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ON THE TEXT OF HOSEA 4-14

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Professor Toy's contention (*JBL.*, 1913, pp. 75-79), that the first three chapters are by another hand, may or may not prove sound; at all events, the other eleven chapters, which fill seven pages in the Baer-Delitzsch text, present abundant difficulties of their own. I am far from claiming acquaintance with all the literature on the subject, or even with all the emendations which reputable scholars have proposed for these eleven chapters. I have, however, encountered and inspected about five hundred such proposals; and if life were not so short, I might put them into four groups, beginning with the smallest: highly probable, fairly probable, improbable, and wildly improbable. Thus I do not go to the extreme of worshipping the received text; but the other extreme, of too little regard for tradition, seems more dangerous; and so I desire to call attention from the trees to the forest, and to point out some general principles which may perhaps aid the investigation.

A. NEGATIVE TESTS.

1. *Transpositions are always questionable.* A single offense of that sort by a given critic might be venial, but our modern editors sin with a high hand. Even President Harper's text has ten or a dozen of these replacements, and other critics go still further. It is an easy matter theoretically to find more appropriate places for this or that element in Hosea, but we should consider practically what is involved in the belief that the reverse process ever really happened. Look now upon this picture and on this. On the one hand, a professor in his study, surrounded with a critical apparatus, and having before him a text of seven pages, which he can glance through, compare with kindred literature, and manipulate at will; the result is a harmonious composition, which he supposes, and we will suppose, for the sake of argument, to represent the author's original utterances. On

the other hand, an ancient scribe, in whose hands a faithful copy of the original is placed, a clumsy bit of roll, which it is his business to reproduce, slowly and faithfully, together with other manuscripts, at a stated price. Now he is not infallible, either in brain or morals; we might anticipate sundry errors from his haste to be rich. He will drop letters and words, and substitute the familiar for the strange; but what earthly motive would induce him to pause long enough to twist his copy back and forth a dozen times, thus making a Chinese puzzle to mystify posterity? The fault, it will be answered, lay not with the copyist, but with one or more editors. But by hypothesis, the modern editor's text equals the original and is all right; what possessed the ancient editors to turn aside unto such crooked ways and make it all wrong? That this ever occurred on a large scale, I stubbornly doubt. All things are possible to him that believeth; but in this case, incredulity seems a duty.

2. *The presumption is against the Septuagint, when it differs from the Massoretic text.* Of course, what we call the LXX has been often conformed to MT; but still, many variations remain. Now even if this presumption is granted, I must admit, on the other hand, that it is sometimes overcome; for instance, in 6:5, where the Hebrew text puts into the mouth of Jehovah this absurdity: "thy judgments light goes forth." By simply dividing the words differently, the Septuagint reads: "my judgment goes forth like light." So again, the very awkward sentence in 8:10; "and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes" is cleared up in the Greek; "and they cease a little while from anointing a king and princes" (מִשָּׁחָ not מִשָּׁח). which is better, though perhaps not quite right. In spite of such exceptions, I claim that the first presumption is against a Septuagint variant. When we come upon a difficult word in the Hebrew (I do not mean a nonsensical word) and find that the Septuagint represents a common word resembling it which makes good sense, it is not the likeliest thing that this last is the original, for if it had been it is not likely that either editors or copyists would have substituted the hard word.

At this point I may perhaps be permitted a word of personal testimony. More than forty years ago, before I had any theories to establish, and with the single aim to know the Bible better,

I used to read the Hebrew and the Greek alternately, verse by verse, until in a few years I had gone through the whole Old Testament. The conviction grew upon me that in the vast majority of variations, the Hebrew text underlying the Greek probably agreed with our own.

