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**This volume is dedicated to**  
***The OMS Bible Seminary***  
**and the**  
***Emmaus Churches of Haiti,***  
**who have done and are doing a**  
**wonderful job of**  
**spreading the gospel and**  
**meeting the physical needs**  
**of the Haitian people!**

## BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

### I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

### II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on \_\_\_\_\_.”

### III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
3. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D. 900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

## BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

### I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15<sup>th</sup> century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14<sup>th</sup> century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sira) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are

1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
5. Maccabean coins and seals
6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

### II. Aspects of Predication

#### A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—singular, plural, dual
  2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
  3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (relation of the action to reality)
  4. tense (aspect)
    - a. PERFECT, which denotes completed, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding, of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).  
S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,  
“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).  
Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as  
“views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).
    - b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.  
J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).  
Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says  
“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).
    - c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
    - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
    - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.

2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal* - *Niphal*; *Piel* - *Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

VOICE or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning.

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, 'tense' shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

The name 'tenses' as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew 'tenses' do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for

the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (vix. of time) which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

### C. Moods (Modes)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
  - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
    - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form, normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
    - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
  - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*  
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
  - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*  
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

- ### D. *Waw* - Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.
1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
  2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
  3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the

past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

#### E. INFINITIVE - There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).  
J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as “When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

#### F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
  - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
  - b. *halo'* - the author expects a “yes” answer

#### NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo'*.
3. The term '*al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term '*en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

#### G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
  - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
  - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
  - c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
  - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
  - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by
    - (1) '*im*
    - (2) *ki* (or '*asher*)

(3) *hin* or *hinneh*

- b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICLE *lu* or *lule*
- c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
- d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	<i>Anchor Bible Commentaries</i> , ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	<i>Analytical Key to the Old Testament</i> by John Joseph Owens
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , James B. Pritchard
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	<i>The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation</i> (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	<i>The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta)</i> by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	<i>Old Testament Passing Guide</i> by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Robert Young
ZPBE	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

## A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing four interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

### **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

### **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS<sup>4</sup>). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

- B. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- C. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between NKJV and NJB. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- D. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS<sup>4</sup> and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
- E. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- F. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this text.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

### **Fourth Principle**

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
 East Texas Baptist University  
 June 27, 1996

## **A Guide to Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search For Verifiable Truth**

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

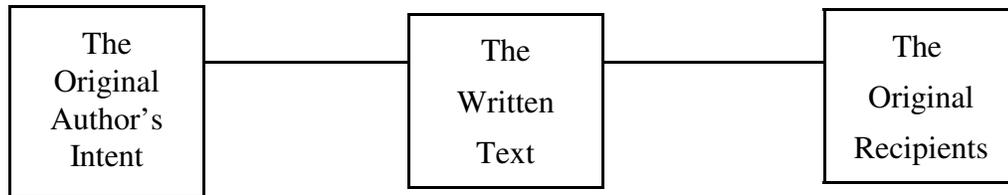
- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - 6. the words chosen to present the message
  - 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

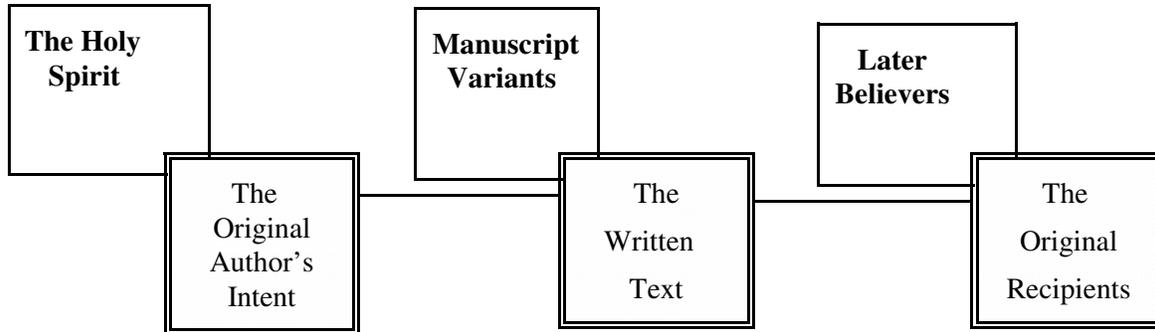
## II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
  - a. historical setting
  - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
  - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
  - b. contemporary work usage
  - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
  - a. relevant parallel passages

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
  1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  4. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - a. Old Testament
      - (1) Hebrew narrative
      - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - (4) Law codes
    - b. New Testament
      - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - (2) Parables (Gospels)
      - (3) Letters/epistles
      - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
  1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
  1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - a. the author
    - b. the date
    - c. the recipients

- d. the specific reason for writing
  - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
  - f. references to historical people and events
3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
    - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - c. contrasting concepts
  3. List the following items
    - a. significant terms
    - b. unusual terms
    - c. important grammatical structures
    - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  4. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
      - (1) "systematic theology" books
      - (2) reference Bibles
      - (3) concordances
    - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
    - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
  5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
    - a. study Bibles
    - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
    - c. Bible introductions
    - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

## V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

"The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in

conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

## VI. This Commentary's Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - 1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS<sup>4</sup>)
  - 2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - 3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - 4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - 5. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - 6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - 1. literary context
  - 2. historical, cultural insights
  - 3. grammatical information
  - 4. word studies
  - 5. relevant parallel passages

- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
  2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
  2. alternate word meanings
  3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

## I. NAME OF BOOK

- A. It is named after the prophet.
- B. The name “Amos” could mean:
  - 1. “to be a burden” (BDB 770, KB 846)
  - 2. “to carry a burden” (BDB 770, KB 846)
  - 3. “to sustain” (possibly “YHWH has carried” [KB 847]. It may be a shortened form of Amasiah, which means “YHWH hears,” cf. II Chr. 17:16).
  - 4. One rabbinical tradition asserts that it was a title given to him by those who opposed his message, implying he did not speak clearly or he stuttered.
- C. This is the only occurrence of this name in the Old Testament. Isaiah’s father, “Amoz” (cf. Isa. 1:1) is spelled differently. There is an Amos mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3:25, but nothing is known of him.

## II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the division of the Hebrew canon called “the latter prophets.”
- B. It is one of “the Twelve” Minor Prophets (i.e., shorter prophetic books).
- C. The order of “the Twelve” or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. However, there are problems with this view:
  - 1. The first six books are different between the MT and LXX

<u>MT</u>	<u>LXX</u>
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah
  - 2. Internal evidence puts Amos chronologically before Hosea.
  - 3. The date for Joel is highly debated. I list him as an early post-exilic prophet along with Obadiah.

## III. GENRE

- A. This is the first of the writing prophets and sets the genre for all that follow.
- B. This is classical Hebrew propheticism. This is a good example of Hebrew poetry and imagery. See Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry at 1:2.
- C. Amos’ writings, collected into a separate book, begin a wonderful literary form known as the “latter prophets” (Isaiah - Malachi).

Amos used the funeral dirge meter to emotionally communicate God's coming judgment. Form, meter, and content powerfully drive home the message of judgment.

D. Here are some good quotes.

1. A good summary of the prophets of this period is found in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, "Amos."

"At the same time, however, the eighth century witnessed the rise of one of the most potent moral forces the world has ever known—the writing prophets. These men, from widely separated backgrounds, shared an overwhelming conviction that God had called them. They had various styles of writing, but all wrote with the authority of the Almighty. They denounced the sins of their contemporaries and also looked far into the future as they spoke of deliverance for both Jew and Gentile" (p. 269).

2. Kyle M. Yates, *Studies in Amos*.

"Amos was a person who could never be taken for granted. Whether one agreed with his views or not, the impact of the prophet's message was lasting. The past twenty-seven centuries have not blunted this impact. Any person who looks deeply into the character of this man of God, and studies seriously the message of the prophet, will never be the same. He cannot accept casually the injustices of present-day society nor overlook God's concern for all of his children" (p. 1).

