *s*), but *Shin* is represented by *sh*, *Ṣade* by *s*, and *Zayin* by *z*. *Taw* is indicated by *t*, *Teth* by *ṭ*, and *Heth* by *h*. *Kaph* appears as *k* and *Qoph* as *q*. 'Aleph is represented by the smooth breathing (') and 'Ayin by the rough breathing ('), while *Waw* and *Yodh*, when consonantal, are transliterated *w* and *y* respectively.

Long vowels appear as *ā*, *ē*, *ī*, *ō*, *ū*, short vowels as *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and half-vowels as *ā*, *ē*, *ō*. *Shewa*, when vocal, is indicated by *e*.

Emendations adopted or suggested, when not transliterated in the notes under the text of R.V., will be found in the footnotes to the translation which appears in the Appendix.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

O.T. : Old Testament.

N.T. : New Testament.

A.V. : the Authorised Version, 1611.

R.V. : the Revised Version, 1884.

R.V.m : the margin of the above.

E.V. : the English Version (when A.V. and R.V. agree).

MSS. : manuscripts.

Heb. : Hebrew.

LXX : the Septuagint, or principal Greek Version of O.T.

Syr. : the Syriac Version.

Vg. or Vulg. : the Vulgate, or Latin translation made by Jerome.

Tg. or Targ. : the Targum, or Aramaic translation of O.T.

HDB. : Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

ch., chs. : chapter, chapters.

v., vv. : verse, verses.

f., ff. : and following.

c. : about.

lit. : literally.

= : equals, is equivalent to.

*ad loc.* : on the passage cited.

*op. cit.* : in the book quoted.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

### A. THE STORY OF AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE AND ITS APPLICATION, i. 2—iii. 5.

- (1) *Hosea's marriage and the birth of his three children*, i. 2-9.
- (2) *His redemption of his unfaithful wife a parable of Jahveh's love for Israel*, iii. 1-5; i. 10—ii. 1.
- (3) *Further application of the parable*, ii. 2-23.

### B. GROUPS OF PROPHECIES AGAINST A GUILTY NATION, iv. 1—xiii. 16.

- I. JAHVEH'S QUARREL WITH ISRAEL AND ITS RELIGIOUS LEADERS, iv. 1—v. 7.
- II. EPHRAIM AND JUDAH EQUALLY GUILTY, v. 8—vi. 6.
- III. NO PIETY AND NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE LAND, vi. 7—vii. 2.
- IV. WICKEDNESS AND CONSPIRACY AT COURT, vii. 3-7.  
WITH A FAITHLESS FOREIGN POLICY, vii. 8-16.  
WILL BRING JUDGEMENT ON EPHRAIM, viii. 1-3.
- V. THE CAUSES OF ISRAEL'S DOWNFALL: RULERS, IDOLS, POLITICS, AND SINFUL WORSHIP, viii. 4-14.
- VI. THE SORROWS OF EXILE, ix. 1-9.
- VII. THE PENALTIES OF IMPURE WORSHIP: CHILDLESSNESS AND EXILE, ix. 10-17.
- VIII. JUDGEMENT ON ISRAEL'S ALTARS AND THE CALF AT BETH-EL, x. 1-8.
- IX. REAPING AND SOWING, x. 9-15.
- X. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, xi. 1-11.
- XI. LESSONS FROM HISTORY, xi. 12—xii. 14.
- XII. SAMARIA'S INEVITABLE DOOM, xiii. 1-16.

### C. WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND PROMISE, xiv. 1-9.

### APPENDIX. THE WORDS OF HOSEA RE-TRANSLATED AND RE-ARRANGED.

## HOSEA

### A. THE STORY OF AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE AND ITS APPLICATION, I. 2—III. 5.

THESE chapters describe how his marriage to a woman whom he greatly loved and the breaking-up of his home through his wife's adultery led the prophet to understand more fully than before the heinousness of Israel's apostasy and the depth of Jahveh's love for His people.

Briefly, the story is as follows: In obedience to a divine command Hosea married a woman called Gōmer-bath-Diblāim. She bore three children to whom he gave symbolical names: the first, a son, he called Jezreel in token of the coming destruction of the dynasty of Jehu; the second, a daughter, and the third, another son, he named Lō-ruhāmāh (Uncompassionated) and Lō-'amm i (Not-My-People), respectively, as signs of Jahveh's rejection of Israel (i. 2-9).

After some six or seven years of married life, Gomer, 'loved of a paramour and an adulteress', left, or was sent away by, her husband. But Hosea was bidden to renew his love to her, faithless as she was. So he bought her back from the slavery into which she had fallen, and made her submit to a period of seclusion before resuming her former position as his wife. In his own affection for his erring wife Hosea saw a parable of Jahveh's love for His unfaithful people, and in the restraint which he put upon her he found a symbol of the punishment which awaited Israel before she could be taken back into Jahveh's favour (iii. 1-5).

Ch. ii. 2-23 is a commentary on the theme set forth in the two passages summarized above. Israel, unfaithful to her divine Husband, has committed whoredom with the Baals (*vv.* 2-5). Jahveh will, therefore, lead her through the stern discipline of famine to return to her first love (*vv.* 6-13). In the wilderness, whither He takes her, Jahveh will win her back, and she will respond to His love as in the days of the Exodus (*vv.* 14-15). Heathen worship will be abolished (*vv.* 16-17). A new covenant will bring security from man and beast (*v.* 18). There will be a second betrothal (*vv.* 19-20), and a new sowing of crops and men (*vv.* 21-3).

It will be obvious to any one who has read these chapters that the text has been disarranged. There are two sections which are clearly out of place: (a) i. 10—ii. 1 (Heb. ii. 1-3), which contains a promise of restoration before the details of the judgement or of Jahveh's ethical demands are stated, and (b) iii. 1-5, which continues the story of i. 2-9.

The inconvenient position of (a) in its present context is emphasized by the fact that while the Hebrew text attaches it to ch. ii, the Greek and Syriac versions place it at the end of ch. i and the English version distributes it between both chapters. One of two alternatives has

until recently been adopted: it has been either rejected as a later interpolation or placed at the end of ch. ii. But neither expedient is necessary. There are no decisive grounds for dismissing the passage as exilic or post-exilic, provided a suitable place can be found for it. That place is not, however, at the end of ch. ii, where it is superfluous, being little more than a repetition of the last three verses, but at the end of ch. iii to which it naturally belongs.

(b) It is now held by many scholars that originally ch. iii must have followed i. 2-9, on the grounds (1) that it is unlikely that Hosea, in telling the story of his married life, would have interrupted it by a long discourse such as ii. 2-23, and (2) that the discourse itself, which is the application of the story of his relations with Gomer to Jahveh's attitude towards Israel, presupposes ch. iii as well as i. 2-9. This view, suggested by Davidson in *HDB*. (Article, 'Hosea'), has been stoutly defended by Melville Scott in *The Message of Hosea*. If ch. iii be inserted between i. 9 and i. 10, it will supply the necessary transition in thought between the two verses. Thus while iii. 1-3 continues the story of Hosea's family, telling of Gomer's discipline with a view to restoration, v. 4 compares her treatment with that which Israel will receive, and v. 5 announces Israel's repentance in the latter days. i. 10—ii. 1 then carries on the thought of iii. 5: repentance will be followed by restoration. Vast numbers, reunion with Judah under one head, and a reversal of the doom pronounced in the names of Gomer's children, will mark Israel's return to divine favour.<sup>1</sup>

But something more than this simple transposition is needed; for there remains a gap between i. 9, the last word of which is probably missing, and iii. 1. We ought to be told how Gomer committed adultery and became a slave, before Hosea forgave her and bought her back. For an ingenious suggestion, see note on ii. 2. It is also possible that i. 7, which is clearly obtrusive where it stands, should be read between iii. 5 and ii. 10. See note on i. 7.

It has been said that this reconstruction of chs. i-iii is a mere romance created by modern commentators and that a scientific scholarship should break with it. But, as Peake remarks, it is questionable whether the substitutes proposed by its critics are as acceptable (*The People and the Book*, pp. 270 f.). Apart from the violence with which they treat the text, they are both mutually exclusive and intrinsically improbable. Thus Marti believes that the wife of ch. iii is a woman other than Gomer, but he rejects the whole chapter as unhistorical. Duhm agrees with Marti that ch. iii records a second marriage, but he regards it as Hosea's: both wives were adulteresses when the prophet married them, the first marriage representing the disloyalty of the land to Jahveh, the second the punishment which God would inflict upon it (Sellin asks why the

<sup>1</sup> Notice how i. 11, 'and they shall appoint themselves one head', refers back to, and is the logical sequel of, iii. 4, 'shall abide many days without king, and without prince'; cf. also the expression, 'children of Israel', which occurs twice in i. 10-11 and twice in iii. 4-5. If we read the sections i. 1-9, iii. 1-5, and i. 10—ii. 1 consecutively, they will be seen to describe Hosea's story of his prodigal wife and its application to the history of Israel—a thought which is developed at greater length in ii. 2-23, more especially on the side of its application.

## I. 1 THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea the son

name of the second wife is not mentioned). Hölscher, like Marti, rejects ch. iii, but cuts out i. 2 also, thus getting rid of Hosea's domestic tragedy altogether. The point of the story of Hosea's marriage, he says, lies in the symbolical names given to his children. But this is too drastic. Steuernagel retains ch. iii, but regards it, not as a sequel to i. 2-9, but as a parallel narrative. Hosea was twice charged to take a prostitute to wife; for a long time he avoided all intercourse with her, and it was only after she had reformed that he had children by her. Sellin, who once held a theory not unlike that of Steuernagel but now defends the reconstruction set out above, rightly remarks that such an explanation is too complicated.

If chs. i-iii as reconstructed form a unity, their date will be during the reign of Jeroboam II, for the fall of the dynasty is still in the future (i. 5), and there is as yet no suggestion of a threat from a foreign enemy, even in ii. 2 ff.

1. The superscription, which announces the prophet's authority, his name, and the period during which he prophesied, is generally regarded as wholly or in part the work of a later hand, and for these reasons: (1) the dating of one whose work lay in Israel by the kings of Judah; (2) the mention of Jeroboam alone of the Northern kings, whereas, if the reference to the kings of Judah is correct, he must have worked also during the reigns of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea; and (3) the fact that the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel as given do not synchronize, Jeroboam having died before Uzziah. It is probable that the reference to the kings of Judah is the work of a Judæan scribe who wrote the headings to the books of Isaiah and Micah. The rest of the superscription may well be the work of Hosea or of the editor who collected his sayings; but, if so, it will belong, not to the book as a whole, but only to that part of it which is represented by our first three chapters.

*The word of the LORD.* *Word* is the technical term for revelation through a prophet, as 'instruction' (*tōrāh*) is the technical term for a divine communication through a priest, and 'counsel' in the case of a sage (Jer. xviii. 18). This *word came unto Hosea*, not from his own mind, but from God Himself (cf. Luke iii. 2; Gal. i. 1).

*Hosea.* An infinitive *hiphil* used as a substantive and an earlier form of Joshua, the name means a 'saving' or 'deliverance'. The same name was borne by the last of the kings of Israel. Pusey reminds us that it is our Lord's name also. The prophet who comes nearest to Jesus in the tenderness of his doctrine of Love is therefore happily named.

*son of Beerī.* Nothing is known of the prophet's father. The name only occurs here, but Jewish fancy has identified him with

of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 When the LORD spake at the first <sup>1</sup>by Hosea, the LORD

<sup>1</sup> Or, *with*.

Beerah, a Reubenite prince (1 Chron. v. 6), while another tradition asserts that he too was a prophet and ascribes to him Is. viii. 19, 20). Since true patronymics are rare in O.T., it is possible that Beeri is the name of a tribe.

*in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* It is fanciful to suppose (with Pusey and others) that the kings of Judah are used to mark the period of Hosea's activity, because Judah is the kingdom of the theocracy, 'the line of David to which the promises of God were made'. Most modern scholars see in the clause the hand of a post-exilic scribe who knew that Hosea and Isaiah were more or less contemporary, and thought that Micah was a little junior to them; hence the omission of Uzziah in Mi. i. 1.

*in the days of Jeroboam.* This is Jeroboam II, the fourth and most successful king of the house of Jehu, who reigned from c. 782 to c. 743 (see p. xvi). It has been suggested that Hosea omits the names of the remaining kings of Israel because he does not regard them as true kings (see p. xxiv); but it is more reasonable to suppose that, if the reference to Jeroboam is from the hand of the prophet himself, it applies only to the section covered by the first three chapters. These chapters, which form a complete whole in themselves, especially when they are re-arranged, clearly belong to the reign of Jeroboam II and to no other; for the fall of the dynasty of Jehu is still in the future in ch. i (see v. 4), and the picture of prosperity shown in ch. ii has no parallel in any other period of Israel's history.

### I. 2-9. *Hosea's Marriage and the Birth of his Three Children*

2-9. The first part of the parable of Hosea and his family: his marriage and the birth of his three children, to whom he gives symbolical names, in anticipation of the vengeance which awaits the house of Jehu and of Jahveh's coming rejection of the nation. For the sequel, see ch. iii.

2. *When the LORD spake at the first by Hosea.* Some scholars (e.g. G. A. Smith) regard this clause as the original heading to chs. i-iii, and render, *The beginning of Jahveh's speaking by Hosea*; others hold it to be an addition which stood in front of the text of the book, before v. 1 was prefixed as the title, to distinguish it from the book which it followed in the roll (Welch). But the

said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom: for the land doth commit great

Hebrew construction, which is not an uncommon one, may be translated, *When at the first Jahveh spake*, or, *At the beginning of Jahveh's speaking*. The preposition is unusual with this verb, and is only found when the subject is Jahveh speaking with a prophet. Render *with*, rather than *through*, *by*, or *in*, *Hosea*.

*The LORD said unto Hosea*. As Isaiah dated his call from the vision in the temple (Is. vi), and Amos from a certain day when he was following the flock (Am. vii. 15), so Hosea traces the beginning of Jahveh's speaking to him to the impulse which led him to marry Gomer.

*A wife of whoredom*. Not (a) one who was a harlot at the time of her marriage, because Hosea cannot be supposed to have attributed such a command to Jahveh, and the symbolism of ch. ii requires that Hosea's bride (like Jahveh's) should have been faithful and chaste at the first (ii. 15; cf. ix. 10, Jer. ii. 2); but (b) one who, though innocent on her wedding-day, had in her a disposition to whoredom which showed itself in later years. The language is to be interpreted proleptically: Hosea's account of his marriage is coloured by the feelings with which he looks back on it. *Go, take unto thee a wife* was not really a command, but an event which in the light of what happened later he regarded as such.

*and children of whoredom*. *Take unto thee* has (by zeugma) a double object. The reference is not (a) to children born before Gomer's marriage, nor (b) to children born in adultery after marriage, but (c) to children who share their mother's disgrace.

*for the land doth commit . . .* The prophet's life was to become a sermon to his people. As Gomer became the bride of Hosea, so *the land*, i.e. the chosen people, had entered into a mystic relation with Jahveh; and as Gomer, after her marriage, became unfaithful, so Israel, after 'the love of her espousals', went astray after other gods. Hosea's message is addressed primarily to the Northern Kingdom, but (as Battenwieser shows) he must have had Judah also in his mind. This seems to be clear from passages such as, *Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the first-fruit on a fig-tree I saw your fathers*, (but) *they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to Baal and became abominations like the object of their love* (ix. 10), and *when Israel was a child, I fell in love with him, and out of Egypt called him to be my son; as I called them, so they went astray from Me, sacrificing to the Baals, sending up smoke to the images* (xi. 1 f.). It is evident also from the figure of the marital relationship which is the subject of chs. i-iii. To limit *the land* to the narrower sense of Israel, excluding Judah, is to maintain that for Hosea Northern Israel alone was Jahveh's



whoredom, departing from the LORD. 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived, and bare him a son. 4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his

bride and that Judah had no part or lot in the privileges of His love.

The verb is intensive (literally, 'whoring, plays the whore'), and the next phrase is a pregnant construction (literally, 'from after'). Render, *for the land constantly goeth a-whoring instead of following Jahveh*. The figure is found frequently in the O.T. of disloyal abandonment of Jahveh for other gods, e.g. Ex. xxxiv. 15 f.; Ju. ii. 17; Ps. lxxiii. 27. Its origin is uncertain: the term may have been used metaphorically from the beginning, but, since actual prostitution was not uncommon in Semitic religions, it is probable that it was first used literally, and afterwards metaphorically. It is not always clear in which sense it is to be interpreted.

*Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.* Attempts to find a meaning for these proper names have been made in the interests of an allegorical interpretation of the events narrated in this chapter. Thus Gomer has been taken to mean 'completeness' (i.e. completely wicked) and Diblaim 'fig-cakes', suggesting idol-worship or the sweetness of sin (cf. iii. 1; Jer. vii. 18). But suggestions such as these are unlikely, and the whole point of the story lies in the fact that Gomer and Diblaim are real persons, unless the latter is, as it might well be, Gomer's birthplace (cf. Diblathaim, Nu. xxxiii. 46; Jer. xlvi. 22).

*bare him a son.* According to Harper and others, 'the context demands that the son be one born in sin, though recognized for the mother's sake'. But the view held by most moderns (including G. A. Smith) is that Gomer remained faithful until after the birth of her first or second child. The view supported by this commentary is that Hosea did not discover his wife's guilt until after the birth of the third child (p. 34; so also Davidson in *HDB.*, Marti, and A. R. Gordon). It is difficult to believe that the prophet would have kept his wife in his house for years, knowing her to be an adulteress.

*Call his name Jezreel.* See note on ii. 21 f. Like Isaiah (Is. vii. 3; viii. 1-4), Hosea gives his children symbolical names as indications of imminent events. The name of the first looks back to Jehu's massacre of Ahab's family (2 K. ix and x) and forward to the punishment of Jehu's house for that act of cruelty. It is an illustration of the progressive nature of O.T. morality that, whereas the author of 2 K. x. 30 represents Jahveh as praising Jehu for having 'done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart', Hosea, writing a hundred years later, con-

name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will <sup>1</sup>avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *visit*.

demns him for the murder. This is due, no doubt, to his conviction that Jahveh desires kindness between man and man and to the prophet's abhorrence of the cult to which Jehu and his dynasty were addicted.

*I will avenge* (lit. 'visit') *the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*. Cf. Am. vii. 9: *I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword*. Both prophets expected the end of the Northern Kingdom to come with the downfall of Jehu's dynasty. But some twenty years were to pass before that kingdom ceased to exist: Jeroboam II was succeeded by his son Zechariah, and five other princes occupied that precarious throne before the fall of Samaria in 722. The verse is interesting (a) because it indicates that Jeroboam was still on the throne when Jezreel was born, and (b) because it shows that 'neither the prophet nor his contemporaries were accustomed to place emphasis upon the letter of prophetic speech' (Harper). As Hosea lived for some time after the death of Jeroboam's son, he might easily have altered this passage to bring it closer to the facts.

*I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel*. Bow is a symbol of power (Gen. xlix. 24; Jer. xlix. 35; Job xxix. 20). The disaster which was to avenge the bloody deed of a hundred years ago would take place on what has always been the great battlefield of Palestine, a broad plain stretching from Mount Carmel and the sea to the river Jordan.

There would have been 'poetic justice' if Hosea's prophecy had been literally fulfilled. It would have been fitting that the house of Jehu should be overthrown on the scene of Jehu's crime, and that the kingdom of the house of Israel should come to an end on the classic battlefield where Jahveh's people had suffered defeat in the past. It is possible that Zechariah, the last of Jehu's line, did, as a matter of fact, meet his end in the valley of Jezreel (2 K. xv. 10; read 'in Ibleam' for 'before the people'); but too much stress cannot be laid on this, since Hosea predicts defeat in battle, whereas Zechariah was assassinated. Hosea's prediction was, however, fulfilled to this extent: that, with the death of Jeroboam, the Northern Kingdom entered upon its last years, and that the dynasty of Jehu, by the murder of Jeroboam's son six months later, perished as it began, in blood, like that of Omri before it. But, as far as we know, the bow, i.e. the power, of Israel was not broken in the valley of Jezreel. It was broken,

valley of Jezreel. 6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *the LORD* said unto him, Call her name <sup>1</sup>Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any wise pardon them. 7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by

<sup>1</sup> That is, *That hath not obtained mercy.*

first by the Assyrian invasion of Galilee and Gilead in 734, and finally by the capture of Samaria in 722. The passage is a good illustration of the difference between prophecy and vaticination. The prophet was not concerned with the literal fulfilment of his predictions. Details of time, place, and circumstances were of secondary importance in his eyes, compared with the basic truth that Jahveh was a righteous God, 'that what He required of man was to know Him and to conform to His moral law', and 'that Israel, utterly failing in these respects, was doomed to destruction' (Buttenwieser, pp. 152 f.). When Hosea found that the kingdom of the house of Israel did not cease with the end of Jehu's line, he might have deleted this definite prediction. The fact that he did not trouble to do so shows that all that he wanted to say was that sin carries its penalty with it, and that when blood cries out for vengeance, it shall not cry in vain (Welch, p. 265).

6. *bare a daughter.* Harper, G. A. Smith, and others infer from the names *Uncompassionated* and *Not-my-people* given to Gomer's second and third children that Hosea had discovered his wife's unfaithfulness before the birth of the second. But both the context and the analogy of Is. vii. 3, viii. 3, 18 seem to suggest that the names of the prophet's children should be regarded as having reference to Israel's impending doom, rather than as expressions of his dislike for them as children of doubtful parentage. *For I will no more again have compassion on the house of Israel that I should at all forgive them.*

*Lo-ruhamah.* Lit. 'She is not compassionated'; a sentence used as a proper name. St. Paul renders 'not beloved' (Ro. ix. 25), and St. Peter 'hath not obtained mercy' (1 Pet. ii. 10). Both 'love' and 'mercy' are contained in the full meaning of the word, 'which expresses the deep tender yearnings of the inmost soul over the one loved' (Pusey; cf. Ps. ciii. 13).

7. *But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.* This is one of many side-glances at Judah, some favourable as here (i. 11; iv. 15; xi. 12), others unfavourable (v. 5; v. 10-14; vi. 4, 11; viii. 14; x. 11; xii. 2). Judah is here excepted from the doom pronounced upon Israel; perhaps because it is less sinful in its worship. It must, however, be admitted that the verse seriously interrupts the story of the prophet's domestic experiences. For

the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. 8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 And *the LORD* said, Call his name <sup>1</sup>Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be <sup>2</sup>your God.

<sup>1</sup> That is, *Not my people.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *for you.*

this reason most critics reject it as an interpolation or a marginal note inserted after the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib in 701. But the language is very markedly that of Hosea; so also is the thought of deliverance by Jahveh alone, and not by the accustomed means of defence (ii. 18; viii. 14; xiv. 3). It seems better, therefore, to adopt the suggestion of Cannon (*Expositor*, March 1924) that the verse has been accidentally displaced and to insert it before and in connexion with i. 10—ii. 1 (Heb. ii. 1-3). If i. 7 be read with i. 10—ii. 1, it will be seen that the deliverance of Judah (v. 7) and the reversal of the judgement on Israel (v. 10) lead naturally to the healing of the schism between North and South (v. 11). It should be noted that Cannon argues for the order ii. 4-25 (Heb.); i. 7; ii. 1-3 (Heb.), but his argument applies almost as forcibly to the arrangement adopted here, viz. i. 1-6, 8-9; iii. 1-5; i. 7; i. 10—ii. 1 (Heb. ii. 1-3). Render: *And upon the house of Judah I will have compassion and I will save them by Jahveh their God, but I will not save them by bow or by sword or by martial array, or by horses or by horsemen.*

8. *Now when she had weaned.* That is, according to the custom of the East, when Lo-ruhamah was two, or even three, years old (2 Macc. vii. 27). The period between the birth of the first child and that of the third would thus be from six to eight years.

9. *Lo-ammi = Not-my-people.* The name signifies complete estrangement between Jahveh and Israel. There seems to be an ascending scale in the prediction of Israel's doom: *Jezreel* ('God scatters') announces the coming judgement; *Lo-ruhamah*, the withdrawal of Jahveh's love; *Lo-ammi*, Israel's rejection and treatment as a foreign people.

*I will not be your God.* A reversal of the covenant (Ex. vi. 7). The Hebrew text has, *I—I am not for you*, i.e. *As for Me, I am not yours or on your side.* The context and ii. 23 suggest either that *your God* ('*ēlōhēkhem*) be read instead of *for you* (*lākhem*), or (more probably) that *l'ēlōhēkhem* has been accidentally omitted after *lākhem*. For one of these emendations there is support in some MSS. of the LXX. But the general sense is the same, whether we emend the text or not. Robertson Smith translates 'I am no longer 'Ehyeh for you', thus recalling the I AM, or rather the I WILL BE, of Ex. iii. 14; but this does not agree with ii. 23 and

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the

it is not certain whether Hosea knew the document to which Ex. iii. 14 belongs.

iii. 1-5 should be read after this verse, together with the introduction to chs. i-iii (pp. 1-3) and the note on ii. 2 and i. 7.

### I. 10—II. 1. *Conclusion of the Parable in ch. iii*

I. 10—II. 1. (Heb. ii. 1-3). The sudden change from doom to restoration, and the absence of any conditions attached to the promise of restoration, have led many commentators to reject these verses as an exilic or post-exilic interpolation. Others, who see no good reason for doubting that Hosea wrote them, feel that they are out of place in their present context, and have usually placed them after the last verse of ch. ii. In favour of this arrangement is the order in which two quotations are made by St. Paul in Ro. ix. 25, 26; but there is little else to support it. A more satisfactory arrangement—and one which meets all serious difficulties—is that which places ch. iii after i. 9, and our three verses (i. 10—ii. 1 English) as the conclusion of iii. 4-5 (Buttenwieser and Melville Scott; see pp. 1-3). If these three sections be read consecutively, it will be seen that ch. iii completes the story of the prophet's relations with his wife in i. 1-9, begins the prediction of restoration with which our English ch. i ends, and supplies the ethical conditions of that restoration. There is a further advantage in this arrangement in that it allows us to retain a passage which we should be reluctant to discard, and which even some of those who reject it (e.g. G. A. Smith) admit might well have been written by Hosea.

The sense would be improved if we could place i. 7 before i. 10. The passage would then describe how the deliverance of Judah (v. 7) and Israel's increased numbers and restoration to Jahveh's favour (v. 10) lead to the healing of the schism between North and South and a further growth of population (v. 11).

Vast numbers, reunion with Judah under one head, and a reversal of the doom pronounced in the names of Hosea's children, will mark Israel's restoration to Divine favour.

10. *Yet.* The opening word of this verse brings out the contrast between what precedes and what follows. But the Hebrew is *and*, and so we should translate, if we agree that i. 10—ii. 1 follows iii. 4, 5. The story of the reversal of doom would then be as follows: after abiding in seclusion many days without king or prince, and without any of the externals of religion, the Israelites will once again seek Jahveh their God and David their king, with the result that they will increase in numbers; that they will be called 'Sons of the living God' instead of 'Not-my-

sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that, <sup>1</sup>in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God. 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *instead of that which was said.*

people'; that, reunited with the Judaeans, they will appoint for themselves 'one head' (i. 11 refers back to iii. 4, 5), and 'great shall be the day of Jezreel' (no longer the scene of massacre, but of a great 'sowing' and springing up of the population), when the joyful news, conveyed by the names '*Ammî* and '*Ruḥāmāh*, is announced.

*as the sand.* Cf. Gen. xxii. 17, 1 K. iv. 20. A great increase of population is a feature of the prophetic promise of prosperity; e.g. Is. ix. 3, Mi. ii. 12, Is. xlvi. 19.

*in the place where.* The place of rejection will be the place of restoration. The sense would be improved if we could translate, *instead of its being said.* But it is doubtful whether *m<sup>e</sup>qôm 'āsher* can bear this meaning. If we retain the rendering, *in the place where*, the impf. which follows should be rendered *it used to be said.*

*Sons of the living God.* 'It was the special sin of Israel, the source of all his other sins, that he had left the living God, to serve dead idols' (Pusey). Now, Hosea says, the name which was the symbol of estrangement from Jahveh will cease to be used, and in its place the sons of Israel will be given a name which denotes the closest possible relationship with Him. In the word *sons* we have the common Semitic conception that the nation is the offspring of the deity that it worships, but here the kinship is moral rather than physical. The expression *living God* is in contrast to the dead, unreal gods of heathenism, the 'nonentities' ('*elîlim*) of Isaiah (ii. 8, 18, 20, &c.), and denotes One who is the source of all life (Ps. xlii. 2, lxxxiv. 2). If the passage is Hoseanic, this is one of the earliest approaches in the direction of monotheism.

11. *the children of Judah and the children of Israel.* The ancient schism between north and south, which occurred at the death of Solomon (1 K. xi, xii), will be healed (cf. Is. xi. 13, Ez. xxxvii. 22). From this and other references (iii. 3 f., viii. 4, xiii. 10 f.) the conclusion has been drawn that Hosea regarded the division of the kingdom as a great sin. If so, he would be the first writer to voice this later conception. But an examination of the passages cited lends little support to this view (see p. xxiv, notes *ad loc.* and Welch, pp. 117, 268 f.).

*shall be gathered together . . . and shall go up from the land.*

and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. II. 1 Say ye unto your brethren, <sup>1</sup>Ammi; and to your sisters, <sup>2</sup>Ruhamah.

<sup>1</sup> That is, *My people*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, *That hath obtained mercy*.

This prophecy of a reuniting of the separated kingdoms under *one head* (a king of David's line; cf. iii. 5) is 'a bold prophecy for the time of Hosea, but it would be equally bold for an exilic prophet, writing when the Northern Kingdom had been dissipated and lost' (Horton). Where is the reunion conceived of as taking place? (1) The verb here translated *go up* is used of going up, i.e. returning, from Egypt (e.g. Ex. i. 10) or from Babylonia (e.g. Ezra ii. 1). The reference might therefore be to a return from exile to Palestine; Israel and Judah gathered together under one leader will re-enact the story of the Exodus (cf. Jer. iii. 18, Ez. xxxvii. 11). This makes good sense, but (2) many scholars, who take the view that Hosea does not mention the coming Exile in chs. i—iii, regard *the land* as meaning 'the Holy Land'. According to one view (a) *go up* means *march to battle* (cf. Na. ii. 1, Jo. i. 6) and the reunited people, now too numerous for the land to hold them, seek to enlarge their borders (Am. ix. 11 f., Is. xi. 14, Mi. ii. 12 f.) by conquest. (b) Another view is that Israel and Judah go up to Jezreel from different parts of the Holy Land. In this case render *assemble* or *rally* instead of *be gathered together*, and *gain dominion over* or *the mastery of*, instead of *go up from*, the land (cf. Ex. i. 10; so Battenwieser). *The day of Jezreel* will then be a day of some decisive battle (cf. 'the day of Midian', Is. ix. 4). The scene of disaster (i. 5) will become the scene of an ideal victory which will give the reunited nation final possession of the land of Canaan. It is not impossible, however, that (c) Melville Scott (after Reuss) may be right when he renders *spring up from the land*, for great shall be the day of Jezreel, i.e. of sowing. Cf. ii. 23, *I will sow her unto me in the earth*. There would seem to be a play upon words: *Israel* being equivalent to *Jezreel* restored; also a play upon two meanings of Jezreel, 'God scatters' and 'God sows': the place of scattering becomes the place of sowing, where Jahveh once more sows His people in their own land.

II. 1. *Say ye . . .* Now that Jezreel has been given a new meaning and the doom has been reversed, the other names of sinister import can no longer be retained (cf. ii. 23). 'The words [Jezreel, 'Ammi, and Ruḥāmāh] form a climax of the love of God' (Pusey). The people once scattered, disowned, and uncompassionated, are now sown again in the land, reconciled to Jahveh, and become the object of His yearning love. The command may be addressed to the prophet's disciples, bidding them announce

2 Plead with your mother, plead ; for she is not my wife,

to the whole nation its restoration to God's favour, or to the members of the united kingdom, directing them to greet each other as the people of Jahveh. In either case Hosea seems happily to divide the nation into two sections to each of which one of the names reversed becomes applicable. Read perhaps (with LXX) *brother* and *sister*, but this reading may be due to a wish to bring this verse into line with the next (*plead with your mother*) with which it was thought to be connected. A change of vowel-points only gives 'āmērū (*they shall say to or call*; prophetic perfect) for 'imērū (*say ye*). It is possible that the pointing of the word as an imperative was due to the imperative of the next verse.

## II. 2-23. Further Application of the Parable of the Unfaithful Wife

This section, which is a detailed application of the story of Hosea's domestic sorrow to Jahveh's experience with Israel, should be read after i. 1-9, iii. 1-5, and i. 10—ii. 1, passages which it pre-supposes. The prophet's theme in *vv.* 2-13 is that Israel has played the harlot, and shall be punished. The people (= the land) has been unfaithful to her Divine Husband, forsaking Him for other lovers (the local Baalim), to whom she ascribes the material blessings of Canaan. But, when these blessings are withdrawn, she will learn the true source of her prosperity and return to Jahveh. In *vv.* 14-23 'the threats melt into the tenderest promises' (Horton). Israel will be led into the wilderness to be wooed again, and she will respond to Jahveh's love. The very names of her lovers will be forgotten. There will be a new covenant and a new betrothal; and, as a result of the union between Jahveh and Israel, there will be renewed fertility and the land will no longer bear names of sinister meaning.

2-5. Jahveh's admonition of faithless Israel. Jahveh, addressing the individual Israelites, bids them expostulate with their mother (i.e. the land and people as a whole) on account of her unfaithfulness. 'The *dramatis personae* are the same as in ch. i; only, whereas in ch. i the husband, wife, and children are both historical persons and significant symbols, in ch. ii they are obviously pure allegories' (Cheyne). The adulterous wife is Israel and the aggrieved Husband is Jahveh. The children are the individual Israelites, either all of them or those who have not altogether given way to apostasy and might therefore be expected to appreciate the prophet's message.

2. *Plead with your mother, plead.* The repetition of the imperative gives intensity to the exhortation; cf. Is. xl. 1. 'Plead' is inadequate as a translation. *Expostulate* would better express Hosea's meaning: it is the language of a wrathful and exasperated husband.

*for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.* These words,



neither am I her husband: and let her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts; 3 lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the

together with v. 4 (*and on her children I will not have compassion, for they are children of whoredom*) are held by Sellin and others to be inconsistent with their context, and are either rejected as glosses or treated as fragments which furnish data regarding Hosea's private history. In the latter case they are placed between i. 9 and iii. 1-5 with a purely conjectural connecting-link such as (Sellin): 'And she weaned Lo-ammi, and went up to Bethel and committed adultery there. And when it was told to Hosea, he drove her from his house and said, *She is not my wife . . .*' Or, more simply, 'Then Hosea said, I will put away Gomer, *for she is not my wife . . .*' Against the authenticity of the words in this context, it is urged (a) that they interrupt the connexion between *expostulate* and *that she put away her whoredoms*, and (b) that, as a matter of fact, Hosea does not finally reject his wife or represent Jahveh as wholly giving up Israel. But it is simpler to take the words as a parenthetical explanation of the expression 'your mother' (Cheyne). Israel's adultery has destroyed the relation of the wife to the husband, but not of the mother to the children. Jahveh calls Israel 'your mother', because He cannot in any true sense of the word call her 'my wife'.

*and let her put away.* Render, *that she put away.* This is the message which the children are to carry to their mother who has brought disgrace upon them. The allusion is to the brazen face and exposed breasts of a harlot (Jer. iii. 3; Prov. vii. 13; Cant. i. 13), or possibly (so Kimchi) to the paint on her face and the ornaments on her breasts. Israel in her Baal-worship is as obstinate and shameless as a whore.

3. *lest I strip her naked.* The punishment which awaits the adulteress is pictured in five successive and climactic lines (Harper). Notice how the ideas of 'land' and 'people' are interchangeable in Hosea's mind: at first he speaks of Israel as a woman, but he passes easily into forms of expression which are suitable only to the thought of a land. It seems to have been part of the punishment of women who broke wedlock that they should be stripped and left naked (Ez. xvi. 38 f.) before being strangled (Lev. xx. 10; Dt. xxii. 22) or stoned to death (Ez. xvi. 40; St. John viii. 5).

*and set her* (lit. 'fix', or 'station', her for all to see) *as in the day that she was born.* For the figure of the helpless condition of a new-born child, cf. Ez. xvi. 4-6. Israel's early history is recalled by *the day of her birth*: the prophet remembers how, when Israel's history as a nation began, she was a homeless wanderer in the wilderness. Cp. ix. 10; xiii. 5. The same privations, he says,

day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst; 4 yea, upon her children will I have no mercy; for they be children of whoredom. 5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my will be hers again. Israel, i.e. the land, will be stripped bare and become like a wilderness and *as a parched land*, and she will meet her death, not by strangling or by stoning, but by thirst (Ez. xix. 13).

4. *Yea, upon her children.* In v. 2 the children are addressed, here they are spoken about; but this kind of transition is quite in keeping with Hosea's style, and there is no need to treat this verse as a gloss or as a fragment misplaced. It serves a double purpose: it adds completeness to v. 3—both the land and its people will be laid waste—and leads up to v. 5.

5. *I will go after my lovers.* Israel's *paramours* are not, as often (especially in Ezekiel), the neighbouring peoples whose favour she courted, or the gods of those peoples, but, as vv. 10 and 15 show, the local Baals, to whom the popular religion attributed the fertility of the soil and the bounties of nature. Of the three couplets, the first two express the necessities of life, food and clothing, and the third, its luxuries. *My drinks* probably = wine and other fermented liquors; cf. the frequent use of the phrase, 'oil and wine'. There is no need to read (with Sellin) *nishqī*, 'my perfume'.

Israel's sin lay, not in worshipping the Baals as deities who existed in opposition to, or even alongside of, Jahveh, as the bestowers of material blessings, but rather in substituting Jahveh for the Baals and retaining in His worship the rites which belonged to the older cultus. The people did undoubtedly think that they were worshipping Jahveh as the giver of nature's gifts, but they had so debased His worship with idolatrous practices which really belonged to the Baals that they might as well be worshipping them. When Hosea 'pierces the veil of syncretism' (T. H. Robinson) and asserts that the honour paid in name to Jahveh is in reality offered to the old gods of the country, he goes farther than his predecessor Amos. The older prophet expressed no aversion from the religious symbolism prevalent in his day; like Elijah and Elisha he had no protest to make against the golden calves, and he would, no doubt, have considered the worship of Israel to be worship of Jahveh, corrupt though it was. But Hosea would not admit that it was worship of Jahveh at all. In his eyes Baal and Jahveh stood for mutually exclusive religious principles; and, since the character of a religion is shown not by the name of its

water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my <sup>1</sup>drink. 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will make a fence against her, that she shall not find her paths. 7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *drinks*.

god but by the kind of service in which he is supposed to delight, he felt no hesitation in denouncing the popular religion of Northern Israel as a worship of Baal and in describing such worship as whoredom. 'By this judgement he proves the depth of his religious insight, for the whole history of religion shows that no truth is harder to realize than that a worship morally false is in no sense the worship of the true God' (Matt. vi. 24, vii. 22 f.; W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 177).

6-13. Jahveh's discipline will make Israel see the folly of apostasy. Israel will learn through the bitter experience of drought and famine that her paramours (the Baals) cannot provide the material blessings for which she has prostituted herself. When these are taken away she will understand that they were Jahveh's gifts.

6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way.* Read *her way* with LXX, and render, *I am about to hedge up her way with thorns, and to fence up her fence.* The active participle, following *behold I*, is frequently used to announce the Divine Purpose (cf. v. 14), and has the force of an immediate future. The meaning is that Israel will be cut off from her paramours by impassable barriers, 'hedge' and 'fence' representing some severe calamity which will overtake her. For the simile, cf. Job iii. 23, xix. 8; Lam. iii. 7, 9.

7. *not overtake . . . not find them.* The verbs represented by *follow after* and *seek* are intensive, the meaning being that though she pursues the Baals with every kind of sacrifice and offering, she will no longer feel their mystic presence. This will vanish with the blessings which they were supposed to give.

*I will go and return.* Better, *Let me go and return.* In her despair Israel turns to Jahveh, but neither here nor in vi. 1-3 does she use the language of true repentance: she merely expresses a desire for something different from her present lot. *Far better was it for me then than now.* Cheyne cites the case of the women in Upper Egypt, who asserted their determination to return to the worship of the Queen of Heaven, on the ground that when they had worshipped her in former times 'they had plenty of food, and were well, and saw no evil' (Jer. xlv. 17). Like the Prodigal Son, when Israel 'began to be in want' she contrasted her present position with the plenty she had once enjoyed and 'came to herself'. The

my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now.  
 8 For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they <sup>1</sup>used for Baal. 9 Therefore will I <sup>2</sup>take back

<sup>1</sup> Or, *made into the image of Baal.*      <sup>2</sup> Or, *return, and take away.*

impulse to return in order to get enough to eat is not very elevated, nor is there as yet any true love of Jahveh in it ; but disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and consciousness of need often mark the beginning of a change of heart.

Some scholars reject vv. 6-7 as breaking the otherwise close connexion between vv. 5 and 8 ; others reject only 7b which anticipates the repentance of vv. 14-23. Sellin places both verses after v. 13.

8. *For she did not know.* Better, *But she had not understood that it was I who gave her the corn and the must and the fresh oil.* 'Israel has not understood' is the burden of Hosea's preaching : it was lack of appreciation of Jahveh's character that led her astray (ii. 20, iv. 6, vi. 6, viii. 2). For the triad of material blessings, the chief products of Palestine, cf. Dt. vii. 13, xi. 14, xii. 17. The words used here denote respectively the threshed corn, the freshly-expressed and only slightly fermented juice of the grape, and oil freshly extracted from the olive-berry (Driver, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 79 f.).