In the case of Hosea, we have much more important testimony. In *Hebraica*, vol. 7, 1891, there was published a very thorough comparison of the Septuagint of Hosea with the Hebrew, by an American student, Gaylord H. Patterson. Carrying the investigation a stage beyond where Vollers had left it, he classified all the variations, set aside those due to mistakes of translation, and those due to a reasonably free translation; there remained (in our eleven chapters) only a baker's dozen that pointed clearly to a difference of text. Editors and commentators since 1891 quote Patterson in their apparatus criticus; but alas! they neither accept his conclusions nor attempt to refute them. The typical sinner here is Paul Ruben, a full half of whose volume of *Critical Remarks* is devoted to Hosea. He prefaces his notes with a reference to the literature, ending with Patterson's study, and he adds this commendably modest remark; "I shall quote these treatises only in those passages wherein I am especially indebted to them for a correction of a wrong conjecture of my own." On that basis, he might well have cited Patterson on every page, for his own book, based chiefly on the Septuagint, is a jumble of the most arbitrary combinations; he actually cites him not once. Study Ruben to learn how not to emend, and Patterson to learn the habits of the Greek translator of Hosea.

3. *To arrange the whole book in strophes is unwarranted.* You cannot prove a theory by simply assuming it. I take the liberty to doubt that these eleven chapters were originally written in regular strophes; whoever asserts that they were so written must bear the burden of proof. The strophe-maker himself, however intent on the end to be gained, usually shows himself aware of the fact that he must find some plausible grounds for his conjectures; but usually also it is plain that these grounds are subordinate to a foregone conclusion. A warning example in this connection is Marti; if the facts get in the way of his quatrains, so much the worse for the facts. He not only transposes ad libitum but excides with a ruthless

knife. By actual count, forty-two verses out of the seven pages have perished in the onslaught. Duhm is more radical than Marti in spots, and Haupt out-Herods both, as far as he has published his analysis. For instance, in 11:1-4, he cuts out two-thirds of the material and leaves only four short lines. It may be instructive to give the skeleton of his results in chapter 7. Of the sixteen verses, two whole ones and eight halves, i. e., the equivalent of six verses, are considered genuine. They make four strophes. Notice the order of the verses; 8, 9, 5^a, 6^b, 7^a, 11^a, 12^a, 2^b, 13^a, 16^a. The rest consists of secondary and tertiary glosses. Secondary glosses, read in Haupt's order, are 4^a, 10, 3, 5^b, 6^c, 7^b, 12^b, 1^a, 2^a, 13^b, 14, 15. Tertiary glosses are 11^b, 6^a, 4^b, 1^b, 16^b. Besides all this, there are a few fragments of verses in each of these three divisions. Evidently the final cause of the Massoretic text is the intellectual amusement of modern critics.

It cannot be denied, however, that the result is often charming. Read Marti's reconstructed text from beginning to end, and hardly a difficulty is left; smoothness reigns and mostly squareness. Hosea's work of genius takes the form of a checkerboard; or, if you prefer a biblical image, it is like Mark's picture of the 5,000 in garden plots, *πρασιαὶ πρασιαί*.

So much for the negative tests of the text.

B. POSITIVE TESTS.

1. *Hosea's originality is one aid in determining his text.* It is the temptation of critics, as well as of other people, to subsume each new fact under some familiar rubric. Thus in 11:3 most modern authorities agree with the American Revision, and make the Lord say; "I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms," apparently supposing that this item in the duties of a nurse, in Numbers and Deuteronomy, must explain the allusion in Hosea. On the contrary, the Authorized Version seems more reasonable; "taking them by *their* arms"; for you'll never teach a child to walk by taking him in *your* arms. Now comes the Journal of Biblical Literature for 1915, with Prof. Haupt's interesting study of the next verse, 11⁴, showing that we should read not אָרַם but אָרַם; not "I led them with cords of a man," but "I led them with leading-strings." This favors the old idea, independently of his contention that 11³ is a gloss. To those of us who retain 11:3 it might be objected

that Hosea, even when dealing with a collective notion, would hardly pass from plural to singular and back again in the same breath: "I took *them* by *his* arms and healed *them*." But what if this final ן of זרועתי instead of being superfluous (*my* arms) should be taken with the previous ׳ as a remnant of ם? Thus all is in order; reading, with the LXX and nearly all critics, אֶקְחֵם, we have three coördinate suffixes of the third person plural.

