

# Expansions on the Book of Hosea

## Introduction

When it comes to biblical texts on the Lectio Divina Homepage, the document at hand follows a now established format called “expansion.” At its heart lays the practice of reading the biblical text in the context of *lectio divina* which involves a slow, loving attention. Such is the approach offered here as elsewhere, no more, no less. Information about the text as well as the person of Hosea can be found elsewhere.

As for the term “expansion,” it developed slowly over several years. It’s aim is to consider key elements within the text and to amplify...expand...them to a certain point beyond their original intent. “Certain point” is the critical phrase. While staying within the parameters of the biblical word or several words as object of *lectio*, one is free to inflate...expand...it from within, not unlike blowing up a balloon. You know when to stop this inflation or expansion only after having engaged the text as a vehicle for disposing yourself to God’s presence. In other words, knowledge when to stop comes to you much like a gift; you don’t impose the limits. Such a slow, drawn-out process is quite unlike, even alien, to our customary way of reading. Even though this cautionary note is part of virtually all introductions to expansions texts, never can it be emphasized sufficiently. Rushing through a text as well as any other activity truly is a bane of modern life.

As for the text at hand, most of the verses are examined, some more and some less. The reason? A good number of them have to do with extended laments and unfamiliar place names. Then we can throw in so-called obscure words and phrases of the Hebrew text, some of which are pointed out. While these facts pose a genuine challenge, it shouldn’t preclude anyone from viewing them in the light of doing *lectio divina*. Hosea, like other prophetic books, presents what seems to be endless accounts of Israel’s faithlessness and exquisitely fashioned punishments for such bad behavior.

Admittedly this gets boring quickly. When going through chapter after chapter (though not as long in a shorter book as Hosea), you wonder when it’s going to end. Then with time you realize that what the Lord accuses Israel of is applicable in equal fashion to oneself. While that’s a key realization, it isn’t the

object of the text at hand. One is to read the verses word-by-word nice and slowly and see to what conclusion you arrive. To go beyond this task, simple yet difficult, would be outside the range of the “expansion” approach. As for reading what can be a somewhat disjointed text, one of divine love and human rejection repeated a number of times, what’s presented here isn’t meant to be read straight on through. It’s more an outline of the text extending an invitation to ponder over a given word, phrase or verse after which you may move on.

Furthermore, what strikes you about Hosea is that through Israel’s faithlessness the Lord refuses to let her go. By the time you get to the last chapter you feel as though you’ve been on a roller coaster ride, up-down, down-up, round and round. Also you feel sorry for the Lord, almost embarrassingly so at having to put up with all this. While it’s easy to condemn Israel, all the details of her faithlessness are alive and well right now, even in our own lives. That nation is privileged for having been singled out as representative of the human race even though the people may not have realized it. Because the book is relatively short you’re able to pick up on this quickly.

At the end of each chapter the transliterated words are listed verse by verse for easier reference. If, for example, a given word is found with the Book of Hosea (short as it is), the closest reference to it will be noted. Otherwise a similar word from another book will be inserted. Generally preference is given to the Psalter because that book contains the full range of human aspirations. As with all “expansion” texts, the one at hand uses the **RSV** or **The New Oxford Annotated Bible** with the Apocrypha. Another reference is the **NIV Study Bible**.

## Chapter One

As is the case with many prophetic works, this book opens with the word of the Lord coming to the prophet who, of course, is Hosea. In several “expansion” documents posted already, often the noun for “word” is found, that being *davar* (the verbal form has the same spelling). However, it means far more than that. It’s along the lines of giving expression, of uttering something deep and intimate to someone very dear. A New Testament parallel is *logos*, that often applied to Jesus Christ. The contents of *davar* isn’t always pleasant but when

uttered by the Lord, neither the person uttering it nor those listening to it cannot ignore it. So for the Book of Hosea to begin with *davar* as it does with most other prophets means that Israel as representative of ourselves must pay close attention to what follows. The same, of course, applies to the person (i.e., Hosea) receiving it.

Because *davar* is so central to anything prophetic, it's helpful to examine a key instance of where it had developed. That brings us to Moses. His relationship with the Lord is incredibly bound up with the divine *davar* as, for example, all the instructions given on Mount Sinai. They are presented in great detail chapter by chapter. No human memory could retain them, the reason why Chapter Twenty which begins this long sequence starts off with "And God *davar* all these *davar* saying<sup>1</sup>." As for the verb "saying," it's 'amar which, if you will, is more prosaic. Finally this *davar* comes to an end with Chapter Thirty-One. The last verse of that chapter reads "when he (the Lord) had made an end of *davar* with him upon Mount Sinai." *Kalah* is the verb "to make an end" which means more specifically to complete, reference being to the two tablets of stones.

*Kalah* sets the stage for what happens next, Aaron fashioning a molten calf. This is in response to the people seeing that Moses had delayed coming down from Mount Sinai, for they didn't know what happened to him. Actually in their hearts the Israelites were delighted that Moses hadn't shown up, for it gave them free reign to engage in idolatry. Ever since having left Egypt they harbored this desire. Aaron couldn't help but notice this which made him take the initiative, all to his favor. Surely the people would be more devoted to him than they were to Moses which would enable him to take over as their leader.

This incident is mentioned because for the people the time between Moses' ascent and his descent was interminably long and drawn out. It stands in sharp contrast to Moses being on Sinai while he was absorbing the divine *davar* which was instantaneous. So we have two types of time: the compact one on the mountain and the drawn-out one down below. After Moses had enlisted the aide of the Levites to slay the idolaters, he ascends Mount Sinai yet again. This time the Lord decides to write his *davar* upon the tables instead of communicating them to Moses. And so at this stage of development *davar* transits from an oral to a written form.

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<sup>1</sup>*Davar* is the same spelling for the verb and noun

Surely Hosea as well as the other prophets must have had a similar experience of this transition with regard to *davar* when it came to them. After all, Moses was the prototype of all subsequent prophets. As for the actual coming of the divine *davar*, no specific details are given which leaves it up to our imagination to wonder how it is effected. If the text went into *details-davar* passing from A to B to C and so forth—something precious would be lost by explaining it away unnecessarily. And so we could say that the coming of the divine *davar* as to Moses and Hosea has its parallel in the practice of *lectio divina*.

First of all, the context of *davar* is made very clear, that is, the text starts off with mention of Hosea's father as well as the four kings of Judah and one king of Israel. That means that the divine *davar* doesn't treat the historical context as incidental as would be the case in other societies of the time. It's as though everyone of his family and Israel's ruler somehow recognized that something had entered their world but weren't fully cognizant of it.

When we associate *davar* with a person such as Hosea, the way it's presented is as coming. Such is the case with the **RSV** translation at hand. However, this verb is lacking. A more direct approach is taken, for the text reads literally as "the *davar* of the Lord was to Hosea." *hayah* or "was" suggests no passage...interval...between the Lord and Hosea; it's almost as though Hosea "was" the divine *davar*. That's as close as we can get to its transmission which essentially ends up almost paradoxically as no transmission.

Vs. 2 begins with "when" which in the Hebrew text is the conjunctive *v-* translated usually as "and." As pointed out in other "expansion" documents, the conjunctive serves to show the close connection between two events. Also it moves the reader along while allowing what had just transpired to be embedded in one's memory as one among a number of interrelated steps. In the case at hand, the conjunctive brings the newly received *davar* of the Lord to those with whom Hosea is about to address.

Note too that the noun *techilah* is used with the verb *davar* which is rendered literally as "the beginning to speak." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" [Prov 9.10]. In the verse at hand, *techilah* represents the first time *davar* becomes manifest which is then spelled out. Furthermore, the Lord *davar* is literally "in (*b-*) Hosea;" i.e., it permeates him through and through, as

though he had become the *davar* itself. Also *davar* is accompanied by “the Lord said” (*‘amar*), two different types of speaking as noted earlier represented by the two verbs.

Hosea must have wondered if he had absorbed the Lord’s *davar* or that it came from some evil source because he’s commanded to do something quite abhorrent, to take a “wife of harlotry.” What’s even worse is that the noun *zenunym* is in the plural (harlotries) and found next in 2.2 (2.3 in the Hebrew): “that she put away her harlotry from her face and adultery from between her breasts.” Hosea is to marry such a woman and have children by her, an even more repulsive thought. The reason? Concern for the land (*‘erets* stands for Israel as well as the physical place-where) is the real reason why the Lord wants Hosea to take such a drastic step. The *‘erets* had forsaken the Lord, reading literally as “from after the Lord.” This may have made his request more palatable...but barely. Putting up with such a wife (if you could call her that) is bad enough, but the children? How would he raise them and inform them about their mother later in life?