*and multiplied unto her silver and gold.* Render, *and heaped silver upon her and gold, which they made into an image of (or used in the service of) the Baal.* The fruits of commerce (Palestine had no mines) are also Jahveh's gifts. Most scholars omit the two Hebrew words after 'gold' as irrelevant to the context and on grammatical grounds (change from sing. to pl.). If they are retained, as they well may be, the more natural rendering is *which they used for* (i.e. in the service of) *the Baal.* The phrase may be taken as parallel to 'she had not understood': Israel not only failed to recognize these things as gifts from Jahveh, she even used them for an alien worship (Welch). It is grammatically possible to translate *which they made into* (Is. xlv. 17, 19 ; Dt. ix. 14 ; Ez. iv. 9) and to make the phrase apply only to 'silver and gold', but '*the Baal*' is nowhere else used of the image of the false god. For the rendering *used for*, cf. Lev. vii. 24 ; 1 S. viii. 16 ; Ez. xv. 5 ; 2 Chron. xxiv. 7. This wider application will cover not merely the making of images, but also the provision of the accessories of the Baal-cultus, including corn, new wine, and fresh oil.

9. *Therefore will I take back.* That He may teach Israel to recognize Him as the giver of her good things, Jahveh will *take back again* His corn and must at the time when they ought to be matur-

my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness. 10 And now will I discover her <sup>1</sup>lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her

<sup>1</sup> Or, *shame*.

ing; He will also *snatch away* His wool and flax which He gave to cover her nakedness, thus reminding her how helpless and destitute she is without Him. Cf. Ez. xvi. 8. The LXX has 'so as not to cover her nakedness'. This involves the change of only one letter (*m* for *l*), but the sense is the same, whether the emendation be adopted or not.

10. *And now*. Better, *And so I will lay bare her immodesty in the eyes of her paramours*. *attāh* = 'consequently'; cf. v. 7, x. 3. *Nabhlūth* comes from a root which has the idea of senselessness, lack of appreciation of the claims of God or man (Dt. xxxii. 6; Ps. xiv. 1; Is. xxxii. 6), and whose exact meaning must be determined by the context. Thus in Jos. vii. 15 it means 'impiety', and in 1 S. xxv. 25 and Is. xxxii. 6, 'churlishness'. Here and in Gen. xxxiv. 7; Dt. xxii. 21; Jer. xxix. 23, it is used of sexual offences. See Driver, *Parallel Psalter*, p. 457.

*in the sight of her lovers*. Israel's disgrace will be aggravated by the fact that her exposure will take place in the presence of her paramours, who will be powerless to render help of any kind. This seems to suggest that Hosea admitted the existence of other gods, but it may be only a poetical way of saying that Israel will be put to shame in the very places where she worships. For the prophet's opinion about other gods, see i. 10 (note *ad loc.*), iv. 12, viii. 5, 6, xiii. 2-4, xiv. 3. It should be borne in mind, however, that the earlier prophets do not give to the abstract doctrine of monotheism the importance which it possesses to our minds. For the practical purposes of religion, the revelation that there is no god who could compare with Jahveh was to them as effective as the more advanced revelation that there is no god except Him (W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 59 f.). Kittel and others omit 'in the eyes of her paramours' as irrelevant to the context. For the same reason Harper omits the whole verse; but others, who prune the text extensively, see no difficulty in accepting it.

11. *I will also cause all her mirth to cease*. Logically and chronologically (perhaps also originally), this verse follows v. 12, which describes the destruction of the products of the soil, and its natural sequel is v. 13. The word translated 'feasts' (*hag*) is used of a festival accompanied by a pilgrimage (in Moslem lands *haj* = the pilgrimage to Mecca). The reference will be to the three

sabbaths, and all her <sup>1</sup>solemn assemblies. 12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my hire that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13 And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *appointed feasts*.

annual feasts mentioned in Ex. xxiii. 14-17. Render *pilgrim-feasts*. *New moon* and *sabbath* festivals are mentioned together in 2 K. iv. 23, Am. viii. 5, Is. i. 13, and Ez. xlvi. 3, as well as here, and are probably of ancient origin. The word rendered 'solemn assemblies' (*mō'ēdh*) = lit. 'an appointed time or place'. It is a wider term than *hag* and includes the pilgrim-feasts and all the other *sacred seasons* (Lev. xxiii). Worship in pre-exilic times was essentially joyful. It found its expression in a merry sacrificial feast to which the people came dressed in their gayest attire and marching joyfully to the sound of music (W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 236 ff.); cf. Ex. xxxii. 5 f.; Ju. xxi. 19 ff.; Am. v. 23, viii. 10; Is. xxx. 29.

12. *her vines and her fig trees*. As the two principal fruit-trees of Palestine, the vine and the fig tree represent God's greatest blessings (Joel i. 7, ii. 22; 1 K. iv. 25; Zech. iii. 10). These, like the bread and water, wool and flax, oil and drink of v. 5, are the *payment* which Hosea represents Israel as thinking she receives from the paramours whom she follows; cf. ix. 1; Dt. xxiii. 18; Is. xxiii. 17 f. But they will be laid waste and become a *jungle* (not 'a forest', but, through neglect, a tangled mass of brushwood, as in 1 S. xiv. 25 f.; Is. xxi. 13) which *the wild beasts of the open country* will devour. Sellin adds here (with LXX) 'and the birds of the heavens and the creeping things of the ground'; cf. v. 18 (from which LXX has probably borrowed the words) and Is. xiii. 20 ff.

13. *I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim*. *Days* = 'feast days', and the meaning is, *I will punish her for the days she kept in honour of the Baals*; i.e. the days of v. 11, which, though they were nominally 'days of Jahveh', were in reality heathen festivals. The plural 'Baalim' refers to the local Baals, varieties of the one national god specially worshipped in different places (e.g. Baal-Hermon, Baal-Meon, Baal-Shalisha, Baal-Tamar) or for special attributes (e.g. Baal of flies, Baal of the Covenant in Ju. viii. 33, ix. 4, and the Baal of Heaven of the inscriptions). To the popular mind there may have been as many Baals as there were places of worship, each with some special local quality. Such local cults, survivals of which may be found in the 'saints' and *welis* of Palestine to-day, were designed to meet popular needs, but Hosea

<sup>1</sup> unto which she burned incense; when she decked herself with her <sup>2</sup> earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD. 14 Therefore, behold, I will

<sup>1</sup> Or, *wherein she burned incense to them.*      <sup>2</sup> Or, *nose-rings.*

would not tolerate the compromise which regarded them as forms of Jahveh-worship.

*unto which she burned incense.* Rather, *when she used to offer sacrifice to them.* The verb is never used of burning incense in pre-exilic times; it means lit. 'to cause sweet smoke to ascend'.

*decked herself.* The popular religion of the Semites required a gala dress for holy days (Ex. iii. 18-22). The figure is that of a woman attempting to attract admirers. These *rings* and *trinkets* were offensive to Hosea because they were worn in honour of the Baals. 'Ring' may be either a nose-ring, as in Gen. xxiv. 47, Is. iii. 21, or an ear-ring, as in Gen. xxxv. 4. 'The 'jewel' of E.V. comes from a root which = 'to adorn'. As one of its derivatives means a 'necklace' in Prov. xxv. 12, Cant. vii. 1, and it is here coupled with a nose- or ear-ring, it is probable that a neck or breast ornament is intended, rather than jewellery in general.

*and forgot me.* Better, *and ME she forgot.* The order of the words emphasizes the enormity of the offence; cf. Ez. xxii. 12, Is. lvii. 11 for a similar emphasis. Such was the nature of Israel's worship that Jahveh's true character was forgotten; cf. iv. 6, viii. 14, xiii. 6.

**II. 14-23.** In this stanza it becomes clear that the object of Jahveh's punishment of Israel is her reformation. He will take her into the wilderness and woo her there as in the days of her youth. Repentance will bring reconciliation with her Divine Husband (*vv.* 16 f.); the wilderness will be transformed into a peaceful habitation (*v.* 18); there will be a new betrothal (*vv.* 19 f.) and a new prosperity (*vv.* 21 f.) and the names which Hosea gave his children as omens of Israel's fate will be reversed (*v.* 23).

What is meant by 'wilderness' in this connexion? (1) According to Harper, G. A. Smith, and others (some of whom ascribe the passage to a later hand), 'wilderness' is a figure for exile in a foreign land (cf. Is. xli. 17), and the writer describes a leading of the people into captivity and their subsequent return to their own country. (2) Sellin, who denies that there is any suggestion of a home-coming in the passage, takes the word 'wilderness' literally and says that Hosea means that it will become the garden of God. But both views involve a scene different from the one described in *vv.* 2-13, which is clearly a desolation of Israel's land. It is simpler, therefore, to assume that it is Palestine that Hosea has in mind in chs. i-iii.

allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak<sup>1</sup> comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of<sup>2</sup> Achor for a door of hope: and she shall<sup>3</sup> make answer there, as in the days of her

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *to her heart*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, *Troubling*. See Jos. vii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *sing*.

14. *Therefore*. This is not the inference which we should have expected, but man's miseries invite God's mercies (Pusey). God *therefore* has mercy, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. As a connecting-link between vv. 13 and 14, 'therefore' means, 'Because she has forgotten Me, she must be reminded of Me', i.e. through discipline. Render: *Behold, I Myself am about to woo her, and lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart*. Jahveh would surround her repentance with the associations of her youth and innocency. 'By the grace of God, everything shall begin again as at first' (G. A. Smith). For *speak to the heart*, cf. Gen. xxxiv. 3, Is. xl. 2. The meaning is 'speak kindly to', in a consoling and encouraging manner.

15. *her vineyards from thence*. 'From thence' might mean (1) 'where she would least expect it, the wilderness with Jahveh being more productive than Canaan with her paramours', or (2) 'as soon as she has left the wilderness, Jahveh will restore the vineyards which He has taken away'. But it is more satisfactory to translate *there*, i.e. in the land so recently laid waste; cf. Is. lxxv. 20, where the word *mishshām* clearly has this meaning.

*the valley of Achor*. A valley on the northern boundary of Judah (Jos. xv. 7) which led up from Jericho to the hills of Judah, perhaps the *Wady Kelt*. To the Israelites this valley, to which they gave the name, 'Vale of Trouble', was a place of ill omen; for it was there, during their first encampment after crossing the Jordan, that Achan's breach of a taboo involved the whole host in guilt (Jos. vii). Its use here is symbolical, the prophet thinking now of its fertility (cf. Is. lxxv. 10) rather than of its evil associations. Cf. for the thought xiv. 7, Is. xxviii. 24, Ps. cxxxvi. 5 f. Sellin reads (adding one letter) 'furrows of hope', but this is unnecessary. If the view that wilderness = exile be adopted, the meaning will be that the Israelites will again enter the Promised Land, and that this time the Vale of Trouble will be the starting-point for a career of prosperity and success.

*and she shall make answer there*. Israel in the wilderness will respond, i.e. be docile, amenable, to Jahveh's wooing, as in the ideal age of the Exodus; cf. Jer. ii. 2: 'I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness'. For the prophetic view of the wilderness period, see pp. 85 f.



youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me <sup>1</sup>Ishi; and shalt call me no more <sup>2</sup>Baali. 17 For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be <sup>3</sup>mentioned by their name. 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for

<sup>1</sup> That is, *My husband*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, *My master*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *remembered*.

16. *thou shalt call me Ishi and . . . no more Baali.* *Ishi* ('my Husband') and *Baali* ('my Lord') are synonymous, but Hosea proscribes the use of the latter name on account of its heathen associations. It seems clear from names (Meribbaal, Ishbaal, Beeliada) which occur in the families of Saul and David, both zealous worshippers of Jahveh, that at one time the name 'Baal' could be used innocently of Jahveh as the owner, or lord and master, of the soil of Canaan. See further on ix. 10. In putting into Israel's mouth once more (*v.* 2) the tenderer name of love, 'my Husband', Hosea anticipates the N.T. conception of the Church as the Bride of Christ and foreshadows the great mystery of Ephes. v. 32 (Horton).

Wellhausen and others reject this verse as a gloss on *v.* 17, partly on the ground that Hosea does not elsewhere use *Baali*, but always the plural *Baalim*. Guthe, Marti, Gordon, and Sellin, who retain the verse, read (after the LXX) 'she shall call to her Husband and call no more to the Baalim'.

*the Baalim.* That is, the local deities, each of which had its own proper name; e.g. Baal-berith, Baal-zebub, &c. All trace and memory of the cultus will be destroyed; not even the names of the Baalim will be *mentioned*. In later times it became the custom to avoid mentioning the Baal, when it occurs in proper names, either by altering it into compounds with Jahveh, e.g. Ishyō for Ishbaal (1 S. xiv. 49 LXX) and Ēl-yādāhā' for Baal-yādāhā' (2 S. v. 16), or by way of ridicule into compounds with bōsheth = 'shame', e.g. Jerub-besheth for Jerub-baal (2 S. xi. 21), Ish-bosheth for Ishbaal (2 S. ii. 8) and Mephibosheth for Merib-baal (2 S. ix. 6). Cf. Jer. xi. 13 (where 'shameful thing' is parallel to Baal), Hos. ix. 10, and Jer. iii. 24.

18. *a covenant for them.* A reversal of *v.* 12. One feature of the ideal future will be peace between Israel and the animal-world: the wild beasts will no more ravage the land. For a similar 'covenant' which Jahveh breaks, cf. Zech. xi. 10; cf. also Ez. xxxiv. 25 (based on this passage). For other references to the close relationship between animals and men, see Gen. iii. 1 ff.; Lev. xxvi. 6; Nu. xxii. 21-30; Is. xi. 6-9, lxv. 25; Job v. 23. Harper asks (following Gunkel on Gen. iii. 1 ff.), Is there here

them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in

a survival of the totemistic conception involving a belief in a real blood connexion? With these passages we may compare Ro. viii. 18-25, where St. Paul brings all sub-human nature within the scope of Christ's redemption. See note on iv. 3.

*and I will break.* There will be peace also between Israel and the other nations (Ps. xlvi. 9, lxxvi. 3, Is. ix. 4, xlii. 6, liv. 10; Jer. xxxi. 31-3, xlix. 35; Ez. xxxvii. 26). *Bow and sword and martial array* (i. 7) will be destroyed *out of the land* (i.e. of Israel); cf. Is. ii. 4 = Mi. iv. 3; Jer. xxiii. 6, xxxiii. 16. *To lie down in safety* means complete confidence and a feeling of security; cf. Lev. xxvi. 6; Job xi. 18; Is. xiv. 30, and especially Ez. xxxiv. 25. On security and confidence the happiness of a nation depends, but these ends can only be reached through disarmament.

19. *I will betroth thee.* To strengthen the idea of security and confidence and to bring it into harmony with the context, the prophet returns to the figure of betrothal and marriage, a relationship which this time will last *for ever* (Jer. xxxi. 35-7; Is. liv. 8-10). The threefold repetition of *betroth* is not a reference to the Trinity (Pusey): it emphasizes rather the joy of the Bridegroom and the indissolubility of His choice. *Right and justice* (the rule by which He acts in carrying out His purposes; cf. Is. xlii. 6; Jer. xxiii. 6), *kindness and compassion* (the sympathy and love with which He will regard the penitent nation), *and faithfulness* (the constancy with which the new relations will be adhered to on His part), are the bridal gifts, the dowry-price (Gen. xxiv. 53, xxxiv. 12), which Jahveh will give. To this list some would add (with a slight change of the text) *the knowledge of Jahveh*. Lack of this knowledge, which is not merely intellectual, but rests upon spiritual experience and results in moral practice (Cheyne), was the cause of all Israel's troubles (iv. 1, v. 4, vi. 3, 6). As the text stands, *and thou shalt know Jahveh* is either the result of Jahveh's five gifts or the gift which Jahveh expects from His betrothed. If the text be adhered to, the former interpretation is preferable, as the context suggests that everything is given by Jahveh and that He asks for nothing in return. To omit *in right and in justice* as a gloss impoverishes the passage.

faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; 22 and the earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall answer <sup>1</sup> Jezreel. 23 And I will sow her unto me in the <sup>2</sup> earth; and I will have mercy upon <sup>3</sup> her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to <sup>4</sup> them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, *Thou art my God.*

<sup>1</sup> That is, *Whom God soweth.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *land.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *Lo-ruhamah.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *Lo-ammi.* See ch. i. 6, 9, 10.

21. *I will answer.* Rather, *I will respond* as in v. 15. The threat of vv. 9-12 is reversed, and all nature co-operates to bless Israel. 'Jezreel (i.e. Israel) asks the plants to germinate; they call upon the earth for its juices; the earth beseeches heaven for rain; heaven supplicates for the divine word which opens its stores, and Jahveh responds in faithful love' (Cheyne). *Respond* to suits this passage better than *call to* or *gratify*. Gordon suggests responsive singing. 'Nature forms, as it were, a grand symphony, in which the note of Jezreel—*God will sow*—peals forth from heaven to earth, and is caught up by all the fruits of the earth. In more sober prose, God commands the clouds to drop their rain, and the whole land of Israel is filled with fertility and joy'; cf. Dt. xxviii. 23; Lev. xxvi. 19; Am. ix. 13; Joel iii. 18; Ez. xxxiv. 25-8, xlvii. 1-8.

23. *I will sow.* See notes on i. 3—ii. 1. Israel is here called Jezreel, which is an easy variant, for the sake of a play on the word. God would once more 'scatter', but not as in i. 4, by causing Israel to flee before her enemies, but by sowing for Himself a new crop of men in the promised *land* (Jer. xxxi. 27 f.). Thus the first name of ill omen, though unaltered in form, has its meaning changed. The other two names are reversed: *I will have compassion on Uncompassionated* (Lo-ruhamah), and *I will say to Not-my-people* (Lo-ammi), *My-people* (Ammi) *art thou; and he* (i.e. Not-my-people) *shall say, My-God.* Cf. Zech. xiii. 9 for a post-exilic allusion to this passage; cf. also St. Paul's quotation in Ro. ix. 25 and St. Peter's in 1 Pet. ii. 10.

*My God.* The restored Israel's confession of faith. 'The whole of religion is condensed in the single word *'Elōhāi*, even as it was condensed into that selfsame word by Christ upon His Cross' (Melville Scott).

So ends the application of the parable contained in the story of the prophet's love for his guilty wife (i. 2-9, iii, i. 10—ii. 1). It is a picture of a people restored to the love and favour of their

God. The prophecy was not fulfilled because Israel would not respond to Jahveh's wooing. But Hosea's message lived on. 'From Israel it passed to Judah, and found a richer expression in prophets like Jeremiah and the preacher of Comfort (Is. xl-lv). And in Jesus Christ the love of God which spoke through Him became incarnate. Hosea's glory is that he approached so nearly the great mystery of redemption. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"' (Gordon).

*Additional Note on the 'Hopeful' Passages in Hosea*

The book is so dominated by threats of the coming doom<sup>1</sup> that many scholars have maintained that all the so-called 'hopeful' passages were added by later hands. Thus Harper, in the *International Critical Commentary* on Amos and Hosea, says: 'It is impossible to reconcile with Hosea's situation and declarations certain passages referring to Israel's future, the so-called Messianic allusions. The prophet plainly represents Israel's ruin as close at hand. Moreover, it is apparently an irretrievable disaster (xiii. 9) which is threatened. In any case death and Sheol are first to do their work (xiii. 14), nor is Jahveh a man to repent (xi. 9; xiii. 14). These passages, therefore, are entirely inconsistent with Hosea's point of view, and directly contradict the representations which are fundamental in his preaching.'<sup>2</sup> As most of the passages excised by Harper (mainly on this ground) occur in chs. i-iii,<sup>3</sup> a note on this subject may well come at this point.

One answer to this contention has already been given in the Introduction, viz. that the hopes which these passages hold out are implied in Hosea's belief, which is fundamental to all his thinking, that Israel owed its origin to the unalterable love of God (pp. xxix f.). Another answer is that they are implied in the prophet's treatment of his wife and in the way in which he uses that treatment as a parable of Jahveh in His dealings with the nation. If iii. 1-4 is Hoseanic, as it is generally admitted to be, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that in the prophet's mind there was a future both for the woman he loved and for the people of whom she was the symbol. There would be no point in his buying back his erring wife, were it not for the fact that he hoped in time to restore her to her former position in his household. It is true that at first they must live together as if they were no longer husband and wife. She must 'abide' for him 'many days'. But this clearly implies that there was something to abide for. Discipline was not an end in itself, but a means to an end, namely, restoration. The significant thing about Hosea's affection for Gomer was that it could not be changed even by her unfaithfulness. Because

<sup>1</sup> See the following passages: i. 3-9; ii. 2-5, 8-13; iv. 19; v. 8-12; vii. 12, 16; viii. 1-3, 6, 8, 13; ix. 1-7, 11-17; x. 1-8, 9-15; xi. 5-7; xii. 2; xiii. 3, 7-9, 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> pp. clix, clxi.

<sup>3</sup> i. 10-ii. 1 (Heb. ii. 1-3); ii. 6f. (Heb. ii. 8f.); ii. 14-16 (Heb. ii. 16-18); ii. 18-23 (Heb. ii. 20-5); iii. 5; xi. 8 b, 9 a, 10 b, 11; xiv. 1-8 (Heb. xiv. 2-9).

he still loved her, she could never be to him like any other woman. She had borne his name; she had given him children, and her misery appealed to him as the misery of no other woman could. Hence he was waiting for the first sign of repentance in order to take her back to his heart. So it was with Jahveh and Israel. Jahveh's purpose was not to be exhausted when Israel was punished, because the relation between them was based on His love for her. Because He still loved her, in spite of all that had happened, it was always possible for the nation, after repentance, to start afresh. If we admit that Hosea's marriage with Gomer was a powerful factor in his work as a prophet, and if we recognize a pedagogic purpose in his treatment of her, the disputed passages of ch. ii will be seen to belong naturally to their context; for they tell us how Jahveh in His love will follow His people into their shame and misery, and be with them in all the trials through which they will have to pass, until He has changed their heart and regained their affection. Thus 'the valley of tribulation' will become 'a door of hope', and there will be a new betrothal based not only on righteousness and justice but also on lovingkindness, tender mercies, and faithfulness (ii. 15, 19).

It is said that if we allow that Hosea predicted a brighter future for the people, we weaken his threats of impending doom. But this is by no means the case. The fate of Israel is not only inevitable, but imminent. Hosea is sent to pronounce judgement, not to avert it. There comes a time when Hosea has given up all hope of repentance until the judgement has run its course. But it is the fact that the judgement comes from Jahveh which fills the prophet with hope, for he is convinced that, if His earlier intervention in the history of Israel, whereby He called her into being as a nation, revealed His love for her, His next intervention will be a manifestation of the same love, and will result in her final salvation and a closer union with Himself.

In this connexion the theory of Battenwieser, viz. that Hosea's exhortations to repentance, with the exception of ii. 2 f., are 'not addressed to the heedless Israel of the present, which is running headlong to destruction, but to the Israel of the future, which has survived the downfall, and, presumably, awakened to a realization of the sinfulness of its past life', is exceedingly attractive. Convinced that his preaching was falling on deaf ears and that no efforts on his part could avert the catastrophe, he fixed his gaze on the ideal future and wrote down his message that its truth might be tested, and its appeal responded to, in the days to come. This Battenwieser holds to be true of v. 15 b—vi. 3 and xiv. 1-8 (a much disputed passage), no less than of ii. 14-23. In ch. ii the purpose of the impending judgement is considered principally from the point of view of the workings of the Divine love; Jahveh will woo Israel again as a lover, as He did in the days of her youth, and betroth her again to Himself. In the other two passages Jahveh's purpose is dealt with largely from the point of view of the change of heart which the judgement will effect. Thus. v. 15 b—vi. 3 (which is retained by Harper, though his interpretation is not the same as that of Battenwieser) is an expression of sincere repentance, put into the mouths of the survivors of the downfall, and of the prophet's conviction that their yearning for

III. 1 And the LORD said unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved <sup>1</sup> of her friend and an adulteress, even as the LORD loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other

<sup>1</sup> Or, of her husband, yet an &c.

Jahveh will be abundantly satisfied; and in xiv. 1-8 Hosea foresees a time when the people shall have abandoned their reliance upon Egypt and Assyria, their confidence in themselves, and their worship of the calves, and put their trust in Jahveh's love. This latter passage clearly refers to a period after the fall of the nation, but it is so Hoseanic in style and language, in spirit and substance, that it cannot reasonably be dismissed as the product of a later age.

### III. 1-5. *Hosea's Redemption of Gomer a Parable of Jahveh's Love for Israel*

III. 1-5. The second part of the parable of Hosea and his family. Hosea appears again enacting the part of Jahveh towards His people. His love for unfaithful Gomer, and his behaviour towards her (redeeming her from a life of shame and placing her in seclusion) are symbols of Jahveh's love for Israel and of the means He will use (deprivation of ordered government and religious privileges) to win her back. This chapter should be read after i. 1-9.

1. *Go yet, love a woman.* Rather, *Go and love once more*, resuming the story of i. 2-9. *Woman* (or *wife*) without the definite article suggests contempt: *this woman* or *such a woman*. R.V., 'beloved of her friend', means one who is *loved by an associate*, an illicit partner. R.V. margin, 'beloved of her husband', is an equally possible translation of the expression in the Hebrew text; cf. Jer. iii. 1, Lam. i. 2 for the former, and Jer. iii. 20 for the latter. R.V. margin makes Gomer's sin all the greater, and in favour of it is the parallel of Jahveh's love for the children of Israel. But *loved by an associate* is preferable, as indicating the degradation into which 'this woman' had fallen. LXX, with different vowel-points, reads 'loving evil', a general term followed by one more specific (Harper). Some scholars adopt the LXX pointing of the first word and read 'loving an associate'.

*even as the LORD loveth.* Hosea's love for Gomer was like that of Jahveh for the guilty nation, and he felt that it must have been inspired by Jahveh. 'The woman, whom God commands him to love, he had loved before her fall; he was now to love her after her fall, and amid her fall, in order to rescue her from abiding in it. Such, God says, is the love of the Lord for Israel' (Pusey). In loving Gomer, disgraced and fallen as she is, Hosea feels that he is only doing what Jahveh does for *the sons of Israel* in similar circumstances. As Gomer loves another man, so Israel turns to

gods, and <sup>1</sup>love cakes of raisins. 2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and an homer of barley, and an <sup>2</sup>half homer of barley: 3 and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be toward

<sup>1</sup> Or, *them that love*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *letheck*.

*other gods*, the Baals who (she thinks) give her the necessaries and luxuries of life (ii. 5 ff.).

*cakes of raisins*. Either 'raisins pressed together to form cakes' or 'cakes of dough kneaded with grapes'. The word is found in 2 S. vi. 19 (= 1 Chron. xvi. 3), Cant. ii. 5, Is. xvi. 7. Sweet cakes were offered in many ancient cults; see Jer. vii. 18, xliv. 19, where cakes made of dough are offered to Astarte, Queen of Heaven. Here they are one of 'the Dionysiac features' of the worship of the Baals who were thought to be the givers of the grapes.

2. *So I bought her*. We do not know whether Gomer left her husband or whether he sent her away; nor do we know where she went. All we are told is that, when the impulse to take her back came to Hosea, he had to buy her at a price. She may have become a temple-prostitute or the slave-concubine of some one; or, forsaken by her paramour, she may have drifted into slavery. The price paid was *fifteen (shekels) of silver, a homer of barley and a letheck of barley*, i.e. it was paid partly in money, partly in kind. A homer = 10 ephahs (Ez. xlv. 11). *Letheck* is a measure otherwise unknown, but, according to the Vulgate and Jewish tradition, it was half a homer, i.e. 5 ephahs. According to 2 K. vii. 18 a shekel would purchase two-thirds of an ephah of barley, but this was a famine price. If the usual price was a shekel for an ephah, the whole price paid would be 30 shekels, which (Ex. xxi. 32) was the price of a slave. LXX has 'a bottle of wine'; whence Melville Scott reads (changing ' into *m*) 'a letheck of wine', thus getting rid of the second 'barley'. Waterman ingeniously transposes the first two letters of *letheck* and emends, 'and she came to Sha'araim' or 'Sha'ar Yam', which he suggests was Hosea's home; but this is too good to be true.

3. *Thou shalt abide for me many days*. Rather, *many days thou shalt sit still for me*. Her life will be quiet and sequestered, very different from the life she has been leading: *thou shalt not play the whore, nor shalt thou be any man's wife*. The meaning seems to be that she must not only cease living in adultery with another man, but also be restrained for a time from intercourse with her lawful husband. The purpose of this seclusion and restraint is that she may learn to control her passions and so be prepared to resume her former position as Hosea's wife.

*so will I also be toward thee*. In other words, during this period

thee. 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without <sup>1</sup> pillar, and without ephod or teraphim : 5 afterward

<sup>1</sup> Or, *obelisk*.

of probation Hosea will not have intercourse with her or any other woman (so Cheyne, G. A. Smith). But the Hebrew, 'and I also unto thee', may be rendered *yet I, for my part, will be* (favourably disposed) *toward thee*. There is no need to insert a negative or to carry over the negative from the previous line ('nor will I be unto thee'); still less is it necessary to read 'I will not go in unto thee'. The meaning of the Hebrew text is sufficiently clear: the prophet hopes to take Gomer back as his wife, if, after a period of isolation, he finds that she is cured of her waywardness. For the present, however, he is simply 'disposed towards her', watching over her and waiting for her. The word expresses regard (2 K. vi. 11, Jer. xv. 1, and Hos. i. 9), yet distance also.

4. *For . . .* This explains the previous verse. *For many days* (there are in which) *the sons of Israel shall sit still without king and without prince, without sacrifice and without maṣṣēbhāh, and without 'ēphōdh and t'rāphīm*. Like Gomer, like Israel: faithless Israel will be deprived of her civil polity and religious privileges, as Gomer was deprived of her conjugal rights. *King and prince* represent the rulers of the state; cf. 1 K. viii. 1 (the sheikhs of Israel, the heads of tribes, and princes of fathers' houses), also Hos. vii. 3, viii. 10, xiii. 10. According to Cheyne, these correspond to Gomer's lovers with whom she is denied intercourse, and the two pairs of objects next mentioned to the absence of conjugal relations between husband and wife; but this need not be taken as implying that Hosea condemns the monarchy as such or that he is protesting against sacrifice and its paraphernalia as alien to Jahveh-worship. On the contrary, he regards deprivation of kingly rule and sacrificial worship as a punishment; cf. x. 7, 15, xiii. 10 ff., v. 6, ix. 4 f. The *maṣṣēbhāh* was a stone symbol of the Divine Presence set up by the side of an altar, whether of Jahveh or of Baal (LXX reads 'altar' here instead of 'sacrifice'; cf. Hos. x. 1, 2). An *'ēphōdh* is generally thought to be an image to which worship was offered and to be specially connected with divination, but there is much to be said for its having been part of the dress of an oracle-priest. *T'rāphīm* were probably household gods, and originally associated with ancestor-worship; these, too, were consulted for oracles. For a fuller discussion of these adjuncts of worship, and for Hosea's attitude towards them and towards sacrifice in general, see pp. 30 ff., 58 ff., and for Hosea's view of the monarchy, see pp. xxiv f.

5. *Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the LORD their God and David their king*. *Afterward*, i.e. when the period of



shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall come with fear unto the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

seclusion is over, *the sons of Israel will again (or turn and) seek Jahveh their God*. This verse is parallel to much that is contained in ii. 2-23, though it is somewhat differently expressed. *And David their king*. These words are rejected by most modern scholars, even by those who do not excise the verse as a whole, on the ground that the supposed 'Messianic' reference is an anachronism at this early date. The restored Israelites will not only resume contact with Jahveh, but will also receive back the monarchy of which they have been deprived, though it will now be a king of David's line. If the words are Hosea's, we have here either an early stage of Messianic prophecy (cf. Is. ix. 1-7) or simply a prediction of the reinstatement of the old dynasty (cf. Am. ix. 11) to rule over a reunited nation (i. 11). Cf. Jer. xxx. 9; Ez. xxxiv. 23-5, xxxvii. 22-7.

*and shall come with fear*. Cf. Mi. vii. 17. Their privations will have been so great that henceforth they will always approach Jahveh and *His bounty* with feelings of reverence and awe. The word *bounty* is generally used in a material sense; here it refers to the good things of the land of Canaan, given by Jahveh, and not by the Baals (ii. 2-23).

*in the latter days*. Rather, *in the end of the days*, i.e. in the days to come, when the 'many days' of sitting still (v. 4) are concluded. A common expression in the writings of the prophets. It is a relative term, and its meaning varies with the contexts in which it occurs. Generally it denotes the end of the vista seen by the particular prophet. Here, as in Is. ii. 2 (= Mi. iv. 1) and elsewhere, it refers to the golden age, the ideal or Messianic era, which is to follow the existing order.

#### *Additional Note on 'Ēphōdh, T<sup>e</sup>rāphim, and Maṣṣēbhāh*

The *ephod* of the priestly code (Ex. xxviii) seems to have been a kind of apron, worn over the *mē'il* and held up by shoulder-straps which were attached to a band at the top of the garment, well above the loins. Above the band of the *ephod* was worn 'the pouch of judgement', a bag nine inches square, which held the 'ūrīm and tummīm, or sacred lots (perhaps stones) used for the purpose of ascertaining the Divine Will. Similar in shape, though not made of the same rich materials, and not (so far as we know) connected with the sacred oracle, was probably 'the linen ephod' worn by the boy Samuel when he 'ministered before the LORD' (1 S. ii. 18), and by King David when he danced before the ark (2 S. vi. 14).

But there are several references to the *ephod* which seem, on the

face of them, to require that we should understand it to mean an idol. Thus (1) in Ju. viii. 26 f. Gideon 'made' 1,700 shekels of gold 'into an ephod and set it up in his city'. So great a weight of metal can scarcely have been used in the manufacture of a mere apron with a pouch attached to it, and the verb 'set up' suggests an idol rather than something worn by the priest. (2) In the story of Micah and his private chapel (Ju. xvii-xviii), the *ephod* is associated with graven and molten images. (3) 1 S. xxi. 9 implies that it is something which stands upright and clear of the wall, for behind it the sword of Goliath is kept. (4) Though the *ephod* is regularly used for worship in the days of Eli, Samuel, and David, the priest is never said to 'wear' or to 'be girt with' it, but always to *bear* it (1 S. ii. 28, xiv. 3, xxii. 18 LXX), and on one occasion Abiathar is said to bring it 'in his hand' (1 S. xxiii. 6). From these passages, together with 1 S. xxiii. 9-12, xxx. 7 f., most scholars have been led to believe that the *ephod* was an idol-image, specially connected with the giving of oracles, and therefore something entirely different from the linen vestment worn by the priest.

There is much, however, to be said against this view. Thus (1) Burney in his commentary on Judges (pp. 236 ff.) suggests that the word rendered 'made into' may equally well be rendered 'used for' (cf. Hos. ii. 8), and that the statement may be taken to mean that Gideon used the spoils of victory not merely for the making of an *ephod*, but also for providing a sanctuary and a priestly caretaker for it. (2) Ju. xvii-xviii is a composite narrative in which one document mentions *ephod* and *t'rāphīm* and the other a graven image and a molten image. The molten image is probably a later addition, but, even if both images are original, it does not follow that they mean the same things as *ephod* and *t'rāphīm*. (3) 1 S. xxi. 9 may mean that both sword and *ephod* were hanging on one large peg (or possibly two pegs), the *ephod* as being constantly in use hanging on the outside. (4) 'In his hand' refers simply to the carrying of the *ephod* when not in use, and 'bear' is most naturally explained by Ex. xxviii. 12, where Aaron 'bears' the names of the children of Israel upon the stones of the shoulder-straps of the *ephod*, and by Ex. xxviii. 29, where he 'bears' their names upon the pouch. These considerations, together with the further consideration that the *ephod* was used in consulting the oracle (1 S. xxiii. 9-12, xxx. 7 f.), and that it was connected with *'ūrīm* and *tummām*, both in David's time (1 S. xiv. 18, 41 LXX) and later (Ex. xxviii), make it difficult to resist the conclusion that the *ephod* may have been in all these cases what Sellin calls 'die Amstracht des Orakel-priesters'.

*T'rāphīm* is, like *'Elōhīm*, a plural of eminence, and does not necessarily imply more than one image (1 S. xix. 13-16). There is the same kind of obscurity about their use as there is about that of the *ephod*. It is clear, however, that at one time they were in some sense 'gods' (Gen. xxxi. 30, Ju. xviii. 24), and from the fact that they were kept in houses (Gen. xxxi. 19, Ju. xvii. 5, 1 S. xix. 13, 16) under the special charge of the father of the family (Gen. xxxi. 30, Ju. xvii) it may be inferred that the possession of them was thought to place the family under the protection of the tribal deity or of the spirits of dead ancestors. It was probably this belief which prompted Rachel to

steal her father's *penates* and Laban to recover the stolen property. Another explanation is that they were 'amulets, resembling perhaps the small figures of Astarte which have been found in abundance in the Canaanite high places, in tombs and private houses at Gezer, Taanach, and other Palestinian sites', which Rachel intended to use (like the mandrakes of Gen. xxx. 14-24) as a fertility-charm (*New Commentary*, pp. 663 f.). From 1 S. xix, where Michal places the *terāphim* in David's bed as a dummy for her husband, we may infer that they were life-sized images in human form, but those which belonged to Laban must have been much smaller, as they were capable of being concealed under Rachel's saddle. There is no evidence that these 'gods' were actually worshipped: it may be that they were rather objects of devotion, like ikons in a Greek, or statues in a Roman Catholic or Anglican Church, and tolerated as such. That they were thought to be not unorthodox or anti-Jahvistic may be seen in the fact that Hosea, that great scourge of idolatry, does not condemn them, but regards them, along with the *ephod*, altar, and *maṣṣēbhāh*, as natural and legitimate adjuncts of Jahveh-worship (iii. 4.)

It should be noted that both in Hos. iii. 4 and in Ju. xvii. 5 the *terāphim* are closely connected with the *ephod*, and that, like the *ephod*, they were consulted as oracles (Ez. xxi. 21 f.; Zech. x. 2). It was no doubt owing to their connexion with divination that the *terāphim* were suppressed in the Reformation of Josiah (2 K. xxiii. 24; cf. Dt. xviii. 10 f., 1 S. xv. 23).

The *maṣṣēbhāh*, mentioned in Hos. iii. 4 and x. 1 f. as standing beside the altar, was originally what we should call a menhir or dolmen, 'a natural boulder or block of stone (Gen. xxviii. 11, 18, 22, xxxi. 45, 51 f.), broader at one end than the other, erected perpendicularly, which was regarded by the heathen Semites as the abode of a deity' (Driver on Dt. xvi. 22). It is alluded to as a symbol of the Canaanites (Ex. xxiii. 24, Dt. vii. 5, xii. 3), erected in or near a temple of Baal (2 K. iii. 2, x. 26 f.). Adopted by the Israelites when they settled in Canaan, it was used freely and innocently as a religious symbol in the worship of Jahveh (Gen. xxviii. 18, 22, xxxi. 45, 51 f., Ex. xxiv. 4), but was afterwards proscribed on account of its heathen associations, along with other adjuncts of worship which had been taken over from the Canaanitish shrines (Dt. xii. 2 f., Mi. v. 12-14). As stated above, Hosea saw no harm in it, nor apparently did the writer of Is. xix. 19. Hos. x. 1 suggests that sometimes this 'pillar' or obelisk was fashioned or carved (see Sellin, *ad loc.*).

### *Additional Note on the Tragedy of the Prophet's Home*

The book of Hosea opens with the statement that in obedience to a Divine command the prophet married 'a wife of whoredom', the reason given for the command being that 'the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jahveh'. This at once raises the question, Was Gomer unchaste at the time of her marriage? Matthew Henry, Pusey, and others, following some of the early Fathers, have maintained that the story is a literal account of actual facts. Hosea, they say, was commanded by God to marry a woman of evil character, and

he did so with his eyes open.<sup>1</sup> When they are asked, How could God give such a command? or, How could a prophet have recognized the voice of God in the impulse which led him to marry such a woman? the answer is either that the bare word of God, 'Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom', is sufficient explanation of a course of action which would be otherwise improper, or that the end justifies the means, whether that end be to reclaim a lost soul or to bring home to the nation by an acted parable the fact of her unfaithfulness to her Divine Husband. This view is so revolting to the moral sense that other interpretations have been sought. Thus (1) it has been held that the story is the outcome of a vision, genuine or artificial. Now it is true that the prophets frequently received their revelations by means of visions (cf. Amos), and it is also true that they sometimes used the vision as the literary form in which they enshrined their message. Thus Jeremiah takes the wine-cup of Jahveh's fury and causes the nations to drink of it (Jer. xxv. 15-17) and Ezekiel eats the roll of the book, wherein was written lamentations and mourning and woe (Ez. ii. 9—iii. 3). These are examples of actions performed in vision, and not intended to be understood as having been carried out in real life. But it is arbitrary to assume that, because the call to prophesy *may* come in a vision, or because a message *may* be presented in that form, it always *must* so come or be presented. Nor is it reasonable to dismiss in this way every story which we find difficult to believe. (2) Other interpreters have regarded the story as an allegory. Ezekiel provides us with examples drawn out to some length; e.g. ch. xvi, where Jerusalem is likened to a harlot, and ch. xvii, where in the parable of the two eagles and a vine God's judgement is pronounced on that city. He also represents himself as commanded to perform actions which from the nature of the case it was impossible to perform (ch. iv). But it does not follow that, because some allegories were not based on actual fact, none were. Moreover, prophets did sometimes perform real actions which had a symbolical meaning. Thus Zedekiah 'made him horns of iron' (1 K. xxii. 11), Isaiah 'walked naked and barefoot' (Is. xx. 3), Hananiah 'took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and brake it' (Jer. xxviii. 10); and no one denies that Isaiah's sons, to whom he gave symbolical names, were real children (Is. vii. 3, viii. 1).

The following considerations taken together are decisive against the theories mentioned above: (a) that, since a transaction which is repugnant to the moral sense is just as repugnant when chosen as the subject of a vision or an allegory, the moral difficulty is not removed;

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<sup>1</sup> This view has been revived recently. Thus T. H. Robinson: 'In the face of what we know of prophetic inspiration, and of the extravagant symbolical actions which were from time to time imposed on the prophets . . . it is not impossible that this was a genuine command received in the ecstatic state, and that Hosea carried it out with full knowledge of what he was doing' (*Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 76). Amongst other recent exponents of the view that Gomer was unchaste at the time of her marriage are Volz, Duhm, Steuernagel, C. H. Toy, and G. M. P. Smith (who says that 'a wife of whoredom' = 'a harlot'). But see H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Marriage of Hosea*, in *The Baptist Quarterly*, July 1931, for a recent review of the problem.

