

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Introduction

The Book of Hosea the Prophet begins:

דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־בְּעִירִי בְיָמֵי עֲזִיָּהּ יוֹתָם אֶחָז
יְחִזְקִיָּה מְלֶכִי יְהוּדָה וּבְיָמֵי יִרְבֵּעָם בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל

“The Word of the Lord which was unto Hosea son of Beerī in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash King of Israel.”

From this first verse of the divinely inspired text, we learn the Prophet’s name and family, and that Hosea prophesied while there was an Israel and a Judah, a Northern Kingdom and a Southern Kingdom, and so chronologically the events of his book begin to take place:

... after the division of the Kingdom into the North and South...

(See handout *Important Old Testament Dates*), after Solomon’s death in 931 B.C. - see 1 Kings 12:16-17, 25-33 [Jeroboam King of Israel 930-909 B.C.; Rehoboam King of Judah 930-913 B.C.],

...but before the fall of the north to Assyria in 722 B.C.: (See 2 Kings 17 – read 1-6, 7-13, 14-20, 21-23, 24-28, 29-34, 35-41).

Hosea’s prophetic work was done in the days of four Kings of Judah: Uzziah (also called Azariah, 792-740 B.C., See 2 Kings 14:21; 15:1-6, Isaiah 6:1), Jotham (750-732 B.C., See 2 Kings 15:32-38), Ahaz (735-715 B.C., 2 Kings 16) and Hezekiah (729-686 B.C., See 2 Kings 18:1-12) Note the “coregencies” in this chronology. Judah falls to Babylon in 586 B.C.

His prophetic work was done in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash (Jeroboam II), King of Israel – 2 Kings 14:23-29. The Prophet Amos had preached from 765-760 B.C. (see Amos 1:1).

The Old Testament Canon

While a discussion of Old Testament Canonical formation and inclusion is not warranted here, a description of the major sections of the Hebrew Bible seems appropriate. By modern Jewish reckoning, the Books of the Old Testament are arranged in three major parts, giving the Hebrew

Bible its name: **תנכ** or TaNaK, an abbreviation comprised of the first letter of each of the

three parts: **תורה** *Torah* or Law, **נבאים** *Neviim* or Prophets, and **כתבים** *Kethuvim* or

Writings. Our Lord referred to these sections frequently. At times when referring to the Old Testament He called them “the Law and the Prophets” (see Matthew 5:17, 7:12; 11:13, 22:40). At other times He referred to the Old Testament as “the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (see Luke 24:44).

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

The Law, of course, is an immediate reference to the *Pentateuch* (Greek: five scrolls), the five Books of Moses. The Prophets included two sections, the first being the Major Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The Book of the Twelve (a Septuagintal title, in which the Books are arranged differently), or as we call them today the Minor Prophets, were the second major section of the part of the Old Testament simply called the Prophets. The Writings include the other Books of the Old Testament, be they poetic/hymnic (Psalter) or records of history (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, etc.). This section, called in Greek the *Hagiographa*, from ἅγιος (holy) and γραφαί (writings or Scriptures), also included the Book of Daniel and the Lamentation of Jeremiah.

These three major sections, the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, are referred to as early as 196 B.C. in the Apocryphal *Ben Sirach*, also known as *Liber Ecclesiasticus* or *Wisdom*. *Ben Sirach* also names most of the Books of the Old Testament Canon. (For more information on the Old Testament Canon, see Steinmann, Andrew, *The Oracles of God: The Old Testament Canon*. 1999, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. For the division of the Old Testament in *Ben Sirach*, see pg. 51.)

In 1st & 2nd Maccabees (aprox. 125 B.C.), the content of *Ben Sirach*'s canon is confirmed, divided into two major sections: the Law and the Prophets, the Prophets containing the Psalter. The practice of storing scrolls considered "canonical" (an anachronistic term) in a repository is confirmed in Maccabees, and seen in the great Library of Alexandria.

In Jewish parlance, there were Former and Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets included historical Books (and so Elijah and Elisha in the 9th century B.C.), and ended before the 8th century B.C., the Latter Prophets included those of the 8th century B.C. until the end of Old Testament Prophecy in the 4th century B.C. (so Isaiah through Malachi).

Hosea is the first Book in the section we call the Minor Prophets. While the reason for the order of these Books is lost to history, many commentators assert that they are arranged chronologically in three sections: those written during Assyria's most powerful years, those written in Assyria's decline, and the Post Exilic Books. Judisch divides them simply as Pre-Exilic and Exilic. As we will see below, although Hosea is the first Book of the Twelve, Hosea was not the earliest of the "Minor Prophets".

The Septuagint orders the Minor Prophets a bit differently. The Book of the Twelve appears before the Major Prophets in *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th century A.D.), and *Codex Vaticanus* (4th century A.D.)

However the Books of the Old Testament Canon are grouped, they all testify to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God who would die for the sins of the world, and take up His life again for our justification: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Date

From the above dates we can approximate the dates of Hosea's Prophetic Ministry as 755-720 B.C., closely following the Ministry of Amos, in the time of Isaiah and Micah (see Micah 1:1). This being true, Hosea's Ministry would have made him the last Prophet to warn Israel of their apostasy before the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria in 722 B.C., and witness to that fall.

Many commentators speculate that while Hosea was a Prophet to the Northern Kingdom, he finished his Ministry in the Southern Kingdom, and may have written his Book there (hence in the last two years of his Ministry). While the fall of the Northern Kingdom makes his relocation to Judah likely, it is difficult to support from Biblical evidence. The idea that he recorded his prophecies after making them is seemingly contrary to what is clearly revealed about some of the Old Testament Prophets – that they wrote first, and later prophesied (see Jeremiah 36:2, where what is received from God to be prophesied is first written, as we also see in the Apocalypse). This may account for the fact that Hosea does not record the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians, rather warns of it, a fact that, together with a conservative chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah, causes Judisch to date the book to 725 B.C. The current LC-MS study Bible dates the book 740-715 B.C., but attempts no exact dating.

It is interesting to note that Hosea names Assyria seven times (but not until the fifth chapter), while Amos, while warning of an enemy, never uses the word.

Dr. Andrew Steinmann frames Hosea's Ministry in this way: "Faced with a nation that was worshipping the false gods Baal and Asherah, Hosea was called to announce that the covenant made at Sinai was now broken and Israel would be exiled from the land. At the heart of this covenant was the gracious promise, 'I will be their God and they will be my people' (Exo 6:7). The prophet reverses this into a message of doom. His third child is named Lo-Ammi or Not My People (Hos 1:9). While this was a stinging indictment upon the nation's apostasy, God was not finished. The prophet promises that in the coming days, Israel will be called 'You are my people', and they will answer 'You are my God' (Hos 2:23). This promise of restoration is fulfilled in Christ (1 Pet 2:10) and will be consummated in the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:3)." (Lessing, R. Reed and Steinmann, Andrew E, *Prepare the Way of the Lord: An Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2014. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. pgs. 459-460.)

Hosea - The name **הוֹשֵׁעַ** Hosea means "salvation". It is derived from the Hebrew trilateral root **יָשַׁע** "he saved", as are the names **יְשַׁעְיָהוּ** Isaiah, **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ** Joshua, and Jesus.

While the Book introduces him as Hosea son of Beeri, no other mention of this Beeri occurs in Holy Scripture. It is chronologically impossible that the Beeri named in Hosea is also the same Beeri named in Genesis 26:34, the only other use of the name.

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A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Outside the Book of Hosea the name Hosea is not used in Scripture with the exception of Romans 9:25, a citation of the Prophet's Words. There the name is written Ὠσηέ.

Structure of Hosea – The structure of the Book of Hosea is unique, and can be divided into two main parts: chapters 1-3, and chapters 4-14. Verse 1 of chapter 1 serves as a *superscription*, much like the first verse of many Psalms (see, for instance, Psalm 34:1 and Psalm 51:1). Beginning in verse 2 of chapter 1 through the end of the chapter we have the account of Hosea's marriage. In chapter 2 God expounds on the example of Hosea and Gomer and their children. In chapter 3 Hosea buys his harlot wife back. Beginning in Chapter 4 through the end of the Book, God gives Prophecies and Oracles through the Prophet Hosea, peppered with calls to repentance. This last and largest section takes the form of a legal trial, with God charging Israel with unfaithfulness, and Israel giving answer. No finer structure can be found in Hosea than the structure outlined by Judisch in his *The Pre-Exilic Books of Prophecy* (1999, Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press. 127-130), an attachment to this study.

Exposition of the Text

Read Hosea 1:1-5

1:1 – While this verse is generally treated above, the most important words have not yet been considered: “The Word of the Lord which was unto Hosea...” This formula is found also in Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah (see also verse 7). See Genesis 15:1-4. What/Who is this “Word of the Lord”? How does this theophany end? (see 15:7-21)

See 1 Samuel 3:1, 6-7, 10. Now read 1 Samuel 3:21. How does the Lord (יהוה YHWH) reveal Himself to Samuel?

Read Jeremiah 1:4-13, noting especially the Word of the Lord in verses 4, 7, 9, 12 and 13.

These verses, together with many others, have brought conservative, even Confessional Lutheran theologians to the conclusion that many of the early church fathers reached:

“Is this not more than an anthropomorphism? Here the “Word of YHWH” is most likely a figure in continuity with angelomorphic traditions that depict God appearing in the form of a man to humans.” (Gieschen, Charles. *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*. 1998. Boston:Brill, pgs. 103-105).

Ultimately Gieschen, now Academic Dean of Concordia Theological Seminary, finds “the Word of the Lord” in this formula to be a theophany in the order of the Angel of the Lord.

Note how differently Amos, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai begin. The word translated “oracle” is

אָשַׁר in the Hebrew. It is sometimes translated “load”, “burden”, or “utterance”. See

Numbers 11:11 for a common use.

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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Now read Malachi 1:1. In the Hebrew it reads:

מִשָּׂא דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכִי

“Oracle of the Word of the Lord unto Israel by hand of Malachi”.

Consider the implications of understanding, in the above pericopes, the Word of the Lord as a theophany of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

1:2 – The first word of verse 2 in Hebrew is “beginning”. The first section of this verse can be translated “Beginning of the Word of the Lord unto Hosea”. After the Prophet’s name, in the oldest manuscripts a paragraph marker is inserted in the text. This indicates that the first part of what English translations render as verse 2 actually belongs to verse 1, and stands as a superscription to what follows.

The mark opens a new paragraph with the words “And YHWH said unto Hosea ‘Go, take unto you a woman of fornications and children of fornications because fornicating the land has surely fornicated from behind YHWH”. The wooden translation “from behind” can be understood as “separating” or “departing” from the Lord. Keil-Delitzsch translates “for whoring the land whoreth away from Jehova”.

In the Old Testament, idolatry and adultery are synonymous. God is a faithful Husband. The Church is His Bride. When Israel runs after false Gods, Scripture calls her unfaithfulness “whoring”. See Exodus 34:15-16; Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 31:16; Judges 2:17; Psalm 73:27; Ezekiel 6:9, and many others. Now, in the context of the historical setting of Hosea, see Hosea 4:12 and 9:1.

In the opening verse of Hosea God is shown to be a faithful Husband, Israel an adulterous bride. As a symbol and a sign of this God’s Prophet to Israel is to marry a harlot, and so receive children born of harlotry. If you think this sounds tough, imagine how it felt to be the God of Israel... Which is the point of the Prophet’s plight. The Word of YHWH to Hosea is indeed a “burden”.

1:3 – The Prophet does as God directs. He is faithful. He takes Gomer, daughter of Diblaim. She bears him a son. The son is legitimate, Hosea is his father, yet the bride is not chaste, the son is born of a harlot. Luther writes “No one should think that, although he uses the words ‘harlot’ and ‘harlotry’ many times, and in chapter 1 takes a ‘wife of harlotry,’ that he was unchaste in owrds and deds. For Hosea is speaking allegorically; this ‘wife of harlotry’ is his lawfully wedded wife, and with her he begot legitimate children. The wife and children, however, had to bear those shameful names as a sign and rebuke to the idolatrous nation.” (AE 35.317-318).

The name Gomer appears in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:2-3 (the eldest son of Japheth, son of Noah). This is not the same Gomer. No other mention of Hosea’s Gomer occurs in Scripture. The reference in Ezekiel 38:6 is to the geographic region settled by the Gomer of

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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Genesis 10:2 (as is determined in Genesis 10:5). The name Diblaim does not occur outside of this verse, it is what is called a *ἄπαξ λεγόμενα*, or *hapax legomena*, “spoken once” in the Greek.

1:4 – God gives Hosea the name for the son born of harlotry – Jezreel. The meaning of the Hebrew word **יִזְרְעֵאל** is “God sows” or “God scatters”. This name is prophetic, by Assyrian hand God will scatter the adulterous Israelites. This name is also historic. Jezreel was once a fruitful plain, see Joshua 17:15-16. It was here that Ahab slaughtered Naboth, see 1 Kings 21:1-18, 19-23. To avenge the deaths of the Prophets slain by Ahab and Jezebel, God anointed Jehu by Elisha’s hand to destroy Ahab’s house - See 2 Kings 8:29 – 9:10 for the historic context.

Remember that the current king of the Northern Kingdom is Jereboam II. He is of the dynasty of Jehu. See 2 Kings 9:30-37 for the historic context of the prophesy “I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel...”

1:5 - By this name God prophesies not just the toppling of the current king of the north, but the destruction of the entire Kingdom. What the Prophet promises does occur. That is the mark of a true Prophet. First Israel was defeated, then the Northern Kingdom was destroyed and Israel taken into captivity, as we learned above.

Read 1:6-2:1

1:6 – In verse 2 God directs the Prophet to have children. Jezreel is not to be alone. The daughter born is named **לֹא רַחֲמָה** “not loved”. The love of God poured out upon Israel would cease. The forgiveness that God had so freely and regularly extended to Israel would end.

1:7 – The Southern Kingdom, however, would stand until 586 B.C., when it too would be destroyed for its unfaithfulness. In the intervening years God would protect Judah from Assyrian attack. See 2 Kings 19:32-36. As prophesied by Hosea, their victory would not come by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the Lord their God. The Angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men in one night.

1:8 – Although “not loved”, still Lo-Ruhamah was provided for: “God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” Like Israel, Lo-Ruhamah had been sustained by God through Gomer. After she was weaned, Gomer conceived and bore a son.

1:9 – The name “not my people” is the opposite of God’s Covenant of grace with Israel. See Exodus 6:7 (and note the context of deliverance there), Leviticus 26:12; Ezekiel 36:28; and Jeremiah 30:22 (remember that Ezekiel and Jeremiah two centuries later than Hosea). God’s great Covenant Promise, that Israel would be His people and He would be their God, has been fractured by Israel’s unfaithfulness. Although God has remained faithful, the child is now named “not my people”. These are horrible words.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

1:10 – The versification in the TaNaK is quite different than in the English versions of the Bible. Chapter 2 begins here in the Hebrew. Topically this makes sense. The crushing chastisement of God upon Israel here ends, and the reward of faith is elaborated. Israel, to be taken into captivity by their enemies, will be restored.

In 1:9 they were Not My People, now they are God’s people and more – they are sons. See Romans 9:22-26 (which Paul applies to the evangelization of the Gentiles) and 1 Peter 2:9-10, the Christian Church. So Hosea’s prophecy looks forward to the ingrafting of all nations into the Christian Church. See Paul’s description of the Church in Romans 11:17-24.

1:11 – Now the scattered, captive people, taken into captivity two centuries apart, are reunited. This oneness, this reunion, points clearly to the Christian Church, since at no time in the history of Israel and Judah does this occur. The language of appointing a leader here reverberates with Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, see Numbers 14:4, which refers to them choosing a leader other than Moses. In Hosea chapters 8 and 9 the Prophet will threaten Israel with a return to Egypt.

Some of the Jews of both the northern and southern Kingdoms were returned from captivity to Palestine under Ezra and Nehemiah, but never as one in the way Hosea here describes, and frequently they fell under foreign rule. Jerusalem would fall again and be destroyed. While Israel and Judah had different kings in the divided monarchy, now God’s people have one King, the true Israel Himself Jesus Christ.

The word “Jezreel” **יִזְרְעֵאל** sounds very much like **יִשְׂרָאֵל** “Israel, so there is definitely word play going on in the Hebrew. See Romans 9:6-9. What was scattered will be united. The Hebrew word translated “Jezreel” in verse 4 is “God scatters” or “God sows”. See Galatians 3:16. God’s people will finally be one, what is scattered will finally bring forth the crop, in Christ, the Promised Seed. The historic deception at Jezreel (see 1 Kings 21), a point of national shame for Israel, is now undone by the unjust death for blasphemy of the Christ. In Christ the true Israel, the Christian Church, has the ultimate victory. See Romans 11:25-26.

