

“Ephraim is a Cake Not turned”: the Fruits of the False Knowledge of God According to Hos 7:8-16

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ABSTRACT: The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, called *What is man? A Journey through Biblical Anthropology* points out in Chapter 1 (“The Human being created by God”), par. 33 that “[t]he failure to recognise the ‘created’ nature of the human being is made explicit in history as an arrogant presumption...” (46) and in par. 34 that “[a]n extraordinary endowment of intelligence, wealth and power gives the human being the illusion of being equal to God. To expose this deception of conscience the Lord predicts the inglorious end of the arrogant” (47). Many of the critiques and prophecies of Hosea are proclaimed in a period of Israelite history which reflects false and arrogant presumptions of the people of God. During the reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 784–753 BC) Israel experienced economic growth, territorial expansion and peace with the Arameans and the Judeans. However, especially following the Syro-Ephraimite war (734–732 BC) it became clear that Israel’s political and military manoeuvres and his trust in his own strength can only lead to disaster. This is one of the recurring messages of Hosea who points out that the only way to stand is to believe and trust in God alone. Many of his images and concepts describe Israel’s false beliefs and presumptions which are based on the erroneous knowledge of God. Hos 7:8-16 can be read as an essence of this message. Its literary devices and notions emphasize that while Israel appears to be potent, he is in fact impotent, the undiscerning nation’s “strength” is withering away. Israel seems wise and knowledgeable when he is in fact unwise and does not know the way of life. In the context of the entire book this passage affirms that the basis of the relation of God and Israel is always the right knowledge of him which entails the right knowledge of the self and of its place in the universe. One of God’s greatest mercies for creation and Israel is that he is available, he can be sought, found and known through his words and deeds. Hosea as the mediator of God conveys to Israel that they can call upon God, seek him and know him. While his message is for a special historical period and circumstances, it is relevant for all ages when humans ignore their created nature and aspire to be powerful, self-sufficient, intelligent in economic, scientific, political and military matters.

KEYWORDS: Book of Hosea, Knowledge of God, Israel’s folly, Literary devices

Introduction: The Most Important Literary Features of the Book of Hosea

Prophetic writings employ a great variety of poetic devices which on the one hand highlight the message of the author, and on the other, reflect the historical, theological and tradition-historical contexts in which these literary devices were produced. Among Hosea’s literary devices we find metaphors, similes, parallelism and poetic repetition varied

by means of wordplays.¹ As John A. Dearman observes, “Hosea has the distinction of being the prophetic book most poetic in the employment of metaphor and wordplay, and most historical with respect to allusions to prior national traditions.”² He also notes that the metaphors in the book are not simply literary devices. They demonstrate that Hosea thinks metaphorically in order to convey his message – i.e. instruct his audience – by using conceptual comparisons.³ As Francis Landy notes, “metaphors and other figures of speech complicate meaning, and how they become instruments for the subversion of one’s implicit understandings of the world.”⁴ For Hosea’s comparisons nature and history are revelatory of God whose portrayal is diverse, striking and complex as is the portrayal of Israel and his relationship with God.⁵ The complexity of the metaphors and similes can be demonstrated in a variety of passages, such as 14:5-9 – according to which Israel is a plant, but God is also described as a plant – or as Hos 8:7 which implies that Israel can be described as a plant and the one who plants; as “a farmer, Israel has reaped what it has sown; as a plant, Israel suffers from the drought that consumes the land.”⁶ God can be depicted as husband (2:4.7.16), father (11:1-4), physician (7:1), lion (5:14; 11:10; 13:7-8), leopard (13:7), fowler (7:12), she-bear (13:8), dew (14:6), dawn (6:3), rain (6:3), a cypress (14:9), moth (5:12), and decay (5:12).⁷ This demonstrates that the choice of images for the deity can be taken from

- 1 See J.A. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2010) 10–16; G. Morris, *Prophecy, Poetry and Hosea* (JSOTSup 219; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1996) 45–100; B.E. Kelle, *Hosea 2. Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (SBLAcBib 20; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2005) esp. 1–17; G. Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert. Metaphors, Models, and Themes in Hosea 4–14* (Connaître la Bible Old Testament 43; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 1996); P.A. Kruger, “Prophetic Imagery. On Metaphors and Similes in the Book of Hosea,” *JNSL* 14 (1988) 143–151; J. Middlemas, “Divine Presence in Absence,” *Divine Presence and Absence in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism. Studies of the Sofia Kovalevskaja Research Group on Early Jewish Monotheism* (eds. N. MacDonald – I.J. de Hulster) (FAT 61/2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013) II, 183–211, esp. 204–206.
- 2 See Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 10, and his excursus on Similes and Metaphors for Political Actions in Hosea 4–14 on pages 11–16. Cf. also Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 1–17; Eidevall, *Grapes*; Kruger, “Prophetic Imagery,” 143–151.
- 3 Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 10, 11–16. Mason D. Lancaster (*Like a Lion and the Morning Dawn. Reconceiving Yahweh Through the Metaphors of Hosea 4–14* [PhD Diss. Wheaton College; Wheaton, IL 2020] vi) also argues that metaphors cluster in places of rhetorical significance.
- 4 F. Landy, *Hosea* (Readings; Sheffield: Phoenix Press 2011) viii; Ehud Ben Zvi (*Hosea* [FOTL 21A/1; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2005] 179) emphasizes the role of metaphors in connection with the worldviews of not only the author but also the target readership.
- 5 Cf. Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 10–11. See also Middlemas, “Divine Presence,” 204–206, who writes that “[m]etaphors are more than a literary device that substitutes for or replaces another idea... When many metaphors are used, they qualify and subvert each other... Some of the most imaginative and illustrative uses of divine metaphor appear in literature almost exclusively focused on the issue of idolatry” (*ibidem*, 206).
- 6 R.A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation. Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*, https://www.academia.edu/1531038/Creator_and_Creation_Nature_in_the_Worldview_of_Ancient_Israel [access: 7.06.2022] 157. In his examination of Hos 8:7, Ben Zvi (*Hosea*, 179) considers a natural process such as sowing and harvesting as notional ground for the metaphor. Middlemas (“Presence and Absence,” 204) notes that in Hosea the “deity is attributed with conveying divine messages via figurative speech” (Hos 12:10: “I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions” NRSV).
- 7 H.W. Wolff, *Hosea. A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1974) xxiv; Lancaster (*Like a Lion*) analyses 105 metaphors for God in 15 clusters within Hos 4–14; Hos 7:8-16 is