In 5:8 the received text reads; "behind thee, Benjamin" אַחֲרַיָּךְ בְּנֵימִן. In the commentaries on that passage, a great pyramid has been built on its point; a phrase in the Song of Deborah has been exalted into the regular Hebrew war-cry of centuries later. Some, following Ewald, go so far as to make it disclose a whole section of the prophet's biography; the turn of expression shows, they say, that he was a resident of Judah when this was written. But no one succeeds in making good sense of the quotation. Why not let it be an original remark of Hosea? Benjamin trembles (יִחַרְרַר instead of אַחֲרַיָּךְ). So many moderns.

One of the most original pictures in Hosea, and at the same time so puzzling a one as to be the despair of commentators, is that of the baker and his oven in 7:4-7. Wellhausen's humor is always with him, and we need not take too seriously his remark that it would be no great loss if some good way could be found to throw Hosea's esteemed baker out of his text. There is certainly corruption here, and if we insist on making the entire passage plain, one conjecture may be no better than another; but why not keep the main figure, which is strong and vivid, and confess our ignorance with respect to a few doubtful words? Verse 7^a is plain enough; "they are all hot like an oven"; that shows that *this* image was used; let each one make what he can of the previous verses, as Prof. Haupt has done in the same number of JBL, and as Hoonacker has done more successfully, I think. Nearly all translations, from the most recent ones back to the Septuagint, are too benevolently disposed towards their readers. Even when they can be sure of nothing, they feel in duty bound to give something, instead of honestly indicating a doubt. A notable exception is Guthe's Hosea, in Kautzsch's Bible; he prints many lacunae.

2. *Hosea is above all things a preacher and this fact has an important bearing on his text.* He has a message to deliver and he will not always stop to polish it or to harmonize it with anybody's preconceptions. For example, the fact that some passages of the received text are metrical, others unmetrical, gives us no right to alter the text; we should shape our theories by the evidence, not impose the former on the latter. A good example of an unmetrical sentence is 12: 8: "A trader! deceitful balances are in his hand; he takes delight in oppressing" **כַּנְעַן בְּיָדוֹ מֵאוֹנֵי מְרָמָה לַעֲשֹׂק אֱהָב:**

If this occurred in a prose writer, every one would accept it as prose; but how different the previous verse, with its three 3's: "But do thóu retúrn to thy Gód; kíndness and jústice obsérve; then hópe in thy Gód foréver" **וְאַתָּה בְּאֱלֹהֶיךָ תִּשׁוּב חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט שָׁמַר וְקוֹה אֶל-אֱלֹהֶיךָ תָּמִיד:** This contrast does not stand alone; for more than a score of verses in the eleven chapters are unmetrical, in the midst of others that are plainly metrical.

Again, it is a common critical device to strike out as a doublet a phrase found elsewhere in the prophecy. But preachers do not hesitate to repeat their warnings. It is quite in character for Hosea the preacher to say in 8: 13: "He will remember their iniquity and visit their sins" and then to say the same in 9: 9, where it is equally appropriate. So in 5: 5 and again in 10: 7: "The pride of Israel testifies to his face"—that has the genuine homiletical tone.

A repetition of a different kind meets us in 8: 11, which most recent scholars refer to a copyist's carelessness. The Revised Version renders it by this curious bit of logic: "Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning." The repetition, I believe, is a preacher's home thrust. "What is an altar for? Is it not to *expiate* sin? Ephraim has multiplied altars *for* sinning; *altars* are to *him* for *sinning*" **הָיוּ לוֹ מִזְבְּחוֹת לְחַטָּא**, one of Hosea's frequent rhymes. Compare the familiar phrase, "peace is to me a war."

