

VOLUME 20

THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL
AND SYMBOLICAL
INTERPRETATION OF

The Bible

by

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HOW TO FIND YOUR REAL SELF (textbook)

THIS I BELIEVE

LEARN TO LIVE

THE FAMILY OF ADAM AND EVE

THE BIBLE - The Seven Days of Creation.

BECOME WHAT YOU BELIEVE

WHAT IS PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM?

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HOSEA

Since the first chapter of the book of Hosea contains almost all of the known information concerning the prophet, it is perhaps well to begin with the facts as he gives them. Further, since the unique quality of Hosea lies in the symbolic interpretation he places on the facts of his own life, we will then proceed to discuss the religious and historical background which helped to determine his interpretation.

First of all, the name Hosea literally means "to save, to deliver," and is a derivation of the names Joshua and Jesus. Cabalistically it contains numbers which add up to 24; this reduces to 6 and refers to service and brotherhood. We are told that he was the son of a man called Beeri ("my well"), but we are not told of his place of birth. He married a woman by the name of Gomer who was the daughter, or slave, of a man named Diblaim. She had quite a reputation, and was called "the woman of harlotry." Hosea began his period of prophecy a few years prior to their marriage. Shortly after she gave birth to a daughter who was named Jezreel. Within a few years she bore two more children, a daughter, whose name when translated is "not pitied," and a son, "not my people."

It seems evident from these names that Hosea had other things in mind than his children when he named them. The argument has always been whether his purpose was to emphasize the unfaithfulness of his wife, and the dubiousness of his fatherhood of the last two children, or to symbolically emphasize his prophecy concerning Israel and her unfaithfulness. However, we will discuss that point later on: here our concern is more with the factual record. It is thought that the name Jezreel (as well as references in the book itself) places the period of Hosea's prophecy at around 746 B.C., since Hosea prophesied the fall of the house of Jehu, which was built in a place called Jezreel, and this fall occurred during the reign of king Jeroboam, or 746 B.C. However, chapter 1, verse 1 presents us with another example of historical liberty, or inaccuracy, since it says that he prophesied during

the reigns of Uzziah, who died in 740 B.C., Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned in 715 B.C. This would cover a period of about 40 to 45 years and, as we have mentioned before, he prophesied for only twelve years. *The Interpreter's Bible* did a remarkable bit of research on this book, and they are of the opinion that verse 1 was added by later editors to emphasize the meaning this book held for the Jews at the time of the deliverance of Jerusalem after Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C.

Once again we have an instance of the confusing chronology of the Bible in the order of the books of Hosea and Amos. In the Bible, the book of Amos follows the book of Hosea. Actually, while they were contemporaries, Hosea's period of prophecy succeeded that of Amos. Of course, because of this, the problems they dealt with, as well as what they had to say about them are similar, although their approach is quite individual. Amos stressed the coming of the day of the Lord in which God would judge Israel's sins. Hosea taught this as well, to a certain degree, but his approach is far more symbolic and his teaching is put in a form close to that of the parable. Amos, on the other hand is a bit more practical in his approach, and very close to the "blood and thunder" type of teaching.

Both Amos and Hosea indict the Jews very strongly for following the letter of the law and not the spirit, for their disregard for the welfare of others, for their softness and self indulgence, and for the superficial lip service they paid their religion. Hosea himself draws a comparison between his wife whom he refers to as a harlot, and Israel, the harlot to God. We see him develop this parable (in a sense this is what it is) as he shows how these things relate not only to the personal problems of a man, but to the actions of a people who were supposedly chosen by God.

One of the specific outrages which stemmed from the cultic influence absorbed during their various captivities is the object of much of Hosea's wrath, and that is the ritual which was performed in observance of the autumn festival. The autumn festival of Succoth, or the Feast of the Tabernacles, is the celebration of the gathering of the harvest and the offering of tithes to God. It is one of the most beautiful festivals of the Hebrew religion. This rite became combined with the sexual orgies which took place in the worship of Baal and Melek.

Moreover, the experience known as the Divine Marriage is part of the basic teachings of true mysticism in both the east and the west. (It is also known as the Mystic Marriage.) It is both a psychological and physical experience which occurs within the individual who has reached a certain level of development. The Greeks, Hindus and Egyptians all taught this, but here it has descended to a primitive worship which taught nothing of the real meaning behind it. The Jews coupled the celebration of Succoth together with that of the orgiastic Divine Marriage of the pagans. It appeared to them to be similar to the concept of Baal, who supposedly fertilized the earth in order to produce the necessary food and grain. His worship consisted in physical orgies. They combined these rites in the idea that they were worshipping God. Whether they really believed this or not we do not know, but this was the most horrible of desecrations to all of the prophets, and they threatened, cajoled and did everything they possibly could to make them change their ways, without much success.

We could, ironically, feel grateful to the Jews for these things, for the one reason that if there had been no backsliding there would be no record of the great prophets and the very beautiful teaching they gave—there would have been no reason for it. Their teachings were even less apt to be recorded since some of the prophets were not particularly accurate in their prophecies—but their teachings stand out. Once again, “Get the message, forget the messenger.” The words they said are as true today as they were then. The words will never die, for they are the truth. For anyone who will use them—whether then or now—they will open the way to a very different life.

There is another interesting aspect in Hosea’s background. Mostly due to environmental factors, there was great intrigue and political instability at that time. Dynasties lasted only from five to twenty years. Father murdered son, and son, father, and all of them strove for power. Hosea believed—and it was a very strong revolutionary idea which could also apply to today—that a king should not reign over Israel simply because his father had been king. He felt every king should be God chosen, not man chosen. He felt the idea of heredity was wrong. He believed completely in the concept that made David the first king of Israel—God chose him to be king. You can just imagine how little chance he had of putting this belief into

effect. We come fairly close to his concept in our national elections, for we do have the element of choice, to some degree. But in his time the family line went on until civil wars became so violent and frequent that entire families and dynasties were wiped out.

Even though our Bible was written in a different era, separating us by thousands of years, we have not changed. We are still going through the same struggle, the same fight for power, with a fair amount of treachery thrown in. Human nature changes very, very slowly. Evolution moves at a very slow pace. Let us make a small comparison. Originally Israel was like a little island in her worship of the One God, surrounded by nations who worshipped a pantheon of gods. Israel is once more, in our day, a little island in this worship, surrounded by Arabs who, although they worship the One God, approach their worship from a completely different kind of faith. The political states which surround Israel have exchanged the god Baal for Allah, but Allah is almost as bloodthirsty in his demands. The Arabs have little hesitation in killing anyone. They are religiously concerned with making prayers at appointed hours, and in making their pilgrimage to Mecca. Israel once more is collected into a small strip of land surrounded by its native enemies. For, even though they are related—first cousins, so to speak, as they are all part of one Semitic race—there has always been a terrific enmity between them. (We may see the end of this through a strange series of circumstances before we are too much older, perhaps the next 10 or 15 years. This could never have taken place before, but it can happen now.)

What is going to happen now? What is going to happen to the Israelites as a people? Economically they have done a fantastic job. They have achieved a magnificent feat in rebuilding their nation, of this there is no doubt. That they were driven to it by sheer necessity, there is again no doubt. But the Israelites in the past were, time and again, driven by sheer necessity to return to their God. Are they going to make the same journey away from their belief once again, or are they going to rebuild this as well? I know people who, even now, have returned from Israel and tell me of the various splits in the religion into the orthodox, the reformed and the conservative groups with an attendant jockeying for power, but until now, it is the orthodox followers who are in control.

In answering the question of what could happen now, we might again look at the past, not for the answer itself, but for the lessons it might emphasize. When we speak of Israel in terms of this book we are referring to a nation which, by the seventh century, was no longer a united kingdom. It had been severed into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel and these were also split up into various little tribes that were often at war with each other. They had been taken captive by their neighboring first cousins, the Arabs, and they had very happily assimilated into both the social and religious pattern of their captors. There was a group of totally unappreciated heroes who had individual contact with God, who had a strong conviction that something must be done about this. The Israelites had so completely digressed from the ways of the One God and the teachings of Moses that they must be brought back to the purity of their original concept. These people who had been imbued with the law "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," must be brought back from their idolatrous belief in the thousands of gods of their captors. The story of the Old Testament from the time of Joshua has been the story of the prophets, who were sometimes killed, beaten or sent into exile, trying to bring these people back to God.