the human realm (parent, husband), from the animal world (she-bear, leopard, moth), and natural phenomena (dew, rain, an evergreen tree, dry rot etc.).⁸ However, many of the descriptions underline the priority and incomparability of God who is ultimately unfathomable, distinctly other, and language can only provide a partial portrait.⁹

Apart from the penchant for these literary devices, Hosea's work is also characterized by the use of verbs as “to know,” “to seek,” “to turn,” “to reject,” “to leave,” “to forget,” “to love” in the depiction of the relationship of God and Israel. Finally, the book's readers can immediately notice the rapid switch of not only the metaphors but also the person of the speaker.¹⁰

1. The Significance and Purpose of the Literary Devices in Terms of Hosea's Teaching

The literary traits summed up above generally serve one overarching purpose: to draw attention to the nature and reasons of Israel's apostasy, his present precarious state while reflecting upon the past and the future at the same time. Many of the author's critiques and prophecies are proclaimed in a period of Israelite history which reflects false and arrogant presumptions of the people of God due to economic growth, territorial expansion and peace with the Arameans and the Judeans. But especially following the Syro-Ephraimite war (734–732 BC) it became clear that Israel's political and military manoeuvres and his trust in his own strength can only lead to disaster.¹¹ This is one of the recurring messages of Hosea who points out on the one hand Israel's sins and on the other, that the only way to stand is to believe and trust in God alone.

The iniquities or ills of Israel mentioned by the author throughout the book are only visible symptoms of a more serious illness or condition: Israel does not correctly know God; he has false perceptions of God. In this regard Hosea's work is similar to that of other 8th century prophets. The lack of or the incorrect knowledge of God is the root of the religious, ethical and social sins. If Israel's perception of God were correct, he would know what God expects of him. Hosea uses the words “to know” and “knowledge” to express this tenet on

part of 7:8–8:1 (Cluster 7).

⁸ Middlemas, “Presence and Absence,” 205.

⁹ Middlemas, “Presence and Absence,” 205. The metaphor of illness and healing is a central one in the book in the form of explicit reference to the terms “illness” and “healing” (e.g. Hos 5:13; 6:1; 7:1.5; 11:3; 14:4) and allusions to their aspects (e.g. Hos 6:2; 7:9.14; 9:4.11–12.14.16; 13:16; 14:5–7), and God's continuous love for Israel is an important theme in 3:1. These are connected to the ideas of despair and hope in the life of Israel. Cf. S.-H. Hong, *The Metaphor of Illness and Healing in Hosea and Its Significance in the Socio-Economic Context of Eighth-Century Israel and Judah* (SBL 95; New York: Lang 2006); see also P.A. Kruger, “Yahweh's Generous Love. Eschatological Expectations in Hosea 14:2–9,” *OTE* 1 (1983) 27–48.

¹⁰ See also B. Oestreich, *Metaphors and Similes for Yahweh in Hosea 14:2–9 (1–8). A Study of Hoseanic Pictorial Language* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang 1998) 228.

¹¹ D. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC 31; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1988) 9; Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 21–22; H. Jagersma, *Izrael története az ószövetségi korban* (Budapest: Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya 1991) 118–126.

a number of occasions.¹² In this context he scolds not only the nation as a whole but also its leaders and priests. According to 4:6 the origin of the many sins of Israel is the lack of the knowledge of God or its rejection: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (NRSV). 6:6 emphasizes – as does Mic 6:6 – that love and God’s knowledge are more important than to merely fulfil cultic precepts. The opposite of being aware of the blessings of God is forgetting them which is connected with forgetting the Creator himself (2:15; 8:14; 13:6). It is clear that knowledge in Hosea is not abstract, theoretical knowledge about the existence of God, but is closely connected to living according to the will of God.

From the numerous historical allusions (the tradition concerning the patriarchs [12:3-5], the exodus [2:17; 11:1; 12:14], the wilderness wanderings [9:10; 13:5], the blessings of the promised land [2:10]) God’s mercy and love can also be discerned for Israel, the divine activity is also revelatory. Israel cannot say that he does not know these, therefore he is accountable to God for his actions. On a number of occasions – both in the historical allusions and other passages – the critique against Israel is formulated using the “I” form in which the deity speaks in order to emphasize his love and compassion towards Israel.¹³ The topic of covenant is also related to the topic of the knowledge of God. Israel’s apostasy is his faithlessness to the covenant (6:7; 8:1) which is manifested in the rejection of God and his will which entails all other sins, whether they are of cultic or social nature. Israel has violated God’s sovereign right to him. His covenant relation to God and its violation are expressed through the metaphor of marriage and marital infidelity.¹⁴ Israel’s “harlotry” is the acceptance of certain elements of Canaanite religion – most probably related to the worship of Baal the god of fertility and weather among others – which included the making of graven images, idols of the deity (8:6; 13:2). Another visible symptom of the false perception of God and of Israel’s own condition is the lack of concern for the neighbour. Hos 4:1-2 is revealing: “Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed.” (NRSV) The sins committed in the royal court are also an important topic according to the prophet for whom the greatest sin in this matter is ignoring God’s will: “They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge.” (8:4a NRSV, see also 13:9-11). These leaders – kings and those who make them kings – are guilty not only of assassinations but also of political manoeuvres in the international spheres. Hosea’s message is similar to that of Isaiah: only God can help, not foreign nations or their armed forces (cf. 5:13; 7:9; 8:9; 12:2).