Some preachers eschew politics; but Hosea is alive to the rapid changes in the government of his country. It is a fair question whether the references to Judah are original or interpolated. Here, as before, are two extremes to be avoided. The

one accepts all these references as we have them. But this cannot be; e. g. in 12:2, "Jehovah has a controversy with Judah, even to visit upon Jacob according to his ways"; the tell-tale ׀ with the infinitive shows that one or the other proper name is an error; and it is not Jacob, for the prophet goes on to speak of him alone. Still, this reasoning cannot be applied to some of the references to the southern kingdom; and when editors would throw them all out, we may well ask with Nowack whether Hosea would have been likely to express no interest in the religious politics of Judah.

Once more, it is a favorite modern notion that the denunciatory passages are inconsistent with hopes and predictions of a bright future; these latter then must go by the board. But not all critics are preachers, or they would apply here that word of the Lord: "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." We need not go all lengths with George Adam Smith, and insist on retaining the entire fourteenth chapter, minus its closing sentence; it is my experience, at least, that most of that chapter seems to lack the ever-present being of Hosea; for example, the triple repetition of "Lebanon" and the jejune "say unto him" in verse 3. On the other hand, it is like a preacher to close with exhortation rather than denunciation. I shall return to chapter 14, but on the main point it gives me pleasure to say of Hosea and Israel what Cheyne said of Isaiah and Judah in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (in 1898, which was in Cheyne's pre-Arabian period). "I am not prepared," he said, "to make a holocaust of passages in which Isaiah takes a bright view of the prospects of Judah."

3. *Hosea's euphonies often help determine his text.* I refer not only to rhythm and metre, but to what Lanier happily calls the *colors* of verse; such as alliteration, assonance, phonetic harmony, and rhyme. I know of no prophet who, within an equal compass of seven pages, so abounds in these varied euphonies. Sometimes a single letter stands out; the most familiar instance is the triple *k* in the proverb: "Like people, like priest: כָּעָם כְּהֹנֵן. A much better example is the triple *m* in 9:11 with its tremendous compression, twelve words in English, three in Hebrew: "there shall be no birth and none with child and no conception": מְלָרָה וּמִבֶּטֶן וּמֵהַרְיוֹן. In 12:2 Ephraim feeds on wind and chases the east wind to the

tune of three r's, which are clearly onomatopoeic: רעה רוח ורדף. The consonant may be medial instead of initial, as in 11:5 ואשור... לשוב or in 10:10 three s's... ואספו... ואסרם באסרם. Most critics strike out the last of these, but the euphony indicates that it was meant to be there.

Then there are various permutations; what is it that gives us pleasure in the phrase that modern editors strike out at the end of 4:14: וועם לא יבין ילבט? It is phonetic harmony, caused by the sequence of the sounds l, y, v, with y, l, v (lo ya vin; yil-la-vet). We have the same thing in 13:2: m, s, k, followed immediately by m, k, s, מסכה מכספם. Elsewhere note the echo-like effects: אוי להם... שד להם; אפרים... מצרים; מעלליהם... אל-אלהיהם; מזבחותם... מצבותם.

When we come to rhymes, we find an embarrassment of riches. Time would fail to illustrate this at length; but that you may appreciate their variety, elaborateness, and evenness of distribution, I give one sample from a verse in each of the eleven chapters in order and then several samples from a single chapter.

(4:7) יחינו... בנרו... ילרו (5:7) כרבם... כבודם (6:2) צמח... קמח (7:7) נדרו... פשעו (7:13) יקמנו
 (9:6) אתנה (11:8) מזבחות... מצבות (10:1) תקבצם... תקברם
 (14:4) מכספם כתבונם (13:2) חרפתו ישיב-לו (12:15) אמגנה ידני... אלהינו.

Calling that a longitudinal section, chapter 9 will furnish a cross section to match it. Here are *its* rhymes in order, besides the one already given.