The name of the harlot (again, the plural) is Gomer which means completion, intimating that she is full of corruption through and through. The same applies to her mother’s name, Diblaim which means something like double layers of grape-cakes, an even more contemptible name than her daughter. As for the Bible, this is the only instance when the two are mentioned, yet at the same time they are symbolic of the nation of Israel, a.k.a. *‘erets*. So if Israel is this *‘erets*/Gomer, who’s the mother? Given Israel’s history, it can be her inclination to associate with neighboring people who practiced idolatry.

It’s almost impossible to conceive of Hosea going through with this *davar*, but he did it nonetheless. Vs. 3 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so,” indicative of quick, decisive action resulting in the birth of a son whom the Lord bade to name Jezreel which means “God scatters” or “God sows.” A footnote in the **RSV** says that this is the name of a valley and a reminder which “points backward to the sin of the house of Jehu,” this recounted in 1Kg 19.15-17. Jezreel is noted in 2.22 but in the sense of God having planted.

And so in vs. 4 Hosea is responsible for having fathered a child named after the valley of Jezreel meaning it...he...is the offspring of a harlot. This offspring the Lord will punish, *paqad* fundamentally being a military term such as to go up

against and applied to the mustering of troops. This sense of *paqad* fits in well here, given the historical situation as it pertains to the Lord putting an end to the kingdom of Israel. More specifically, *paqad* applies to the house of Jehu whom the Lord will bring to an end, *shavath*. This verb also means to keep as a day of rest but here is more along the lines of an utter removal. “And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her appointed feasts” [2.11].

Connected with this *paqad/shavath* is “in (*b-*) that day” of vs. 5 as it reads literally. It begins with the conjunctive *v-* which as pointed out above, shows the close connection between events. Note that in vs. 4 the Lord is quick to insert a conciliatory note, namely, that such *paqad* will last “yet for a little while” (*ky-hod mehat*), no longer. And as a kind of appendix, in vs. 5 the Lord himself will break the bow of Israel. However, no specific instance of who or what nation will bring on such a disaster. One has to look to the historical account alluded to in conjunction with King Jehu.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the **RSV**. If the birth of Jezreel weren't enough, Gomer has a second child with the prophet Hosea, this time a daughter. He had the dubious honor of giving her a name which is Not Pitied or *Lo-Ruchamah*, the verbal root being *racham* or to behold with tender affection, here with the negative *lo-*. The reason? The Lord himself says that he won't have *racham* on Israel. “Say to your brother, ‘My people,’ and to your sister, ‘She has obtained pity’” [2.1]. In the verse at hand *racham* is used with the verb *yasaph* which shows continuance, something that the Lord will refrain from doing. Such continuity can extend for an indefinite period of time meaning that divine *racham* will be withheld. Only the Lord can do away with such *yasaph*. It's bound up with not imparting forgiveness, the text reading literally “to bear I am bearing to them,” *nasa'*. “They are greedy for their iniquity” [4.8].

In contrast to the lack of *racham* with regard to Israel, the Lord has a different plan for the house of Judah as recounted in vs. 7. It begins with the conjunctive *v-* and translated as “but.” As for the word house or *beyth*, it has a certain inherent domestic quality and refers to people who are either related or at least are familiar with each other. “Tribe” might be an equivalent which fits in with the twelve tribes of Israel. The Lord will deliver the house of Judah, *yashah* also as to help or to set free and is the verbal root from the proper name Jesus. “I am



the Lord your God from the land of Egypt...and besides me there is no savior” [13.10]. This is the first of two instances of *yashah*, the first taking place literally “in (*b-*) the Lord their God.” Note third person plural, the God of Judah which implies a certain familiarity that can be recovered despite the unfaithfulness at hand. The second *yashah* in vs. 7 says that the Lord will not resort to military action which the inhabitants of Judah might expect.

Vs. 8 too begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “when” and reverts to Not Pitied or *Lo-Ruchamah*, the second child or daughter of Gomer and Hosea. The time frame is when the infant is weaned and when Gomer gives birth to a third child. By now Hosea must be in serious internal turmoil about these three births which come in rapid succession. He’s also asking himself if there will be any more...hopefully not. This third child is a son whom in vs. 9 the Lord bids Hosea to name Not My People or *Lo’ Hamy*. Not only that, the Lord adds that to this negative or *Lo’* literally “I am not (*lo’*) to (*l-*) you.” Of all the three children representative of the nation of Israel this third one is the worse, representative of a full-throated rejection by the Lord.

The conjunctive at the beginning of vs. 10<sup>2</sup> is of great importance, translated as “yet.” The reason? Despite the Lord’s punishment of Israel, there is hope. Hosea too must have been relieved. No more would he have to be the father of another bastard-like child which means no more would he have to give birth to an entire nation. Hopefully he can divorce Gomer. However, he learns painfully that she is the nation of Israel from whom he can’t separate himself.

Now the people of Israel will resemble the sand of the sea which can’t be numbered, this clearly reminiscent of the Lord’s promise to Abraham: “I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendant as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.” In other words, Israel is on the verge of recapturing that vision so essential to her identity.

Vs. 10 continues with an elaboration of this Abraham-like promise, that is, the designation not-my-people which harkens back to vs. 8, *Lo’ Hamy* though without the formal title as there. So in place of this Israel will not be called, but it will be “said of them” (this implies nations other than Israel which fits in well with the Abraham reference) that they are sons of the living God. Note

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<sup>2</sup>Vs. 10 equals 2.1 in the Hebrew.

that this is to take place in the future and in the same place or *maqom* as Israel had been known as not-my-people. As for *maqom* which connotes a habitation or abode, cf. 5.15: “I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.” Thus *maqom* remains the same for Israel as sons of the living God and not-my-people. The place-where, however, is simply the focal point for this dramatic transformation.

Vs. 11 brings to conclusion Chapter One, yet again with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” The separated kingdoms of Judah and Israel will be reunited, the verb being *qavats* also as to congregate or assemble. “Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up” [8.10]. Once so assembled, it’s up to the two nations to decide upon one head or *ro’sh* also as that which is foremost or the beginning. “They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and make offerings upon the hills” [4.13].

Once this has been accomplished, both Judah and Israel will go up from the land or ‘*erets* (cf. vs. 2), this most likely being a return which is in accord with a footnote in the NIV. The same footnote adds that both “would spring up from the ‘*erets* as plants do.” This would explain the “day of Jesreel” which as noted above, has the alternate meaning of “God scatters.” Thus the scattering done by the Lord with regard to seed counters the other Jezreel pertaining to the house of Jehu. And so the opening chapter concludes on a positive note after having introduced three children, if you will, begotten between the prophet Hosea and the prostitute Gomer. Nevertheless, this is not the end of the story. More details as to Israel’s unfaithfulness will unfold as we move through the remaining fourteen chapters.

1) *davar*, 2) *techilah*, ‘*amar*, *zenunym*, ‘*erets*, 4) *paqad*, *shavath*, 6) *yasaph*, *racham*, *nasa’*, 7) *beyth*, *yashah*, 10) *maqom*, 11) *qavats*, *ro’sh*, ‘*erets*

## Chapter Two

The Lord bids Hosea to address both his brother and sister (plural in the Hebrew text) *Hamy* and *Ruchamah*, “my people” and “she has obtained pity” respectively to offset what he had said in 1.9 and 1.6, that is, the two negatives. Once this is out of the way, in vs. 2 the Lord turns attention to the children begotten by Hosea and Gomer. They (i.e., brothers and sisters) are to plead



with their mother, the verb *ryv* also as to contend with or to strive. “Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest” [4.4].

The object of this *ryv* takes up (rather, consumes the rest of Chapter Two) beginning with the Lord who’s almost at the point begging the brothers and sisters to say that Gomer is neither his wife nor husband. She is to renounce her harlotry, *sur* also as to shut up. “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth” [2.17]. In the verse at hand, *sur* is intensified by the phrase “from her face” with regard to harlotry. In other words, Gomer has a compulsive tendency to engage in prostitution, morbidly so, and must remedy the situation by turning her face or her attention, a task easier said than done. Even more intimately, she’s to *sur* her adultery from between her breasts, *na’phuphym* being the only instance of this noun in the Bible. It’s derived from the verbal root *na’aph* meaning to commit adultery. This can apply to both a man and a woman compared with *zanah* from which the noun in vs. 2 is derived and applies mostly to a woman.