12 Out of the twenty occurrences the stem is employed sixteen times in verbal (2:10.22; 5:3.4.9; 6:3 [2x]; 7:9 [2x]; 8:2.4; 9:7; 11:3; 13:4.5; 14:10) and four times in noun form (4:1.6 [2x]; 6:6).

13 See also Middlemas, “Presence and Absence,” 203–204.

14 Dearman (*Book of Hosea*, 44–49) considers the metaphor of household to be a root metaphor in Hosea.

2. The Analysis of Hos 7:8-16¹⁵

Hos 7:8-16 is in the context of chapters 7–8 which especially deal with the folly of Israel in political and international matters.¹⁶ However, political and cultic rejection of God is difficult to separate since mixing with other nations means not only distrusting the power and mercy of God but also trusting one's or other's own “power” and going after other nations' gods. Charges of rebelling against God or rejecting him fit the sphere of both politics and cult.¹⁷ Therefore 7:8-16 is an important passage in the whole of the book and is representative of some of the most important problems in terms of Israel's actions.

8 אֶפְרַיִם בְּעַמִּים הוּא יִתְבּוֹלֵל אֶפְרַיִם הִיא עֵגֶה בְּלִי הַפּוֹכָה:
9 אֶכְלוּ זָרִים כּוֹחוֹ וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע גַּם־שִׁיבָה זָרְקָה בּוֹ וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע:
10 וְעֵגֶה גְּאוּן־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּפְנֵיו וְלֹא־שָׁבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא בִקְשׂוּהוּ בְּכָל־זֹאת:

11 וַיְהִי אֶפְרַיִם כִּיּוֹנָה פוֹתָה אֵין לָב מִצְרַיִם קָרְאוּ אֲשׁוּר הֶלְכוּ:
12 כְּאֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ אֶפְרוֹשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם רִשְׁתִּי כְּעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲוִירֵיהֶם אֶסְרֶם כְּשֹׁמֵעַ לַעֲדָתָם:
13 אִי לָהֶם כִּי־נִדְדוּ מִמֶּנִּי שֹׁד לָהֶם כִּי־פָשְׁעוּ בִּי וְאֲנִכִּי אֶפְדֶּם וְהִמָּה דִּבְרוּ עָלַי כְּזָבִים:

14 וְלֹא־יָזְקוּ אֵלַי בְּלֶבֶם כִּי יִילִילוּ עַל־מִשְׁכַּבְתָּם עַל־דָּגָן וְחִירוֹשׁ יִתְגַּדְּרוּ וְסוּרוּ בִּי:
15 וְאֲנִי יִסְרֹתִי חֲזֻקָתִי וְרוּעָתָם וְאֵלַי יִשְׁבּוּרֶדֶעַ:
16 יִשׁוּבוּ לֹא עַל הֵיוּ כִקְשֶׁת רַמְיָהּ יָפְלוּ בַחֲרֹב שְׂרִיקָהּ מוֹעֵם לְשׁוֹנָם זֹו לַעֲגֹם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

8 Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

9 Foreigners devour his strength, but he does not know it;¹⁸

gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, but he does not know it.¹⁹

10 Israel's pride testifies²⁰ against him; yet they do not return to the Lord their God, or seek him, for all this.²¹

11 Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without sense; they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria.

¹⁵ The translation of the Masoretic text is from NRSV, unless otherwise indicated. The examination of the passage is based on the final text. For a summary of the views on the composition of the passage and the book, see especially G.A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea. A Redaction Critical Investigation* (SBLDS 102; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1987) and J. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (Berlin: De Gruyter 1993) esp. 58–73.

¹⁶ Cf. Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 12, who points out that political imagery appears more frequently in these chapters than elsewhere in the book. Yehezkel Kaufmann (*The Religion of Israel From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* [London: Allen & Unwin 1960] 375–376) also notes the importance of the topic of military and political ventures among the sins of Israel in connection with the failures of the monarchy within Hos 4–14.

¹⁷ Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 11.

¹⁸ The verbs in v. 9a can be understood in past tense.

¹⁹ The expression “he does not know it” can be understood in past tense in both instances. F.I. Andersen – D.N. Freedman, *Hosea. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1980) 462, translate “Mold is sprinkled upon him, but he has not realized it” (7:9b).

²⁰ The verb עָגָה (“to respond/testify”) is used in Hosea in other instances (2:17.23-24; 5:5; 7:10) and can be translated with this meaning here.

²¹ It is also possible to read: “yet they did not return to the Lord their God, or seek him, for all this.”

12 As they go, I will cast my net over them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will discipline them²² according to the report made to their assembly.²³

13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me.²⁴

14 They do not cry to me from the heart,²⁵ but they wail upon their beds; they gash themselves²⁶ for grain and wine; they rebel against me.

15 It was I who trained and strengthened their arms, yet they plot evil against me.

16 They turn to that which does not profit;²⁷ they have become like a defective bow; their officials shall fall by the sword because of the rage of their tongue. So much for their babbling in the land of Egypt.