3. Theo Laetsch, *The Minor Prophets*.

"Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, four great stars in the galaxy of Old Testament prophets, truly noble men of God, trying—alas, vainly—to stem the flood of iniquity engulfing God's people, and their inevitable ruin. Never has the holy Law of God been preached with greater earnestness and intensity than it was proclaimed by these men, who spared neither rich nor poor, neither young nor old, neither vociferous rebel nor unctuous hypocrite. And in no other period of the Old Testament era has the Gospel been heralded in language clearer and sweeter than these men spoke by inspiration of God. Yet all their faithful efforts, all their fervent appeals to their countrymen, could not hold back the overwhelming floodwaters of God's judgment sweeping away a people highly favored but unspeakably wicked and ungrateful. Still they continued in their call to repentance and salvation to a hardened generation, seeing but little success, yet faithful to their high calling. Their message is as timely today as it was more than 2,500 years ago. It is God's Word, enduring forever!" (p. 136)

#### IV. AUTHORSHIP

A. Jewish tradition has always asserted the author to be Amos of Tekoa.

B. The man:

1. He was a Judean from Tekoa (known for its "wise" people, cf. II Sam. 14), which is about five miles southeast of Bethlehem, located on the highest hill (2,700') in the region (cf. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* vol. 1, p. 120).
2. He was not a prophet nor part of the prophetic family or guild (cf. 7:14). Originally prophets lived together in communities. Later some became identified with the palace.
3. He was apparently a "small sheep" (Arabic) herder (BDB 667, KB 719-720, cf. 1:1, possibly "sheep herder," "sheep seller," or "sheep owner" [cf. II Kgs. 3:4]). A different and common term for "shepherd" (BDB 133) is used for him in 7:14.
4. He was (1) an owner of fruit trees or (2) a "dresser of sycamore trees" (cf. 7:14). This may have involved an annual move to other locations. These trees are called "fig-mulberry." The

fruit is much like a fig. Each fig had to be pierced individually in order to ripen properly. This was a very important crop to the Near Eastern people. David even appointed a special supervisor (cf. I Chr. 27:28) to oversee these crops. Amos' agricultural background is the source of several of his prophecies.

- a. 1:2
    - (1) wild animals, 3:3-8; 5:19
    - (2) poor pasture land
    - (3) drought
  - b. 2:13, weighted wagon
  - c. 4:6-9
    - (1) lack of bread, v. 6
    - (2) no rain for crops, v. 7
    - (3) no water to drink, v. 8
    - (4) dry wind, v. 9
    - (5) mildew, v. 9
    - (6) insects, v. 9
  - d. 5:16-17
    - (1) mourning farmers, v. 16
    - (2) failing vineyards, v. 17
  - e. 7:1-6
    - (1) locusts, vv. 1-2
    - (2) fire, v. 4
  - f. 8:1-2, summer fruit
  - g. 9:13-15, days of agricultural prosperity, which denoted YHWH's presence and blessing (cf. Deut. 27-29).
5. Jewish tradition says he was a well-to-do businessman. This is quite different from the common view today that he was a poor country peasant. Because of the excellency of his poetry and literary expertise the Jewish tradition is probably correct. From II Sam. 14:2ff we know that Tekoa was apparently known for its wise citizens. He was the first prophet to have his messages recorded in a separate book. Notice the first person, singular pronouns in 5:1; 7:1-9; 8:1, and 9:1.
  6. He preached to the northern kingdom of Israel. We know for certain that Bethel (i.e., golden calf) was a preaching site, but probably there were many other preaching locations.

C. The problem of authorship is problematic because:

1. The book implies he was a poor farm worker.
2. The style and poetry are excellent, implying a well educated person.
3. His sermons are said to have been given orally, but they are very structured and balanced, which implies written literature.
4. Many scholars assume Amos had editorial or scribal help. One possible evidence of a scribe is that 7:10-17 are in the third person, while 7:1-9; 8:1-2; 9:1 are in the first person (cf. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 271).
5. As with much of the OT, we moderns do not know how these biblical books were structured or formed. However, the ultimate author is the Spirit of God. It is their content that is crucial. They are a word from God to every age and culture, especially ones of prosperity and power!

## V. DATE

- A. It is relatively easy to date this prophecy about 750 B.C., plus or minus ten years.
- B. The first verse of Amos is the longest and most precise dating attempt of any OT book.
  - 1. Uzziah reigned from about 783-742 B.C. (Bright)
  - 2. Jeroboam II reigned from about 786-746 B.C. (Bright)
  - 3. The earthquake is also an attempt to date the book (cf. 1:1; 8:8; 9:1,5; Zech. 14:5). Josephus related it to II Chr. 26:16-21 when Uzziah offered a sacrifice. Archaeological studies at Hazor suggest about 760 B.C. (Yadin, 1964).
- C. In 5:8 and 8:9 an eclipse is mentioned. This may be the same one mentioned in Assyrian documents as occurring on June 15, 763 B.C. (Assyrian records), however, there was another complete eclipse on February 9, 784 B.C.
- D. Amos' encounter with Amaziah, the ruling priest at Bethel under the authority of Jeroboam II, also dates this book (cf. 7:10-17).

## VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. The parallel biblical material is found in
  - 1. II Kgs. 14:3-17:6
  - 2. II Chr. 25-28
  - 3. Hosea
  - 4. Isaiah
  - 5. Micah
- B. The simplest summary of the state of idolatry among God's people can be seen in Hosea.
  - 1. 2:16, "will no longer call me Baali"
  - 2. 4:12-13, ". . .daughters play the harlot. . ."
  - 3. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone"
  - 4. 13:2, "men kiss calves!" (ritual)
- C. Social setting
  - 1. It was a time of economic prosperity and military expansion for both Israel and Judah. However, this prosperity was beneficial only to the wealthy class. The poor and middle classes were exploited and abused. It almost seems that "the buck and the gun" became additional idols!
  - 2. The social stability and property of both Israel and Judah are related to several causes:
    - a. the long and prosperous reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.) in the north and Uzziah (783-742 B.C.) in the south
    - b. the temporary decline of Egypt and Mesopotamia
    - c. Assyrians' defeat of Syria by Adad-Nirari III in 805 B.C.
    - d. the lack of conflict between Israel and Judah
    - e. the taxation and exploitation of the trade routes from north to south through the land bridge of Palestine caused rapid economic growth, even extravagance for the wealthy class

3. The “Ostraca of Samaria,” which are dated during the reign of Jeroboam II seem to indicate an administrative organization much like Solomon’s. This seems to confirm the widening gap between the haves and have nots.
4. The dishonesty of the wealthy is clearly depicted in Amos, who is called “the prophet of social justice.” The bribery of the judiciary and the falsification of commercial weights are two clear examples of the abuse that was common, apparently in both Israel and Judah.

#### D. Religious setting

1. It was a time of much outward religious activity, but very little true faith. The fertility cults of Canaan had been amalgamated into Israel’s religion. The people were idolaters, but they called it YHWHism. The trend of God’s people toward political alliances had involved them in pagan worship and practices.
2. The idolatry of Israel is spelled out in II Kgs. 17:7-18.
  - a. v. 8, they followed the worship practices of the Canaanites
    - (1) fertility worship
      - (a) high places, vv. 9,10,11
      - (b) sacred pillars (Ba’al), vv. 10,16
      - (c) Asherim, v. 16, these were wooden symbols of the female consort of Ba’al. They were either curved stakes or live trees.
    - (2) divination, v. 17, this is discussed in detail in Lev. 19-20 and Deut. 18.
  - b. v. 16, they continued the worship of the two golden calves, symbolizing YHWH, set up at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam I (I Kgs. 12:28-29).
  - c. v. 16, they worshiped the astral deities of Babylon: sun, moon, stars, and constellations.
  - d. v. 18, they worshiped the Phoenician fertility fire god, Molech (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5).
3. Ba’alim (cf. W. F. Albright’s *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 82ff).
  - a. Our best source is “Ba’al Epic of Ugarit.”
    - (1) Depicts Ba’al as a seasonal dying and rising god. He was defeated by Mot and confined to the underworld. All life on earth ceased. But, helped by the female goddess, he rises and defeats Mot each spring. He is a fertility deity who was worshiped by imitation magic.
    - (2) He was also known as Hadad.
  - b. El is the chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon, but Ba’al’s popularity usurped his place.
  - c. Israel was most influenced by Tyrian Ba’alim through Jezebel, who was the daughter of the King of Tyre. She was chosen by Omri for his son Ahab.
  - d. In Israel Ba’al was worshiped at local high places. He was symbolized by an upright stone. His consort is Asherah, symbolized by a carved stake symbolizing the tree of life.
4. Several sources and types of idolatry are mentioned:
  - a. the golden calves at Bethel and Dan set up by Jeroboam I to worship YHWH
  - b. the worship of the Tyrian fertility god and goddess at local high places
  - c. the necessary idolatry involved in political alliances of that day

#### E. Political setting in the North

1. Jeroboam II was the last strong king in Israel. He was fourth in the line of Jehu and the last one predicted to reign (cf. II Kgs. 10:30). He had a long and politically successful reign (786-746 B.C.).
2. After the death of Jeroboam II there were six kings within a twenty-five year period.
  - a. Zechariah (II Kgs. 15:8-12). He was assassinated after only six months.
  - b. Shallum (II Kgs. 15:13-15). He was assassinated after only one month.