Should Gomer refuse to obey, the Lord will really go after her, this time depriving her of everything. He begins his grim litany in vs. 3 by striping her naked, the verb being *pashat* also as to expand, to spread out and in the verse at hand applies to the image of removing a garment. “And the bandits raid without” [7.1]. Following this *pashat* we have three verbs which make Gomer’s deprivation permanent:

- 1) *Yatsag* or to place, to set Gomer as on the day of her birth.
- 2) *Sum* or to place in the sense of to establish with regard to being in the desert (*midbar*). “Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness” [2.14].
- 3) *Shyth* or to set as well as to constitute or to appoint. “For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed” [6.11]. Capping of these three we have the Lord threatening to slay Gomer with thirst.

Vs. 4 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” to show that the threefold placing of the previous verse carries over to the children. That is to say, the Lord will not have pity or *racham* which is reminiscent of 1.6, Gomer’s second child or daughter named Not Pitied or *Lo-Ruchamah*. They seemed to have inherited their harlotry from their mother who had acted without shame,

*bosh*. “And they shall be ashamed because of their altars” (‘sacrifices’ in Hebrew) [4.19].

In vs. 5 Gomer boasts aloud of her brazenness or going after lovers, the participle *‘ahav* also as to desire, to breath after and is found next in vs. 7. She pursues them (the common verb *halak*, to go) purely out of self-interest because they provide her with the basics for living. And from her point of view, it was a pretty good deal.

Because of this blatant self-interest which Gomer doesn’t attempt to hide, in vs. 6 the Lord literally attempts to fence her in. Before doing this he exclaims *hineh* which often is rendered as “behold” but isn’t translated here. Such a way of talking suggests that the Lord actually in thinking out loud, deliberately so, in order that his words sink into Gomer.

Next the Lord takes two steps to restrict Israel:

1) The Lord hedges in her (‘your’ in the Hebrew) way (*derek*) in, *suk* having two other biblical references from Job, 1.10 and 10.11, the former being quoted here: “Have you not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?” As for *derek*, it also applies to a going or journey. “I will punish them for their ways and requite them for their deeds” [4.9].

2) He builds a wall around Israel, *gadar* also as to fortify as with a wall. “He has walled me about so that I cannot escape” [Lam 3.7]. Once pressed in by both thorns and a wall, Israel can’t find her paths, *ntyvah* being more a footpath compared with *derek*. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” [Ps 119.105].

Vs. 7 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated whose value consists in connecting the hemming-in of Israel of the previous verse with a still head-strong determination to follow her own will. It takes the form of two opposites: 1) to pursue her lovers, *‘ahav* and *radaph*. The first is a participle last found in vs. 5 and the latter can also mean to persecute. “Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord” [6.3]. Note the contrast between *radaph* and *nasag* (to overtake), the latter also as to reach, to attain. “Shall not war overtake them in Gibeah” [10.9]? 2) As for the verbs to seek and to find, they are *baqash* and *matsa’*. The former contains the notion of touching or feeling and the latter of attaining or arriving and is found in vs. 6 but not noted there. As for *baqash*, cf.

3:5: “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king.”

By reason of the double-bind just noted, vs. 7 continues with Israel saying to herself that she will return to (*shuv*) her first husband who is the Lord, the one responsible for having put her in such dire straights. She does this deliberately so that the Lord will listen in and take notice. Life was far better then than it is now, but then again, will he be disposed to receive her? After all, he is the Lord and has a reputation for mercy but the possibility of rejection is there. As for *shuv*, cf. vs. 9: “Therefore I will take back my grain in its time and my wine in its season.”

Vs. 8 confirms Israel’s fears, beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which reveals a quick response by the Lord. He claims (and justifiable so) that Israel hadn’t known that he was responsible for furnishing her with nourishment, the verb *yadah* indicative of intimate knowledge which she should have had from the outset of their relationship. “I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” [vs. 20]. Reference to grain, wine and oil is echoed in Dt 7:13: “He will love and you bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the grain, new wine and oil.” Vs. 8 further says that the Lord had lavished (the common verb *hasah*, to give) upon her silver and gold originally slated for worship of Baal.

Between vs. 9 and vs. 13 the Lord lays out a whole series of recriminations he intends to take out on Israel which is forced to listen against her will. It’s set in motion with *laken* or “therefore” followed by each verse prefaced with the conjunctive *v-* showing the rapid succession of threats to be carried out. The Lord’s intent is not to denigrate Israel but wishes her to realize that he is her spouse who had been miffed by her association with Baal. He begins by saying that he will take back (*shuv*, cf. vs. 7) what he had bestowed upon her, especially material to cover her nakedness. Similar to this *shuv* is *galah* in vs. 10 (the conjunctive *v-* prefaced to *hatah* or ‘now’) or the Lord revealing Israel’s lewdness. This verb also means to reveal or to be carried into exile. “When I would heal Israel, the corruption of Ephraim is revealed” [7.1]. What’s especially embarrassing here is that the Lord will do this in the eyes of her lovers, another use of the participle ‘*ahav* (cf. vs. 7). She will be exposed out there for all to see with no one to rescue her, *natsal* (cf. vs. 9 but not noted there) conveying the sense of snatching away.

In vs. 11 the Lord will put an end to those things associated with his bride's worship of Baal, the verb being *shavath* found in 1.4 but not noted there. One of them consists of sabbaths or *shabath* which is similar in sound to *shavath* and stands out by reason of it aping the Lord's Sabbath.

In vs. 12 the Lord will lay waste both the bride's vines and fig trees, *shamam* also to be desolate, to be appalled. "For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation" [Ps 79.7]. Both had been given to Israel by her lovers, yet another instance of the participle 'ahav (to love) noted last in vs. 10 and which here is in the plural. In their place the Lord will make a forest and allow wild beasts to devour them.

Last but not least in vs. 13 the Lord will punish his bride Israel, *paqad* which as noted with regard to 1.4 is military term and thus here connotes a certain sharpness. In other words, the Lord comes around full circle from vs. 8, her worship of Baal which she did all decked out with a ring and jewelry. This verse ends poignantly with the Lord saying that Israel has forgotten him, *shakach*. "Therefore they forgot me" [13.6].

The list of recriminations between vss. 9 and 13 must have left Israel both embarrassed and devastated with nowhere to go, at a complete loss for words. That's why vs. 14 begins with *laken* or "therefore" to counter the one in vs. 9 with the Lord stepping in immediately and not allowing his bride to respond and be driven to despair. *Laken* is backed up, if you will, by *hineh* (cf. 1.6) or "behold" as the Lord launches into an extended monologue lasting the rest of Chapter Two. This he does with the intent of consoling Israel.

As with the remaining verses of Chapter Two, vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which translates in the RSV as "therefore." Again, it's indicative of fast-paced action as well as all the elements being connected in intimate fashion. The Lord's first step is the most important one by far. His goal is to remove his bride from everything associated with Baal. However, he does this in a subtle fashion, not forcefully, which consists of two steps:

1) He allures her into the wilderness (*midbar*, cf. vs. 3), the verb being *patah* which also means to spread out, to be ingenuous in mind as well as to persuade. For yet another use of *patah*, cf. 7.11: "Ephraim is like a dove, silly and

without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.”

2) The next means of persuasion is that once in the *midbar*, the Lord will speak to her in a tender fashion, that is, *davar* (cf. 1.1) literally “upon (*hal-*) her heart (*lev*).” “Wine and new wine take away the understanding” [4.11]. *Davar* plays an important role as noted in the introductory parts of this document, more along the lines of giving expression. So for the Lord to *davar* upon his bride’s heart is more to impress upon (*hal-*) her what already is inside him, this being a kind of marital image.

Vs. 15 has the Lord giving Israel her vineyards literally “from there” (*misham*) which means from the *midbar* in which she finds herself. Note that the bride had been allured there against her will and once she realizes it, knows it isn’t a wasteland but a fruitful place as signified by the vineyards. In addition to this, the Lord will transform the Valley of Achor into a door of hope. As for this place, it’s mentioned in Chapter Seven of Joshua where Achan had taken booty and hid it resulting in Israel’s defeat at Ai. Thus Joshua stoned not only Achan but his entire family and livestock. With regard to Israel, instead of meeting a similar fate, one of hope opens up for her, *tiqvah*. “For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth” [Ps 71.5].