The passage has points of connection with 7:1-7 through the image of baking (see the image of oven in 7:4.6-7)²⁸ and through the divine speech in the form of accusatory laments.²⁹ Nevertheless, v. 8 begins a new section. While 7:1-7 deals primarily with the internal affairs of Israel, 7:8-16 treats his disastrous international and political manoeuvres.³⁰

22 Both the verbs רָצַח (“to chastise,” “to discipline,” “to teach,” “to train”) and רָצַח (“to tie,” “to bind”) fit the context but this would be their only occurrence in the Hiphil stem. The idea of binding would continue the image of net. However, the notion of chastising seems to make better sense regardless of how we translate the final clause of the verse (see below). רָצַח is employed in Hos 7:15 and 10:10 (twice, rendered with $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ in the LXX in both instances). See also Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 462, 470–471; K. Tóth, *Hóseás próféta könyve 1–7. részének magyarázata* (Budapest: Református Theológiai Akadémia 1978) 61; Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 206; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116, 122.

23 The Hebrew word עֵדָה can mean “assembly,” “gathering” of people, or “flock” in the case of animals, such as birds. The latter seems appropriate because of the first half of the verse. However, to appreciate the verse as a simile, it is more probable to assume that only v. 12a contains the images of birds and catching, and v. 12b refers to the nation. If we read עֵדָה (“testimony”) instead of עֵדָה , the clause may refer to a treaty. עֵדָה is in parallel with statutes and covenant in 2 Kgs 17:15. The LXX has a different rendering in Hos 7,12b: “by the report of their affliction.” It may be the result of reading רָצַח (from רָצַח : “wickedness,” “evil,” “trouble,” “affliction”) for עֵדָה . Cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116.

24 The verb “to lie” can be rendered in the past tense.

25 The verb “to cry” can be translated in the past tense.

26 Neither the word גָּר (“to sojourn,” “to be a stranger”), nor the term גָּרַר (“to drag away”) fits the context of the second half of the verse. It is more probable that the text contained גָּרַר (“to cut”) reflecting the copyist’s error of confusing the consonants ר and ג . See also Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 462, 475; Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 207; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116, 123; P. Czanik, *Hóseás könyvének magyarázata* (Budapest – Gödöllő: Iránytű Kiadó 1996) 93–94, 97.

27 The Hebrew expression is problematic here. The following readings are possible: (They turn) to עֵל (the yoke), cf. Czanik, *Hóseás könyvének magyarázata*, 94; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116, 124; (They turn) but not to עֵל me (reading עֵל for עֵל), Tóth, *Hóseás próféta könyve*, 60–61; (They turn) to עֵל Baal (reading עֵל for the problematic expression), Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 207; (They turn) to עֵל no-god, taking עֵל as a reference to a deity whose name may have become shorter perhaps due to the copyist’s error, but which was similar to עֵלִיִּן (Most High), see also Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 463, 477; (They turn) to עֵל no-profit (from the verb עֵל : “to profit,” “to benefit”), see Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 207, 214; cf. Jer 2:8. The LXX renders “They have turned aside to nothing.”

28 See also Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, 151.

29 Cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 117, who also notes some of the catchwords providing a link between the subsections of chapter 7. Cf. also Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 206.

30 Emmanuel Nwaoru (“The Role of Images in the Literary Structure of Hosea VII 8–VIII 14,” *VT* 54/2 [2004] 216–222) notes that the structural and functional unity of Hos 7:8–8:14 is strengthened by literary devices such as metaphors.

7:8-16 can be divided into 3 subsections: vv. 8–10 contain images related to food or consumption, where v. 10 is a culmination of the passage; in vv. 11–12 the author employs images taken from the animal world, and in most of vv. 13–16 the prophet uses direct speech instead of metaphors concerning Israel and the impending punishment.

The Hebrew term *בָּלַל* (“to mix,” “to mingle,” “to confuse”) in v. 8a is used in the Old Testament for instance in the context of mixing oil and flour with the result of unleavened cakes mixed with oil as in Exod 29:2. Another usage of the verb, however, can take us closer to its meaning in the present context. It also appears in Gen 11:9 according to which at Babel God confused the language of all the Earth. In Hos 7:8 it symbolizes Israel’s political actions, when looking for foreign alliances. As a result, he becomes entangled with foreign nations – some of which are greater and more powerful than him –, ending up confused and even more vulnerable. This political manoeuvring reflects Israel’s folly and pride at the same time which in the end resulted in the catastrophe of the loss of Samaria in 722 BC. The nations with which Israel mixed himself can be those mentioned by name in the book (Egypt and Assyria), but also other people of the region, the Arameans, the Philistines, or the Canaanites in general. Some of these nations made a covenant with Israel either before the Assyrian invasions of the 9th and 8th centuries or more narrowly during the last decades of the history of Israel, especially following the death of Jeroboam II, when some of Israel’s last kings were pro-, while others anti-Assyrians.³¹ Mixing with them entailed danger both politically and in terms of cult for a people who were in a special position as the elected people of God, and election entailed special responsibilities and consequences.

The second half of 7:8 employs the image of baking, possibly reflecting wisdom ideas. It compares Ephraim to a cake, more precisely a flat bread not turned. Such a bread would be raw on the one side and burnt on the other, unfit for human consumption. Since the baker’s purpose is to produce a good quality product, the inedible bread must be the result of a fault or failure occurring during the baking procedure.³² The image implies a false perception of Ephraim who appears to be potent, like risen bread, but turns out to be simultaneously burnt and soggy, in other word, impotent.³³ His failed and miscalculated political

31 Among the former was Menahem who paid heavy tribute to the king of Assyria in order to consolidate his hold on power (cf. 2 Kgs 15:19-20) at the expense of the Israelites. This was probably the reason for the assassination of his son Pekahiah by Pekah. The latter, together with king Rezin of Aram, formed an anti-Assyrian coalition which may have included some of the Phoenician and Philistine coastal cities. It is probable that Aram and Israel (and perhaps the Philistines) attacked Judah during the so-called Syro-Ephraimite war (734–732 BC) since they could not force Ahaz the Judahite king into the coalition (cf. 2 Kgs 16:5; Isa 7:1-9). The results of the reprisals of Assyria included loss of Israelite territories, deportation of Israelites and Arameans into Assyria, destruction of major Israelites cities and of Damascus, continuous subjugation of Israel to Assyria during the reign of king Hoshea, the murder of king Rezin. Judah was also made a vassal state to Assyria by king Ahaz (cf. 2 Kgs 16:5-9). See also Jagersma, *Izráel története*, 124–125; Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 22–26; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 9; J.M. Miller – J.H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1986) 322–337.