- c. Menahem (II Kgs. 15:16-22). He reigned ten years, but paid heavy tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III.
  - d. Pekahian (II Kgs. 15:23-26). He reigned two years and was assassinated.
  - e. Pekah (II Kgs. 15:27-31). He reigned five years and was assassinated. He lost several cities to Assyria.
  - f. Hoshea (II Kgs. 15:3; 17:1-6). He reigned nine years and was exiled by Assyria in 722, when Samaria fell.
3. Brief summary of the invasions of Assyria and Babylon during the eighth century which affected Palestine.
- a. The four eighth century prophets were active during the rise of the Tigris-Euphrates empire of Assyria. God would use this cruel nation to judge His people, particularly Israel. The specific incident was the formation of a trans-jordan political and military alliance known as the “Syro-Ephramatic League” (735 B.C.). Syria and Israel tried to force Judah to join them against Assyria. Instead Ahaz, king of Judah, sent a letter to Assyria asking for help. The first powerful empire-minded Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), responded to the military challenge and invaded Syria. Later, Assyria’s puppet king, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.), in Israel, also rebelled, appealing to Egypt. Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) invaded Israel again. He died before Israel was subdued, but his successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), captured Israel’s capital of Samaria in 722 B.C. Assyria deported over 27,000 Israelites on this occasion as Tiglath-pileser had exiled thousands earlier in 732 B.C.
  - b. After Ahaz’s death (735-715 B.C.) another military coalition was formed by the trans-jordan countries and Egypt against Assyria (714-711 B.C.). It is known as the “Ashdod Rebellion.” Many Judean cities were destroyed when Assyria invaded again. Initially Hezekiah supported this coalition, but later withdrew his support.
  - c. However, again, another coalition tried to take advantage of the death of Assyria’s powerful king, Sargon II, in 705 B.C., along with the many other rebellions which occurred throughout the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah fully participated in this rebellion. In light of this challenge Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) invaded (701 B.C.) Palestine and camped near the city of Jerusalem (II Kgs. 18-19; Isa. 36-39), but his army was miraculously destroyed by God. There is some question among scholars as to how many times Sennacherib invaded Palestine (e.g., John Bright has one invasion in 701 B.C. and another possible one in 688 B.C., cf. p. 270). Hezekiah was spared an Assyrian takeover, but because of his prideful exhibition of the treasures of Judah to the Babylonian delegation, Isaiah predicted Judah’s fall to Babylon (39:1-8). Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 587-586 B.C.
  - d. Isaiah also predicted the restoration of God’s people under Cyrus II, the Medo-Persian ruler (41:2-4; 44:28; 45:1; 56:11). Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. to Babylon, but the city of Babylon fell in 539 B.C. to Cyrus’ army. In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued a decree that all exiled people, including the Jews, could return home. He even provided funds from his treasury for the rebuilding of the national temples.

## VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. Charges against the nations, 1:1-2:3 (possibly through 2:16)
  - 1. Syria (Damascus), 1:3-5
  - 2. Philistia (Gaza), 1:6-8
  - 3. Phoenicia (Tyre), 1:9-10
  - 4. Edom, 1:11-12

- 5. Ammon, 1:13-15
- 6. Moab, 2:1-3
- B. Special charges against God's people, 2:4-6:14
  - 1. Judah, 2:4-5
  - 2. Israel, 2:6-6:14 (context of judgment on Israel through 6:14)
- C. Visions of judgment, 7:1-9:10
  - 1. Locusts, 7:1-3
  - 2. Fire, 7:4-6
  - 3. Plumb line, 7:7-17
  - 4. Summer fruit, 8:1-14
  - 5. Destruction of a sanctuary, 9:1-10
- D. The Messianic hope, 9:11-15

Some scholars have suggested that this is not a "chronological structure," but a logical, literary structure (i.e., judgment - restoration). Amos preached over a short period of time. The contents are his, but the structure may be an editor preserving what was recorded of Amos' prophecies.

## VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Amos relates God's wrath to Israel's (and her neighbor's) violation of the Mosaic covenant. We need to realize the relationship between OT corporate responsibility and individual faith. We have a societal sin problem as Israel did, however, in our minds, two standards often exist.
  - 1. our individual private lives and faith
  - 2. our corporate social, public lives

Israel must have rejoiced as Amos proclaimed YHWH's judgment on her surrounding neighbors (and traditional enemies). Their nations were a part of the kingdoms of David and Solomon and must have known something of the Mosaic covenant and the God of Israel.

The Israelites must have rejoiced indeed as Amos brought up God's judgment on her rival Judah! But, the emotional affirmations quickly stopped when Amos, in a climactic fashion, turned to the sins of these northern tribes!
- B. God's sovereignty over all the earth is the background for YHWH's dealing in judgment with the nations outside the Covenant of Israel. This is the basis of Israel's understanding of monotheism (cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 2, p. 889).
 

There are several texts that relate to YHWH's creation and control of nature (cf. 4:13; 5:8-9; 8:8; 9:5-6). These form doxologies of praise! This book sees nature as a revelation of God (i.e., the earthquake, the eclipse, and the allusion to Deut. 27-29).
- C. Amos 2:9-12, God's judgment against Israel, must be seen in the light of His gracious acts in history. God's election and covenant with Israel sets the stage for His severe judgment. It must be remembered that "to whom much is given, much is required" (cf. Luke 12:48).
- D. Chapter 5 links faith and life inseparably! Amos denounces the wealthy's exploitation of the poor.
- E. Israel was falsely trusting in:
  - 1. her religion, 4:4-5; 5:21-23
  - 2. her economic prosperity, 6:1ff
  - 3. her military power, 2:14-16; 6:1b, 13
- F. Even amidst Israel's faithlessness there is hope in God's covenant, God's Messiah, 9:8b-15.

# AMOS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		God's Judgment on Israel's Neighbors (1:1-2:5)	
Introduction 1:1-2	Superscription 1:1	1:1-2	Title 1:1
	Indictment of Neighboring Peoples, Israel, and Judah (1:2-2:16)		Introduction
	1:2		1:2
Judgment on the Nations (1:3-2:3)			Judgment on the Neighboring Nations and on Israel Itself (1:3-2:16)
1:3-5	1:3-5	Syria 1:3-5	Damascus 1:3-5
1:6-8	1:6-8	Philistia 1:6-8	Gaza and Philistia 1:6-8
1:9-10	1:9-10	Tyre 1:9-10	Tyre and Phoenicia 1:9-10
1:11-12	1:11-12	Edom 1:11-12	Edom 1:11-12
1:13-15	1:13-15	Ammon 1:13-14	Ammon 1:13-14

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)** ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following

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\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters one and two form a literary unit dealing with the sins of Israel (cf. 2:6-16). The first two verses could be the theme of the entire book. Israel's (i.e., the Northern Ten Tribes) unique relationship with YHWH causes them to be uniquely guilty of rebellion (cf. Luke 12:48). They were Covenant People and they had a Covenant assignment.
- B. Amos begins his Sermon with judgment on the enemies of Israel:
  1. all the surrounding nations
    - a. pagans
    - b. those related to the Jews (Edom by Esau; Ammon, Moab by Lot)
  2. her kinsmen, Judea

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.**

**<sup>2</sup>He said,**

**“The LORD roars from Zion**

**And from Jerusalem He utters His voice;**

**And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn,**

**And the summit of Carmel dries up.”**

**1:1 “Amos”** For the supposed meanings of this rare name see Introduction, I., B.

▣ **“the shepherds”** This term occurs only one other time in the OT, “sheepmaster,” used of Mesha, King of Moab (cf. II Kgs. 3:4). His occupation could also relate to cattle (BDB 133, cf. 7:14). This is an unusual term (BDB 667, KB 719-720) and could refer to the ownership of a special kind of diminutive sheep (BDB 838, cf. 7:15). Amos was (1) following Jewish tradition as a well-to-do businessman (sheep breeder, cf. The Jewish Study Bible, p. 1177) or (2) he was a poor herdsman and itinerant agricultural worker.

The Hebrew consonantal root *mqd* (KB 719-720) has many meanings.

1. to prick, to puncture
2. to clean, to shine (Arabic, “to free” or “to save”).
3. a poor type of sheep
4. money (*Talmud*, a small coin)
5. speckled (cf. Gen. 30:32)
6. shepherd, herdsman, sheep breeder
7. title for high official (Ugaritic)

Context is crucial! Only context defines words. Cognates are only helpful when the word is rare. In Amos there are several words used to describe his occupation before his call by God.