The second sentence in vs. 15 (It also begins with the conjunctive *v-*) mentions “there” (*shamah*) or the desert as a transformative place. Within this isolated place the bride Israel will answer as on the day of her youth or *nehorym* (masculine plural). “Your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” [Ps 103.5]. This is clearly when Israel left Egypt and spent forty years in the Sinai wilderness.

Compare “in that day” of vs. 16 with “days of her youth” of vs. 16, both being pretty much equivalent. As for the former, it is when Israel left Egypt which implies the important leadership of Moses. In the Sinai wilderness she will call the Lord “my husband,” the common noun for man being used (*ysh*) instead of “My Baal” which hearkens back to her worship of that false god (cf. vs. 8). Not only that, in vs. 17 the Lord will remove (*sur*, cf. vs. 1) the names of the Baals, that is, the plurality of forms which this god had assumed. Furthermore, she is prohibited to mention them in the future which as we all know failed multiple times. Regardless, the forty year period of being in the Sinai wilderness is a kind of honeymoon in Israel’s history, something to be recalled especially during times of crisis for inspiration.

After the *sur* of the previous verse, vs. 18 has the Lord making a covenant “to them” in the Hebrew text, the verb *karath* with the noun *beryth*. Both are used together in many instances, *karath* fundamentally as to cut which implies permanency. “They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants” [10.4]. Such a relationship the Lord will make “on that day” or the same day as noted in vs. 16 and again in vs. 21 which shows its importance. This time created beings are involved as well as abolishing weapons of war, *shavar* fundamentally as to break and noted in 1.5 but not noted there. Only then will it be possible for Israel to lay down in safety, *shakav* being the verb. This form is found in 1Kg 3.20: “And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me while your maid-servant slept and laid it in her bosom and laid her dead son in my bosom.”

In vs. 19 the Lord comes off with the first of three intentions to betroth Israel which shows that he’s in earnest. Also the preposition *l-* backs this up three times, “to me.” Two are in this verse and one is in the next, the verb being ‘*arash*. The first two instances mention specifically “forever,” *halom* prefaced with the preposition *l-*, literally “to ever.” As for the verb, cf. 2Sam 3.14: “Give me my wife Michal whom I betrothed at the price of a hundred foreskins.” In the verse at hand the four components (all with the preposition *b-* or ‘in’ prefaced to them) with regard to the second ‘*arash* are *tsedeq*, *mishpat*, *chesed* and *rachamym* or righteousness, justice, love and mercy, the last one being the only component not found elsewhere in Hosea. The first two are associated with many other prophets; the other two are included but not as frequent though *chesed* abounds in the Psalms.

As for the third and fourth, they are more or less along the same line. *Chesed* is a well known counterpart to the New Testament *agape*, both nouns considered untranslatable because they point to the most tender kind of love imaginable. In a way and though not as well known, the second is even better. It’s in the plural, indicative of abundance and has the notion of cherishing and soothing.

With regard to the four nouns of vs. 19, other references are included here as is often the case in an “expansion” document. *Tsedeq* and *chesd*: “Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit (‘according to’ in Hebrew) steadfast love” [10.12]. “Hearken, O house of the king! For the judgment pertains to you” [5.1]. “I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land” [Jer 42.12].



Vs. 20 contains the third instance of *'arash* or *'emunah*, again with the prepositions *l-* and *b-* as used with the first two instances. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist and faithfulness the girdle of his loins" [Is 11.5]. And so the accumulative effect of this threefold betrothal by the Lord and the just mentioned four components reach their culmination in knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 8) the Lord in a way not unlike a marital relationship.

Vs. 21 has the second "in the day" (cf. vs. 16) which a fourfold chain of reaction with regard to the verb *hanah* or to answer (cf. 2.15 but not noted there). It begins with the Lord concerning the heavens which in turn will *hanah* the earth. From there (vs. 22) the earth will answer grain, wine and oil and end up *hanah* Jezreel. This, however, is not the same Jezreel as in 1.4 but concerns the alternate meaning "God sows." In other words, this sowing begins in heaven, drops down to the earth and then into its produce. As for the fourfold *hanah*, it resembles singing back and forth with a certain rhythmic sway.

Vs. 23 brings to and end a lengthy sentence begun in vs. 21 where the Lord will sow or *zarah* (verbal root of Jezreel) strictly for himself in the land, *'erets* (cf. 1.2) being synonymous with the nation Israel.

Vs. 23 concludes with the Lord having pity on Not Pitied or *racham* with regard to *Lo-Ruchamah*, this undoing what the Lord had commanded Hosea in 1.6. Similarly, he will do the same with regard to "Not my people" or *Lo' Hamy* as in 1.8. The response which is a kind of *hanah* as depicted just above? Israel will say "You are my God." Note that this is quoted in Rom 9.25.

1) ryv, sur, na'phuphym, 3) pashat, sum, midbar, shyth, 4) racham, 5) bosh, 'ahav, halak, 6) hineh, suk, derek, 7) 'ahav, radaph, baqash, matsa', shuv, 8) yadah, 9) shuv, 10) galah, 'ahav, natsal, 11) shavath, shabath, 12) shamam, 'ahav, 13) paqad, shakach, 14) hineh, patah, midbar, davar, lev, 15) tiqvah, nehorym, 17) sur, 18) karath, beryth, shavar, shakav, 19) 'arash, tsedeq, mishpat, chesed, rachamym, 20) 'emunah, yadah, 22) hanah, 'erets, 23) racham

### Chapter Three

The shortest chapter in Hosea contains a mere five verses starting off with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "and" to show a close connection between what had

just happened and what is about to happen. This is especially important for Hosea to whom the Lord speaks is now speaking. Again (*hod*) he is to love (*'ahav*, cf. 2.12) a woman or *'ishah* whose name isn't given but presumably is Gomer. Just hearing that small word *hod* was enough to send shivers up and down his back. However, this woman is loved by someone else which is rendered by the noun *reah* which can apply to a neighbor, someone in the vicinity. "This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" [Sg 5.10].

Also this woman is an adulteress, the participle *na'aph* being used. "They are all adulterers" [7.4], a clear reference to Israel. Without a doubt the woman represents the relationship of both Israel and Hosea which is inextricable. Fortunately for Hosea, he had the advantage of being privy to the boundless love which the Lord had communicated to Israel. If the Lord can do this, why can't I he says to himself. We even have an extreme case of this woman turning to other gods which is rendered literally as "faces to other gods." She shows her devotion to them by consuming cakes and raisins. "Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kirhareth" [Is 16.7].

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "so" where Hosea purchases this woman for the usual price of a slave meaning that somewhere along the line one of her lovers got tired of her and decided to get rid of her. Also it could apply to her being enslaved to Baal. Once under his sway, Hosea levels with her. He tells her to remain with him for a long time and not revert to being a harlot nor to run off with another man. He concludes this admonition by saying the he'll be faithful to her. Words straight from the heart but given this woman's history, will they register? We don't have any response nor elsewhere within this short chapter suggestive of the inveterate rebellious spirit that will plague the rest of this book. In this case it doesn't bode good for everyone involved.

In vs. 4 the result of this depravity manifests itself by Israel not having for an extended period of time a king or prince nor means of divining the future. This will cause the children of Israel to return and seek (*shuv* and *baqash*, cf. 2.9 and 2.7) the Lord. Not only that, the two verbs will apply to King David which in this instance is a way of intimating a future messianic ruler. A driving force for this *shuv* and *baqash* will be fear and awareness of the Lord's goodness, *pachad* and *tov*. The former fundamentally refers to trembling. "Then they shall be in

great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous” [Ps 14.5]. This chapter closes by saying this will happen not now but “in the latter days” which can tie in with mention of King David or more likely, someone of his stature.