32 Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 157.

33 Cf. also S.E. Haddox, “(E)Masculinity in Hosea’s Political Rhetoric,” *Israel’s Prophets and Israel’s Past. Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes* (eds. B.E. Kelle – M.B. Moore)

and diplomatic actions result in something that is useless; in this case this causes one of the nation's greatest tragedies. This is one of the possible interpretations of the metaphor. If we modify it somewhat and place the emphasis on what Egypt and Assyria means for Israel, the image may also imply that Egypt is unable to provide help, proves to be squishy while Assyria is burning Israel.³⁴

Hos 7:9 twice employs the expression "he does not know it." As noted before, the stem "to know" appears a number of times in the book. Hos 4:6.14 describe the idolatrous people of God as those "who lack knowledge" or those "who do not understand/discern," respectively. In the former, apostasy is connected with rejecting knowledge (תִּשְׁכַּח).³⁵ The epilogue of the book (14:10) also contains the term "to know." It is a wisdom saying with terminology and ideas typical of Israelite wisdom literature ("wise," "to understand," "intelligent/discerning," "to know," "way/path," "right/straight," "righteous," "walk," "transgressor," "stumble").³⁶ The verse emphasizes that for the pious the ways of God are straight, possible to follow if not easily discernible since they require strenuous work and meditation, but the sinners can stumble in them. The epilogue also suggests that the prophecies contained in the book have become an object of study and guide to life.³⁷ The term "these things" may refer to the content of the book and implies that the condition of Israel's survival is fearing God and keeping his commandments.³⁸ Apart from these passages and the general statements of Israel's knowledge of God or the lack thereof, important is the connection between the concept of the knowledge of God and that of seeking Him (6:3).³⁹

In the present context the phrase "does not know" demonstrates that even though Israel is on the way to his demise, he is ignorant of the warning signs. Hos 7:8 and 7:9 together emphasize that the undiscerning nation's "strength" is withering away. Strength in this

(OTS 446; New York: Clark 2006) 174–200, esp. 195–196; Nwaoru, "The Role of Images," 219. Shalom M. Paul ("The Image of the Oven and the Cake in Hosea VII 4–10," *VT* 18/1 [1968] 114–120, 118) considers the image a symbol of Israel's present exhausted condition in the sense that Ephraim is incapable of averting the impending tragedy.

34 Haddox, "(E)Masculinity," 195–196; see the image of the broken reed of a staff in 2 Kgs 18:21 and Jer 37:7.

35 Cf. Sir 6:23.

36 Wisdom literature often contrasts the righteous/godly with the transgressor/godless and their respective ways of life (Ps 37:38–39; Prov 10:24.29.30; 11:3; 12:3.5.7; Sir 32:16–17). See e.g. Prov 1:2; 2:2.6; 3:13.19; 4:5.7 for the word-pair "wisdom" and "understanding."

37 Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 647.

38 Cf. G.T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct. A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament* (BZAW 151; Berlin: De Gruyter 1980) 129–130, who argues that the editorial stance is explicit also in the suffix of the term "know them." He adds that Hos 14:10 "highlights the function of the Hoseanic corpus as an enduring sacred word to the later Jewish community...[and] indicates a long history in the shaping and in the religious usage of the Hoseanic traditions." (*ibidem*, 135).

39 In wisdom writings the godly is usually associated with wisdom, accepting discipline and undertaking the strenuous work of learning instruction (cf. Sir 6:18–31; 15:3), contained especially in the law of Moses and in the teachings of the sages. Wisdom is connected with the fear of God (Prov 9:10 cf. also Prov 1:7a). On the other hand, "fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov 1:7, NRSV), do not understand that wisdom is the source of life and do not seek her (Prov 8:35). Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez ("A Love Like a Morning Mist. Hosea 5:15–6:6," *Landas* 27/2 [2013] 101–135, 111) points out that the term "seeking," favored by Hosea (e.g. 3:5; 5:6.15; 7:10; 10:12) appears frequently in wisdom writings (e.g. Job 8:5; Prov 1:28; 8:17; 11:27).

context may mean both power, and the produce of the land, representing a people who are losing not only their strength but also their independence.⁴⁰ While gray hair should entail wisdom, in this context it only affirms loss of virility.⁴¹ The idea can be paralleled with that in v. 7 in the context of internal turmoil. According to the latter the people devour their own rulers, while in v. 9 strangers consume Israel's strength. Chapter 7 confirms both internal and external dangers⁴² through parallels such as this and also through images mentioned above (i.e. baking). The foreigners can be those who remained within Israel from the beginning of the Davidic monarchy, the Canaanites, or those to whom Israel is paying tribute as a vassal state. This theme is continued in 7:11a as can be seen below.

Hos 7:10 is a culmination of the unit comprising vv. 8–10. The phrase “Israel's pride testifies against him” is identical to the one in 5:5. In their immediate context (Hos 7:9 and 5:4) we find a reference to knowledge. 7:9 has been discussed above. 5:4 reads: “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they do not know the Lord.” (NRSV) While the idea of turning to God is found in 7:10, in the case of the other passage it is found not in 5:5 but in 5:4. According to the latter, they do not know the Lord. According to 7:9 they do not even know themselves.⁴³ 7:10 confirms that while Ephraim is on his way to demise, he is reluctant to seek God and turn to him. Parallel to turning to God is the seeking of God which – as noted before – is one of the most important topics alongside the theme of the knowledge of him (3:5; 5:6.15; 7:10; 10:12).⁴⁴ Repentance could still avert God's wrath but Ephraim does not want to repent.⁴⁵ This statement echoes that of Hos 7:7 which has God as speaker: “none of them calls upon me” (NRSV). In verse 10 it is the prophet that speaks interrupting the speech of God that pervades chapter 7.⁴⁶ Israel cannot claim that God is not aware of his actions. It is clear from God's first person references that he sees and condemns both the internal affairs and the political actions, and these are not according to his will.