Now both Lo-Ami and Jezreel, names associated with the curse, are made terms of endearment and Divine sonship. God’s grace is boundless. God adopts His fallen children.

2:1 – This blessing proclaimed by God ties directly to the preceding two verses, and shows the wisdom of the versification of the Hebrew Bible, in which this is 2:3.

Now the daughter Lo-Ruhamah is restored. Previously not loved, now the daughter of harlotry is loved.

Read 2:2 – 5

2:2 – The three children now established as beloved, the Word of God speaking through Hosea turns to the mother. The Prophet took a wife of iniquity to learn of Israel’s relationship with God. The restored children now receive a command: “Rebuke your mother!” The Hebrew Qal

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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

imperative **וַיִּבֶן** can also be understood to mean “bring charge against”, or “reason with”, as Keil-Delitzsch translates. This fits nicely into our understanding of Hosea as a Divine trial. Note here that the children have found favor with God, but not the mother. While an individual Israelite was saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the entire nation was under God’s condemnation for apostasy – in the Old Testament as well as the new idolatry=adultery.

God is holy. He can have no dealing with unholiness except to condemn it. The Divine Groom can only be promised to a chaste Bride. So the repeated references to the Holy Church as Bride (see Matthew 25:1-13, John 3:29, Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17). The unchastity of Israel forces God to declare “she is not my wife, nor am I her Husband.” See Ezekiel 16:2-8 for a similar metaphor for Israel and the Divine Groom.

The jussive (hortatory) “Let her put away” is the first part of a conditional sentence that conveys God’s decree – the second part of which comes in verse 3: “Lest I...”

The Hebrew reads “Let her cause her fornication to be taken away from her face”. The face is the most visible part of the body, and brings the greatest shame. The verb is causative and active, she must cause it to happen by her own action. This is a call to repentance.

Like her fornication, so too her adultery. Besides the obvious reference to intimacy related to harlotry (see Ezekiel 23:3-5, Hosea 9:14), the allusion to her breasts points to her heart, the seat of faith – adultery=idolatry, which is unbelief. The heart is the root of the problem.

While the “Let her... Lest...” formula is a horrible proclamation, at its base is the Husbands desire for reconciliation with His Bride.

2:3 – The second half of the conditional sentence, in Hebrew a poetic construction, is the result of Israel failing to repent. In Holy Scripture nakedness is shameful, although admittedly in our culture it seems to be flaunted. See Genesis 3:7-10; Job 1:21; Isaiah 20:3-4, and many others. Public shame of poverty and humiliation will be visited not upon the Promised Land, but upon the people to whom God gave it. So too will the people who inherited the land of milk and honey be as a desert, barren, parched, dead. Remember that Israel was delivered out of the desert and into the Promised Land. The reverse is illustrated here, again, not on the land, but on the people.

2:4 – Continuing the poetic thought “Let her... Lest...”, in the case that Israel does not turn from her idolatries the people, sons of whoredoms, will also forfeit the love promised them, as they are infected with the national sins. Compare this verse to 2:2, where mercy is extended to the same children.

2:5 – This verse provides further explanation of how the Israelites are sons of whoredom. They are, as in chapter 1, children born of iniquity, born of the unfaithfulness of their mother and conceived in the disgrace of the worship of false gods. The false gods here are called the “lovers” of the mother Israel. It is not that they sought her – they cannot, they are wood and

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

stone, rather she has “gone after” them, desired them, lusted for them, and consummated that lust in worship of false gods. See Ezekiel 23:37.

The very provision which the only true God provides, Israel attributes to her false gods. See Jeremiah 44:17-22 for another example of this. God’s provisions here are broken into three categories – basic food, basic clothing, and luxuries.

Read Hosea 2:6-8

2:6 – God provided a path for Israel through the Red Sea, through the desert, and into the Promised Land. Now He blocks (literally “hedges up”) her path, even with thorns, that she be stopped. Instead of parting the sea, now God walls Israel in, for her there is no escape.

2:7 – The reason for the hedge of thorns and the walling in is revealed: that Israel not be able to pursue her idols.

The gracious intention of God is visible here. He does not provide the thorn hedge or the walls to harm Israel, but to cause her to return to Him. How like Israel we are – wont to pray in times of shortage or tribulation, chasing after our desires at other times. The Old Testament shows cycles of Israel backsliding, receiving the chastening of God, and then returning to right worship. Ultimately the return of Israel to the true God is not a return in purity – she goes back because she was “better off.”

2:8 – God is the God Who Provides. See Genesis 22:14; Psalm 145:15, 16, 21. Israel took God’s gracious gifts and used those very gifts in the worship of Baal. See Numbers 22:41, 25:3; Judges 6:28-31. הַבַּעַל or “the Baal” is a semitic title meaning “lord” or “master”. The name Baal was used for a variety of gods in the ancient Middle East. See 1 Kings 22:51-53, for instance. Worship of the Baals was typically done on a mound or hilltop, see Numbers 22:41, 1 Kings 3:2; 2 Kings 23:4-10. Asherah was the sexual consort of Baal, whose worship involved trees or poles. See Deuteronomy 7:5; 1 Kings 15:11-14. The Baal worship described here could include sexual immorality as part of the worship. To Israel’s shame, the very gifts of daily bread that the true God provided, they employed as offerings to false gods.

Read Hosea 2:9-10

2:9 – The gifts of God can be withheld. Here, because of their idolatrous use, God promises to take away food, clothing and luxuries, the very gifts with which Israel was to cover her nakedness (a major theme of this section of Hosea).

2:10 – Naked, hungry and ashamed, Israel would not be desirable to the false gods. Through this reprimand God would return her to himself, as in verse 7. The poetic repetition of this section of Hosea is easy to see. This is called parallelism, a “back and forth” use of the same images.

Read Hosea 2:11-13

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

2:11 – As part of God’s reprimand of the “mother”, Israel, the required religious observances will be brought to an end. Israel’s unbelief renders their liturgical calendar vacuous, since it is by faith that the Israelites were saved, not by observance of the Law, be it civil or ceremonial or moral. See Exodus 23:14-17, Deuteronomy 16:16, 1 Chronicles 23:27-32. Fr. Joel Baseley has written a book, *The Vanishing Marks of the Church*, detailing how this is happening in the visible church today.

2:12 - In 2:5 the adulterous mother attributed her earthly provision to false gods rather than to the One True God, the Triune God. Since she had done so, her daily bread too is taken away. “God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”

When men look to false gods as the providers, God can take His gracious provision away to turn men back to him. In Israel’s case this includes the Promised Land, the Land of deliverance, where initially Israel enjoyed the fruits freely. In doing so, God is just, see Deuteronomy 6:10-19, and the promises and warnings there. Israel in Hosea’s time was living under the very Covenant God established in Deuteronomy. See Isaiah 5:5-6.

2:13 – This final verse of God’s rebuke of Israel summarizes her transgressions. The burning of incense to the Baals was a sign of their worship. See Ezekiel 16:17, where promiscuity was involved with idol worship. When Israel was delivered out of Egypt, she was given the plunder of the land, the gold and jewels of Egypt.

Do you remember what God’s punishment was for their inappropriate use of that gold? See Exodus 32:1-5, 20, 27-28. The description of Israel bedecking herself gives the reader the image of a harlot. See Revelation 17:4-5. To what does our country attribute its daily bread? How does the Christian family differ?

The Hebrew word translated here “forgot”, שָׁכַחַהּ, is what God does not want men to do to Him. What God wants, as we see in Jeremiah 31:34 (note the context here), and in Hosea 13:4-5, is that His people remember (זָכַר) Him, know (יָדַע) Him. To know God is to believe in Him, see Judges 2:10-11. To “remember” in the Old Testament is an active remembrance, see Genesis 19:29, Jonah 2:7. Israel’s “remembering” and “forgetting” represent belief and unbelief. See Ezekiel 21:32.

God’s chastisement of Israel will be severe. She will be taken captive, deported to Babylon, denied access to the Temple, lose her inheritance in the Promised Land, and dwell among, and in servitude to, pagans.

Read Hosea 2:14-20

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

2:14 – God will not forsake His chosen, even if they have forsaken Him. See Jeremiah 31:31-32. Note that it is not Israel that turns to God, but God will “allure” Israel, He will buy back the harlot wife. The price will not be paid with gold or silver, but with the holy, precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of Christ (see especially 2:20). To speak tenderly to her is the opposite of the rebuke Israel suffered in 2:2-13. What Biblical, Lutheran categories do you see in the “rebuke” of Israel, and God’s promise to “speak tenderly” or “allure” His people?

2:15 – The loss of the vineyard was a mark of God’s anger in 2:12. But the vineyard is important imagery in the Old Testament. See Isaiah 5:1-7.

The Valley of Achor – See Joshua 7:11, 20-26, עָכוֹר “Achor” means “trouble” or “disturbance” in Hebrew. See Isaiah 65:8-10 for the clear Christological understanding of God’s restoration. Now the valley of “trouble”, Israel’s chastisement, will be made a door of hope. This is a clear example of God’s grace extended to the sinner.

Restored, Israel will be to God as she was in the days of her great deliverance – faithful. But it will be under a new and better Moses, a new and better Joshua, Jesus, who will Shepherd Israel into the true Promised Land, heaven.

2:16 – Israel will again be a Bride to the Bridegroom. See Isaiah 61:10, which includes the bedecking of jewelry in faithful relations with the Groom, and also vineyard/garden language. There is wordplay here in the Hebrew that we miss in the English. The word “my master” in Hebrew is בַּעֲלִי “my Baal”. Note how smoothly this flows into verse 17!

2:17 – To remove from the lips is to cause to forget – now it is not God that is forgotten, but the Baals. Israel’s confession will be of the true God. Their prayers will be directed to the true God. This is a description of faith. They will not call upon the names of false Gods, but they will call upon the Name of the Lord. See Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:10-13.

2:18 – Here God promises a New Covenant. Israel will be protected from temporal, physical harm, both from animals and men. From your knowledge of the history of the Middle East, has this come to pass? The New Covenant is alluded to in much of the Old Testament, as we have seen above in Jeremiah 31:31ff. See especially Isaiah 11:6-10 and 65:17-25. What time is Isaiah describing?

2:19-20 – The betrothal in Hosea 1 was one of iniquity. Now the betrothal is one of righteousness, justice, love and compassion, one of faithfulness. Do you remember what the fourth Article of the Augsburg Confession is? See Habakkuk 2:4. Hosea 2:19-20 is a description of the betrothal of the Church to her Bridegroom. Now the one “not beloved”, Lo-Ruhamah, is beloved (1:6). See Matthew 25:1-10; Revelation 21:2, 9.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Read Hosea 2:21-23

2:21 – “...in that day” – The great and terrible Day of the Lord. For the Prophets of the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord began with the coming of the Messiah, and ended with the final judgment. See Isaiah 2:12-19, 13:9-13, 49:8, 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16ff); Zephaniah 1:14-18; Malachi 3:16-18, 4:1-6; See also 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:10-13.

2:21b-22 - The balance of verse 21 and verse 22 are understood quite differently by different commentators, indeed there is no agreement on the translation of the main verb - אָעֲנֶה - The ESV, NIV and NKJ translate “I will answer”, KJV and Keil-Delitzsch translate “I will hear.” The verb, אָעֲנֶה, is generally translated “I heard” or “I returned a greeting”. A less common translation is “confront a witness” or “testify”. Since this is a verse that describes the Day of the Lord, and the making of all things new, this author relates the verse to the context of 2:8, where Israel sees the earth and its bounty as a provision of the Baals. Here, the whole creation testifies that it is the One True God who provides, all His gifts in unison pointing to Him, and so informing Jezreel, who once was scattered, but now, as the Holy Church, is sown.

2:23 – This is the Gospel: the one once not beloved is now beloved, the ones once not God’s people are declared to be His people, and they confess “You are my God.” See the Promise of God in Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 30:22-24; Joel 2:27.

Read Hosea 3:1-5

3:1 – The Gospel Promise of chapter 2 still ringing in Israel’s ears, now the Prophet is caused to prophesy against Israel’s apostasy once again. This will set up the great legal charge God brings against Israel in chapter 4, and in the chapters that follow.

The Prophet is directed to love an adulterous woman. As with Gomer, this is to be an object lesson to Israel – by this they will know what God endures as their God, and they are unfaithful. Israel loves another, the Baals, who also love her. The raisin cakes were part of the worship of the Baals, and returns to the thought that Israel has adulterously, idolatrously, attributed to the Baals the gifts of creation. The words “of the pagans” (NKJ) do not occur in the Hebrew.

3:2 – Since the adulterous woman is a harlot, the Prophet must pay for her. Although he loves her as God directs, at no time does the text of Hosea allow that he had relations with her. The Prophet remained chaste in this relationship.

The verb כָּרָה translated “bought” has a nuanced meaning – “acquire by trading”. It is also used for “haggling”. The verb only occurs 19 times in the Old Testament, and is most frequently translated “dug”, as in Psalm 57:7 and 94:13.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

The price of the harlot is 15 “silvers” (usually translated “shekels of silver”), and a homer and a “Lethech” of barley. The Hebrew word לֶחֶךְ is transliterated here, its meaning is uncertain because it only occurs once in Scripture. Keil-Delitzsch goes to the Septuagint for the meaning, where it reads ἡμίκορος, which they translate “half a homer”. If Keil-Delitzsch is correct, then their assertion that Hosea pays the equivalent (half in barley, half in silver) of the slave price of Exodus 21:32 is supported.

3:3 – While the prophet has a wife, he does not exercise his conjugal rights. The Hebrew is a bit clearer here, roughly “many days you shall sit (dwell) unto me, not you shall harlot and not you shall be unto a man, and also I unto you.” It is a period of forced waiting that allows for no intimacy.

3:4 – The reason for the relationship between the prophet and his “wife” is here given – it is a parable for the relationship between God and Israel. Israel will “sit” many days, lacking a king, without the right worship of God, and without idols. It is a time for Israel to contemplate their sins, and to prove their faithfulness.

3:5 – After the period of waiting, Israel will return to God. They will seek a king appointed by God, and the gifts of God. They will do so “in dread”. “In the latter days” refers to the time after their waiting, but can clearly be seen as an end-times reference.

Read Hosea 4:1-3, and see our outline of the Book of Hosea

4:1 – The legal charge is here brought by God against Israel, and evidence is presented. Chapter 4 begins with the “Grand Arraignment. The specific charges are presented in 4:2-9. The word for “charge” here is רִיב, a “dispute”. The overarching charge is that there is no אֱמֻנָה (faithfulness), there is no חֶסֶד (mercy), there is no דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים (knowledge of God) in the land. The word translated “mercy” חֶסֶד is among the most important words in the Old Testament, occurring over 245 times. It is best seen in Deuteronomy 7:9. See also Genesis 19:19, 47:29; Exodus 20:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 6:4, 23:6; Isaiah 63:7; Hosea 6:6; Joel 2:13, and many more.

4:2 – Having testified against Israel regarding what they lack, now God lists what they have: lying, killing, stealing, adultery, lack of restraint, bloodshed. If God were to bring charges against our country, would the same be true?

4:3 – There are temporal consequences to sin, and eternal consequences to sin. God here lists temporal consequences of Israel’s apostasy: the land will mourn, those who dwell in the land will waste away together with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, even the fish will be taken from the sea. This describes a land, once “flowing with milk and honey” (contrast God’s description of Israel with His Promise in Exodus 3:8), a land that will be uninhabitable.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

4:3, cont. – Remember the Garden of Eden, and the curse resultant from sin – read Genesis 3:17-19. So too here in Hosea does God curse the land because of Israel’s sin. See Isaiah 24:3-6, where this continues through verse 14, where God makes it clear that this is a winnowing, a cleansing, to the benefit and salvation of God’s faithful people, as it will prove to be in Hosea as well.

Read Hosea 4:4-6

Remembering that we are in the section of Hosea known as “The Divine Indictment” (see outline), here God continues with forensic, legal language. In the Divine trial He continues to levy charges against the people that have forgotten Him.

4:4 – No sinner can bring charges against another sinner. Both are guilty before God. In light of our transgressions, how can we accuse others? See Deuteronomy 17:12-13. Notice here in 4:4 the Hebrew verb is the same verb used in 2:2: **רִיבּוּ** - “bring charges” or “contend against.”

There those saved by grace can bring charges against the nation that has forsaken God, by appealing to God’s Holy Law. But God alone is Holy. He alone can bring a charge. And He does exactly that here. Having declared the children righteous, He, through His Prophet Hosea, now charges the Priests who were supposed to teach His Law. See Deuteronomy 31:9-13. The nation is condemned, but the Priests cannot charge the people for this – they were derelict in their Priestly duties.