1) ‘ahav, reah, na’aph, 5) shuv, baqash, pachad, tov

## Chapter Four

This new chapter begins in a typically prophetic way, namely, the command to hear or *shamah* the *davar* (cf. 2.15 and 1.1) of the Lord. In 1.1 this *davar* came...was...to Hosea who, given his role as prophet, had no need to *shamah* it for himself whereas the people of Israel desperately needed it. The contents of this *davar*? The Lord has a bone to pick (the verb *ryv*, cf. 2.1) with those living in the land or ‘*erets* (cf. 2.20). You could say that he pauses for a moment to allow his *davar* to get sink in. Then in another sentence within vs. 1 the Lord spells out this *davar* which sounds more as a lament than anything else. He bemoans the fact that faithfulness and kindness ‘*emeth* and *chesed* (cf. 2.19) no longer exist. ‘*Emeth* alternately means truth compared with ‘*emunah* as in 2.20 though both come from the same verbal root. “And speaks the truth from his heart” [Ps 15.2]. Furthermore, no knowledge or *dahath* of God exists in the land, this being the second instance of ‘*erets* in the same verse and can be taken as Israel itself. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because you have rejected knowledge” [vs. 6].

Vs. 2 is a continuation of the previous verse, that is, the two essentially form one whole sentence. It mentions seven types of misbehavior, all stemming from the lack of faithfulness, kindness and knowledge eloquently stated in vs. 1. The sixth one sums up the others quite well, the breaking of bounds or *parats* which connotes scattering. “They shall play the harlot but not multiply” [4.10]. As the verse at hand says, murder is the inevitable consequence.

Vs. 3 begins with *hal-ken* or “therefore” which sets the stage for showing what the first two chapters depict. It is a word Hosea never wished he had to utter. The land or ‘*erets* goes into mourning, ‘*aval* applicable not only to the physical earth but to the nation of Israel as a whole. “Its people shall mourn for it, and its idolatrous priests shall wail over it (calf of Bethaven)” [10.5]. The same ‘*erets* is mentioned toward the beginning of creation, Gn 6.11 echoing the verse at

hand: “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.” The other symptom of this violence is that each and every inhabitant, human and non-human (all beasts, birds and fish), are languishing, *‘amal* also as to droop, to be sad. “He caused rampart and wall to lament, they languish together” [Lam 2.8].

Vs. 4 begins with *‘ak* or “yet” which shifts attention to the priest (*kohen*), this word being singular and can apply to all those of this order or the high priest alone. “And it shall be like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways” [vs. 9]. No person is to contend or accuse (*ryv* and *yakach*) except the Lord with this priest. The first verb is noted in vs. 1 and the second also as to argue, to prove. “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger” [Ps 6.1]. In a sense, this comes as a relief to the people because the Lord’s attention is upon the priest and not them. However, that is a false hope, one everyone knew. The Lord has to begin somewhere so he begins with the priest, hoping that he will set an example.

In vs. 5 the Lord will make both priest and prophet (*navy*’) stumble, the latter also singular (compare with singular priest in vs. 4) mentioned in 9.7 under a similar circumstance. That verse has an even more blunt assessment: “The prophet is a fool.” The priest will stumble during the day, *kashal* also as to totter, to waver whereas the prophet will do so by night. “Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt” [5.5]. Then the Lord adds that he will destroy their (‘your’ is singular) mother, *damah* also as to liken, to be silent. “Samaria’s king shall perish like a chip on the face of the waters” [10.7]. Also *damah* is in the next verse. As for this mother, most likely it refers to the nation of Israel as in 2.2: “Plead with your mother, plead.”

Vs. 6 contains words which are more as a lament and are quoted frequently, namely, that the people...rather “my people”...are destroyed because they lack knowledge, the verb *damah* being used as in the last verse. As for this knowledge or *dahath* (cf. vs. 1), it is rejected, *ma’as* being the verb as it applies to an intimate type of knowing. *Ma’as* also means to despise. “My God will cast them off because they have not hearkened to him” [9.17]. As for this rejection, the Lord will apply it to the priest (the prophet isn’t mentioned but assumed he’s included). It should be noted that the intimate knowledge at hand applies to the marital bond between the Lord and Israel, that is in jeopardy of being destroyed.

In addition to this loss of *dahath*, because the priest (i.e., the singular ‘you’ though it can include the prophet) has forgotten the Torah of the Lord, the Lord will apply the same to his children. “Set the trumpet to your lips...because they have broken my covenant and transgressed by law” [8.1]. As for the verb *shakach* applied to children, although they may continue to exist physically, they won’t do so spiritually. Also implied is that they won’t be able to carry on the family line. “For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces” [8.14]. In the context at hand *shakach* is more or less equivalent with *damah*, to perish.

Vs. 7 uses the third person plural (‘they’) which is applicable to all three groups: priest, prophet and people, they now being pretty much in the same category. Despite their increase, they have sinned literally “to (*l-*) me.” The two verbs are *ravav* and *chata’*, the latter also as to miss the mark. As for references, cf. Ps 38.19: “And many are those who hate me wrongfully.” “Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning” [8.11]. The sentiment here is not unlike what the Lord saw prior to the great flood: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth” [Gn 6.5]. So ever since then, the story of humankind has been a struggle between the increase of evil and divine efforts to keep it in check.

Vs. 8 has the third person plural (‘they’) which pertains to the priests who feed upon the singular sin (*chat’ath*) of the plural people, ‘*akal* being the common verb to eat found next in vs. 10. [8.13]. Such eating is mirrored in a greed for iniquity which reads literally as “to their depravity they are lifting up his soul.” The idea is that the priests are totally focused on setting or lifting up their hearts...souls (*nephesh*)...to (‘*el-*) personal gain or *havon*. The verb is *nasa’* (cf. 1.6) as pertaining to gain which alternately means iniquity. “Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt” [5.5]. The other reference in Hosea to *nephesh* is 9.4: “Their bread (to their soul) shall be like mourners’ bread.”

In vs. 9 the Lord turns attention to the people who until now might have considered themselves as victims of their leaders, again with emphasis upon the singular priest, not the prophets. This is done by the particle *ky-* prefaced to people and priest after which similarity the Lord will bring down punishment, *paqad* with the preposition *hal-* or upon (cf. 2.13). Such a hard-pressed sentence is with regard to *derek* (cf. 2.6) or ways of the two and is followed by requiting them. This is rendered literally as “return his actions” with the verb *shuv* and the noun *mahalal* both found in 5.4: “Their deeds do not permit them to return

to their Lord.”

Vs. 8 mentions the verb *'akal* with regard to the priests feeding upon the people's sin whereas vs. 10 uses the same verb minus any satisfaction or *savah*. “But when they had fed to the full, they were filled, and their heart (note singular) was lifted up” [13.6]. They even resort to practicing harlotry (*zanah*, cf. 2.5), but selling their bodies and therefore their souls won't be of avail. This is put in terms of the verb *parats* which as noted in vs. 2 has the alternate meaning to break down. Vs. 10 continues saying that forsaking the Lord results keeping the ways of a prostitute, *hazav* and *shamar* being the two verbs connoting the opposite. Two examples: “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters” [Jer 2.13] and “Hold fast to love and justice” [12.6]. With the Lord left fully behind as suggested by *hazav*, the people turn fully in the opposite direction, that is, they keep watch as a watchman (*shamar*) on the city walls for any opportunity to practice their harlotry or to rent themselves out.

Vs. 11 mentions both wine and new wine, the noun for the latter being *tyrosh* found in 2.22 but not noted there. Implied is drunkenness which removes understanding, literally as “takes the heart” (*lev*, cf. 2.14).

Vs. 12 to the end of Chapter Four depicts the close connection between harlotry and the worship of idols. Chiefly due to the profound neglect by their priests, the people inquire of wood, *sha'al* being the common verb to ask. Similarly, their staffs—instead of being a means of support—supposedly provide oracles. *Maqel* or staff is less common than *mateh*, the latter often associated with both Moses and the Egyptian magicians who engaged in a contest of sorts. That is to say, the *mateh* could change, for example, into a snake and back into its original form. However, the *maqel* in Exodus has only one reference, albeit an important one: “In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand...It is the Lord's Passover.” As for this word in the verse at hand, the people use it to divine some kind of oracles, the common verb *nagad* (to say, to tell) being used.

The second sentence of vs. 12 doesn't speak merely of harlotry as before but the spirit of harlotry, *ruach* as wind or breath. “A wind has wrapped them in its wings” [vs. 19]. The verb connected with this noun is *tahah* which also means to wander. “My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray” [Jer 50.6]. Equivalent to this *tahah* is the verb *zanah* (cf. vs. 10), to play



the harlot instead of obeying God which reads literally as “from under God.” Such words suggest that the people preferred a harlot’s covering to being under divine protection.