40 M.A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets. I. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2000) 80.

41 Haddox, “(E)Masculinity,” 195–196. Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman (*Hosea*, 467) reject the idea of “gray hair” here since it is usually the sign of old age that was respected in Israel. They suggest instead the image of mold. This would continue the images related to food in Hos 7:8–9. Paul (“Image of the Oven,” 119–120) refers to the epic of Gilgamesh in which the expression “the fifth has a moldy cast” appears concerning the cake baked for the sleeping Gilgamesh, and argues that the Akkadian term employed here is the exact semantic equivalent of the Hebrew עֵינָהּ וְרִקָּהּ. However, while old age and respect are frequently connected in the Hebrew Bible and in the deuterocanonical literature, Jewish writings do know about becoming old without honour. According to 1 Kgs 11:4–8, Solomon's heart was turned away from God by his foreign wives in his old age. Eccl 4:13 reads: “Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice.” (NRSV) According to Wis 3:16–17 the children of an unlawful union might live long but “their old age will be without honor” (v. 17b). For Ben Sira “an old fool who commits adultery” is especially loathsome (Sir 25:2 NRSV).

42 Cf. Hos 5:13 and Landy, *Hosea*, 105.

43 Landy, *Hosea*, 107.

44 Cf. Job 8:5; Prov 1:28; 8:17; 11:27.

45 Cf. Amos 4:4–13.

46 Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 80–81.

The first verse (7:11) of the next unit compares Ephraim to a dove, silly and without sense. An expression similar to “without sense” is found in Prov 17:16 in parallel with the fool. The term “naive” or “simple” also appears in Job 5:2 in parallel with a fool.⁴⁷ The comparison in Hos 7:11a may be based on the assumption that doves are easily allured and trapped. This seems confirmed in Hos 7:12. Doves, however, are not always connected with stupidity in the Hebrew Bible. Hosea seems to focus on their negative characteristics. Moreover, in a number of the animal images Israel is portrayed as the powerless prey of God either as bird or herbivore, while God is often described as predator.⁴⁸

The term for dove (הַיִּנְיָ) may also reflect a wordplay since the Hebrew verb יָנַי means “to oppress,” “to maltreat,” describing the result of Israel’s alliances with other nations.⁴⁹ The significance of the image is further underlined by the fact that doves move to and fro in search of food, sometimes a morsel, and do not always realize the danger. Israel is also going to and fro between powers in search of help or support when calling upon Egypt and going to Assyria.⁵⁰ None of this made any sense, since the Assyrians were exerting their influence in the region already, while Egypt was not in the position to help.⁵¹ We read only about the last of this period’s Israelite kings, Hoshea that he sent messengers to king So of Egypt and conspired against the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:4), but something similar may have happened more than once during the last decades of the history of Israel. The reasons for the assassination of some of the Israelite kings may have been to put away the pro-Assyrian ruler in favor of the pro-Egyptian candidate.⁵² According to Isa 7:9, if Israel does not stand firm in faith, Israel shall not stand at all. Hosea’s message is similar: Israel should not trust in political intrigue but only in the covenant Lord.

Hos 7:12 continues the theme taken from the animal world reminiscent of those of wisdom literature. The image of bird and snare is used in Prov 7:23 in the story of the adulterous woman.⁵³ The term “to cast/spread a net” is almost exactly the same in Ezek 12:13; 17:20; 32:3 as in Hos 7:12. The first two passages in Ezekiel portray the Babylonian exile, while according to the third God will throw his net over Egypt at the time of retribution.

47 C.L. Seow, “Hosea 14:10 and the Foolish People Motif,” *CBQ* 44/2 (1982) 212–224, 218–219. Cf. also Deut 11:16; Job 31:27. While יָנַי in Qal means “to be naïve/simple,” in Piel it also means “to allure/entice” and is used in Hos 2:16 (= 2:14 in NRSV): “Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.” See also Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 81. Cf. Exod 22:25 (=22:26 in NRSV); Jer 20:7.

48 S.E. Haddox, *Metaphor and Masculinity in Hosea* (SBL 141; New York: Lang 2011) 109–114. Grace I. Emerson (Hosea. *An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective* [JSOTSup 28; Sheffield: JSOT Press 1984]) also notes the importance of figurative language in the portrayal of Israel’s relation to God and points out that in the salvation oracle of Hos 11:11 (“They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord” NRSV) the role of birds is the reversal of that in 7:11 (42).

49 Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 81.

50 Cf. Tóth, *Hóseás próféta könyve*, 62. Emmanuel Nwaoru (“The Role of Images,” 219) points out that Ephraim’s actions without understanding/mind also include forgetting the events of the past (cf. Hos 5:13).

51 This is emphasized in Hos 12:2 (= 12:1 in NRSV): “Ephraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a treaty with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.”