4:5 – Stumbling is the result of sin. Delitzsch says that the stumbling here is a description not of their sinning, but of their fall because of their sin. The righteous man walks straight. But the priests stumble/fall, and the prophets with them, because they do not speak the Word of God. From such as these God withdraws Himself. See Hosea 5:5-6. Here God vows to destroy the nation because of the sins of the priests...

4:6 - ...as the priests have destroyed God’s people by teaching falsehood, by withholding from them the Law, which taught in its purity imparts the knowledge of the true God. What are some contemporary examples of this today?

Note the Hebrew poetic structure here. True knowledge = the Law of God. Rejected are the priests and their children, see Exodus 20:5.

Read 4:7-13a

4:7 – The Divine Indictment continues. The more priests there were, the greater their transgression. God promises here to “change their glory into shame.” See Romans 1:21-23. So it will be on the last day for every unrepentant sinner.

If you use a study Bible, you may note here one of the rare incidents of textual variants in the Hebrew manuscripts. We follow the Masoretic Text.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

4:7, cont. – The difference is between the Hebrew words **כְּבוֹדִי** and **כְּבוֹדָם**, a slight difference that renders “his glory” “my glory”, so woodenly “as many thus their sins unto me, their glory unto ignominy I shall change” becomes “as many thus their sins unto me, my glory unto ignominy I shall change.” Again, we follow the Masoretic text in the reading “their glory”. The critical apparatus in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* identifies the change as *Tiq Soph*, short for *Tiqqune Sopherim*, which implies a scribal modification of the last two letters of the word to avoid disrespect to God. There are only 18 of these in the entire *TaNaK*. (Scott, William, *A Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters & Other Markings*, 3rd ed. 1987, Richland Hills, Texas: BIBAL Press and William R. Scott. [15]).

4:8 – The priests of apostate Israel are further condemned – they at once lead Israel into sin, and get rich off of it.

4:9 – But as the “mother” is subject to charges from the children (2:2), so shall the priests be held accountable for their transgressions. See James 3:1 for a similar treatment in the New Testament.

4:10 – The condemnation of the priests is severe. Since they feed on the peoples’ sins, they will eat but not be satisfied. And while the nation increases (4:7), it is not to their benefit, rather to their ignominy. Here the parallelism is evident, the opposite of “increase” being that they shall “not increase”, because their union is not with the true God, but with false Gods, thus it is “harlotry”.

4:11 - Two words for wine are used here, **יַיִן** and **תִּירוֹשׁ**, the first being wine, the second being “new wine”. The repetition shows them to be consummate drunks, their hearts enslaved by overconsumption of the fruits of their whoredom.

4:12 – The mute, carved idols of the Baals are mocked here. Rather than the Living God, they seek revelation and comfort and protection from inanimate pieces of wood. This is true because of their insistence on running to false gods, which is adultery in God’s eyes.

4:13 – A description of worship in the “high places”, see 1 Kings 3:2; 1 Kings 14:23; Jeremiah 7:31; and Ezekiel 16:16, which completes the thought in Hosea 4:13b.

Read Hosea 4:14-19

4:14 – The role of the men is clearly explained here – just as the sin in the garden was Adam’s, although it was Eve who was deceived, so here the women are not punished for their whoredom, because the men cause it by going themselves into idolatrous worship. Men and women being without understanding, all will be trampled.

4:15 – As the children brought charges against their mother, so here the distinction is made between the nation of Israel and the true Israel, those of faith inside of the nation. *Bethaven* is “house of idols”, a re-naming of *Bethel*, “house of God.” 1 Kings 12:28-29; Amos 4:4-5.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

From our quick study on Hebrew words translated “idol” in the New King James, we remember the word used here in 4:15 for Beth Aven - **בֵּית אֲוֵן** the first word (reading from the right) is “Beth”, which means “house”. The second word, Aven, means “trouble”, “sorrow” or “wickedness”. Changing Bethel (see Genesis 12:8, 13:3-4) to Beth Aven (see Joshua 7:2 for the geographic location) is demonstrative of Israel’s idolatry – here the exhortation uses the city name not as a location, but as an action – going to the house of idols. See Amos 5:5, where “nothing” is the same Hebrew word. Beersheba (Hebrew: “well of seven” or “well of the covenant”, see Genesis 21:30-32) was located in the southernmost part of Judah, actually in Simeon, west of the bottom edge of the Dead Sea.

“Gilgal” means “wheel” or “rolling” in Hebrew. See Joshua 5:9-10. There are two distinct locations named Gilgal in the Old Testament. One, the most prominent, is in the Jordan valley in the southern tip of Manasseh, northeast of Jericho by about 7 miles, see Deuteronomy 11:30. The other is further to the north, in the mountains by Shiloh and Bethel, see 2 Kings 2:1-2. While some commentators hold this to refer to the Gilgal of the Jordan valley, archeological study in the northern location has uncovered a site of no fewer than six separate but related encampments, by Bethel on the border between Benjamin and Ephraim, that are called together Gilgal. See Amos 4:4-5. Keil-Delitzsch says that the Gilgal referred to is the northern, mountainous location, to which pilgrimages were made to worship the Baals.

Ultimately in verse 15 Israel is forbidden from taking oaths in the Name of the Living God, because they have worshipped dead idols.

4:16 – Israel would not submit to the Word of God. They ran rather to idols. They are likened here to a stubborn calf, that will not go where it is led (the word for “calf” here is different than the word used in Exodus 32:4). So God will let them graze in the “open country” of Assyria and Babylon, the place of their captivity, like a lamb unprotected from the wolves and predators.

4:17 – A Word of condemnation spoken to the children, whom God loves and redeems, of the “mother” Israel, against whom God brings charges. Ephraim is used again here for the 10 northern tribes. Of the 12 tribes, Ephraim was the most powerful.

4:18 – This further describes what it means to be “joined to idols” in verse 17. The word used for “drink” is a very strong, intoxicating wine. See Isaiah 1:22, where the same word is translated “wine”.

Verse 18 is particularly difficult to translate. Keil-Delitzsch writes of 18b “The meaning of the last half of the verse is also a disputed point, more especially on account of the word **הִבְיָהוּ**, which only occurs here...” The various treatments of this word result in several different translations. Compare the following translations:

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Keil-Delitzsch: their drinking has degenerated; whoring they have committed whoredom; their shields have loved, loved shame

NKJV: their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually, her rulers dearly love dishonor

KJV: their drink is sour, they have committed whoredom continually, her rulers with shame do love. Give ye.

NIV: even when their drinks are gone, they continue their prostitution; their rulers dearly love shameful ways

NASB: their liquor gone, they play the harlot continually, their rulers dearly love shame.

ESV: when their drink is gone, they give themselves to whoring; their rulers dearly love shame.

Woodenly, the following translation can be offered:

סָר סְבָאָם הַזֵּנָה הַזֵּנָה אֶהְבֵּוּ הֵבִי קְלוֹן מִגִּנְיָהּ:

He turned aside | liquor | to commit harlotry | they committed harlotry (fem) |

they loved | ? | shame | their shields *or* her gifts made in return

Having seen the difficulty in translation, there is no reason not to accept the New King James rendering of the text, which honors the Hebrew, and takes הֵבִי as a form of אֶהְבֵּוּ, which honors the treatment of the preceding verb.

4:19 – The “nothingness” of Israel’s Baal worship is like chaff when the wind catches it. This may be a reference to a “threshing floor”, where wheat & chaff are thrown up into the wind, and the heavier wheat is separated by the wind as the chaff is blown away. The Hebrew word for “wind” is also the word for “spirit”.

Ultimately, shame will come upon Israel for their sacrifices to Baal.

Read Hosea 5:1-4

5:1 – While still inside of the Divine Indictment that began in 4:2, now a special focus is brought to the role of the priests. The priests are supposed to protect Israel from false teachings and false gods. Rather than doing this, they have led the people astray. Because of the Hebrew poetic construction the priests here seem to be those of the royal court, perhaps either king Zechariah or Menahem, who ruled from 753-742 B.C., the time of Hosea’s prophecy. While all Israel is condemned, the priests have a special responsibility to God and to Israel, which they have abdicated. So the proclamation is “yours is the judgment!”, strong words of condemnation. The word God has for Pastors that teach false doctrine and lead bad practice is no less severe, see James 3:1.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A. ✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

“A snare to Mizpah and a net spread on Tabor” The snare and net are used for catching birds. For Mizpah, see Judges 10:17, an encampment of Gilead (a region on the east side of the Jordan). Tabor is a mountain which lends its name to the a region west of the Jordan and south of the Sea of Galilee (in Zebulun/Issachar, see 1 Chronicles 6:77 [verse 62 in the Hebrew]). The names Mizpah and Tabor used as they are here would describe the lands both east and west of the Jordan. They are likened to fragile, defenseless birds that can be caught in a snare, the false doctrine and teaching of the priests.

5:2 – This is Hebrew poetry, the word “revolters” is parallel to the priests of verse 1, and those who follow them, against whom the judgment is proclaimed (the house of Israel, the house of the king). The word “rebuke”, מוֹסֵר in the Hebrew, is a different word than is used in 4:4 (יוֹכַח) or 5:9 (תּוֹכַחַהּ). The word used here is important in the Prophets for God’s chastening of His people. See Isaiah 26:16 (God’s salvation in light of His destruction of the earth), Jeremiah 2:30 (Israel forsaking God); 5:3 (the sinfulness of all men), and 7:28 (idolatrous worship), noting the contexts there. How does these contexts compare to God’s use of the same word in Hosea? Their transgressions are elaborated in the next verse...

5:3 – Ephraim commits harlotry, Israel is defiled. Ephraim is the land just north and west of the hill country of Benjamin. This is Hebrew poetry – note the pattern: Ephraim/Israel, harlotry/defilement. This is also a synecdoche (figure of speech using a part for the whole, or vice versa). Ephraim represents all of Israel, her harlotry is the cause of her defilement. This is a major theme of Hosea.

5:4 – Again here we must note the poetic form of the verse: They do not know the Lord (the major charge against Israel in this section of the Divine Trial), so the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and as a consequence they are prevented from repentance (turning to God), so their deeds show forth what their hearts believe. See James 2:26, noting the similarities. Israel was not saved by works, but as in James, their works were the window to their hearts.

Read Hosea 5:5-7

5:5 – The word “pride” is גָּאֹן in the Hebrew – a horrible sin. See Leviticus 26:19, Job 35:12, Proverbs 8:13. Now see Isaiah 14:11-12 for the use of the same word. Note the parallelism Hosea provides for “pride” – stumbling. God brings charges against Israel, but Israel’s own actions make testimony against her.

5:6 – The flocks and herds are for offerings. In her sin, when Israel seeks the Lord, to make the required sacrifices, God will not be available to them. The design of the sacrifices was to remind Israel of their sin, See Isaiah 1:10-14, Hebrews 10:1-9. The sacrifices were signs, never the solution, to Israel’s sin. God has “withdrawn” Himself (שָׁלַח) from them – see Deut 31:16-18.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

5:7 – The parallelism in “They have dealt treacherously with the Lord” and “they have begotten pagan (strange) children” is clear – the proof of their adultery is in the children that do not look like their fathers. This is certainly true ethnically, the tribes were to have emptied the Promised Land of its inhabitants, but instead they found the women beautiful and committed adultery with them. See Joshua 3:10, 7:1, 9:24-27; Judges 2:20-23, 14:1-3 (although God uses Samson and his Philistine wife to create strife between Israel and the Philistines).

This is also true theologically, as the true faith was polluted by the teachings and practices of the pagan peoples. In this their “children” were “strange”.

“a New Moon” came in about a month’s time. The calendars of the ancient middle east were “lunisolar”, based on the movement of the sun and moon. “The month was defined as the interval between successive first appearances of the moon in its cyclical phases...” which were always 29 or 30 apart. Emerging from behind the sun, the crescent moon would appear on the western horizon just after sunset, the “new moon.” (Anchor Bible Dictionary)

That the new moon would “devour them and their heritage” is a prophecy of the fall of Judah, the punishment for the sins of Israel, which would come soon. On the New Moon festival, see Hosea 2:11, Psalm 81:3, Isaiah 66:23, Colossians 2:16-17. See Genesis 7:11 for the first occurrence of the Hebrew word **שִׁדְדָה** “New Moon” in the Bible. Can you guess which English word is used to translate the Hebrew word?

Read Hosea 5:8-15

These eight verses prophesy the complete destruction, and the taking away into captivity, of Judah. Hosea wrote in approximately 722 B.C. or shortly afterwards, the fall of the Northern Kingdom had just occurred. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) would fall in 586 B.C. While the north fell to the Assyrians, a stronger enemy, Babylon, would completely consume Assyria and take Palestine by force, all the way south to the Egyptian border.

5:8 – Although commentators point to 2 Kings 16:5-9 and Isaiah 7:1-9 as the conflict described here, in which Syria goes to war with Ephraim, it is better seen as prophetic of the fall of the Southern Kingdom. This treatment of the text is reinforced by the fact that in verse 11 Ephraim (a nickname here for the north) is already oppressed and broken in judgment, and it is Benjamin that is called upon to “look behind you, O Benjamin”, a reference to enemy troops closing in.

Gibeah and Ramah were cities in Benjamin, on the very northern border. They were of high altitude (Benjamin was the “hill country”), and good places for watchmen, so were perfect places for the warning **שׁוֹפָר** “shophar” to be blown, alerting the south of impending attack. See Hosea 8:1; Jeremiah 4:5-8.

On Beth Aven, see our study notes on Hosea 4:15 on pg. 16 of this study.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

5:9 – Ephraim is the Northern Kingdom. The “Day of Rebuke” – ultimately, the Last Day. Any interim rebuke is simply a foretaste of the wrath to come. The word used in 5:2 is a different word – there מוֹסֵר, actually a masculine noun meaning “chastening” or “discipline” (although it is rendered in English as if it were a verb); here תּוֹכַחָה a feminine noun meaning “punishment” or “chastisement”. For the use of the same Hebrew word, see Psalm 80:14-19, where in verse 16 it is translated “rebuke”. What time is the Psalm describing?

5:10 – Now the Southern Kingdom is included in the charges God brings. “Those who remove a landmark” – stones marked the boundaries of parcels of land. Moving the boundary stone was dishonest, a way of lying about what you owned. See Deuteronomy 19:14. For their dishonesty, for breaking the Commandments of God, the wrath of God will be poured out upon them. That wrath comes at the hand of the Babylonians in 586 B.C., but the full outpouring of God’s wrath comes on the Day of the Lord.

5:11 – The Divine indictment returns now to focus on the Northern Kingdom again. This is apparently written shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.), for it is already “oppressed and broken in judgment”, which came through the hands of Assyria. See Deuteronomy 28:33, where the sense of the same Hebrew words is that the oppression and brokenness is continual. The reason for their oppression is that they did not obey God, rather they obeyed men. See Jeremiah 35:13; Matthew 15:7-9; Acts 5:29.

The word translated “precept” here in the New King James is the Hebrew word צִוְיָ, which is literally an “oracle,” but one of dubious origin. Here, and in Isaiah 28:10,13 it is used for a “statute” of human origin that stands against the commands of God. Some Bible versions translate this as “idols”

5:12 – The moth and rottenness eat away at the object. By moth and rotting the object corrodes and is destroyed or left worthless. See Matthew 6:19-20.

5:13 – Verse 13 continues the thought of verse 12. Here Israel sees the wounds God has inflicted in punishment, but rather than turning to God Israel turns to foreign kings, who will devour her. The king “Jareb” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word יָרֵב, which means “striver” or “contender” or “warrior”. This is a nickname Hosea gives to the Assyrian king, see 10:6, a name that mocks the earthly power of the king in contrast with the heavenly power of the true King.

5:14 – In verse 12 God came as a moth and rottenness. Israel does not repent. Now He comes as a lion, not nibbling away at them but tearing them in pieces. The taking away refers to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Only God can return them. See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

5:15 – As the lion withdraws to his lair after conquering his prey, so the Lord will withdraw His presence, His Prophetic Word, and His help, from Israel and Judah after He gives them over to foreign rule and enslavement. The Northern Kingdom fell in 722 B.C., the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C. The Edict of the Return was given in 538 B.C. After Malachi there would be 400 years of silence, in which Israel had no Prophet. But in mercy, by His grace, God would send John the Baptizer. He would be beheaded.

Terrified of the silence, Israel would seek God's face. See Exodus 33:20; Numbers 6:25-27, 12:5-8; Deuteronomy 31:16-18, 32:20-26. In Hosea, we see the fulfillment of God's prophesy of Deuteronomy.

Read Hosea 6:1-3

Do you recognize this pericope? Hosea 6:1-6 is the first Reading of the Good Friday Tre Ore Service of the Word. What does Good Friday have in common with the situation in Israel in the time of the Prophet Hosea?