Fast upon the heels of this harlotry (vs. 13) the people make sacrifices on hilltops and under various types of trees, the shade of which provides secrecy. This same verse begins with *hal-ken* or “therefore,” indicative of something akin to an intervention. However, it’s one where the Lord acknowledges that Israel’s daughters and brides sell themselves, but he refrains from punishing (*paqad*, cf. vs. 9) them. In addition to these two categories of women, men associate with harlots and cult prostitutes meaning that they frequent temples in honor of Baal and other such gods. Vs. 14 concludes on a sad note. That is to say, the people who lack understanding will come to ruin, *byn* and *lavat*. The former fundamentally means to distinguish, to separate and the latter has one other biblical reference. Two quotes are as follows: “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things” [14.9]. “The wise of heart will heed commandments, but a prating fool will come to ruin” [Prov 10.8].

Vs. 15 contrasts Israel and Judah, the latter not to feel guilty (*asham*) despite the former being engaged in harlotry. “I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face” [5.15]. In the second sentence of this verse the Lord addresses Israel, telling her not to enter Gilgal nor Beth-aven. These places are associated with idolatrous worship where they swear allegiance to the Lord which takes the formulaic expression “As the Lord lives” first found in Rt 3.13. So it seems the harlotry which dominates the Book of Hosea thus far and unfortunately will be difficult to root out is a perfect description of Israel’s relationship with the Lord and his faithfulness despite its continuance.

The persistence of harlotry, symbolic of Israel’s tendency to worship other deities, is summed up well in vs. 16 where the Lord compares her to a stubborn heifer, *sarar* also as rebellious and is used twice. “I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels” [9.15]. Actually the second half of this verse is a rhetorical question which the Lord utters openly with the intent for all to hear it. In this way he might shame his bride to return to him.

In vs. 17 Ephraim is joined to idols, *chavar* suggestive of joining in fellowship. “After some years they shall make an alliance” [Dan 11.6]. In the verse at hand we can detect some pouting by the Lord who says brusquely to leaven him

alone and fend for themselves.

In the **RSV** the opening words read “A band of drunkards” while the **NIV** has “Even when their drinks are gone.” I.e., the text here is uncertain, the same applying to a good part of the remaining verse. Anyway, what comes through clearly is another reference to harlotry put in vs. 19 as a wind or *ruach* (cf. vs. 12) which has wrapped them in its wings, *tsarar* also as to be in distress and is a fitting description of the situation at hand. “The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is kept in store” [13.12]. This verse concludes with the people who will be ashamed because of their altars, *bosh* (cf. 2.5). Note that this is in the future tense which intimates a ray of hope for Israel.

1) shamah, davar, ryv, ‘erets, ‘emeth, chesed, dahath, 2) parats, 3) ‘erets, ‘aval, shuv, ‘amal, 4) kohen, ryv, yakach, 5) navy’, kashal, damah, 6) damah, dahath, ma’as, Torah, shakach, 7) ravav, chata’, 8) ‘akal, chat’ath, nephesh, nasa’, havon, 9) paqad, derek, shuv, mahalal, 10) ‘akal, savah, zanah, parats, hazav, shamar, 11) tyrosh, lev, 12) sha’al, maqel, nagad, ruach, tahah, zanah, 14) paqad, byn, lavat, 15) ‘asham, 16) sarar, 17) chavar, 19) ruach, tsarar, bosh

## Chapter Five

This new chapter begins as centered around three types of paying attention:

First we have *shamah* or the command to hear as it pertains to the priests whom the Lord has excoriated in the previous chapter. Compare with the beginning of that chapter, the *davar* of the Lord.

Second comes *qashav* or the giving of attention to an object to the house of Israel, *beyth* as noted in 1.7 has a certain domestic quality as applied to an entire nation. “Hearken to the sound of the trumpet” [Jer 6.17].

Third and last comes ‘*azan*, literally to give ear with regard to a second *beyth*, that of the king. This giving ear is more intensive than simply listening or *shamah*. I.e., the *beyth* of the king also has this domestic quality as it relates to those whom he rules. “Give ear to my words, O Lord” [Ps 5.1]. As for this king, no specific name is given but use of *beyth* suggests the entire nation.

With regard to the third *beyth*, the Lord has some choice words, namely, that

judgment or *mishpat* (cf. 2.19) literally is “to (*l-*) you.” This directness indicates that the king is the person ultimately responsible for his people with such judgment no so much coming to him but as noted, right to him. Then the Lord gives the reason: the second person plural for “you” is suggestive of Israel’s kingship in general. This “you” has become a snare at Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor. As for the former, it can refer to one of two places whereas the latter is uncertain but as the **NIV** notes, it must have been the scene of some event not pleasing to the Lord.

Vs. 2 mentions a pit “they” have made, most likely referring to the multiple kings just noted in their collaboration of digging it, the verb *hamaq* meaning to be deep. “They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah” [9.9]. The Lord will respond in kind to this *hamaq* with chastisement, the noun being *mosar* which also means discipline, the primary idea being to communicate knowledge so as to shape conduct. This is born out as in the second verse of the opening chapter of Proverbs: “That men may know wisdom and instruction, understand words of insight.” In the verse at hand, the preposition *l-* (to) is prefaced to “all,” literally as “to all of them.” Note the same idea with regard to *mishpat* in the verse above.

From vs. 3 through vs. 7 the Lord turns attention to Ephraim and Israel, alternating between the two in vs. 3. The former is noted first in 4.17 and commonly understood as referring to Israel as a whole by reason of being the largest of the twelve tribes. With this dual identity in mind, the Lord first claims to know both (i.e., Ephraim first), *yadah* (cf. 2.19) followed by Israel not being able to hide from him, *kachad* also as to destroy or to be desolate. “My sins are not hidden from you” [Ps 69.5].

The second half of vs. 3 shifts to Ephraim playing the now familiar role of harlot or *zanah* (cf. 4.12) while Israel is defiled, *tame'* connoting impurity. For a similar verse referring to the two, cf. 6.10: “Ephraim’s harlotry is there, Israel is defiled.”

Vs. 4 continues the theme of harlotry expressed as a “spirit of harlotry” or *ruach* with *zenunym* (cf. 4.19 and 1.2 respectively). If we take *ruach* in the sense of wind, the harlotry of both Ephraim and Israel (i.e., ‘their’) may be said to blow over everyone else and therefore permeate them. This shedding of their inveterate behavior is put in terms of deeds or *mahalal* (cf. 4.9) which preclude a

return to God, *shuv* (cf. 4.9) being an integral part of Hosea's prophecy. The common verb *natan* or to give is used, literally as "do not give their deeds to return" as though such deeds were weighed down, preventing Ephraim/Israel from making this all-important *shuv*. Vs. 4 is capped off, if you will, with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "and:" both do not *yadah* the Lord, again as connected with *shuv*.

Vs. 5 includes Judah along with Ephraim and Israel. First we have pride or *ge'on* with regard to Israel which is similar to 7.10: "The pride of Israel witnesses against him." In the verse at hand, this pride accuses Israel, that is, offers testimony or *hanah* (cf. 2.22, one of multiple meanings of this verb). Not only that, such testimony literally is "in (*b-*) his face." Second and third come Ephraim and Judah where the verb *kashal* (cf. 4.5) or to stumble applies to both. First to stumble is Ephraim, that is, in his guilt or *havon* (cf. 4.8; verbal root is *hanah*) followed by Judah.

Vs. 6 mentions "they," the third person plural possibly including Judah as noted in the last verse. The flocks and herds could be intended for sacrifice in their collective intent to seek the Lord, *baqash* (cf. 3.5). Already the Lord has decided that this *baqash* will not be satisfied, for they won't find (*matsa'*, cf. 2.7) him. The reason? The Lord has withdrawn himself, *chalats* also as to prepare, gird oneself. "And loose his sandal from his foot" [Dt 25.9]. If the Lord withdraws, those seeking him will be left with the flocks and herds.

Vs. 7 brings to a conclusion the Lord's complaint against his people, they having behaved faithlessly, *bagad* suggestive of an unstable relationship. "But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me"[6.7]. A concrete sign of this is that they have given birth to children who are considered alien, the participle *zur* meaning to be a stranger. Implied is Israel's long-standing practice of harlotry. "Aliens devour his strength, and he knows it not" [7.9]. Times when the new moon is celebrated will turn on the people and devour (*'akal*, cf. 4.10) them. In sum, the Lord will use Israel's religious practices or that in which they take special delight in order to chastize his people.