The Israelites, like everybody else, were very human. Their pattern is very typical of human nature, which has not changed very much. They assimilated, worshipped false gods and then, when things went wrong, when things got bad enough and they had no place else to turn they cried, "Oh God, why have You forsaken us?" Even as you and I. The lesson in their history is one which applies equally as forcibly to us as it does to them.

Too, in spite of the fact that they worshipped all the false gods and took part in the various orgies, they still went to the temple on the sabbath, and donned their phylacteries for the morning prayer. A few thousand years later a very wise man said, "Thou shalt not serve God and Mammon." But this has been their saga. I would like us to see that we have not changed: the problem is still the same—we have yet to learn.

I myself would not be in metaphysics if I did not believe that it taught complete Truth and was the most workable belief of all religious thought, and if I did not believe that it taught us about a reality that will enable us to change our problems

permanently. First of all, it removes every crutch: A) You are responsible for you. You cannot blame it on God. B) You have been given everything that you need. If you want something, use what you have been given to achieve it. C) In order to use it properly you must live a certain kind of life. This is the A, B, C of metaphysics. All of us have come from other religions. Whether we were trained religiously or not, we came from specific religious backgrounds. We did not remain with those religions because they could not hold us—they did not offer us what we sought. This is why I believe that when the final stage of religion is reached all the pomp and circumstance will have been eliminated and we will be at the point where you and I are responsible not only to God, but to and for ourselves. We will be at the point where we do not blame anybody for the things that happen to us, and where if we do not like something we change it rather than complain about it. Most important of all, we will be at the point where if we want to find God—if we want to—we will know we have the ways and means of doing so within ourselves. It is not a question of appeasing a jealous God by making sacrifices. Each person in metaphysics, whether he realizes it or not, has sacrificed himself consciously or unconsciously by meeting the demands of metaphysics and making it his religion.

When we look at other religions we find much beauty and good in all of them, but if we look at the history of these religions, it is quite a different story. From the time of Jesus until our day, the Jews as such were not heard of very much; instead there were the Christian martyrs and the early Catholics. Then we went from the beginning of Enlightenment into the Dark Ages and the curtain dropped once more, and if anything, even worse conditions prevailed among the various nations and religions. It is certainly a thought provoking idea to realize that since the dawn of our own era, roughly 10,000 years, there has been a great deal of talk about God—magnificent books have been written (not only our own Bible, but the Hindu, Chinese, Egyptian and Greek writings) containing very wonderful revelations, and we study them—but we have yet to have peace in our time. People often comment on the Old Testament, saying that its stories are so bloody, but I am not sure that we have not witnessed the bloodiest history in our own time, with all our so-called great enlightenment.

We spoke of the fourth century B.C. as being a period

of spiritual rebirth, with many great teachers living at the same time, each man bringing to his own particular race a great teaching and enlightenment. We speak of our own time as an age of spiritual rebirth, and it is. But I sometimes think, since there is no world leader or member of a religious order who is outstanding to such a degree that he is an inspiration to, not only his own people, but—because our communication is so all-encompassing—to all people, that this is the beginning of the time that Jesus referred to in that much misunderstood section of Matthew (ch. 24, 25)—the second coming of Christ. This is the first time in the recorded history of the world when there has not been an outstanding religious leader such as Jesus, Paul, John, Moses, or even Hosea, to lead the people by the force of his own inspirational direction. People are beginning to demonstrate the second coming of Christ, not through a teacher, or another human being, but through the Presence of God within each human being Who is now beginning to be able to be heard.

In this day and age we are slowly realizing that there is no real security outside. Two negative material events have helped to bring this about; the two World Wars and the Depression. Suddenly people who usually neglected the art of thinking began to realize that there was no security "out there." Most people do not like to think, but when they are faced with dire circumstances, and situations which hurt them personally, then they sit down and ask, Where does security lie? They then come slowly and unhappily to the conclusion that nothing in the outer world is secure. Not a thing. When we get into metaphysics we realize that the only real security is within ourselves. Actually this is a wonderful realization because we are thrown back on our own resources, and this is the way we find God. There is a saying that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," which is true, unfortunately, because we only seek the real security when everything else has failed.

Now let us return to Hosea who, as we have seen, had quite a difficult time with the Israelites. Although his book comes under the heading of the minor prophets, he was actually one of the great ones. As we know, the role of the prophet is never one of peace and quiet. From the mystic's point of view, the prophet is a dedicated man. From the psychoanalyst's point of view he is a man with a martyr complex. According to our

twentieth century ideas, no man would possibly submit himself to indignities, rejections and dangers often including the sacrifice of his own life, unless there was something psychologically wrong with him. There is nothing psychologically wrong. The trouble with psychology is that it does not go far enough in its understanding of the total make-up of the human being. The desire to help people is an overwhelming drive in a prophet.

One of the things which makes Hosea unique is his approach to his prophecies. We approach the study of the Bible from the many levels on which it is written, (which we have touched on before) and as we do this we find it becomes a very beautiful and open book. If we were to read Hosea literally, we would find it rather difficult to believe that God would tell Hosea to marry a harlot who would have children by other men when the Ten Commandments states "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Unless this is symbolic, it does not make sense. This book is unique, not because it is symbolic, for many books in the Bible are, but because of its type of symbolism. It was most fortunate for Hosea that Freud was not alive. Can you imagine what his analysis of him would have been? "He is sexually frustrated. He has a martyr complex and a mother complex, and I am certain his id is working overtime." But Hosea was blessed in this respect.

The prophet has the touch of God, and for that reason he speaks with authority. It is not a question of what he is doing to achieve it, or of how he got the authority—he simply has it. And for this reason Hosea's personal symbolism is additionally interesting. It is a phallic symbolism and, since this is his choice of the form in which his message is to be couched, I have the kind of mind that says: "This is very interesting. He is the only prophet in the Old Testament who uses this kind of symbolism. Could it be that he uses it because he witnessed so many of the orgies perpetrated by the Jews that he was unconsciously influenced by them? Or, did he specifically choose this symbolism because it was the language they understood? Of course, we have no way of knowing, but it is an interesting speculation.

We are told that Hosea believed he was instructed by God to marry a woman of harlotry. She had three children before she left him, and as the Bible relates the story one is not sure if the last two children were sired by Hosea or someone

else. We would feel very sorry for him if they were not his, and certainly it would be rather hard on a man to ask him to go through such an experience. It is not that Hosea is to marry a whore, but God is telling him that Israel, as Hosea puts it, has gone a-whoring. They have left the concept of God and violated their belief. Hosea was not a fool, and he certainly was God-inspired, and so he chastises them in his own very amazing form of symbolism. As we have mentioned before, there is nothing strange about the symbol of marriage being used in terms of religion. It actually dates back to the early Chinese religion where it was used in a very picturesque way. As we get into the book we will see that the picture Hosea draws of himself and the woman of harlotry, is used to represent Yahweh and His wife, Israel.

I find this symbolism very lovely for another reason. Basically, the human soul is always represented by the woman, and the physical body, by the man, but in this instance we find a triangle, if it can be called so, which is quite different. Israel is presented as the woman (wife) and Yahweh as the man (husband), and in this role He becomes both the husband and the father—the God of Righteousness and Punishment—He varies His role.

Hosea's pattern as a prophet is similar to the others we have dealt with: the constant repetition of God, through the prophet, threatening Israel or Judah with desolation and destruction and then offering them everything if they will repent. He is not relating a personal experience, any more than Isaiah did: the teaching is directed to the people and has nothing to do with the man himself. The character of the man colored what was said, but the teaching was directed to the people. Very few of the prophets, with the exception of Ezekiel, allowed their personal experience to enter into their prophecies.

This brings out a point we should mention at this time. You have no doubt noticed that we have stopped dealing with symbolism in terms of the individual. In the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Joshua, we were told not only of the teaching given to the people, but of the story of the evolution of the man. In the book of Judges and the books of the prophets, we are no longer dealing with the individual, but with what is happening to the people as a nation. Perhaps this was because the individuals were not

developed enough to warrant a description of the steps of their growth, or because at this time it was more important to describe the evolution of a people as they absorbed the impact made on them by the earlier leaders. For example, when we reach the New Testament we will not be concerned with what personally happened to Matthew. We know little of his life other than the fact that he was a tax collector and was miserable because the people hated him for his profession, and that he was suddenly touched by Jesus and gave up everything and joined him. We will find nothing which refers to Matthew's conscious or subconscious mind. We find nothing about Luke and know very little about Mark or John, because what is related deals with all of us, in terms of our future growth. We read of the individual change in the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, for Paul is the type of person who laid his heart out and wanted everyone to dissect it with him. We find out what happens to him, but we do not find the kind of archetypal, or (universal) symbolism which we have had in the first part of the Old Testament. As a different example, when you read the Bhagavad Gita, you are not told that this is in the conscious mind of the individual, and this in the subconscious: the Gita deals with motivation. You know that the Superconscious is emerging into the consciousness of the individual, and that the subconscious and conscious minds are changing, but you are not given the specific symbolism which represents this change. Actually, with the exception of the early Egyptian literature, the Bible is the only scripture which deals as much with the individual symbols of growth as it did in the beginning.