(7) לחמם לנפשים (4) יסכו... יערבו (4) אתנן... דגן (7)
 עונם... חטאתם (9) דרכיו... אלהיו (8) עונה... משטמה
 (10) נדרים בגוים (17) כבכורה בתאנה (10)

The bearing of Hosea's rhyming habit on the question of his text is plain. When critics assert, for example, that תקברם and תקבצם are merely variants of the same word, they are manufacturing evidence instead of following the light of analogy. Some will have it that a profusion of rhymes is likely to occur by accident in any highly inflected language, but that is a decided mistake. The slightest acquaintance with medieval

Latin hymns as contrasted with classical Latin shows that the material for rhymes was always present but was long unused.

Not to dwell upon single unrhymed assonances like . . . יַעֲקֹב יַעֲבֹד or לְמַצָּפָה . . . הַמִּשְׁפָּט which seems to have given a hint to Isaiah, or the one that he actually copies: שְׂרִייהֶם סָרְרִים. I will quote a few euphonic clauses, to show how beautifully they illustrate the principle of balance. In 8:3 observe the succession of vowels: יִזְכּוֹר עֲוֹנֶם וַיִּפְקֹד חַטָּאתֶם (*i-ō ō-ā i-ō ō-ā*). Note the double rhyme in the last clause of 12:15:

וְדָמְיוֹ עָלָיו . . . וְחֲרָפְתּוֹ יִשִּׁיב-לוֹ:

In 4:9 the liquid sounds are as interesting as the rhymes. Now and then we encounter a perfect balance of rhythms and rhymes, a fine example being the Silluk clause of 10:1:

כָּרֵב לְפָרְיוֹ הֲרֵבָה לוֹ מִזְבַּחֹת כָּטוֹב לְאַרְצוֹ הֵטִיבוֹ מַצְבוֹת:
Another as good or better was discovered by Duhm, who made the easy correction of ך for ך in the Silluk clause of 8:7 and produced the following, which he calls the only rhymed song in the Old Testament:

בְּלִי יַעֲשֶׂה-קֶמַח	קָמָה אֵין-לוֹ צֶמַח
רִים יִבְלַעְהוּ:	אוֹלֵי יַעֲשֶׂהוּ

Professor Duff puts that into English thus:

“A corn-stalk all yellow
Brings no meal to a fellow:
But if grains should bend it,
The wild-ox would end it.”

The quality of verse which I have called balance goes much beyond what is technically called parallelism, and sometimes enables us to eliminate a superfluous word. Thus Hosea wrote in 9:10: “Like grápes in the wilderness fóund I Ísrael; like the first ripe of the fig I sáw your fáthers.” Some prosaic scribe had to explain this image and write in the margin: “in its beginning” בְּרֵאשִׁיתָהּ, which throws the line out of balance. We see the same thing at 8:5: “And the pride of Ísrael witnesses to his fáce, and Éphraim stúmbles in the mídst of his sín.” The correction “and Ísrael” for “and Eḡ” found a

place beside the other in the text, making it limp badly. On the other hand in 4:2 a true feeling for balance *preserves* the received text against the monstrosity which most recent critics have foisted upon it. They read **וּפְרִיץ** for **פְּרָצוּ** but this changes the fine poetry to deadly prose; a mere list of items, thus: "swearing and perjury and killing and stealing and adultery and outbreak." What the prophet wrote, according to the evidence, was a balanced line, whose second member reads: "they break out, and blood touches blood."

Finally, let me illustrate by a long consecutive passage, my belief that Hosea writes in varied metre when he pleases, and in prose when he pleases. Let us turn to 13:7. From this point on, as I will try to show, there are (first) two great climaxes of three lines each, in metrical double 3's, and between the two is a broken line which shows at once its imperfect character. Then come four lines in 5's, the so-called *kināh* rhythm. Then a magnificent Alexandrine, three 3's. A long prose verse follows, closing the chapter, while chapter 14 begins with four 6's, namely, three 2's plus two 3's, and again three 2's plus two 3's. Apart from the torso, not a word of MT needs to be altered in these twelve and a half verses (13:7-14:3^a), except, if you choose, **כָּעַת** for **כִּי-עַת** in verse 13 and **אָחוּ** for **אֲחִים** in verse 15, with the addition, following the ancient versions, of **אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** at the end of the section. Marti, in order to preserve his 4's, has to make a new start before reaching the first climax. That climax may be imitated in English as follows:

I will be unto them as a lion;
 As a panther in ambush will I lurk;
 I will meet them as a frenzied bear
 And will rend the enclosure of their heart.
 I'll devour them there like a lioness:—
 Wild beasts of the field will mangle them.