Vs. 8 switches tone to the sounding of an alarm as indicated by the verb *taqah*, often with regard to an instrument associated with a ram's horn. Fundamentally it means to strike (as a tent peg), the sound being unmistakably

associated with some sort of external threat. “Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy” [Ps 47.1]! In the verse at hand, *taqah* is used with regard to two instruments: *shophar* and *chatsotsrah*, the former as noted being a ram’s horn and the latter one which is long and straight. References: “Set the trumpet to your lips, for a vulture is over the house of the Lord” [8.1]. “With trumpets (*shophar*) and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord” [Ps 98.6]! The former is associated with Gibeah (cf. 5.2) and the latter with Ramah.

Vs. 8 mention two other places. First comes Beth-aven (cf. 4.9) where an alarm is sounded, *ruah* meaning to shout which can either be one of joy or alarm. “Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy” [Ps 47.1]! Second comes Benjamin with regard to “tremble” but reads in the Hebrew “after you.”

In vs. 9 Ephraim is mentioned and as noted earlier, is interchangeable with Israel. A specific day or *yom* is singled out, this noun similar to the Greek *kairos* which is indicative of a significant event. On that *yom* Ephraim (Israel) will become a desolation or *shamah* also as astonishment or something unexpected. “Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth” [Ps 46.8]. In the verse at hand *yom* is associated with *tokechah* or punishment, alternately as rebuke and has three other biblical references, one of which is Ps 149.7: “To wreak vengeance on the nations and chastisement on the peoples” [Ps 149.7].

Vs. 9 concludes with the Lord saying all this will take place among (*b-* or in) the tribes of Israel. So if Ephraim/Israel are affected, the desolation or *shamah* will spread like a virus to the other eleven tribes. And so this verse comes to an end with a hint of satisfaction and revenge in the Lord’s voice, that is, he declares what is right or two verb, *yadah* (cf. vs. 3) and ‘*aman*, literally as “made known being faithful.” As for ‘*aman*, cf. 11.12: “but Judah is still known by God and is faithful to the Holy One.”

Vs. 10 refers to Judah’s princes having removed landmarks or *gevul* which also means a border. “That they might enlarge their border” [Am 1.13]. This is in reference to Judah having taken Israelite territory (another translation of *gevul*) which the NIV refers to in 1Kg 15.16-22. Of concern here for the Lord is that it’s a violation of Dt 19.14: “In the inheritance which you will hold in the land that

the Lord your gives you to possess, you shall not remove your neighbor's landmark which the men of old have set."

Because of the violation at hand, the Lord will pour out his wrath like water, the verb *shaphak* with the noun *hevrah*. The verbal root of the latter is *havar*, to pass over. With this in mind, such *hevrah* along with *shaphak*, gives a fairly accurate image. Two other references: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh" [Jl 2.28]. "And I have taken them away in my wrath" [13.11].

In vs. 11 Ephraim is both oppressed and crushed in judgment, *hashaq* and *ratsats*. Two references: "A trader in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress" [12.7]. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" [Is 42.3]. The latter is more associated with *mishpat* (cf. vs. 1) or judgment. There's a reason for this, namely, he (third person singular makes it more personal) is determined to go after instruction as the Hebrew text reads. The verb is *ya'al* meaning to be willing and suggests a decision to do something. "Abraham answered, 'I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord'" [Gn 18.27]. As for the noun "instruction," it's *tsav* which has one other biblical reference, Is 28.10: "For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little."

In light of this, "therefore" of vs. 12 has an ominous tone which is represented by the conjunctive *v-*. Here the Lord likens himself to a moth concerning Ephraim and dry rot concerning Judah. Both are images of a slow, eating-away, not a quick devouring action. Keep in mind that Judah is mentioned in vs. 10 as having removed landmarks.

Vs. 13 speaks of two types of afflictions with regard to Ephraim and Judah, sickness and wound or *choly* (also as a disease) and *mazor*. "The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you healed all his infirmities" [Ps 41.3]. The latter has one other biblical reference, Jer 30.13: "There is none to uphold your cause, no medicine for your wound, no healing for you." Only Ephraim takes the initiative of seeking a cure from the king of Assyria, having gone there first after which he makes his petition. The Hebrew reads literally "a king will contend" (*ryv*, cf. 4.4). However, this king is powerless to help and may see in Ephraim's distress as well as that of Judah an opportunity to invade their lands. As for the curing and healing which the king does not provide, the verbs are



*rapha'* and *gahah*. The former implies restoring or making whole. "For he has torn, that he may heal us" [6.1]. As for the latter, this is the only occurrence in the Bible.

In vs. 14 the Lord will assume two forms: a lion to Ephraim and young lion to Judah, *shachal* and *kaphyr*: "So I will be to them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk beside the way" [13.7]. "Does a young lion cry out from his den" [Am 3.4]? Such strong images reveal a miffed side of the Lord, if you will, but are in the future tense meaning they pose a threat. Like both animals, the Lord will rend Ephraim and Judah with no one being able to rescue them, *natsal* (cf. 2.10) more a snatching away.

The sense of being miffed is carried over to vs. 15 which concludes this chapter. One gets the idea that the people are aware of their perverse behavior and persist in it almost against their will. In other words, they are addicted, and the Lord knows it. All it all, this process of give-and-take is one where essentially both parties are on the same side. It's simply a matter when the people realize the gravity of their situation, this fact known fully by the Lord who is willing to put up with more rejection.

And so the Lord decides to return to his own place which presumably is heaven, the verb *shuv* and the noun *maqom* (cf. vs. 4 and 1.10 respectively). We can picture him doing this, almost sulking back where he will wait as long as it takes. This is indicated by the small word *had*, "until." *Had* is tied in with the people's acknowledgment of their guilt and their decision to seek the Lord's face. The two verbs are *'asham* and *baqash* (cf. 4.15 and vs. 6 respectively). Hopefully this will not take long. Actually their distress or *tsar* hopefully will prompt this seeking or *shachar*. As for *tsar*, cf. Ps 18.6: "In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help." As for *shachar*, cf. Ps 6.3.1: "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you." Note the difference between *baqash* and *shachar*. The former suggests both touching and feeling...a kind of groping about...whereas the latter a breaking forth and longing.

Note that this concluding verse continues into the first one of the next chapter thereby forming one extended sentence.

1) *shamah*, *qashav*, *beyth*, *'azan*, *mishpat*, 2) *hamaq*, *mosar*, 3) *yadah*, *kachad*, *zanah*, *tame'*, 4) *ruach*, *zenunym*, *mahalal*, *shuv*, *natan*, *yadah*, 5) *ge'on*, *hanah*,

kashal, havon, 6) baqash, matsa', chalats, 7) bagad, zur, 'akal, 8) taqah, shophar, chatsotsrah, ruah, 9) shamah, tokechah, yadah, 'aman, 10) gevul, shaphak, hevrah, 11) hashaq, ratsats, mishpat, ya'al, tsav, 13) choly, mazor, ryv, rapha', gahah, 14) shachal, kaphyr, natsal, 15) shuv, maqom, 'asham, baqash, tsar, shachar

## Chapter Six

As noted just above, the first verse of this new chapter is a continuation of the last verse of the previous chapter. That verse mentions the distress felt by Ephraim and Judah who cry aloud "Come" as they rally each other to return (*shuv*, cf. 5.15) to the Lord. This they exclaim after the Lord says that he will return to his own place, that being the impetus for their cry. In a way, their *shuv* mirrors the *shuv* of the Lord to this place, the same verb being used. As for any prior collaboration between Ephraim and Judah, it can be said with some confidence that there was none. Both found themselves in a desperate situation much like the prodigal son who decided to return to the father. So their exclamation is purely spontaneous because they saw no other option.

Vs. 1 gets right to the point, that indeed the Lord has torn and stricken Ephraim and Judah, *taraph* and *nakah*. The former suggests an action done by a large animal which pounces upon its prey. Indeed, the noun *tereph* is derived from *taraph* meaning prey. "He has torn me in his wrath and hated me" [Job 16.9]. As for *nakah*, generally it refers to a deadly blow or a manifestation of violence. "He shall strike root as the poplar" [14.5].