CHAPTER 1. (As you can see, this is a rather startling way of phrasing religious instruction.) The phrase in the first verse, "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea," tells us that he believed he was instructed by God and that this gave him authority for his words. One of the qualities which is the mark, not only of the prophet, but even more of the mystic, is their complete assurance that what they are saying is definitely so. It is a quality which is often irritating to others when they encounter it. It was said of Jesus that "he spoke as one having authority," and there were those who would literally have killed him for it. They resented Moses for his authority—who was he to command them? Moses at least had some background—but Jesus, the son of

a carpenter...! Nevertheless, the distinguishing feature of a prophet or mystic is that he will always speak with complete assurance—not his own—because the experience within him is so real that it comes through to him as the voice of God. These are facts which, in our day and age of materialism and the attendant loss of understanding of these things, we look at and say, "How can he know?" We expect to be able to give "scientific" tests to determine its validity. If this was the standard by which we were to measure the value of a teaching, then we would have to disregard all of the prophets and the scriptures of the various religions, for Moses and Paul were the only ones, to my knowledge, who had academic backgrounds. But in our time, many people are inclined to be dubious and a bit annoyed if one speaks with any degree of authority.

On the other hand, if a person has a thorough knowledge of his subject, he is bound to speak with authority about it. If he were to give a course on that subject and did not have sufficient self-assurance to present it as though he knew what he was talking about his students would resent it greatly. It is a funny quirk of human nature to find that if you speak as though you know what you are talking about on the subject of religion it is often resented. Nevertheless this is the mark of the mystic. It is true that God reveals Himself and speaks with His chosen creature, but this is a fact which we do not read about too often. No mystic would ever take it upon himself to speak in any way other than what God has told him. The human recipient, the mystic who has this earmark, must do what he hears no matter what it costs him. He cannot live with himself otherwise. God would not do anything to him, but he himself is impelled. For instance (whether this was the case, or not), if Hosea thought that God wanted him to marry a woman like Gomer, he would certainly do it. Moses certainly did not want to go through his experiences with the Jews, but when he was told that he had to do it, he did. Even with his tremendous control, Jesus would not relish the experience of being crucified.

To return to chapter 1, it speaks of the marriage and should be interpreted in the light of what we have been discussing. The Aramaic word for harlot had a slightly different connotation at that time: it also meant spiritual unfaithfulness. The word was frequently used to describe Israel

when she went off after strange gods, which is additional corroboration that Hosea's wife was not necessarily the harlot, but that Yahweh was accusing Israel through the prophet.

Then we are told of the birth of his children. Their names, which have been mentioned before, should be kept in mind because they are changed in the next chapter. In verse 9 Yahweh says, "I am not your God," which tells us that Yahweh is renouncing His chosen people. This was the most terrible thing that could happen to them. However, we are not told what their reaction to this message was. It is an interesting idea for speculation because there were many people who obeyed the laws of Moses to some degree, and one wonders what was the reaction when Hosea told them that God was no longer interested in them; that they were under judgment and no longer chosen people and would now reap what they had sown. It appears to have made no impression whatsoever.

Following this, in verse 10, we are told that Yahweh, Who is a God of Mercy and Restitution as well as a God of Justice, says that there will be a time when they are called the "sons of the living God." At that time the number of the Israelites will have greatly increased—a sign of God's favor—and their children shall once more be gathered together in a land of safety and comfort. All this will take place provided they worship the One God.

CHAPTER 2. We begin to see the pattern of his symbolism here, and I think you will find it very lovely. This section is supposedly addressed to Hosea's daughter, Jezreel, who, in turn is to relate it to her brother and sister. We are told that their names have been changed. Her brother, formerly Lo-Ammi meaning "not my people," is now called Ammi, "My people," and her sister, whose name meant "Not pitied," is now called Ruhamah, which means "She has obtained mercy." We begin to see the second aspect of God emerging here: He is not only the God of Justice, or Law, but the God of Love Who cannot remain angry. No matter what form of symbolism is used, the Law of Karma is always in action or, in the Bible's terms, God would not be Justice if the day of reckoning did not come. But He did not mean to cast them off entirely. If they will turn back He will once more be their God. This is the tone of the whole section.

One idea which is particularly beautiful is that He promises that after their repentance there will be a betrothal: they will once more be close to Him despite their former unfaithfulness which was born of ignorance. In very beautiful symbolism, the chapter describes the yearning of Yahweh for His wife. He is not going to wait for her to turn back: He is going to take her into the wilderness where she first heard His voice, and win her back once more. Before this can take place she must rid herself of all the accoutrements of false worship. This refers to what actually took place in those days: the women had their breasts painted and bare, their faces were completely painted, and they were bedecked in jewels, and this is greatly objected to. Primarily they are to recognize that God Himself, Yahweh, was the Source of their substance, not Baal. They are told that they were thrown out of favor because they did not know Who supplied them with corn and wine, and gave thanks to a false god. When they recognize the fact that God is the One Source and Substance they will once more be reunited.

CHAPTER 3 also deals with the redemption of the adulterous wife, symbolizing Israel. Here God is pictured as saying, in effect, "She is still worthwhile, let us bring her back home. Let her repent and return." Israel will not be completely restored to the fullness of her former state, rather, she will be temporarily deprived of her accustomed leaders and religious symbols, but the door is open to her return. It is interesting to note that none of the prophets can bear to portray God indefinitely as a God of Punishment Who will cast Israel off forever, and so they all bring in the idea of eventual or possible redemption. If Israel will take the step, will make the effort, her restoration will be fulfilled.

In CHAPTER 4 the symbolism is put aside for it is quite obvious that this does not refer to the house of Hosea. We are told outright that Israel has been unfaithful, and will be punished. We are told of her acts of unfaithfulness, which include lying, killing, stealing and incest, and that as a result of these "abominations in the eyes of the Lord," Israel will have drought and deprivation. We know, of course, that this represents a spiritual, as well as physical unfaithfulness. A significant point in this chapter is brought out in verse 6, where we see that while God is rejecting

Israel, He is holding the priesthood responsible for what has occurred.

CHAPTER 5 is an interesting chapter. The names which are used were purposely chosen to emphasize its message. For example, Mizpah means "watchtower;" Tabor, "highest part;" Gilgal, "a circle;" Beth-aven, "a house of vanity." The indictment of the priests continues, but attention is centered on the house of Israel. Since they are not united at this point, each of the three kingdoms is castigated. Not only has Israel erred, but Ephraim has also betrayed itself and is told that God will not hold them guiltless for taking His Name in vain. It seems that Judah had not erred as badly, but Hosea, being not only a man of God, but also a man of experience with his people, was certain that Judah would be just as guilty in time, so they are all told of the punishment in store for them. On the other hand, in the final verse, despite the terrible things that God is going to do to them, they are told that the door is not completely closed.

The book of Hosea consists of sermons and addresses which he gave to the Jews whenever he had the opportunity to speak to a group of them. This did not occur frequently because few people wish to be scolded as Hosea scolds them. We have seen this to be true of many of the other prophets: probably the only two whom the Jews heard willingly were Second and Third Isaiah because of their words of comfort and beauty which contained little chastisement. Hosea belabors them with the one message (given also by the other prophets) "Return to the Lord your God." We are beginning to see however, that his choice of symbolic examples used to express this message varies constantly, thus bringing us to an interesting point.

Initially, we must realize that none of the prophets spoke from their normal everyday level of consciousness. Hosea, for example, is not speaking to the Jews in the same way that he would speak to his friends. As we read on—if we have eyes to see and ears to hear—we observe that he is experiencing certain changes within himself, as we do ourselves on a different level. In these addresses we are shown what is happening, not personally to the man Hosea, but to Hosea's subconscious mind as he experiences these changes. This is the reason for the frequent

change in the symbolism. They do not occur through conscious, deliberate choice.