כְּנֹמֵר עַל-דֶּרֶךְ אֲשׁוּר:	וַאֲהִי לָהֶם כְּמוֹ-שֹׁחַל
וְאֶקְרַע סָגוּר לָכֶם	אֶפְגָּשֶׁם כְּרֹב שְׂכוּל
חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה תִּבְקַעֵם:	וְאֶכְלֶם שֵׁם כָּל־בְּיָא

Then comes the torso:

שְׁחַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־בִי בְעֵזְרֶךָ

“thy destruction, Israel, for in me, in thy help”—what else, we ask? This is sadly misinterpreted in A. V. which is faithfully followed by both revisions. “It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help.” The main statement, “thou art,” is not there. The fragment needs, of course, to be completed, but I will not attempt to complete it now. Three more double 3’s immediately succeed:

And pray, now, where is thy king?
 And thy deliverers in all thy cities?
 And thy judges, for whom thou prayedst:
 Give me a king and princes!
 I give thee a king—in my wrath,
 And remove him in hot displeasure.

וְיִוְשִׁיעַהּ בְּכָל־עָרֶיהָ	אֱהִי מַלְכָּךְ אֲפֹא
תְּנֶה־לִּי מֶלֶךְ וְשָׂרִים:	וְיִטְפְּטֶיךָ אִשָּׁר אֲמַרְתָּ
וְאֶקַּח בְּעֵבְרָתִי:	אֶת־זֶלְזֶלְךָ מֶלֶךְ בְּאִפִּי

Next we have the *kinâh* rhythm, 3’s and 2’s.

Bound fast is Ephraim’s guilt; stored up his sin.
 Upon him come travail pangs; a foolish son;
 He meeteth not at its time the delivery of sons.
 From Sheol shall I redeem them? from Death set them free?

צְפוּנָה חֲטָאתוֹ:	צָרוּר עֵוֹן אֲפָרַיִם
הוּא־בֵן לֹא חָכֵם	חֲבָלֵי יוֹלְדָה יִבְאוּ לוֹ
בְּמִשְׁבַּר בָּנִים:	כָּעֵת לֹא־יַעֲמֵד
מִמּוֹת אֲנָאֵלִם	מִיַּד שְׂאוּל אֲפָדֵם

Now the tremendous Alexandrine, the outburst of Jehovah’s vengeance: אֱהִי רִבְרִיךָ מוֹת אֱהִי קִטְבְּךָ שְׂאוּל נַחֵם יִסְתֵּר מֵעֵינַי: “Ho, thy terrors, Death! Ho, thy destruction, Sheol! Relenting is hid from my eyes.”

It is altogether futile to constrain verse 15 into the bounds of metre; it is good prose as it stands, with the single change

indicated; and it is rendered fairly in the American Revision. But chapter 14, verses 1 and 2 with a part of 3, are metrical in form: Guilty is Samaria, a rebel 'gainst her God; by the sword she shall fall: תָּאֲשָׁם שְׁמֵרוֹן כִּי מָרְתָה בְּאֱלֹהֶיהָ בַּחֶרֶב יִפְלוּ
Her sucklings dashed in pieces; her pregnant ones cloven with the sword: וְהָרִיתָיו יִבְקָעוּ: עַל־לֵיהֶם יִרְטָשׁוּ.

Over against this thunder cloud is the rainbow:
Return, Israel, to Jehovah thy God, for thou staggerest in thy guilt:

שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בְּעֹנֶךָ:

Provide yourselves with words, and turn to Jehovah your God:

קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

come before him, that is, not with victims, but with penitent prayers.

I know not where Hosea closed his book; but if it was here, he stopped in a good place.