1. *nqd*, 1:1
2. *bqr*, 7:14
3. *s'n*, 7:15

▣ **“Tekoa”** The name (BDB 1075) means “to pitch a tent” (cf. Gen. 31:25; Jer: 6:3) or “to blow a trumpet” (cf. Ezek. 7:14). Tekoa is a city in the Judean desert, overlooking the Judean wilderness. It was about five miles south of Bethlehem. Isn’t it amazing how many of God’s leaders have come from the pastoral lifestyle?

▣ **“which he envisioned in visions”** The term is literally “saw” (BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* PERFECT). It is regularly used of an ecstatic vision (cf. Num. 24:4,16; Isa. 1:1; 2:1,13; Ezek. 12:27; 13:16; Micah 1:1; Hab. 1:1). It came to be one of three words used to designate a prophet (i.e., “seer,” e.g., Amos 7:12; II Sam. 24:11; II Kgs. 17:13; I Chr. 21:9; 29:29; II Chr. 9:29; 12:15; 19:2; 29:25,29; 33:19; 35:15; Isa. 29:10,25; 30:10).

The fact that v. 1 mentions both “words” and “visions” may imply the two different kinds of genres that make up the prophecies of vv. 1-6 and 7-9. This is possible, but far from certain.

▣ **“the days of Uzziah king of Judah”** He was a good king who reigned in Judah from 783-742 B.C. (for chart of possible dates see Appendix). The fact that the king of Judah was mentioned at all shows the prophet’s theological orientation toward Jerusalem. The prophets always condemn the splitting of the tribes in 922 B.C. (cf. I Kgs. 12:16-20; II Chr. 10).

▣ **“the days of Jeroboam. . .king of Israel”** This refers to Jeroboam II (BDB 914), who reigned over the Northern Ten Tribes from 786-746 B.C. (there are so many slightly differing dates, see Appendix). He was a very successful and efficient Monarch. Both Judah and Israel, at this period, were enjoying great prosperity because Assyria had defeated their traditional enemy to the north, Syria. Also, Assyria and Egypt were not expansionists during this period (see Introduction, VI).

▣ **“two years before the earthquake”** This must have been a very strong earthquake because it is mentioned years later in Zech. 14:5. It may be alluded to in 8:8 and 9:1. Josephus (*Antiq.* 9.225) tells us that it is related to Uzziah’s sin of offering of a sacrifice (cf. II Chr. 26:16-21). This is either (1) a historical statement in an attempt to precisely set the date for Amos’ prophecy (Amos 1:1 is the most extensive dating attempt of any book of the OT) or (2) a way of reinforcing the judgment theme of Amos’ message from YHWH.

**1:2** This begins the first poetic section in Amos. It is a summary of the entire book.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW POETRY

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up one-third of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and the “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. It is basically thought-based in balanced, parallel lines.
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

### II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings, or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written, not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in
  1. balanced lines (parallelism)
  2. word plays
  3. sound plays

### III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753), was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
  1. synonymous - the lines express the same thought in different words:
    - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
    - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
    - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
    - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
  2. antithetical - the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
    - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
    - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
  3. synthetic - the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
  4. chiasmic - a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
- B. Charles A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899), developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
  1. emblematic - one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3
  2. climatic or stair-like - the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22
  3. introverted - a series of clauses, usually at least four, are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 - Ps. 30:8-10a

- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), developed the concept of balanced clauses further by
1. complete balance - where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two - Ps. 83:14 and Isa. 1:3
  2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which usually denotes a number of parallel lines (a,b,b,a; a,b,c,b,a) forming an hour glass shape, often the central line(s) is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lam. 1-4)
  2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
  3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
  4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
  5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
  6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:
1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
  2. work songs - (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
  3. ballads - Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
  4. drinking songs - negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
  5. love poems - Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
  6. laments/dirge - (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25); II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19
  7. war songs - Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
  8. special benedictions or blessing of leader - Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
  9. magical texts - Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
  10. sacred poems - Psalms
  11. acrostic poems - Psalm 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
  12. curses - Num. 21:22-30
  13. taunt poems - Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
  14. a book of war poems (Jashar) - Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

#### IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.

- D. Judges 4 & 5 is very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exod. 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

▣ **“the LORD roars”** The term “roars” (BDB 980, KB 1367, *Qal* IMPERFECT) was also used of God’s voice as thunder, Job 37:3-5 and Jer. 25:30. This seems to refer to God’s judgment (cf. 3:8) based on Israel’s sins amidst their covenantal knowledge of YHWH (the nations mentioned were all part of David and Solomon’s kingdom and, therefore, had some knowledge of YHWH). This is similar to Joel 3:16.

The roar is the climactic moment of a lion’s kill, the moment of judgment. It can refer to deliverance, as in Joel 3:16; Hosea 11:10, but in this context of God’s judgment. The Shepherd (Ps. 23) has become the aggressive attacker! What a role reversal sin causes!!

For “LORD (YHWH)” see the Special Topic: Names for Deity, following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY**

#### A. *El*

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
  - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
  - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself”), Gen. 16:13
  - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the all Compassionate One” or “God of the mountain”), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
  - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
  - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant”), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
  - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
  - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
  - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
  - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
  - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
  - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
  - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
  - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
  - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
  - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
  - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
  - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2

m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18

n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56

5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Josh. 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)

B. *Elyon*

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
  - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
  - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
  - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
  - d. *El* - Num. 24:16
  - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *Illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
3. It is often used by non Israelites.
  - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
  - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
  - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
  - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, written to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (plural), *Eloah* (singular), used primarily in poetry

1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family was polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
3. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
4. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Ps. 14 (*elohim*) is exactly like Ps. 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

5. Although plural and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the singular verb to denote the monotheistic usage.
6. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
  - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
  - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
  - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is plural! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
  - a. Hebrew has many plurals, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the plural is used to magnify a concept.
  - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who do His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).

- c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates, Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

#### D. YHWH

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Gen. 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the Lord “ (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
- b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
- c. from a Ugaritic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
- d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE, meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
- e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
- g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
- h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67).

The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form

- (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
- (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., Isaiah)
- (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)

3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to the word “YHWH” in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, often YHWH is combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations of terms, here are some.
  - a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
  - b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26

- c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
- d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
- e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
- f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
- g. *YHWH - Ro'i* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“Zion. . .Jerusalem”** These two names are in a synonymous, parallel relationship (see Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry at 1:2). The Jews envisioned God as symbolically dwelling between the wings of the Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of the temple on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem (cf. Exod. 25:22). Jerusalem was built on seven hills.

1. Mt. Zion was the hill on which the Jebusite citadel was located, which was not captured until David’s day (cf. Josh. 15:63; II Sam. 5:6-10).
2. Mt. Moriah was the hill on which the temple was built (cf. Gen. 22:2; I Chr. 21:1-22; II Chr. 3:1).

The mention of Jerusalem as the place from which God roars was a subtle way to reject the golden calves which Jeroboam I set up (at Bethel and Dan) in Israel. God dwelt in Judah’s temple (cf. 9:11), not Israel’s shrines (cf. 4:4; 5:5; 8:14)!

The original meaning of both Zion (BDB 851) and Jerusalem (BDB 436) is uncertain.

▣ **“the shepherd’s pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up”** God’s judgment on mankind’s sin affects nature (cf. Gen. 3; Deut. 27-28; Rom. 8:18-25; the seals and bowls judgments of Revelation). God uses nature to get mankind’s attention (e.g., vv. 1c; 4:6-13; Ps. 19:1-6).

▣ **“Carmel”** Carmel was a mountain range in northern Israel that runs into the Mediterranean. It’s name meant “vineyard of God” (BDB 501). It was proverbial for its lush vegetation (BDB 502).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:3-5**

<sup>3</sup>Thus says the LORD,

**“For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron.**

<sup>4</sup>So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael  
And it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad.

<sup>5</sup>I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus,  
And cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven,  
And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden;  
So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir,”  
Says the LORD.

**1:3-2:3** This is a literary unit which serves a theological purpose.

1. YHWH is God of the whole earth.
2. All who sin must face His wrath.
3. His people were sinning and, even more so, because they were covenant people (cf. Luke 12:48).

This unit must have been read or heard with glee as Israelites gladly welcomed God’s judgment on these neighboring nations; yes, even Judah (cf. 2:4-5). But suddenly, and surprisingly, Amos turns in climactic fashion, to Israel’s sin (cf. 2:6-6:14). Their prosperity, military power, and land expansion were not a sign of God’s covenantal blessing (cf. Deut. 27-29). Amos, the enforcer of Moses’ Covenant, demands reckoning! The Day of the Lord would not be a blessing, but a curse (cf. 5:18-20)!