(b) that neither view suits the symbolism of ch. ii, where Israel is represented as being pure at the time of her marriage with Jahveh (ii. 15; cf. ix. 10 and Jer. ii. 2); (c) that the story of Hosea's domestic sorrow reads like a simple statement of actual fact, and not like a vision or a literary fable; (d) that whereas in an allegory or a vision we should expect all the names to be significant, for Gomer-bath-Diblaim no symbolical meaning has been found; and (e) that a real experience such as this furnishes the best explanation of the prophet's tender message.

Hence (3) most modern commentators adopt a modified form of the literal interpretation, namely, that the facts were as stated in chs. i and iii, but that Gomer was a pure woman at the time of her marriage and only went astray afterwards. As the prophet brooded over the tragedy which had happened in his own household, he saw in it a reflexion of the tragedy of Jahveh's experience with Israel, of His love for His people and their ingratitude and disloyalty. Hosea had already seen the unfaithfulness and moral declension of Israel and had expressed some of the consequences in the names of his children, but when the truth about Gomer came to his knowledge, the conviction forced itself upon him that his marriage was neither an accident nor a pure misfortune. It was God's way of speaking to him (i. 2) His mind about His erring people. In other words, Hosea's account of his marriage is coloured by the feelings with which he looks back upon it. 'The usage of speech, as well as the psychological conception involved in the command of Jahveh to marry a woman, who, as Jahveh knows, will break her marriage vows, is to be compared with representations concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. x. 1, xi. 10, xiv. 4) and the commission to Isaiah (Is. vi. 9 f.), these being really *not* commands, but events which in the light of later history are so interpreted.'<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to assume that Hosea discovered Gomer's infidelity before the first child was born, or that he discovered it after the birth of Jezreel and before the birth of the other two children, or between the birth of the second and third. Though great names can be quoted, there is little evidence in favour of any of these views. Against all it may be said: (1) that the context demands that the names of the prophet's children should be regarded, like Isaiah's (Is. vii. 3, viii. 3), as having reference to the impending doom of Israel, and not as expressions of his dislike for them as children of doubtful parentage; and (2) that it is difficult to believe that Hosea would have kept his wife in his house for years, knowing her to be an adulteress and permitting her to go on sinning in this way. It is simpler and more natural to suppose, with Davidson, that Gomer's character was not revealed to the prophet until all the children had been born, and that it was then that he began to speak of his family as 'a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom'.<sup>2</sup>

If the view taken above be correct, Hosea had learned, before his home was broken up, something of Jahveh's love for His people and of Israel's unfaithfulness to Him. He had also seen the inevitable

<sup>1</sup> Harper's *Amos and Hosea*, p. cxliv. Cf. also Jer. xxxii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Article 'Hosea' in *Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible*.

issue of Israel's ingratitude. But his apprehension of these facts was deepened by his sad experience, and, as Sir George Adam Smith expresses it, his 'grief became his gospel'. There were probably two stages in the process: (1) he remembered that his own case was only one of many, and that everywhere homes were being ruined through the licentious worship of strange gods; and then (2) he connected the wrong done to himself, and the wrongs done to family-life generally, with the wrong done to the love of Jahveh by His people's desertion of Him. When this stage was reached he conceived of the relationship between Jahveh and Israel as that of husband and wife.<sup>1</sup> It was not in itself an original idea, for its basis is the common Semitic conception which regards the national or local deity as the *ba'al*, i.e. the husband, as well as the lord and master, of the land, and it seems highly probable that the notion of a marriage-tie between the deity and the worshipping community was prevalent among the unspiritual Israelites of Hosea's day and connected with the Canaanitish immorality which the prophet so often condemns (ii. 7, 16). When, therefore, Hosea called Jahveh the Husband of Israel, he did not invent a new simile. But he did a very bold thing: instead of rejecting the current symbolism on account of its abominable associations and its disastrous effects on the morals of the people, he deliberately appropriated it and made it the vehicle of his profoundest teaching. Israel (the people, not the land) is Jahveh's Bride, but the basis of the union is no longer physical, but moral. 'It is a relation of inmost affection and lays upon the spouse a duty of conjugal fidelity which the popular religion daily violated.'<sup>2</sup> Hosea's originality lay in the fact that he recreated an idea and, in recreating it, gave it a new meaning. When he spoke of love as a necessary element of a true marriage, he was saying something that was new to his hearers, and when he announced that Jahveh loved His people and expected love in return, he was adding a new idea to the religious conceptions of Israel. He might, no doubt, have arrived at this truth without going through the kind of trouble which a literal interpretation of chs. i and iii demands. His reading of history might have taught him, and probably did teach him, something of Jahveh's affection for the people of His choice (ix. 10, xi. 1 ff., xii. 9 ff., xiii. 4 f.), and, as we have seen, the idea of a marriage-relation between a deity and his land or the community was probably current in the prophet's day; yet his conception of Jahveh's love is so vivid, and his appreciation of the divine agony and yearning so deep, that we feel that he must have passed through some such experience as that which he relates. If the story be true, and not an allegory or a vision, it helps to explain the human and personal complexion which Hosea gives to the relation between Jahveh and His people. A man of deep feelings and sensitive nature, the most emotional of the prophets, his own experience of outraged love enables him to understand and express the mind of God. Reading his wife's character, he saw that she was unable to stand alone, that the one chance for her in life lay in his being willing to help her, and that, if he gave her up, she would only sink into deeper shame. And,

<sup>1</sup> George Adam Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, vol. I, ch. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, Lect. IV.

looking into his own heart, he found that he could not give her up and that, in spite of her past, he could forgive her and take her back. Whence came this love which would not let her go? Surely from Jahveh, the source of all love, a God who is 'good and tender beyond man's dream'.<sup>1</sup> Then, applying these thoughts to Jahveh and Israel, he saw that the nation showed the same weakness as that which he had discovered in Gomer: she was unable to stand alone, almost incapable of remaining loyal and true, and in constant need of forgiveness and help. This forgiveness and help Jahveh was yearning to bestow. 'O Israel, return unto Jahveh thy God' (xiv. 1). 'How can I give thee up, Ephraim? How let thee go, Israel?' (xi. 8). Hosea's conception of the connexion between Jahveh and Israel is extraordinarily personal. Jahveh is a Person who takes an emotional delight in the object of His love (ix. 10). Israel is Jahveh's bride, whom Jahveh drives out of His House (ix. 15), and whom He takes back and betroths unto Himself for ever (ii. 19). The nation is a unity with an individual soul, a personal will, capable of being stubborn like an obstinate cow (iv. 16) or silly like a dove (vii. 11), capable also of responding to Jahveh's love (ii. 15). This idea of the nation as a moral person suggests that religion requires a personal subject as well as a personal object, and we almost expect Hosea to say that 'only the individual mind can be truly in religious communion with God'.<sup>2</sup> But, although he did not actually say it, he prepared the way for Jeremiah, who was the first to announce this great truth.

Hosea's domestic tragedy helps to explain two other aspects of his message, in both of which he was a pioneer in religious thought: (1) his abhorrence of idolatry, and (2) his teaching about sin and repentance. (1) To Amos the calves were merely part of an elaborate cultus which Jahveh despised as a trivial matter compared with right conduct, but to Hosea, who had a deeper insight into their true character, they were the symbols of apostasy (xiii. 2). 'With the horrible symbolism before him in which ancient religion expressed the relation between heaven and earth, rites of fertility, and with his own domestic parable in his heart, he uses the metaphor of marriage to describe the union of Jahveh and Israel, and in the idols he sees the lovers for whom Jahveh's wife has forsaken Him and played the harlot.'<sup>3</sup> Because of his own poignant experience with his wife, he saw only one sin in Israel. Amos could speak of three transgressions, or of four, which made the nation ripe for judgement, but Hosea traced all the wrongs done in his country to one common root, unfaithfulness. The popular religion is 'whoredom', because whatever the names which the people might give to the local Ba'alim, they are other than Jahveh. They are not Israel's true Husband, but paramours whom she follows for hire (ii. 5, 13, iv. 15, ix. 1). So he attacks the idols with bitter vehemence. They are artificial gods, the work of men's hands (viii. 6). They shall be smashed into splinters (viii. 6) and carried as a present to the Great King (x. 6). He describes priests and people as mourning over their loss (x. 5), and

<sup>1</sup> Glover, *Progress in Religion*, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Article 'Hosea' in *Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible*.

<sup>3</sup> Glover, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

waxes sarcastic over the spectacle of human beings kissing calves (xiii. 2). Hosea is the first prophet to denounce the worship of images, and we may well believe that it was the pain at his own heart which enabled him to appreciate its malign influence and emboldened him to characterize it as 'whoredom'. (2) It was the eighth-century prophets who revealed the moral character and requirements of Jahveh and, as a consequence, the range and depth of sin. Amos led the way. He saw in the sin of the people an offence against Jahveh's *righteousness*. To Hosea the sin of Israel was grievous because it was a sin against Jahveh's *love*. When he called it 'whoredom', he conceived of sin as an attitude of mind, an alienation of affection which debases conduct. And so repentance with him is a change of mind,<sup>1</sup> an awakening to the truth about Jahveh, a return unto Him (vi. 1; vii. 10; xiv. 1, 2), and a new understanding of His character (iv. 6; iv. 14). Repentance is made possible because Jahveh loves Israel and longs to forgive her, but it can only come as the result of stern discipline. Her land laid waste, she must live the desert life again, and so learn to depend on Jahveh alone (ii. 14-16). It was in the tragedy of his own home that Hosea discovered these truths. It was out of the depths of his own experience that he learned the real significance of sin and the heinousness of its character in the sight of God, the divine longing to forgive, and (because true love is not blind) the necessity of discipline when mere kindness fails to arouse contrition. In other words, much of Hosea's teaching is explained by the conviction that what God gave him grace to do for his wife, He Himself yearned to do for the nation whom He loved.

To attribute so much of Hosea's message to the influence of his domestic sorrow is not to deny his inspiration; for neither his moral standards nor his conception of God can be accounted for by his environment. 'It must have been some higher influence that enabled him to make the transition from his own history to that of God and the people, for it was not just every good man with a bad wife in Israel that perceived in his own experiences a reflexion of the history of God with His people, and forthwith became a prophet.'<sup>2</sup> All we can claim for his personal experiences is that they deepened his appreciation and coloured his expression of the revelation which he received, and that there is a sense in which it is true that his marriage was 'the beginning of Jahveh's speaking' with him.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *metanoia* of the Gospels, and G. A. Smith, chs. xxi-xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Article 'Hosea' in *HDB*.



## B. GROUPS OF PROPHECIES AGAINST A GUILTY NATION, IV. 1—XIII. 16

### IV. 1—V. 7. *Jahveh's Quarrel with Israel and its Religious Leaders*

This section, like chs. i-iii, may be assigned to the reign of Jeroboam II; for there is no allusion to the political assassinations which followed his death and no clear indication of any menace from a foreign invader.

IV. 1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the

IV. 1-19 is a rhetorical expostulation with Israel and its priesthood in which Jahveh appears as accuser and judge. A general indictment of the nation for its wickedness, which is the cause of a drought from which it is suffering (1-3), is followed by a passage which throws the blame for all this wickedness on the priests (4-6), whose failure to do their duty will be punished (7-10). Because of their bad example, the people are given over to superstition and sensuality (11-14). The chapter concludes with a friendly warning to Judah to avoid Israel's idolatry and obstinate wrongdoing, which can only end in ruin (15-19).

1. *The LORD hath a controversy.* That is, a *quarrel* or contention (cf. Mi. vi. 2; Jer. ii. 9; also for the thought of a legal suit, Is. iii. 13-15). Negatively, Israel is charged with lack of *faithfulness* and *piety*, those virtues which hold society together. *Faithfulness* means honesty, integrity, trustworthiness (cf. Jer. ix. 3-4). *Piety* (*hesedh*) is that 'kindliness of feeling, consideration, and courtesy, which adds a grace and softness to the relations subsisting between members of the same society' (Driver). The two virtues are often found together; e.g. Gen. xxiv. 49, xlvii. 29; Ps. lxxxv. 10. They are lacking in Israel, because there is *no knowledge of God in the land* (cf. ii. 8, 20, iv. 6, 11, v. 4, vi. 3-6, vii. 11, xi. 3; Is. xi. 9; Jer. xxii. 16). Hosea means 'not merely an intellectual apprehension of His nature, but a knowledge displaying itself in conduct, a knowledge of His power, His influence, and His character, resting upon spiritual experience, and resulting in moral practice' (see Driver, *Sermons on the O.T.*, pp. 224-5, and a fine chapter in G. A. Smith, pp. 347-59). Jer. xxii. 13-17 illustrates this passage: Josiah's 'knowledge of God' results in justice and kindness to the poor, as opposed to the violence and oppression of which his degenerate son is guilty. Some scholars

land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. 2 There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3 Therefore shall

see significance in the fact that here and in vi. 6 the prophet speaks of the knowledge of *God*, the reason being that, as this principle is not confined to Israel but lies at the root of all religion, reference to Jahveh, its national God, would be out of place; but it is doubtful whether this distinction was present to Hosea's mind. See further on vi. 6, and additional note on *hesedh*, p. 47.

2. *There is nought but swearing and breaking faith.* The first five words in this black catalogue of sins are infinitives used for the sake of vividness: render (omitting 'there is nought but', which is not in the original Heb.), *Swearing and lying, murdering, stealing and committing adultery!* Harper and G. A. Smith take *swearing and lying* together and render *perjury*; but it is possible that 'swearing' here = *false swearing* (x. 4). The first two sins are opposed to 'faithfulness', the other three to 'kindness'. It is to be noted that these sins are breaches of the ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh Commandments (Ex. xx) respectively—a fact which supports the view that the Decalogue in its original, terse form was already in existence (see *New Commentary*, pp. 84 ff.).

*they break out.* That is, into acts of violence; or perhaps we should render *they break into* (the houses of their neighbours). Sellin takes the verb with the preceding infinitives as subject, and translates 'increase' or 'prevail' (*haben überhand genommen*), adding 'in the land' from the LXX. Others change the word slightly and read 'breaking forth'. But the text makes good sense, and the two perfects at the end of the verse go well together. The words rendered *blood* are in the plural and mean 'acts of bloodshed'. Render, therefore, *and one bloody deed follows another.*

We are often reminded that Hosea has but little to say, as compared with Amos, about social and commercial iniquity. It may be that things had grown so much worse in his day that it was impossible to dwell on details, and that the fact of the nation's utter disintegration was responsible for his comparative silence (T. H. Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 74). The sins that Amos exposed were sins which might well have existed in the days of a strong king like Jeroboam—luxury and self-indulgence, dishonesty in business, injustice in the courts, and oppression of the poor—but some of the sins which are summarized in this verse set all law and order at defiance. There is now no *security in the mountain of Samaria* (Am. vi. 1) and society has fallen to pieces under Jeroboam's successors. Hosea is not indifferent to the sins which Amos denounces, but he is more concerned about tracing

the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. 4 Yet let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. 5 And thou

them to their source—ignorance of Jahveh resulting in false worship—than about describing them in detail.

3. *Therefore shall the land mourn.* Drought and famine are in the land: Hosea sees in this calamity the punishment of God. *Render is mourning . . . is languishing.*

*with the beasts of the field.* Cf. ii. 18. Nature reflects the moods of man. Earth mourns and the beasts suffer for man's iniquity (cf. Jer. xii. 4): a thought often found in the prophetic literature (Is. xvi. 8, xxiv. 3-6; Am. viii. 8; Zeph. i. 2-3; Jo. i. 10, 18; cf. Rom. viii. 19-22, where nature, which shared the consequences of Adam's fall, will share the travail of a new birth).

4. *Yet let no man strive.* It is not you, O sons of Israel, who are most to blame for these sins and calamities; so I will waste no more time in rebuking you. *Render, Let no man bring a charge, and let no man reprove.* The next few verses show that Hosea attaches the real blame to the priests, but the rest of this verse as it stands condemns the people because they *make complaints against the priest.* The text is obscure and probably corrupt. W. R. Smith reads *mārū bhī hakkōhēn*, 'Thy people have rebelled against Me, O priest!' G. A. Smith and others prefer *w<sup>e</sup>ammī* (so LXX) *kikk<sup>e</sup>mārāw*, 'My people are as their idol-priests', and transfer 'O priest' to the beginning of v. 5. This change is neither violent nor improbable. Other suggestions are *w<sup>e</sup>imm<sup>e</sup>khā m<sup>e</sup>ribhī hakkōhēn*, 'with thee is My quarrel, O priest!' (Hermann); *w<sup>e</sup>ammī khāmōkhā hakkōhēn*, 'My people is like thee, O priest!' (Nowack); *w<sup>e</sup>imm<sup>e</sup>khā khōmer ribhī*, 'with thee, O idol-priest, is My quarrel' (so Sellin, omitting 'priest' as a gloss explaining 'idol-priest'). Marti's emendation, 'the people is as the idol-priest and the prophet as the priest', is too drastic. *Kōmer* (pl. *k<sup>e</sup>mārīm*) is an Aramaic word for priest; in the O.T. it is used only of idolatrous priests of the Baal-cult (cf. Hos. x. 5; 2 K. xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4) and is therefore appropriate to this context. Read, therefore, in all probability, *for My people are like their idol-priests.*

5. *And thou shalt stumble.* Adopting the emendation suggested above, render *O priest, thou dost stumble by day, and the prophet also stumbles with thee by night.* A side-glance at those prophets to whom prophecy was simply a means of making a living (Am. vii. 12; Mi. iii. 11) and who sometimes came to their duty in a drunken condition (Is. xxviii. 7). Povah finds in Hosea's metaphor, 'stumbling', an anticipation of modern psychology. Repudia-

shalt stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee in the night; and I will destroy thy mother. 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, <sup>1</sup>I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the

<sup>1</sup> According to another reading, *I have rejected.*

tion of the thought of the living God (ii. 5; iv. 1, 6; viii. 3; xi. 2, 7) has been followed by repression and forgetfulness (ii. 8, 13; iv. 6; viii. 12, 14; xiii. 6), perversion of true religion (iv. 8; viii. 13; x. 10), and a buried complex over which Israel stumbles (v. 5; xiv. 1). See *The New Psychology and the Hebrew Prophets*, ch. ix.

*and I will destroy thy mother.* W. R. Smith interprets 'thy mother' to mean *thy stock*, i.e. the priestly clan; but ii. 2 points rather to the whole nation. 'Thy children' (Nowack) would make good sense, as also 'and thou destroyest the men of thy people' (Sellin); but the changes involved are too drastic.

6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* That is, of God (v. 1). The reason is to be found in its rejection by the priests and in their forgetfulness of Jahveh's direction.

*because thou hast rejected knowledge.* Thou, i.e. the priest, is emphatic in the Hebrew. *Knowledge* here, which is parallel to *Direction* (E.V. 'law'), is knowledge of God's revealed will, which it was the function of the priesthood to declare (Dt. xxxiii. 10; Ez. xliv. 23; Mal. ii. 7). In every religion there is 'an established order of ritual, a recognized code of social morals, a system of taboos, and so forth, on the due observance of which the maintenance of good relations between the tribe and the tribal deity is understood to depend' (Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, p. 2). Of these things, which represent religion in its public and traditional aspect, the priests were the official guardians and exponents, and they were recognized as such by the prophets themselves (Jer. ii. 8, xviii. 18; Ez. vii. 26, xxii. 26, xliv. 23-4; Mi. iii. 11; Hab. i. 4; Zeph. iii. 4; Hag. ii. 11 ff.; Mal. ii. 6 ff.), who constantly appeal to this traditional revelation of Jahveh and never condemn the priesthood as such, but only for their neglect or abuse of their functions.

*the law.* Rather, *Direction*. The word rendered 'law' (*tōrāh*) comes from a root meaning 'to direct' and is used in O.T. of the 'direction' given by the priests to the laity on matters of moral and ceremonial duty. This direction would be given orally as a rule (Mal. ii. 6), though it is probable that even in Hosea's day there was a certain amount of written legislation in existence (iv. 2, viii. 12). Jahveh's *Tōrāh* is regarded by Hosea as the foundation of morality, and he attributes the crimes which are rampant in Israel to the priests' forgetfulness of its true character, and to their disregard of that 'knowledge' of God, which the

law of thy God, I also will forget thy children. 7 As they were multiplied, so they sinned against me: I will change their glory into shame. 8 They feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity. 9 And it shall be, like

possession of such a revelation of His will implies. Cf. Mal. ii. 6, 7 (based perhaps on Dt. xxxiii. 8-11) for the O.T. ideal of what the priesthood should be. Hosea's teaching, like that of Malachi, has a strangely modern ring about it; for the Gospel no less than the Law has its message to the intellect, the laity still seek direction at the mouths of its priests, and, when they cannot obtain it, they 'take hurt and hindrance by our negligence'. 'Priesthood is an intellectual, as well as a moral trust' (G. A. Smith).

*thy children.* If 'thy mother' = the priestly clan, *thy children* will be the members of the clan. Otherwise the reference will be to the sons of the priests who, their fathers having ceased to be priests, will be unable to succeed them in their office.

7. *As they were multiplied.* Render, *The more they increase, the more they sin against Me.* This suggests that the priesthood grew in numbers and influence during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. An example of their sinfulness is given in the next verse.

*I will change their glory into shame.* Rather, *their glory* (i.e. the dignity of their position) *for ignominy will I exchange.* One of those abrupt transitions characteristic of Hosea. An ancient various reading is, 'My glory for ignominy they have exchanged', i.e. the glory of Jahveh for the shameful cult of Baal. Many scholars follow Syr. and Tg. and read *their glory for ignominy they have exchanged.* This makes a good parallel to the first half of the verse.

8. *They feed on the sin of my people.* A further charge against the priests, viz. that they thrive on unholy gains. The reference is not to sin-offerings, because we are not sure that the sin-offering existed before the time of Ezekiel, and in any case it was quite proper for the priests to eat it (Lev. vi. 25 f.); and, further, the parallel word *iniquity* seems to require the meaning *sin*. Hosea probably means the cult in general. The priests' incomes have been increased by pandering to a lower type of religion; they have turned from their primary duty of declaring Jahveh's *Tōrah* to the easier and more gainful business of conducting a debased worship (Welch). Cp. viii. 11; Am. iv. 4.

*set their heart on.* Literally, *lift up their soul to*; i.e. direct their greed to, the people's iniquitous worship. The word translated *iniquity* (*āwōn*) comes from a root meaning 'to err from the way'. According to Povah, it is used in Hosea sometimes of 'repression' of the thought of the living God (see note on iv. 5), sometimes of the 'perversion' arising from such repression, whether

people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and will reward them their doings. 10 And they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away

it be religious (as here and viii. 13, x. 10), sexual (ix. 9), or commercial (xii. 8).

9. *And it shall be, like people, like priest.* Render, *And it is (a case of) like people, like priest.* It is not certain whether vv. 9-10 refer primarily to the priests or the people. G. A. Smith refers both vv. and v. 11 to priest and people combined. So also Pusey: 'Priest and people were alike in sin. Yea, they are wont, if bad, to foment each other's sin. The bad priest copies the sins which he should reprove, and excuses himself by the frailty of our common nature. The people, acutely enough, detect the worldliness or self-indulgence of the priest, and shelter themselves under his example.' But Cheyne and Harper are probably right in interpreting vv. 9-10 as a continuation of the subject of the priests' wickedness and approaching punishment. Because the priest is no better than his people, in spite of his nearness to God, Jahveh will *visit upon him his ways and requite him for his doings.* - 10. *they shall eat.* Greed is punished by unsatisfied hunger, whoredom by childlessness. Some scholars, on the ground that increase was not looked for in this immorality, change one letter and read (with LXX) *yithraṣṣū*, *they shall not find satisfaction.*

*because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.* Lit. 'observe' or 'watch'. Unsatisfied desires are the result of leaving God out of account. This is good sense, but some (after LXX) would attempt to improve this line by connecting the last word of v. 10 with the first in v. 11 and reading (changing vowel-points only) 'because Jahveh they have forsaken, for the purpose of keeping whores'.

11. *Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding.* Lit. 'the heart', which in Hebrew psychology is the seat of discrimination and reflexion; hence G. A. Smith renders, *capture the brains.* This short sentence reads like a 'wise saying' (Harper). Some scholars feel that it is out of place here, and would insert it either in the middle of v. 12 (Harper) or at the end of v. 14 (Marti). If the verse be retained in its present position, it is the beginning of an indictment of the people generally. Drunkenness and debauchery, Hosea says, blunt the intellect and lead to the practices described in the next verse. 'Corruption of manners and superstition (it has often been observed) go hand in hand' (Pusey).

the <sup>1</sup>understanding. 12 My people ask counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. 13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *heart*.

12. *My people*. Pathetic, as iv. 6, xi. 7. My own people—so far have they departed from Me, that they consult their idol-blocks and divination-rods! 'The tenderness of the word aggravates the stupidity and ingratitude of Israel' (Pusey).

*stock . . . staff*. Some consider the allusions in this and the next verse to have reference to a survival of the tree-worship of ancient Israel (cf. Gen. xii. 6, Ju. ix. 37, Dt. xi. 30); in which case render 'tree' and 'twig'. But more probably the reference is to the official cult, and we should understand 'stock' as meaning the *tērāphīm* (or possibly the *'ēphōdh*-image), consulted for oracles, and 'staff' as some form of rhabdomancy, or divination by means of rods or headless arrows (cf. Ez. xxi. 21 f.; also 1 S. xv. 23, Zech. x. 2, where divination is mentioned with the *tērāphīm*).

*spirit of whoredom*. *Rūah* is sometimes used of an uncontrollable impulse which cannot be accounted for and leads a man whither he knows not; cf. Nu. v. 14 (jealousy), Is. xix. 14 (perverseness), Zech. xiii. 2 (impurity). *From under* = 'from being in subjection to'. The phrase is used of the subjection of a wife to her lawful husband; cf. Ro. vii. 2 (Gk.).

13. *They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains*. Render, *Upon the tops of the mountains they offer many sacrifices, and upon the hills send up sweet smoke, under oak, white poplar, or terebinth, because its shade is good*. The reference is not especially to surviving elements of the tree-cultus, but to the Canaanitish custom of sacrificing 'on every high hill and under every spreading tree', which was adopted by the Israelites, but afterwards forbidden (Dt. xii. 2). Sometimes 'the tops of the mountains' were chosen as being as near to heaven as possible, but these would be without trees (Jer. iii. 2); more often artificial mounds were made (the 'high places' of 1 and 2 K.). The latter may be intended by the word translated 'hills' here. If so, 'under oak, poplar, or terebinth' attaches naturally to it. Otherwise, we must read or understand 'and' before the clause about the trees. The context suggests that it is not the sacrificial worship at the 'high places' as such that Hosea condemns, but the identification of that worship with the licentiousness of the Baal-cult, including prostitution under the shady trees.

thereof is good : therefore your daughters commit whoredom, and your <sup>1</sup>brides commit adultery. 14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your <sup>1</sup>brides when they commit adultery ; for they themselves go apart with whores, and they sacrifice with the <sup>2</sup>harlots : and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown. 15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah <sup>3</sup>offend ; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *daughters in law*.

<sup>2</sup> See Dt. xxiii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *become guilty*.

*Therefore.* The consequence of this licentious worship : their *daughters* and *daughters-in-law* become licentious too. 'The punishment is that the immorality cannot be confined to the temple women ; the men cannot sin . . . and keep their daughters pure' (Horton).

14. *I will not punish.* Guilty as they are, it is not they who deserve to be punished, but their fathers ; for *they themselves* (i.e. the fathers) *go aside with whores, and offer many sacrifices with q<sup>d</sup>hēshōth* (temple-prostitutes). *So is a senseless people laid low!* The allusion is to 'the repulsive custom, common in the Canaanitish and Phoenician cults, by which persons of both sexes prostituted themselves in the service of a deity' (Driver on Dt. xxiii. 17 f.) ; cf. Gen. xxxviii. 21 f. ; 1 K. xiv. 24, xv. 12 ; Jer. iii. 2, 6, 8 f., 13. It is one of the practices in ancient Semitic religions which astonished Herodotus (i. 199).

15. *let not Judah offend.* A friendly warning to Judah not to *become guilty* of the same practices as Israel. It is difficult to say whether the admonition to the sister kingdom ends here, or whether it continues to v. 17, or even to the end of the chapter.

*Gilgal.* In Heb., the Gilgal or circle of stones (cf. Stonehenge). From Am. iv. 4, v. 5 ; Hos. ix. 15, xii. 11 it is clear that this was an important centre for these idolatrous rites. Situated 1½ miles from Jericho, it was Joshua's base for the conquest of the land beyond the Jordan (Jos. iv. 19 f.). Here Samuel offered sacrifice and proclaimed Saul king (1 S. x. 8, xi. 14 f., xiii. 4-9, xv. 21-33). It was Jeroboam I's policy to use these associations as a set-off against Jerusalem and the Temple.

*Beth-aven.* Lit. 'House of Naughtiness', an opprobrious substitute for Beth-el, 'House of God' (cf. v. 8, x. 5 and Am. v. 5, 'Bethel shall come to 'āwen', where some would read 'Bethel shall become Beth-āwen'). Bethel was a famous 'high place', with many sacred associations. Here Abraham and Jacob had erected altars (Gen. xii. 8, xxxv. 7), and here Jeroboam I had set up a golden bull (1 K. xii. 28-33). Hosea calls the place what it has become in God's eyes, something worthless and disappointing,



nor swear, As the LORD liveth. 16 For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly, like a stubborn heifer: now will the LORD feed them as a lamb in a large place. 17 Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. 18 <sup>1</sup>Their

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Their carouse is over.*

a thing of naught; or he may be thinking of the fate which awaits it. Beth-el is on a small hill 10 miles north of Jerusalem; hence *go ye up.*

*nor swear, As the LORD liveth.* To swear by Jahveh was not only permitted (Jer. iv. 2), but even in later times enjoined (Dt. vi. 13, x. 20); hence it has been supposed that some particular mode of swearing is here prohibited, e.g. swearing by Jahveh as a local god or in such a way as to confuse Him with some other deity. But we should expect the name of a place in this line to correspond with Gilgal and Bethel. Many scholars, therefore, with Am. v. 5, viii. 14 in mind, insert at *B<sup>e</sup>'ēr-Shebha'* between *swear* and '*by the life of Jahveh*'. If this conjecture be correct, we have another pun (cf. Beth-'Āwen): *nor take an oath at the Well-of-an-Oath (w<sup>e</sup>'al tishshābh<sup>e</sup>'ū bhībh<sup>e</sup>'ēr-shebha')*. Beer-sheba, a site consecrated by association with the patriarchs (Gen. xxi. 31 ff., xxvi. 23 ff., xxviii. 10, xlvi. 1), was in the far south of Judah. If Amos and Hosea are referring to the Northern Kingdom only, Beer-sheba is a long way off for purposes of worship (especially in view of 1 K. xii. 28-33). It seems probable, therefore, that Amos in v. 5, viii. 14, and Hosea here (vv. 15-19) are addressing themselves to Judah as well as to Israel.

16. *For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly.* Render, *Yea, like a stubborn heifer, Israel hath become stubborn. Will Jahveh now feed them like a lamb in a broad place?* For the heifer as a figure for obstinacy, cf. xi. 4, Dt. xxxii. 15, Jer. xxxi. 18, xlvi. 20. A 'broad place' = prosperity and release from trouble; cf. Ps. xviii. 19, xxxi. 8, cxviii. 5, Is. xxx. 23. If Israel rebels against his Master's yoke, how can he expect to be treated as gently as a lamb?

17. *Ephraim is joined to idols.* 'Ephraim' (most important of the ten tribes) is Hosea's favourite name for Northern Israel. The figure is that of a wife's relation to her husband (see cognate noun in Mal. ii. 14). Cf. for the thought, 1 Cor. x. 20.

*let him alone.* Leave him to his fate; for it is hopeless to attempt to reclaim him. Cf. Ez. xx. 39, the Parable of the Ten Virgins, Rev. xxii. 11.

18. *Their drink is become sour.* This translation cannot be defended. R.V.m is better, *Their carouse is over* (lit. 'their liquor is gone'). On the basis of this G. A. Smith translates,

drink is become sour: they commit whoredom continually; <sup>1</sup>her <sup>2</sup>rulers dearly love shame. 19 The wind hath wrapped her up in its <sup>3</sup>wings; and <sup>4</sup>they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *they are given up to love; her rulers are a shame.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *shields.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *skirts.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *their altars shall be put to shame.*

'Their orgies over, a-whoring they go.' Almost all scholars pronounce the text to be hopelessly corrupt. Of the many ingenious suggestions, that of Houtsma (which involves only the change of an *r* into a *d*) is the best: 'A band of tipplers, they give themselves up to whoredom.'

*her rulers dearly love shame.* The Hebrew for 'rulers' is 'shields' (Ps. xlvii. 19). The text is confused. 'Dearly love' in the Hebrew is an impossible form. Clearly the last three letters should be omitted as a case of dittography. This would give, *her shields (rulers) love ignominy.* LXX further suggests that instead of 'her shields' we should read 'rather than their pride'. This gives us, *they prefer ignominy to their (or her) pride or prestige.* Some understand *gā'ōn* as a title of Jahveh (so Sellin, who reads 'My Majesty' here); but there are objections to this. See notes on v. 5, vii. 10.

19. *The wind hath wrapped her up in its wings.* Render, *A storm shall envelop her in its wings.* A figure for the violence with which the conqueror will sweep Israel into exile; cf. xiii. 15, Is. lvii. 13. For 'wings', cf. Ps. xviii. 10, civ. 3.

*ashamed because of their sacrifices.* Render *put to shame*, and read *altars* with LXX, Syr. and viii. 11. When they are carried off into exile they will discover how useless their unholy rites have been. Cf. x. 6, Is. i. 29.

Verses 16-19 lend colour to the theory that the prophetic oracles were originally brief in form: they seem to have little connexion with each other beyond unity of theme. The last verse is a short and sharp sentence of judgement, capable of expansion; but it is so clear and complete in itself that it would be superfluous to add another word.

#### *Additional Note on 'Hesedh'*

In our English versions *hesedh* is usually rendered *kindness*, but *mercy* (cf. iv. 1, vi. 6, x. 12, xii. 6), *goodness* (vi. 4), and *lovingkindness* (ii. 19) are also found. We may distinguish three uses of the word in the O.T.:

(1) There are many instances in which it is used of *God's condescension to the needs of man.* Thus His *lovingkindness*, which is abundant (Nu. xiv. 18), great (Nu. xiv. 19), and lavished on thousands (Ex. xx. 6;

Dt. vii. 9) is shown in deliverance from enemies (Ps. xxxi. 16, 21), help in time of trouble (Ps. xxxii. 10), preservation from death (Ps. vi. 4), redemption from sin (Ps. xxv. 7), and quickening of the spiritual life (Ps. cxix *passim*). It is shown especially in the keeping of His covenant with Abraham (Mi. vii. 20), with Moses (Dt. vii. 9, 12), and with the Davidic dynasty (2 S. vii. 15, xxii. 51), and generally in His dealings with Israel as a nation.

(2) The word is used but once in the prophets (outside Hosea) of *Israel's affection for Jahveh*, viz. in Jer. ii. 2, where 'the *hesedh* of thy youth' is parallel to 'the love of thine espousals'; but cf. the expressions 'men of piety' (Is. lvii. 1) and 'acts of piety' (2 Chron. xxxii. 32, xxxv. 26; Neh. xiii. 14).

(3) When *hesedh* is used of *men in their relations with each other*, 'mercy' is not an adequate translation: it is 'too narrow a term and accentuates unduly the rights possessed by the person who shows the *hesedh*' (Driver, *Sermons on O.T.*, pp. 220 ff.). It is a quality exercised mutually amongst equals, the kindness, courtesy, and consideration by which life is made tolerable and the community is held together; cf. Gen. xxiv. 49, xlvii. 29; Jos. ii. 14; 2 S. ii. 6.

All three usages are found in Hosea. It is true that there is only one reference to God's *hesedh* for Israel, viz. in ii. 19, where it is one of His bridal gifts to His people, but the thought of Jahveh's love for the nation runs through the whole book. In the other passages in which *hesedh* occurs, it is almost impossible to distinguish between Israel's love for Jahveh and that kindness towards their fellow-Israelites which Jahveh's people ought to show. Clearly it is the former in vi. 4, because the context requires this meaning, and the same is probably true of vi. 6, where *hesedh* is parallel to 'the knowledge of God' and both are pronounced to be more acceptable than sacrifices and burnt-offerings. In fact there is no passage in which the word *cannot* mean love for God, though kindness towards one's fellows suits the context better in iv. 1 and xii. 6 (x. 12 is doubtful). The explanation of this ambiguity is that it is inherent in the meaning which Hosea attaches to the word. When he uses *hesedh* he always means love for God, but he knows no love for God which does not show itself in love for one's fellow-men; nor, on the other hand, does he know any love for man which is not inspired by love for God. If Hosea were pressed to distinguish between the various shades of meaning which belong to *hesedh* as he uses it, he would say that on the side of Jahveh it is the free, unmerited generosity to which Israel owes everything and which we should call grace; that on the side of Israel as a community it is a grateful recognition of the debt which the nation owes to Jahveh together with the loyalty inspired by that grateful recognition; and that, since all the members of the community are members of Jahveh's family, *hesedh* should govern their relations to one another as well as their relation to Jahveh. But he does not, as a matter of fact, make any such distinction, because to him the three are essentially one, and all are comprised in the same covenant. It is therefore unnecessary and unprofitable to ask in every instance whether loyal affection to Jahveh or kindness to one's fellow-Israelites is intended. The two belong together: there can be no true love for Jahveh which does not carry with it love for those who belong to

V. 1 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king, for <sup>1</sup>unto you pertaineth the judgement; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2 And the revolvers

<sup>1</sup> Or, *against you is the judgement.*

Jahveh's family (see Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, Lecture IV; Welch, pp. 123 f.).

If this interpretation is correct, *kindness* will be found to be as inadequate as *mercy* as a rendering of *hesedh*. *Piety*, in the comprehensive sense of the Latin *pietas*, is the only word which seems suitable as a translation when the word may include both love for God and love for one's fellows, but it does not seem possible to find a better rendering than *lovingkindness* to express God's love for man.

V. 1-7. This passage pursues further the subject-matter of ch. iv, with which it should be read. It arraigns the priesthood and (incidentally) the court, because through the sensuality of their worship they have led their people into the snare of sin.

1. *Hear . . . hearken . . . give ear.* Climactic. A threefold summons to include all classes, viz. *the priests*, already rebuked in ch. iv; *the people*, ensnared by the priests into a sinful worship; and then, as a climax, *the house of the king*, i.e. the king and his court (cf. 'house of David', Is. vii. 13), here denounced for the first time, except for the reference to Jehu's crime in i. 4.

*for unto you pertaineth the judgement.* 'You' probably refers to all three classes addressed, and not exclusively to the court, as R.V. suggests. R.V. margin, '*against you is the judgement*', i.e. *the sentence which I am about to pronounce*, is better. Welch (who omits 'and hearken, ye house of Israel') argues strongly in favour of judgement in the sense of R.V., viz. 'the act of judging' (p. 269); cf. Dt. xvii. 11; Mi. iii. i. The meaning would then be: 'for it is your duty (i.e. the duty of priests and rulers) to give judgement—a duty which you have neglected'. For 'judgement' = *sentence*, cf. Is. liii. 8; Jer. i. 16, iv. 12, xxxix. 5. The reason for the sentence follows.

*for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.* The allusion is obscure: Hosea is evidently referring to some scandal well known at the time. Mizpah of Gilead was the scene of Jacob's covenant with Laban. Tabor, on the borders of Issachar and Zebulun, is the famous hill rising out of the plain of Esdraelon, south-east of Nazareth. See next verse.

2. *And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter.* R.V. paraphrases the Hebrew in an attempt to make sense out of an impossible combination of words. Of the many emendations suggested, one is almost certainly correct: *and the pit of Shittim they have made deep.* This emendation (which involves only the

are gone deep <sup>1</sup>in making slaughter; but I am <sup>2</sup>a rebuker of them all. 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou hast committed whoredom, Israel is defiled. 4 <sup>3</sup>Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredom is <sup>4</sup>within them, and they know not the LORD. 5 And the <sup>5</sup>pride of

<sup>1</sup> Or, *in corruption.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *They will not frame their doings.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *in the midst of.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *a rebuke.*

<sup>5</sup> Or, *excellency.*

change of a *t* into a *t*) gives us a good parallel to the *snare* at *Mizpah* and the *net* on *Tabor*. Shittim was the camping-place of Moses (later of Joshua: Jos. ii. 1), where Baal-peor was worshipped (Nu. xxv; cf. Hos. ix. 10). Corresponding to the names of three places where priests and rulers encouraged a dangerously seductive worship, we have now a threefold figure describing the entanglement into which Israel has fallen: the *snare* (Am. iii. 5), the *net* (Ps. x. 9), and the *pit* for catching wild beasts (Ez. xix. 4, 8).

*but I am a rebuker of them all.* Lit. 'and I am correction to all of them'; cf. Ps. cix. 4 ('I am prayer'). Cheyne and others (transposing two letters) read 'none' for 'I', and render, *and there is no correction for any of them.*

3. *I know.* 'I' is emphatic: *It is I who know Ephraim* (though he does not know Me) . . . *that thou, Ephraim, hast committed whoredom.* Thou for 'now' adds point to the sentence, and only involves the change of one letter.

4. *Their doings will not suffer them.* Better, *Their doings do not permit them to turn to their God* (cf. vii. 2; John viii. 34; Rom. vi. 16). The reason is that an *impulse to whoredom* (see iv. 12) is, as we should say, in their very bones. For *Jahveh they know not*, cf. ii. 8, 20, iv. 6, vi. 6, viii. 2.