Although in modern Bible translations no change in structure is delineated between 6:3 and 6:4, it is a major division in Hosea. Hosea 6:1 asserts the certainty of Divine pardon, 6:2 teaches the monergism of Divine pardon, and 6:3 returns, in poetic style, to the certainty of Divine pardon (Judisch's outline). 6:4 begins the next major section of Hosea, the second charge by God against Israel.

6:1 – Directly connected to the thought of 5:15, here the Prophet calls for Israel to turn, to repent, to turn to the Lord. The Hebrew word for "turn" or "return" is **שׁוּב**, a word which means "turn and go the other way", which is also the Hebrew word for "repent." See Jeremiah 25:5; Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30.

Here we meet the certainty of God's pardon. In 5:14 God was represented by a lion. Here his carnivorous work is done, He has torn in pieces. What are the two parts of the Word of God? Which part is "tearing" or "slaying" like a lion? Which part is healing? See John 1:17; 2 Timothy 2:15.

Note the poetic device here – in parallel with tearing and healing, we now have smiting (striking) and binding. What does the Law do? What does the Gospel do? The Pastor is called to apply Law, then Gospel. God's treatment of Israel is the example. How is the use of the Law loving? How is this true in the life of the sinner? How is this true in the life of the sinner declared righteous? God slays and makes alive – see Deuteronomy 32:39.

6:2 – Here again we meet Hebrew poetic style. See Job 5:19; Proverbs 6:6, 30:21,29; Amos 1:3. The poetic device escalates to its apex – the resurrection on the third day is the vehicle by which God raises up Israel and all men. The Christology of this prophesy is clear to the Christian. See 1 Corinthians 15:20-24.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

6:3 – The first of three great charges brought by God against Israel is that there is no knowledge of God in Israel. See 4:1, 6, and the outline of Hosea. The charge finds its “closing argument” here. More than knowing, Israel must continually pursue the knowledge of the Lord.

God’s coming on the last day is the completion of the knowledge of the Lord. All men will know Him and see Him. See Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10-11.

The word translated “going forth” is **אֲרִיז**, “rising” in the Hebrew. It is a masculine noun for the source, the starting point (see Numbers 33:2), the place out of which the sun comes every morning. See Psalm 19:6, 75:6 (here the word is simply translated “east”). See a similar description (without **אֲרִיז**) in Isaiah 58:8. While His rising is the source of our life, indeed the source of the life of the world, it is on the last day, at the Parousia, that we will surely know the Lord.

How will the Lord come? As rain that covers the earth. Keil-Delitzsch writes “The dawn is mentioned instead of the sun, as the herald of the dawning day of salvation. This salvation, which dawns when the Lord appears, is represented in the last clause as a shower of rain that fertilizes the land.” See Deuteronomy 11:14. Note the relationship between Deuteronomy 11:14 and Hosea 2:8 and 2:22. See Joel 2:19 (from the same chapter as the Ash Wednesday first reading). So it is, like the former and latter rain, in the coming of the Lord, that the final harvest is accomplished. See Matthew 13:30, 39; Psalm 72:6; 2 Samuel 23:3-4.

Read Hosea 6:4-11

This section begins the second great charge of God against Israel. The first charge was the rejection of the knowledge of the Lord. Now God, having given a clear prophesy of the eschatological resolution in the Second Coming of the Messiah, levels the second charge: the rejection of devotion. The forensic presentation of this charge will continue through 11:11, where God will level the charge that Israel has rejected the truth, the third great charge.

6:4 – Note the change in tone from 6:3. While the sky brings the springing forth of the sun from the east, and the former and latter rains, it also brings clouds. The east is the source of life, the resurrection. The rains nourish the crop and bring it to maturity. But the clouds simply blow away. Here God, speaking through the Prophet, likens Israel’s faithfulness to clouds that disappear, and to dew that quickly evaporates.

The word used for “faithfulness” is **אֱמוּנָה**, a word we have met before. In Hosea 4:1 it is translated “mercy.” It is also frequently translated “kindness” in Genesis. See the treatment of the word there. God is the source of “faithfulness” and “mercy”, man’s expression of it ought rightly be a response to God’s giving of it. Note the use of the same word in Psalm 13:5, and the righteousness of faith that it works, as well as the response of faith. In Psalm 23:6 the same word is translated “mercy”. Note there the eternal result of God’s **אֱמוּנָה**.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

6:4, cont. – But neither the northern or southern Kingdoms have shown the response of faith. When times are good, they forget God. When times are bad, they treat him like a “good luck charm”. Their **טֹהַר** is fleeting.

6:5 – The “therefore” that begins this verse answers the question asked in verse 5. Israel’s continual apostasy is necessarily met by God’s continual rebuke and chastisement.

The hewing described is to “hew out” or “carve”, the shaping work of the Word of God by which He gradually and continually conforms us to His will. To be “hewn” is not pleasant. See Hebrews 12:6-9, Luke 13:7-9.

The first two lines of this verse are once again poetic. Note the juxtaposition of the verbs “hewn” and slain”. Note also the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture in the juxtaposition of “prophets” and “words of My mouth.” It is the Prophets by whom God speaks to His people. If they are true Prophets, their word is His Word. As the Prophetic work of the Christ is continued through the Office of the Holy Ministry, so ought our preachers be.

The last clause of 6:5, in the NKJV “And your judgments are like light that goes forth”, is particularly difficult in the Hebrew. Keil-Delitzsch rejects the NKJV rendering and translates “and my judgment goeth forth as light.” Because of the difficulty of the Hebrew form

וּמִשְׁפָּטַי, Keil-Delitzsch places the final letter of the word, **ַי**, as a prefix on the word that

follows, **אֹר**, making the form **כְּאֹר**, “Like light”. The movement of that one letter changes the meaning of the first word to “My judgments”, which makes perfect sense in light of the context, and matches the Vulgate rendering accomplished from ancient texts. So also the NIV and the ESV. So the hewing, the slaying, and the judging are all done by God, and are parallel expressions.

6:6 – See Matthew 9:13, 12:7. Our Lord’s citation of this verse in the New Testament makes Hosea’s use a type fulfilled in Christ, the antitype. See 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11-18; Micah 6:8; and Psalm 40:7-11. The Old Testament sacrifices were instituted to teach Israel of their sin, their need for a Savior, and the way in which that Savior would work. God desired Israel to make the sacrifices, but not for the sacrifices themselves, rather as signs of the one perfect Sacrifice that God Himself, Incarnate, would make. See Galatians 3:19-26. God desires mercy and not sacrifice. The mercy He desires He Himself gives.

In a parallel thought, an echo of the first charge God brought against Israel is related to the second: to truly know God is to know His mercy, not only His command to make the **עֹלָה**, the whole burnt offering, which is **ὁλοκαύτωμα** in the Greek, “holocaust”.

6:7 – This is better translated “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant.” God made a Covenant with Israel. Rather than faithfulness, Israel transgressed the Covenant, as did their fleshly father.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A. ✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

6:7 cont. – The “treacherous dealings” of Israel are in stark contrast to the **דֶּסֶד** of God, the love that is manifest in righteousness, the faithful love demonstrated in the Covenant and seen in 6:6. See Jeremiah 31:32.

6:8 – In God’s testimony against them, two examples of Israel’s unfaithfulness are given – one in Israel and one in Judah. First is Gilead, which we met in 5:1. It is a region on the east side of the Jordan. It is “east Israel” for the purposes of Hosea. The Hebrew reads of Gilead that it is “tracked by footsteps” or “trodden” (Keil-Delitzsch) with blood”. The blood is the evidence of the murderous tendencies of the Gileadites, the “evildoers” that populate the region. In our vernacular we might say “their bloody finger prints are all over the place.” It is sure evidence of their crime.

6:9 - The road from Samaria to Bethel, the principal place of worship of the northern 10 tribes, ran through Shechem, a city by Mount Gerazim. Pilgrims would travel the road on their way to/from Bethel. Keil-Delitzsch asserts that the priests of the region were chosen from among the dregs of society, and they would actually gather in mobs and rob those traveling to worship with their offerings. The “lewdness” they commit is **זָמָה**, the lewdness of Leviticus 18:17 and 19:29, translated as “wickedness” in both those verses.

6:10 – Here God gives eyewitness testimony. God is the God Who Sees – Genesis 16:13. But what He sees in Israel is horrible – harlotry that defiles. Do you remember how the Book of Hosea began?

6:11 – Judah, like Israel, has transgressed. So there will be a “harvest” for them as well, see Matthew 13:39. The NKJV treats the Hebrew **שׁוּבֵי שְׁבוּת** a bit differently. Here we read “return the captives”. See Deuteronomy 30:3. The sense here (and in Deuteronomy) isn’t one of deliverance, but rather that the imprisonment of the people will be turned. Israel couldn’t escape judgment. Neither will Judah.

The harvest is appointed, an eschatological reference, of which the captivity of Judah is a foretaste. Keil-Delitzsch translates in paraphrase “When God shall come to punish, that He may root out ungodliness, and bring back His people to their true destination, Judah will also be visited with the judgment.” This understanding of the **שׁוּבֵי שְׁבוּת** formula renders a meaning exactly opposite that of the Lutheran Study Bible, but much more in keeping with the text and the context of punishment. To avoid a difficult verse, the NIV splits verse 11, pairing the last half of it with 7:1, and adding the word “fortunes” (as does the ESV), which doesn’t occur in the text.

Read Hosea 7:1-7

7:1 – The crime of rejection of devotion (6:4) is further proved by God’s testimony. God, the God of mercy, the God Who Heals (see Exodus 15:26), desired to heal His chosen people. But

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

as He approaches her to heal her wound, her nakedness, her shame, her transgression are more manifest. God's healing comes through the sending of His Prophets, as the healing of the world today comes through the sending of Pastors. But when the healing Word was brought to Israel the Prophets were stoned and rejected. So the true extent of the wound is known. What would be said of the treatment of God's Called and Ordained messengers in the world today?

The moral corruption is incurable (Keil-Delitzsch), it is shameful nakedness in God's eyes. Again as in 6:9 theft and robbery are cited, as well as fraud. See Genesis 21:23 for the use of the same word here translated "fraud". See the same word in Exodus 20:16.

7:2 – God remembers. His remembrance, זָכַר, is an active remembrance, more than just a thought. When God remembers, He acts. See Genesis 9:16; Leviticus 26:45; Nehemiah 13:27-31 (where there is a "double remembrance" – for what is Nehemiah asking?). Israel pretends that their sins are forgotten, the opposite of active remembrance. In fact, those very sins pile up in testimony against them. See Isaiah 59:12. While they may be perpetrated in darkness, God sees clearly – their sins are "before His face." But see Jeremiah 31:34 for their hope.

7:3 – As a sign of the total depravity of the nation, the kings and the princes, placed by God over the people, delight in their apostasy. See Romans 13:1-7; but see also Acts 5:27-29. What is the Church to do regarding our government today, which not only delights in, but promotes the sin of the people (murder is called "a woman's right") and licentiousness (perversion is called "love"), and seemingly embraces nihilism?

7:4 – Verses 4-8 all treat of the same illustration – the baker and the bread. The word translated "adultery" here, זָנָה, is a different word than is used in 1:4, זָנָה. There the word means "harlotry" or "unchastity." Here the reference is to spiritual unfaithfulness, although this word is also used for the physical act of adultery. See Exodus 20:14. This reinforces the theme of Hosea that idolatry is adultery, the bride's unfaithfulness to her Groom.

The baker of old would use a hot oven during the day for baking, and then let the oven cool, but still burn, during the night. That would give sufficient heat for the leavened dough to rise. In the morning the fire would be stirred and stoked, and more wood added to make it blazing hot again.

7:5 – The word "inflamed" links this verse to 7:4. The word "princes" links this verse to 7:3. The kings and princes are addicts, addicted to the wickedness and lies of 7:3. Like an addict, they become sick from the substance to which they are addicted. In their intoxication, the princes tempt the king to "stretch out his hand" with scoffers. The king, the very one placed by God over the people, is so enamored of the transgressions of the people, that he gets caught up in it – he goes about with scoffers - when he should rather rebuke them and restore godly order. For a similar metaphor, see Proverbs 20:1, 8.

7:6 – This thought is strongly connected to the previous verses. In their apostasy, they plan their sins like the baker plans to bake. When not transgressing, they plot to transgress as the baker

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

leaves the dough to rise. In the morning, they stoke the fires and their lust is inflamed that they return to their wickedness and their lies (v. 3) like a baker returns to his flaming fire and baking.

7:7 – It is the people, not their king or princes, that tempt the leaders to stray (see 6:11b in the English enumeration, 7:1, 3). They “burn” with passion (see v. 6), and the bread they bake, the fruits of their sin, is the corruption of their judges and kings. All fallen together, no one calls on the Lord, which is to say that none of them worship the True God. For a strikingly similar use of the metaphor, see Psalm 14:2-4. See also Genesis 4:26; 1 Kings 18:24; Psalm 116:12-17; Zephaniah 3:8-9; Zechariah 13:9; Acts 19:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:22.

So it is that “All their kings have fallen, none among them calls upon Me.” In the time of the Prophet Hosea, kings rose and fell in short periods of time. The study Bible note (NIV) refers to the reigns of Zechariah (not the Prophet), and Shallum (2 Kings 15:10-15), both Northern Kings, who were both deposed in a period of less than a year (753 B.C., the 38th year of Azariah king of Judah – 752 B.C., the 39th year of the reign of the same king, called alternately Uzziah, see Isaiah 6:1. Azariah/Uzziah reigned for 52 years, from 792-740 B.C., the year of his death).

A conservative dating, however, places Hosea’s writing 30 years after both reigns (722 B.C., after the fall of the Northern Kingdom). The term of Hosea’s ministry (just under 40 years), however, included Zechariah and Shallum, and most certainly overlapped with the ministry of Isaiah.

A godless people cannot be governed. Integrity, ethics and morals are tied to faith. In a godless society, anarchy (nihilism) will always result, especially in a representative system. What does this say about our country? Do not lose heart, dear Christian. We are pilgrims here, subjects of a different King, citizens of God’s Kingdom. His reign is eternal.

Read Hosea 7:8-16

7:8 – As further evidence of their idolatry, Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) has “mixed himself among the peoples.” God’s command was “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the LORD.” See Isaiah 52:10-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Rather than being separate, Ephraim mixed himself among the peoples.

The result of Ephraim’s mixing among the peoples is that he is like “a cake unturned.” This reaches back to the baking metaphor of 7:4. A cake unturned is useless, burned on one side and raw on the other. It can’t be eaten, it is thrown away.

7:9 – See Isaiah 1:7 for a similar description. The apostasy of Israel is so pervasive that he is not aware he is being overtaken. Sin is like that. It begins as a small temptation or trespass, but unchecked it quickly grows and overcomes the sinner. A tribute paid to the foreign king Tiglath-Pileser, and a tribute paid to Egypt, “devoured his strength”. See 2 Kings 15:19-20, 16:7-8. It was not the loss of money *per se*, but the fealty to pagan nations with foreign gods, coupled with a willingness to sell the holy things, that brought Israel’s downfall.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

7:9 cont. – With grey hairs comes death. The corruption of Israel grew slowly, like the appearing of grey hairs on the head of an aging man. In sin, Israel didn't notice he was dying.

7:10 – Pride is a sin. Israel's pride bears witness against him. See Amos 6:8; Leviticus 26:14-25. Here in Hosea it is pride that keeps Israel from returning (שוב) to the Lord their God. What Moses spoke in prophesy (Leviticus 26) came to pass upon Israel in Hosea's time, and would come to pass in Judah 135 years later.

7:11 – In poetic style, the message of 7:9 is restated here – Assyria and Egypt, Israel's greatest enemies, are the very countries they turn to for protection. The “silly dove” here is an expression we share with Hebrew – we say “bird brained”.

7:12 – As above in 5:1, the net here is used for catching birds. Like a “silly dove”, Israel is easily captured. There is nowhere they can flee from God. They are chastened for false doctrine, what “their congregation has heard.” It is false doctrine that is ultimately their downfall. False doctrine is no plaything, it destroys faith. See Jeremiah 14:14-15; Lamentation 2:14 (can you see שׁוֹב in this verse?); Ezekiel 22:28-31; Matthew 24:24-25; 2 Peter 2:1-2.

7:13 – Israel fled to Assyria and Egypt for help. In truth, they were simply fleeing from God. So Luther says in his exposition of the 1st Commandment (LC.2):

“A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the whole heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your God also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god.”

This should cause all of us to ask: “In what have I truly trusted?” “To what or to whom have I run when I am in trouble?”

To flee from God is destruction. Both Northern and Southern Kingdoms would be destroyed. The reason: “...because they have transgressed against Me.” It is Israel's sin that brings about his demise. God delivered them out of Egyptian captivity, He “redeemed” them. And yet in their transgression, in their unfaithfulness, in their seeking protection from pagan peoples, they have lied against God. They broke their half of the Covenant “I will be your God, and you will be My people.” See Exodus 6:7.