**1:3 “Thus says the LORD”** This prophetic formula was a way of showing that the message was not the personal opinion of the prophet, but the very word of God. How much of the message was from the prophet (specific vocabulary, literary form) is uncertain. The mood or manner of inspiration is uncertain and may have variations, but the important truth is that it is a message from God. This message, though given in a certain language, historical situation, and culture, has a relevance to all cultures and times. Hermeneutically every passage has one meaning—that which the original inspired author meant to say—but many applications or significances related to the reader/hearer’s historical and cultural situation. However, the application must be directly related to the original author’s intent/message!

In this context the phrase announces the judgment of YHWH on nations and peoples (cf. Jer. 47:2; 48:1; Ezek. 25:3; 30:2; Amos 1:3; 2:1).

▣ **“For three transgressions of Damascus and for four”** This is a standard introductory phrase in Amos (cf. 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6). It has also been found in other Near Eastern literature. It means that they sinned again and again.

The term “four” was used often in the ancient Near East.

1. four phases of the moon
2. four divisions of the year (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 495)

In the OT itself it represented

1. compass directions (i.e., a man facing east)
2. wind directions (e.g., Dan. 7:2; 8:8)
3. corners of the earth (e.g., Isa. 11:12)

From these came its implied meaning of completeness or fullness. Also the numbers three and four equals seven, which is another OT way to show completeness; the sins of these nations were full/complete!

The term “transgressions” (BDB 833) is one of several Hebrew words which are used to describe sin and rebellion. In Amos this term takes on a sense of social sins (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 708). These nations rebel by attacking neighbors and relatives. Their actions show that they do not know YHWH. These nations were part of the Davidic empire and had been exposed to YHWH. The nations will be a part of a restored Davidic kingdom (cf. 9:11-15)!

Prophets often spoke of YHWH’s judgment on the nations (cf. Isa. 13-23; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32). The nation of Syria is also known as Aram with Damascus as its capital. The capital stands for the nation as a whole.



NASB, NRSV	<b>“I will not revoke its punishment”</b>
NKJV	<b>“I will not turn away its <i>punishment</i>”</b>
TEV	<b>“I will certainly punish them”</b>
NJB	<b>“I have made my decree and will not relent”</b>

The NEGATED VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is the usual VERB in the prophets to describe “repentance.” In this context it refers to God. The only vocabulary available to us to describe God relates to humans. God is an eternal Spirit. We use human words to describe Him (anthropomorphisms), but He is far beyond our ability to describe.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (or Greek) NT words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. The Hebrew terms are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

1. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:12; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
2. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
3. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
4. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses the term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the LORD. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

**1:3 “they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron”** “They” refers to the Syrians.

The VERB (BDB 190, KB 218, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) refers to an agricultural procedure of separating grain from its husk (cf. Deut. 25:4). It can be used metaphorically as II Kgs. 13:7; Isa. 21:10; Jer. 50:11; and Hosea 10:11 show. It is used of God’s judgment (e.g., Micah 4:13 and Hab. 3:12).

Here it could also be metaphorical, but because of the Septuagint’s translation of II Sam. 12:31, it may be literal. Whether metaphorical or literal it speaks of Syrian abuses of Israelites (possibly related to II Kgs. 13:1-9).

▣ **“Gilead”** This name (BDB 166) refers to the northern trans-jordan area between the Arnon and Jabbok Rivers that was given to the sons of Jacob, Reuben, and Gad. The specific atrocities of Syria (Aram) may relate to II Kgs. 8:28-29 or 10:32-33.

**1:4 “I will send fire”** The VERB (BDB 1018, KB 1511) is a *Piel* PERFECT and is parallel to “consume,” “break,” and “cut off.” God will destroy the fortifications and dynasty of the house of Hazael (Syria, Aram). Fire is a symbol of the judgment of God on wickedness (e.g., Isa. 30:27; Jer. 21:14; Ezek. 20:47-48; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8; Mal. 4:1). See Special Topic: Fire at 7:4.

▣ **“Hazael”** This was the usurper monarch of Syria (BDB 303, cf. II Kgs. 8:7-15). He reigned from 842-796 B.C.(?). He was a powerful military adversary to Assyria’s western expansion. Syria was invaded several times, but Damascus was not taken (i.e., 841, 837, and possibly 836 B.C.)

Once Assyrian pressure was lessened Hazael attacked his southern neighbors.

1. trans-jordan area, II Kgs. 10:32-33
2. Philistia, II Kgs. 12:17
3. Judah, II Kgs. 12:17-18

▣ **“citadels”** The term (BDB 74) is translated in various ways:

1. stronghold
2. guardroom of the palace or temple
3. fortress

The Akkadian loanword, *b’rh*, is used as a parallel in the Post-Exilic literature (e.g., of forts in II Chr. 17:12; 27:4 and of the temple in I Chr. 29:1; Neh. 2:8).

▣ **“Ben-haddad”** This (BDB 122, cf. II Kgs. 13:3,24-25) is the son of Hazael (797-775 B.C.?). Probably his father gave him this name (in history as Ben Hadad III) because it became the common name (dynastic title) of many Syrian monarchs, like Pharaoh in Egypt or Caesar in Rome.

It is also possible that it reflects the worship of the storm god, Hadad (*Ba’al* or *Rimmon*, cf. II Kgs. 5:18). In this case it would be a condemnation on idolatry.

**1:5 “the gate bar of Damascus”** Literally this refers to the lock on the main gate, a large wooden beam (or sometimes a metal bar, cf. I Kgs. 4:13), which was placed horizontally across two wooden doors. Metaphorically it refers to the destruction and exile of Syria (Aram) as a nation (cf. TEV).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NJB “the inhabitant”

NRSV, TEV “the inhabitants”

NIV “the king”

NET “the ruler”

JB “the one enthroned”

This is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE MASCULINE SINGULAR (BDB 442, KB 444). It is obvious there is a parallel between this term and

1. v. 5c, “him who holds the scepter”
2. v. 8b, “him who holds the scepter”

*The Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible* has in the footnote, “him that is seated = that reigneth” (p. 873).

▣ **“the Valley of Aven”** The term “Aven” (BDB 19) can mean

1. trouble

2. sorrow
3. wickedness
4. idolatry

It is used in several ways in Amos-Hosea.

1. a place of idolatry (here)
2. a reference to Bethel by means of a Hebrew word play (cf. Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5,8)
3. a reference to wickedness (cf. Hosea 6:8; 10:8; 12:11)
4. nothingness (i.e., idolatry as vanity, cf. Amos 5:5)

Here it refers to a place somewhere in Syria. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 284, notes that it is a Jewish word play on Baalbek, which was called Heliopolis during the Greek period. McComiskey also asserts that because of the contact between Syria and Egypt this city may possibly have taken on the name of an Egyptian city, 'On (cf. the Septuagint).

The site is geographically uncertain, but many believe that it refers to the Bukaa valley (cf. the Septuagint).

▣ **“him who holds the scepter”** Originally the term “scepter” (BDB 986) referred to a wooden implement of war. Leaders were those who fought well. Their wooden weapon became a symbol of authority, rule, or power. It is used of the kings of pagan nations in Isa. 14:5; Amos 1:5,8; Zech. 10:11, but of God’s power in Isa. 10:5 and His Messiah’s power in Isa. 11:4.

▣ **“Beth-eden”** This name means “house of pleasure” (CONSTRUCT BDB 108 and 112). Its geographical location is uncertain, but may refer to (1) a kingdom north of Aram on the bank of the Euphrates River (time of Assurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III) or (2) Baalbek in the Bukaa Valley (time of Tiglath-pileser III).

▣ **“So the people of Syria will be exiled to Kir”** We learn from 9:7 that this was their original homeland; they will be exiled to where they started from (BDB 885, cf. II Kgs. 16:9). However, its location is unknown (cf. Isa. 22:6). Most identify it as a location in Elam.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-8**

**<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD,**

**“For three transgressions of Gaza and for four**

**I will not revoke its *punishment*,**

**Because they deported an entire population**

**To deliver *it* up to Edom.**

**<sup>7</sup>So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza**

**And it will consume her citadels.**

**<sup>8</sup>I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,**

**And him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon;**

**I will even unleash My power upon Ekron,**

**And the remnant of the Philistines will perish,”**

**Says the Lord GOD.**

**1:6 “Gaza”** This city (BDB 738) was a way of referring to the nation of Philistia. They were sea peoples from the Aegean Islands who tried to invade Egypt, but were defeated and settled on the southwestern coast of Palestine around 1200 B.C. They brought Iron Age technology with them and established control over a large

area of the coastland. In vv. 6-8 four of their five major city-states are mentioned, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gaza.