5. *the pride of Israel.* *Gā'ōn* = *pride, majesty*, and is used in a good or bad sense according to the context. As the word is sometimes used of God (e.g. Is. ii. 10, 19, 21, xxiv. 14; Mi. v. 4), some take *the pride of Israel* as a title of Jahveh; but, though this would be possible here and in vii. 10, it is doubtful whether any of the other instances of its occurrence (Ps. xlvii. 4; Am. vi. 8, viii. 7; Na. ii. 2) can bear this meaning. It is wiser, therefore, to follow Wellhausen, who understands the reference to be to Israel's trust in ceremonial and unwillingness to turn and repent (vii. 10). Render, *But the arrogance (or ostentation) of Israel doth testify to his face.* 'Hosea describes a subtle symptom of the moral awakening. . . . The conscience of many a man, of many a kingdom, has been reached only through their pride. Pride is the last nerve which comfort and habit leave quick; and when summons to a

Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity; Judah also shall stumble with them. 6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them. 7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD; for they have <sup>1</sup>borne strange children: now shall <sup>2</sup>the new moon devour them with their <sup>3</sup>fields.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *begotten*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *a month*.<sup>3</sup> Heb. *portions*.

man's better nature fails, it is possible to touch his pride with proofs of his decadence' (G. A. Smith). If this thought be considered too subtle for Hosea, we can interpret the passage more simply as meaning that Israel by its very arrogance or self-confidence stands self-condemned on the day of Jahveh's assize. The rendering, 'Israel's pride shall be humbled' (LXX, Tg., Syr.) makes good sense here and in vii. 10, but does not agree very well with 'to (lit. in) his face'. See Driver and Cripps on Am. vi. 8, viii. 7, and G. A. Smith's note on this verse.

*Stumble.* A figure for calamity, as often in the prophets; cf. xiv. 1; Is. viii. 15, xxxi. 3, and see note on iv. 5. We should probably omit 'Israel and' as a doublet, and render, *Ephraim doth stumble in its guilt*, i.e. 'is tottering to its fall'. The verse ends with a side-glance at Judah; cf. iv. 15.

6. *flocks and herds.* That is, for sacrifice. They go to seek Jahveh with their sacrifices and do not find Him, because they seek Him in the wrong way, viz. through unclean and idolatrous rites.

7. *dealt treacherously against.* Or, *played false with.* The verb occurs in Jer. iii. 20 of a treacherous wife. Baal-worship is a breach of Israel's marriage-contract, and a generation has grown up who are strangers to Jahveh.

*now shall the new moon devour them with their fields.* 'Now', introducing a punishment, as often in Hosea; cf. iv. 16, viii. 8-13, x. 2. The meaning of the last five words in the Hebrew is obscure. As the 'new moon' seems to suggest some quickly-approaching judgement, and 'fields' is a word used of the allotments of individual Israelites, it has been thought that the allusion is to the idea that the new moon has some baneful influence on the crops. (so Ibn Ezra). LXX 'mildew' may be a paraphrase, or they may have read *heres* ('drought') for *hōdesh* ('new moon'). Render, *Now may the (next) new moon devour them with their fields.* Any month may bring disaster to their crops.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven; <sup>1</sup>behind thee, O Benjamin.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *After thee, Benjamin!* See Ju. v. 14.

### V. 8—VI. 6. *Ephraim and Judah equally guilty*

The alarum of invasion will find both kingdoms weak through internal corruption. Assyrian help will not avail; for it is Jahveh Himself who is the destroyer. Tribulation brings repentance, but this is too superficial for Jahveh, because it lacks *hesedh* and knowledge of God. He can make nothing of them.

Alt's theory (adopted by Sellin) that this section refers to the war between the Syro-Ephraimitish coalition and the Southern Kingdom is most attractive, and has the merit of rendering unnecessary the repeated substitution of 'Israel' for 'Judah' which most moderns propose whenever the latter word occurs. It also offers a good explanation of the allusion in v. 13. According to Sellin, Hosea condemns both sides in the war, and shows how both are equally guilty, because they lack piety (*hesedh*) and knowledge of Jahveh. The words are not actually mentioned in v. 10-14, but they are implied, the one in vv. 10 f., the other in vv. 12 f. Both kingdoms must be chastised until they repent and return to God; but the superficial repentance which they offer in vi. 1-3 will not avail, because it is lacking in the two essentials of true religion (vi. 4-6). If this view be accepted, the poem will belong to a time when the Assyrian king, having received tribute from Ahaz of Judah and raised the siege of Jerusalem, had lifted his arm for a blow against the confederates. He may perhaps have besieged Damascus and begun his march against the Northern Kingdom; and it may be that the army of Judah seized this opportunity for making a raid on Benjamin from the south to compensate itself for the devastation made by the allies.

**V. 8.** The alarum of invasion: Hosea bids them rally to meet the invader. Cf. Am. iii. 6. 'Cornet' is the curved *horn* of a cow or ram, used chiefly to give signals in battle (Ju. iii. 27; 2 S. ii. 28, xx. 1). The other instrument is a long straight *trumpet* of metal. The three places (for Beth-aven, see iv. 15) are mentioned because they are hill-towns, and therefore well adapted for signals of alarm. Their situation within a few miles of Jerusalem may be intended to suggest that an enemy from the North has almost reached the southern border and that Judah also is in danger. But Sellin's view, that it is an enemy from the South, viz. Judah, that Hosea has in mind, is probably correct. This is supported by the fact that in normal times Gibeah and Ramah belonged to Judah (1 K. xv. 16 ff.). *After thee, Benjamin* is the slogan of the tribe of Benjamin (see Burney's note on Ju. v. 14). It may mean either, 'Benjamin takes the lead; let the other tribes follow!' or, 'After thee, Benjamin (our ancestor); we (your descendants)

9 Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of rebuke : among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. 10 The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark : I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. 11 Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgement ; because he was content to walk after <sup>1</sup>the

<sup>1</sup> The Sept. and Syriac have, *vanity*.

follow !' Translate, *raise the battle-cry in Beth-aven, 'After thee, Benjamin'*.

9. The rally of the tribes is all in vain ; for *in the day of decision Ephraim becomes a desolation*. This judgement which Jahveh makes known *against Israel's tribes* is one that will surely be fulfilled.

10. *The princes of Judah*. Hosea leaves the priests and turns to the court. Exception is taken by most critics to the presence of 'Judah' here and in *vv. 12-14* : it is held that a post-exilic editor has substituted 'Judah' for 'Israel' in order to involve the Southern Kingdom in Ephraim's guilt. But there is no difficulty in supposing that the oracles of *vv. 8-15* include Judah, unless we assume that Hosea's mouth was sealed on that topic. 'The general sense of the section is that it will be vain for Ephraim and Judah to have recourse, as they had done on former occasions, to the king of Assyria ; it will not be in his power to remedy the ills which afflict them' (Cannon, *Expositor*, March 1924). Cf. *Mi. i. 2-9*.

The statement that Judah's nobles were like *removers of landmarks* is confirmed by her own contemporary prophets (*Is. v. 8 ; Mi. ii. 2*). Hence it seems unnecessary to suppose that this is a proverbial phrase for the lowest wickedness. As land-grabbers they were no better than those sacrilegious people who removed their neighbours' landmarks (*Dt. xix. 14 ; Prov. xxii. 28*) and deserved the same fate.

11. If the text is correct, render, *Ephraim is oppressed, crushed as to his right*. The same two passive participles are found together in *Dt. xxviii. 33*, but the context requires us to read both as active (so LXX and most moderns) : *Ephraim oppresses and crushes right*. Ephraim is a sinner no less than Judah. Both have failed to show *hesedh*.

*content to walk after the command*. 'Content' is a weak rendering ; the meaning is rather, *determined*. 'The command' makes no sense. LXX (also Syr.) reads *vanity (shāw' for šāw)*, i.e. idols (*Ps. xxxi. 6 ; Jer. xviii. 15*). This is almost certainly correct. Render, *because he had wilfully gone after vanity*. Duhm's suggestion, *šārō*, his (Judah's) adversary, the Syrian, is ingenious ; cf. E. Meyer's reading, *zār*, a stranger.



command. 12 <sup>1</sup>Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to <sup>2</sup>king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound. 14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. 15 I will go and return to my place, till they <sup>3</sup>acknowledge their

<sup>1</sup> Or, *And I was.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *a king that should contend.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *have borne their guilt.*

12. *Therefore am I.* Rather, *And it is I who am like a moth . . . like rottenness.* Jahveh Himself is bringing on the approaching calamity. Slowly, but surely, both Israel and Judah will decay; cf. Job xiii. 28.

13. *sickness.* For *sickness* and *sore* as figures to describe the state of the body politic, see Is. i. 5-6, iii. 7; cf. Hos. vi. 1, vii. 1.

*went Ephraim to Assyria, and [Judah] sent to king Jareb.* Many scholars insert 'Israel' here to complete the parallelism, but 'Judah' would be more appropriate to the context. There have been many conjectures as to the meaning of *king Jareb*, and many emendations have been suggested. G. A. Smith thinks it is a nickname, *King Pick-Quarrel*. Others would read (involving no change of letters) *malkī rābh, the Great King*. In either case the reference would be to some Assyrian monarch (such as Tiglath-Pileser III). The first half of the verse probably refers to the tribute sent by Menahem to Tiglath-Pileser in 738, and the second to that sent by Ahaz, who followed the Northern king's example at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion. *But*, says Jahveh, *he (emphatic) cannot heal you, nor relieve you of your sore.* It is not only wicked, but also useless, to seek an alliance with another nation. Cf. vii. 11 ff., viii. 9, x. 3 f., xii. 1, xiv. 3; also Is. vii, viii, xxxi.

14. *For I will be . . .* This verse states the reason why Assyria cannot help: the affliction is sent by Jahveh. *I Myself am like a roaring lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah*—the strongest possible figure of destruction—*I, I do rend and go My way, carry off (the prey), with none to rescue.* Cf. xiii. 7; Is. v. 29, xxxi. 4.

V. 15—VI. 3. Jahveh withdraws Himself from His people till they feel their guilt and return to Him. They do return, with words of penitence on their lips. But is this repentance sincere or only superficial? Those who regard these verses as an addition by a later hand, designed to relieve the gloom of the preceding

offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me <sup>1</sup>earnestly.

**VI. 1** Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind

<sup>1</sup> Or, *earnestly, saying,*

verses, read the good resolutions of vi. 1-3 as a sincere expression of penitence; so also Battenwieser, who defends their Hoseanic character, but thinks that the prophet is addressing himself to those who survive the downfall. Most of those who ascribe these verses to Hosea regard the passage as a confession so shallow and so inadequate that Jahveh can do no other than reject it. This interpretation has the merit of connecting v. 15—vi. 2, not only with v. 14, but also with the three following verses, which would otherwise be left in the air. In v. 8-14 the punishment is predicted. v. 15 describes how the people will feel their guilt and in their affliction seek Jahveh. vi. 1-3 is their confession or prayer. But Jahveh, seeing how superficial their repentance is (v. 4) and always has been (v. 5), declares that He can accept nothing short of a change of heart. Only *hesedh* and *knowledge of God* can save them (v. 6).

As Harper has pointed out, v. 15—vi. 3 is a 'pair of soliloquies'; in the first, Jahveh turns away with the feeling that in their distress the people will seek Him; in the second, the people offer an assumed repentance, which they expect to be readily accepted. Welch suggests that the words which Hosea puts into the mouth of the people (vi. 1-3) are part of a temple-song which was used at one of the great festivals.

**15.** *to my place.* Jahveh soliloquizes. We are not to think of a lion returning to his den (v. 14), but of Jahveh 'hiding His face' (Ps. x. 11, xxx. 7, civ. 29) from His people and 'standing afar off' (Ps. x. 1, xxxviii. 11), viz. *in Heaven* (Is. xviii. 4; Ps. xiv. 2). Cf. Mi. i. 3 for the opposite of this. The expression indicates that He will not interfere with the nation (Jer. xiv. 8 f.; Ps. lxxx. 14) until the people *feel* (or *suffer the consequences of*) *their guilt*, when they will be only too ready to seek Him out. There is no need to change 'feel their guilt' into 'are confounded' (or 'startled').

**VI. 1.** *Come and let us return.* The people's soliloquy. 'Saying' should be read or understood (LXX, Syr., Tg., and R.V. *m*) at the beginning of the sentence. Along with this expression of repentance there goes the easy assurance that all will soon be well: *for He hath torn* (v. 14) *only that He may heal us, smitten that He may bind us up.* They profess to have discovered that Assyria could not heal them (v. 13); cf. vii. 1, xi. 3 for Jahveh as the true physician.

us up. 2 After two days will he revive us : on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know the LORD ; his going forth is sure as the morning : and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee ? O Judah, what

2. *After two days . . . on the third day.* Either, 'after a couple of days (or) on the third day', i.e. in two or three days, or 'after a couple of days' is parallel with 'on the third day'. In either case the meaning is that Jahveh will come to their help in a very short time. Cheyne reminds us that this verse contains the germ of the idea of a resurrection and is the basis of the allegory of the Dry Bones in Ez. xxxvii. 1-10 and of the national revival in Is. xxvi. 16-19. For the 'death' of Israel, which Sellin connects with the Adonis-myth, cf. Hos. xiii. 1, 14. 'To live before Him' = to live under His eye and protection ; cf. Gen. xvii. 18 ; Is. liii. 2 ; Jer. xxx. 20. The Targum, the Fathers, and the older expositors see in this verse a reference to a personal resurrection.

3. *let us know, let us follow on to know the LORD.* This mutual exhortation resumes that of v. 1. 'Follow on' (= pursue) is the word used in ii. 7 of Israel's pursuit of her 'lovers'. She now resolves to pursue the knowledge of Jahveh, because lack of this knowledge is the cause of her misery (iv. 1), but it is a hasty resolution which is not carried into effect.

*his going forth is sure as the morning.* That is, 'His going forth (out of His 'place' of v. 15) is as certain as the morning-grey'. This does not make good sense. Most scholars, therefore, adopt Giesebrecht's ingenious and convincing emendation, *ḵeshahārēnū khēn nimṣā'ēhū*, which is supported by LXX : *when we seek Him, then we shall find Him.* 'They are confident of success just as soon as they make the effort' (Harper).

*as the rain, as the latter rain.* Figurative of moral and spiritual refreshment. As the rains of winter and spring revive the land, so Jahveh will revive His people. The rain here corresponds in function to the wind of Ez. xxxvii. 9, and to the dew of Is. xxvi. 19 (cf. Hos. xiv. 5). Israel relies on the return of Jahveh's favour as the husbandman relies on the former and latter rains.

4-6. Jahveh's reply to Israel's prayer. He can make nothing of Ephraim and Judah ; their love for Him is evanescent, a mere phase which will soon pass. So it has always been. That is why He sent His prophets to warn them. He demands reality : a love and knowledge of Himself which shows itself in moral conduct.

4. *Render, What can I make of thee, Ephraim ?* The answer is 'Nothing ; because your love for Me is like the *morning cloud*, the *night-mist* which the hot sun quickly disperses'. The reference

shall I do unto thee? for your <sup>1</sup>goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away. 5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: <sup>2</sup>and thy judgements are *as* the light that goeth forth. 6 For I desire <sup>1</sup>mercy, and not sacrifice;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *kindness*.

<sup>2</sup> According to some ancient versions, *and my judgement goeth forth as the light*.

is to 'one of those dense masses of night-vapour, which the westerly winds of summer bear from the Mediterranean Sea, and which more than supply the place of dew' (Cheyne). A simile of transitoriness; cf. xiii. 3; Is. xlv. 22; Job vii. 9.

5. *Therefore*. . . . That is, 'It is on account of this inconstancy, this superficial repentance, so often shown in the past, that I have sent My prophets to proclaim My judgements'. Israel is not likened to wood or stone which is being shaped, but to wood or stone which is being *hewn to pieces* through the agency of the prophets. Cf. Jer. xxiii. 29. For 'by the words of My mouth', cf. Ps. xlv. 3, 5; Is. xi. 4; Heb. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16. Hosea may have prophets like Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha in mind (1 S. xv. 33; 1 K. xviii. 40) when he uses these metaphors.

*thy judgements*. That is, those pronounced upon thee. But the sudden change of person is awkward. A better sense is given by LXX, Syr., and Tg. which read, *and My judgement goeth forth as the light*, i.e. as the lightning. This change only involves a different grouping of the letters, and is almost certainly correct. A further change of vowel-points in one word improves the parallelism: *and My judgement went forth as the lightning*. Welch takes *mishpātî* to mean 'My claim'. Jahveh has made His claim on His people clear: He hewed them by the prophets; He slew them by the words of His mouth; and His claim on them went forth like the light, plain for all to see.

6. *For I desire mercy . . . and the knowledge of God*. The message of the prophets in the past and the judgements they announced were intended to teach Israel that Jahveh demands reality in religion, and that message is now repeated. What He delights in is that love and knowledge of Himself which they alone have who do His will, rather than ceremonial and the outward observances of religion. Those who take the first part of this saying *au pied de la lettre*, and in the parallel clause render the preposition translated 'more than' as a negative, 'ignore the fondness of the Hebrew writers for such antithetic statements and, it may be added, apply a criterion to the language of the Old Testament which they never think of applying to the words of the New' (Welch, p. 129). Cf. Luke x. 20, xiv. 12, xxiii. 28.

'In all such forms of speech, what seems to be forbidden is not really prohibited, but shown to be very inferior to something else' (Plummer, *St. Matthew*, p. 140). It is a mistake to suppose that when Hosea announces Jahveh's intention of making an end of the impure worship of His people he is rejecting the cultus *per se*; for there are passages (e.g. iii. 4, v. 6, ix. 4 f.) in which he suggests that the absence of all worship is a penalty, even the supreme penalty.

The first part of this verse is twice quoted by our Lord (Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). In the former passage, He shows how the Pharisaic attitude of mind which shrinks from consorting with publicans and sinners is incompatible with the prophet's message of charity towards one's fellows. In the latter, He ascribes the condemnation of His disciples for a technical offence on the Sabbath to a perverted sentiment, which looks upon ceremonial observances as the whole of religion (Driver, *Sermons on O.T.*, pp. 229 ff.). Wellhausen contrasts this passage with 1 S. xv. 22, where obedience, and not love, is preferred to sacrifices. 'Here we get exactly the contribution which Hosea made to religion. Mere obedience is warmed into love. Samuel certainly did not preach mercy to Saul' (Horton). *Hesedh* is closely concerned with righteousness and justice (iv. 1, x. 12, xii. 6), but it is something deeper, more intimate, natural, and spontaneous than mere obedience to a Divine command or a code of laws, because it views everything from the standpoint of a loyal relationship to Jahveh and His family.

#### *Additional Note on Sacrifice in pre-Exilic Prophecy*

The attitude of the prophets towards animal sacrifices is one of the most debated questions amongst students of the O.T., but the evidence at our disposal is so meagre, and the conclusions drawn from it so contradictory, that it is difficult to give a satisfactory answer to it. The relevant passages are Am. v. 24 f., Hos. vi. 6, Is. i. 10-17, Mi. vi. 6-8, and Jer. vii. 22 f.

For the reasons given above, the present writer cannot accept the view that Hosea's pregnant saying, 'I desire *hesedh* and not sacrifice', is an absolute rejection of any form of cultus. Nor does he feel convinced that the censure passed by Isaiah on the sacrifices offered in his day implies a condemnation of all external acts of worship as a means of expressing sincere religious devotion. He finds it difficult to believe that the great prophet intended to abolish for all time the offering of sacrifice and incense and the observance of new moon and sabbath, or that the rhetorical question, 'Who hath required this at your hand, to trample My courts?', means anything more than that God does not want such worship as His people are giving Him., viz. formal service and practical disobedience (cf. 1 S. xv. 22). In the Micah passage (which may be a later addition) sacrifices

seem not to be so much condemned as subordinated to the moral and spiritual condition of those who offer them. The negative answer involved in the questions of *vv.* 6 f. need not imply that the prophet thought of Jahveh as displeased with sacrifices *per se*. It may be that what he repudiates is the thought that sacrifice is *all* that Jahveh requires. He then (*v.* 8) proclaims the essential elements of true religion, and, *detaching them from all else*, sets them in clear relief. The passage as a whole suggests sympathy and tenderness towards an inquirer who is anxious to know how best to please God.

Those who maintain that the eighth-century prophets reject sacrifice as an institution, and not merely sacrifice as offered by a people that had lost the true knowledge of God, rely mainly on Am. v. 24 f. and Jer. vii. 22 f. It is true that at first sight both passages seem to imply that the early religion of Israel was of a non-sacrificial character, and that therefore the whole sacrificial system was outside the revelation on which the covenant with Jahveh was based. But each is patient of more than one interpretation. Thus, to take Amos first, Harper translates the question as follows: 'Was it *only* sacrifices and offerings that ye brought Me in the wilderness?' The answer is, 'No, ye brought Me more than sacrifices, true worship of the heart and righteousness, public and private'. This rendering 'places the emphasis in the proper place and does not compel Amos to say that there were no sacrifices or offerings in the wilderness'.<sup>1</sup> Another suggestion is that Amos is contending that sacrifices are not essential to religion, because as a matter of fact during the wandering in the wilderness the Israelites were unable to offer them; cf. Jos. v. 2-12, which states that sacrificial worship could not be practised until the people came to Jahveh's land. Not being circumcised, the people were unclean, and the wilderness itself, with the exception of Mt. Sinai and perhaps Kadesh-Barnea, was as Damascus, Egypt, or Assyria (2 K. v. 17; Ex. v. 3; Hos. ix. 3 f.). Sacrifice must, therefore, wait until the Israelites arrived at 'holy' places like Bethel, Gilgal, and Shechem. According to this view, Amos does not refer to a period when sacrifices were not contemplated, but to a period when, owing to circumstances, they could not be offered.<sup>2</sup> If, during the forty years of wandering, a period during which Israel received many tokens of God's care and favour, sacrifices were not offered, at any rate normally, these forms of religion on which the people lay so much stress and upon which they concentrate all their attention, cannot be the most essential elements of religious service; still less can they be accepted by Jahveh as a substitute for social righteousness and moral conduct. Such may be the meaning of Amos v. 24 f.

Jeremiah's statement, as translated in R.V., 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices', clearly

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<sup>1</sup> So also G. M. P. Smith (quoted in *The People and the Book*, p. 209): 'A religion without ritual would have been practically inconceivable to the Hebrew mind . . . Amos was not consistently hostile to ritual. It is safer to assume that he is protesting not against ritual *per se*, but against making ritual do service for character and right conduct.'

<sup>2</sup> See *New Commentary*, p. 423; also Cripps, *Amos*, pp. 338 ff.

means that sacrifice was not ordained by Jahveh. If so, it is strange that he should have made it in view of the existence in his day of passages like Ex. xxiii. 14-19 (JE) and Dt. xii. 5 ff., 13; xv. 19 ff.; xvi. 2, 5 f.; xvii. 1, which attribute sacrifices to the Divine command. We are compelled to assume either that he did not know the books or that he did not recognize their authority. It may be that he was engaged in an attack either on the teaching of Deuteronomy (Skinner) or on a document (according to Kennett, the document J) which claimed that in the wilderness Jahveh had recognized sacrifice (Ex. xxxiv. 19-26). But it is by no means certain that the translation of our English version is the correct one. Binns (*West. Comm.*, p. 76) has given an alternative rendering of 'al *d'bh*ar which is grammatically possible, viz. *for the sake of* or *on account of* instead of 'concerning'. If this is adopted, the meaning will be that Jahveh did not reveal Himself to the people in order to obtain their sacrifices, and the *vv.* 21 f. may be paraphrased thus: 'Eat the flesh yourselves: God does not want it' (cf. Ps. l. 12 f.). 'God wanted the hearts of His people, not their offerings. This is the reality underlying all sacrifice, and where the thing symbolized is lacking, the symbol itself is but a mockery and intrinsically valueless. That,' says the writer, 'it seems to me, was Jeremiah's meaning in this passage; he was not denying the cherished belief of the people that the sacrificial system was of Divine origin, but he was trying to restore to them a worthy notion of the meaning of that system.' It should be remembered in this connexion that both Jeremiah and Hosea, writing on the eve of a national disaster which would make sacrificial worship impossible, would naturally wish to bring into prominence the realities of which the sacrifices were the symbols.

It seems to the present writer that while it must be admitted that none of the prophets saw in the sacrifices as they knew them a worthy expression of religious worship, and each of them would have said that sacrifices were not in the last resort essential to true religion, the case for their condemnation of any sort of cultus has not been proved. It may fairly be argued that in all these passages it is not so much the particular form of the people's worship which they condemn, as their false ideas about God. The prophets speak with abhorrence of some practices connected with the cultus (e.g. Hos. iv. 13 f.), they say that God has no need of sacrificial gifts and that material oblations do not avail to change His mind, but it is nowhere stated that sacrifice is wrong in itself, and it is probable that no prophet (with the possible exception of Jeremiah) wished to abolish it for all time.<sup>1</sup> In view of the widespread use of sacrifice in pre-Mosaic times and during the centuries before the age of the prophets, and in view of the fact that sacrifice was the only method yet known to humanity of entering into communion with the deity, it is difficult to believe that Amos or any other pre-exilic prophet could have dreamed of a period in the history of Israel when no sacrifices were offered or at least

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eerdmans (quoted in *The People and the Book*, p. 209): 'the emphasis laid by the prophets on the ethical will of God by no means involves that they were representatives of an exclusively ethical religion. The cult had its significance for the prophets also (Hos. iii. 4, viii. 12).'

and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. 7 But they <sup>1</sup>like <sup>2</sup>Adam have transgressed the covenant: there

<sup>1</sup> Or, *are as men that have transgressed a covenant.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *men.*

contemplated. Moreover, we have to account for a fact which it would be difficult to account for if the great prophets had denounced sacrifice as an institution: the fact that sacrificial worship came to a new position and a previously unknown power after the prophets had done their work (Welch, p. 271).

### VI. 7—VII. 2. No 'Hesedh' or Knowledge of Jahveh

This section illustrates Hosea's interest in the history of his people and his peculiar way of looking at it. Everything which he condemns seems to be the inevitable consequence of something that happened in the past, each town to be defiled with a sin from which it is unable to free itself: the inhabitants may change, but the town remains the same and commits the same sin. As the ideal future is to include a return to the early youth of the nation, so the present seems to be a mirror of the past. Accordingly, he is inclined to use the imperfect tense or the active participle in speaking of ancient events, as if those events were still taking place. Hence, as Sellin reminds us, it is sometimes difficult to say whether the reference is to the prophet's own time or to the old traditions with which his mind is stored.

It is clear that in these verses Hosea is thinking of the sinful deeds with which some of the principal towns of Israel have been branded from ancient times down to his own day. All the old crimes remain unforgotten and await expiation, no less than the crimes of the present. There are no definite indications of date, but, since the poem carries on the theme of v. 5—vi. 6—lack of piety and knowledge of Jahveh—it may perhaps be assigned to the reign of Pekah.

The text is corrupt, and it is impossible to say exactly what the prophet wrote; but the general sense is sufficiently clear, viz. that the conduct of Israel (and especially of the priests) is in direct opposition to Jahveh's requirements, *hesedh* and the knowledge of God, and that Israel's sins are beyond remedy. Hosea begins by pointing out places where the sins have been and are being committed: Adam (?), Gilead, Shechem, and Beth-el (?).

7. *like Adam.* This has been taken to mean: (a) like Adam in Paradise who broke the covenant under which he was tacitly placed (Tg., Talmud, and Vulg.); (b) like ordinary men (Ps. lxxiii. 5, lxxxii. 7), i.e. men less privileged than they; or (c) like men who have transgressed the covenant (LXX and Kimchi), 'ādḥām being collective and the relative understood. But a place-name seems to be required to suit 'there' in the next clause and to correspond to the localization of Israel's sin in the next verse.

Read, therefore, *in Adam* (Jos. iii. 16; 1 K. vii. 46). This was near a ford of the Jordan between Succoth on the east and



have they dealt treacherously against me. 8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, it is stained with blood. 9 <sup>1</sup>And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem: yea, they have committed

<sup>1</sup> Or, *And as robbers lying in wait, so &c.*

Zarethan on the west of the river and on the direct route to Gilead.

*there.* If we read 'Adam' as the name of a place, 'there' will refer to it; otherwise it will refer to the places which were the scenes of Israel's crimes, especially those mentioned in the following verses. 'Dealt treacherously', i.e. played Me false; cf. v. 7; Jer. iii. 20, v. 11, &c. The word is used of a breach of the marriage-contract.

8. Gilead, elsewhere a district, is here a city, probably the one mentioned in Ju. x. 17; but we cannot say whether it is Ramoth-Gilead, Jabesh-Gilead, or Mizpah, capital of Gilead (v. 1). There may be an error in the text. Lucian's recension of LXX has 'Gilgal'. It is *a city of mischief-workers, foot-tracked with blood.*

9. The general sense of the verse is that even the priests form into bands to waylay and murder travellers, but translation is difficult owing to the state of the text. As the text stands, a literal rendering would be: 'as the lying in wait for a man of marauding-bands' (or, treating 'man' and 'marauding-bands' as in apposition, 'as the lying in wait of marauding-bands') 'is the gang of priests; they murder on the way to Shechem, yea, they do enormity'. This requires us to suppose that the words represented by 'they murder' and 'the way' have been accidentally transposed. Following the LXX, some would read: 'as marauding-bands lie in wait for a man, the priests hide themselves on the road, they murder at Shechem'. This only involves a slight change, and makes a good parallel. G. A. Smith changes one letter in the first word and renders, 'assassins, marauders, a pack of priests, on the way to Shechem they murder'. Sellin reads 'in the strength of' for 'as the lying in wait of' and points 'the way' as a verb and translates, 'in the strength of robbers the band of priests walked on'.

Shechem (the modern Nablus) was both a city of priests and a city of refuge (Jos. xx. 7, xxi. 21), and therefore a place of pilgrimage. It lay on the road from Samaria and the North to Bethel. It was also 'of all the centres on the Western Range most open to approach from Eastern Palestine, by the fords of Jordan only eighteen miles away, and thus "the way to Shechem" comes in here naturally after "Gilead" in the preceding verse' (G. A. Smith). In the days of Abimelech Shechem

lewdness. 10 In the house of Israel I have seen an horrible thing: there whoredom is *found* in Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11 Also, O Judah, there is an harvest appointed for thee, when I bring again the captivity of my people.

VII. 1 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood: and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers <sup>1</sup>spoileth without. 2 And they consider

<sup>1</sup> Or, *maketh a raid*.

was destroyed as a punishment for the highway robberies of its inhabitants (Ju. ix. 25, 45). Render 'lewdness' by *enormity*. In some contexts the word means 'unchastity'.

10. *In the house of Israel*. Although the text makes good sense, many scholars read in *Beth-el*, owing to x. 15, Am. v. 6, and 'there' in the next line. If the text is retained, 'there' will refer generally to 'every high hill, each idol-chapel, each field-altar, which they have multiplied to their idols . . . every spot of the Lord's land which they have defiled by their sin' (Pusey). The *horrible thing* (Jer. v. 30, xxiii. 14) is defined as *whoredom*, literal (iv. 14) as well as spiritual, because there is a close connexion between the two.

11. *Also, O Judah*. Another side-glance at the sister kingdom, rejected by most scholars, but on insufficient grounds (see pp. xii, 96 f.). For 'harvest' as a figure of judgement, cf. Jo. iv. 13; Jer. li. 33. The idea is thoroughly Hoseanic; for three times more *qāsîr* is used of a moral harvest, viz. viii. 7, x. 12-13.

*when I bring again the captivity of my people*. If these words belong to this verse, the meaning is that the punishment of Judah is a stage in that golden future when Israel is brought back from exile, or when her fortunes reach the turning-point. Cf. Am. ix. 14. But it is probable that this line belongs to the beginning of the next verse, q.v.

VII. 1. *When I would heal Israel*. Cf. v. 13, xi. 3; Jer. xvii. 14. This clause is parallel to *When I would turn the fortunes of My people*, the concluding words of v. 11. The verse continues: *then shall be laid bare Ephraim's iniquity and Samaria's evil deeds, how they practise fraud, and the thief cometh in, a marauding-band making raids without*. Cf. Jer. vi. 13, viii. 10. Whatever methods of healing God might use, whether the teaching of His prophets or His own fatherly chastisements, they would not hearken, but went on still more obstinately in their evil course. The remedy served only to lay open the extent and malignity of the disease, and to show that there was worse in it than at first appeared (Pusey). Cf. Ro. vii. 9.

2. *And they consider not in their hearts*. Literally, *they say not*

not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face. 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness,

to their heart, i.e. to their conscience. 'Remember' = *record*, or *register* (G. A. Smith), i.e. remember for punishment; cf. viii. 13, ix. 9; Jer. xiv. 10, xlv. 21.

*now*. Hosea's abrupt 'now' announcing judgement (cf. v. 7). *Their doings have surrounded them* (i.e. as witnesses to their crimes, or so as to entangle them); *they have come to My notice* (lit. 'before My face'). Sellin would read 'their doings have encompassed Me' (cf. xi. 12), a good parallel to the latter half of the verse. In either case the suggestion is that God has now no alternative but to punish, so callous and indifferent have His people become.

There now follows a series of remarkable passages which, though rendered difficult by a disordered text and obscure allusions, give us a vivid impression of a nation going to perdition with the active help of its leaders, partly through adultery and drink, partly through treachery, conspiracy, and assassination at court, and partly through its foolish policy of seeking foreign help instead of amending its own domestic affairs and trusting in Jahveh. For such a nation ruin is in store and the scorn of its allies. Already the trump of judgement has sounded.

### VII. 3-7. *Wickedness and Conspiracy at the Court*

This short section is unusually difficult, but through the confusion we can trace the outlines: 'a king surrounded by loose, unscrupulous nobles; adultery, drunkenness, conspiracies, assassinations; every man striking for himself; none appealing in truth to God' (G. A. Smith).

Sellin places it at the beginning of the reign of Pekah, after the murder of three kings, Zechariah, Shallum, and Pekahiah. Speaking under the immediate influence of these assassinations, Hosea finds the cause of them all in the godlessness of the people and the irreligiosity of the kings themselves.

3. *They make the king glad*. If the text is correct, the meaning is that the court takes a positive delight in the wickedness of the people. When schemes of evil are brought forward, they are only too ready to join in. This makes good sense (cf. Ro. i. 32), but many prefer to follow Wellhausen, who transposes two letters and reads, *in their wickedness they anoint kings* (LXX has plural), the allusion being to the way in which phantom-kings are set up one after another by parties in the state. Cf. viii. 4, 10. 'King and princes' is Hosea's regular description of the government of his day; cf. iii. 4, viii. 10, xiii. 10.

and the princes with their lies. 4 They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir *the fire*, from the kneading of the dough until it be leavened. 5 On the day of our king the princes <sup>1</sup>made <sup>2</sup>themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners. 6 For they have <sup>3</sup>made ready their heart like an

<sup>1</sup> According to many ancient versions, *began to be heated with wine.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *him.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *brought near.*

4. *adulterers.* The reference here may be to political intrigue, and not to immorality or the cultus. Cf. Jer. ix. 2 for a similar description of the condition of Israel. But whether the word is to be taken literally or not, it suggests the violence of the passion with which the people and the court are inflamed. So too does the latter half of the verse.

*as an oven.* . . . As the text stands, the translation can only be: 'as an oven kindled by the baker, as a stirrer he rests from kneading the dough until it is leavened.' Oort's emendation (*bō'ēr hēm 'ōphēhū*) involves a minimum of alterations: *like a glowing oven are they*, (whose) *baker ceaseth to stir* (the fire) *from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.* This gets rid of a grammatical difficulty, a fem. ptc. with a masc. noun.

The thought seems to be that as the baker only leaves the fire to smoulder while the dough is being kneaded and leavened, so the rulers and people only rest from inflaming their passions till they regain their strength for the next piece of wickedness. Some scholars attach 'they are all adulterers' to v. 3 and reject the rest of this verse as a gloss on v. 6. Others would treat only 'he ceaseth . . . leavened' as a gloss. Gordon, who compares this passage with Carlyle's description of the Reign of Terror in Paris, regards the whole of this verse as a prosaic explanation intruded into the text, and reads: *All this is taken from* (the analogy of) *bakers. They are like a burning oven, when the baker . . .*

5. *On the day of our king.* That is, the king's birthday or coronation day, or some festal day appointed by the king. The prophet owns the king—he is *our king*—and he does not blame him for keeping the day, but for the way in which it was kept (Pusey). Some would treat the verb as causative, and either render 'day' as = 'by day' or change it to 'they': *they* (or *by day they*) *made our king sick, and our princes with fever from wine.* But this is unnecessary, as the king's share in the carousal is mentioned in the last line of the verse: *he stretched out his hand to mockers* (scorners or loose fellows). Cf. Ex. xxiii. 1; Prov. xx. 1.

6. The Hebrew, which is, 'for they bring near like an oven their heart in their intrigue', suggests that they come to the king's feast as friends while they are really traitors at heart, and that,

oven, whiles they lie in wait: <sup>1</sup> their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. 7 They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me. 8 Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples;

<sup>1</sup> According to some ancient versions, *their anger*.

when their plans are matured, they carry out their evil design. The baker with his oven would be a figure of their passion which slumbers all night, but in the morning breaks out in deeds of violence. But the text is by no means satisfactory. Following a suggestion of LXX, Harper reads: *for like an oven their hearts burn with their intriguing*. Similarly G. A. Smith: *yea, they have fired like an oven their heart with their intrigues*. Schorr's emendation, involving two slight changes, is the most attractive: *for their inward part is like an oven, their heart burneth in them*.

In the next line 'baker' seems out of place. Most scholars, following Syr. and Tg., punctuate the word differently and read *their anger*, i.e. the anger of the conspirators against those who are to be their victims.

7. The result of these hot passions and ambitions is revolutions in which kings are the victims. The tenses imply a description of a common occurrence, and point to the period of anarchy after the death of Jeroboam II (2 K. xv), when four regicides are recorded. The passage is not earlier than the reign of Menahem, the murderer of Shallum, who in turn assassinated Zechariah. In spite of all this, no one among the people calls upon Jahveh for help; cf. vii. 9, 10, 14, 16.

## VII. 8-16. *Ephraim's Faithless Foreign Policy*

The prophet now passes from Ephraim's internal anarchy to her external relations, and denounces her faithless foreign policy and her ingratitude to Jahveh. This section would seem to belong either to the reign of Pekah, during which Egypt's aid was sought for the great coalition against Assyria, or to that of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, when the whole kingdom was vacillating between the two great powers. Verse 9 is in favour of the later date.

8. *mixeth himself . . . a cake not turned*. The indictment opens with a double epigram, the figures being again taken from the bakehouse (cf. vv. 4 and 6). The verb in the first line is not found elsewhere in its present reflexive form, but the root means to 'pour out' or 'mingle', and it is used in Ex. xxix. 2 and in Phoenician of the mixing of oil with the sacrificial flour. The thought seems to be that, when political and commercial relations were opened

Ephraim is a cake not turned. 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are <sup>1</sup> here and there upon him, and he knoweth *it* not. 10 And the <sup>2</sup> pride of Israel doth testify to his face: yet they have not returned unto the LORD their God, nor sought him, for all this. 11 And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *sprinkled*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *excellency*.

with the outside world, Israel accepted foreign customs, fashions, and ideas, with the result that her moral strength was undermined. Ephraim has become like a cake that is full of heathen ingredients and *unturnd*, i.e. scorched on one side and so unfit to be eaten. The cake referred to is the flat, round cake of the East which is baked on hot stones (cf. 1 K. xix. 6). The point of the simile is either that the country is half ruined by its association with heathen nations or (more probably) that the weakness of the national character, with its fickleness, inconsistencies, and lack of direction (cf. v. 11), is such that it can only be likened to a half-baked scone. See G. A. Smith, pp. 290-5, for a modern application.

9. *Strangers*. The reference is probably to the tribute paid by Menahem (2 K. xv. 19 f.) and to the territory taken from Pekah (2 K. xv. 29), but it may include also the other nations with whom Israel had recently come into contact, Syria (2 K. viii. 12, x. 32 f., xiii. 3, 7), Philistia (Is. ix. 12), and Egypt.

*gray hairs*. Like the disease of v. 13, this is a figure of decrepitude and approaching death. Cf. the Arabic proverb quoted by Pusey: 'thy grey hairs are thy passing bell.' The grey hairs *sprinkled upon him* are a sign of premature old age.

*and he knoweth it not*. The decadence which follows from intercourse with foreign nations has crept upon Israel unobserved. He does not notice that he is tottering to his grave. *Deus quos vult perdere, dementat prius*.

10. *the pride of Israel*. See v. 5. The reference is to the arrogance which blinds the nation to the fate which is rapidly approaching; cf. Is. ix. 9 f.

*for all this*. In spite of all the above-mentioned signs of decay, Israel does not return to Jahveh, its God. For the expression, cf. Is. ix. 12, 17, 21.

Some scholars omit this verse on the ground that the first line is a repetition of v. 5 and that the rest is not poetry, but prose. The section would, however, be poorer without it.

11. *a silly dove*. Render, *Ephraim hath become like a silly, senseless* (lit. 'without heart'; cf. iv. 11) *dove: to Egypt they call, to Assyria they go*. As the dove, proverbially simple, flies from the

<sup>1</sup> understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria. 12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven: I will chastise them, <sup>2</sup> as their congregation hath heard. 13 Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *heart*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *when the report cometh to their congregation*.

pursuing hawk into the fowler's net, or, having lost its nerve, flutters aimlessly hither and thither, so Israel seeks refuge now in Assyria, now in Egypt; cf. v. 13, ix. 3, xii. 1. This is probably to be understood as an allusion to the foreign policy of Israel, controlled now by the pro-Egyptian, now by the pro-Assyrian, party—a policy of hesitation and indecision, of reliance on 'balance of power', rather than on Jahveh—and not to certain historical events (e.g. 2 K. xv. 19, xvii. 3).