We have seen the other prophets, especially First and Second Isaiah, were quite consistent in the use of their individual symbols, and they refer to them time and again. Ezekiel was an exception, but he was a psychic given to visions and trances, and the others were mystics speaking from an inspired level of consciousness. So it is particularly fascinating to see the direction of the subconscious impulse behind the symbolisms which appear in the book of Hosea.

At first, the whoring wife and the harlot symbolized Israel. The illegitimate children also symbolized the wayward tribes of Israel. These change to nature symbols of wind, trees and beasts. We will find other changes as we go on. However, the book ends on quite a calm note compared to its vehement beginning. It is unfortunate that we do not have enough of the historical background of these prophets to know specifically what was happening to them. Hosea's gamut of symbolism is particularly fascinating because it shows that, not only is he trying to change his people, he is unconsciously changing himself.

If we were to keep track of our own dreams we would find that it is unusual to have a repetitive symbolism, even though it is usual for the conscious mind to continue on the level it is accustomed to pursue. The only occasions on which I have found the symbolism of dreams to be repetitive have been in cases of extreme stress. For example, I knew a man who was in a frightful mess and unwilling to take the steps necessary to get himself out. He first dreamed that he was covered with mud. A week or two later he dreamed that he was walking through very filthy snow. A month or so later he was still walking through snow in his dream, but it was not as dirty. Finally in his dream he found himself walking through a forest with rain beating down, cleansing him. He dreamed in a consistent pattern of water, symbolizing the emotions, and the condition of the water represented the state of the emotions.

CHAPTER 6 continues the indictment of the priesthood. There is a very lovely concept given here which is repeated time and again, here and throughout the Old Testament, once more showing us that while the words are there, we rarely

see or understand them for ourselves. We are told that God wants worship, not ritual; God wants mercy, not sacrifice, and yet they, and we, continue to indulge in ritualism and sacrifice. Similarly we see the figure of Jesus worshipped as God by many sects: they do not seem to have read his own words saying most distinctly that this was not the case. In the Old Testament we have encountered the concept that ritual and sacrifice have no place in the worship of God; at least six times we found this stated in the Psalms, in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and two or three times in Hosea. What keeps us from seeing it? The only reason that comes to me is phrased in Emerson's rather caustic comment: "the planet trembles when God lets loose a thinker on it." When it comes to religion, not too many people think about it, they blindly accept. At any rate, we are once again told that the worship of God consists in sincerity and in obeying the Law, and this is said in the midst of a record of the disloyalty of the Israelites and their worship of false gods. We are told that the defilement of the house of Israel is a "horrible thing," and that they will reap a harvest of evil.

CHAPTER 7 might be called the chapter of social, or political insecurity. Revolutions have brought about changes of dynasty, and Israel, which had been taught to rely completely on God, is taking refuge in foreign alliances, and is once more adopting the religious and social customs of her neighbors. Actually, within a space of ten years or so, there was a succession of four kings: Zechariah, six months; Shal-lum, one month; Menahem, eight years; and Pekahiah, two years. None of them died of natural causes, but they were killed as a result of the lack of faith in God and the greed, envy and conspiracy of the people. The succession of kings and the reasons for it were definite departures from the path laid out for Israel. They strengthened Hosea's belief that the right of kings should not be determined by inheritance, but by the choice of God.

We see many very similar situations throughout the world today. Most nominations are conducted in smoke-filled rooms where men in political power carry on their bargaining for positions: "If you get this, I must get that." It is a tragedy and one of the reasons which are behind the unhappy conditions that exist today. Too, we have seen a man overthrown practically overnight in many countries; or other men who rule for one

month, or six, and are then killed by revolutionists. This chapter deals with a similar situation existing in Israel. The leaders are blamed for what has happened, and are told that something must be done to change this if they are to find their way back to God. However, in the final analysis, it is the attitude of the people which is outpictured in its leaders.

CHAPTER 8 continues with the same theme of the Israelites' separation from the principles of Judaism and the resulting evils. God warns them that there will be more wars, and tells them that they will call to Him when they are in dire extremity. Of course, regardless of the harsh punishments, when He is called He will answer, as always. We are given a rather lovely summation in verses 4-14 which describe Israel as being politically at odds with itself, and spiritually confused. They are reminded that if they continue to put their faith in outer things—idols such as the Samaritan calf—it will only lead to further folly. They must unite, return to their God and in this way find themselves once more. In verses 10-13 they are indicted for spurning the Law of God.

Hosea stresses the point we spoke of in the last chapter by saying "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." *The Interpreter's Bible* says that in a period of 253 years Israel had eighteen kings, offspring of ten different families and each reign ended in violent death. Of course, "a new broom sweeps clean," and a new king often brought a period of peace. But peace lasted only until someone began to feel they must get the better of someone else. Often rules were "changed" because certain conspirators felt that a particular ruler would be more beneficial for an alliance they had made with a foreign country. Once again, in a similar way we have seen the leaders of countries in South America and Africa carry out coups because of their own alliances with Communist powers. It is really quite fascinating to see the similarity.

CHAPTER 9 doesn't paint a very pretty picture for Ephraim, does it? Hosea delineates the evils they have been perpetrating, and ends by asking God to punish them. This is another instance which shows us that even a mystic can get angry, for Hosea certainly was furious at this point. Jesus got very angry on a few occasions; the money changers in the

temple, for instance, and he had no hesitation in saying that he had no use for the Pharisees. It is unfortunate that these things are not spoken of more often, because most people think of Jesus as a man who would never raise his voice in protest against any thing or any man. The Gospels show that this was not the case.

When Hosea asks God to punish the Ephraimites, although he is angry, he doesn't really mean it in his heart because no mystic can hate to that extent. He is a man, however, who can be furious and in the stress of that fury say things that are not in line with the real mystic's drive. There have been times when I have come across ideas or groups in metaphysics which are a complete desecration of what I believe, and I have been momentarily infuriated. Then I realize that my fury only hurts myself, and does not harm the other groups or individuals. The only thing I can do is to treat them out of existence if they are evil. Fortunately for the Ephraimites, Hosea did not know the power of the Word and so he turns to God and asks that He do these things to them. It is also fortunate for Hosea, for he does have a lot of spiritual power, which we can tell from the book, and he could have used it, which would have been rather sad. Incidentally, Hosea says that their wickedness originated in Gilgal ("the place of Baal"), which is the place where Saul was crowned king of Israel, and in that way he connects what happened to Saul to the Ephraimites.

In CHAPTER 10 Hosea not only blames the people for what has happened, but he blames the rulers. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel blamed the priesthood and to a slight degree the rulers for leading the people astray, but I don't believe anyone has emphasized it as strongly as this. I am perfectly sure that as a result of his many castigations of the rulers Hosea did not have an easy life. On the other hand I am also sure that from time to time he received offers of bribes and honors if he would put the blame somewhere else, because he was listened to by the people. But there was no price that could tempt him to betray what he believed to be true. Two very definite earmarks of the mystic are the refusal to compromise and a tremendous integrity, and Hosea certainly expressed them both to the highest degree. It is also true that we have yet to see a mystic in the Old Testament who did not have these qualities. This is particularly noticeable since

one of the wonderful things about the Bible is that it never glosses over a man's shortcomings. We read of many men whose personal lives did not completely reflect their religious beliefs, but we have read of no mystic who did not embody these two qualities. Hosea is a complete rebel who would not conform to "the powers that be." He believed only in the worship of the One God, and tried his utmost to keep Israel in line with this belief, even though he did not succeed too well.

Verses 1-8 deal with the fate of Israel's kings who, as you remember, were numerous. In verse 2 we are told that the seat of the trouble lies in the fact that the kings have divided hearts. Actually it would be a rather amazing thing if they did not. The tradition of Israel which they were supposed to represent was extremely strong, and they had great pride in it. Where we sometimes look at the Exodus and the miracles which took place with "a grain of salt;" these men had grown up and lived with a deep belief in this tradition. When they betrayed this faith it most assuredly caused a great inner conflict. One reason why Hosea does not condemn them as strongly as he could have is his understanding of this. Hosea shows a great mercy and understanding despite his fury and knowledge that their ways could only lead to more and more difficulties. This mercy is shown in his approach to the words he is given to say. In verse 3 he tells what will happen to them, as well as to Samaria for her worship of idols. In verses 9-15 we are told the results of Ephraim's disobedience: that the tribe was to be punished and possibly eradicated. This is followed by a change of heart and additional instructions to Ephraim. The last two verses tell of the despoiling of Israel.