▣ **“because they deported an entire population”** Apparently the descendants of Esau were actively involved in purchasing Hebrew slaves taken by the Philistines. Entire communities (or treaty communities) were captured and sold (cf. Joel 3:3-8).

▣ **“Edom”** Edom, Moab, and Ammon were relatives of the Jews. They lived in the southern trans-jordan.

**1:7 “him who holds the scepter”** David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, pp. 133 and 136), makes the historical point that Amos is accurate regarding:

1. the Philistine cities were royal city-states surrounded by other cities ruled by those who bore the scepter of the city-state monarch (v. 7)
2. the Ammonites had a monarch and his officials (cf. v. 15; Hosea 7:3,5,7,16; 8:4)

**1:8 “the remnant of the Philistines will perish”** The Philistines (BDB 814) were a traditional enemy of Judah from the time of Joshua to David. They will be completely destroyed as a nation and as a people.

▣ **“the Lord GOD”** This is literally *Adon* YHWH. Since both are translated “lord,” when they occur together YHWH is translated all capitals “GOD.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-10**

<sup>9</sup>Thus says the LORD,

“For three transgressions of Tyre and for four

I will not revoke its *punishment*,

Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom

And did not remember *the* covenant of brotherhood.

<sup>10</sup>So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre,

And it will consume her citadels.”

**1:9 “Tyre”** This (BDB 862) refers to the nation of Phoenicia, which seems to have been made up racially of Canaanites and the Sea Peoples (Aegean Sea). This nation became the source of the fertility worship of both Ba’al and Asherah, which permeated the Northern Ten Tribes through the influence of Jezebel (cf. I Kgs. 16:31-33; 18:19,21).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

##### I. Reasons For

- A. Ancient humans began as a hunter-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
- B. Ancient Near Eastern inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.
- C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.

##### II. Where and Why

- A. Fertility religions developed in
  1. Egypt (Nile)

2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)

3. Canaan (Jordan)

B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the ancient Near East.

C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.

### III. Who and How

A. Who (the gods and goddesses)

1. Egypt

a. Isis (female)

b. Osiris (male)

2. Mesopotamia

a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)

b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)

3. Canaan

a. Ba'al (male)

b. Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)

B. Each of these pairs were mythologized in similar ways.

1. one dies

2. the other restores

3. the pattern of dying and rising gods mimic the annual cycles of nature

C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e., marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people.

### IV. The Israelites

A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).

B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.

C. Idolatry involves the blessing of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.

### V. Suggested Reading

A. W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*

B. J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*

C. James G. Frazer

1. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*

2. *Folklore in the Old Testament*

3. *The Worship of Nature*

D. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible*

E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

▣ “because they delivered up an entire population to Edom” Homer mentions Tyre’s slave trade in his *Odyssey* 4:288ff; 15:473ff.

▣ **“did not remember the covenant of brotherhood”** This refers to some type of treaty, possibly the precedent of one that was made with Solomon (cf. II Sam. 5: 11; I Kgs. 5:1-18; 9: 11- 14). It also may refer to the unnatural behavior of selling one’s neighbor into slavery. All of the sins mentioned in this section deal with mankind’s inhumanity toward his fellowman.

**1:10 “I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre,**

**And it will consume her citadels”** Tyre (capital of Phoenicia) was an island fortress that was almost impregnable. However, during Alexander the Great’s move through Palestine in 332 B.C., after a seven-month siege, the city fell when the enemy built a causeway out of the rubble of the destroyed mainland city. We learn from historical documents that 6,000 were killed, 2,000 were crucified or impaled and 30,000 were sold into slavery.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>Thus says the LORD,

**“For three transgressions of Edom and for four  
I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because he pursued his brother with the sword,  
While he stifled his compassion;  
His anger also tore continually,  
And he maintained his fury forever.**

<sup>12</sup>So I will send fire upon Teman

**And it will consume the citadels of Bozrah.”**

**1:11 “Edom”** This (BDB 10) refers to near relatives of the Israelites through Esau, Gen. 25:19-26; 36:1-19. Edom and Israel were always at odds. Edom becomes a symbol of broken family bonds and covenants. She is often condemned in the prophets (cf. Isa. 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Mal. 1:2-4).

Petra was its capital (cf. Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 25:12-14; Obad. 10-15; Mal. 1:2-4). It was located east of Judah in the trans-jordan region (modern Jordan).

▣

NASB “compassion”

NKJV, NRSV, NJB “pity”

TEV “mercy”

This term (BDB 933) can also refer to a treaty partner (i.e., “ally,” NIV footnote and NET Bible).

▣ **“His anger also tore continually,  
And he maintained his fury forever”**

These two poetic lines are parallel. “His anger” refers to the settled, continual anger of the Edomites against the Israelis (cf. NEB). Again, God’s judgment comes because of sins against people, in this case relatives.

**1:12 “Teman”** This (BDB 412) was a northern district of Edom (cf. Jer. 49:7,20; Obad. 9) whose capital was Bozrah.

▣ **“Bozrah”** This (B DB 131) refers to one of the larger northern cities of Edom located at a major oasis on “the King’s Highway” (trans-jordan trade route from the Gulf of Aqaba north to Syria). It was a city of great antiquity (cf. Gen. 36:33; I Chr. 1:44).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> Thus says the LORD,  
“For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four  
I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead  
In order to enlarge their borders.  
<sup>14</sup> So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah  
And it will consume her citadels  
Amid war cries on the day of battle,  
And a storm on the day of tempest.  
<sup>15</sup> Their king will go into exile,  
He and his princes together,” says the LORD.

**1:13 “Ammon”** This (BDB 769) is also a relative of the Israelis through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:30-38). The Israelites were not to confront them on their exodus because they were relatives (cf. Deut. 2:19). Ammon was located in the trans-jordan area between the Arnon and Jabbok Rivers.

▣ **“Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead”** Gilead (BDB 166) is in the northern trans-jordan area. There is no historical reference to this specific act, but this practice was well known (cf. II Kgs. 8:12; 15:16; Hosea 13:16). However, the judgment of God falls on all of these nations because of their violent war practices.

▣ **“In order to enlarge their borders”** This slaughter of innocent women and children was not related to holy war, as was the Israeli attack on Jericho (cf. Josh. 6), but was simply motivated by greed for more land.

**1:14 “Rabbah”** This term means “the great” (BDB 913). This title was used of a city of Ammon, located at the headwaters of the Jabbok River (cf. Deut. 3:11; II Sam. 12:26; 17:27).

▣  
NASB, NJB “war cries”  
NKJV, NRSV,  
TEV “shouting”

This term (BDB 929) has a large semantical field:

1. raise a shout
  1. for attack
  2. for victory
  - c. for worship
  - d. for destruction
2. give a blast

Often a battle cry is linked to a trumpet blast, as in Josh. 6:5,10,16,20. Every nation had its own war cry (cf. 2:2; I Sam. 17:20,52, also see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 9,254). Israel’s was linked to YHWH (cf. Jdgs. 7:20-21).

# AMOS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judgment on the Nations (1:3-2:3)	Indictment of Neighboring Peoples; Israel and Judah (1:2-2:16)	God's Judgment on Israel's Neighbors (1:1-2:5)	Judgment of the Neighboring Nations and on Israel Itself (1:3-2:16)
		Moab	Moab
2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3
Judgment on Judah		Judah	Judah
2:4-5	2:4-5	2:4-5	2:4-5
Judgment on Israel		God's Judgment on Israel	Israel
2:6-8	2:6-8	2:6-8	2:6-8
2:9-12	2:9-11	2:9-3:2	2:9-11
	2:12		2:12-16
2:13-16	2:13-16		

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD,

“For three transgressions of Moab and for four

I will not revoke its *punishment*,

**Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.**

**<sup>2</sup>So I will send fire upon Moab**

**And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth;**

**And Moab will die amid tumult,**

**With war cries and the sound of a trumpet.**

**<sup>3</sup>I will also cut off the judge from her midst**

**And slay all her princes with him,” says the LORD.**

**2:1** The literary judgment formula of chapter one continues through chapter two (cf. 1:3).

▣ **“Moab”** These were also relatives of the Israelis through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:30-38). The country is in the trans-jordan area just north of Edom between the Arnon and Zered Rivers.