12. *When they shall go*. Rather, *As soon as they go*, i.e. as soon as they seek the help of Egypt or Assyria, *I will spread My net over them; as birds of the heavens I will bring them down*. Jahveh's net (Job xix. 6; Ez. xii. 13, xvii. 20, xix. 8, xxxii. 3) means captivity, and 'I will bring them down' (i.e. by placing a bait) is a poetic parallel to 'I will spread My net over them'. Sellin would read: 'As often as they go to Assyria', supposing that 'Ashshūr (Assyria) has dropped out accidentally after *ka'asher* ('as often as').

*as their congregation hath heard*. The Heb., *as the hearing of* (or *the message to*) *their congregation*, can only mean, *as has been publicly proclaimed* (i.e. by My prophets), or, *according to the report concerning their congregation* (i.e. the pro-Assyrian or the pro-Egyptian party). But both interpretations are somewhat forced. LXX has 'in the hearing of their affliction', which suggests to G. A. Smith and Harper (following Gardner) 'by the fulness of their affliction'. But this involves changes in four of the letters. Marti reads 'because of their wickedness'. Sellin inserts one letter, divides the words differently, and proposes: 'I will take them away as moth(s) from their swarm.' As none of these emendations is convincing, it is perhaps better to leave this line out as hopelessly corrupt.

13-16. 'A Woe against a Baal-worshipping people' (Sellin) for their unfaithfulness and ingratitude to Jahveh. The only 'Woe' in Hosea; contrast Amos and Isaiah.

13. *wandered*. The same word is used in Prov. xxvii. 8; Is. xvi. 2 of a bird wandering away from its nest. Anxiety to get help from Egypt or Assyria is flight from Jahveh; nay more, it is *revolt* (not 'trespass') against Him, the breaking of a bond which united them to Him.

Some take the second half of the verse as an indignant question:

them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me. 14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: <sup>1</sup>they assemble themselves for corn and wine, they rebel against me. 15 Though I have <sup>2</sup>taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. 16 They return, but not to *him that is on high*; they

<sup>1</sup> According to some ancient authorities, *they cut themselves*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *chastened* them.

*And shall I ransom them, when they have spoken lies about Me?* But it is better to interpret the sentence as meaning, *And I would* (if I possibly could) *ransom them*, but (they have rendered this impossible because) *they have spoken lies about Me*. Not knowing Jahveh as they ought to have done, they misunderstand and misrepresent Him (cf. Jer. v. 12), falsely supposing that He cannot help them, unless they worship Him as Baal.

14. *with their heart*. There is no real penitence: the cry which they utter is not honest and sincere, but merely a continual howling because their corn and new wine have gone. It is 'the beast-like cry of the animal for food, and not the true cry of the soul for God' (Harper). Cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 2, cxix. 10; Is. i. 15, xxix. 13; Matt. vi. 6 ff.; also Is. xxiv. 11.

*howl upon their beds*. This must mean that they howl for material blessings as they recline upon divans, eating the sacrificial meal. As this is most unlikely, recourse is had to emendations, the best of which is Gardner's 'beside their altars'. Melville Scott reads *maskiyyōthām*, 'their images' (Nu. xxxiii. 52). But Sellin's rendering, *on their prayer-places*, makes a way out of the difficulty. With Hoonacker he supposes that the word translated 'beds' means here 'places (near the altars) where men prostrate themselves in prayer', as in 2 S. xii. 16, 21; Ps. iv. 4, cxlix. 5.

*assemble themselves*. Read with LXX, Syr., and some Heb. MSS.: *cut themselves*, i.e. to make their prayers more effective. Cf. with this verse the scene in 1 K. xviii. 28; also Jer. xvi. 6, xli. 5.

*they rebel against Me*. This refers to the 'howling' and 'gashing' in particular, and generally to the way in which they reject the help of Jahveh and run after the Baals. Cf. iv. 16, xi. 2.

15. Israel's ingratitude for all that Jahveh has done for them. *Although it was I who trained (them), strengthened their arm, yet against Me they plan* (nothing-but) *wickedness*. The reference may be to Jeroboam's military successes (2 K. xiv. 23-8) in recent times, or to incidents such as Ex. xvii. 8-13 and the conquest of Canaan generally: cf. Ps. xviii. 32-50; Am. ii. 9 f. Some omit 'I trained' with LXX.

16. *They return, but not to him that is on high*. 'To him that is



are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

VIII. 1 <sup>1</sup>Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle *he cometh* against the house of the LORD: because they have

<sup>1</sup> Or, *The trumpet to thy mouth! As an eagle against the house of the LORD!* on high' is represented in the Hebrew by the preposition 'al. If the text is correct, the preposition reverts (as prepositions occasionally do) to its original use as a substantive, and = 'to that which is above'; cf. xi. 7. Render, *they turn, but not upwards*. Having reached a turning-point in their history, they go still farther away from Jahveh. LXX reads 'al lō' instead of lō' 'al: 'they turn to that which is nothing', i.e. an idol. This suggests to Marti and others the reading, *they turn to Baal* (so also xi. 7).

*a deceitful bow.* That is, a bow which causes the arrow to miss its mark; cf. Ps. lxxviii. 57. Israel is like a bow which is expected to shoot in one direction, but actually shoots in another. Harper compares this simile with that of the vineyard which was expected to yield good grapes, but actually yielded wild grapes (Is. v. 1-7).

*their princes shall fall.* Because the nobles are the main cause of all Israel's troubles. Upon them especially will the sword of Assyria fall. The word translated 'rage' means *insolence* or *defiance*, and the reference is either to the 'lies' and 'wickedness' of vv. 13, 15, directed against Jahveh, or to the attitude of the leaders of the pro-Egyptian party (cf. Is. xxx).

*this shall be their derision.* This = their falling by the sword. The Egyptians, their old enemies, upon whom they relied for help against Assyria, will not only fail them (cf. Is. xxx. 3, 5), but take a malicious delight in their downfall; cf. Ex. xxxii. 12, Dt. ix. 28.

### VIII. 1-3. *The Horn of Judgement*

Amidst all the confusion of internal anarchy and external relations, one clear note sounds, the trump of doom. The enemy is about to attack, and appeals to Jahveh will be in vain.

1. The prophet is commissioned to sound the alarm; cf. v. 8 ff., Am. iii. 6, Jer. vi. 1, Ez. xxxiii. 3-6, 1 Cor. xiv. 8. The original is terse, abrupt, and hurried as befits the occasion: *To thy mouth* (lit. palate) *the horn!* *As a vulture* (the foe will swoop) *upon Jahveh's house.* For *horn* (not 'trumpet'), see note on v. 8. The eagle, here and elsewhere, is the griffon-vulture, bald on the top of its head (Mi. i. 16), whose fondness for carrion is mentioned in Job xxxix. 30, Prov. xxx. 17, Matt. xxiv. 28, and whose swiftness is referred to in Dt. xxviii. 49, 2 S. i. 23, Jer. xlix. 22. The

transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.  
 2 They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee.  
 3 Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him. 4 They have set up kings, but not by me;

Assyrian will come with the swiftness of an eagle and swoop down upon Jahveh's house, i.e. the land of Palestine, as in ix. 15 (cf. ix. 3). It is worth noting in this connexion that this bird of prey appears frequently in Assyrian inscriptions, that Isaiah alludes to the swiftness of the Assyrian armies (v. 26-30), and that Nebuchadnezzar is called an 'eagle' in Jer. xlix. 22, Ez. xvii. 3; also that *bit Humri* (house of Omri) is the Assyrian name for the land of Northern Israel. Harper and G. A. Smith read 'for an eagle (comes down upon) the house of Jahveh'. Sellin (changing one letter) reads 'as a watchman over Jahveh's house' (cf. Jer. iv. 16, vi. 17).

*my law.* See notes on iv. 6, viii. 12. This half of the verse, which gives a reason for Jahveh's judgement, is rejected by Harper as a later interpolation.

2. *They shall cry.* The words are rough and broken: an example of too rapid speech: *To Me they will cry, My God—we know Thee—Israel.* It is a brief résumé of the prayer in vi. 1-3 and just as insincere. *To Me* is in contrast with those to whom they have turned of late (vii. 8-16). When disaster is upon them they cry to Jahveh (cf. v. 15, vi. 1 ff.), and claim His help on the ground of their knowledge of Him and their relationship with Him. *My God* is the cry of each individual in the nation, but it passes abruptly into the cry of the nation as a whole: *we know Thee—Israel* (Thy people). 'Just the plea which our Lord says He will reject (Matt. vii. 23)' (Horton).

3. Jahveh's reply is forcefully abrupt, as often in Hosea: *Israel hath rejected with loathing the Good—let the foe pursue him.* 'The good' is everything for which Jahveh stands . . . as well as Jahveh Himself (Harper). Cf. Am. v. 4, 6, 14, where to seek good = to seek Jahveh. With such a people, who call good evil and evil good, nothing can be done. The invasion must take its course.

### VIII. 4-14. *Their Kings and Idols are the Causes of Israel's Downfall*

Jahveh rejects Israel's man-made rulers and idols, his foreign policy and sinful worship. For these things and for his reliance on fortified cities he shall be swallowed up among the nations.

4. *Kings, but not by me.* See vii. 3, 5, 7, 16, viii. 10, 2 K. xv, and p. xxiv. This self-willed choice of dynasties was made with-

<sup>1</sup> they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. 5 He hast cast off thy calf, O Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? 6 For from Israel is even this; the workman

<sup>1</sup> Or, *they have removed them.*

out Jahveh's *sanction* ('I knew it not') and *approval* ('not from Me'). 'They have made princes' may be merely a poetic parallel to 'they have made kings', or the reference may be to the subordinate rulers, who in an Oriental state were often of the blood royal. It is tempting to follow Ibn Ezra and read 'they made princes' as if it meant 'they removed them'.

*idols.* Hosea correlates two facts in this one verse, viz. the kings made by men and the gods also made by men. Hosea was the first prophet to denounce the use of images in worship, and this passage contains the first denunciation of the bulls which Jeroboam set up (1 K. xii. 28 ff.). Elijah attacked the worship of a foreign deity, but neither he nor Elisha is recorded as having condemned the worship of Jahveh under the form of a steer; and it is a remarkable fact that, except in one doubtful passage (Am. v. 26), Amos has nothing to say about images or idols. 'Idol' is lit. *a thing made*, i.e. of the silver and gold which Jahveh Himself gave His people (ii. 8). It is made only to be *cut off*, i.e. by the invading armies. The inevitable result of its manufacture is here identified with the people's intention in making it: cf. Is. xxx. 1, Jer. vii. 18.

5. *He hath cast off.* Lit. *rejected with loathing*; cf. v. 3. The subject is Jahveh. Most scholars read, *I loathe*. LXX points the word as an imperative: 'Spurn thy calf, O Samaria'. 'Calf' is a contemptuous designation of the bull-images at Dan, Bethel, and elsewhere. Samaria is probably the land, and not the town; cf. vii. 1, viii. 6, x. 5-7, xiii. 16.

*how long . . . innocency?* A parenthetic question, whether from Hosea or from a later hand. Render, *how long will they be incapable of innocency?* Idolatry, as seen by the writer, is not only a false form of worship, but an immoral way of living; cf. Jer. xiii. 27. Another rendering is: 'how long will they be unable to escape punishment?'; cf. Jer. xxv. 29. Gardner suggests: 'how long will they be unable to understand that it is from Israel?' (joining this sentence with the first line of the next verse). Ehrlich reads: 'how long will Israel be unable to attain to cleanness of hands?'

6. This verse states the reason for Jahveh's rejection of the calf: *for from Israel is this also*, i.e. the man-made calf, as well as the man-made king. It comes from Israel, and no higher source;

made it, and it is no God: yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: <sup>1</sup>he hath no standing corn; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up. 8 Israel is swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. 9 For they

<sup>1</sup> Or, *it hath no stalk.*

it is of human workmanship and origin, and therefore no God at all; cf. xiii. 2. Here is the germ of the later polemic against idolatry in general; cf. Is. xxxvii. 19, xl. 19 f., xli. 7, xlii. 17, xlv. 9-20.

*broken in pieces.* This phrase represents a substantive which does not occur elsewhere in O.T. *Splinters*, which is the Talmudic rendering, is adopted by almost all scholars. If this is correct, it suggests that the images were made of wood and only overlaid with silver and gold. 'Utter destruction awaits this emblem of, and substitute for, deity' (Harper).

7. *Wind . . . whirlwind.* The consequences of Israel's conduct and foreign policy are described by two figures taken from the harvest field. In the first, *they sow wind and reap whirlwind*, 'wind' representing the vanity and unprofitableness of their present ways (cf. x. 13), and 'whirlwind' what it will all lead to, viz. destruction. Cf. Gal. vi. 7 f.; 2 Cor. ix. 6 for the thought of the impossibility of escaping the consequences of one's own actions.

*standing corn . . . blade . . . meal.* In the second figure, Israel has no standing corn, i.e. the seed they sow never grows up to its full size, but, if here and there it does grow up, either it brings forth no grain, or what grain it yields falls into the hands of the enemy. In other words, Israel's policy will never be successful from the worldly point of view, and any wealth which he may acquire will be seized by other nations. There is a rhyme in this couplet: *qāmāh 'ēn lō šemaḥ, b'ēlī ya'āseh qemaḥ*. G. A. Smith renders, *stock without shoot shall never yield fruit*. Render the last line, *if perchance it were to yield, strangers would swallow it up*.

8. *Now.* Hosea's 'now', announcing the judgement. He sees it as if it were already here. Israel is as good as *swallowed up*, a strong figure for ruin (cf. Is. ix. 16). His national independence will be lost among the Gentiles, and the process has already begun (vii. 8 f.). Soon he will be deemed among the nations *as a vessel wherein is no delight*, a simile for something which is neither useful nor ornamental; cf. Jer. xxii. 28, xlvi. 38.

9. *For they are gone up to Assyria.* This is one ground for the judgement of v. 8. Like a wild ass that leaves the herd to go its

are gone up to Assyria, *like* a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired <sup>1</sup>lovers. 10 Yea, though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them; and they <sup>2</sup>begin to be minished by reason of the burden of the <sup>3</sup>king of princes. 11 Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin, altars

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *loves*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *shall sorrow a little or, for a little while*.

<sup>3</sup> See Is. x. 8. Many ancient authorities have, *king and princes*.

own wilful way or to find a mate, Israel seeks an alliance with Assyria. There is a play on words here (*pere*, 'wild ass', and *Ephraim*) of which Marti would deprive us by reading 'Ephraim' instead of 'wild ass', and Sellin by rejecting 'wild ass' as the remark of a glossator.

*Ephraim hath hired lovers*. Or, according to almost all modern commentators, *Ephraim hath given love-gifts*, the allusion being to the gifts by which Israel sought to gain help from Assyria or Egypt (xii. 1). Wellhausen's suggestion that 'Egypt' should be substituted for 'Ephraim' and that the rendering should be, 'to Egypt they send love-gifts', is attractive and supported by the LXX. Cf. 2 K. xvii. 4.

10. The first half of this verse is rejected by Harper as a gloss. Its meaning depends on the meaning which we attach to the word 'hired' in *v.* 9. If we translate, 'Ephraim hath hired lovers', we must translate 'hire' in this verse, and the meaning will be 'Yea, though they hire among the nations, I will gather their paramours against them as their enemies'. But if we translate, 'Ephraim hath given love-gifts', this verse will read, 'Yea, though (or 'even if') they give themselves (or 'love-gifts') among the nations, now must I gather them', i.e. confine them or restrain them in exile; cf. iii. 3 f., viii. 13, ix. 3.

*and they begin to be minished*. A.V. has, 'and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes'. As neither R.V. nor A.V. yields a good sense, it is better to follow the LXX and read words which only differ from our present text in two letters: *and they shall cease for a little from anointing a king* (or 'kings') *and princes*. Cf. iii. 3, xi. 5. The meaning of the verse as a whole seems to be that Israel's dallying with foreign nations must cease, and that this will involve a cessation from their constant anointing of godless kings and princes.

11. *Because*. Rather, *For*. This and the following verses are a justification of the threat in *v.* 10. It was a popular notion in Hosea's day that the more altars set up and sacrifices offered, the more pleasing it was to the deity (Is. i. 11). The addition of the word 'to sin' at the end of the first line suggests that the opposite of this is true. But the word is superfluous in view of

have been unto him to sin. 12 <sup>1</sup>Though I write for him my law in ten thousand *precepts*, they are counted as a strange thing. 13 As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law, but they &c.*

its occurrence in the second line. LXX omits. Render, *For as Ephraim hath multiplied altars, they have become to him altars for sinning.* Action which Israel thought to be worthy of all praise is condemned by Jahveh, because the cultus is corrupt. The more altars they build, the deeper does their guilt become. Cf. x. 1.

12. *Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts.* A.V., 'I have written to him *the great things* of my law', follows the reading in the margin of the Heb. Bible, other renderings of which are 'the multitudes of my law', 'my many laws', or 'the excellencies of my law'. But the word which is thus variously translated occurs nowhere else in the plural. R.V. follows the text of the Hebrew, which has *the myriads of*, and this reading is generally preferred. LXX supports the consonants of the Hebrew text, though it divides them differently. It also supports the pl. 'my laws', which only involves a change of vowel points and makes better sense. Wellhausen's rendering, 'the words of' for 'the myriads of', is not such a drastic change as Harper seems to suggest (Melville Scott, p. 136), but it receives no support from the Versions. Render, *Though I were to write for him by myriads My Directions, as those of a stranger would they be accounted.* We may paraphrase thus: If I were to write so many laws that they could not be counted (or, if the laws already written down were to be increased to 10,000), they would have no more binding force in Israel's eyes than the laws of a foreign country. This passage is a condemnation of priests and people for having forgotten Jahveh and His moral requirements, while they were very busy with the ceremonial details of their sacrificial worship (cf. iv. 6-8). It is important as bearing witness to the existence of written 'directions' which were supposed to be authoritative and to embody principles of universal obligation in Israel, and the context suggests, here and in iv. 6-8, that the 'directions' alluded to are ethical and moral, and not merely ceremonial; e.g. Ex. xx. 23—xxiii. 33 and parts of Lev. xvii-xx.

13. The first line of this verse is made difficult by an anomalous form, which some connect with a root meaning 'to give' ('the sacrifices of My gifts they sacrifice') and others with a late Heb. verb meaning 'to singe' or 'to roast' ('the sacrifices

they shall return to Egypt. 14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded <sup>1</sup> palaces; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the <sup>2</sup> castles thereof.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *temples*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *palaces*.

of My roastings they sacrifice'). LXX, which has 'the beloved sacrifices', suggests the reading (adopted by Duhm, Marti, Sellin, and others): *sacrifice they love and they sacrifice, flesh and they eat it*. The thought may be that sacrifices are often a mere form, used as an excuse for indulging in the luxury of eating flesh-meat; cf. iv. 8; Is. xxii. 13. But whatever may be the precise meaning of the words, they are intended to describe a worship which is so displeasing to Jahveh that *now He must remember their guilt and visit their sin*. Cf. ix. 9; Jer. xiv. 10; also vii. 2; Jer. ix. 9. Hosea's emphatic 'now' suggests that *at last* Jahveh's patience is exhausted and the time for punishment has come.

*they shall return to Egypt*. 'Back to their ancient servitude they must go, as God had formerly said He would withdraw them into the wilderness' (G. A. Smith); cf. ii. 14 f. This is not a poetical expression for exile in general, but a threat of actual captivity in Egypt which is repeated in ix. 3, 6, xi. 5, and is parallel to the prediction of an Assyrian captivity (cf. predictions of a restoration from Egypt in Is. xi. 11; Mi. vii. 12). LXX adds here: *and in Assyria they shall eat the unclean thing*. If this reading is original, and not a gloss borrowed from ix. 3, it brings the passage into line with vii. 11, xi. 5, xii. 1, xiv. 3.

14. This verse is commonly regarded as a later addition, because it is written in the style of Amos and refers to Judah. But why should not Hosea quote from his predecessor or allude to historical facts which happened in his day? 'Judah under Azariah-Uzziah did "multiply fortified cities" (2 Chron. xxvi, 10), a proceeding which Hosea could not but condemn as a dependence on material defence rather than on the help of Jahveh (i. 7, ii. 18, xiv. 3), and he quotes from Amos almost exactly that prophet's denunciation of *Judah* (Am. ii. 5). A post-exilic editor would not have chosen this particular episode of history and founded upon it an interpolation to prove that Judah at this distant date was as bad as Israel. In fact the Judæan Chronicler has nothing but praise for this period of Uzziah's career' (Cannon, *Expositor*, March 1924).

**IX. 1** Rejoice not, O Israel, <sup>1</sup>for joy, like the peoples; <sup>2</sup>for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved hire upon every cornfloor. **2** The threshing-floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her. **3** They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but

<sup>1</sup> Or, unto exultation.

<sup>2</sup> Or, that.

### IX. 1-9. *The Sorrows of Exile*

Having predicted that the nation will go into exile, Hosea now describes the effect of the exile on Israel's social and religious life. As the people are indulging in the Dionysiac revelry of a harvest-festival, he announces that a time is coming when there will be no more materials for sacrifice; for all food will be unclean, as will be those who eat it. When Israel goes into exile, it will no longer be possible to keep festivals (*vv.* 1-6). That his day of visitation is coming is evident from his attitude towards the prophet, whose destruction he plots (*vv.* 7-10). The date will be during the reign of Pekah or that of Hoshea; cf. vii. 8-12.

**1.** *for joy.* Lit. 'to the point of exultation'. It is perhaps better to read with LXX; *exult not. Like the peoples* = as the heathen, who consider the harvest to be the gift of the gods in return for their sacrifices, thus making the obtaining of material blessings the aim and object of their worship.

*for thou hast gone.* . . . If they believe that material blessings come from the Baals, they are committed to the debased worship of their local shrines. Each act of worship will be whoredom in which the harlot (Israel) receives her hire (corn, wine, and oil; cf. ii. 12) from her paramour (the local Baal). As Cheyne and Harper point out, this is not an attack on the local sanctuaries or high places as such, but a protest against false worship and honouring the Baals instead of the true God. Centralization of worship came later (cf. Dt. xvi. 15, and, for a post-exilic harvest-festival, Zech. xiv. 16-19).

**2.** The threat begins here. *Threshing-floor and vat* (not 'winepress', but the lower trough into which the pressed juice of grape or olive flowed) *shall not know them* (so LXX, which reads *d* for *r*), *and the must shall play them false* (read 'them' for 'her' with LXX). The meaning is that the corn, wine, and oil of Canaan will not be known to Israel, not because the crops will fail, but because he is to be carried into exile, as the next verse shows.

**3.** *They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land.* This explains why all their revelry and all their sacrifices (legitimate or otherwise) shall cease. Jahveh cannot be worshipped in any country but His own. As Chemosh was Moab's god and Milcom Ammon's, so Jahveh was Israel's God (Ju. xi. 24). Cf. David, who believed



Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. 4 They shall not pour out wine *offerings* to the LORD, <sup>1</sup> neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto him: their bread shall be unto them &c.*

that being driven out of Israel meant having to serve other gods (1 S. xxvi. 19); Naaman the Syrian, who had to take away soil from Palestine because he wished to worship the God who had healed him of his leprosy (2 K. v. 17); and Jonah, who thought that by crossing the sea he could escape Jahveh's presence (Jon. i. 1). Such was the popular belief in pre-exilic times. And it followed from this belief that all other lands were unclean (cf. Am. vii. 17); so also was their produce, since it could not be sanctified by the offering of its firstfruits to Jahveh; cf. Ez. iv. 13.

*return to Egypt.* See note on viii. 13. 'It is not yet certain in the prophet's mind whether Egypt or Assyria, or both, shall be the agent of Israel's exile' (Harper).

4. *Wine offerings.* At sacrificial meals some of the wine was given to the god and poured out as a libation, the rest being drunk by the worshippers (1 S. i. 24, x. 3; Am. ii. 8). As the text stands, the meaning of 'neither shall they be pleasing unto Him' is that, since libations cannot be made in another land, all wine will become unclean, and so displeasing to Jahveh. Then follows the statement, 'their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners', which is not only awkward, but inconsistent with the first two lines of this verse and with iii. 4, which tell us that in exile there will be no sacrifices. Almost all scholars, ignoring the Hebrew accents, place 'sacrifices' in the second line (so LXX, Syr., and Tg.) and, changing a *b* into a *k*, render: *neither prepare for Him their sacrifices.*

The next three words in the Hebrew are lit. 'the like of the bread of mourners is to them'. We must read 'their bread' instead of 'to them', and translate, *as the bread of mourning (shall be) their bread.* As the wine they drink and the flesh they eat will be unconsecrated and therefore unclean, so will it be with their bread. It will be no better than the bread eaten during a period of mourning for the dead or the bread broken for the dead at funerals (cf. Nu. xix. 14; Dt. xxvi. 14; Jer. xvi. 7; Hag. ii. 12 f.), than which nothing could be more impure.

*for their appetite.* Henceforth *their bread shall be (only) to (satisfy) their hunger; it shall not enter Jahveh's house.* It will be plain bread and nothing more—and unclean bread at that—and

LORD. 5 What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? 6 For, lo, they are gone away from destruction, yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: their pleasant things of silver,

as they eat of it there will be no sense of communion with God, no feeling that, having placed a portion of it in one of the sanctuaries, it is a pledge of divine favour. Horton notices the irony of the situation: 'They had eaten the sacrifices for their appetite, forgetting Jahveh: now they would not be allowed to eat for anything else!'

5. *What will ye do . . .* This deprivation of the joy of worship will be most keenly felt as the days of each *sacred season* and *pilgrim-feast* come round; cf. ii. 11. For the expression, 'What will ye do?', cf. Is. x. 3; Jer. v. 31. It is possible, however, to translate, *What will ye offer?*

It is clear from vv. 3-5 that in Hosea's view religion and sacrifice are one and the same thing, and that he has no wish to sever Jahveh-worship from concrete, institutional forms. He seems to regard the suspension of sacrifice during the exile as equivalent to a *moratorium* in religion. If it be argued that he is expressing the popular ideas about religion, and not his own conviction, this still leaves unexplained the prophet's silence as to how fellowship with Jahveh is to be maintained without sacrifice.

6. Hosea sees the ruin of Israel as if it had already taken place. As the text stands, we should render, 'For, lo they have fled from the devastation, Egypt gathering them, Memphis burying them', i.e. they have left their desolated homes only to be buried in exile in another country. Wellhausen's emendation, *they have gone away to Assyria*, is adopted by most moderns, though the Versions give no support. *Gather* is a synonym for *bury* (cf. Jer. viii. 2, xxv. 33; Ez. xxix. 5). The allusion is to the vast and numerous burial-grounds of Egypt, the greatest of which was at Memphis, near Cairo, the most ancient of Egypt's capitals. Egypt was the place of refuge for many exiles both in 722 and in 536 B.C.

*their pleasant things of silver.* The Hebrew *maḥmad* is used of valuable ornaments; hence some interpret the phrase as referring to silver images, others as meaning the sacred vessels and the whole apparatus of worship. LXX has *Michmas*, reading the name of a place. This suggests to Melville Scott that *maḥmad* = Machomades, a town on the Græater Syrtis, the reference being to the quicksands which will bury those who in their flight from the devastation take to the sea. He translates: 'they flee from destruction to Egypt, yet Memphis shall gather them up, and Machmad shall bury them; as for their silver articles, nettles

nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tents. 7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great. 8 Ephraim <sup>1</sup> was

<sup>1</sup> Or, *watcheth against*.

shall possess them'. Gordon also follows LXX, but reads *mikhmās*, 'a dwelling-place', which makes a good parallel to 'tents' in the next line. He omits 'to their silver (things)' as an explanatory gloss. So Sellin, who also omits 'Memphis shall bury them'. If we retain the text, we should render: *nettles possessing* (i.e. overgrowing) *their silver ornaments, with thorns in their tents* (i.e. either their homes or their places of worship). For the desolation of nettles and thorns, such as was the fate of the monastic buildings of England, cf. Is. xxxiv. 13.

7-9. The prophetic warning will be vindicated by the event.

7. *The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad.* If these lines are the object of 'shall know', the whole clause, 'Israel shall know that the prophet . . . mad', is a parenthesis, and the reference will be to false prophets who have deceived the people by prophesying smooth things. If, on the other hand, the words are independent of 'Israel shall know', they are a quotation from what the people have said about Hosea (or, possibly, Amos; cf. Am. vii. 10 ff.). The context, the use of the expression 'the inspired man', and the unlikelihood of the people's calling their favourite prophets fools and madmen, favour the latter view. Render, *Come are the days of visitation, come the days of requital; Israel shall find it out.* [Israel says:] '*A fool, the prophet; crazy, the man of the spirit.*' [Hosea replies:] (*It is*) *by reason of the greatness of thine iniquity and because thy enmity is great* (that you speak like that, or that I am driven to this state of frenzy). Some see in 'requital' (Hebrew *shillum*) a play on Shallum, with whom the anarchy began (2 K. xv. 10). Instead of 'Israel shall know' or 'find out', Hoonacker (using the consonants read by LXX, i.e. changing *d* into *r*) reads '*Israel cries: A fool, &c.*' This may be correct. For the madness of the prophet, cf. 2 K. ix. 11. The word translated 'enmity' is found only here and in v. 8, but the root is found in Syriac where it = 'to bind with cords'.

8. *Ephraim was a watchman with my God.* It is just possible to translate as R.V., but what does it mean? A.V., 'the watchman of Ephraim (i.e. the prophet) was with my God', is better. 'With my God' = 'helped by', or 'on the side of'. Other suggestions are: (a) 'Ephraim looked out (for oracles) beside my God', i.e. not content with a true prophet sent by Jahveh, he seeks for help from other sources; (b) 'Ephraim is a liar in wait in hostility

a watchman with my God: as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, *and* enmity in the house of his God. 9 They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their

with my God'. But none of these translations is satisfactory. If we read *mē'im* for '*im*, we may render either 'Ephraim's watchman appointed by my God, even the prophet' (Cheyne), or 'Ephraim's watcher from my God is the prophet, but a fowler's snare, &c.' (G. A. Smith). Melville Scott, reading '*am* for '*im*, suggests 'Ephraim watcheth against the people of my God', i.e. the faithful remnant who follow the prophet. Wellhausen, Nowack, Duhm, Marti, Gardner, and Harper rearrange and alter the text considerably, but their efforts are not convincing. Sellin's emendation, '*ōhel* (tent) for '*ēlōhai* (my God), makes good sense: *Ephraim lieth in wait* (Ps. xxxvii. 32) *beside the prophet's tent, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, enmity* (or 'persecution') *in the house of his God*. Instead of 'they have deeply corrupted themselves' in the next verse, Sellin and many scholars read *they have made deep his pit*, i.e. they have dug a deep pit for him, carrying on the simile of the hunt. See note on v. 1 f. This latter emendation involves only a change of vowel-points. Cf. Jer. xviii. 20, 22. Difficult though it is to translate, the general sense of the verse is clear: the prophet is being persecuted, his enemies lie in wait for him and set traps to catch him. *The house of his God* may be the land of Canaan as in viii. 1, ix. 15, or (more probably here) one of the local sanctuaries, such as Beth-el or Gilgal (iv. 15). For the thought of 'enmity in the house of his God', cf. the incident at Beth-el recorded in Am. vii. 10-17; also Is. xxviii. 9 f., xxx. 10 f.

9. *as in the days of Gibeah*. Hosea is probably alluding to the outrage described in Ju. xix. The reference is so allusive as to suggest that the story was familiar to his readers. If so, it must have formed part of the historical tradition of N. Israel, whether oral or (possibly) written. If we retain the reading of our present Hebrew text, *they have deeply corrupted themselves*, the incident alluded to marks the depth of the depravity into which Israel was capable of sinking. But, if we emend the text as above (*they have dug a deep pit for him*), the allusion will be more particularly to the way in which the sons of Belial beset the house in which the Levite was lodging (Ju. xix. 22-30, xx. 5). In either case, it is probable that Hosea had also in mind the terrible punishment which ultimately overtook the Benjaminites (Ju. xx; cf. Hos. x. 9 f.). The Targum on x. 9 sees in the phrase a reference to the election of Saul as king, and this explanation has been revived by Wellhausen and Nowack in modern times. But, although Saul lived at Gibeah, he is not said to have been

sins. 10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first season: but they came to Baal-peor, and <sup>1</sup>consecrated themselves

<sup>1</sup> Or, *separated*.

chosen king there: according to one account this took place at Mizpah (1 S. x. 17 ff.), according to the other at Gilgal (1 S. xi. 15).

As the phrase occurs again in x. 9, some scholars reject 'as in Gibeah's days' as a gloss here, but it is somewhat arbitrary not to allow Hosea to make more than one allusion to the same event. Harper rejects the last two lines as an insertion from viii. 13. This too is somewhat arbitrary; cf. the refrain in Is. v. 25, ix. 12, 17, 21, x. 4.

### IX. 10-17. *Impure Worship and its Penalties: Childlessness and Exile*

Israel's early promise is contrasted with its present condition. The nation's life began with all the freshness and purity of youth, but the people polluted themselves at the first Baal-shrine which they reached. This was the beginning of an immoral worship which has clung to the nation ever since. One penalty for this sin against chastity will be a serious decline in the population, and the few children that will be born are destined for the sword; for—and this is the second penalty—Jahveh will drive the people of Israel out of His land, and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

10. *like grapes in the wilderness . . . as the firstripe in the fig tree.* The passage begins by describing Jahveh's delight in His choice of Israel to be His people (cf. xi. 1; Jer. ii. 2), so soon to be turned to disappointment. He found them with the pleasure with which a man finds grapes in a wilderness, where commonly nothing grateful or refreshing grows (Dt. viii. 15), or tastes the first ripe fig, proverbial for its sweetness and considered a great delicacy owing to the lateness of the fig-harvest (Is. xxviii. 4; Mi. vii. 1; Jer. xxiv. 2, 5). *At its first season*, i.e. when it first begins to ripen, is omitted by the Syriac and most moderns as superfluous.

*but they came to Baal-peor.* They is emphatic; the very people to whom God showed so much love *came, separated themselves, and became abominations.* Not only in the days of Gibeah, but, on their very first approach to the Promised Land, the nation sinned against Jahveh. Baal-Peor (abbreviation for Beth-Baal-Peor) was in Moab, E. of the Jordan and near Mt. Pisgah (Nu. xxiii. 14, 28; Jos. xiii. 20). According to tradition (Nu. xxiii. 28, xxv. 3, 5, xxxi. 16; Dt. iii. 29, iv. 46), this was where the earliest contact of the Israelites with the nature-religion of the Canaanites was made.

unto the <sup>1</sup>shameful thing, and became abominable like that which they loved. 11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird: there shall be no birth, and none with

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *shame*.

Whether the worship of Baal-Peor was more than usually licentious, as is commonly supposed, we cannot say; but Hosea traces the beginnings of Israel's apostasy to the readiness with which he succumbed to its immoral attractions when he was in Shittim. 'What happened at Baal-Peor was repeated with variations at every centre of Canaanite worship after the conquest of western Palestine' (Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, p. 59).

*the shameful thing*. At Baal-Peor the Israelites separated (i.e. consecrated) *themselves unto Baal*. The Hebrew text has *Shame*, which later scribes sometimes substituted for the name which it became unlawful to utter (see note on ii. 16, where Hosea calls Jahveh 'Baal'). The result of this consecration was that they *became abominations like the object of their love*. Sellin regards 'abominations' as a later substitute for *q<sup>d</sup>hēshim*, and reads 'became temple-prostitutes like their lover'. But this is unnecessary. The meaning is that the people grow like the things which they worship. Cf. Ps. cxv. 8: 'they that make them are like unto them'. and Kimchi's saying (quoted by Pusey): 'he who serveth an abomination is himself an abomination'; cf. also Jer. ii. 5: 'they walked after vanity and became vain'. *Shiqquš* ('abomination') is used frequently of idols and idol-worship; e.g. Jer. iv. 1, xiii. 27; Ez. xx. 7, 8.

11. *Ephraim, their glory shall fly away*. One punishment for these sins against chastity is childlessness. Cf. iv. 10. Ephraim's *glory*, i.e. his prosperity generally or, more specifically as Kimchi and some moderns, his population (children being the glory of their fathers: cf. Prov. xvii. 6), shall take to itself wings: *no more bearing, pregnancy or conception*. The words form a kind of inverted climax: their women will not conceive; if they do, the children will die in the womb; if they do not die in the womb, they will die at birth. In the following verses the idea is carried further: if children are born, they will die; even if some of them grow up, they will be destroyed; and if any survive the sword, they will become wanderers in heathen lands. For a similar hypothetical climax, cf. viii. 7.

16 should almost certainly be read here: *Smitten is Ephraim, their root withered, fruit they cannot produce; yea, though they bring forth, I will deal death to the darlings of their womb*. Underlying this verse there is a play on words: Ephraim = 'fruitful' (Gen. xli. 52). Cf. ii. 23 for the reversal of the meaning. Hosea is fond of the figure of a tree (x. 1, xiv. 8). Here it is a tree smitten by

child, and no conception. 12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there be not a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them! 13 Ephraim, <sup>1</sup>like as I have seen Tyre, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer. 14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give?

<sup>1</sup> Or, as I have seen, is like Tyre, that is planted &c.

the sun (Ps. cxxi. 6; Jer. xvii. 8), which destroys even the root and with it all hope of future growth (Am. ii. 9; Mal. iv. 1).

12 follows naturally after v. 16, as an exception or modification in Hebrew follows a general statement.

*when I depart.* Most scholars change a vowel point and read *yea, also, woe to them when I look away from them.* By some this couplet is rejected as a gloss, by others it is transferred to the end of v. 15.

13 is a difficult verse as the text stands. The translation of A.V. and R.V. cannot be justified; for there is no 'like' in the Hebrew, 'planted' is fem. with a masc. subject, and a reference to Tyre is uncalled for. Gordon reads 'Ephraim as a tamarisk I have seen, beside rocks planted on meadow-land'. This only requires the change of one letter, but it does not suit the context. LXX suggests the following: *Ephraim, as for a prey his sons are destined, Ephraim must lead out his sons to slaughter.* This emendation suits the context without involving violent changes in the text. 'I have seen' is not in Swete's text of LXX, and may, perhaps, be omitted. It is possible that this verse contains an allusion to the punishment at Shittim in Nu. xxv. 5. Marti suggests that the reference is to child-sacrifice, but there is no evidence of this in Amos or Isaiah, and in other passages in Hosea the loss of children is due either to Jahveh's judgement or to immoral worship (cf. ii. 2 ff., iv. 10 ff., v. 1-7).

14. *Give them, O LORD.* This is generally understood as the prophet's prayer on behalf of the people. Since Ephraim's children were to be led forth to slaughter, it would be merciful to ask that they should have no children; cf. Luke xxiii. 29. But the context, which is concerned with Ephraim's destruction, seems to suggest that the prophet in his indignation is asking God to bring about the doom which he is foretelling. LXX omits the second 'give them'.

Unfruitfulness was always regarded in Israel as a special punishment inflicted by Jahveh, and it was the greatest possible curse which could happen to a family or nation. Rachel spoke for all her race when she said, 'Give me children or I die' (Gen. xxx. 1). Hosea was the first to ascribe a diminishing population to sins of

give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. 15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them: because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house: I will love them no more; all their princes are revolvers. 16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb. 17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

the flesh (iv. 10), as he was the first to insist that unchastity breaks up family life (iv. 13 f.). 'History in many periods has confirmed the justice of his observations, and by one strong voice after another enforced his warnings' (G. A. Smith, pp. 305-10).

15. *All their wickedness is in Gilgal.* See note on iv. 15, and cf. xii. 11; Am. iv. 4, v. 5. In this, one of the most famous of the northern sanctuaries, Israel's impure worship had its focus: *it was there that I began (or learned) to hate them. Because of the evil of their doings at Gilgal, Jahveh will drive them out of His House* (i.e. out of Palestine, as in viii. 1; cf. ix. 3).

*all their princes are revolvers.* There is a play on words in the original, *sārīm* and *sōr'rim* (cf. Is. i. 23). G. A. Smith translates 'all their nobles are rebels'. Box (*Peake's Commentary*) suggests 'all their rulers are unruly'; Horton, 'all their princes are prancers', the word being used of a refractory animal in iv. 16. The assonance is, perhaps, best expressed by *all their rulers being revolvers*. For the thought of the responsibility of the leaders for the nation's sins, cf. vii. 5 ff. and 16, see p. 83.

17. The prophet speaks again, and pronounces a verdict of rejection, summing up Jahveh's message.

*My God.* No longer Israel's God, since they will no longer listen to Him. From all the nations Jahveh had chosen them, but they had wandered away from Him (vii. 13); so now they will receive the curse of Cain (Gen. iv. 14) and become wanderers among the nations. Having left their true home, they will not find another. Cf. xii. 9. 'Such was to be their lot; such has been their lot ever since' (Pusey).

#### *Additional Note on Israel's Religious Worship*

##### *In the Desert.*

To Hosea, as to Jeremiah a hundred years later (Jer. ii. 2 f.), the sojourn in the desert was the ideal period in Israel's history, a time when its relation to Jahveh was perfect (ii. 15, ix. 10, xi. 1). And what he means is that Israel's religion was at that time uncontaminated by the influence of the Canaanitish cults. This is, of course,



historically true. For if the Decalogue in its ultimate form of ten short sentences is in the main Mosaic, as some scholars now say, the religion of the desert must have been a very simple thing, and any form of cult which Moses may have ordained must have been of the simplest possible character. And, apart from this consideration, it should be remembered that the conditions of the nomadic life would not be favourable to the offering of elaborate worship.

Certain sayings of the prophets (see additional note, pp. 58-61) have been understood to mean that sacrifice was unknown in the wilderness. This can scarcely be true, since it was the normal method of approach to God amongst Semitic tribes, it existed amongst the Hebrews before they went down to Egypt, and we know that the Passover at least was observed in the desert. The nomadic life, it is true, would not afford many opportunities for worship of this kind; but, if there were no harvests and vintages, there were the first-fruits of the flocks and herds to be offered, and in the course of a long stay, at Kadesh for example, there would be ample room for altars and shrines. It may well be that Moses gave no commandment concerning sacrifice, but it does not seem reasonable to suppose that he prohibited it altogether.