52 Czanik, *Hóseás könyvének magyarázata*, 95.

53 For similar images see Jer 5:26; Amos 3:5; Ps 91:3; 124:7; Eccl 9:12.

As noted before, some of the interpreters read “to bind” in the second half of Hos 7:12 in order to harmonize it with the image of trap and snare, while others read “to discipline/chastise/train/teach.” While the latter may seem awkward, the verb is not unknown in the Book of Hosea.⁵⁴ It is employed in 7:15 and 10:10. The Greek translation of 7:12 and 10:10 has the term *παιδεύω* which fits into the context of covenant ethos and the teachings of wisdom and piety.⁵⁵ The end of Hos 7:12 is difficult to interpret. If we depart from the image of the flock of birds and understand *הָעֵדָה* as “assembly,” “gathering” of people, we may assume that Israel is reproofed for gathering, meeting with foreign nations for the purpose of seeking allies and making covenants as was the case on more than one occasion in 8th century BC Israel. This idea is even more supported if we conjecture that originally the sentence contained not the word *הָעֵדָה*, but the similar *עֵדוּת* (“testimony”) referring to the terms of a treaty with a vassal. In this case God as a suzerain would chastise the errant vassal trusting in Assyria or Egypt instead of him.⁵⁶ The Ancient Near Eastern ideological background of such a punishment is well documented.⁵⁷ Nets and snares are symbols of – among others – inescapable disaster, absolute sovereignty, control, ultimate world dominion.⁵⁸ In Hos 7:12 the image emphasizes the helplessness of Israel, a bird, who will be trapped by his real enemy, Yahweh, the fowler, when he least suspects it.⁵⁹ The Greek translation of the final words of the verse takes us into another direction when rendering: “I will discipline them by the report of their affliction,” introducing the idea of “affliction,” “evil,” “trouble,” “oppression” instead of “flock” or “assembly.” This may have resulted from the assumption that the consonants of the terms *הָעֵדָה* and *הָעֵדָה* were jumbled since they both contain *ע* while *ה* and *ד* can easily be mixed up.⁶⁰

Hos 7:13 contains a cry of woe over Israel in a parallel: “Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me!” (NRSV). The author employs the strongest terminology for committing iniquity, the Hebrew *שָׁפַח* in the sense of rebellion. It often refers to vassal kings who rebel against suzerains (2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5,7; 8:20,22).⁶¹ As a metaphor it is frequently used by the prophets of Israel’s or his leaders’ rebellion against God (Isa 43:27; Jer 2:8,29; 3:13; 33:8; Ezek 2:3; Lam 3:42).⁶² “To rebel” is in parallel with the verb “to stray” in Hos 7:13; the latter also has the meaning “to flee.” It is possible to read 7:13b as: “I was the one who redeemed them. They were the ones who told lies about me.” In this case we find here the echoes of the language of

⁵⁴ Cf. Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 206, 211–212; Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 470–471.

⁵⁵ Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 212. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116 reads “I will punish them sevenfold for their evil.”

⁵⁶ Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 81.

⁵⁷ Cf. Lancaster, *Like a Lion*, 120.

⁵⁸ O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World. Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1997) 89–90.

⁵⁹ Cf. also Eidevall, *Grapes*, 119; P.A. Kruger, “The Divine Net in Hos 7:12,” *ETL* 68 (1992) 132–136, 135.

⁶⁰ See also Wolff, *Hosea*, 107–108.

⁶¹ See also 1 Kgs 12:19.

⁶² Cf. Lancaster, *Like a Lion*, 124. The noun appears in all of the eight oracles against the nations in Amos 1–2 and also in Amos 3:14; 5:12 concerning Israel’s transgressions.

the exodus⁶³ and a condemnation that even though God has demonstrated his love and power for his people in the Egyptian bondage they do not understand the significance of God's actions or appreciate them. This is all the more serious if we consider that even during the Babylonian exile the main tenets of Israel's faith – such as those of the Creator and of the exodus – were not denied or forgotten by the faithful, they were the main arguments of the prophet Deutero-Isaiah in convincing the exiles about the imminence of redemption and return. Reading the expression in the past tense would strengthen the parallel of verses 13 and 15 since they would both refer to the gracious acts of God (v. 13: redemption; v. 15: training and strengthening) and Israel's rejection of them (v. 13: speaking lies against him; v. 15: plotting evil against him). If the verb “to redeem” is understood as “I would redeem” them the reference is to Israel's present obstinacy.⁶⁴ Whatever translation we prefer, these lies are now the obstacles in the present restoration of Israel. What the author means by lies is another matter. It may be that Israel thinks God cannot save.⁶⁵ Such a conclusion is based on the fact that Israel has either a false knowledge of God or deliberately speaks unwisely of him. His actions are unrecognized or even scorned by Israel.⁶⁶ In the dire situation of the Assyrian invasion and in the shortage of food referred to in 7:14 they not only think that God cannot help but they may even blame him and turn away from him, not knowing or not wanting to know that such conditions are caused by their own sins. The failure to recognize the true nature of their relationship with God and of the correlation between act and consequence is attested elsewhere in the prophetic literature.⁶⁷

Hos 7:14 is problematic. The most probable reading is that of NRSV: “They do⁶⁸ not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; they gash themselves for grain and wine; they rebel against me.” As noted above, neither the word גִּיר (“to sojourn,” “to be a stranger”), nor the term גָּרַר (“to drag away”) fits the context. It is more probable that the text contained the word גָּדַד (“to cut”) reflecting the copyist's error of confusing the consonants ג and ד.⁶⁹ Even though the Greek renders the entire sentence in past tense it confirms the notion of cutting, gashing. If we accept this translation, the second half of the verse concerns the cult. The significance of the term “beds” is dubious. The image may simply express the sentiment that the Israelites are wailing upon their beds and complaining instead of turning to God with all their heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning as instructed according to Joel 2:12, or it may refer to cultic rituals during which the devotees recline at beds for feast, or it may refer to fertility cults.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the mention of grain and wine suggests that despite the shortage of food Israel is obstinate,

63 Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 462, 473.

64 The term is also found in Hos 13:14.

65 Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 473.

66 Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 82.