▣ **“because he burned the bones of the king of Moab to lime”** These actions (i.e., 1) opening the grave; 2) removing the remains; 3) burning them; 4) mixing them to make mortar [for buildings] or plaster [for whitewashing walls] were seen as way to humiliate and to affect negatively one’s place/rest in the afterlife. This purposeful violation of that which was culturally sacred and taboo shows the level of animosity. This does not refer to cremation as a way of disposing of a dead body, but to a later desecration! It does, however, give me a chance to discuss modern concerns about cremation.

Cremation was an abominable practice to all the Near Eastern people. It is only mentioned in the Bible in connection with great crimes (cf. Gen. 28:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15,25). Apparently out of hatred Moab burned the king of Edom’s bones and mixed them with mortar to build buildings or plaster to whitewash walls (Targums). Lime (BDB 966, cf. Isa. 33:12) was an ingredient of mortar and plaster (whitewash).

It is possible that this act is a metaphor for complete destruction (i.e., Vulgate). It is difficult to interpret VERBS that have both literal and metaphorical uses. This is especially true of poetic passages, as in the book of Amos.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: CREMATION**

### **I. OLD TESTAMENT**

A. Cremation (burning) was one of the four ways to inflict capital punishment in Leviticus (cf. 20:14; 21:9, examples, Gen. 28:24 and Josh. 7:15,25).

B. People friendly with Saul, reclaimed his body and those of his three sons from the Philistines and burned them before burying their bones in the land of Benjamin (cf. I Sam. 31:12-13, omitted in the parallel of I Chr. 10:12).

There is some dispute among scholars about the reading “burned” vs. “anointed.” This text is the only seemingly positive cremation in the OT (cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1074). It may also refer to burning spices (cf. II Chr. 16:14; 21:19; Jer. 34:5).

C. Later, a Judean prophet predicts the burning of the priests at Bethel on its sacrificial altar (cf. I Kgs. 13:2).

D. The issue of cremation has sometimes been falsely linked to the OT use of fire as a metaphor for judgment (cf. Isa. 30:33). Cremation metaphors (i.e., “pyre”) are used to accentuate eschatological condemnation.

E. Burial was practiced by all of the countries of the ancient Near East (cf. Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 57). Cremation was seen as a humiliation (cf. Amos 2:1).

## II. GREECE AND ROME

A. Both of these civilizations practiced cremation.

1. Greece regularly (Sophocles, *Electra*, 1136-1139)

2. Rome as a viable, but not common, option (Cicero, *Deleg* 2,22,56)

B. The cultures of the Mediterranean had a different attitude toward cremation than the cultures of the ancient Near East. Tacitus mentions that the Jews bury, not burn (*His.* 5.5)

## III. RABBINICAL JUDAISM

A. Most early rabbis assert that burying is commanded by Deut. 21:23.

B. Cremation is forbidden in the Talmud (*Sanh.* 7:2,24b) and *Mishna* ('Abodiah Zarah 1.3).

C. Modern Judaism allows those cremated to be placed in Jewish cemeteries (cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1074).

## IV. NEW TESTAMENT

There is no discussion or mention of this subject in the NT. The physical body is viewed as a temporary shelter (cf. II Cor. 5). Something of the old body will be reunited with the believer at the Second Coming, but there are no details or explanations (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18). This is simply not an issue of “faith and practice” for Christians. Like the Jews of the OT, believers of the NT assert a bodily resurrection. There is a physicalness to eschatology, but the how or why is not specified! The condition or location of the physical remains do not affect a believer’s reunion with Jesus. Faith in Christ is the key, not physical remains!

**2:2 “I will send fire”** This phrase refers to

1. YHWH’s judgment
2. the literal burning of cities

It is a recurrent phrase in Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5 and Hosea 8:14. Fire is often sent as a cleansing agent and a symbol of God’s presence! See Special Topic: Fire at 7:4.

▣ **“the citadels”** See note at 1:4.

▣ **“Kerioth”** This is a region’s or city’s name. The NEB, following the LXX, translated it as “towns” (because of the DEFINITIVE ARTICLE, cf. Jer. 48:41), but the revision of the NEB, called the REB, puts the place name back into the translation (i.e., “the palaces of Kerioth”). This city is also mentioned in Jer. 48:24,41. This city (possibly *Kir*, cf. Isa. 15:1) had a major shrine to the Moabite fertility god, *Chemosh* (cf. *The Mesha Stone* L.12; I Kgs. 11:33).

▣ **“with war cries”** See note at 1:14. War cries and trumpet blasts are often used as signals in battle. The phrase in some contexts refers to the sound of confusion and fear during battle.

▣ **“the sound of the trumpet”** Trumpets were used to direct troops in the field. See note at 1:14.

**2:3 “the judge”** This is used in the sense of monarch. The king acted as judge (cf. Micah 5:2), as God’s representative (cf. Gen. 18:25; Jdgs. 11:27; Ps. 50:6; 75:7; 94:2; Isa. 33:22). The parallel phrase, “all her princes,” refers to the royal family. Moab will be totally destroyed as a nation (cf. Mal. 1:2-5).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-5

<sup>4</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
“For three transgressions of Judah and for four  
I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because they rejected the law of the LORD  
And have not kept His statutes;  
Their lies also have led them astray,  
Those after which their fathers walked.  
<sup>5</sup>So I will send fire upon Judah  
And it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem.”

**2:4 “Judah”** The charges against Judah are theological (rejection of YHWH’s covenant, i.e., Mosaic Laws) not social. The charges would have been denied by Judah, but apparently the same sins against YHWH which characterized Israel were also in Judah (cf. Jer. 3:6-10; Ezek. 23:1-49).

▣ **“they rejected the law of the LORD”** The VERBAL “rejected” (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in two seemingly opposite senses:

1. to reject or refuse someone or something (i.e., here, God’s law)
2. for God refusing to reject His people. They reject Him and His covenant, prophet, and worship, but He, the covenant God, punishes them, but does not fully reject them.

The paradox is clearly seen in a series of texts from Jer. 6:30; 7:29; 14:19; and 31:37! In Amos (cf. 2:4; 5:21) and Hosea (cf. 4:6 [twice]; 9:17) YHWH rejects a generation of His people because of their willful rejection of Him and His law (cf. Hos. 4:6; 8:1,12)! All of Israel’s descendants were never right with God, only those who exercised faith, repentance, and obedience!

▣ **“their lies also have led them astray”** This term “lies” (BDB 469) means “lie,” “falsehood,” or “deceptive thing.” NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 619, characterizes it well, “emphasizes an action or word that is false, a lie, because it somehow violates God’s character, word, or deed, as expressed in himself, his prophet or his creations.” Psalm 40:5 and the NIV reflect this concept. The “lies” refer to false teaching and the worship of false gods (cf. Hab. 2:18). This same concept is carried over in the NT where in I John the “lie” refers to unbelief in Jesus, the ultimate sin and covenant incompatibility.

▣ **“their fathers walked”** This is an idiomatic way of asserting that this generation, as well as previous generations, faithfully worshiped the fertility gods of Canaan (i.e., *Ba’al* and *Asherah/Astarte*).

**2:5** This is a reference to the Babylonian Exile that will befall Judah in the days ahead (i.e., 586-539 B.C.).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:6-8

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
“For three transgressions of Israel and for four  
I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because they sell the righteous for money  
And the needy for a pair of sandals.  
<sup>7</sup>These who pant after the *very* dust of the earth on the head of the helpless  
Also turn aside the way of the humble;

**And a man and his father resort to the same girl**

**In order to profane My holy name.**

**<sup>8</sup>On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar,**

**And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.**

**2:6 “Israel”** Amos got the attention of the audience by first proclaiming judgment against the surrounding enemies, then by proclaiming judgment on Israel’s brothers (Judah), but now he shocked them by turning to God’s judgment of them!

▣ **“Because they sell the righteous for money”** Because of the allusion to slavery by Edom, the Philistines (cf. 1:6), and the Phoenicians (cf. 1:9), this is probably a reference to selling their countrymen into slavery. The term “sell” (BDB 569, KB 581, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in two senses: (1) persons kidnaped to be sold as slaves or (2) to sell oneself to a creditor for a period of time. It is certain that this is a reference against those who were wealthy, who abused the socially ostracized and needy (cf. Prov. 14:31; 17:5).

The term “righteous” here is used in parallel with “the needy” (v. 6), “the helpless” (v. 7), and “the humble” (v. 7). So in this context (and remember context determines meaning) it does not have a theological orientation, but a social one. Righteous people are related to YHWH and His law and thereby treat their covenant partners appropriately. Righteousness in Amos has a vertical and a horizontal aspect. In Hosea the term takes on a more religious (theological or vertical aspect) orientation (cf. Hosea 2:19; 10:12; 14:9. In context it is often related to *hesed* (i.e., covenant faithfulness).