Moses does, however, seem to have prohibited the making of images for worship. How long the second commandment was obeyed we do not know, but it is difficult to see whence the later revolt against images could have come, if some one like Moses had not held up before the nation the higher ideal of an imageless worship. It seems probable that there were always some who adhered to the original Jahveh-religion as it was taught in the desert, otherwise we cannot explain the various attempts at reform which were made from time to time and at last bore fruit in the exilic and post-exilic ages.

### *In Canaan.*

We may assume that when Jahvism came into Canaan it was simple and primitive, austere and unsophisticated. But it was not long before it was modified and transformed under the influence of its new environment. It was (humanly speaking) inevitable that these nomadic tribes should be impressed by the comparative wealth and luxury in the midst of which they found themselves as they gradually settled down to live beside their Canaanitish neighbours, and that imitation should follow. They soon learned how to build houses, make pottery, and grow corn. 'In their agriculture they were bound to be imitative; and, with the farmer's lore, they would naturally learn the farmer's religion. The shrines and altars, the dolmens and poles, the feasts and sacrifices, were all waiting for the incomers.'<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there would at first be some doubt as to whether the God of the desert could provide them with corn, vine, and olive (ii. 8). It is not surprising, therefore, that there should have been a tendency to worship Baal for success in agriculture. But as time went on and Jahveh gave them victory in war after war, Canaan became 'the land which Jahveh gave to your fathers' and Jahveh became the God of

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<sup>1</sup> *The People and the Book*, p. 242.

this land, a God of the fruitful soil. This meant that imitation passed into assimilation. For, though He was the same God who had led the children of Israel safely through the wilderness, it did not follow that Jahveh must be worshipped in the old simple way. On the contrary, new conditions seemed to require new rites. And so it came about that the Israelites took over the whole apparatus of the Canaanitish cult, together with the language and civilization of the Canaanites, and the God of the wilderness became a God of altars and images.

The two religions did not coalesce, but one of them 'received a number of alien rites into its bosom, as the Christian church, from its early ages, received a number of rites and offices of which the Apostolic age knew nothing'.<sup>1</sup> Thus the old high places of Canaan, with their *maššēbhōth* and *'āshērīm*, symbols of the Divine presence, became sanctuaries for the worship of Jahveh, and sacrifices connected with agriculture were added to the animal sacrifices which they inherited from their forefathers. Included in this sacrificial worship there were two horrible Canaanitish rites: infant sacrifice and the sacrifice of virginity. The former seems to have disappeared early in the North, though it broke out from time to time in Judah (2 K. xvi. 3), but the temple-prostitutes were a familiar feature in Israel's religion down to the time of Josiah. While the Ark, which the Israelites brought with them from the desert, continued to be the central object of their worship, there were two other forms in which Jahveh came to be represented and worshipped, both probably borrowed from the religion of Canaan. The one, found only in the South, was the brazen serpent, the legitimacy of which does not seem to have been questioned till the reign of Hezekiah. The other, which belonged to the North, was the golden bull. This was in later times felt to be a flagrant violation of the second commandment; but, since the bull was identified with Jahveh, the general feeling of Northern Israel seems to have been in favour of it, and the earlier prophets, Elijah, Elisha, and even Amos, do not seem to have condemned it. It was left for Hosea to reveal its true character as the *fons et origo* of Israel's apostasy. If the bull had phallic associations in Canaan, as it had in other countries, and as we may infer that it had from the religious prostitution and the disregard for the laws of chastity which were prevalent in his day, we can well understand Hosea's attitude towards it. 'It was inevitable that the man's holy rage should fall upon the thing that was the sign and emblem of that feature in the erroneous worship of Israel which his own soul's story had taught him to detest most completely.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 64. See also pp. 21-4; and *The People and the Book*, Essays vii and x.

X. 1 Israel is a luxuriant vine, which putteth forth his fruit: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars; according to the <sup>1</sup>goodness of his land they have made goodly <sup>2</sup>pillars. <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>Their heart is <sup>4</sup>divided; now shall they be found guilty: he shall smite their altars,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *prosperity*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *He hath divided their heart*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *obelisks*.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *smooth*.

### X. 1-8. *Jahveh's Judgement on Israel's Altars and especially on the Calf at Beth-el*

In his prosperity Israel multiplied altars and *maṣṣēbhōth*. These will be destroyed (*vv.* 1-2). The Calf of Beth-aven will be carried off to Assyria (*vv.* 5 f.). The king, powerless to help or deliver (*vv.* 3 f.), will be swept away with the high places, leaving his people to despair (*vv.* 7 f.).

'All three strophes appear to belong to the beginning of the reign of King Hoshea; heavy tribute has already been paid to Assyria' (Sellin).

1. *a luxuriant vine*: carrying on the figure of ix. 10, 16; cf. Ps. lxxx. 8-11. Prosperity was given to Israel in Canaan (cf. ch. ii), but, in occupying this fruitful land, he adopted the sinful worship he found there, and increasing prosperity only led to more and more idolatry (cf. ii. 8, viii. 4, 11).

*which putteth forth his fruit*. The Hebrew word for 'putteth forth' is doubtful, and most scholars treat it as a scribal error. G. A. Smith translates tentatively, 'he lavishes his fruit'. LXX ('her fruit flourishing') suggests a possible correction of the text. But Sellin's reading *yasgeh*, *he maketh much fruit for himself*, makes good sense and involves the change of only one letter (a for a w).

*according to the multitude*. Render, *as his fruit increased, he increased the number of his altars: as his land became rich, he enriched his obelisks*. For the *maṣṣēbhōth* (obelisks or 'pillars') see iii. 4 and additional note, pp. 30-32. *Enriched* suggests carving or ornamentation.

2. *Their heart is divided*: i.e. between Jahveh and Baal (cf. 1 K. xviii. 21). They scarcely know which of the two they are worshipping. This translation involves a change in the vowel-points. If we keep the ordinary pointing, the meaning is *their heart is smooth*, i.e. deceitful or slippery. It is a false kind of Jahveh-worship which is condemned.

*now shall they be found guilty: or bear punishment*. A favourite word with Hosea; cf. iv. 15, v. 15, xiii. 1, 16. For Hosea's abrupt 'now', cf. iv. 16, v. 7, viii. 8, 13. *Smite* = lit. 'break the necks of'.

he shall spoil their <sup>1</sup>pillars. 3 Surely now shall they say, We have no king: for we fear not the LORD; and the king, what can he do for us? 4 They speak *vain* words, <sup>2</sup>swearing falsely in making covenants: therefore judgement <sup>3</sup>springeth up as <sup>4</sup>hemlock in the furrows of the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *obelisks*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *they swear falsely, they make covenants*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *shall spring up*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *rosh*. See Dt. xxix. 18.

The word is always used elsewhere of breaking the neck of an animal; hence it is thought that the reference may be to the horns (Am. iii. 14), or (Wellhausen) to calves' heads at the corners, of the altars. The first 'he' is emphatic: *Himself will break the necks of their altars, destroy their obelisks*.

3-4. These verses have no clear connexion with the context, which predicts the overthrow of the mixed cultus, but they are not on that account to be rejected as post-exilic; for in IV-XIV idols and puppet-kings are the twin-targets of Hosea's scorn (G. A. Smith). Cf. viii. 4-13. The suggestion that 'king' is a popular name of the image worshipped at Samaria is not convincing.

3. *Surely now they will say*. Render, *For soon they will be saying, We have no king*, worthy of the name. The reference is not to the exile or to the fall of the last ruler of the Northern Kingdom, but, as the question with which the verse ends shows, to the impotence of the kings made not by Jahveh, especially to Hoshea, who reigned by the grace of Assyria (vii. 1-7, xiii. 10). *For Jahveh we have not feared* are strange words to put into the mouth of a people busily engaged in what they considered to be Jahveh-worship, but they express what the people will discover when Jahveh's judgement comes upon them.

4. The answer to the question, 'The king, what can he do for us?' *Speak words* (so read with LXX), *swear falsely, make covenants*. *Words* = mere words of the lips, i.e. falsehoods (Is. xxix. 21, xxxvi. 5, lviii. 13). For false oaths, cf. iv. 2. *Make covenants* (or *bargains*), i.e. with Egypt and Assyria; cf. v. 13, vii. 11, x. 6, xii. 1.

*therefore judgement springeth up*. There are two different interpretations of this line: (1) If the verb is regarded as a continuation of the infinitives which precede it, the meaning is that unjust judgement flourishes like a noxious weed (cf. Am. vi. 12). But (2) it seems better to understand the line as referring to the *bitterness of the divine punishment* which will fall first upon the king and then upon the shrines and their worshippers. For the bitterness of this weed, cf. Dt. xxix. 18; Am. vi. 12; Jer. ix. 15; Lam. iii. 19. Render, *But punishment shall spring up* (bitter and universal) *like a poisonous weed in the furrows of a field*.

field. 5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and <sup>1</sup> the priests thereof that rejoiced over it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. 6 It also shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to <sup>2</sup> king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. 7 <sup>3</sup> *As for Samaria, her king is cut off, as* <sup>4</sup> *foam*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Chemarim*. See 2 K. xxiii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. v. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *Samaria is cut off with her king*.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *twigs*.

5. *the calves of Beth-aven* (ironical for Beth-el; see note on iv. 15). Read the sing. (with LXX) and render, *For the Calf of Beth-aven the inhabitants of Samaria shall tremble, yea, his people shall mourn over him*. So far from being a help to its devotees, the calf will be a source of the greatest anxiety to them. 'His people': i.e. no longer Jahveh's (cf. i. 9).

*and the priests thereof*. *K<sup>e</sup>mārīm* is used elsewhere only of idol-priests; see note on iv. 4. The use of the word here is contemptuous, like 'his (the idol's) people' above. The verb attached to 'idol-priests' always means 'to rejoice'. If the text is correct, we must either suppose a relative clause as R.V. or understand *yāghilū* as having the sense of *yāhīlū* ('writhe'). But it is better to assume a scribal error and read either *yāhīlū* or *yēlīlū* ('howl'): *and his idol-priests shall writhe (or howl) over him*. The verse ends: *on account of his glory, because it has gone into exile from him*. A strong expression for loss of prestige; cf. 1 S. iv. 21 f. It is possible that this last line is a gloss.

6. *It also*. Render, *Yea, himself*. The image, stripped of its glory and discredited (v. 5), will be *carried in procession* (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 29; Is. xviii. 7) *to Assyria, a present to the Great King* (see note on v. 13). *Present* is a euphemism for tribute (cf. 2 S. viii. 2, 6; 2 K. xvi. 8; also 2 K. xii. 18, xviii. 15 f.).

*ashamed of his own counsel*. His false policy will fail Israel in the day of trouble. Wellhausen's conjecture 'his idol', which makes the cultus the source of Israel's shame, is pointed but unnecessary. Render, *Ephraim shall incur shame, and Israel shall be put to shame on account of his policy*.

7. *As for Samaria, her king is cut off*. This rendering can only be obtained by transposing two words. Render, *Undone is Samaria; her king is like a chip on the face of the waters*. 'Foam' (the Rabbis and R.V.) is derived from a root meaning 'to be angry'. 'Chip' or 'splinter' (LXX and most moderns) is connected with an Arabic root = 'to break' or to 'snap off'; cf. a cognate word in Jo. i. 7. The king is as helpless as a chip of wood borne along by a torrent.

upon the water. 8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us. 9 O Israel, thou hast sinned <sup>1</sup> from the days of Gibeah: <sup>2</sup> there they stood;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *more than in the days.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *there have they continued.*

8. *The high places also of Aven.* The prophet may be thinking of the high places of Beth-el (= Beth-aven, iv. 15) in particular, or of high places in general (cf. Am. vii. 9). If the latter, 'āwen = idolatry (lit. 'naughtiness'). Almost all scholars omit 'of Aven, the sin' as a gloss on 'high places'.

*the thorn and the thistle.* Cf. ix. 6. A striking picture of the forced cessation of the cultus. 'Where the victims aforetime went up, or were offered, now the wild briars or thistles alone should go up, and wave freely in undisputed possession.' Pusey finds a suggestive thought in the fact that this combination of the words for 'thorn' and 'thistle' occurs only in Gen. iii. 18, where the ground is cursed for Adam's sin, and here, where the land is made desolate because of Israel's sin.

*and they shall say.* This may be interpreted as a prayer that the high places themselves may cover the shame of the worshippers (Horton), or, more probably, as a prayer that the mountains and hills around the sanctuaries may destroy them and so save them from falling into the hands of their enemies. Death was preferable to such a fate. It is a cry of despair which had become proverbial in N.T. times (cf. Luke xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16; also Rev. ix. 6).

### X. 9-15. *Israel must Reap as he has Sown*

Israel has been sinning since the days of Gibeah, and Jahveh is about to gather the nations against him. He has been like a heifer engaged in the pleasant and easy task of treading out the corn, but now he must undergo the discipline of the yoke. Ruin might have been averted by right conduct, kindness and repentance, but since Israel has ploughed wickedness, he shall reap injustice, and the tumult of war shall bring destruction on land, fortunes, and king.

9. *O Israel, thou hast sinned.* A different pointing gets rid of an irregular form in the verb: *Since Gibeah's days is Israel's sin.* The reference, as in ix. 9 (which see), is probably to the crime of Benjamin (Ju. xix-xx), and not to the setting up of the monarchy (Wellhausen), or Micah's idolatry (Ju. xvii. 3 ff.).

*there they stood.* According to R.V. the meaning seems to be that the Benjaminites made a stand in defence of Gibeah against the rest of Israel. It is a historic retrospect, with a present application: like the Benjaminites of old, the Israelites persist in

<sup>1</sup> that the battle against the children of iniquity should not overtake them in Gibeah. 10 When it is my desire, I will chastise them; and the peoples shall be gathered against them, when they are <sup>2</sup>bound <sup>3</sup>to their two transgressions.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *shall not the battle . . . Gibeah?*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *yoked.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *for.*

their wickedness and defy Jahveh. But it is better to follow R.V. *m.*, which suggests that the people are still morally men of Gibeah (cf. Is. i. 10, where allusion is made to Sodom and Gomorrah) and turns the latter half of the verse into a question, 'Shall not the battle against the children of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?' History will repeat itself, not only in the sin, but also in the penalty. As the tribes once rose up against Benjamin, so now the nations will rise against Israel.

*against the children of iniquity.* These words come somewhat awkwardly at the end of the sentence. G. A. Smith and others transfer them to follow 'there they stood', and read: 'there stood against Me the sons of iniquity'. But it is simpler to keep the order of the Heb. and place the words at the beginning of the next verse.

10. This verse is untranslatable as it stands, and the text is evidently corrupt. But, if we borrow 'against the sons of unrighteousness' from the end of v. 9 and read (with some codices of LXX) 'I will come' for 'when it is my desire' and (with LXX and Syr.) 'to chastise them for' instead of 'when they are bound to', we get the following, which gives an excellent sense: *Against the sons of unrighteousness I will come, that I may chastise them; and the peoples shall be gathered against them to chastise them for their two iniquities. The peoples = Egypt and Assyria. Cf. Is. viii. 9, xxix. 7, where the word seems to refer to the various peoples from whom the Assyrian armies were drawn.*

*their two transgressions.* The Heb. text has 'their two eyes', i.e. presumably the eyes of the nations. But 'two' is superfluous in this connexion, and the word in the fem. pl. is not found except with the meaning 'springs'. The margin of the Heb. Bible has a *w* instead of a *y*. According to A.V., this gives, 'when they are bound to their two furrows', i.e. to the sinful course which they have ploughed for themselves. The versions (including our R.V.) support the *w*, but, pointing the word differently, read 'their two transgressions', or better *their two iniquities*. These are usually understood as referring either (1) to the cult and the rejection of David's line, or (2) to the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Other suggestions are (3) apostasy and idolatry, (4) the idolatry of Micah and Jeroboam, (5) Israel's early sin at Gibeah and his present wickedness, or (more probably in view of viii. 4-13, x. 1-8),

11 And Ephraim is an heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out *the corn*; but I have passed over upon her fair neck: I will set a rider on Ephraim; Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods. 12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap

(6) Israel's man-made idols and kings. Cf. for the thought, Jer. ii. 13.

11. *an heifer that is taught.* Israel is compared to a young heifer treated with every kindness and consideration by its owner, the only task required of it being the pleasant and easy one of walking round and round the threshing-floor, a task which carried with it the privilege of eating as much as it liked (Dt. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18). Some would omit 'that is taught' (i.e. *trained*) as a gloss.

*but I have passed over upon her fair neck.* That is, with the yoke which galls and wounds. Some would make this clearer by reading 'I have caused the yoke to pass over'. But this thought anticipates the punishment of hard labour which is to follow, and leaves incomplete the idea suggested in the previous line. It is better, therefore, to translate *and I Myself have spared her fair neck.*

*I will set a rider on Ephraim.* Israel's punishment: she will exchange hard labour in the fields (ploughing and harrowing) for the easy work she has hitherto enjoyed—a figure for life under a foreign master. The context requires that 'cause one to ride' should be understood in a secondary sense: *I will cause Ephraim to be yoked.*

*Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods.* A side-glance at Judah, rejected by most critics, some of whom would read 'Israel'. Not so, however, Wellhausen, Kuenen, Duhm, and G. A. Smith. Cannon suggests that the order of thought is: Ephraim first, then Judah, then Jacob as including both. See additional note on p. 96.

12. If any one but Hosea had composed this section, we might be justified in suspecting this deeply spiritual verse as an interpolation by a later hand familiar with Jer. iv. 3; for it introduces a new figure, and v. 13 is at first sight (but see below) the natural sequel of v. 11. Those who retain the verse as Hoseanic usually interpret it as a final appeal to repent and amend; but it is perhaps better to read it as showing how the coming doom might have been averted. Render as three parallel clauses: *Sow to yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of* (so read with LXX) *piety, break up* (or *fallow*) *your fallow ground.* The meaning is that 'no result may be expected unless the old habits are changed and new character formed' (Harper). *Piety* (*hesedh*), parallel to *righteousness* (right conduct towards one's neighbour), is probably here love of man for man; cf. iv. 1, xii. 6, and see additional note on p. 47.



according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and <sup>1</sup>rain righteousness upon you. 13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of <sup>2</sup>lies: for thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. 14 Therefore shall a tumult arise <sup>3</sup>among thy <sup>4</sup>people, and

<sup>1</sup> Or, *teach you righteousness.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *against.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *faithlessness.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *peoples.*

*for it is time to seek the LORD.* Render, *for there is yet time to seek Jahveh, to the end that He may come and rain righteousness upon you.* It weakens the sense to translate, 'to the end that He may come and teach you righteousness', or to read (with LXX) *p<sup>e</sup>ri* for *yōreh* ('to the end that the fruit of righteousness may come unto you'). It is also unnecessary to read *da'ath* ('knowledge') instead of *w<sup>e</sup>ēth* ('and time'). *Righteousness* is probably used here in the sense of 'salvation' or 'deliverance', as often in Is. xl-lxvi (for the figure, cf. Is. xlv. 8; Ps. lxxii. 6, lxxxv. 11). G. A. Smith translates happily *righting*.

If the interpretation adopted above be correct, this verse gives the substance of Hosea's message when there was yet time for the nation to repent and escape the impending ruin; and the next verses state how the people will be punished because they did the exact opposite of what the prophet had exhorted them to do. But, whatever be the interpretation of the verse, its teaching on repentance is the same. 'Repentance is no mere turning or even re-turning. It is a deep ethical process—the breaking up of fallow ground, the labour and long expectation of the sower, and the seeking and waiting for God till Himself send the rain' (G. A. Smith, pp. 360-71).

13. *Ye have plowed wickedness.* Instead of sowing righteousness Israel has ploughed in wickedness, and instead of reaping the fruit of kindness he has reaped *injustice*. And the result is utter disappointment: *ye have eaten the fruit of lying*. The word translated, 'lies' = that which deceives, disappoints or fails one; cf. vii. 3, xii. 1, and (the verb) ix. 2. Verses 13 b-15 describe the punishment which will overtake the nation for its disobedience.

13 b-14. *for thou didst trust in thy way.* The context, the parallel 'thy mighty men', Hos. xiv. 3 and Is. ii. 7, demand that we should follow the LXX and read *thy chariots* for 'thy way'. Begin a new sentence and render, *Because thou hast trusted in thy chariots, in the multitude of thy warriors, the tumult (of war) shall arise among (or against) thy peoples, and all thy fortresses shall be laid waste.* For *tumult* cf. Am. ii. 2; Is. xvii. 12; Jer. xlvi. 45. *Thy peoples* = 'thy tribes'. 'In thy cities' (so Wellhausen and

all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces

Nowack) would be a good emendation, but it finds no support in the versions. For the thought of Israel's reliance on military prowess, cf. i. 7, ii. 18, viii. 14, xiv. 3, and Is. xxxi. 1.

*as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel.* As Arbela on the Tigris is too far away for its destruction to have made a strong impression on the Israelites, we have to choose between two other known places of that name: (1) Arbela, near Pella, on the other side of the Jordan, and (2) Arbela (the modern Irbid), west of the Sea of Galilee, mentioned in 1 Macc. ix. 2. Shalman is commonly identified with Shalmaneser V, the Assyrian conqueror, who besieged and captured Samaria 724-722 B.C. (2 K. xvii. 1-6), and might well have destroyed Arbel in the course of his campaign. But this requires us either to extend Hosea's activity beyond the limits accepted by most scholars, or to suppose that the allusion is a gloss by a later hand. Accordingly, others identify Shalman with Shalmaneser IV, who made an expedition to Damascus in 773-772 B.C., and may have invaded the country east of Jordan. Schrader (*Die Keilinschriften und das A.T.*, p. 441) has argued in favour of *Salamanu*, a Moabite prince, mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser (Pul) as having paid tribute to him (as did Menahem, a contemporary of Hosea, in 2 K. xv. 19). We know from 2 K. xiii. 20 that the Moabites made a raid into Israel's territory in the days of Joash, and from 2 K. xiv. 25 that they were subjugated by Jeroboam II. But it is not improbable that, during the anarchy which followed his death, they became independent again and went so far as to destroy Beth-Arbel in a raid. Sellin suggests, 'as Shallum destroyed the house of Jeroboam in the day of Ibleam'; but this is too drastic a change. As no certainty is attainable, it is better to admit that the allusion is to some event not elsewhere recorded and of which we know nothing. Whatever it was, it made a deep impression on Hosea, not only on its own account, but as a presage of evils to come. 'The fate of Beth-Arbel might be repeated in every town in Israel. The prophet himself predicts it of Samaria (xiii. 16, see ix. 13). It was to him an event of terrible importance as things were in his day. Hosea could write this passage. No interpolator would have thought of doing so' (Cannon, *Expositor*, April 1924).

*the mother . . . with her children.* This belongs naturally to the laying waste of Beth-Arbel in the day of battle: *the mother being dashed in pieces with her children.* It was accompanied by a merciless and indiscriminate slaughter. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 11. If the line be taken as a prophecy, it should probably be read in conjunction with the end of the preceding line: *In the day of battle the mother*

with her children. 15 <sup>1</sup> So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: at daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *So shall it be done unto you at Beth-el.*

*shall be dashed in pieces with her children.* According to this view, *mother* = the land, and *children* = the cities (so G. A. Smith).

15. *So shall Bethel do.* Beth-el, as a centre of impure worship, is the source and cause of the coming disaster. So the Heb. text must be understood. But the LXX suggests a better reading: *Thus will I do to you, O house of Israel.* 'Your great wickedness' is lit. the wickedness of your wickedness; cf. 'Holy of Holies'.

*at daybreak.* The early morning, usually a time of brightness and hope, instead of bringing a change of fortune, will see the king himself cut off. Some codices of Heb. and Gk. read 'like the dawn', i.e. the king will be undone as suddenly as comes the break of day after a night of sleep.

#### *Additional Note on References to Judah in Hosea*

Of the fourteen references to Judah, four favourable and the rest unfavourable, all, or all but two (Harper), have been ascribed to a hand or hands other than that of Hosea himself. As it is difficult to suppose that a Judæan editor would have made interpolations representing Judah in two different lights, recourse has been had to two editors, one for the interpolations favourable to Judah after the defeat of Sennacherib in 701, the other for the unfavourable allusions after the year 586, but Harper assigns the twelve references which he rejects to the post-exilic age.

Of the favourable references, i. 7 is clearly out of place in its present context, but it is so Hoseanic in thought and language that it ought to fit in somewhere, and Cannon has suggested a good place for it (see note *ad loc.*). The allusion in i. 11 (Heb. ii. 2) is rejected with the passage in which it occurs (i. 10—ii. 1). But the main reason for the rejection of i. 10—ii. 1 is its awkwardness in its present position, and a better position has been found for it (see pp. 1 f., 10). iv. 15 is retained by Harper, and xi. 12 b contains a doubtful word, but an allusion to Judah here is not unnatural.

With regard to the unfavourable references, v. 5 is retained by Wellhausen and Harper. In the five references which occur in v. 8—vi. 6, it is asserted that 'Judah' has been substituted for 'Israel', but it is clear that the passage is addressed to both Judah and Israel, whether we accept Alt's theory as to its date or not. In vi. 11 the allusion to Judah is just as natural as that in v. 5. The reference in viii. 14 to the fortified cities of Judah is as true to facts as the statement that the princes of Judah were like removers of landmarks in v. 10, and it is unlikely that a post-exilic editor would have made such a remark. There seems to be no good reason to doubt the originality of the word in x. 11 (see note *ad loc.*), but it is difficult to explain its presence in xii. 2.

Two general observations may be made in this connexion :

(1) No other eighth-century prophet restricted himself to the affairs of one only of the two kingdoms. Amos was a prophet (it has recently been argued that he was a citizen) of Israel, but he does not hesitate to refer to Judah and Jerusalem (ii. 4-6, vi. 1). Isaiah was deeply concerned with the politics and fortunes of Judah, but he alludes to Ephraim both incidentally and specifically (vii. 8, xvii. 3, xxviii. 1-4). Micah couples Jerusalem with Samaria, and predicts the ruin of the latter (i. 5-7), and expects the restoration of Judah to include the remnant of Israel (ii. 12).

(2) No prophet, least of all Hosea, could fail to notice the difference between the political conditions of the two kingdoms or refrain from 'casting a wistful glance on Judah and its royal house as contrasted with the rabble of murderers who had ruined the kingdom of Israel'. On the other hand, Hosea must have been deeply conscious of the religious and moral state of Judah, which was much the same as that of Israel. On both grounds, it would be cause for surprise if his thoughts did not turn sometimes to the sister kingdom (Cannon, *Expositor*, Feb. 1924). It would add considerable force to this argument if we could be sure that Hölischer is correct in assuming that his home was in Benjamin on the often-disputed borderland between North and South (see pp. xi f.).

To the foregoing considerations it may be added (3) that the figure of the marriage-relationship in chs. i-iii is not without its bearing on the authenticity of the 'Judah' references. 'To hold that Hosea meant all this to apply to Northern Israel only would be to maintain that for him Northern Israel alone was Jahveh's spouse, that it alone enjoyed the privileges of His love, and that Judah was in no sense a part of the religious-social community of Israel' (Buttenwieser, pp. 236 f.). Cf. also ix. 10 and xi. 1 f.

### XI. 1-11. *The Fatherhood of God*

With the possible exception of ii. 2-23, this is the finest and most moving passage in the whole book. Under the figure of a father tending and nursing his little son, Hosea depicts Jahveh's love for Israel with supreme tenderness and beauty. We have the same antithesis as in ch. ii between Jahveh's infinite love and Israel's base ingratitude, the same thought of restoration after punishment. In its central idea, the fatherhood of God, this passage comes very near to the gospel of the N.T., though in Hosea it is Israel as a nation that is always in view. It only remained for Jesus to apply the truth to God's relation to the individual.

Israel owed his existence as a nation to Jahveh's free choice. He began to love him when he was a child, and father-like He tended him and took care of him. But His love was all in vain. Israel turned from Him and served other gods. He must, therefore, go into exile, and see his cities destroyed. As the doom draws near, Jahveh's heart is torn between justice and mercy. How can He give Ephraim up to destruction? The answer is that, though the judgement must take its course, His people will not be utterly exterminated. His voice will call them back from exile.

### XI. 1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and

The passage (see *v.* 5) reflects the reign of Hoshea, when Assyria was already the virtual king of Canaan, and overtures were being made to Egypt.

1. *When Israel was a child.* For the third time in iv-xiv (Cf. ix. 10, x. 9) Hosea goes back to Israel's early history, this time to the period of the Exodus, referred to in ii. 15 as 'the days of her youth'. Contrast this passage and ii. 15 with ii. 3, where the nation's existence seems to date from the wanderings in the wilderness, and with vii. 9, where Israel's hair is sprinkled with grey. Here the prophet sees 'across the confused and vicious years' what G. A. Smith in a fine passage (pp. 316 ff.) calls 'the romance of the early history of his people'. God might have chosen Egypt, Assyria or Phoenicia for His purposes, but He chose instead the 'despised captive of one of them, a people without a country or a history . . . a child people and a slave'. The verb 'loved' is inchoative (cf. 'hated' in ix. 15): *I began (or learned) to love him.*

*and called my son out of Egypt.* Jahveh not only set His love on Israel, but also gave him a career; cf. Ex. iv. 22, where Jahveh's son leaves Egypt in order to 'serve' Him. Cf. also xii. 9, xiii. 4 for further references to the Exodus. According to R.V., 'My son' is a synonym for and parallel to 'Israel'. Some scholars find unnecessary difficulties in this rendering. G. A. Smith renders: *and from Egypt I called (him) to be My son.* Others follow LXX and read; *and out of Egypt I called his sons (Sellin: My sons).* Cf. Jer. xxxi. 9, 20 for Ephraim as Jahveh's son.

The title 'My son' is sometimes questioned on the ground that elsewhere Hosea always speaks of the relation between Jahveh and Israel as that of husband and wife. But the passage already contains in *v.* 3 the simile of father and son, and we have no right to tie a prophet down to one metaphor. It would seem that (apart from ii. 3) Hosea thought of Jahveh's fatherhood especially in connexion with His choice of the infant Israel to be His people from the land of Egypt, that he looked upon the period during which the nation wandered in the wilderness as one of wooing and betrothal (ii. 14 ff.), and that he conceived the marriage-relation as beginning with the settlement in Canaan, when the nation, no longer in its early youth, was called to live in Jahveh's house. 'The prophet conceived Israel as owing its very being to a love which, when it had brought the nation into existence and cherished it into strength, added this also, that it chose the people to bear Jahveh's name before the world' (Welch, pp. 108 ff.).

'Out of Egypt have I called My son' is quoted in Matt. ii. 15. Whether the quotation is a purely verbal one after the manner of the Rabbis, or whether the compiler was using a collection of Messianic texts, matters little. Christian piety has felt that the

called my son out of Egypt. 2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. 3 Yet I taught Ephraim to go; <sup>1</sup>I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *he took them on his arms.*

description of Israel as Jahveh's son was applicable in part at least to the one perfect Israelite (Cheyne). It may be that the compiler of the Gospel wishes to suggest the thought that, by spending His infancy in Egypt, the Messiah repeats in His own life-story the history of His people (*New Commentary*).

2. *As they called them.* Jahveh had chosen Israel and called him to be His son and to set an example of true religion, but he had been a stubborn and rebellious child. According to our present text, the first 'they' and the second 'them' must refer to Moses and the prophets. The LXX suggests a better reading: *The more I called them, the farther they went from Me* (lit. according to my calling them, so they went from Me). The rest of the verse illustrates what is meant by departure from Jahveh: *they sacrificing unto the Baals, and sending up smoke to the images* (cf. ii. 8-13, xiii. 1, 2). It is Hosea's view that all Jahveh's efforts made through the prophets only served to deepen Israel's obstinacy (cf. Is. vi. 10, Jer. vii. 25 f.).

3. *Yet I taught Ephraim to go.* The 'I' is emphatic in contrast to the Baals after whom Israel ran. Render, *Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them up on Mine arms* (so LXX), *but they did not understand that I healed them.* Not only did Jahveh guide Ephraim's tottering footsteps, but when he was weary He carried him in His arms (Dt. i. 31, xxxii. 11; Is. lxiii. 9), and when he fell and bruised himself, he healed him (a common figure in Hosea, cf. v. 13, vi. 1, vii. 1, and Ex. xv. 26). 'Jahveh was gracious as one is gracious to a child who owes everything to the care without which it cannot live' (Welch). For 'they knew not', cf. ii. 5-8.

4. *I drew them with cords of a man.* If the Heb. text be correct, the figure changes and becomes that of 'a team of bullocks in charge of a kind driver'; cf. x. 11. G. A. Smith imagines them toiling up a steep road. 'There is no need now for the rough ropes by which frisky animals are kept to their work; but the driver, coming to his beasts' heads, by the gentle touch of his hand at their mouths and by words of sympathy draws them after him.' *With cords of a man* (i.e. either 'humane cords' or 'cords with which one would lead a man, not a bullock') *I used to draw them, with bands of love.* Cf. Jer. xxxi. 3; John vi. 44.

bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them. 5 He

*as they that take off the yoke.* The sense requires that we should read the sing., as the LXX suggests: *and I used to be to them as one that lifteth the yoke from upon their jaws.* G. A. Smith pictures the humane driver easing the yoke to prevent it from pressing and rubbing against the beasts, and then resting and feeding them when they reach the top of the hill. 'Jaws' is a difficulty. We should expect 'shoulders' in this connexion, and 'from upon' instead of 'on'. We must suppose either that the meaning is 'one that lifted the yoke from the neck to the jaws', to ease the pressure on the neck, or that the yoke was in those days connected with the jaws in such a manner that the animal was unable to eat with comfort when wearing it.

*and I laid meat before them.* This translation cannot be obtained from the text as it stands. Pointing 'and I laid' differently, reading 'food' for the Heb. 'I would cause to eat' (an anomalous form) and taking *lō'* ('not') from the beginning of the next verse (so LXX), we get *and I used to extend food towards him.* Some connect 'and I laid' with a form meaning 'gently' ('and dealing gently with him, I used to give him food'). Others render *and I inclined unto him* (and) *caused him to eat.*

Marti (on the basis of LXX) solves all difficulties by reading 'and then I became to him as one that smiteth a man on his cheeks; I turned against him and overcame him'. But this is too ingenious. More attractive is Sellin's emendation: reading *'ūl* ('suckling'; better *'ōlāl*) for *'ōl 'al* and omitting 'their jaws' as a gloss, he renders, 'and I was to them as one who brings up a suckling, and I inclined unto him, gave him to eat'. Melville Scott, reading *'ōlāl* ('babe' or 'suckling') for 'yoke upon', 'to their bosom' (a *q* instead of an *h*) for 'their jaws', and (with some Heb. texts) 'I used to carry' for 'I used to make eat' (a *b* for a *k*), renders, 'I was to them as they that lift up a babe on their bosom, and I stooped down unto him and carried him' (cf. Nu. xi. 12; Is. xl. 11; Jer. xxxi. 9). Either of these emendations would get rid of the sudden change of metaphor and make an excellent parallel to the previous verse. Combining the two, I would suggest: *and I was to them as one that lifteth a babe to his bosom, and I would bend down to him and feed him.* Another suggestion, which involves only two slight changes in the Hebrew text (the omission of a *y* and the substitution of a *y* for an *h*), gives the following: *and I was to them as one that lifteth a babe ('ūl) to the cheeks. . . .*

If we could be certain that one of these emendations is correct, we should get a consistent and beautiful picture of Jahveh as a Father teaching little Israel to walk, taking him into His arms

shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. 6 And the sword shall <sup>1</sup>fall upon his cities, and shall consume his bars, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels. 7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they call

<sup>1</sup> Or, *rage against*.

when he is tired, healing his little wounds when he falls, guiding him with leading-strings, caressing him, stooping down to him, and feeding him when hungry.

5-7. 'Upon this gracious passage there follows one of those swift revulsions of feeling, which we have learned to expect in Hosea' (G. A. Smith). As Israel will not respond, he must undergo that discipline which a loving Father cannot withhold.

5. *He shall not return*. Transfer 'not' to the end of the previous verse, changing it to 'to him' (so LXX and almost all moderns); otherwise the statement will be a contradiction of viii. 13, ix. 3-6, xi. 11. The prophet had both Egypt and Assyria in mind as places of exile, because the forces of both countries were potential invaders; cf. Is. vii. 18. Hosea left the destination vague; but the fact of exile was certain. Render *and* (= 'or') instead of 'but'. There is a play on the two meanings of the verb *shūbh*: he shall *return* unto the land of Egypt, or Assyria shall be his king, because they have refused to *turn* (to Me).

6. *And the sword*. The sword = the power of war personified; cf. Ez. xiv. 17. Render, *So the sword shall whirl in his cities and make an end of his bars* (i.e. the bars of his gates, part of his defences). Some reject 'and make an end of his bars' as a doublet of 'shall whirl in his cities'. Sellin reads 'his sons' (*n* for *d*), and 'their bones' instead of 'because of their counsels'. Most scholars read 'in their fortresses' (cf. x. 14), but the LXX supports the Heb. text. 'Their counsels' would refer to Israel's foreign policy which was bound to bring about his ruin. G. A. Smith suggests that the whole verse, which weakens the climax of v. 5, may be an insertion.

7. *my people are bent to backsliding*. Lit. 'are hung towards My turning away', i.e. turning away (defection) from Me. This seems to give the ground for the judgement just pronounced: the people's aversion from Jahveh. G. A. Smith: 'My people have a bias from Me'.

*though they call them*. 'They' = the prophets. R.V. may mean that, though the prophets summon men to worship Jahveh, their praise of Him is unreal. Instead of 'to him that is on high', some would translate 'upwards'. So G. A. Smith, who renders, 'though they are calling them upwards, not one can lift them', and paraphrases: 'not one of the prophets is able to raise



them to *him that is* on high, none at all will <sup>1</sup>exalt *him*.  
 8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *lift himself up*.

a people sunk in sin and ignorance.' Others regard the last verb as intransitive: 'not one stirreth to rise.' For other renderings (10 in each half of the verse), see Harper.

Most scholars regard the verse as hopelessly corrupt. Harper rewrites it. Others emend more or less drastically. Sellin (with a minimum of alterations): 'But My people is sick (*h* for *t*) of their defection (cf. xiv. 4, 'I will heal their backsliding'), and call to Baal (*ba'al* for '*al*'), who does not at all bring up (*sc.* a suckling; see note on v. 4)'.  
 8. The prophets may fail and the people persist in their obstinacy, but Jahveh's is an unchanging love, a love which cannot finally reject the child He has adopted as His own. *How can I give thee up, Ephraim, surrender thee, Israel? How can I give thee up like Admah, set thee as Seboim?* The answer is, 'I cannot'. 'For Jahveh to give up Israel was as hard as for Hosea to cast from his home the children he had fondled in his arms and taught to walk' (Gordon). Admah and Seboim are two out of the five cities of the plain mentioned in Gen. xiv. 2; cf. Dt. xxix. 23; Jer. xlix. 18. They are not mentioned in Gen. xix as having been overthrown, but there was evidently a tradition that they shared the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, the towns to which Amos and Isaiah allude as classic examples of divine judgement (Am. iv. 11; Is. i. 9 f., iii. 9, xiii. 19; cf. Matt. x. 15; Luke x. 12).

*my heart is turned within me.* Render, *My heart is turned* (i.e. altered) *upon Me, My compassions* (lit. consolations) *grow hot together.* The preposition *upon* adds pathos to the expression of emotion, by emphasizing the person whom the emotion affects. The prospect of Ephraim's doom is almost more than Jahveh can bear. For a discussion of the bearing of this passage on the doctrine of the passibility of God, see H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Marriage of Hosea*, in *The Baptist Quarterly*, July 1931.

9. *I will not execute.* Judgement must takes its course, but it will be tempered with mercy; Jahveh must punish, but He will not exterminate. Render, *I will not carry into effect the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim . . . and I will not come* (and) *exterminate* (reading 'ābhā'ēr for b'ir, 'in the city', which is meaningless).

for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not <sup>1</sup>enter into the city. 10 They shall

<sup>1</sup> Or, *come in wrath.*

*for I am God and not man.* This gives the reason why Jahveh will not utterly destroy Israel. Because He is God and not man, He is unchangeable (cf. Hab. i. 12) and His purpose of love must be carried out. Cf. Ps. cxxx and Collect for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

G. A. Smith and others read this verse as a last appeal to Israel to repent. But it is more natural to understand it as a statement of Jahveh's intention. Marti, Hölscher, and others turn the verse into a question: 'Shall I not carry into effect . . . shall I not turn to destroy . . . shall I not exterminate?' The meaning would then be that, while compassion might divert a man from his purpose, it cannot divert Jahveh—the exact opposite of the interpretation adopted above.

10-11. G. A. Smith and others, on the ground that they contain expressions unusual in Hosea and are not connected historically or logically with the previous verse, regard these verses as an interpolation added during the Exile. But the comparison of Jahveh to a lion occurs twice elsewhere in Hosea (v. 14, xiii. 7 f.), and that of Ephraim to a dove once (vii. 11); Hosea regarded it as certain that Israel would be conquered and deported (ix. 3-17, x. 5, xi. 5, xiii. 16), and just as certain (unless we excise ch. xiv in the interests of a theory) that Israel would be converted and return; and, on the interpretation adopted above, the difficulty about the context disappears. Moreover, the fact that no event corresponding to this prediction ever happened, or could ever be thought likely to happen at the time when the addition was alleged to have been made, seems decisive against any theory of interpolation. Hosea could make the prediction, because he could feel the hope (see Cannon, *Expositor*, April 1924). Jahveh cannot give His people up, or deal with them as He dealt with the cities of the plain. They will indeed be punished, but He will not utterly destroy them. They will go into exile, but He will call them home, and they will dwell once more in their own houses.

10. *They shall walk after the LORD.* A common figure for service and obedience (cf. Dt. xiii. 5; 1 K. xiv. 8), here resolved into a literal following of Jahveh. Render, *After Jahveh they will go, like a lion He will roar; when He roareth, sons will come trembling from the West.* In contrast to the figure in v. 14, xiii. 7, Jahveh is here compared to a lion calling its young. 'From the West' is lit. 'from the sea', i.e. the coastlands; cf. Is. xi. 11 (R.V. m.). Sellin, who emends to make Jahveh speak in these verses, reads 'My children from Egypt'.

walk after the LORD, who shall roar like a lion: for he shall roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west. 11 They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith the LORD.