7:14 – In their trouble, in their “wailing upon their beds”, they did not seek God. They did not call out to Him. They ran to Assyria and Egypt.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

7:14, cont. – Notice the source of their cries – not from their hearts, which is to say they are not from faith, rather from unbelief, see Deuteronomy 32:46; Isaiah 29:13.

In the Hebrew, the “heart” לֵב is the “inner man”, the seat of faith. See Psalm 14:1; Proverbs 10:8, 11:29-31, note the poetic construction and parallelism. So here in Hosea the wailing is not an honest appeal to God, rather an unbelieving complaint based in the lies of verse 13. It is also a wailing of despair, for while they suffer, they do not trust in God for deliverance.

Grain and wine are God’s gracious provisions – see 2:8-9, 2:22 (note that Israel is now not receiving them), and ultimately see 14:7. This is a theme of Hosea’s prophecy. What is the context of Joel 2:19? Read Joel 2:13-19.

7:15 - Note how the transgression, the lie, the wailing, the rebellion and the devising of evil are all equated by the poetic structure of verses 13, 14 and 15.

God’s discipline of Israel (in the desert after the Exodus, in the many cycles of rebuke and restoration in the Promised Land) was done by God in love, to teach Israel where to look in time of trouble – see Nehemiah 9:27; Psalm 27:5; Psalm 37:39-40; Isaiah 33:2 (note the “arm” in this passage); Jeremiah 2:27-28.

The verb used for “disciplined”, יָסַד is to instruct not to chastise (Keil-Delitzsch). See Psalm 18:32-35. To instruct the arms is to show from whence strength may be acquired. More than this, the Lord has given them great victories, even in their apostasy (see 2 Kings 14:25-26). Still, they have not learned where true strength comes from.

Now see Daniel 12:1-3, and consider: with the recent events in our country, and the unprecedented persecution of Christians we are experiencing, we would do well to heed these Words of God, for in them is great comfort for us. Let us not be like Ephraim in Hosea 7, rather let the discipline of suffering and persecution we face turn our hearts to the only True God, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ephraim, however, does not turn to God in faith, rather they “devise evil”, which is defined in the next verse.

7:16 – The verb used for “return” is שׁוּב, “repent” verb in Hebrew. But they do not turn towards God, the Most High. Where do they turn? See verse 11.

A treacherous bow is a bow that does not shoot arrows where aimed, it always misses the mark, which is a definition of sinning. See Psalm 78:52-59. Here in Hosea 7:16, in the last half of the verse, we have the beginning of the prophesy of the fall of the Southern Kingdom, which continues through the end of chapter 9.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Read Hosea 8:1-6

8:1 – In Hebrew the sentence simply reads “The trumpet to your mouth.” There is no verb. It is an exclamation of warning. The trumpet is the alarm, the warning against danger. See 5:8. The exclamation of warning is from God to Hosea. The word translated “eagle” in the KJV, NKJV, and NIV is rendered “vulture” in the ESV. The Hebrew word is **נְשֹׂף**. See Deuteronomy 12:13-14, where the same word is translated “eagle”, as it is commonly translated in the O.T. See Ezekiel 10:14. But the force of the word is best seen in the horrible prophesy of Deuteronomy 28:49-53, and in Habakkuk 1:8 – a swiftly attacking carnivorous bird that will show no mercy. Here the “eagle” is Assyria for the North, Babylon for the South.

The “house of the Lord” here is Israel, the people among whom God dwells. The reason the “eagle” comes is that Israel has transgressed God’s Covenant, and rebelled against His Law. The specific transgression of this part of the “charges” God brings against Israel is found in verse 4, as it was in 7:5.

8:2 – The NIV and ESV render the imperfect verb **יִזְעֻקוּ** from **זָעַק**, to call or cry out, in the present tense, “they call”, while the KJV and NKJV render it in the future tense, “they will call”. Knowledge is not salvific. The devil too knows God. See Exodus 8:10, where Pharaoh, who rejects God, will still know Him. Assent and faith following knowledge are what God desires. Yet Israel, who runs to secular powers and idols for help, claims here to “know God.”

8:3 – Their actions contradict their assertion that they know God. They have rejected the good. So the consequence is that their enemy shall pursue them.

8:4 – In verse 1 the “transgression” is alluded to. In verse 3 it is called “rejecting the good.” Now in verse 4 the specific charge is articulated against Israel: without God’s help or direction, without His election, Israel set up for themselves kings and princes. They were not of God, nor did He recognize them. Under their rule Israel fell into apostasy. More than selecting godless kings, Israel made idols out of silver and gold. This language reminds the reader, and the Israelite hearers, of Exodus 32:3-4. The condemnation is not new. See Aaron’s weak excuse in Exodus 32:24. Israel’s excuse in Hosea’s time is no more believable.

8:5 – Here God, speaking through Hosea, calls Israel’s idolatry their “calf”, invoking Exodus imagery. Samaria is the Northern Kingdom. Keil-Delitzsch says this is an actual calf, using 10:5, 15 as proof. Remember that *Beth Aven* means “house of wickedness”, a name to which God changed the name of the city *Beth El*, “house of God.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

8:5, cont. – See 1 Kings 12:25-33. Note where this occurred – Bethel. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, who followed his father as heir to the throne, the first king of the divided Kingdom. Solomon died in 930 B.C. While Rehoboam reigned in Judah, the Southern Kingdom, Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s officials who Solomon tried to kill (see 1 Kings 11:26, 40) reigned in Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Hosea prophesied 200 years later.

“...your calf is rejected...” is a paraphrase of the Hebrew. The word translated “rejected” is **נָפַץ** in the Hebrew, which means “to stink, emit stench, become odious and hence be pushed aside”. The forcefulness and vividness of the Hebrew is a bit lost in the word “rejected.”

God’s anger is aroused against Samaria, the Northern Kingdom. They have committed idolatry. Worse than Aaron at the foot of Sinai, worse than Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:28, who desired to prevent men from going to Jerusalem, Israel now is the subject of God’s anger.

The connecting thought “how long until they attain unto innocence” bridges verses 5 and 6, the proof of their guilt follows.

8:6 – That Israel is not innocent is proven by the source of the calf – it was carefully crafted in Israel. Contrary to Jeroboam’s declaration “Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt...” here God clearly declares “...it is not God.” The proof is that it was made by human hands, see Isaiah 44:12-20, where God mocks Israel for worshipping fire wood.

Finally God’s sentence: the calf of Samaria shall be broken into pieces. The “hammer” God used was Assyria, who crushed the Northern Kingdom, took Israel hostage in a foreign land, and dwelt in their houses and grew fat on the food Israel had planted.

8:7 – Israel is described as a worthless crop. God “planted” them, see Psalm 80:8-19 (note the strong Christology there).

8:8, 9 – Verses 8 and 9 help us assert that Hosea is writing after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Notice that they are in Assyria, “now” scattered among the nations, wandering. This is a description of Israel after 722 B.C.

Even in their state of exile, they don’t repent. They “hire lovers”, which is a central theme of Hosea – remember chapters 1 and 2? “...go, take yourself a wife of harlotry...” The Hebrew word **הִשְׂכַּרְתִּי** is translated here “hire”. It is commonly used in the Old Testament to denote the wages paid to a prostitute.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

8:10 – Remember from chapter 1 that Jezreel was the first son of Hosea and Gomer. Jezreel can mean to sow (by broadcasting seed), or it can mean to scatter. God’s boundless mercy and grace are shown here in His Promise – although they have willingly scattered themselves, He will gather them. The crop of 8:8-9 will bear fruit, by God’s grace.

This gathering, the time of restoration, the time of return (see Ezra 1:1-5, which occurred in 538 B.C.) is preceded by the suffering Israel endures in her Babylonian Captivity, the time when “they sorrow a little”, when they are forced to submit to a cruel foreign king, the “burden of the king of princes”.

Can you remember another cruel king to whom Israel was enslaved? The punishment here is similar to Israel’s enslavement to Pharaoh. And yet here, in the midst of the damning charges brought against Israel, God shows mercy and grace in the Promise of the return to the land God gave them when He brought them out of Egypt, as God had promised beforehand – see Genesis 15:13. God kept that Promise, so will He keep His Promise to Ephraim.

8:11 – Note the opposites in this verse – Ephraim built altars according to God’s Law for sin offerings (see Exodus 29:36-37), but that which was to be holy have become altars for sinning. **חַטָּאת** is the Hebrew word translated “sin offering”, and it is also used for “sin”. See Genesis 4:7 where the same word is used – the first occurrence of the word “sin” in the Bible. So in Hosea the poetic construction juxtaposes “sin offering” and “sin”.

8:12 – God gave Israel His Law, the Torah, **תּוֹרָה**, See Romans 9:3-8. See Galatians 3:21-25.

8:13 – Israel’s disrespect for the Law is here proven – Israel was to have one altar, in the Temple in Jerusalem. In verse 11 we see that their idolatry brought many altars. They “slay and eat” the flesh (Keil-Delitzsch), which proves it is not an offering to God, but an idolatrous practice by which they fill their bellies. Their sacrifices are nothing more than flesh. See God’s warning in Exodus 34:12-16. This warning was seven centuries before the Assyrian captivity.

Although they sacrificed, the Lord is not pleased. The sacrifices were false, not made in faith, like Cain’s. See Genesis 4:3-5, Hebrews 11:4.

God’s remembrance is an active remembrance, one that is not merely a thought, but is coupled with action. See Genesis 9:15; Leviticus 26:44-45; Jeremiah 14:20-21; Ezekiel 13:60-63 (note the strong Christology here).

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

8:13 cont. - What is God's action as He remembers their false sacrifices? How is what Israel will endure in Assyria and Babylon like a return to Egypt? See God's warning in Deuteronomy 9:6-7; 28:62-68. Remember that in Deuteronomy Israel had been delivered from Egypt by the Exodus. The warning in Deuteronomy is brought to bear on the Israelites of Hosea's time, 700 years later.

8:14 - Note the opposite of "remember" in verse 13. God remembers. Israel forgets. See 1 Chronicles 16:11-17; Psalm 103:17-18. To forget one's Maker is to lose oneself – if you don't know who your god is, you don't know who you are. This is clearly seen in the world today, where the godless have lost even the distinction between right and wrong, even between male and female.

Trusting in the things of men, fortified cities and fortresses, is foolishness. With a Word, with a breath, God can wipe out the largest cities and strongest castles. Israel and Judah will learn that their security cannot come from men.

Read Hosea 9:1-9

Continuing in the theme of the major "charge" against Israel in this section of Hosea, their rejection of devotion to the true God (6:4-11), in this section God warns His chosen people against false security. We have seen that they trusted in fortified cities and castles. Now all the things in which they trusted will be taken away.

9:1 – Returning to a major theme of the Book, Israel's adultery (see 1:2; 2:2-5) is raised again as a charge against them. But the clarity of verse 1 – their adultery is forsaking the true God – is a stinging rebuke. See God's warning in Exodus 34:12-17, which comes to pass in Hosea's day.

Making "love for hire" on the threshing floor, the work of a prostitute, is a description of the pagan crop blessings in which they participated and confided, as well as trusting in the harvest rather than in the Lord of the Harvest. See Judges 8:33-34.

9:2 – The very staples necessary for life, grain and wine, will be taken from them. See the blessing in Genesis 27:28-29. This is all reversed in Hosea because of Israel's apostasy. This is the chastisement due them for trusting in the harvest as a sign of God's favor, or as a sign of the favor of the gods. What would a modern equivalent of this be?

9:3 – More specifically, the Promised Land shall be taken from them. The land which God gave them was some of the most fertile on earth. They enjoyed the land, but forgot God. So God will remove them from the land. America is not the Promised Land, but how is our country in peril of this today?

Note the poetic construction here – Egypt = Assyria, "returning" = eating unclean things. See Daniel 1:9-17. The faithful don't eat unclean things. See Ezekiel 4:13

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

for God's warning (Ezekiel prophesied over a hundred years after Hosea, just before and following the fall of the Southern Kingdom).

9:4 – The prescribed sacrifices will be impossible, since they will have no wine nor sacrifices to bring. See Hosea 2:8-11. What they do bring, brought in unbelief, will not be pleasing to God. See Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4; Matthew 5:23-24. Keil-Delitzsch translates "...like bread of mourning they are to Him; all who eat it become unclean: for their bread is for themselves, it does not come into the house of Jehova." This translation provides a different referent from the Hebrew, but allows agreement between the first and last sections of verse 4. The bread eaten at funeral meals was considered unclean, because the corpse defiled the house and all those who came in contact with it, for seven days. Thus their bread, and the Israelites, will not be acceptable as a sacrifice to the One True God because it/they come from that which is unclean.

9:5 – In light of a proper rendering of verse 4, the unclean would not be allowed to participate in the festivals and feasts required by the Law, thus they could not keep the Law. Moreover, the connecting of verses 4 and 5 with 6 refer to the inability of the Israelites to enter the Temple or make the appointed sacrifices. Because of their idolatry, their captivity will prevent them from participating in the great Pilgrim Feasts. The heart and center of the Israelite cultus would be plucked out.

9:6 – Again here a more careful rendering of the Hebrew is helpful – "For behold they have gone away because of the desolation: Egypt will gather them together..." (Keil-Delitzsch). Compare the NIV and ESV to the KJV here. Separated from God by their transgressions, unable to make the offerings required, unable to worship in the Temple or keep the feasts, they shall find their graves in captivity. Memphis was the ancient capital of Lower Egypt, found today on the western bank of the Nile south of Old Cairo. It was famous for its tombs.

Exiled, the Promised Land would be overcome by wilderness. The things of beauty they treasured would be overcome by nettles, their habitations by thorns. What was the Land of Promise would be a wasteland.

9:7 – Again here we see the poetic structure of Hosea – the last half of this verse gives definition to the first half. The promised punishment for their apostasy and unfaithfulness has come upon them, and they know it well by the signs: the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is a madman. See Ezekiel 13:7-14. The reason for this sorry state, this separation from God, is stated: because of the greatness of their iniquity and their great enmity.

9:8 – The words of the true Prophets speak against the Israelites, and the words of the false prophets, the fools and madmen, lead them away into danger – caught like a helpless bird in the trap created by those who are supposed to be their watchmen.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

9:8, cont. – God placed the Prophets in Israel as watchmen, to preach His Law and comfort with His Promises. But Israel is a dangerous place for the Prophets:

Matthew 23:29-39. Note here Hosea's use of the personal possessive form – אֱלֹהֵי (My God). This is a stinging condemnation of the Israelites, for He is no longer their god. They have chosen others. See Exodus 6:7-8; Leviticus 26:9-13. Note here the strong identification of the One True God as the God of deliverance from Egypt, the land of captivity. This is a major theme in the O.T., and also in Hosea. In Hosea Israel has run to Egypt for help and protection rather than running to the God that delivered them from Egypt. See 1:9; 7:11; 8:13; 9:3, 6; 12:13-14, but finally in 13:4 there is hope.

In opposition to “my God”, verse 8 ends with “his God”, a reference to the God of the true Prophets, rejected by Israel.

9:9 – The enmity of verse 8 is in the “corruption” שחַת of Israel. See the same word in Exodus 32:7-8, and note the context there in light of Hosea 8:5-6. Gibeah (גִּבְעָה) is the Hebrew word for “hill.” Several Biblical cities have this name. The first is in the hills of Judah (Joshua 15:57). The second is in Ephraim, where Eleazar son of Aaron was buried (Joshua 24:33), which in some translations is rendered “a hill”. The third is a truncated name of another city (Gibeath-Kiriath or LXX Gibeath-Jearim) in Benjamin (Joshua 18:28). For the context of the Gibeah corruptions reference, see Judges 19:15, 20-29. This account gives us another glimpse into the godlessness of Israel in the time of Hosea. Can you imagine a time when men are so corrupt that the distinction is lost between male and female?

The sentence for their corruption is that God will remember their iniquity, and punish their sins. See Psalm 25:7; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 14:10; Hosea 8:13; But see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:12-17.

Read Hosea 9:10-17

9:10 – God here lovingly remembers the Patriarchs and their faithfulness. Like juicy grapes in an arid desert, like the first and sweetest fruit from the tree, God delighted in them. See Exodus 3:4-6; Matthew 22:31-32. But see Luke 13:28, clearly the condition of Israel in Hosea's time.