CHAPTER 11. Verse 1 is, for me, one of the most beautiful in the Bible. Once again we have a change in symbolism from Israel, the wife, to Israel, the son. In the overall symbolic pattern, Egypt represents the subconscious and Israel, the son who becomes the Presence of God incarnate. He manifests through the subconscious into the conscious mind. We are told that this happens "when Israel was a child." The entire chapter deals with this idea quite clearly.

What is actually being said is that, regardless of Israel's backslidings, the will of God will be fulfilled. This is a fact which, although we realize it in a dim way, we must become

sufficiently objective on a psychological level in order to fully realize it. Metaphysically we know that no matter what transpires in the physical world, no matter how often we deviate, the beginning and end remain as they are. They will always remain: nothing can change them. The day is going to come when the Presence of God will reign in each of us. We may take all sorts of detours, as the Israelites did, and thus delay it, for we have free will, but we cannot stop it. We might call this the inevitability of God. This is what Hosea refers to in this chapter when he says that no matter how many times Israel, Ephraim and Judah depart from the ways of God, the end result will not change. They will return to the path which was ordained for them and nothing can change this.

This is equally true of you and me. For instance, if I were to say I never wanted to hear of metaphysics again, and began to live a life which was the exact opposite of what I had been taught, I could continue in this way for twenty-five lifetimes, but inevitably, I would pay for it. I might kid myself by thinking I was having a wonderful time, but I will nevertheless wake up with what we could call an eternal hangover. For we do wake up, and whether we do now or at some far later time is, except as it concerns ourselves, relatively unimportant. I must admit it is difficult to look at the horrors of our own time—Hitler, Stalin, and the rest—and realize that the time will come when they are going to be little lambs, washed white. I will also admit that although I accept the concept, I do not think if I were to meet them I could see the Presence of God in them too easily. It is nevertheless inevitable that this will take place. In verses 8 and 9, when he says “I am God, not man,” he is, in effect, saying that God is Infinite, God is Mind, and God’s ways are mysterious to us. There is no doubt of that. We do not have the ability to know all the answers. Although in each and every one of us there is a secret place where the Presence resides that no one can enter but ourselves, it is true that even there, until we have a certain degree of development, we do not find ourselves completely at home.

CHAPTER 12 is quite lovely, and, surprisingly, all of a sudden we are confronted with Jacob. In verses 2–6 we are told that the judgment was upon Jacob. It is interesting that this refers to Jacob before he became Israel. The line

which is particularly fascinating is verse 3 where we are told that Jacob was guilty of wrong from the time he was in the womb. It is a very vivid statement of the concept that you bring your good and evil back with you. Of course, you must ask, if you bring it back, where do you bring it back *from*? It is one of the few places, (in its present translation) where the Bible hints at the concept of reincarnation. It is certainly rather difficult to conceive of a new-born baby being guilty of evil, but this statement refers to the Law of Karma.

The chapter continues by saying that Ephraim is a traitor for his confidence is in his wealth and he will not be held accountable for it; and that no matter what happens there will come a time when they will return to God. In verses 13 and 14 we are told that the work of the prophet is for Ephraim as well as for Israel, with the historical statement of what God has done in bringing them out of Egypt. The important point of the chapter is stressed again, that evil began early: evil began with Jacob, and Jacob symbolizes Everyman.

CHAPTER 13 once more relates the inevitable destruction of Ephraim, and the spiritual death of Israel. Hosea claims that there is no stability in either of them in heaven or in earth. In verses 4-6 we are told that Yahweh, Who is the shepherd of Ephraim, will also be the destroyer of Ephraim. This did not actually occur, but we know the prophets are very, very dramatic. The main thing the Israelites are to remember is, in verses 9 and 10, that Yahweh is the only power. In verses 11-14 we are told of the possibility which still remains for Ephraim to be revived. In verse 16 we are told of the doom of Samaria. One of the especially interesting things to note about this chapter is that it is quite similar to I Cor. 15:15, where Paul says "Oh, death where is thy sting..." Actually Paul quotes quite a number of passages from Hosea with slight variations. The basic fact which is stressed in this chapter is that there is One Power and One Presence, and it is impossible to escape this fact.

CHAPTER 14, might be summed up by "Come home, all is forgiven," and it is quite beautiful. In verse 2 they are told to "take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto him, 'Take away all iniquity...'" They are given a chance to be saved through their sincere words. This again stresses

the fact that what is demanded is not the ritual sacrifice that they made to Baal, but the sacrifice of the heart to God. Faithlessness, and the sin of trusting in foreign alliances rather than God must be done away with, but a desire to be healed will be met by God with full forgiveness and restoration.

It is true that the symbolism of Hosea certainly has a pre-Freudian touch, but it is far more valid than that of psycho-analysis.

The constant deviation of Israel from the laws of Moses were a constant source of grief and tragedy to all of the prophets. Hosea is particularly vehement and picturesque in his almost continual denunciation of them.

But there is one beautiful thing that stands out, not only in Hosea, but all of the prophets. The constant threats and furies of the prophets, predicting dire punishments and destruction of them all were the very human reactions of the lovers of God, as they so often witnessed the betrayal of Hebrew ideals.

But - in spite of the frustrated fury, as real mystics, they knew that no matter how far we may trespass, the door to God is never closed. And they had to tell this to the back-sliders, in spite of their own feelings. The moment we say, "I will arise and go to my Father", the Prodigal Son is welcomed, restored and blessed.

M. Dr.

J O E L

The first of the books of the minor prophets, the book of Joel, is extremely short—only three chapters—and, once again, its position in the order of these books has not been determined by chronology. The name Joel means “Yahweh is God.” *The Interpreter's Bible* mentions that there were twelve other prophets between the time of Samuel and Nehemiah with this same name. Beyond the information given in the first line of the book: his name, his father's name, and his belief that he spoke the word of the Lord, almost nothing is known about him. It is evident that he lived in Jerusalem, since his book describes what took place there, and that he was a temple-prophet. The approximate date of his writing, 400 B.C., has been determined by the mention, or lack of mention of nations in power, and his references to Judah's political situation. The three chapters of the book are divided into two main parts; 1:1–2:27, which deals with the plague, and 2:28–3:21, which deals with what is to come and is the apocalyptic portion of the book.

There are a number of interesting points that should be mentioned about the book in general. Firstly, there is a feeling of quietness about it, even though it deals with a tremendous catastrophe. It is one of the few books in the Bible where we do not find war and bloodshed, and where the Israelites are not called miserable sinners who are going to lose everything because of their wrongdoing. This is partly due to the fact that Joel had a very narrow and exclusive idea of Yahweh and Judaism. He believed that the favor of Yahweh was given solely to the Israelites. Although he believed the catastrophe was a form of punishment, he does not blame the Israelites for anything specific.

Secondly, the background of the book is completely different from what we have previously encountered. At this time the people have settled down after two wars, and have achieved a certain degree of prosperity. They have also returned to their religion by a limited, ritualistic observance in the temple. Prior to this, worship was a rather tumultuous

mixture of Judaism and pagan ritual; it is now a confined formalism. Joel personally believed very much in the necessity of temple sacrifice and ritual. He also believed that it was equally important to worship with your heart.

Although they no longer indulge in their idolatrous orgies, Joel does believe that Israel has strayed, although he speaks more of Judah than of Israel. He believes the plague of locusts is not only punishment from God, but a forewarning of what is to come. As we have seen, most of the prophets believed in some form of a day of judgment, and Joel's picture of it is rather apocalyptic. He believes that the time will come when all that Israel has lost will be restored and they will be showered with God's grace and favor. Incidentally, an interesting point is made when he speaks of this outpouring of the Spirit. Although it will be limited to Israel, it is not limited to the male sex. This is unusual because, while in Israel women were held in high esteem, they were rarely found in the foreground. Joel says that the Spirit will be poured out upon the men and women, the sons and daughters of Israel. However, the nations that oppressed Israel will be brought together in the day of judgment, and not only will they be denied grace, but their punishment will be extremely severe.

The Interpreter's Bible feels that this might have been a prophecy given in the temple during the time when the plague actually occurred. It certainly is a most amazing and strangely beautiful description of the destruction that took place. Incidentally, we don't think of these plagues as happening in our time, but I witnessed one of them myself while staying at Palm Springs, California. It was one of the most fantastic things I have ever seen in my life. It seems that they have a plague of locusts about every three years, particularly when there are heavy rains in the mountains. In one night, not a leaf was left on the palm trees, and the pools, the streets, even the glassed-in newsstands and the specially built doors of the Biltmore were filled with locusts. I have a great sympathy for the Israelites, for it is an appalling thing, and the plague in Jerusalem lasted for quite a while.