67 Among others see the question of tithes in Mal 3:6-12.

68 It is possible to translate it in the past tense.

69 See also Andersen – Freedman, *Hosea*, 462, 475; Dearman, *Book of Hosea*, 207; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 115–116, 123; Czanik, *Hóseás könyvének magyarázata*, 93–94, 97.

70 Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 82–83.

refuses to return to God and looks for blessings elsewhere.⁷¹ If the idea of gashing is indeed present in the text, it describes the desperate acts of Israel similar to those of the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:28).⁷² The Hoseanic verse also contains the Hebrew term סור (“to turn away/aside”) which is similar in form to יסר (“to discipline,” “to teach” etc.). The use of words similar in form or a wordplay is also characteristic of Hosea. In the overall message of the passage the author emphasizes that while God is ready to teach, instruct and discipline his people, there is no one to teach since they turn away from him.

This notion is found in Hos 7:15 in the context of father-son relation appearing also in 11:1-7. Among the so-called historical allusions of Hosea we find those that concern the wilderness wanderings. While it is not specified what the author means by “It was I who trained and strengthened their arms” (NRSV) it refers to an early stage of the relation of God and Israel, the childhood of the nation.⁷³ Training, strengthening in this context can mean discipline, preparation for life, for protection. God did not create comfortable and perfect conditions for Israel but he prepared them, made them able to stand, to remain faithful and to make sound decisions. He elected Israel and as a father nurtures and sustains his son, so did God with Israel. This is what Israel has forgotten and spurned. As Mason D. Lancaster points out, the images expressing God’s generous care, love and provision describe the emotional side of His relationship with Israel. “All the years of equipping Israel for a life of flourishing are met not only with heartless rejection, but with the active plotting of evil against God.”⁷⁴ The term “to plot evil” is also found in Nah 1:9.11 concerning haughty Ninive who plots evil against God and will be punished for it. It also denotes “to think falsely,” “to consider something/somebody falsely.” In the present context it is connected with the false perception or lack of proper knowledge of God (Hos 4:1; 6:3). In 7:15 this includes the false perception of his nurturing love and discipline.⁷⁵ Whichever translation we accept, in the overall message of Hosea it is clear that those who plot evil against or think falsely of God will be punished. While in Hos 11:9 we read in God’s speech that “I will not execute my fierce anger,” it is clear that ultimately punishment will be carried out for the contemporaries of Hosea and the promises of restoration are for the future generations.

Various attempts to interpret 7:16a have been detailed above. Some of the probable readings are: “They turn but not to me”; “They turn to Baal”; “They turn to no-god”; “They turn to no-profit.”⁷⁶ The Greek reads: “They have turned aside to nothing.” Whichever of the alternatives we accept, the idea is in parallel with the uselessness of the slack bow. To follow other earthly powers or gods not only angers God but is also futile. The slack bow is good for nothing, since shooting the target is only possible with a taught bowstring.⁷⁷ At

71 Cf. Hos 3:1: “they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes” (NRSV).

72 Jer 41:5 may refer to something similar.

73 According to Jer 2:2 the Lord remembers the devotion of Israel’s youth.

74 Lancaster, *Like a Lion*, 123.

75 Cf. Gen 50:20 which employs the same term for both human and divine plotting.

76 See the note on the text and translation of 7:16.

77 Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 83.

the same time we may think of the incredible flat bread that is also useless.⁷⁸ They all express and portray Israel's present condition.⁷⁹

The second half of 7:16 confirms this when speaking of the fall of the officials. Among them may be those who partook in the assassinations of kings but the prophetic literature frequently singles out Israel's leaders for their iniquity. The expression "the rage of their tongue" may imply complaining or speaking against God himself and refusing prophetic word. However, it may also refer back to the charges of conspiracy in Hos 7:3-7 which may also reflect the interfering of foreign powers in Israel's politics. The mockery of Israel by Egypt may confirm this. Alliance with Egypt and Assyria meant for Israel a trap, demise and derision.⁸⁰

Summary

Through complex literary and linguistic devices Hosea emphasizes that the basis of the relation of God and Israel is always the right knowledge of Him which entails the right knowledge of the self and of its place in the universe. The iniquities or ills of Israel are only visible symptoms of a more serious illness or condition: Israel does not correctly know God; he has false perceptions of God, he forgets his createdness in his relationship with the Creator. This is the root of religious, ethical and social sins. The passage in the context of the book underlines that while Israel appears to be potent, he is in fact impotent, the undiscerning nation's "strength" is withering away. Foreign powers seem influential, alluring, but God's people should know better since they know about a greater power than human sovereigns. The political and cultic entanglement with other nations results in fact not in salvation but in an inglorious demise. Israel's "wisdom" in internal and external matters only demonstrates how unwise he is. His pride, arrogance, scheming and living without God lead not to life but to the opposite, death, of which Israel is ignorant. While Hosea's message is for a special historical period and circumstances, it is relevant for all ages and can be re-read especially when God's people ignore their created nature and aspire to be powerful, self-sufficient, intelligent in economic, scientific, political and military matters.

⁷⁸ Lancaster (*Like a Lion*, 126–129) considers the metaphors of the cake, the dove and the bow as metaphors about useless Israel; all three are a failed version of its kind, not able to fulfil its purpose. Through these images the prophet implies that while God had expectations for Israel and chose them for a purpose, Israel failed him.

⁷⁹ Nwaoru, "The Role of Images," 220. If, however, we assume that the text originally read "They turn to the yoke," we find a reference not to the continuing disobedience but to its consequence. The term "yoke" reminds the reader of the Egyptian bondage, or to the loss of territories and deportations after 732 BC. Cf. Deut 28:47-48: "Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and with gladness of heart for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack of everything. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you." (NRSV). See Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 115–116, 124.

⁸⁰ Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 83; Landy, *Hosea*, 112.

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