Baal-Peor – See Numbers 25:1-5; Deuteronomy 4:3; Psalm 106:28-31 (a reference to Numbers 25). The Israelites knew of this event, and yet knowingly repeated the offense in Hosea's time. Note that Hosea says “they became an abomination like the thing they loved”, a reference to the false god they worshipped.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

In Hosea 9:11-17, the major theme is Israel's barrenness. This is a scandal and a curse. God's promise in Hosea 1:10-11 (See Genesis 15:5-6, 22:17-18; Psalm 127:3-5; 1 Chronicles 4:27) is that Israel be fruitful. But going in the way idolatry Israel will be barren, and those children she does have will be slain (see Romans 9:22-29, noting who Paul cites. Who is the Remnant? Who is the true Israel? See Romans 9:6-8, noting again the strong relationship between Hosea 9 and Romans 9. See Galatians 4:27-28.).

9:11 – Prostitution is not for child-bearing. They consummate the relationship, but are barren, which is a curse. The second half of the verse explains the curse. See Exodus 20:3-6. How is Israel in Hosea's time a fulfillment of this? How is the godlessness, idolatry and abortion epidemic in our country a fulfillment of this?

9:12 – Even if Israel manages to have children, they will die. See Deuteronomy 32:21-25. The cause of the disaster is given in the last clause – because of their idolatry, God turns away from them. See Ezekiel 24:21. Here instead of “when I depart” Keil-Delitzsch prefers “Woe to them if I depart from them”, “them” being the children.

9:13 – Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, was “planted in a pleasant place”, the Promised Land which God gave them. She was in that respect like Tyre. Tyre was a bountiful, beautiful Island city on the coast of northern Israel. The city included the island, and the old city was the port to its east. It was the capital of Phoenicia. See Ezekiel 27:1-7. King David had a treaty and alliance with Tyre in the 10th century B.C. The wealth and beauty of Tyre caught the eye of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, who attacked the city and laid siege against her for 13 years, around the same time that Jerusalem fell to Babylon, 586 B.C. Now see the prophesy in Ezekiel 27:26-36.

Even though Ephraim was “planted” in a beautiful and bountiful place, she will not be protected. He will “bring out his children to the murder.” This is generally understood as a prophesy of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom, which occurred in Hosea's time. Hosea can be dated accurately from 750-715 B.C., Israel fell in 722 B.C. This section seems to indicate that Hosea is writing shortly before the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Seven centuries later, Tyre and Sidon were the northern boundaries of Jesus' travels. See Matthew 15:21. St. Paul and St. Luke also traveled there, see Acts 21:3, 7. Ptolemais was in what is now the northern coast Libya by Egypt, not far from Benghazi.

9:14 – The Prophet's prayer is an interjection – it would be better for Israel to be cursed with barrenness and unable to nurse children than for those children to be brought out to the murder.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

9:15 – Now the Prophet returns to the evils of Israel. Gilgal was the first city established when the tribes crossed the Jordan entering the Promised Land, see Joshua 4:19-20. It soon became the location of an idolatrous worship site. See Hosea 4:15; Amos 4:1-5. Amos prophesied just before Hosea.

It is in Gilgal that God begins to hate Israel, now He vows to love them no more. They are Lo Ruhamah, they are Lo Ami. See Hosea 1:6, 9. Notice how strongly this theme binds the book or Hosea into one.

Ultimately Israel will be driven out of God's "house", from the Promised Land (722 B.C. at the hand of the Assyrians), and from the Temple (586 B.C. at the hand of the Babylonians)

9:16 – This verse provides a summary of the horrible prophesy Hosea has just given – Israel will be barren (see verses 11-12), their children will be killed (verse 13).

9:17 – The Prophet now speaks in the first person. As the result of Israel's idolatry, they will be rejected by God. While His Word was clear, they would not listen, so they shall be "wanderers" among the nations, a reference to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. But note that today most Jews live outside of Palestine, and for centuries (some say two millennia) there was no Jewish state. What we know now as Israel was established in 1948.

The Israelites will be "wanderers." In Hebrew the verse reads:

יִמְאַסֶּם אֱלֹהֵי כִּי לֹא שָׁמְעוּ לוֹ וַיְהִי נֹדְדִים בְּגוֹיִם: ס

"He shall reject them, my God, because not they heard to Him, they shall be *Noddim* in *Goyim*." That they did not "hear" Him is strong condemnation in the Hebrew – see Deuteronomy 6:4-12. Deuteronomy 6:4 is the "Great *Shema*":

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֶחָד: וְאֵהְבֶתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-
לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

Pastor will translate. The "Great *Shema*" was chanted as the centerpiece of the Jewish prayer life, see Deuteronomy 6:7, and was recited by the Jews before death. Israel is commanded to "hear", but "they did not hear Him."

The *Goyim* are the gentiles. The word translated "wanderers" is derived from the same root as the place of Cain after his expulsion – see Genesis 4:6 - the Land of Nod, which means the Land of Wandering. So shall Israel be. See Deuteronomy 28:62-66 for the Prophecy of Moses concerning Israel, a Prophecy given in 1446 B.C., seven centuries before Hosea.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A. ✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Read Hosea 10:1-6

The section of the “trial” that focuses on Israel’s condemnation (8:1-10:15, see outline by Judisch, III. [The Covenant Lawsuit] b. [The Specific Charges] ii. [The Rejection of Devotion] 2. [The Divine Condemnation]) continues here. Hosea returns to the thought of 9:10 as “the guilt and punishment of Israel *is* still more fully described”. This will occur in two parts, 10:1-8 and 10:9-15 , although note that in 11:1 the Divine Pardon will follow.

10:1 – Read 9:10, and compare to 10:1. As in 9:10, the Prophet speaks God’s Word to Israel, recalling their bounty and luxury and fruitfulness. But as they grew more fruitful, so too did they build more altars to false gods. As prosperity increased, so did the marks of idolatry. The metaphor of the vine/vineyard is found throughout Scripture, see Psalm 80:8-13; Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 21:33-41; John 15:5-6.

But as Israel prospered in Hosea’s time, her idolatry increased. Is this true in our country? In our homes and families?

10:2 – See Amos 3:13-14. In Hosea, the altars they have built to false gods will be destroyed. In Amos, also the Temple altar will also be taken away on account of Israel’s unfaithfulness. What are the implications of this? What is the contemporary equivalent of this in the visible Christian Church?

10:3 – God did not want Israel to have kings, it was to have been a theocracy. See 1 Samuel 8:8-20. Israel desired to be like all the other nations, but God wanted her to be set apart. That was in the 11th century B.C. Now, 400 years later, as their king is taken away and they are led into captivity in Assyria, they now confess what God always knew.

10:4 – What God foretold about the secular kings through Samuel has come to pass.

10:5 – Remember that Beth-El means “House of God”, but Hosea has referred to it as Beth-Aven, “house of wickedness”. Recall the account of 1 Kings 12:28-33. But now, the altars broken down, the people do not worship there, they mourn over it.

10:6 – Israel wanted idols. That was their “counsel” (Hebrew: **עֲצָה** , which means “advice, counsel”). God gave them what they wanted - a pagan king, slavery, and pagan worship, as they became Assyrian slaves. What is it that our country wants? Once the point of pride, now they are ashamed of their idols. Note that the ESV and NIV translate here “...Israel shall be ashamed of his idol” and “...Israel will be ashamed of its wooden idols.”

Read Hosea 10:7-10

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

10:7 – Keil-Delitzsch translates “Destroyed is Samaria; her king like a splinter on the surface of the water.”

10:7 continued - This chapter began with a description of a fruitful, spreading vine. Now the Northern Kingdom will be like a small dead twig broken off – a metaphor related to the wooden idols they worshipped. They will not be “attached” any longer, they will drift helplessly. See also John 15:6.

10:8 – What Israel considered their pride is shown to be their sin. Rather than the lush description of the Promised Land provided in Scripture, a land flowing with milk and honey (see Exodus 3:8), now the curse of Eden (Genesis 3:17-19) is brought to bear on Israel. The words bring to mind the severity of their sin. But see the Promise in Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35-36.

They shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!" Just as the delivery from Egypt was a type of our salvation in Christ, so here the Assyrian conquest and captivity is seen as a type of the final judgment. See Luke 23:28-31; Revelation 6:12-17.

10:9 – Here again we meet Gibeah, see our notes on 9:9. Israel has remained in Gibeah, which is to say it has remained in the sin of Gibeah. The ESV renders the war mentioned in 10:9 as being in the future, a reference to the fall of Israel. The NIV and NKJ render the battle in the past. Some commentators say that this is a reference to the early attacks of foreign armies against the north. Keil-Delitzsch says that after the abomination in Gibeah (Judges 19:15ff) those sinners perished by war (Judges 20:10ff), so too war is the just punishment for Israel, who remains in the sin of Gibeah. Keil-Delitzsch’s treatment honors the Hebrew and rightly treats Israel’s history. In the context of the verse that follows, their treatment of the text makes the most sense.

10:10 – The men of Gibeah perished by war (see Judges 20:19-21, 33-35). So too the Israelites. But as it was against Gibeah, that war will be the veiled hand of God. Military defeat and bondage are Israel’s just plight.

Read Hosea 10:11-15

10:11 – The slavery of the Northern Kingdom is described poetically as the yoking of a heifer. The Hebrew word here for “heifer” or “calf” is עֵגְלָה, the same word used in 10:5 – can you find it there? What does this mean for Israel? The commentators say that the young calf was allowed to eat while the grain was threshed, but the older calves were yoked and forced to work, and not allowed to eat. See Deuteronomy 25:4, where the Hebrew word is שׁוֹר, a bull or ox. Now see Deuteronomy 32:14-16, and compare to Hosea 10:11. These connections were natural for Israel.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

10:11 continued – So while Israel enjoyed profitable work in the past, now the hardship comes – they will be yoked, a sign of slavery, and they will perform hard labor. Note here that the hard servitude of the Northern Kingdom is also prophesied here for the Southern Kingdom. These all come to pass in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

10:12 – Verses 12 & 13 stand in apposition to one another (further define one another), and in poetic form are one cogent thought. What is described in verse 12 is the works of repentance, the works Israel ought to do. What is described in verse 13 is the sinful work that Israel has done. Ephraim has been well warned. Now he is exhorted to work new works, different works, to prepare new ground for planting (verse 12), to live differently than he has up to this point.

Pastor will explain the importance of the words in the first clauses

זָרְעוּ לָכֶם לְצִדְקָה קַצְרוּ לְפִי־חֶסֶד

“sow unto yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of mercy” The word for “sow” is of the semantic domain of the word for “seed” in Genesis 3:15. The word for “righteousness” is the righteousness of Genesis 15:6, and commonly used in the O.T. The word translated “reap” also means to shorten or to cut short, which makes a lot of sense if you think about it. The word translated “mercy”, חֶסֶד, we have already seen (see Psalm 136:1-2). It is an important O.T. word that implies merciful, loving faithfulness. It can be translated “steadfast love”, although neither word occurs in the Hebrew. See Hosea 2:19 for the same words (mercy, righteousness) used in one sentence.

Fallow ground is untilled, purposely left untreated. The repentance of Israel is to be shown as the next clause demands: “it is time to seek the Lord.” Still, the Lord comes when and where He pleases (see the 3rd Article of the Creed and its explanation). Note here Article V of the *Augustana*: “That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, to them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake.” *Augustana V, Triglotta*.

Ultimately righteousness does not come from man, from his sowing or his reaping, but from the Lord. It comes as rain comes, out of man’s control, solely of God. See Hoseah 6:3, and Joel 2:23, where harvest language is used to describe the early rains that start the crop, and the later rains which bring it to maturity. See Isaiah 45:8. Where is this Isaiah text used in the Church Year? It is the Introit for *Rorate Coeli*,

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

the Fourth Sunday of Advent. What does this mean? The Righteousness that rains down upon us is ultimately Christ.

10:13 – Rather than the fruits of righteousness, Israel has plowed in wickedness and reaped iniquity. See Job 4:8; Galatians 6:7-9. Therefore the “fruit” they have eaten, the result of their apostasy, has not been truth, but rather lies. It is not lost on the Hebrew reader that the lexical root of “Ephraim” is the Hebrew word for “fruit”. Can you see the word פֶּרִי in the word אֶפְרַיִם ?

The second part of verse 13 is wedded to what precedes and what follows. Israel’s sin is seen in their trusting in themselves, in their own strength (hence the moniker Ephraim, the strongest of the Northern tribes, the Yale Anchor dictionary says Ephraim was the “heartland” of Israel) rather than in God. This results in what follows in verse 14.

10:14 – The very thing in which Ephraim trusted, his mighty men, his warriors, will be taken away, destroyed. More than simply destroyed, an historic, tragic event is paralleled to the destruction of Israel – that of Beth Arbel. The name Shalman, and the city Beth Arbel, occur only here in the O.T. – both words are a *hapax legomenon*. The Concordia NIV study Bible says that the name of the king and the military event are unknown, although the margin note cites 2 Kings 17:3. The Concordia ESV study Bible suggests that Shalman is a contracted form of Shalmaneser, an Assyrian king, and that Beth Arbel may be a nickname for a location in Gilead.

Keil-Delitzsch affirms that Shalman is Shalmaneser, who in 2 Kings 17:1-6 destroys the kingdom of the 10 tribes, the Northern Kingdom. This understanding of Shalman would necessitate the Prophet writing *after* 722 B.C., since what is described in 2 Kings 17 is the destruction Hosea prophesies, and here he refers to it in the past tense, as in the description of the horrible deaths of the mothers and children. Verse 15 moves this back into the present tense. Ahaz ruled from 735-715 B.C., Hoshea, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, ruled from 732-722, when the Kingdom was lost to Assyria.

Keil-Delitzsch finds Beth-Arbel to be *Arbela in Galilæa Superior* a city in Palestine, cited in both Josephus and in 1 Maccabees 9.2 (*When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah a second time, and with them the right wing of the army. They went by the road which leads to Gilgal and encamped against Mesaloth in Arbela, and they took it and killed many people.*) Gilgal was located just north of the Dead Sea, east of Jerusalem, east of Ephraim, in southern Manasseh, one of the ten northern tribes (although Keil-Delitzsch places Beth Arbel in Naphtali, the northernmost tribe of the ten, but is not inconsistent with the Maccabees reading). Maccabees is, of course, much later, but the city name could have been well established by the time of its writing.

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Trinitytide, 2014 A. ✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

So the Prophet declares “tumult will arise among your people”, in the future tense, “as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel”, in the past tense. Keil-Delitzsch offers “Nothing is known concerning the devastation of Beth-Arbeel by Shalman; and hence there has always been a great uncertainty as to the meaning of the words.”

The best way to reconcile the clear reading of the text, and the future and past tenses, would be to understand that the fall of Beth Arbel had already occurred at the time of the writing of Hosea, and that during the fall of that city the named atrocity occurred. The fall of the entire Northern Kingdom was to follow, and so was in the future tense.

If Assyria attacked from the north first, as is historically accurate, then the clear reading of the text and the known history would be in agreement. See 2 Kings 15:27-29, which occurred in the reign of Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria. Note that here Gilead and Naphtali are named. Azariah, also called Uzziah (see Isaiah 6), began his reign in 792 B.C.

The 52nd year of his reign (and also the last year) would have been approximately 740 B.C., so according to 2 Kings 15:27 Pekah would have reigned from 740-720 B.C., squarely inside of Hosea’s time, and appropriate to the dating of the northern Israel campaign of Tiglath-Pileser, which is usually placed in 734-733 B.C. This understanding allows the Beth Arbel event, although not mentioned in Scripture, to be in the past tense, while the fall of the Northern Kingdom was yet to come (722 B.C.), which fits well into our dating of Hosea.

The deficiency in this approach, and that not a small one, is that it is Tiglath-Pileser, not Shalmanezar, named in 2 Kings 15. Tiglath-Pileser is actually more a title than a name, three Assyrian kings used that name, which means “My trust is in the firstborn of the shrine Esarra”, which refers to the god Ninurta, son of the god Ashur. As seen above in 10:5, where Bethel is called by God Beth Aven, city names are subject to change in Hosea.

10:15 – Again here, as in 10:5, Bethel is referred to (see 1 Kings 12:28-33; 2 Kings 10:29 – Bethel was located in Benjamin, just south of the Northern Kingdom. It was important in Israel’s history because there Abram rested between Bethel and Ai, and there, after God made the Promise of giving Palestine to Abram, and there he “called on the Name of the Lord”, see Genesis 12:7-8). Now the land promised to faithful Abram would be taken away from his unfaithful descendants, and the ruler deposed.

Whether “at dawn” is to be understood literally, as in the very next day, or figuratively, as in “soon” or “when the light comes”, the fall of Israel is nigh.