11. *They shall come trembling.* Lit. 'they shall tremble from'. The context suggests that it is the trembling of eagerness, rather than of timidity, which is required; hence some would render here and in v. 10, *they shall come hurriedly*. In vii. 11 the point of comparison is the stupidity of the dove; here it is the speed of the sparrows and the doves (Is. lx. 8; Ps. lv. 6 f.).

*I will make them to dwell in their houses.* As the preposition means 'on', not 'in', we should either render *I will cause them to sit on their nests* (for 'house' in this sense, cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 3), or read (with LXX) *I will bring them back to their homes*.

#### XI. 12—XII. 14 (Heb. xii. 1-15). *Lessons from History*

Ephraim is utterly false and faithless, as his relations with Assyria and Egypt show. Jahveh will punish him. He has the faults of his ancestor, Jacob, who supplanted his brother in the womb. (But let him remember Jacob's good points: he persisted earnestly with God at Peniel and found Him at Beth-el.) Ephraim is a merchant who defrauds and gets rich by cheating, but Jahveh will make him a nomad instead of a merchant. Since the warnings of the prophets have been in vain, his shrines at Gilead and Gilgal with their false worship are already destroyed (Jacob, by the way, was a faithful lover; and it was by a prophet that he was led out of Egypt), and for all his bitter provocation of Jahveh he will be repaid.

This passage contains four allusions to the story of Jacob (v. 3b-4a, 4b-6, 12), and one to the Exodus (v. 13), which are regarded by many scholars as interpolations, on the ground that they interrupt the argument and disagree with the point of view taken in the 'original' material. Against this view Cannon (*Expositor*, April 1924) contends (1) that the chapter is an illustration of Hosea's peculiar style, his want of connexion, his sudden transitions; (2) that it is possible to discern his line of thought; but (3) that the links of connexion are too subtle to have suggested themselves to an interpolator. The inclusion of these allusions may be explained in some such way as this: Hosea has mentioned Jacob as the arch-deceiver and as such a type of the Israel of the prophet's own times. But, he hastens to add, there were good traits in his character which Israel would have done well to emulate. Jacob persisted with God at Peniel, even to tears, and prevailed (contrast vi. 4). He found God at Beth-el, and God spoke to him there (contrast the situation at Beth-el now, iv. 15, x. 5-8). He was a faithful lover and husband (as against chs. i-iii and Hosea *passim*). And, having alluded to Israel's disregard for the prophets (cf. v. 11, vi. 5, ix. 7), he is reminded, and he reminds the

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit: <sup>1</sup> but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Holy One.

**XII. 1** Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *and Judah is yet unstedfast with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful.*

nation, of the fact that Israel owes its national existence and preservation under God to a prophet. It would be more logical if we could transfer *v.* 12, where it seems out of place, to a position between 3*a* and 3*b*; but we cannot expect logic from an emotional prophet like Hosea.

xii. 1 suggests the reign of Hoshea (2 K. xvii. 4), as also the reference to Gilead as having become a thing of naught (xii. 11), which demands a date later than the Assyrian campaign of 734–732 (2 K. xv. 29).

**XI. 12.** *falsehood . . . deceit.* Jahveh is represented as so surrounded by Israel's *lies* and *deceit* that He can see nothing else. Cf. iv. 2, vi. 7, vii. 1, 3, 13, x. 4, 13, where the same charge is made, and with the same words. The next verse indicates that the treachery lay in his dealings with Assyria and Egypt. Elsewhere Israel's foreign policy is described as folly (vii. 11) or ingratitude (vii. 15).

*but Judah yet ruleth with God.* Another side-glance at Judah. On the ground that the parallelism and the context (xii. 2) require that Judah, if mentioned at all, should be blamed, it is generally felt that these lines must be either rejected as an interpolation in the interests of Judah or emended in such a way as to give a bad sense to the words. Since 'ruleth' is not a possible translation, those who consider the lines to be post-exilic follow a suggestion of the LXX and read 'but Judah is yet known (i.e. of proved character; cf. Dt. i. 13–15) with God and faithful with the Holy One'. But it is possible to keep the present text and still obtain a bad sense by connecting the rare word translated 'ruleth' with an Arabic root meaning 'to be restless' and rendering, *and Judah is still wayward with God and with the Holy One* (who is) *faithful*. The sense would be further improved if *q'dhōshīm* (Holy One, plural of majesty) were pointed to read *q'dhēshīm* (cf. iv. 14; 1 K. xiv. 24, &c.): *and faithful to* (with) *temple-prostitutes*. If with Cannon, who renders 'but Judah is yet known to God and established with the Most Holy' and treats the lines as a reference to the divinely recognized and established monarchy in Judah, we adopt an interpretation favourable to Judah, we must either read 'Israel' for 'Judah' in xii. 2 or suppose that Hosea could speak favourably and unfavourably of Judah in the same passage.

**XII. 1.** *Ephraim feedeth on wind.* The verb may be translated 'feedeth on' as in R.V., 'delighteth in' or 'is associated with',

east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt. 2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will <sup>1</sup> punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his <sup>2</sup> manhood he

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *visit upon*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *strength*.

but G. A. Smith's *herdeth* is more forcible. Ephraim is described as a shepherd and a hunter, who tends not flocks, but the *wind* and hunts not game, but the deadly *sirocco*, unwholesome and destructive (cf. xiii. 15, where Assyria is likened to a south-east wind).

*he continually multiplieth lies and desolation.* Read (with LXX) *shāw'* for *shōdh*, *falsehood* and *destruction* not being a suitable combination, and render: *all day long he multiplieth falsehood and vanity (or fraud)*.

*a covenant with Assyria.* Ephraim's activities were deceitful, delusive, and disastrous, because they involved relations with other countries instead of reliance on Jahveh. Cf. v. 13, vii. 11, viii. 9, x. 4. 2 K. xvii. 4 and Is. xxx. 6f. are an interesting commentary on this verse. Oil, one of the principal products of Palestine (Dt. viii. 8; Ez. xvi. 19), was sent to Egypt, which had no oil, as a present; cf. Is. lvii. 9. Read perhaps (with Syr.) *they carry* for 'is carried'.

2. *a controversy with Judah.* Lit. Jahveh hath a *quarrel* or *contention* (cf. iv. 1) with Judah and (= even) to punish Jacob according to his ways. Grammar and sense almost compel us to omit 'and' (so LXX) and to read *Israel* for 'Judah'. The purpose of the contention is to punish Israel for the faithless conduct just mentioned.

3. *took his brother by the heel.* Cf. Gen. xxv. 26. This is said to be the earliest example of the adaptive use of history. But what is the lesson? According to some interpreters, Jacob is commended because even in the womb he was ambitious for God's blessing. But it seems preferable to understand him here as a bad example: his treatment of his brother before birth 'indicates that fatal characteristic of the nation which, as exhibited again and again in its history, has now reached the point at which punishment must be administered' (Harper). Cf. Gen. xxvii. 36, where as here and in Gen. xxv. 26 the verb '*āqabh*' ('to attack at the heel', and so *overreach*) is treated as the root of 'Jacob', for the same unfavourable sense.

*in his manhood he had power with God.* Having stated that Israel's deceptive character was 'inborn and ineradicable' (Harper),

<sup>1</sup> had power with God: 4 yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us; 5 <sup>2</sup> even the LORD, the God of hosts; the LORD is his

<sup>1</sup> Or, *stroke*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, for the LORD is the God of hosts.

Hosea remembers some of Jacob's good points and contrasts them with the bad traits in his descendants' character. Thus (v. 12) Jacob was a faithful lover: *and Jacob fled to the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife kept (sheep)*; cf. Gen. xxvii. 43, xxviii. 2, xxix. 18 ff., xxx. 31, xxxi. 38 ff. Jacob in his strength persisted with God, yea, persisted with an angel and prevailed. Moreover, he showed himself penitent: *he wept and begged mercy of Him*. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 24-32. Once more, Jacob found God at Bethel, and God spoke with him there; cf. Gen. xxviii. 10-22. *Sārāh* ('persevered' or 'persisted') is the presumed root of 'Israel' (cf. Gen. xxxii. 28), as *'āqabh* is that of 'Jacob'—another pun, or play on words. It may be noted that Hosea shows a knowledge of the patriarchal history as recorded by the Jahvist, but we cannot be certain that he is quoting from that document. The fact that 'he wept and begged mercy' is not in Genesis suggests that he was drawing from oral tradition. Welch (so also van Hoonacker) regards vv. 3-5 and 12 f. as extracts from versified temple-legends current in the sanctuary at Bethel.\*

*spake with us*. That is, in the person of our ancestor Jacob. Read (with Syr.) *with him*.

5. *even the LORD*. The Hebrew is 'and' in the sense of *as*

\* There can be little doubt that Skinner (*Genesis*, p. 411) is right in saying that in its fundamental conception the struggle at Peniel was neither a dream nor an allegory, but a real physical encounter in which Jacob measured his strength and skill against a divine antagonist. The god with whom the patriarch fought was not Jahveh originally, but a local deity, a spirit of the night who feared the dawn. Frazer (*Folklore in the O.T.*, p. 136) suggests that it was the spirit of the Jabbok, who resented the crossing of the river and sought to kill those who attempted it (cf. Ex. iv. 24); in which case the play on words between *yabbōq* and *yē'ābhēq*, 'he wrestled', would have a greater significance than appears on the surface.

Hebrew folklore related how Jacob overcame the spirit who held up his advance, but, when the story was adapted by J, the God who wrestled with the patriarch became Jahveh, and the writer's main interest in recording it was to account for the name *Israel* ('Perseverer with God') and the place-name *Peniel* ('Face of God'). The story has advanced a further stage when it appears in Hosea. Increasing sensitiveness to anthropomorphism is seen in the substitution of the Angel of Jahveh for Jahveh Himself, and the addition of the words 'he wept and begged mercy' turns Jacob's 'prevailing' into the success of penitent and importunate prayer. Cf. Charles Wesley's hymn, 'Come, O thou Traveller unknown', and see Driver, *Genesis*, pp. 294-7.

memorial. 6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgement, and wait on thy God continually.

7 <sup>1</sup> *He is* <sup>2</sup> a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his

<sup>1</sup> Or, As for *Canaan*, the &c.

<sup>2</sup> Or, a *Canaanite*. Heb. *Canaan*.

*truly as*, introducing a solemn asseveration. Most critics regard the couplet as a pietistic doxology interpolated into the text. If it is retained, render, *As truly as Jahveh is the God of hosts—Jahveh is His memorial* (i.e. name; cf. Ex. iii. 15)—*so thou with the help of thy God shouldst return*. The words are probably not addressed by Jahveh to Jacob, but by the prophet to Israel. Since God's character is such that He can be found by persistent prayer, let Israel return to Him. 'Jahveh of Hosts' or 'Jahveh, the God of Hosts' is a common title for God in O.T., the reference being sometimes to the heavenly beings or to heavenly bodies, sometimes to the armies of Israel. Which is the original reference we cannot say for certain. It may be that some early Semitic mythological idea lies behind the expression. See Cripps, *Amos*, pp. 330 ff. Sellin omits the doxology and reads, *but thou shalt dwell in thy tents* (like Jacob of old; cf. Gen. xxv. 27). In view of v. 9, this may be the correct reading, but the versions give no support.

6. *Keep mercy and judgement*. For *piety* and *justice*, both in relation to men, cf. iv. 1 f., vi. 6. The verse defines in what returning to Jahveh consists or, if Sellin's reading in v. 5 be adopted, to what a return to the simple life will lead: kindness and justice in their dealings with each other and faithfulness towards God.

*wait on thy God continually*. 'Wait' is used in the sense of 'wait eagerly'. *Hope on* would be a better translation.

7. *a trafficker*. In v. 1 it is Jahveh who is cheated; here they are cheating each other. Render, *Canaan! False balances in his hand, he loveth to practise extortion*. *Canaan* = Phoenicia (Gen. x. 15; Is. xxiii. 11), and since trading had for long been in the hands of the Canaanites, 'Canaanite' became a synonym for *merchant* (Job xli. 6; Prov. xxxi. 24; Zeph. i. 11; Ez. xvii. 4), as 'Chaldaean' became a synonym for 'astrologer'. Degenerate Israel was no better than a Canaanite (cf. Ez. xvi. 3), who was ever a deceiver (cf. *Odyssey*, xiv. 288 f.; Polybius, *De Virtute*, L. ix.); his highest aim was to become rich in spite of his past history which ought to have taught him better. For *false balances*, cf. Am. ii. 6, viii. 5; Prov. xi. 1. 'Practise extortion', lit. *to oppress* (e.g. by defrauding a labourer or dependant of his due; cf. Dt. xxviii. 33; Am. iv. 1), is the word used by Samuel in 1 S. xii. 3.

hand: he loveth to <sup>1</sup>oppress. 8 And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labours they shall find in me none iniquity that were sin. 9 But I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast. 10 I have also spoken unto the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *defraud*.

8. *And Ephraim said.* Ephraim defends himself. According to R.V., he congratulates himself on his wealth, and on having for the most part obtained it honestly. If from time to time he has not been strictly honest, those trifling lapses will not be reckoned as sins. But (as Cheyne points out) this implies an unnatural distinction between 'iniquity' and 'sin'. It is better, therefore, to adopt Wellhausen's slight emendations (which LXX supports) in the latter half of the verse, and read (Jahveh or the prophet speaking), *All his profits* (though he gave them up as a ransom for his soul) *would not suffice for the guilt which he has incurred.*

9. *But I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt.* Render, *For I, Jahveh, am thy God.* Cf. xiii. 4, xi. 1.

*again make thee to dwell in tents.* This is not a promise of restoration, but a warning that Jahveh is about to destroy Israel's commerce and civilization and 'reduce them to their ancient level of life in tents as in the time of their gathering at Horeb' (G. A. Smith). The analogy of ii. 14 ff., however, suggests that the threat contains within it the germ of a promise. The destruction of the nation so often announced will not be complete: they will be brought down to the condition of nomads (cf. ix. 17), a nation without king, country, or the apparatus of worship (cf. iii. 4), but it may be that in the wilderness of exile Jahveh will find His people as He found them in the desert-wanderings in the days of their youth.

*as in the days of the solemn feast.* If R.V. translates correctly, the reference is to the Feast of Booths, the most popular and the most joyous of the three great festivals, when the people celebrated the end of the harvest by dwelling in tents. This they did at present for their own amusement, but soon they would be doing it from bitter compulsion (Cheyne). As this interpretation is somewhat forced, it is better to understand *mō'ēdh* here in the sense of *solemn assembly* (G. A. Smith renders 'as in the days of the Tryst'), the reference being to God's meeting His people and speaking to them in the wilderness of Sinai (Ex. xix). It is unnecessary to read either 'as in the days of old' or 'as in the days of thy youth'.

10. *spoken unto the prophets.* As often, before passing sentence,



prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and <sup>1</sup>by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes. 11 Is Gilead iniquity? they are altogether vanity; in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks: yea, their altars <sup>2</sup>are as heaps in the furrows of the field. 12 And Jacob fled into the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*. 13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he <sup>3</sup>preserved. 14 Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly: therefore shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *by the hand*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *shall be*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *kept*.

Jahveh reminds Israel that it is not for want of warnings that their doom is coming. Word, vision, allegory—no means have been left untried. Render, *And I used to speak unto (or, possibly, by) the prophets, for it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets uttered parables.*

11. *Is Gilead iniquity?* The Hebrew is lit. 'If Gilead be worthlessness (i.e. given to idolatry), surely they (the people of Gilead) have become a thing of naught'. We should probably read 'in' or 'with', instead of 'if', and render, *In (or with) Gilead was worthlessness, nothing but a thing of naught have they become.* Cf. vi. 8, where Gilead is mentioned as a place of evil repute.

*in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks.* As there is nothing reprehensible in this practice, some would read (with Wellhausen) *lashshēdim, to the demons*, instead of *sh'wārīm*. The LXX reading, *princes (sārīm) sacrifice*, is not, however, impossible. For Gilgal (west of Jordan as Gilead is east), see note on iv. 15.

*yea, their altars are as heaps.* 'Heaps' (*gallim*) is a play on Gilgal and Gilead (cf. for a similar pun the Hebrew of Am. v. 5).

12. See on v. 3.

13. This verse belongs logically to v. 10, as v. 12 belongs to v. 3. This is the first mention of Moses as a prophet; cf. Dt. xviii. 15, xxxiv. 10. *Preserved* (or, perhaps, *shepherded*) refers to the wanderings in the wilderness.

14. *Ephraim hath provoked.* This verse looks back to v. 10. Israel has been warned time after time, but the only result has been that he has given bitter provocation to Jahveh.

*therefore shall his blood be left upon him.* Render, *therefore shall He cast his blood-guiltiness* (lit. 'his bloods', i.e. the blood of those he has murdered) *upon him, and for his insult* (i.e. the insult to Jahveh in the nation's idolatry; cf. for the thought, Is. lxxv. 7) *his Lord will repay him.* If we were at liberty to rearrange Hosea's oracles, v. 11 (transferred to follow this verse) would make a better climax.

**XIII. 1** When Ephraim <sup>1</sup>spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel: but when he <sup>2</sup>offended in Baal, he died. **2** And now they sin more and more, and have

<sup>1</sup> Or, *spake with trembling &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *became guilty.*

**XIII** (Heb. xiii. 1—xiv. 1). *Samaria's doom is inevitable*

This chapter sums up all that has gone before: Israel's early promise and Jahveh's tender care; Israel's forgetfulness and declension to idolatry; the weakness of the kings and the stupidity of the people; the inevitability of the coming doom.

Ephraim was once a power in the land, but his greatness as good as died when he gave himself up to Baal-worship and idolatry: he shall vanish like cloud and dew, chaff and smoke (*vv.* 1-3). Because of his ingratitude for Jahveh's loving care, shown in his past history, his only Saviour must become his enemy and devour him like a wild animal (*vv.* 4-8). His kings are powerless to help, and they too will be removed (*vv.* 9-11). Full of guilt and unprepared to meet his fate, Jahveh cannot deliver Ephraim. Death and Sheol must do their worst, and punishment take its inevitable course: drought, invasion, and the horrors of war (*vv.* 12-16).

The desperate sound of this chapter points to the last great distress of the year 725, when Hoshea's fate was sealed and the siege of Samaria began (Sellin).

**XIII. 1.** *When Ephraim spake, there was trembling.* There are many interpretations of this line, but none better than that which is represented by R.V. There was a time when Ephraim's reputation stood high, and the other tribes treated him with reverence and respect. Hosea may be thinking of the days of the Judges, or of the reign of Jeroboam I when the bull-images were set up, or generally of the acknowledged supremacy of Ephraim in Israel's history. In the second line the verb should be pointed to read 'he was exalted' or better (with Syr.), *a prince was he in Israel.*

*when he offended in Baal.* Render, *when he became guilty* (or *incurred guilt*) *through the Baal, he died* (morally, spiritually, and in a political sense). Cf. Gen. ii. 17; Prov. ix. 18; 1 Tim. v. 6. Ephraim had been dying ever since he took to Baal-worship, which sapped and undermined his strength (cf. v. 12). The time of his actual death as a nation was at hand.

**2.** *And now, &c.* The Israel of Hosea's day is no better than the Ephraim of old; *they continue to sin* in their worship of idols, which they make *according to their own skill* (or, changing one letter with LXX, *according to their own model*)—*the work of smiths, all of it.* Cf. Is. xl—xliv, and see notes on Hos. viii. 4-6. In condemning the manufacture of idols, Hosea prepared the way for his successors.

made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let <sup>1</sup> the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. 4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou <sup>2</sup> shalt know no god but me, and beside me there is no saviour. 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the sacrificers of men.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *knowest.*

*they say of them.* Render, *to them* (i.e. to the idols) *they are speaking*, as though they could hear. But the verb usually requires what is said to follow; hence some would insert 'ēlōhīm ('gods', or better 'God') and translate, *to them they are saying, 'O God' or of them they are saying, 'God'* (i.e. they call them 'God'). There is, however, a further difficulty at the end of the verse. The Hebrew is lit. 'the sacrificers of men'. This might refer to human sacrifice (Mi. vi. 7), but we have no evidence that such sacrifice was offered to the steer-gods, and, if it were, it would scarcely be mentioned and dismissed in this casual way. It is better, therefore, to assume with Kimchi and most moderns, that it is an idiomatic expression = *the men that sacrifice* (cf. Is. xxix. 19, 'the poor ones of men', and Mi. v. 5, 'the princes of men'). Better still, perhaps, would it be to read (with LXX), '*To them*' (i.e. to the calves), *they are saying, 'offer sacrifice'* (cf. 1 K. xii. 27, 32)—*men kiss calves!* For the kiss of homage to an idol, cf. 1 K. xix. 18.

3. *as the morning cloud.* See note on vi. 4.

*as the chaff.* Cf. for the figure, Is. xvii. 13, xli. 15 f.; Ps. i. 4. Render, *as the chaff that whirleth up from the threshing-floor, and as smoke from the lattice.* The latter comparison is not found elsewhere. *Lattice* may be an opening in the roof (chimney) or in the wall (window). This people which worships the Baal, makes images, and kisses calves shall vanish like mist, chaff, or smoke.

4. *from the land of Egypt.* Cf. xii. 9; also ii. 15, ix. 3, xi. 1. After 'I, Jahveh am thy God', the LXX inserts: 'who made firm the heavens and founded the earth, whose hands founded all the host of heaven, and I did not show them to thee that thou mightest walk after them, and I led thee'. This reads like a reminiscence of Amos, but it does not suit the context and cannot be original.

*thou shalt know.* Rather, *thou knowest.* Cf. Dt. xxxii. 12. Israel knows no other god as saviour. No other god has intervened on his behalf.

5. *I did know thee.* Cf. Am. iii. 2, 'You only have I known',

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me. 7 Therefore am I unto them as a lion: as a leopard will I watch by the way: 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart: and there will I devour them like a lion; the wild beast shall tear them. 9 <sup>1</sup>It is

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Thou art destroyed, O Israel; for thou &c.*

i.e. chosen to show favour to. Most scholars follow the LXX and Syr. (changing *d* into *r*) and read, *I fed thee*. The 'I' is emphatic: *it was I and no other who knew (or fed) thee*.

6. *According to their pasture*. R.V. translates literally; but, assuming that pasture is a noun with the force of an infinitive, we may render, *When they were fed, they filled themselves*. The second 'they were filled' is in the Hebrew 'they filled'. This is probably an error for the infinitive absolute. If so, it would strengthen the preceding verb: *they filled themselves full*. Enjoying Jahveh's gifts, Israel gave no thought to the Giver; cf. ii. 8, iv. 7, x. 1.

*forgotten me*. Cf. ii. 13; Dt. viii. 14; also Dt. vi. 11 f., xxxi. 20, xxxii. 15, 18.

7. *Therefore am I unto them as a lion*. Render, *I will be . . . as a roaring-lion*, either understanding the pf. with *waw* consecutive as a prophetic pf. or pointing differently with the LXX. He who was, and might have continued to be, their Saviour must now be their destroyer. The vengeance that will overtake them will be like the fierceness of a lion with its prey; it will come swiftly like the leap of a leopard, and relentlessly like the pounce of a bear robbed of its cubs. Cf. v. 12, 14, vii. 11 f.

*as a leopard will I watch by the way*. *Shūr* may = 'to lurk', or it may be connected with an Arabic root = *to spring suddenly*, like a lion on its prey. LXX, Syr., and Vulg. point differently and read, *on the way to Assyria*. This is probably correct.

8. *I will meet them as a bear*. Render, *pounce or fall on them* (lit. 'encounter'). Cf. 2 S. xvii. 8; Lam. iii. 10; Prov. xvii. 12. Not the 'caul' (i.e. the *pericardium*), but *that which encloses the heart*, viz. the breast.

*there*. That is, on the way to Assyria. Some would read for this line (after LXX), *and lions of the forest shall devour them there* (Sellin: 'and dogs shall eat their flesh'; cf. 2 K. ix. 36). This makes a good parallel to the next line (*and wild beasts of the open country shall tear them in pieces*), and the two lines together would indicate the result of the preceding four. The simplest emendation would be to read *m* for ' and point the words to mean, *and dogs shall eat them there*.

9. A.V. and R.V. are attempts to translate an impossible text.

thy destruction, O Israel, <sup>1</sup> that *thou art* against me, against thy help. 10 Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? 11 I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath. 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up: his sin is laid up in store. 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come

<sup>1</sup> Or, *for in me, in thy help*—Or, *but in me is thy help*. Some ancient versions have, *who shall help?*

With the combined assistance of LXX and Syr. we obtain the following, which makes good sense and (apart from vowel-points) involves no change other than *m* for *b*: *I have destroyed thee, O Israel. Yea, who is thy help?*

10. *Where now is thy king?* The answer is 'Nowhere'; for such kings as Israel possesses are powerless. Cf. x. 3. 'Judges' (cf. vii. 7) seem to be used here for 'princes' (iii. 4, vii. 3, 5, viii. 10). Most scholars follow Houtsma, who (supported by LXX and Syr.) reads, *Where is thy king now, that he may save thee, and all thy princes that they may do thee justice?*

*that he may save thee.* 'It is the irony of history that the last king of Israel should have borne the proud name, Hoshea' ('a saving')—Sellin.

*Give me a king.* The allusion here and in the next verse is not to the choice of Saul, but to the sad story of the self-chosen dynasties of the Northern Kingdom, which experience had proved to be a failure.

11. *I have given thee a king.* It is possible to take 'king' as a collective and render, *I give thee kings* from time to time *and take them away*. 'The frequent and tragic successions upon the throne . . . were to a pragmatic people a sign of the divine disapproval' (*New Commentary*). But it is better to understand the verse as a reference to the coming dethronement of Hoshea and the dissolution of the monarchy (cf. iii. 4).

12. *bound up.* Ephraim's iniquity will not be forgotten. It is tied up as in a bag for safe custody (cf. Dt. xxxii. 34; Job xiv. 17) and laid by in store (cf. Job xxi. 19) till the day of reckoning comes. Cf. Ro. ii. 4 ff. 'In modern language Ephraim has a buried complex, which is due to his refusal to face a new birth' (Povah).

13. *The sorrows of a travailing woman.* *The pangs of travail* is a common figure for anguish and distress (cf. Is. xiii. 8, xxi. 3; Mi. iv. 9; Jer. iv. 31, xiii. 21; Matt. xxiv. 8; 1 Thess. v. 3). Here it aptly describes 'an inevitable period of affliction which no power can turn aside' (Harper).

upon him : he is an unwise son ; <sup>1</sup> for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children. 14 I will ransom them from the <sup>2</sup> power of <sup>3</sup> the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, <sup>4</sup> where are thy plagues ?

<sup>1</sup> Or, *when it is time, he standeth not in &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *hand.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *Sheol.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *I will be.*

*he is an unwise son.* A rapid change of figure. Ephraim, a parturient woman, suddenly becomes the child that should be born. The child fails to do his part in the womb, thus protracting the mother's agony and endangering the life of both. The verb in the Hebrew is lit. 'stand'. This may be interpreted to mean either 'stay' or 'tarry' (R.V.) or 'step forth and take his place'. The mood may be either optative or indicative. There are thus two possible translations : (a) *for this is no time to tarry* (lit. for it is time he should not stand) *in the mouth of the womb* ; (b) *when it is time he does not (come forth and) take his place at the mouth of the womb.* There is no need to read *kā'ēth* ('at the right time') or to point *'ēth* as if it meant 'now'. 'Mouth of the womb' is lit. *the place of the breaking forth of children.* Gordon compares John iii. 4 and remarks : 'At this period of his ministry Hosea saw no second birth possible for Israel ; but growing insight into God's heart made all things possible.'

14. *I will ransom them.* It is tempting to regard this verse as a sudden promise of mercy breaking parenthetically into a context of doom. In favour of this interpretation it has been suggested that a swift revulsion of feeling is characteristic of this emotional prophet ; that in passages like i. 10 f., ii. 15 f., iii. 5 and (especially) xiv. 4-8 he holds out the promise of ultimate redemption ; that the Versions understand the passage in this sense, and that it is so understood by St. Paul in his defiance of death (1 Cor. xv. 55). But the last clause of the verse *repentance is hid from Mine eyes* is clearly opposed to mercy ; so too is the whole context, which in v. 13 represents Ephraim as in the grasp of death, and in vv. 15 f. describes the form which the nation's destruction will take. Render, therefore, as a question (asked by the tone of voice ; cf. iv. 16, x. 9) : *From the power of Sheol shall I ransom them, from death redeem them ?* Israel by its folly 'lies in the way of its own redemption . . . shall God then slip in and work a deliverance on the brink of death ? Nay, let Death and Sheol have their way' (G. A. Smith).

*O death, where are thy plagues ?* This is not a challenge to Death and Sheol, made by one who knows that their *plagues* and *pestilence* can do no harm, since Jahveh is about to deliver Ephraim, but a command to Death and Sheol to do their worst = 'Hither with thy plagues, O Death, with thy pestilence, O Sheol !' *Sh'ōl* is the

O <sup>1</sup>grave, <sup>2</sup>where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. 15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the <sup>3</sup>breath of the LORD coming up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: <sup>4</sup>he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. 16 Samaria shall <sup>5</sup>bear her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Sheol*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *I will be*.<sup>3</sup> Or, *wind*.<sup>4</sup> Or, *it*.<sup>5</sup> Or, *become desolate*.

dark, cavernous abode of the departed, here personified as a power of destruction; cf. Ps. xviii. 5, cxvi. 3.

15. *Though he be fruitful among his brethren.* The coming doom is described, first figuratively and then realistically. It begins with a play upon Ephraim (*yaphri*’, ‘he is fruitful’; cf. Gen. xli. 52, xlix. 22; Hos. xiv. 8, and (for another pun) note on viii. 9) which looks back to the first two lines of the chapter. Those who find a difficulty in the fact that Ephraim is in Hosea not a single tribe, but the Northern Kingdom as a whole, prefer a reading, *though he flourish among the reed-grass*, which might be an allusion to Egypt (Gen. xli. 2). But this is ‘a forced and doubtful simile’ (G. A. Smith).

*an east wind.* That is, the hot, scorching *sirocco*, which, blowing with great violence from the desert, parches the land; cf. xii. 1. Here it is a figure for Assyria, who comes from the East; cf. Is. xxvii. 8; Jer. xviii. 17, where the same figure is used for an invasion. It is called *Jahveh’s wind*, because Assyria is only an instrument in Jahveh’s hand (cf. Is. x. 5, 15). The Assyrian *sirocco* will destroy *fountain* and *spring*, the sources of Ephraim’s fruitfulness.

*he shall spoil.* The figure is suddenly dropped in favour of the stern realism of ancient warfare. Render, *while he* (the foe) *strippeth the treasure, every precious vessel*, i.e. all articles of value. Cf. Na. ii. 9.

16. *Samaria shall bear her guilt.* Cf. v. 15, x. 2, xiii. 1. LXX, A.V. and R.V. *m.* read *shall become desolate* or *be laid waste*—a reading supported by the context. For the barbarities which followed defeat in war, cf. Jos. x. 24; Ju. i. 6 f.; 2 K. viii. 12, xv. 16; 2 Chron. xxv. 12; Am. i. 13; Na. iii. 10; Is. xiii. 16; Ps. cxxxvii. 9. There is a similar threat in x. 14.

To this inevitable doom impenitence has brought the sinful nation. They have now nothing to look forward to but invasion with all its horrors and exile in a foreign land. If Hosea had been

as inflexible as Amos, his prophecy might well have ended here, as many scholars would have it end, with a stern and relentless prediction of doom. But he was a native of Northern Israel who loved his people and his country, and he was a married man who loved his sinful wife and the children she bore. He had always believed in the possibility of repentance and restoration after punishment and discipline, both for Gomer and for Israel, and he had traced this conviction to the inspiration of God. It was as impossible for Jahveh finally to give up Israel as it was for himself to cast away for ever the wife of his bosom and the children whom he had taught to walk. Punishment there must be, severe and exemplary. The threatened judgement must take its course. Death and Sheol must be allowed to do their worst. But, saved from the wreck of national disaster, he saw a penitent and forgiven Ephraim, restored to its own land and prosperous, because it relied now, not on idols, but on Jahveh.



## C. WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND PROMISE

### XIV. 1-9 (Heb. 2-10). *Repentance, Forgiveness, and Renewed Prosperity*

The prophet appeals to his people to return to Jahveh with words of true repentance on their lips (*vv.* 1-2). In reply to this appeal Israel promises amendment: he will abjure foreign help, confidence in his own military strength, and the worship of idols (*v.* 3). Jahveh then promises healing, restoration of the love-relationship, and ideal prosperity (*vv.* 4-5). The prophet's comment on this promise (*v.* 7) is followed by Jahveh's declaration that Ephraim will forsake his idols, and that He Himself will be the source of Ephraim's fruitfulness (*v.* 8). A final exhortation urges that the teaching of the book should be laid to heart (*v.* 9).

This picture of the final triumph of Jahveh's love is so Hoseanic in language and thought that it can only be rejected on *a priori* grounds (see pp. xxix f., 25 ff.). The confession of sin which the writer puts into Israel's mouth (*v.* 3) has to do with the three forms which their apostasy took and Hosea denounced, and the scene of the restoration of prosperity, which looks back to ch. ii, is to be Hosea's own country. 'There is, in short, no phrase or allusion of which we can say that it is alien to the prophet's style or environment, while the keynotes of his book—*return, backsliding, idols the work of our hands, such pity as a father hath*, and perhaps even the *answer or converse* of *v.* 9—are all struck once more' (G. A. Smith). Other familiar words are *stumble, heal, the dew, corn and wine, and the vine*. When did Hosea write it? G. A. Smith and others consider it to be unlikely that this was Hosea's last word, which can, they think, be none other than the 'hopeless proclamation' of ch. xiii. They would, therefore, assign it to some period when Israel's doom was still uncertain and Hosea had some faint hopes of repentance. If, however, we adopt the theory that this is not an appeal to the Israel of the present, but to the Israel of the future which has survived the catastrophe, ch. xiv will not only retain its present position, but also be consonant with the latest possible date, namely either just before or after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.

**XIV. 1** O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. **2** Take with you words, and

**XIV. 1-2.** The prophet's appeal to the Israel of the future.

*return.* Israel's apostasy was the cause of all his troubles; his return will, therefore, be the first step towards reconciliation. *Thou hast stumbled* (figurative for calamity; cf. iv. 5, v. 5) is a prophetic perfect like Am. v. 2; Hosea speaks of the coming destruction of the old state as if it had already taken place.

*Take with you words.* When Israel returns to Jahveh's presence, he must not appear before Him empty (Ex. xxiii. 15, xxxiv. 20); but, instead of Canaanitish sacrifices and idol-worship, he will

return unto the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and <sup>1</sup>accept that which is good: so will we render <sup>2</sup>as bullocks *the offering of our lips*. 3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are our gods*: for in thee the

<sup>1</sup> Or, *receive us graciously*.

<sup>2</sup> The Sept. and Syriac have, *the fruit of our lips*.

bring with him words (not empty words as in vi. 1-4, but words expressing true repentance and contrition). LXX and Syr. add 'your God' after 'Jahveh'.

*Take away all iniquity*. Render, *Altogether forgive (our) iniquity*—a prayer for pardon—and *accept that which is good*, i.e. 'allow thyself to be appeased by accepting such good things as we have to offer', viz. confession of sin and vows of obedience. G. A. Smith and others join the latter phrase with the line following: *Take it well that we render, &c.* There is no need to emend so as to read, 'and let us (or, 'that we may') receive that which is good', i.e. at Thy hand.

*render as bullocks*. Lit. 'render (as) bullocks our lips'. If the present text, which is unsatisfactory and almost impossible, be retained, the meaning is that as words take the place of false sacrifices, so lips will replace the bullocks which were offered (Ps. l. 13 f., li. 19, lxix. 30 f.; Heb. xiii. 15). But it seems more than probable that the LXX reading (which omits one letter) is correct, and that we should render, *so shall we pay (as is due) the fruit of our lips*, viz. praise and thanksgiving. For the expression, cf. Is. lvii. 19.

3. Israel's promise of amendment. Hosea foresees a time when Israel will abjure reliance on foreign help, the worship of idols, and confidence in himself.

*Asshur shall not save us*. The Israel of the future will no longer look to Assyria for help (cf. v. 13, vii. 11, viii. 9, xii. 1).

*we will not ride upon horses*. This may refer to that other sin against the theocracy which Hosea denounced, viz. reliance on military strength (cf. i. 7, x. 13), but, in view of passages like vii. 11, viii. 13 LXX, ix. 3, xi. 5, xii. 1, where Egypt is coupled with Assyria, it is probable that the prophet is thinking of past overtures to Egypt, the country which supplied Palestine with horses (Dt. xvii. 16; 1 K. x. 28; Ez. xvii. 15; Cant. i. 9). Is. xxx. 16, xxxi. 1-3 suggest that 'horses' is a proverbial equivalent for 'Egypt'.

*the work of our hands*. Alien gods, as well as alien protection, are abjured. This looks back to iv. 17, viii. 4 ff., x. 5 f., xi. 2, xiii. 2, and anticipates Is. xlii. 17, xlv. 17. Render, *nor say again, 'Our God', to the work of our own hands*.

fatherless findeth mercy. 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6 His

*the fatherless.* According to Sellin the word 'fatherless' gives no sense in this connexion; others treat the line as a gloss or insert it after *v.* 2. But a positive statement such as this is really needed to complete the three negatives which precede. 'Not on Assyria, not on Egypt, not on idols, but on Thee do we now rely.' Having renounced human helpers, the people are thrown back on the Fatherhood of God. *Compassion* looks back to *i.* 6, *ii.* 1, 23.

4-8. Jahveh's gracious reply, interrupted in *v.* 6 by the prophet's comment. His promises of healing, restoration of the old love-relationship, and an earthly paradise read like a love-song and remind us in details of the Song of Songs (Sellin).

4. *Backsliding* looks back to *xi.* 7. It is here regarded as a disease which Jahveh will heal; cf. *v.* 13, *vi.* 1, *vii.* 1, *xi.* 3. The line is quoted in *Jer.* *iii.* 22.

*freely*, i.e. of my own free will, spontaneously, not because they deserve My love. Cf. *xi.* 1.

*mine anger is turned away.* The opposite of *viii.* 5.

5. *as the dew.* The *night-mist*, which comes with the west wind in summer, is used in *vi.* 4, *xiii.* 3 as a simile of what is transitory; here of a beneficent provision of nature whereby vegetation is preserved against the scorching effects of the sirocco in a rainless season. Cf. *Prov.* *xix.* 12; *Is.* *xxvi.* 19.

*the lily.* Cf. *Ecclus.* *xxxix.* 14. An image of beauty and profusion. 'There is nothing to bind us down to any single individual of the lily species' (Cheyne). Sellin says that here and in *Cant.* *v.* 13 the allusion is to the red anemone which plays a part in the Adonis-myth. As the slender roots of the lily might suggest instability, Hosea changes the simile in the next line.

*and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* If the text is correct, we can only translate, *and strike his roots as Lebanon*, the allusion being either to the cedars of Lebanon or to Mount Hermon which dominates the whole of Hosea's landscape (cf. *Job* *xxviii.* 9 for 'roots' in this connexion). As 'strike' is doubtful in Hebrew in this sense, Wellhausen reads, *his roots shall spread* (lit. 'go'). Many scholars also change 'Lebanon' into *libneh*, the white poplar of *iv.* 13. This makes a good parallel, suits the context, and avoids reading 'Lebanon' three times in as many verses. But G. A. Smith points out how unnecessary it is to mitigate the metaphor, since 'the mountain himself rises from vast roots, cast out across the land like those of some giant oak'.

6. *His branches.* Rather, *His saplings shall spread.* The root

branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and blossom as the vine: <sup>1</sup> the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. 8 <sup>2</sup> Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir tree; from me is thy fruit found.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *his memorial*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *O Ephraim, what &c.*

of the tree will send forth many fresh plants; in other words, Israel will be like not merely a tree, but a garden (Cheyne).

*his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* The *stateliness* of the olive is due to its foliage (dull green on the upper surface and silver-grey underneath), which it retains all the year round; cf. Ps. lii. 8; Jer. xi. 16.

*his smell as Lebanon.* Cf. Cant. iv. 11. The allusion is to the cedars and aromatic trees and shrubs. Budde would read *l<sup>e</sup>bhōnāh, frankincense.*

7. The prophet speaks. Read with LXX, *They shall return and dwell under His shadow.* Cf. Ez. xxxi. 6.

*they shall revive as the corn.* 'As' does not appear in the text, which means *they shall cause the corn to grow*, a reversal of vii. 14, viii. 7, ix. 6. The LXX reads the word as intransitive, 'they shall live', and adds a word which suggests 'and be well-watered'. Those who adopt this reading have to change 'the corn' into 'like a garden'. But the text as it stands is by no means impossible, though the change of metaphor in the next line is somewhat abrupt.

*blossom as the vine.* From the prosperity of the land, the prophet passes in thought to that of the people who live in it; cf. Ps. lxxii. 16.

*the scent thereof.* Render, *their* (lit. 'his', i.e. Israel's) *fame* (shall be) *as the wine of Lebanon*, noted for its bouquet; cf. Cant. i. 3.

8. If the present Hebrew text be retained, Ephraim is the speaker, and 'shall say' or 'saith' must be inserted with Syr., Targ., A.V. and R.V. There are difficulties in the way of this interpretation, but it has the merit of avoiding the unusual comparison of Jahveh with a tree. Pusey and others read the verse as a dialogue between Jahveh and the penitent nation:

Ephraim (saith), What have I to do any more with idols?

[Jahveh speaks] It is I who have answered, and I will regard him.