In the verse at hand the two verbs are countered by what eventually proves to be a kind of wishful thinking, that being borne out several verses later when the Lord gives a response. Regardless of the harshness of this response, Ephraim and Judah should be grateful that at least the Lord is replying to their distress even though they fail to appreciate this. The presumptuous expectation tied in with *taraph* is *rapha'* or heal (cf. 5.13) while that associated with *nakah* is *chavash* which also means to saddle or to bind up. "And I girded you about with fine linen" [Ezk 16.10].

Vs. 2 continues the presumption of Ephraim and Judah, that is, confidently and somewhat arrogantly they claim that after a mere two days the Lord will

restore them to life. Not only that, on the third day he will raise them up in order that they may live before him. Such a presumption rests on the reality that at least both recognize essentially they are dead. The verb is *qum*, also to arise. “Therefore the tumult of war shall arise among the people” [10.14]. Essentially this resolve is not heart-felt but uttered out of a desire to escape distress, and the Lord is fully aware of it. Ephraim and Judah simply are incapable of living right there in from of the Lord.

Ephraim and Judah continue their delusional presumption in vs. 3 by encouraging each other not just to know but to strive to know the Lord, *yadah* (cf. 5.9) implying intimate knowledge of which they are basically ignorant. However, there’s one glimmer of hope. They say “strive to know” meaning they will make an attempt at this *yadah*, *radaph* (cf. 2.7).

The two continue with two more presumptions, namely, that the Lord’s going forth can be counted upon with the same certainty as sunrise or the *motsa’* of *shachar* being absolutely certain. References: “Its (sun) rising is from the end of the heavens and its circuit to the end of them” [Ps 19.6]. “In the storm (*shachar* or dawn) the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off” [10.15].

The second presumption is that the Lord will come to Ephraim and Judah as spring rain or *geshem*. Again unfortunately for them, this just might be the same *geshem* of the great flood: “And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights” [Gn 7.12]. So instead of watering the earth as they expected, this *geshem* covered it and killed every living being.

After Ephraim and Judah have made their half-hearted case, speaking aloud, of course, with the intent that their words reach the Almighty. The Lord, however, chimes (vs. 4) in for basically the remainder of Chapter Six. He starts off with a bang, two brief rhetorical questions uttered in exasperation. The first is what will he do with (*l-* or *to*) Ephraim followed by the same to Judah (a second *l-*). Without giving room for a response, the Lord lays bare the intent of the two. Their love or *chesed* (cf. 4.1) resembles a morning cloud, basically the same as dew, which evaporates at sunrise. So if their *chesed* disappears at daybreak, that implies it exists only during the night and therefore is a phantasy.

In vs. 5 the Lord speaks not directly to Ephraim and Judah but almost as though

he were informing everyone else of their infidelity. That is to say, he has both hewn and slain them, *chatsav* and *harag*. References: “Wisdom has built her house, she has set up (i.e., hewn) her seven pillars” [Prov 9.1]. “Ephraim must lead forth his sons to slaughter” [9.13]. In the verse at hand, the former is associated with the prophets whereas the second is with the Lord’s words or ‘*emer*. Note that ‘*emer* (from the common verbal root ‘*amar*) is used instead of *davar*, word as expression. Implied is that *davar* is associated as it often is with the prophets through whom the Lord speaks. On the other hand, the ‘*emer* at hand might be designated as commands which come from his mouth. Essentially both are pretty much the same in this particular case.

Finally vs. 5 the Lord throws in his judgment (‘your judgment’ in the Hebrew text) or *mishpat* (cf. 5.11) which goes forth as light and suggests the speed or immediacy of light compared with the slower issuing forth from both prophets and the divine ‘*emer*.

Vs. 6 begins with the small but important word *ky* or “for” where the Lord gets straight to the issue at hand. The verb *chaphets* has a spontaneous, almost erotic air about it suggestive of delight. “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” [Ps 40.8]. In the verse at hand, such *chaphets* is tied in with two pairs, love vs. sacrifice and knowledge of God vs. burnt offerings. The first two of each pair are *chesed* and *dahath* (cf. vs. 4 and 4.6). As for *chesed*, it isn’t the one resembling a morning cloud in vs. 4 which most likely is related to sacrifices offered by Ephraim and Judah.

Vs. 7 in the **RSV** begins “At Adam” but the **NIV** follows the Hebrew with “Like Adam.” Both references have an air of uncertainty about them, that is, a place-name and the fact that there’s no covenant between the Lord and Adam (i.e., obviously he pre-dated this concept). However, like the first man, the Adam at hand committed a transgression or more accurately, through his wife. The verb is *havar* which also means to pass over. The overall idea is that by passing over or through a boundary without permission one is found guilty. “Set the trumpet to your lips...because they have broken my covenant and transgressed my law” [8.1].

The association with Adam as a person is countered by what follows in vs. 7. It says “there” (*sham*) the people had dealt faithlessly with the Lord, *bagad* (cf. 5.7) with the preposition *b-*, literally “in me.” So we could take this *sham* not so

much as Adam as a place-where but as the place of transgression or *havar* of the covenant or *beryth* (cf. 2.18).

Vs. 8 mentions Gilead also found in 12.11 which contains a similar sentiment: “If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nought.” In the verse at hand, it is literally a city of “makers of evil,” the verb *pahal* and the noun ‘*aven*. Compare *pahal* with the more common verb *hasah* usually with the same meaning, more to prepare or to produce by labor. “For they deal falsely” [7.1]. As for ‘*aven*, it can also mean misfortune as well as falsehood. The is found last in 5.8 as part of the name of city: “Sound the alarm in Beth-aven,” literally as “house of evil.” In Gilead there can be found tracks of blood, an image of murder.

Vs. 9 equates robbers with priests. The former is rendered literally as “to tarry man raiding parties,” the verb *chakah* and the noun *gedod*. The verb also means to wait as in Is 8.17: “And I wait upon the Lord. As for the noun, it also refers to a band of soldiers: “The bandits raid without” [7.1]. As for the priests (*kohen*, cf. 4.4), they form a similar group or *chever*, this noun listed in the **RSV** as “uncertain” and also applies to an enchantment or charmer. “So that it does not hear the voice of charmers or the cunning enchanter” [Ps 58.5]. Thus it could be said that the priests have become charmers instead of serving the Lord and his people. Both robbers and priests commit murder as well as evil en route to Shechem. *Zimah* connotes lewdness as well as evil: “For they have committed abomination and wantonness in Israel” [Jdg 20.6]. This is especially wicked by association with Shechem where Jacob set up an altar called El Elohe Israel (cf. Gn 33.20), implying that it’s a place of pilgrimage.

Vs. 10 reverts to a theme running throughout Hosea, the harlotry of Ephraim, *zenuth* found in 4.11 but not noted there. It results in the defilement of Israel, *tame’* (cf. 5.30). Note the location of this harlotry, in the house or *beyth* (cf. 5.1) of Israel. It is precisely there—*byth* can refer to the temple or nation as a whole or both—that Hosea himself has seen a horrible thing or *shaharur* which has one other biblical reference, Jer 18.13: “The virgin Israel has done a very horrible thing.” It’s so horrible, if you will, that *shaharur* occurs just twice.

Chapter Six closes with throwing in Judah, not to be left behind. That is to say, the Lord has appointed a harvest for Judah, *shyth* being the verb as in 2.3 meaning to set, to put. Here harvest is symbolic of divine judgment which

instead of grain or fruit yields iniquity. “For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” [8.7].

Vs. 11 contains a second sentence when the Lord decides to restore his people's fortunes, the verb *shuv* (cf. vs. 1) and the noun derived from it, *shevyth* [Jl 3.1]. Chapter Six ends here, but this sentence continues into the first verse of Chapter Seven. However, such a restoration comes at a price which that chapter details.

1) *shuv*, *taraph*, *nakah*, *rapha'*, *chavash*, 2) *qum*, 3) *yadah*, *radaph*, *motsa'*, *shachar*, *geshem*, 4) *chesed*, 5) *chatsav*, *harag*, 'emer, *mishpat*, 6) *chesed*, *chaphets*, 7) *havar*, *bagad*, *beryth*, 8) *pahal*, 'aven, 9) *chakah*, *gedod*, *kohen*, *chever*, *zimah*, 10) *zenuth*, *tame'*, *beyth*, 11) *shyth*, *shuv*, *shevyth*