Read Hosea 11:1-4

11:1 – Again here, as in 9:10 and 10:1, the great love of God for His chosen people is recalled. Here the historic referent is Israel’s deliverance by God from Egyptian slavery, the greatest salvific act of the O.T., but see Matthew 2:15. Jesus Christ is the True Israel, who also would be delivered from Egypt, overcome by force, captured, tortured, and put to death.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

11:1-11 – This section, after two chapters of Divine Condemnation for the absence of devotion in Israel, brings the Good News of the Divine Pardon. Note the outline of these sections as found in the Judisch Hosea outline we studied as we began our class:

- The divine condemnation (8:1-10:15)
1. The divine pardon (11:1-11)
 - a. Its certainty (11:1)
 - b. Its monergism (11:2-7)
 - i. Stated negatively (11:2)
 - ii. Stated positively (11:3-4)
 - iii. Stated negatively (11:5-7)
 - c. Its certainty (11:8-11)

In 11:1 we have the Prophecy “out of Egypt I called my Son”. This is evidence of God’s deliverance of His people. As He delivered them from Egypt, so will He ultimately deliver them from the bonds of slavery to sin and death by the One who fulfills the Prophecy in 11:1, the Christ Child. See Exodus 4:22-23.

2 – Now for the third time (Keil-Delitzsch) God returns to the history of Israel, and His great salvific acts, which were met with back-sliding by Israel. See Hosea 10:1, 9:10.

11:2 reads in the Hebrew: **קָרְאוּ לָהֶם בֶּן הָלֶכְוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם לְבַעַלִּים יִזְבְּחוּ וְלִפְסֵלִים יִקְטְרוּן**
Woodenly: “They called unto them, thus they walked from their faces, unto Baals they slaughtered for sacrifice, and unto the idols they made sacrifice.”

(Hebrew note – the extra nun on the last word of the sentence is called a paragodic nun. “Paragodic” deals with the end of something. The nun is frequently added in Hebrew prose when the last syllable of the last word in the sentence contains a long vowel. Notice that the Soph Pasuq [end of verse] or Silluq follows. The final two verb forms are piel imperfect forms, the “intensive active”)

Here the ESV translates “The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.”

The NIV translates “But the more *I* called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.”

The NKJ translates “As they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images.”

Keil-Delitzsch solves the problem by explaining “...they, the Prophets, called to them.” See 2 Kings 17:13-16; Jeremiah 7:25-27 and 25:4-7; and Zechariah 1:4-7.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

11:3 – As they “walked away” from God to serve and worship idols, Israel forgot that it was God who “taught them to walk.” He is their Creator. And He is the God that walked among them in the garden, and would walk among them when He took on Flesh. Here again, as in 11:1, God appeals to Israel’s history. He taught them to walk in His Ways – see Deuteronomy 5:31-33; Joshua 22:5; Judges 2:20-22; 1 Kings 2:1-4; Psalm 81:8-14; Isaiah 2:1-3. The word for “walk” in Hebrew, **הלך** is an important word. Jewish exegesis divided Scripture into two parts – Halakah and Haggadah – instructions on living according to God’s Law (walking), and comfort and encouragement. In this context see John 14:6, a proclamation of Christ’s Divinity that the Jews would have well understood. To walk in God’s Way is to believe in Jesus Christ.

God taught Israel to walk, to follow His Commands. He took them by their arms, as one would lead a child. See Hebrews 8:8-9 for the same imagery.

“They did not know that I healed them...” See Exodus 15:26, where God gives one of His Names – **יהוה רפואה** or YHWH Ropheak, derived from YHWH Raphah, “The LORD who heals.” Here in Exodus this is in the context of the bitter waters of Marah. Note the strong connection between the “teaching to walk” language, the Exodus, and God’s delivery of Israel in the desert.

11:4 – Here again God invokes the Exodus of Israel’s history. “I drew them with **בַּחֲבִלֵי אָדָם** bands of a man, with cords of love” is a better translation here. God does not bind Israel with rope as a slave, but rather gently leads them out of Egypt, using Promise rather than a whip. God’s great love is shown in His gift of the Promised Land to Israel, which always pointed to Christ and through Him eternity with God in the true Promised Land, heaven. Taking the yoke from their neck is a reference to freeing Israel from slavery. See Jeremiah 30:8-9, written many years after the death of David. God, in His mercy frees you from your slavery to sin and death by the One who is the new and better David, the true Shepherd King of Israel, David’s Son yet David’s Lord.

God fed them Manna in the wilderness. They ate heavenly bread. But see Exodus 16:3-4 (note the connection between “walking” and salvation), and John 6:31-36. Notice the posture of God as He feeds His chosen people – He stoops, bends down. He makes Himself low for you. He humbles Himself, stooping to take on Flesh, coming down from heaven and being made Man.

11:5 – God delivered them from Egypt. He removed the yoke of slavery. But because of Israel’s refusal to walk in His ways, their apostasy, they will know slavery again. In 722 B.C. Assyria would take the 10 northern tribes into captivity.

11:6 – A clear prophecy of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom. Note that the Prophet speaks here in the future tense, the fall of Israel has not yet occurred, supporting our dating of the Book of Hosea to a time just before 722 B.C. Read 2 Kings 17:7-18 carefully, compare this account to the Prophecy of Hosea, which is given before the fall of the North.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

11:7 – The people have turned their hearts from God, they are determined in their apostasy. The second half of the verse the NKJ translates “Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him.” The Hebrew doesn’t support “the Most High”, rather “and if they call it upwards” (Keil-Delitzsch, “they” is understood to refer to the prophets, see verse 2). This is a clear reference to calling on God, but a more literal translation would be “into above they call it/him” (וְאֶל-עֵלָּי (יְקַרְאֵהוּ)). The NKJV “none at all exalt Him” is better rendered “it does not raise itself at all”, the call does not reach God.

11:8 – God chose Israel. They chose other gods. Still, using anthropomorphism, God equates Himself to what a man would experience so that Israel knows that Law is His alien work. Notice the poetic construction Ephraim/Israel, and then Admah/Zebolim. These cities were located in the flat land near Sodom, and were destroyed. See Deuteronomy 29:23; Genesis 19:24-25; Jeremiah 49:18. What comparison is God making in condemnation of Israel by using these cities?

The NKJV rendering “My heart churns within me” is superior to the NIV “My heart is changed within me” and to the ESV “My heart recoils within me”. This concept, derived from the Hebrew verb הִפְּתִי (here in the Niphal – “to turn one’s self”), is clearly seen also in the New Testament with the Greek verb Σπλαγγνίζομαι, see Matthew 15:32; Matthew 18:27; Matthew 20:34. This verb literally means that one’s bowels react in sympathy to the sufferings of another, a “visceral reaction”. God is a God of compassion. The work natural to His nature is to bless, to save, to give life. But He is also holy and just, and must act accordingly. See Matthew 23:37-38.

11:9 – God is longsuffering. He is a God of grace, a God of mercy. What Israel deserves is clear. And yet He will save them. The Christology of “the Holy One in your midst” who comes in the future is not lost on the reader. He is Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), He is Jesus (Matthew 1:21-23). The deliverance of the true Israel will not be by military force or from physical captivity, but the Savior promised of Old, who is not only Man, but also God, will save them. He will not come in wrath, but in humility, and meekness, in grace. He will come to save. But those who will not believe in Him will know His day of wrath as this creation is destroyed.

11:10 – Again here we have a picture of that time when Israel and all men will be gathered and bow, all men will kneel (see Philippians 2:9-11). Christ is the Lion of Judah (see Genesis 49:8-11). These words also echo the deliverance of Israel as prophesied by Balaam, see Numbers 23:23-24, 24:8-9.

11:11 - Like the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, so will God deliver His people from the Assyrian captivity (see verse 5). Not by their own might, for He is like a lion, and they are as trembling birds. He will call them again out of captivity, and they shall dwell again in their houses in the Promised Land.

11:12 – Topically this verse fits better with what follows, as an introduction to the next section.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Read Hosea 11:12 – 12:6

Note: The verse numbered 11:12 in your Bible is verse 12:1 in the Hebrew.

11:12 – Having prophesied the return from captivity, now both Israel and Judah are mentioned. Notice the parallelism that defines Ephraim as Israel – this is a poetic device.

Note the difference in the translations here:

(NIV) “And Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One.”

(ESV) “but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.”

(NKJ) “but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One *who is* faithful.”

It is not unusual that the versions render a verse differently. It is very unusual that the versions render a verse to mean the opposite of what other versions translate. Here Keil-Delitzsch translates “and Judah is moreover unbridled against God, and against the faithful Holy One.” Luther translated “but Judah still holds fast to its God...” based on the 16th century Rabbinical understanding of the verb in question, $\tau\eta$ which reliable lexicons label “uncertain” in meaning in Hosea 12 (Hebrew enumeration). Basing the meaning on its Arabic cognate, which Keil-Delitzsch reports is used of cattle that have broken loose, they render the meaning “to cause to ramble about, to ramble in relation to God”, and so “unbridled”.

The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament tradition, translates ἐκύκλωσέν με ἐν ψεύδει Εφραιμ καὶ ἐν ἀσεβείαις οἶκος Ἰσραηλ καὶ Ἰουδα νῦν ἔγνω αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς καὶ λαὸς ἅγιος κεκλήσεται θεοῦ - “Ephraim has encircled me with lies and in unrighteousness *the* house of Israel, but Judah now knew God and *a* holy people *it* will be called by God.”

Overagainst the NKJ, ESV, Luther, and the LXX rendering, it is much easier to translate with the NIV, and Keil-Delitzsch that Judah is unruly, especially in light of the history of Judah and the pending exile of the Southern Kingdom too. For the context that compels this rendering, see especially 12:2 to this point, which is a continuation of the thought of 11:12.

12:1 - To feed on the wind is to eat nothing. The east wind points towards Assyria, but see also 13:15. Rather than trusting in God, Israel turns to the military might of Assyria and Egypt. But neither pagan nation will preserve Israel, it will be plundered, and returned again to captivity. Study Bibles include a note here that Egypt imported olive oil because olives weren't grown there.

12:2-13:2 – This verse begins a major section of Hosea, in which the “Third Charge” (see Judisch outline) is presented, a charge of the rejection of truth. The Divine Indictment of this charge continues through 13:2, after which follow the Divine Condemnation (13:3-13) and the Divine Pardon (13:14-14:8). The Book of Hosea, closing with a Word of Grace, ends one verse later.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

12:2 – Continuing on the theme of our rendering of Hebrew 12:1 (English 11:12), the Prophet speaks now against the Southern Kingdom. Judah is the chief tribe of the Southern Kingdom. Judah was the fourth-born son of Jacob (Israel). See Genesis 32:24-29, 29:32-35, יהודה is roughly translated “praised”. Now see Genesis 49:8-12. By Jacob’s blessing, the Messiah is here promised through Judah’s progeny.

The Southern Kingdom too would be punished by God for their ways. This would happen finally in 586 B.C., with the fall of Jerusalem.

12:3 – “...took his brother by the heel...” See Genesis 25:21-26. “...struggled with God...” see Genesis 32:24-29, just read.

12:4 – Note the poetic device that equates “he struggled with God” (verse 3) and “he struggled with the Angel” (verse 4). This is Hebrew’s way of making the reader understand that “the Angel” is God. “The Angel”, “The Angel of the Lord”, a theophany of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. See Genesis 16:6-15, 22:9-18; Exodus 3:1-6; Judges 2:1-4, and many more.

“he wept... sought favor... blessed him...” See Genesis 32:29-30

“Bethel” - See Genesis 28:12-22, 35:9-15.

12:5 – “That is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD is His memorable name. “ Let there be no doubt as to who the Lord is. See Psalm 24:10, 46:7-11; 1 Samuel 1:3, 4:4-8. The title “The Lord of Hosts” יהוה צבאות is used more in Isaiah than in any other Book, although it is used heavily in Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets.

“His memorable Name” - See Exodus 15:1-3. Remembering in the Hebrew mind is not simply a mental act, but is accompanied by action. See Jonah 2:7; Psalm 20:7, 119:55.

12:6 - In each of the Genesis accounts cited in this chapter, God calls to Israel’s remembrance that God is gracious, and He blesses Jacob. Israel, named after the Patriarch, was to follow their father Jacob/Israel in his faithfulness. This they cannot do by themselves, but only with the help of God.

The imperative here is שׁוּבוּ , “turn, return”. This is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament command “Repent!”

Israel is to “hold fast” (ESV), “maintain” (NIV), “observe” (NKJ) mercy and justice. These are attributes of God, attributes imputed to men by faith. God is merciful, remember our study of this word - דָּקָה ? See Hosea 2:19 (note the context there in relation to the verse at hand), Psalm 89:14, 101:1. He alone is Just, see Deuteronomy 32:3-4 (note the relationship there between God’s Name and His Justice), Psalm 119:149.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
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Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

Read Hosea 12:7 – 14

12:7 – The thoughts of 12:6 and 12:7-8 are not fragmented, but are meant to be read together. Israel should be Jacob – who wrestled with God and was blessed, who struggled against God but whom God, in loving-kindness, allowed to prevail. But Israel is not like that. Israel has become not Jacob, but Canaan, which name is taken from the vocabulary of merchants and means “trader”. Israel endeavored to become rich by means other than the True God, through oppression, which is fraud. Understood properly, verse 7 provides a smooth connection to verse 8.

12:8 – Here Ephraim boasts of the ill-gotten wealth described in verse 7. Ephraim “boasts” that his gain is by his own striving, no credit is given to the God Who Provides. See Genesis 22:14; Psalm 86:15-17; Psalm 145:10-16; 2 Chronicles 30:9; Joel 2:13; James 4:16; Galatians 6:14.

Ephraim trusts in his wealth, not in the One True God who provided it. See 1 Kings 3:9-14; Matthew 6:24.

Ephraim came to believe that riches would cover his sins. See Matthew 6:19-21.

12:9 – When Israel was in Egypt, they were slaves without possessions. God, in His mercy, plundered Egypt, and gave the wealth to Israel. See Exodus 12:35-36. This was a sign of God’s grace, His bountiful goodness. But now, because of their apostasy, Israel will again dwell in tents – a sign of wandering, of expulsion, of poverty. “I AM the Lord your God” – God reminds Israel who He is. Their actions betray the truth that they have forgotten Him.

See Leviticus 23:41-44. The “appointed feast” is the Feast of Tabernacles, in which Israel dwelt in tents to recall their pilgrimage and captivity, and God’s delivery of them from slavery. In the ultimate act of deliverance, God would dwell in a skin tent to deliver man, the Incarnate God to whom Moses, all the sacrifices and feasts, and all the Prophets pointed (see John 1:1-4, 14).

12:10 – It is not that God failed to warn Israel. Even the Prophet Hosea brought the message that Israel must repent and turn back to God. The call to repentance was an act of grace. God tried to save them. But they would not. See Matthew 23:37-38.

This is more than a history lesson. In this we see clearly how God works. How has God warned you against sinful behavior? How have you responded? Like Israel? What is it that God desires to give? He desires that you be His beloved, His people, a harvest of righteousness from the seed He has sown. See Luke 8:11-15.

12:11 – The two cities Gilead and Gilgal represent the whole of Israel. Gilead is in the east, Gilgal in the west. On Gilead, see Hosea 6:8. Gilgal was the first city established when the tribes crossed the Jordan entering the Promised Land, see Joshua 4:19-20. On Gilgal, see Hosea 4:15 and 9:15. Gilgal is where Saul was crowned king of Israel, see 1 Samuel 11:15. Saul backslid into apostasy, see 1 Samuel 15:22-26. It was at Bethlehem that the shepherd king of Israel was anointed, see 1 Samuel 16:13.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

12:12 – Again here God appeals to the history of His blessing of His chosen people. In comparison to the sinful actions of Gilead and Gilgal in the previous verse, the pious actions of Jacob, the father of the tribes, are cited (remember how this chapter began, verses 2-6). The account of Jacob’s indentured servitude to Laban, the earning of the two brides, and his tending of the flocks and the payment out of them is recorded in Genesis 28 and 29. See Genesis 28:2-5 and Genesis 29:20-28.

The birthright that Jacob so prized (Genesis 25:31-34) is rejected by Israel, his namesake, by their unfaithfulness. They have squandered their inheritance. See Luke 15:11-14.

12:13 – Having proved His faithfulness to Jacob, father of the tribes, now God reminds Israel of His faithfulness to them in the Exodus, the greatest act of deliverance in the Old Testament. The Prophet by which He cared for them was Moses. Now Israel refuses to hear God’s Prophets, as Hosea himself, sent by God, preaches to deaf ears.

12:14 – Having presented His faithfulness in the great “trial”, now God shows Israel’s unfaithfulness, and the due penalty for it. Regardless of their unfaithfulness, note that in this verse God asserts that He is still their Lord. On “the guilt of his bloodshed” see Genesis 4:10; Matthew 27:24-25; Romans 3:25-26; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22, 11:28. It is in the shedding of Christ’s Blood that God delivers us, and in that Blood-bought forgiveness there is hope for us.

Read Hosea 13:1-3

The great trial of the Book of Hosea is drawing to a close. In this chapter God’s wrath is revealed against Israel because of their unfaithfulness. In the final chapter God promises mercy and restoration if Israel repents.