The Interpreter's Bible had some delightful notes on 1:5, "Awake, ye drunkards." They said that the first people in Jerusalem to complain were the drunkards who could not get anything to drink or, if they found something, could not afford it. But seriously, you realize that the plague was not

only a catastrophe because of the scarcity of food, but because it produced an economic collapse. We had a taste of this in New York a few years ago when as a result of a truck drivers' strike no fresh food could reach the city. It is startling to realize that a city like this could be completely cut off. We might not suffer from a collapse as a result of locusts, but it could happen to us in a time of strike. At any rate, this was a time of misery for all the people. We have no idea how long it lasted, but in all recorded history there had never been a plague of locusts as bad as this.

CHAPTER 1 certainly shows that Joel has a very beautiful command of words, for it is a powerful description of a scene of complete devastation. There is nothing particularly symbolic here. He very clearly conveys the idea that the plague is a form of punishment sent by God, but the very clarity of his idea brings other thoughts to mind.

As you and I know, God never sends anything but good, so there must have been something in the Karma, to use a word with which we are now familiar, of the Israelites that had caused this plague. We also know that their originally pure faith had been diluted and polluted throughout the years, and this inevitably leaves its mark on the individual or group faith, which comes under the heading of Karma. In my lectures, I have often teased about our ability to control the weather; nevertheless we have that control. If we are children of God and have been given dominion over this earth, as the Bible tells us from beginning to end, then it stands to reason that we have control and dominion over the planes of being below us. Animals and nature itself is below us in consciousness, and therefore is under our dominion—if we believe it. We are told that a plague of locusts occurred, and we must ask, Why? Did God send it? Does He send any catastrophe? Of course He does not. We bring everything on ourselves. If the Israelites had been living as they should, if they had been positive and faithful to their concept of God, plagues of locusts and weather catastrophes could not take place.

I believe Joel knew this, although he does not state it openly. My impression is that he had a certain degree of intuition and knew a bit more than he said. He approaches the idea indirectly and leaves the conclusions to be drawn by others. He takes it from the point of view that this is the result of the errors of a prior generation. On the other hand,

he is perfectly sure that this is part of the day of judgment and, although he does not accuse the Israelites of a specific evil, he urges them to repent. If you are to repent, it must be because you have erred in some way. Actually, to repent means "to return to," to change one's mind about a concept.

I find it a point of great curiosity as to just what they did, or did not do, to cause this catastrophe. We know that in Joel's time the people were fairly devout worshippers in temple, and the fact that Joel felt he must exhort them to practice and live their religion may offer a possible explanation. Too, Joel considered one of the terrible consequences of the plague to be that not only were people starving, but that there was no food for the temple sacrifices. It is possible that he felt they ought to ask forgiveness because they could not make the proper sacrifices. It is interesting that this is one of the few eras in history where there were no kings and the people were led by the priests and teachers. Too, there are no political alliances or associations to be held against the Israelites: Assyria and Babylon are not mentioned, and the reference to Greece is not as a powerful nation, for it was before Alexander's triumphs. Neither political or religious transgression is mentioned. It could be that they had become soft and lethargic from good living.

CHAPTER 2 is a particularly beautiful chapter, and verse 25 is one of the loveliest we ever encounter. This chapter deals with what is to come: Israel is going to be saved. Regardless of how badly Israel had behaved, how badly she was berated by her prophets, there is not one who does not end by prophesying her eventual redemption. Yet history belies this on many occasions. There is little doubt of the fact that these men were sincere and had godly vision: what do you think affects their accuracy? Free will, of course. Very often they translated their interpretation in terms of a symbolic understanding of what Israel means: those who were accurate in their predictions confined their interpretation to Israel itself. We see Joel so certain that everything will be all right; there will be no more difficulties, there will be peace in our time, yet, in the 2500 years since then, we have yet to see it fulfilled.

CHAPTER 3 is an excellent description of Joel's concept

of the day of judgment, a day in which all of the Old Testament writers, and a few of the New Testament, believed. When we reach the book of Revelation, we will find much of the same form of symbolism. We might then ask, from where did John get his symbolism? I am perfectly sure that John did not read Joel. What, then, is the answer? The subconscious mind. All of us share the same subconscious knowledge, whether we personally know each other or not.

The chapter deals with the final judgment. The faithful Israelites will be delivered and protected, and the oppressing nations will be punished for what they have done. It is interesting, in noting that Joel also believed that the other nations were used as instruments by Yahweh to punish Israel, to see that almost none of the prophets ascribe the privilege of being saved to any nation other than Israel.

"I will restore to you the years that
the locust hath eaten." Joel 2:25.

There are certain texts that have always
symbolized beacon lights of God to me,
and this is one of them. There is none
of us who, at least once in his life,
has not been reduced to the point
of crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou
forsaken me?"

The words in Joel are an eternal con-
stant between God and each of us. For
those of you who have not read "The
Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson,
I recommend that you get it and read
it. This is another way of interpreting
the text in Joel. It might be called
the biography of the text.

D. M.

A M O S

With the book of Amos, which is the earliest of the prophetic books, we go back some three hundred years in time. Joel, as we remember, wrote around 400 B.C., and Hosea, in the last half of the eighth century: Amos precedes Hosea by 30 or 40 years. We have no answer as to how the Biblical order was determined, and it is confusing when we relate these books to their historical background. Incidentally, the fact that the Old Testament has twelve minor prophets and the New Testament follows a Cabalistic pattern and may be a conscious, or unconscious, reason for the elimination of the names of others who have contributed to the Bible as well as for its present order.

Amos' stature as one of the greatest of the twelve minor prophets has been established not only by the truth and power of his prophecies, but by the impact which he, as the first of the prophets, made on those who followed him. However, although he "set the tone," so to speak, for the others, in one point he was unique. Every one of the prophets we have read have predicted the doom of Israel through the punishment by the God of Vengeance Who, in the next moment, is going to restore them to their former place of honor and glory. Amos, in 760 B.C., had come to the conclusion that the time would come when Israel would never again be restored. He believed that this would take place in his own time. It did not, but he was accurate insofar as Israel was never again united as a prosperous nation, until the twentieth century. There were short periods during which the two kingdoms were united, but they were again divided each time. During the reign of Jeroboam II, under whom Amos lived, Israel was for the third and last time reunited and an extremely prosperous nation, and it was at this time that Amos said that there was no chance of restoration from this point on. We will find that the final verses of the ninth chapter speak of a restoration, but *The Interpreter's Bible* and other scholastic authorities believe that this was added by later editors in order to encourage the people. It definitely was not written by Amos.

The history of his time is rather interesting. For one thing, for the first time in a very long period of Israel's history, the people were enjoying great prosperity. Israel controlled the great trade routes and was therefore the center of tremendous commerce. This had come about as the result of power changing hands between the great nations of that time, much as we have seen it today in the East and in Europe. As we remember, under the rule of Ahab Israel had become very wealthy and powerful and Judah, the southern kingdom, shared in that wealth. This was followed by a decline in power during which they were defeated by the Aramaeans who were in turn defeated by the Assyrians. At this time, if you recall from the book of Isaiah, the Assyrian armies left Israel to attend to disturbances in their other colonies, and Israel once more rose to power. Their last great enemy had been stopped and they were certain that God had finally answered their prayers and this was their time of peace. Then, even as you and I, they fell into the trap.

The wars had brought about many changes. They enjoyed what we call a "boom" period, similar to what took place here after the first World War. And they, too, went a bit berserk. Many people became immensely wealthy and were referred to—a most amazing thing in Israel—as the class of nobility. They had summer homes and winter homes and let themselves indulge in orgies of spending, sensual pleasures and every other imaginable dissipation. From what we have seen so far in the Bible, this seems a bit incredible, but it continued for about 40 or 50 years. As their prosperity increased, their moral and ethical observances decreased. They took terrible advantage of the poor of their country. The poor could find no justice in the courts because the judges could be bribed. If a man was indebted for the smallest amount of money and could not pay, he was sold into slavery. All this was considered perfectly fitting. Strangely enough, they maintained their religious observances, but when they congregated to worship the occasion became so festive that it was no longer worship. They made the great mistake of considering God as participant in these observances, rather than as the Giver of all gifts. They felt that they were the chosen people and, since God had chosen them and brought them into this prosperity, therefore God was on their side and they could do anything they pleased. They also practiced some of the ancient

nature rites adopted from their neighbors—all under the guise of their religion. This was the pattern of life at this time in the entire country.