[Ephraim] I am like a green fir-tree:

[Jahveh] From Me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

It is better, however, to follow the LXX in the first line and read 'he' for 'I', and to ascribe the whole verse to Jahveh; *Ephraim, what more has he to do with idols? It is I who respond and regard him (favourably): I am like a spreading cypress; from Me is thy fruit found. Respond* looks back to ii. 15, 21 f., the idea being that Jahveh's treatment of Ephraim corresponds to Ephraim's attitude towards Him. For *regard favourably*, cf. Job xxxiii. 14, xxxv. 13 (both with 'respond' as a parallel). It is unnecessary to read 'give him dwelling', 'bring him back', 'make him rich', or 'I have afflicted and will make him blessed'. Most improbable is Wellhausen's 'I am his Anath and his Asherah'. *Fruit* (*p<sup>eri</sup>*) is a play upon 'Ephraim', as in ix. 16, xiii. 15. Cf. for the thought, ii. 8, 21-3; John xv. 4 f.

If this interpretation be correct, Jahveh's last word to the penitent and restored Israel of the future is a promise of prosperity, shelter, and protection. For a reconciled nation there will be a renewed earth, where love will reign and the soil will give of its best (Welch, pp. 141-3).

9. An epilogue, pointing the moral of the book; cf. Ps. cvii. 43. The style resembles that of the Wisdom literature (cf. Prov. xi. 5, xv. 19); hence most scholars ascribe the verse to a later hand, but Jer. ix. 12 reads like a quotation from it (Melville Scott, pp. 99-101). *Jahveh's ways* are the paths which His Providence has marked out for men. They are *straight* for all, i.e. they lead to the predestined goal; but while *the righteous* move along them safely, *the transgressors* find them rough and perilous. For this thought, cf. Dt. xxx. 19 f.; Ps. i. 1, 6, xxiii. 3; 1 Cor. i. 18. Render,

*Whoso is wise, let him understand these things;  
Understanding, let him perceive them;  
For straight are Jahveh's ways,  
And the righteous walk in them,  
But the transgressors stumble in them.*

A wise man will study the prophecies of Hosea, and take to heart the lessons which they teach.

## APPENDIX

### THE WORDS OF HOSEA RE-TRANSLATED AND RE-ARRANGED

#### *Reign of Jeroboam II*

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE AND ITS APPLICATION,  
i. 2-6, 8-9; iii. 1-5; i. 7; i. 10—ii. 1

Hosea's marriage      At the beginning of Jahveh's speaking with Hosea,  
Jahveh said unto Hosea :  
    Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom  
    And children of whoredom ;  
    For the land constantly goeth a-whoring  
    Instead of following Jahveh.

So he went and took Gomer-bath-Diblaim ; and she conceived and bare him a son. And Jahveh said unto him ;  
    Call his name Jezreel,  
    For yet a little while  
    And I will visit the blood of Jezreel  
    Upon the house of Jehu,  
    And cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.  
    And it shall come to pass on that day  
    That I will break the bow of Israel  
    In the valley of Jezreel.

When she conceived again and bare a daughter, He said unto him :  
    Call her name ' Uncompassionated '  
    For I will no more again  
    Have compassion on the house of Israel,  
    That I shall at all forgive them.

Then she weaned ' Uncompassionated '. And when she conceived and bare a son, He said :  
    Call his name ' Not-My-People ',  
    For ye are not My people,  
    And, as for Me, I am not your God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 'I am not to you' suggests that the last word is missing. The roll on which the prophecy was written may have been torn. The context and ii. 23 require that we should add *l'elōhēkhem*. Some codices of LXX support the addition.

Gomer proves un- faithful	[	]	<sup>1</sup>
The Divine impulse to love again his faithless wife	Then Jahveh said unto me :	Once more go, love (this) woman, Beloved of an associate and committing adultery, As Jahveh loveth the sons of Israel, Though they are turning to other gods And are lovers of raisin-cakes.	
Her deliver- ance and the restraint im- posed upon her	So I bought her to me for fifteen (shekels) of silver, A homer of barley, and a measure <sup>2</sup> of barley, And I said unto her :	Many days shalt thou sit still for me ; Thou shalt not play the whore, Nor be any man's wife, Yet I, for my part, will be (favourably disposed) towards thee.	
Israel's similar experience	For many days there are In which the sons of Israel shall sit still Without king or prince, Without sacrifice or obelisk, Without ephod or teraphim.		
Repentance and restora- tion to pros- perity and Divine favour	Afterwards shall the sons of Israel turn And seek Jahveh their God And David their king, And come trembling unto Jahveh and His bounty In the end of the days.		
Healing of the schism between North and South	<sup>3</sup> And upon the house of Judah I will have compassion, And I will save them by Jahveh their God, But I will not save them by bow or by sword, By martial army, by horses or by horsemen. <sup>3</sup> And the number of the sons of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered ; And it shall be in the place where it used to be said of them, No people of Mine are ye, That it shall be said of them, Sons of the Living God. And the sons of Judah and of Israel shall assemble together, And appoint for themselves one head, and spring up from the land, For great shall be the day of Jezreel. They shall say <sup>4</sup> to your brethren, My People, and to your sisters, Compassionated.		

<sup>1</sup> A verse, describing how Gomer became an adulteress and fell into slavery, seems to have been lost.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *lethekh*.

<sup>3</sup> i. 7 is inserted tentatively between iii. 5 and i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Pointing 'ām'ērū (prophetic pf.). LXX reads 'brother' and 'sister'.

*Reign of Jeroboam II*

## ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS, PUNISHMENT, AND RESTORATION, ii. 2-23

Jahveh's  
warning to  
faithless  
Israel

Expostulate with your mother, expostulate,  
For she is not My wife,  
And I am not her Husband,  
That she may put away her whoredoms from her face  
And her adulteries from between her breasts ;  
Lest I strip her naked,  
And place her as on the day of her birth,  
And make her as a wilderness,  
And set her as a parched land,  
And kill her with thirst.  
Yea, upon her children I will not have compassion,  
Because they are children of whoredom.  
For their mother hath played the whore,  
She that conceived them hath dealt shamefully :  
For she said, I will go after my paramours  
Who gave me my bread and my water,  
My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.

Jahveh's dis-  
cipline will  
make her see  
the folly of  
apostasy

Therefore, behold, I am about to hedge up her <sup>1</sup> way  
with thorns  
And fence up her fence, that she may not find her paths ;  
And though she pursue her paramours, she shall not  
overtake them,  
Though she seek, she shall not find them.  
Then she will say, Let me go and return to my first  
Husband,  
For it was better for me then than now.  
But she had not understood  
That it was I who gave her  
The corn, the must, and the fresh oil,  
And heaped silver upon her  
And gold,<sup>2</sup> which they used for (the service of) the Baal.<sup>3</sup>  
Therefore I will take back My corn in its time,  
And My must in its season.  
And I will snatch away My wool and My flax,  
(Given) to cover her nakedness.  
And so will I lay bare her immodesty  
In the sight of her paramours,  
And none shall rescue her from My hand.  
<sup>2</sup> And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees  
Whereof she said, Payment are these to me,  
Which my paramours have given me,  
And I will make them into a jungle,  
And the wild beasts of the open country shall devour  
them.

<sup>1</sup> So LXX. Heb. has 'thy'.

<sup>2</sup> Or, 'which they made into (an image of) the Baal'.

<sup>3</sup> Transposing *vv.* 11 and 12.



And I will cause all her mirth to cease :  
 Her pilgrim-feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths,  
 And all her sacred seasons.  
 So will I visit upon her  
 The days (kept in honour) of the Baalim,  
 When she used to offer sacrifice to them,  
 And put on her rings and her jewels,  
 And go after her paramours,  
 But Me she forgot—saith Jahveh.

Discipline  
 will bring re-  
 pentance  
 and recon-  
 ciliation

Therefore, behold, I am about to woo her,  
 Lead her into the wilderness and speak to her heart.  
 And I will give her her vineyards there,  
 And the valley of Achor for a door of hope,  
 And she shall respond there as in the days of her  
 youth,  
 Even as on the day when she came up from the land  
 of Egypt.  
 And it shall come to pass on that day, saith Jahveh,  
 That thou shalt call Me, My Husband,  
 And shalt call Me no more, My Baal ;  
 For I will remove the names of the Baalim from her  
 mouth,  
 And they shall no more be remembered by their  
 names.

A new cove-  
 nant and a  
 new be-  
 trothal

And I will make for them a covenant in that day  
 With the wild beasts of the open country, the birds of  
 the heavens, and the reptiles on the ground ;  
 And bow and sword and battle will I break from the  
 land,  
 And I will cause them to lie down in safety.  
 And I will betroth thee to Me for ever,  
 Yea, I will betroth thee to Me in righteousness,  
 And in justice, loving-kindness, and compassion,  
 Yea, I will betroth thee to Me in faithfulness, and thou  
 shalt know Jahveh.

The signs of  
 Jahveh's for-  
 giveness and  
 love

And it shall come to pass on that day  
 That I will respond, saith Jahveh,  
 Will respond to the heavens,  
 And these shall respond to the land.  
 And the earth shall respond to the corn,  
 The must and the fresh oil,  
 And these shall respond to Jezreel.  
 And I will sow her for Myself in the land,  
 And I will have compassion on Uncompassionated,  
 And I will say to Not-my-people, My people art thou,  
 And he shall say, My God !

*Before the fall of the dynasty of Jehu*JAHVEH'S QUARREL WITH ISRAEL AND ITS RELIGIOUS LEADERS,  
iv. 1—v. 7

A general indictment of the nation	Hear the word of Jahveh, O sons of Israel, For Jahveh hath a quarrel Against the inhabitants of the land ; Because there is no faithfulness nor piety, Nor knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, breaking faith, killing, stealing and adultery— They break out, <sup>1</sup> and one bloody deed followeth another. <sup>2</sup> Therefore the land mourneth, And every inhabitant thereof languisheth, With the wild beasts of the open country and the birds of the heavens ; Yea, even the fishes of the sea are swept away.
The priests responsible	Yet let no man bring a charge, And let no man reprove, Since My people is like its idol-priests. <sup>3</sup> Priest, thou dost stumble by day, The prophet also stumbles with thee by night ; And I will undo thy mother. Undone is thy people for lack of knowledge ; Because thou thyself hast rejected knowledge, I reject thee from being a priest to Me, And because thou hast forgotten the Direction of thy God, I, even I, will forget thy children.
Their wickedness and bad example	According to their number, so they sin against Me, Their glory I will change <sup>4</sup> into ignominy. They feed on the Sin of My people, And set their appetite on their iniquity. So it becomes (a case of) 'like people, like priest', But I will visit their ways upon them, And requite them for their doings ; For they shall eat, and not be satisfied, They shall commit whoredom, and have no increase, <sup>5</sup> Because Jahveh they have left off heeding.

<sup>1</sup> *sc.* into acts of violence; or, perhaps, 'they break into', *sc.* the houses of their neighbours.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, 'bloods (i.e. acts of bloodshed) touch bloods'.

<sup>3</sup> Reading *w<sup>o</sup>ammī* for *w<sup>o</sup>amm<sup>o</sup>khā* with LXX, and *kikh<sup>o</sup>mārāw* for *kim<sup>o</sup>ribhē*, and transferring *kōhēn* to the next verse.

<sup>4</sup> Some read the plural, 'they change' or 'they changed' with the Syriac and the Targum.

<sup>5</sup> A change of one letter, *t* for *p*, gives 'and not find satisfaction' (so LXX).

- Superstition and sensuality of the popular religion
- Whoredom, wine and must  
Take away the brain.  
My people asketh counsel at their stock,  
And their stick declareth (the oracle) to them ;  
For an impulse to whoredom hath led them astray  
And they have gone a-whoring from their God.  
On the tops of the mountains they offer many sacrifices  
And on the hills send up sweet smoke,  
Under oak, poplar, or terebinth,  
Because its shade is good.  
Therefore your daughters commit whoredom,  
And your daughters-in-law adultery.  
I will not punish your daughters because they commit whoredom,  
Nor your daughters-in-law because they commit adultery,  
For they themselves go aside with whores,  
And offer many sacrifices with temple-prostitutes.  
So is a senseless people ruined !
- A warning to Judah
- Though thou art committing whoredom, Israel,  
Let not Judah become guilty ;  
And come not to Gilgal,  
Nor go up to Beth-Aven,  
Nor swear [at Beer-Sheba],<sup>1</sup>  
'By the life of Jahveh.'
- Obstinacy, idolatry, sensuality, and their consequences
- Yea, like a stubborn heifer,  
Israel hath become stubborn.  
Will Jahveh now feed them  
As a lamb in a wide pasture ?  
Wedded to idols is Ephraim,  
Let him alone !  
Their carousal over,<sup>2</sup>  
They betake themselves to whoredom ;  
Her rulers<sup>3</sup> love ignominy.  
A storm shall envelop her in its wings,  
And they shall be put to shame because of their altars.<sup>4</sup>
- Priests (and princes) a snare to Israel
- Hear this, O priests,  
Hearken, O house of Israel,  
And, O house of the king, give ear,  
For against you is the sentence ;  
For a snare ye have been at Mizpah,  
And a net spread out at Tabor,

<sup>1</sup> After 'swear not' the name of a place is required ; cf. Amos v. 5, viii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The text is probably corrupt. A change of one letter, *d* for *r*, gives 'a band of toppers'.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, 'her shields'. LXX suggests *migg<sup>o</sup> ḏnām*. Omit *hēbhū* as a piece of dittography.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX and Syriac. Cf. viii. 11.

And the pit of Shittim they have made deep,<sup>1</sup>  
 And there is no correction for any of them.<sup>2</sup>  
 It is I who know Ephraim,  
 And Israel is not hid from Me,  
 That thou,<sup>3</sup> Ephraim, hast committed whoredom,  
 Defiled is Israel.

The nature  
 of their sin

Their doings do not allow them  
 To turn to their God,  
 For an impulse to whoredom is within them  
 And Jahveh they know not.  
 But the arrogance of Israel doth testify to his face,  
 [Both Israel and] Ephraim<sup>4</sup> stumble in their iniquity,  
 Judah also stumbles with them.  
 With their flocks and herds they go to seek Jahveh,  
 But find Him not: He has withdrawn from them.  
 They have played false with Jahveh,  
 In that they have begotten alien children—  
 Now may the (next) new moon devour them with their  
 fields!

### *The Reign of Pekah*

#### EPHRAIM AND JUDAH EQUALLY GUILTY, v. 8—vi. 6

The alarm  
 of invasion  
 finds Eph-  
 raim and  
 Judah weak  
 through in-  
 ternal cor-  
 ruption

Blow a horn in Gibeah,  
 A trumpet in Ramah:  
 Cry aloud at Beth-Aven,  
 'Behind thee, Benjamin!'  
 Ephraim becomes a desolation  
 In the day of decision;  
 Against the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure.  
 The princes of Judah have become  
 Like removers of landmarks:  
 Upon them will I pour out like water My wrath.  
 Ephraim oppresses and crushes right<sup>5</sup>  
 For he hath wilfully gone after vanity.<sup>6</sup>

As for Me, I am as a moth to Ephraim  
 And as rottenness to the house of Judah.  
 When Ephraim saw his sickness,  
 And Judah his wound,  
 Then Ephraim went to Assyria,  
 And (Judah) sent to the Great King;<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A change of one letter, *t* for *t*, gives this excellent reading.

<sup>2</sup> Transposing two letters. <sup>3</sup> *'attāh* for *'attāh*.

<sup>4</sup> Most scholars omit either 'Israel' or 'Ephraim' in this line.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX, which points the participles as active.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew *šāw* = 'command' makes no sense. Read with the LXX and R.V. margin, *shāw* = 'vanity', i.e. idols.

<sup>7</sup> Reading *malkī rābh* or *melekh rābh* for *melekh yārēbh*. The parallelism requires 'Judah' in this line.

But he cannot heal you,  
Nor relieve you of your wound.  
For I Myself am like a roaring lion to Ephraim,  
Even as a young lion to the house of Judah ;  
I, even I, do rend and go My way,  
Carry off (the prey), with none to rescue.

Tribulation  
brings re-  
pentance

I will go, I will return unto My own Place,  
Till they feel their guilt and seek My Presence :  
In their distress they will seek Me earnestly,  
(Saying), Come, let us return unto Jahveh,  
For He hath torn that He may heal us,  
Smitten, that He may bind us up.  
He will revive us in a day or two,  
On the third day He will raise us up,  
That we may live before Him.  
Yea, let us know, let us follow on to know Jahveh ;  
As we seek Him earnestly, so shall we find Him,<sup>1</sup>  
And He shall come to us as the winter-rain,  
As the spring shower which saturates the earth.

But it is too  
superficial,  
because it  
lacks piety  
and know-  
ledge of  
Jahveh

What can I make of thee, Ephraim ?  
What can I make of thee, Judah ?  
For your piety is like the morning cloud,  
And like the night-mist that goeth early away.  
Wherefore I have hewn them by the prophets,  
I have slain them by the words of My mouth,  
And My judgement has gone forth as the light ;<sup>2</sup>  
For it is piety that I delight in, and not sacrifice,  
And the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

### ? *The Reign of Pekah*

NO HESEDH NOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE LAND, vi. 7—vii. 2

Israel's  
crimes are  
beyond  
remedy

But they in Adam<sup>3</sup> have transgressed the covenant,  
There have they played Me false.  
Gilead is a city of mischief-workers,  
Foot-tracked with blood.  
And as bandits lie in wait for a man,  
(So does) the gang of priests ;  
They murder on the road to Shechem,  
Yea, they do enormity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A slight rearrangement, *k°shahdrēnu khēn nimšā'ēhū* for *k°shahar nākhōn mōšā'ō*, gives this almost certain reading. LXX supports.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX, Syriac, and Old Latin versions divide the consonants. Syriac and Targum rightly point the verb as a perfect instead of an imperfect.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 'like Adam' or 'like men', but a place-name is required.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the best rendering of a difficult passage. See notes *ad loc.*

In Beth-el<sup>1</sup> I have seen a horrible thing:  
 There Ephraim hath played the whore,  
 Israel is defiled;  
 Also, Judah, a harvest is appointed for thee.  
 When I would turn the fortunes of My people,<sup>2</sup>  
 When I would heal Israel,  
 Then shall be laid bare the iniquity of Ephraim  
 And the wicked deeds of Samaria,  
 How that they practise fraud,  
 And the thief cometh in,  
 A marauding band making raids without.  
 And they say not to their conscience  
 (That) I remember all their wickedness:  
 Now their doings have encompassed them,  
 They have come to My notice.

### *The Reign of Pekah*

#### WICKEDNESS AND CONSPIRACY AT COURT, vii. 3-7

Wickedness and con- spiracies at court	With their wickedness they make the king glad, And with their lies, princes. All of them are adulterers, Like a glowing oven are they, Whose baker ceaseth to stir (the fire), <sup>3</sup> From the kneading of the dough till it is leavened. On the day of our king, sick have become The princes from the heat of wine— He stretched forth his hand with mockers. For their inward part is like an oven, Their heart gloweth in them; <sup>3</sup> All night their anger sleepeth, <sup>3</sup> In the morning it blazeth like a flame of fire, All of them become hot like an oven, And devour their rulers. All their kings are fallen, Without one of them calling unto Me.
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### *The Reign of Pekah or that of Hoshea*

#### EPHRAIM'S FAITHLESS FOREIGN POLICY WILL END IN DISASTER, vii. 8—viii. 3

Faithless foreign policy	Ephraim—among the peoples he mixeth himself; Ephraim has become a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not;
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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 'in the house of Israel', but a place-name would be more appropriate in the context.

<sup>2</sup> This line is taken from the end of the preceding verse in the Heb.

<sup>3</sup> Read *bō'ēr hēm 'ōphēhū* in v. 4, *qirbām, bō'ēr bām*, and *'app'hem* in v. 6. Following LXX, Harper reads *bā'ārū*, and G. A. Smith, *bi'ārū*, for *qēr'bhū*.

Also grey hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knoweth it not.

And the arrogance of Israel doth testify to his face ;  
Yet they return not to Jahveh their God,  
Nor seek Him for all this.

And Ephraim is become like a silly, senseless dove ;  
To Egypt they call, to Assyria they go.

As soon as they go, I will spread over them My net ;  
As birds of the heavens, I will bring them down,  
I will chastise them according to the announcement  
of their congregation.<sup>1</sup>

instead of  
reliance on  
Jahveh

Woe to them, because they have flown from Me,  
Destruction to them, because they have revolted  
against Me !

When I would ransom them, they spoke lies about Me.  
And they have not cried unto Me with their heart,  
But howl on their couches,<sup>2</sup>

For corn and must mutilate themselves,<sup>3</sup>  
Rebelling against Me.

Although it was I who trained,<sup>4</sup> strengthened their arm,  
Yet against Me they plan (nothing but) wickedness.

They turn, (but) not upwards,

They are become like a faulty bow ;

Their princes shall fall by the sword

By reason of the defiance of their tongues—

This their derision in the land of Egypt.

The horn of  
judgement

To thy mouth the horn !

Like a vulture (the foe will swoop) upon the house of  
Jahveh ;

For they have transgressed My covenant,  
And against My Direction have they revolted.

To Me they will cry,

My God, we know Thee—(we Thy) Israel.

Israel hath rejected with loathing the Good—

Let the foe pursue him !

### *The Reign of Pekah or that of Hoshea*

RULERS AND IDOLS, FOREIGN POLICY AND SINFUL WORSHIP, THE  
CAUSES OF ISRAEL'S DOWNFALL, viii. 4-14

Man-made  
kings and  
idols

They have made kings without My sanction,  
Princes without My approval ;

Of their silver and gold they have made themselves idols  
That they may be cut off.

<sup>1</sup> So the Heb.

<sup>2</sup> Or possibly, 'on their praying-mats'.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX, Syr. and some Heb. MSS., reading *dd* for *rr*.

<sup>4</sup> LXX omits 'I trained'.

I reject with loathing<sup>1</sup> thy Calf, O Samaria ;  
 Kindled is Mine anger against them—  
 How long will they be incapable of innocency ?  
 For from Israel is this also :  
 A smith made it, and it is not God ;  
 Yea, splinters Samaria's Calf shall become.

The nations  
 will swallow  
 Israel up

For they sow wind, and reap whirlwind ;  
 Stalk, he hath none,  
 The shoot yieldeth no fruit ;<sup>2</sup>  
 If perchance it were to yield, strangers would swallow  
 it up.  
 Israel is (as good as) swallowed up ;  
 Now are they become among the nations  
 Like a vessel wherein is no delight.  
 For they have gone up to Assyria,  
 Like a wild-ass going its own wilful way ;  
 Ephraim hath given love-gifts.<sup>3</sup>  
 Yea, though they give themselves away among the  
 nations,  
 Now must I gather them in ;  
 And they shall cease for a little from anointing a king  
 and princes.<sup>4</sup>

Sacrifices  
 unacceptable  
 to Jahveh

For as Ephraim hath multiplied altars,  
 They have become to him altars for sinning.<sup>5</sup>  
 Were I to write for him by myriads My Directions,<sup>6</sup>  
 As those of a stranger would they be accounted.  
 Sacrifice they love<sup>7</sup> and sacrifice,  
 Flesh, and eat it,  
 Jahveh having no pleasure in them.  
 Now (at last) He will remember their iniquity,  
 And visit their sin ;  
 As for them, to Egypt they must return,  
 [And in Assyria eat that which is unclean].<sup>8</sup>  
 So Israel forgot his Maker, and built palaces,  
 And Judah multiplied fenced cities ;  
 But I will send fire upon her cities,  
 And it shall consume her castles.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So most moderns. Heb. has 3rd sing. perfect.

<sup>2</sup> There is a play on the words here, *šemah* and *qemah*.

<sup>3</sup> So most moderns. Heb. has 'hath hired lovers'.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX, reading *wayyabdu<sup>l</sup>u* *afid mimm<sup>o</sup>shōab*.

<sup>5</sup> Omit 'to sin' in the first line with LXX.

<sup>6</sup> Kethibh instead of Qerē.

<sup>7</sup> So Duhm, after LXX, reading *zebhab 'āhābhū wayyizbāhū*.

<sup>8</sup> The words in brackets are found in the LXX, but they may be borrowed from ix. 3.

<sup>9</sup> This verse is usually taken as a gloss, but see note *ad loc*.



*Reign of Pekah or that of Hoshea*

## THE SORROWS OF EXILE, ix. 1-9

Deportation  
and deprivation  
of the  
means of  
worship

Be not glad, O Israel, exult not,<sup>1</sup> like the peoples;  
For thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God,  
Thou hast loved (a harlot's) hire upon every threshing-  
floor.  
Threshing-floor and wine-vat shall not know them,<sup>2</sup>  
And the must shall play them<sup>3</sup> false.  
They shall not dwell in Jahveh's land;  
But Ephraim shall return unto Egypt,  
And in Assyria eat that which is unclean.  
They shall not pour out libations to Jahveh,  
Neither prepare<sup>4</sup> for Him their sacrifices.  
As the bread of mourning their bread<sup>5</sup> shall be:  
All that eat of it shall be defiled;  
For their bread shall be (only) to (satisfy) their hunger,  
It shall not enter Jahveh's house.

What will ye offer on the day of a sacred season,  
Or on the day of Jahveh's pilgrim-feast?  
For lo, they have gone to Assyria,<sup>6</sup>  
Egypt shall gather them,  
Memphis shall bury them,  
Nettles overgrowing their silver ornaments,  
Thorns in their tents.

Vindication  
of the pro-  
phet's warn-  
ing

Come are the days of visitation,  
Come the days of requital;  
Israel shall find it out,  
[Who say] 'A fool, the prophet;  
Crazy, the man of the spirit.'  
It is by reason of the greatness of thine iniquity,  
And because (thine) enmity is great.  
Ephraim lieth in wait against the prophet's tent,<sup>7</sup>  
A fowler's snare is in all his ways,  
Enmity in the house of his God.  
They have dug a deep pit for him<sup>8</sup>  
As in the days of Gibeah;  
He will remember their iniquity,  
Visit their sin.

<sup>1</sup> So LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, and Targum, reading 'al tāghēl.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX, reading *d* for *r*.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; Heb. 'her'.

<sup>4</sup> Reading *k* for *b*.

<sup>5</sup> Reading 'their bread' for 'to them'.

<sup>6</sup> So Wellhausen and most moderns. Heb., 'from destruction'.

<sup>7</sup> Following Sellin's emendation of a corrupt text. See note *ad loc*.

<sup>8</sup> This involves a change in vocalization only.

*Reign of Pekah or that of Hoshea*

## IMPURE WORSHIP AND ITS PENALTIES, ix. 10-17

Israel's early contamination	Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, Like the first-fruit on a fig-tree [in its first time] <sup>1</sup> I saw your fathers; (But) they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to Baal, <sup>2</sup> And became abominations like the object of their love.
Childlessness	Ephraim—like a bird flies away their glory: No more bearing, pregnancy, or conception. <sup>3</sup> Smitten is Ephraim, Their root withered, Fruit they cannot produce; Yea, though they bring forth, I will deal death to the darlings of their womb. Yea, though they bring up their sons, I will bereave them, that there be not a man; Yea, also, woe to them, when I look away from them! Ephraim—for a prey are his sons destined; Ephraim must lead out his sons to slaughter. <sup>4</sup> Give them, Jahveh—what wilt Thou give? <sup>5</sup> A miscarrying womb and dry breasts.
Exile	All their wickedness is in Gilgal, It was there that I began to hate them; Because of the evil of their doings From My House will I drive them, I will love them no more, All their rulers being revolvers. My God shall reject them, Because they have not hearkened unto Him, And they shall be wanderers among the nations.

*The Reign of Hoshea*

## JAHVEH'S JUDGEMENT ON ISRAEL'S ALTARS AND THE CALF OF BETH-EL, x. 1-8

Altars destroyed	A luxuriant vine was Israel: Much fruit he used to make <sup>6</sup> for himself. As his fruit increased, He increased the number of his altars; As his land became rich,
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<sup>1</sup> Omitted by Syriac and most moderns as superfluous.

<sup>2</sup> Heb., *bōsheth*, 'shame'.

<sup>3</sup> v. 16 inserted here.

<sup>4</sup> Following a suggestion of LXX, read *l'šaid šāthū lōh bhānāw* and point *heregh*.

<sup>5</sup> LXX omits the second 'give them'.

<sup>6</sup> Reading *yasgeh* with Sellin.

He enriched his obelisks.  
 Their heart is deceitful,  
 Now must they bear their punishment;  
 Himself will break the neck of their altars,  
 Destroy their obelisks.

The king  
 powerless      For soon they will be saying,  
                   We have no king;  
                   For Jahveh we have not feared,  
                   And the king—what can he do for us?  
                   Speak words,<sup>1</sup> swear falsely,  
                   Make covenants;  
                   But punishment shall spring up like a poisonous weed  
                   In the furrows of a field.

The Calf  
 deported      For the Calf<sup>2</sup> of Beth-Aven  
                   The inhabitants of Samaria shall tremble,  
                   Yea, his people shall mourn over him,  
                   And his idol-priests writhe in agony<sup>3</sup> over him,  
                   For his glory, because it has gone into exile from him.  
                   Yea, himself shall be carried in procession to Assyria,  
                   A present to the Great King;  
                   Ephraim shall incur shame,  
                   And Israel shall be put to shame on account of his  
                   policy.

The people  
 in despair      Undone is Samaria,  
                   Her king is like a chip  
                   On the face of the waters.  
                   Destroyed are Israel's high places,<sup>4</sup>  
                   Briars and thistles go up on their altars;  
                   And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us,  
                   And to the hills, Fall on us.

### *The Reign of Hoshea*

#### ISRAEL MUST REAP AS HE HAS SOWN, x. 9-15

Israel's sin  
 and its  
 punishment      Since the days of Gibeah is Israel's sin,  
                   There they have remained.  
                   Shall not the battle overtake them in Gibeah?  
                   Against the sons of unrighteousness I will come  
                   That I may chastise them,<sup>5</sup>  
                   And the peoples shall be gathered together against them  
                   To chastise them for their two iniquities.

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> LXX has the sing., Heb. 'calves'.

<sup>3</sup> Changing one letter.

<sup>4</sup> Omitting 'of Aven, the sin' as a gloss.

<sup>5</sup> Read (with LXX) *bā'thā wa'āyass<sup>6</sup>rēm*.

How the  
doom might  
have been,  
and why it  
was not,  
averted

Ephraim is a heifer trained,  
Loving to thresh,  
And I Myself have spared her fair neck.  
I will cause Ephraim to be yoked,  
Judah must plough,  
Jacob harrow for himself.  
'Sow to yourselves righteousness,  
Reap the fruit<sup>1</sup> of piety,  
Fallow your fallow ground;  
For there is yet time to seek Jahveh,  
That He may come and rain salvation upon you.'  
Ye have ploughed wickedness,  
Reaped injustice,  
Eaten the fruit of lying.

The coming  
ruin

Because thou hast trusted in thy chariots,<sup>2</sup>  
In the multitude of thy warriors,  
The tumult (of war) shall arise among thy tribes,  
And all thy fortresses shall be laid waste,  
As Shalman laid waste Beth-Arbel  
In the day of battle,  
The mother being dashed in pieces with her children.  
Thus will I do to you, O house of Israel,<sup>3</sup>  
By reason of your great wickedness;  
At dawn shall the king of Israel  
Be utterly undone.

### The Reign of Hoshea

#### THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR HIS REBELLIOUS SON, xi. 1-11

Jahveh's  
love and care  
for His child

When Israel was a child, I began to love him,  
And out of Egypt called My son.  
The more I called them, the farther they went from Me,<sup>4</sup>  
Sacrificing to the Baals, sending up smoke to the images.  
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
Taking them upon Mine arms;<sup>5</sup>  
But they did not understand that I healed them.  
With cords of a man I would draw them,  
With bands of love;  
And I was to them as one that lifteth a babe to his  
bosom,<sup>6</sup>  
And I would bend down to him, (and) feed him.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX, which reads *bh<sup>o</sup>rikkh<sup>o</sup>khd*.

<sup>3</sup> Following LXX.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX and Syriac, reading *k<sup>o</sup>q<sup>o</sup>r<sup>o</sup>t* and *mippānai hēm*.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX, which reads *'eqqāhēm*.

<sup>6</sup> LXX suggests *k<sup>o</sup>mērim* and *l<sup>o</sup>hāyāw*. If we adopt the former, read 'ōlāl for 'ōl'al, and change *l<sup>o</sup>hāyāw* to *l<sup>o</sup>hēqō*, we get the above translation. An alternative suggestion is to read *k<sup>o</sup>mērim 'al 'al l<sup>o</sup>hāyāim*, 'as one that lifteth a babe to his cheeks'.

<sup>7</sup> Read *wā'ēf*.

The penalty  
of disobedi-  
ence

<sup>1</sup> He shall return to the land of Egypt,  
Or Assyria shall be his king;  
For they have refused to turn (unto Me).  
So the sword shall whirl in his cities,  
[And make an end of his bars (of defence)]  
And devour amongst their fortresses.<sup>2</sup>  
My people are bent on defection from Me;  
Though they are calling them upwards,  
No one can raise them.<sup>4</sup>

But Jahveh  
cannot final-  
ly reject His  
people

How am I to give thee up, Ephraim,  
Surrender thee, Israel?  
How am I to make thee like Admah,  
Set thee as Seboim?  
My heart is turned upon Me;  
My compassions grow hot together.  
I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger,  
I will not again destroy Ephraim;  
For God am I, and not man,  
The Holy One in the midst of thee,  
Therefore I will not come and exterminate.<sup>5</sup>

He will call  
them back  
from exile

After Jahveh they will go,  
Like a lion He will roar;  
When He roars,  
Sons will come trembling from the West.  
They will come trembling like sparrows from Egypt,  
And like doves from the land of Assyria,  
And I will bring them back to their homes,<sup>6</sup>  
Saith Jahveh.

### *The Reign of Hoshea*

#### LESSONS FROM HISTORY, xi. 12—xii. 14

Israel is  
treacherous

Ephraim has surrounded Me with lies  
And the house of Israel with deceit  
(But Judah is yet known<sup>7</sup> with God,  
And established with the Holy One).  
Ephraim herdeth the wind,  
And hunteth the sirocco;  
All day long he multiplieth  
Falsehood and vanity.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Transfer *lō* ('not') to the end of the previous verse and read *lō* ('to him').  
So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> The words in brackets may be a gloss.

<sup>3</sup> So most moderns, but LXX supports the Heb., 'because of their counsels'.

<sup>4</sup> An attempt to translate the Heb. See note *ad loc.*

<sup>5</sup> Reading *'abhā'ēr* for *b'ēr*.

<sup>6</sup> So LXX, reading *hāshībhōthām*. Heb., 'I will cause them to sit on their nests'.

<sup>7</sup> On the basis of LXX.

<sup>8</sup> So LXX, reading *shāw* for *shōdh*.

like his an-  
cestor Jacob

They make a covenant with Assyria,  
And carry oil to Egypt.  
Jahveh hath a quarrel with Israel,<sup>1</sup>  
And will punish Jacob according to his ways,  
According to his doings requite him.  
In the womb he took his brother by the heel<sup>2</sup>  
(But Jacob fled to the field of Aram,  
And Israel served for a wife,  
And for a wife kept (sheep).  
In his strength he persisted with God,  
Yea, persisted with an angel and prevailed,  
He wept and begged mercy of Him.  
At Beth-el he found Him,  
And there He spake with him).  
[As truly as Jahveh is God of hosts,  
Jahveh the name He is remembered by]<sup>3</sup>  
But thou shalt dwell in thy tents,<sup>4</sup>  
Keep piety and justice,  
And hope on thy God continually.

Like Canaan,  
Israel has  
become rich  
but Jahveh  
will take him  
back to the  
wilderness

Canaan! False balances in his hand,  
He loves to practise extortion.  
And Ephraim has said, I have grown rich,  
I have found wealth for myself;  
(But) all his profits would not suffice  
For the guilt he has incurred.<sup>5</sup>  
For I, Jahveh, am thy God  
From the land of Egypt;  
I will again make thee dwell in tents  
As in the days of the solemn assembly.

Warnings of  
the prophets  
unheeded

And I used to speak by the prophets,  
For it was I who multiplied visions,  
And through the prophets uttered parables  
(Also by a prophet Jahveh brought Israel up from  
Egypt,  
And by a prophet he was shepherded).<sup>6</sup>  
Ephraim hath given bitter provocation,  
Therefore shall He cast his blood-guiltiness upon him,  
And for his insult his Lord will repay him.<sup>7</sup>  
In<sup>8</sup> Gilead was worthlessness,  
Nothing but a thing of naught have they become;  
In Gilgal the princes have sacrificed.<sup>9</sup>  
So their altars are as stone-heaps  
Upon the furrows of the field.

<sup>1</sup> Reading 'Israel' for Judah.      <sup>2</sup> v. 12 inserted between 3a and 3b.

<sup>3</sup> This verse may be a pietistic gloss.      <sup>4</sup> So Sellin; cf. v. 9.

<sup>5</sup> So Wellhausen after LXX, reading *y<sup>o</sup>ghî'âw, lš, l<sup>o</sup>'âwšn, and hâ!â'*.

<sup>6</sup> v. 13 belongs logically to this position.

<sup>7</sup> v. 14 is placed before v. 11, as the latter forms a better climax.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 'if'.

<sup>9</sup> Following LXX.

c. 725

## ISRAEL'S DOOM IS INEVITABLE, xiii. 1-16

Ephraim,  
fallen from  
its high posi-  
tion, shall  
vanish away

When Ephraim used to speak, there was trembling,  
A prince was he in Israel; <sup>1</sup>  
But, when he became guilty through the Baal,  
He died.  
And now they continue to sin,  
And make themselves molten images,  
Out of their silver idols according to their skill—  
The work of smiths, all of it.  
'To them', they are saying, 'offer sacrifice!' <sup>2</sup>—  
Men kiss calves!  
Therefore shall they be like a morning cloud,  
And like the night-mist that goeth early away,  
Like chaff which whirleth up from the threshing-floor,  
And like smoke from the lattice.

Jahveh's  
love and care  
in the past,  
and Israel's  
forgetful-  
ness

But I, Jahveh, am thy God  
From the land of Egypt;  
And a god save Me thou knowest not,  
Nor any Saviour but Myself.  
It was I who shepherded <sup>2</sup> thee in the wilderness,  
In the land of drought.  
When they were fed, they filled themselves full, <sup>3</sup>  
And their heart was lifted up,  
So Me they forgot.

Jahveh's  
vengeance

So I will be to them as a roaring lion,  
As a leopard on the way to Assyria, <sup>4</sup>  
Pounce on them like a bear robbed of its cubs  
And rend that which encloses their heart;  
And dogs shall eat them there, <sup>5</sup>  
Wild beasts of the open country tear them in pieces.

Their king  
is powerless  
to help

I have destroyed thee, O Israel.  
Yea, who is thy help? <sup>6</sup>  
Where is thy king now, that he may save thee,  
And all thy princes, that they may do thee justice, <sup>7</sup>  
Of whom thou saidst, Give me  
A king and princes?  
I give thee a king in Mine anger,  
And take him away in My wrath.

<sup>1</sup> So Syriac.

<sup>2</sup> After LXX.

<sup>3</sup> Reading an infin. absol. for the second 'they filled'.

<sup>4</sup> The pointing of LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate.

<sup>5</sup> Changing one letter.

<sup>6</sup> Reconstructed from LXX and Syriac, involving the substitution of *m* for *b*.

<sup>7</sup> Reconstructed from LXX and Syriac. Read 'ayyēh and šārekhā w<sup>o</sup>yish-p<sup>o</sup>fūkhā.

Too foolish to recognize the crisis	Bound up is Ephraim's iniquity, Stored his sin. The pangs of travail come upon him ; An unwise son is he, For this is no time to tarry In the mouth of the womb.
Israel is left to his fate	From the power of Sheol shall I ransom them, From death redeem them ? Where are thy plagues, O Death, Where thy pestilence, Sheol ?— Repentance is hid from Mine eyes.
Drought and invasion	Though he [Ephraim] be fruitful among his brethren, A sirocco shall come, Jahveh's wind, rising from the wilderness ; It will dry up his fountain, And parch his spring, <sup>1</sup> While he [the foe] strips the treasure, every precious vessel.
The horrors of war	Samaria shall be laid waste, <sup>2</sup> For against her God hath she rebelled. By the sword they shall fall, Their babes shall be dashed in pieces, And their women with child ripped up.

*Shortly before or after 722*

## REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS, AND RESTORATION, xiv. 1-9

Hosea's ap- peal to the Israel of the future	Return, O Israel, to Jahveh thy God, For thou hast stumbled by thine iniquity. Take with you words, And turn to Jahveh ; Say to Him : Altogether forgive (our) iniquity, And accept that which is good, So shall we pay the fruit of <sup>3</sup> our lips.
Israel's pro- mise of amendment	Assyria shall not save us, We will not ride upon horses, Nor say again, ' Our God ', To the work of our hands ; For in Thee the fatherless findeth compassion.
Jahveh's an- swer	I will heal their backsliding, Love them freely, For Mine anger is turned away from them.

<sup>1</sup> Pointing the ptcps. as active (so LXX).<sup>2</sup> So LXX and R.V. m. which read *tēshōm*.<sup>3</sup> So LXX, omitting one letter. Heb. 'bullocks'.



I will be as the night-mist to Israel,  
 He shall blossom as the lily,  
 And his roots shall spread like the poplar;<sup>1</sup>  
 His saplings shall spread,  
 And his stateliness shall be as the olive,  
 His scent as Lebanon.

Israel's re-  
 storation      They shall return and dwell under His shadow,<sup>2</sup>  
 Cultivate the corn;  
 They shall blossom as the vine,  
 And their fame be as the wine of Lebanon.

Jahveh  
 speaks again      Ephraim, what more has he<sup>3</sup> to do with idols?  
 It is I who respond and regard him:  
 I am like a spreading cypress,  
 From Me is thy fruit found.

Epilogue      Whoso is wise, let him understand these things,  
 Understanding, let him perceive them;  
 For straight are Jahveh's ways,  
 And the righteous walk in them,  
 But the transgressors stumble in them.

<sup>1</sup> 'Spread' (cf. next line) for the impossible 'strike', and 'poplar' (*libneh*) for 'Lebanon'.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX, reading *yēsh'bhū*.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX. Heb. 'I'.

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