13:1 – Here God reminds Ephraim/Israel of the great heights he had achieved because of God’s blessings. See Genesis 48:10-20 for the promise and prophesy of Ephraim’s strength, and note the usurpation of the birthright, as with Jacob and Esau. So the blessing was realized as “When Ephraim spoke men trembled.” Among the ten tribes of the north, Israel, Ephraim was strongest.

Ephraim’s great strength was turned to “death” in several ways. Ephraim’s violation of the 1st Commandment, his worship of Baals, merited death. See Mark 14:64. All sin merits death. See Romans 5:12. But the fall of the northern kingdom is also a type of death. That the fall hasn’t yet occurred is shown in verse 2.

13:2 – The sin of Ephraim multiplies, even to the extent that “They have made molded images (מִסְכָּה), idols (עֲצָב)... The first Hebrew word comes from the verb “to pour” or “to mold”.

The second Hebrew word we met in our study of the word “idol” at the beginning of our study of Hosea. It means “idol” or “image”. The very talents God has given them for good, they employ for evil. See Exodus 20:3-5, 35:30-35; Deuteronomy 27:15. The reference to the calf remembers not only the sin at the foot of Sinai, but also 1 Kings 12:26-33.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

13:3 – Israel’s strength and might have been legendary. God has protected them from their enemies. They have basked in God’s blessings in the Promised Land. But now they will vanish like the clouds, the dew, the chaff, and the smoke. See Job 13:23-28; Psalm 1:1-6.

Read 13:4-8

13:4 – In some study Bibles there is a note that provides an alternate translation for “ever since the land of Egypt”, that renders the Hebrew “who brought you out of Egypt”. The sense of the Hebrew is “from the land of Egypt hither” (Keil-Delitzsch), which is understood both geographically and temporally. The sense here is that by the Exodus, delivery in the desert, and the giving of the Promised Land God made Israel his people.

Israel is to have no other Gods. See Exodus 20:1-8. This is known as the “First Table”. How has Israel transgressed these Commands? Note verse 2 – how does God identify Himself? See the relationship between the Ten Commandments and Hosea 13:4-6.

13:5 – God appeals to His lovingkindnesses of the past. See Psalm 40:10-11, note how different the Psalmist’s plea is from Israel’s situation. See Psalm 51:1; Psalm 69:13-17. Israel does not heed God’s warning. Judah sees Israel fall, but does not repent. For the ultimate fate of the Southern Kingdom, see Jeremiah 16:3-16.

13:6 – The cycles of Israel’s faithfulness and apostasy in the Old Testament are summed up in this verse. God delivers them, they become comfortable and sin. How is this true in our lives?

The plea of the Psalmist is frequently “Remember!” God remembers. But Israel forgets. See Matthew 6:24-34.

13:7-8 – God has been Israel’s Good Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6, written around 1000 B.C.). He has protected His flock (In the Exodus, in 1446 B.C.). The image of Scripture is of God attacking Israel and tearing them apart. In 4:16 He warns them, here the sentence is pronounced (around 722 B.C.). Here it is not that the flock will be left to wander and be attacked by wild beasts, but rather God Himself will attack them. These are the children upon whom the iniquity of their fathers is visited (Exodus 20:5). Their end will be violent and gory.

Read Hosea 13:9-13

13:9 – Here curse and promise are alternated. The destruction of Israel is so certain and well-deserved that God places it in the present tense – “O Israel, you are destroyed.” And yet the very next thought is “your help is from Me.” Although severely chastened in the Assyrian captivity, God will not forsake His chosen people. See Jeremiah 31:31-32. This was prophesied of old – see Deuteronomy 4:26-31. Although Israel has forgotten (13:6), God remembers.

13:10 – Israel was to have been a theocracy. God gave them Moses (Exodus 3:10), Joshua (Numbers 27:15-20), God gave them judges (Judges 2:11-18), and kings (1 Samuel 8:7-20). Finally David (1 Samuel 16:10-13) and Solomon (1 Kings 1:28-34) were chosen as Israel’s kings. But at Solomon’s death the kingdom was divided, and many of the kings were evil and

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

adulterous (see 2 Kings 10:31-32, 2 Kings 21:19-23, for instance). Now God reminds Israel that they sought protection not from Him, but demanded kings (1 Samuel 8:7-20, just read).

13:11 – Israel desired kings, not God. God gave them kings, who led them astray (as above in 1 Samuel 8:7). Their request for kings was idolatrous, and merited God’s wrath. God “took him away.”

13:12 – God has remembered Ephraim’s sins. See Hosea 8:13 and 9:9. Ephraim’s sins are not loosed, they are bound, not one of them is forgotten, they are “stored up.” See God’s Words to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 14:10-12. But see God’s answer in Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23.

13:13 – God used the image of the attack of wild beasts in verses 7 & 8, here He uses the image of a childbirth gone awry. See Jeremiah 6:24; Micah 4:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 (What is the context here?).

The pains of childbirth yield no fruit – the child dies in the womb. What is the significance of this image in light of Genesis 35:17-19? The favored son’s birth resulted in the death of the mother, now the mother can’t give birth, and the son dies – remember 2 Samuel 12:13-14. All these accounts were well known by Israel.

Read Hosea 13:14-16

13:14 – Though God attacks Israel like a wild beast, though Israel perishes, still God had for His chosen people Words of grace. He will **הִדָּפֵן** (ransom, rescue, redeem) Israel. He will even deliver them from death – compare 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, where this verse is used by the Apostle as a direct reference to the resurrection.

The Hebrew word for “grave” here is **לִיאַוֶּשׁ**. See Job 14:12-15 where the word for “grave” is the same – do you see the resurrection here? What about in Psalm 30:3? Psalm 49:14-15? The word grave does not occur in the New Testament (NKJV), although some translations render the Greek **ᾠδης** as “grave”. The actual Greek word for grave is **τάφος**, see Romans 3:13; Matthew 27:61, a word better translated “tomb”.

The KJV finishes verse 14 with “O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” “Keil-Delitzsch **מַחֲלֵה** prefers instead “Where are thy plagues, O death? Where thy destruction, O hell! Repentance is hidden from my eyes.” The Hebrew word translated “pity” in the NKJV is **מַחֲלֵה** in the Hebrew, “sorrow”, “repentance”, “pity”, “compassion”. It occurs only here in Hosea, but see Joel 2:13 where the word is translated “relents”. In Hosea the sense of the end of this verse is the same as in Psalm 110:4, where the same Hebrew word is translated “relent”, as in Amos 7:3.

13:15 – Ephraim is strong, even thriving. But the “east wind”, Assyria, will come.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

13:15, cont. - Although the NIV assigns the last sentence of verse 14 to the 15th verse, it goes more naturally with verse 14, verse 15 beginning a new thought. The verb translated here “thrives” is a derivative of the same Hebrew word that is translated “fruit”, and also “Ephraim.” The source of the wind is the “wilderness”, the “desert”, the arid land to the east of Palestine. On the other side of the desert is Assyria. That “dryness” will parch the Promised Land by conquering it, and loot the land as it “plunders the treasury of every desirable prize.”

Interestingly, the first occurrence of the word wind in this verse is the Hebrew word for “east wind”, קָדִים. The second occurrence of the word wind, in the following sentence, is the Hebrew word רוּחַ, also the word for spirit, Spirit, and breath. See Genesis 1:2, and 6:17, where רוּחַ is used. In Genesis 2:7 a different word for “breath” is used, נְשָׁמָה. See also Genesis 7:22, in which both Hebrew words are used together.

The Hebrew words underlying “desirable prize” are found also in Nahum 2:9 (Hebrew 2:10) and 2 Chronicles 32:27. Keil-Delitzsch considers it “the treasures of the capital”. Since the word is also translated “vessel”, “article” or “implement”, this author feels it may refer to valuable items used in religious observances.

13:16 – “Samaria”, a reference to the Northern Kingdom using a non-Hebrew reference to the place, rather than referring to the people of the Ten Tribes. This word does not occur in Scripture before 1 Kings 13:32, there a reference to the idolatry of Jeroboam, the first king of the North in the Divided Kingdom. She will be held guilty, that is in the great trial of the Book of Hosea, she will be found guilty, because the evidence is overwhelming that she has rebelled against her God.

The horrible sentence of military defeat and the atrocities of war visited upon her are also spoken of in Hosea 10:14; 2 Kings 8:12, 15:16; and in Amos 1:13 (Ammon are the descendants of Lot living in the Transjordan, north of Moab).

Although this bloody atrocity is almost unimaginable, it happens in abortion clinics among us every day. That it does is a sign of the apostasy of our nation, it is a sign of our curse. שׁוּבָה

יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בְּעֲוֹנֶיךָ:

Read Hosea 14:1-3

14:1 – In light of the horrible sentence in 13:16, how sweet God’s call to repentance is! He says

שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בְּעֲוֹנֶיךָ:

“Return, O Israel, unto YHWH your God, because you have stumbled by your iniquity!” Note the first word, here an imperative, we have studied before. This word occurs 16 times in Hosea, giving the Book a central theme. See 2:7, 2:9, 3:5, 6:1, 7:10, 8:13, 12:6, and many others.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

14:2 – In the Old Testament men approached God with offerings. The sin offering required death (Exodus 29:10-14), the shedding of blood. But Hosea does not direct Israel to turn to God with bulls, rather with words. “Take with you words...” the Prophet commands. They are to make confession, confession of their sins, and be absolved. The words they are to take follow, words that God Himself provides: “Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.”

Forgiveness and salvation never came through the death of animals. It came, and it comes, through the death of Christ. What God commands through Hosea is the confession that flows from faith. A more literal translation is “Forgive all guilt, and accept what is good, that we may offer our lips as bullocks” (Keil-Delitzsch). “What is good” was never animal sacrifice, but the Sacrifice to which the entire Old Testament pointed – Christ’s sacrifice. The confession of faith is “what is good”, an offering not of bulls but of the words that flow from faith.

14:3 – The confession continues. These wonderful words will be evidence of Israel’s repentance. They have been convicted in the great trial of the Book of Hosea, they confess their guilt, and now they speak words of faith in God, saving faith.

Although they have sought not God, but powerful allies, now they confess that Assyria will not save them. Indeed, by Assyria will come their utter downfall. Ephraim’s strength will not come from military might, not from “riding on horses” (see Hosea 1:7; Isaiah 2:7; Isaiah 31:1).

The words of repentance God bids Israel speak includes a rejection of idol worship, one of the main charges against them in the great trial.

Finally, Israel’s confession returns to the first major theme of the Book: In the true God, YHWH, the fatherless find mercy. See Hosea 1:9-10. They were “children of adultery”, not His people, but returning they are now His people, sons of the Living God.

Read Hosea 14:4-7

14:4 – Hearing such a confession of faith, God Himself vows mercy. First, He will “heal their apostasy”. The English word “apostasy” comes from the Greek word for “turning away from”. The opposite is to “repent”, to turn back to. God heals Israel’s turning away by giving His Son, the True Israel, to die for their sins.

Although they were Lo-Ami (do you remember what this means?), now God will love them freely, boundlessly. The Hebrew word for “freely” is also the word for the “freewill offering”, which is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, who in love offers Himself freely for the sins of the world. See Leviticus 22:21, and note the Christology there.

Although God was wrath, angry, His anger is turned away. See Daniel 9:16; Psalm 78:38, 85:3-7; Isaiah 12:1-6. As Israel “turns”, so God’s anger is “turned”. The verb is the same in the Hebrew.

14:5 – In chapter 13 it was a parching desert wind that blew, now God is like life-giving dew.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

14:5, cont. – Israel was a dry, barren, cut off. See 2:3. His spring, his fountain, was cut off and dry. See Job 18:16-17. These are metaphors for death, be it physical or spiritual. See 13:15. God’s mercy is seen towards Israel in this: now Israel will grow like the lily. See Isaiah 26:19. On the lilly Keil-Delitzsch writes: “...the fragrant white lily, which is very common in Palestine, and grows without cultivation, and ‘which is unsurpassed in its fecundity, often producing fifty bulbs from a single root’ (quoting Pliny, a Roman philosopher and botanist, d. 79 A.✠ D.)

The NKJ reads “and lengthen his roots like Lebanon”. The Hebrew reads

וַיִּדְ שָׁרְשָׁיו כְּלִבְנוֹן:

“...let him strike his roots like Lebanon.” The word “tree” or “cedar” does not occur in the Hebrew, although the ESV and NIV both add it. The word translated “lengthen” in the NKJV is נָכָה in the Hebrew, which means “strike” or “hit”. Here it is used in the sense of “to give a thrust”. God will cause the roots to thrust out into the soil and even the bedrock and spread widely. Keil-Delitzsch says that the referent of “Lebanon” is not the deep-rooted cedar forests of Lebanon, but the mountain itself upon which Lebanon is established, the Galilean mountains. They base this on Micah 6:2, the image being that Israel will be established like a mountain, with “roots” to the deepest earth, unshakable. The Oxford Atlas of the Bible explains “the mountain range parallel with the coast of Phoenecia; the valley of Lebanon was between this and the parallel range to the E., the ranges collectively called... ”the Lebanons.” (pg. 134). See Deuteronomy 1:7. This is a bit difficult to correlate with 14:6, which continues with a clear reference to a tree. In any case, Ephraim, Israel, cut down, dry, dead, will now flourish by God’s grace, restored, forgiven, fruitful.

14:6 – The tree metaphor continues. The word translated “branches” in the NKJV is יוֹנְקֵת, in the Hebrew, a “young branch” or “shoot”. The beauty of the restored Israel is likened to an olive tree. Israel will be firmly established (rooted), increase and multiply (branches), again be beautiful and glorious (olive tree, which is long-lived). The “fragrance” of Lebanon is the aroma of the cedars, although the word “cedar” does not occur in the Hebrew (NIV translates “cedars of Lebanon”). See Psalm 104:16; for cedars with mighty mountains see Song of Songs 5:15-16 (a description of the Groom); Isaiah 2:13-15. The Jerusalem Temple was built with stone and cedar. See 1 Kings 6:15.

14:7 – The image of the mighty, fragrant tree established, God speaking through the Prophet places Israel under that tree, the beautiful and bountiful Promised Land. Repeated references in Hosea to the land of promise, and then Israel losing it because of apostasy (see especially chapter 2:3-13), are now brought to fruition in Israel’s return to its shade (shadow). In the Middle East, shade sustains life.

“They shall be revived like grain...” (Hebrew “he/it shall revive grain and bud). Grain falls to the earth and dies, but from that death comes life and bounty. This is true of Israel by God’s grace in Hosea, but points forward to the True Israel, see John 12:24.

Fr. Mark P. Braden
Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Detroit
Trinitytide, 2014 A.✠ D.

A Brief Study on the Book of the Prophet Hosea

14:7 cont. – The image of Israel as a vine is a common one in Scripture. See Psalm 80:8-19; Isaiah 5:1-7 (what day is this sung?); Jeremiah 2:20-24; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Matthew 21:33-39; Luke 13:6-9. Ultimately it is Christ, the Vine, that brings life to Israel, see John 15:4-6.

“scent” – the Hebrew word is זָכַר “memorial”, “remembrance”, as in ESV (fame) and NIV (fame).

“... the wine of Lebanon” the fruit of the vine of Lebanon produced famous wine, even cited in secular sources like Pliny (see notes on 14:5). This verse is apparently the only clear reference to it. Wine is a common sign of prosperity in Holy Scripture. See Hosea 2:8-9; Numbers 18:12; Deuteronomy 7:13; Nehemiah 10:37; Proverbs 3:9-10; Jeremiah 31:12, and many others.

14:8 – Placing the words of 14:8 in the mouth of Ephraim is unique to the King James/New King James. The words “shall say” do not occur in Scripture. The ESV and NIV treat the first word of the verse, “Ephraim”, as a vocative – “O Ephraim”. That said, Ephraim confessing that he will have nothing more to do with idols as a response to God’s grace in verse 7 fits the context well. Here Ephraim confesses the blessings he has received of God, not by merit, but by grace. He witnesses the great fruit that God has brought forth, which connects well with verse 7. No longer dry, now Ephraim flourishes.

14:9 – The Book of the Prophet Hosea closes with a call to the faithful: “Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. *Who is* prudent? Let him know them.” This wisdom, this prudence, is the fruit of faith. See Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10; Isaiah 11:2. This serves as the summary of the Prophet’s Book – to those of Israel’s time, and to those of our time.

“For the ways of the LORD *are* right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.” Faith leads the Christian to walk in the ways of God. See Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 32:4.

Having heard the Word of God through the Prophet, let us pray with the Psalmist the Words of Psalm 145:17-21.

✠ Sola Fide ✠

✠ Sola Gratia ✠

✠ Sola Scriptura ✠

✠ Solus Christus ✠

✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠

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