Their similarity to us is a strangely provoking one. They had emerged from very literal hells on a number of occasions prior to this. They had always been rescued. After their demonstrations, as we would call them, they said, "This is enough. I don't have to pray so hard. I don't have to stay on the beam. Let's relax and enjoy it." I doubt if any of us actually says words of this type, but what we do is become lax and feel it is not so necessary to meditate daily and watch our thoughts. Someone told me recently that things had been going so well for them that they had gotten out of the habit of meditation, and problems were piling up again. "What did you expect?" I asked, "Did you think God had given you a free pass? You have to do what the rest of us do. You either take care of your own house, or it is going to be upset." I think the Israelites were guilty of this and a few more things at that time and this is what Amos felt very strongly about.

Amos was a shepherd from a little village called Tekoa. He is traditionally described as a wealthy man who, nevertheless, tended his own flocks. He was an out-of-doors man, and far from unintelligent. Most of his education came from his contacts with people as he travelled through the various cities selling his flocks. He had an unusually strong power of perception, and was able to "pick up" the facts of a situation very readily, and analyze it accurately. He also had an extremely retentive memory. Furthermore, he was tremendously intuitive and very religious. His imagery is different from what we have seen so far in that it is almost wholly drawn from nature, with which he lived in constant contact. He sees the power of God as nature, but he never makes the mistake of believing that nature is God, which is one of the mistakes of the Israelites, as it is with us.

It would be very interesting if we would visualize Amos for a moment. We usually picture prophets, or visionaries, as being men with ascetic faces and slender bodies, who burn with a fiery spiritual energy but are physically rather frail. Amos, as a shepherd, was anything but frail. He must have been a rather big and brawny man with his feet very much on the ground, and yet this man had visions. We cannot

think of him as being fanciful, or a dreamer of dreams since, from the wealth he had acquired, he must have been a very good business man. It is a very fascinating idea to which we should give some thought.

Amos was very observant. On his many trips to the cities, he watched what was happening to his people and, being a very sincere and devout man, felt strongly that they were making the mistake of their lives. So he prayed. Then came his visions. It is interesting that of all the prophets, many of whom were great and prophesied events which did take place, Amos is the one man, looking back from our own time, whose complete prophecy came true. Never again was the nation of Israel united into one kingdom until our time, and as a democracy it is not the same type of nation as it was then. He certainly exemplified the saying "a prophet is without honor in his own country." When he felt the call he went to the city and said what he had to say. His statement that Israel would never again be restored to her former honor and glory certainly did not make him popular.

Amos' contention, which he felt very deeply, was that God was not an easy partner. Yahweh was All-Powerful, and a powerful destructive force against His enemies. The concept of Yahweh had been linked to the death dealing storm gods of early history, and was so regarded even at this time. However, since He had drawn Israel into a very close relationship with Him and saved them time and again, they came to believe that the force of His power would never be turned against them. I think they realized very dimly that some of the visciditudes they had gone through were because Yahweh punished them by means of other nations, but He had always restored them. Amos was certain that the time had come when this would no longer take place. He knew that, in addition to the concept of an All-Powerful God, they had also received from Moses the concept of a God Who was All-Righteousness, and they had forgotten the Law of Righteousness.

The first time this feeling crystallized for Amos was when he saw the destruction caused by a swarm of locusts on the plains. As he watched this devastation he had the definite feeling that this was what was going to happen to Israel: the nation would be made as desolate as the plains were after the plague. He felt that he must gather himself together and do what he could, but he was not too happy about the prospect.

As we have seen, it is a wonderful quality of the prophets that, although they may not like their job, they always do it.

Not only was he badly received by his own people, but by the priests and other prophets as well. At that time each town had a guild which each prophet had to join. It was similar to our unions of today. Amos was completely independent at all times, and did not join. When he came to a particular town and gave his prediction, the guild would unite with the people in trying to drive him out of town. As a matter of fact, when he arrived at Bethel, we find that he had quite a fight with the head priest there and was forced to leave. Time marches on but people remain much the same.

Nevertheless, the book of Amos has left an indelible mark on the history of Israel and the world. It is all the more astonishing, since his period of prophecy covered less than two years and it is the only book that does not predict the complete restoration of Israel. It is composed of three parts: the visions, oracles and narratives; and contains only nine chapters.

CHAPTER 1. One of the things Amos came to tell the Israelites was that Yahweh was interested not only in them, but also in the other nations. They really believed, as we have said before, that God was their special property. *The Interpreter's Bible* tells us that they looked on God as a "national asset." This, too, is frequent in our time. As you may recall, the Kaiser said, "Me and God," and even we have a tendency to think God is on our side. (I frankly think He should be, although I may be a bit prejudiced.) The same idea is held by the various religious sects of our time. Amos points out that all nations, not only Israel, come under the wrath of God. Perhaps the greatest point that he makes is that you cannot take God for granted, which is something we all try to do. For instance, I often use the phrase "too many people think God is just a messenger boy," because many think that if they speak the Word God will do it. But God doesn't do anything for us, He does it through and with us. Little by little we all must learn this.

Amos begins with an indictment of the nations. He speaks of the three and four transgressions of Damascus: 3 plus 4 equals 7, Cabalistically, and refers to an infinite number of sins.

The number 3 refers to the sins of the mentality which are spiritual pride, idolatry and greed. The number 4 pertains to the physical plane and its sins of lust and cruelty, dishonesty and materialism. Here the people were very satisfied in their wealth and cruel to those poorer than they which was the cause of their downfall.

All the nations were guilty of this, but Israel is more strongly condemned because they had decided that they were the chosen of God. As we know, no one actually is, and this, I think, has been one of the great tragedies of time, because this idea has been the basic cause of the difficulties of the Jews. The moment you say "I am chosen. I am better than you," that moment you breed enmity. On the other hand, if you do choose God, as Abraham and Moses chose for them, then you must live in accordance with your choice. In the same way, if you become a metaphysician, and you alone can make that decision, then you are not only given the privilege of knowing your God as a result of your choice, but you must accept the attendant responsibility. That is the responsibility which the Israelites shirked at this phase of their history. In a similar way, this responsibility is stressed far more strongly if you are in metaphysics than if you are not, because one of the first things we must accept in metaphysics is our own responsibility for ourselves. Until we have some realization of this we are not ready for metaphysics, and when we do accept it we must live in accordance with the Law to the best of our ability. When we do not, we get spanked. Here the Israelites proclaimed themselves to be the elect of God and then acted like their neighbors, which could only lead to trouble. The neighboring nations—Syria, Philistia, Tyrus and Edom—are each accused of a particular crime, and each of these nations has since passed from the pages of history as a world power.

In CHAPTER 2 the indictments continue with an oracle against Moab and, with the indictment of Judah, we are brought to the core of Amos' message. The indictment of Israel is the most grievous of all. In addition to the sins which we touched on in the introduction are those of temple pledges which were stolen, and temple prostitution. The latter is spoken of in the phrase "a man and his father will go in unto the same maid," which refers to a temple harlot, not to incest, and was an act adopted from the religious

observances of their neighbors. This was definitely not to be tolerated and Amos tells them this in no uncertain terms. It is really a wonder that he escaped with his life. He definitely made an impression on them, and told them what would happen to them. They had broken their covenant for the last time, and they were going to pay for it.

CHAPTER 3 is his sermon on the destruction of Israel. He very beautifully overlooks the separation between the northern and southern kingdoms and instead refers to them as one family. Nevertheless he stresses the uniqueness of Israel's (the northern kingdom) relationship to God. Once again, the chapter emphasizes the fact that it is a question of the privilege of being the chosen of God versus the responsibility of that position. He says that they are abusing their privilege and neglecting their responsibility, and for this reason they are doomed. God, who is also a God of Wrath, is through with them.

CHAPTER 4 is an inspiring chapter—Amos certainly had a fine mind. He chose his words for their power and effect and the first verse certainly does not give a very charming description of the Samarian women. He speaks of them as "kine" and accuses them of just about everything. He accuses them of a selfish greed because the more they had, the more they insisted their husbands get for them. (We haven't changed too much, have we?) Then he tells them what their fate will be: they will starve and die in the streets, for God will bring drought on the city. When he speaks of the hooks used to drag the carcasses away, he is describing the way they brought dead animals to the refuse heaps outside the city. He lambastes them and then, in his most sarcastic tone, tells them to come and worship (verses 4, 5). The word Gilgal refers to a circle of stones, and was a place of worship. This sermon was delivered in Bethel at the occasion of a religious festival and he furiously resented what they were doing in the form of sacrifice. He speaks sarcastically when he says they bring their tithes every three years because they actually tithed over a period of three days. They would tithe and then feast on the remains of the animals and God was supposed to feast as well. The same thing would take place on the second and third days, only on the third day the wealthy would pay increased tithes to impress, not God, but their fellow Israelites: they would "proclaim and publish the

free offerings." We see this today with names on stained glass windows. Amos then speaks of the fact that no matter what he said they seemed completely unhearing. It is true that we have no record of any change that Amos was able to cause in the people, but they undoubtedly grew increasingly uncomfortable as he persisted.

CHAPTER 5, I think, is very beautiful. *The Interpreter's Bible* calls this "The Death of a People," and says that it is "an elegy over the fall of the kingdom," in the rhythm of a dirge. You can imagine what it must have been like, in the midst of all the festivities, to see Amos appear in mourner's clothes. The custom was (and even today it is true in orthodox Judaism) for the mourner to put ashes on his head and rend his clothes and lament. Amos got their attention in this way in order to tell them what he had to say, and it took a great deal of courage.

I think one of the loveliest parts is in verses 14 and 15 where he tells them what true religion is. It is very close to what Moses said in Deuteronomy. He tells them that this is the way, and it is equally true for us. It is not a question of giving up things that are pleasing, but it is to put God first. Amos then tells them if they do not put God first the worst will happen for Yahweh has done too much for them and will do no more. He says they are going to be sent into exile far beyond Damascus, away from the Palestine of which they are so proud, and they will never be reunited again. This is actually one of the few times in the Bible where we see an instance where, whether they repent or not, it is too late.

CHAPTER 6. In verses 4-17, Amos very ironically describes the self-indulgent life of the leaders. With this description and the opening line, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" he openly blames the priests and leaders for, in their indulgence and pride, bringing Israel to this pass. We should not forget that the priests were a very powerful group to contend with, and this fact plus the antagonism of the guilds and the people certainly did not prepare an easy way for Amos' message. He reminds the people that they knew better. They had been called back to the Mosaic tradition time and again. They did what many people do today; they said, "The priests know so much more than we do that we will just follow them." Since it was a most comfortable way of rationalizing,

they willingly followed them. Amos warns that the time has come for them to face the consequences of their choice. He details the fall of the city and severely blames them for their refusal to face the truth. The truth is something we all have a dislike of facing. It often is not the most pleasant of meetings, which is one reason I think people who become good metaphysical students do have an invisible badge of honor, because in order to be a good student you must begin by facing yourself. You must face yourself in the realization that you and you alone are responsible for the good and bad in your life, which means that you cannot hold resentments and you must learn to see the Presence of God in the other fellow. It is not easy, but it is the only way. This is the Law and we must learn to use it.

So Amos warns them that they have come to the end of God's patience. In our terminology he is saying, "You have come to the end of your good Karma, my friend. You have misused the Principle of God to such a degree that you are now going to suffer the effect." One thing is always true: "Whatsoever we sow, that we shall reap." With verse 7, Amos begins to deal with their fate. In verses 10 and 11 he paints a picture of the horrors of siege, which must have created a little uneasiness in the minds of his hearers. The final verses of the chapter speak of the end of the people guilty of corruption and pride. It is really a miracle that Amos was not killed. You know what can happen to a crowd when it hears things it doesn't want to hear: crowds have often gotten so out of hand that they have endangered the life of the speaker. Apparently he had divine protection because nothing is mentioned here about any physical injury.

CHAPTER 7 is a bit different from the others in its form. It is a series of four visions and a narrative dealing with Amos. The narrative tells us that apparently Amos reached the higher political and religious groups at Bethel, for the king, Jeroboam II, made his headquarters in that city. The head priest, Amaziah, greatly resented Amos and his message of doom, and told him, very sarcastically, to go down to Judah and make his living there. Amos tells him that he is not a prophet or priest by profession, but a herdsman who was picked by God to give this message. He predicts that Amaziah and his family will share in Israel's doom. We have no way of knowing if this came true, but it is more than

probable that it did. Despite his uncordial reception, Amos persisted in prophesying.

The visions themselves bear out my belief that Amos is one of the most beautiful and concise prophets of the Bible. They are simple visions, with extremely simple and lovely imagery, most of it colored by the phase of God with which he was most closely in contact, which was nature. He saw and was part of these things—locusts, earthquakes, the changing seasons—and they impressed him very strongly with the power of God. The first vision deals with the locusts in which he saw the complete annihilation of Israel. He pleads with God to save Israel and He seems to agree. Then, he has a second vision of a devouring fire and again he pleads with God and once more the decision is altered. As a result of the vision of the plumb line he gets the impression that God is waiting to see the effects of Amos' prophecies on the people, and that since He finds them still wanting, He reverts to His original decision of sending plagues to be followed by the scattering of Israel.

CHAPTER 8. In verses 1–3 we are given the picture of a basket of summer fruit as a symbol of Israel at that point in her history. Summer fruit is full, lush and plentiful, and this is true of Israel's state. In verses 4–7 Amos says that in spite of all the lushness, there is in reality nothing but evil which will bring about their impending doom. He once more cites some of their sins, and in verses 8–10 tells them this doom will come through earthquakes, darkness and mourning, ending in a tremendous famine where the people will die from hunger and thirst. The symbolism is quite obvious, but it is interesting to see that he does not speak of wars or oppression by other nations, as much as the fierce and destructive powers of nature that will be turned against Israel.

CHAPTER 9 brings us to the end of the book of Amos. The chapter deals with the utter and final end of Israel. In his vision, verses 1–4, and the hymn in verses 5 and 6, he very clearly draws a picture of God finding them no matter where they go or try to hide. In verse 7 he points out the relationship of God to people other than the Israelites. As often as this has been said by the prophets, it has yet to take root. In some of the books of the later prophets this concept is mingled with the view of God sitting somewhere in the heavens directly above Israel and looking after the other people indirectly, by means of

messengers. But every so often we have a prophet who points out that God is a God to all the inhabitants of the earth, not just to Israel. This is a concept that has yet to be grasped.

In verses 8-10 Amos gives the final judgment. God is going to purge and judge them, and they are faced with their imminent doom. The book of Amos actually ends with the 10th verse, for verses 11-15 add the traditionally happy ending which *The Interpreter's Bible* says was written by later editors.

The Book of Amos very clearly points out that the time has come to face Reality. Reality does not include a God who has chosen a people to worship him, and because of His choice, He will always punish, forgive and restore them.

The God of Amos is the God who created Power which is controlled by His Law. The constant abuse of that Power and Law must finally reap what has been imposed upon it. And so, even as it is with each of us, Israel would pay. And - it has.

This not only applies to the Israel of Bible times. It applies to each and every human being then, now and until the end of Time.

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Ps. 19:7.

m. m

Thank you, and God bless
you.

Mildred Mason

*FORMULA FOR DEMONSTRATION

(A demonstration is answered prayer..
the manifestation of the Presence,
Power and Love of God.)

" **A**sk And Ye Shall Receive,

Seek And Ye Shall Find,

Knock And It Shall Be

Opened unto you"

- *JESUS*

(*The formula is ASK Mildred Mann)

Seven Steps in Demonstration

Desire: Get a strong enthusiasm for that which you want in your life, a real longing for something which is not there now.

Decision: Know definitely what it is that you want, what it is that you want to do, or have, and be willing to pay in spiritual values.

Ask: [When sure and enthusiastic] ask for it in simple, concise language...

Believe: in the accomplishment with strong faith, consciously and subconsciously].

Work at it ... a few minutes daily in seeing yourself in the finished picture. Never outline details, but rather see yourself enjoying the particular thing ...

Feel gratitude. Always remember to say, "Thank you God," and begin to feel the gratitude in your heart. The most powerful prayer we can ever make are those three words, provided we really feel it.

Feel expectancy. Train yourself to live in a state of happy expectancy ... Act it until it becomes part of you, as it must and will.

These are the seven steps. Follow them and they will bring you whatever it is that you need.

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Mildred Mann