Because this context has a legal/judicial flavor, the term probably refers to the defendant in a legal trial who cannot afford to bribe the judge!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Gal. 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans.

He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaiosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *sdq* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was not clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and the Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential, progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view, all of the Bible from Gen. 4 - Rev. 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Gen. 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Rev. 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
  - a. Rom. 3:26
  - b. II Thess. 1:5-6
  - c. II Tim. 4:8
  - d. Rev. 16:5

2. Jesus is righteous
  - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
  - b. Matt. 27:19
  - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
  - a. Lev. 19:2
  - b. Matt. 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
  - c. Rom. 3:21-31
  - d. Romans 4
  - e. Rom. 5:6-11
  - f. Gal. 3:6-14
  - e. Given by God
    - 1) Rom. 3:24; 6:23
    - 2) I Cor. 1:30
    - 3) Eph. 2:8-9
  - f. Received by faith
    - 1) Rom. 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
    - 2) I Cor. 5:21
  - g. Through acts of the Son
    - 1) Rom. 5:21-31
    - 2) II Cor. 5:21
    - 3) Phil. 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
  - a. Matt. 5:3-48; 7:24-27
  - b. Rom. 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
  - c. I Tim. 6:11
  - d. II Tim. 2:22; 3:16
  - e. I John 3:7
  - f. I Pet. 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
  - a. Acts 17:31
  - b. II Tim. 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* published by IVP:

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

▣ **“And the needy for a pair of sandals”** This may be interpreted literally as meaning (1) people bought and sold for a very small amount (cf. 8:6) or (2) a court procedure (i.e., the exchanging of shoes, cf. Ruth 4:7, see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 169) to give some legality to these scandalous enslaving practices of the rich.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 228, has a significant statement related to the social concept of “needy,” “poor,” and “poverty.”

“Where western thinking stresses the economic aspect of poverty, the ANE understood poverty in the context of shame and honor. So the possession of land, power, economic security, and social states made a person rich, and the absence of these factors made a person poor.”

**2:7**

**NASB, NKJV** “pant”  
**NRSV, TEV** “trample”  
**NJB** “crushed”

There is much discussion about the translation of this term (BDB 983, KB 1375, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) in v. 7: (1) the NASB and NKJV imply that the rich begrudged (i.e., “gasp for air” KB 1375 or “pant after” BDB 983 I, e.g., Job 7:2; Ps. 119:131; Eccl. 1:5) the small amount of dust the poor placed on their heads in mourning (hyperbole) or (2) the NRSV, following the Septuagint, and the Vulgate translate this term “to trample” (BDB 983 II, e.g., 8:4; Ps. 56:2; Ezek. 36:3), which seems to imply the affluent’s humiliation and domination of the poor. In this context “the righteous,” “the needy,” “the helpless,” and “the humble” refer not to the perennially poor, but the recently exploited middle class farmers or merchants who had been forced to borrow money and thereby lost their tribal lands, income, pride, and social position. For a good discussion of the rich and poor in the OT see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 72-74. Because of the term’s use in 8:4 the second option seems best.

▣

**NASB** “turn aside the way of the humble”  
**NKJV** “pervert the way of the humble”  
**NRSV** “push the afflicted out of the way”

**TEV** “push the poor out of the way”

**NJB** “thrust the rights of the oppressed to one side”

The VERB (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is used several times in Amos.

1. In 2:7 and 5:12 it refers to abuses of the legal system caused by the wealthy’s bribery of the judges (e.g., Exod. 23:6; Deut. 16:19; 24:17; 27:19; I Sam. 8:3; Prov. 17:23; Isa. 10:2; Lam. 3:35).
2. In 2:8 it refers to the wealthy reclining on the garments taken from the poor as pledges for a debt.

The basic meaning of the term is to “stretch out” or “spread out.” In the first example above the judges stretched their hands for a bribe. In the second example the garments of the poor are spread out so that the wealthy can sit on them or possibly lie on them, which would refer to cultic prostitution.

▣ **“a man and his father resort to the same girl”** The term for girl (BDB 655) here is not the normal term for cult prostitute, although that may be what this is referring to (cf. Deut. 23:18; for historical setting see Hos. 4:12-14). It could also refer to the “selling” of a poor, young maiden, whereby she would be used as a concubine by all the men in one family (cf. TEV). This would violate (1) Lev. 18:8; 20:11; Deut. 22:30; 27:20 and (2) Exod. 21:7-11. Since the context is the abuse of the poor and helpless, then the second option seems best.

There have been several other interpretations. One cannot be specific about the precise nature of some of these violations, but the overall context is very clear. Humans, even covenant people, are sinful and violate God’s laws! God does not take sin and sinners lightly, especially those who should have known Him (i.e., Judah and Israel). We reap what we sow in direct proportion to the light (and power) we have!

▣ **“In order to profane My holy name”** These acts were flaunted at the shrines (golden calves of Jeroboam II) in Bethel and Dan (cf. v. 8). They had the appearance of legality and religious approval, but everyone knew what was happening!

This VERBAL (BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in several senses in the *Piel* form:

1. to defile sexually, Lev. 19:29; 21:9,15
2. to defile ceremonially, Lev. 19:8; 21:12,23; 22:9,15
3. to defile God’s name, Lev. 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2,32; Jer. 34:16; Ezek. 20:39; 36:20-23; Amos 2:7

The cultic acts of the Israelites were polluting, defiling, and profaning the very God they claimed to worship and serve! They flagrantly ignored the Mosaic legislation for personal gain and pleasure!

It is obvious that Amos (like all of the prophets) judged actions in light of the Mosaic Law.

1. 2:4 uses the terms “the law of the LORD” and “His statutes” to refer to the Mosaic legislation.
2. 2:7 relates to Lev. 18:8,15; 20:11-12
3. 2:8 relates to Deut. 24:12-13
4. 2:9-11 relates to Gen. 15:12-21
5. 2:11-12 relates to Num. 6

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY**

### **I. Old Testament Usage**

- A. The etymology of the term (*kadosh*, BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kds*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to cultic things, places, times, and persons. It is common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

C. In the prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized, comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy; His name representing His character is Holy; His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).

D. God's mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity.

There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as "merciful" and God as "holy" in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

## II. The New Testament

A. The writers of the NT are Hebrew thinkers (except Luke), but influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT that controls their vocabulary, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion.

B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and is God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).

C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness.

**2:8 "On the garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar"** The rich were taking and keeping (prohibited in Exod. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:12-13) the sleeping garments (outer cloaks) of the poor as a pledge for loans (see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 171, cf. Exod. 21:7,26-28; Lev. 25:39-40; Deut. 24:10-13,17; Prov. 20:16; 27:13). This may relate to cultic prostitution mentioned in v. 7 or a cultic meal connected to the worship of fertility gods.

The phrase, "every altar," shows the idolatrous nature of the worship being offered to Ba'al (male) and Asherah (female), who were local fertility gods with an altar in each and every community. YHWH had only one official altar (i.e., Mt. Moriah). Jeroboam I had established two alternate sites at Bethel and Dan to prevent his people (i.e., the northern tribe) from returning to Jerusalem for feast days.

▣ **"in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined"** There are two possible interpretations: (1) in the cultic centers of Dan and Bethel the rich were becoming intoxicated on the revenue they illegally extracted from the poor or (2) the temple taxes were being used to promote drunkenness and sexual practices.

Some translations translate *Elohim* as "their gods" or "their god" (NJB, NAB, NIV), but the context implies a reference to YHWH (NASB, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA, NET). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:9-16**

**9"Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them,  
Though his height *was* like the height of cedars  
And he *was* strong as the oaks;  
I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.**

**10It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
And I led you in the wilderness forty years**

**That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.**

**<sup>11</sup>Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets**

**And some of your young men to be Nazirites.**

**Is this not so, O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD.**

**<sup>12</sup>But you made the Nazirites drink wine,**

**And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'**

**<sup>13</sup>Behold, I am weighted down beneath you**

**As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves.**

**<sup>14</sup>Flight will perish from the swift,**

**And the stalwart will not strengthen his power,**

**Nor the mighty man save his life.**

**<sup>15</sup>He who grasps the bow will not stand *his ground*,**

**The swift of foot will not escape,**

**Nor will he who rides the horse save his life.**

**<sup>16</sup>Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day,” declares the LORD.**

**2:9-12** This is a historical rendition of the gracious acts of God, which sets the stage for Israel's judgment. God's people's violations of His covenant are not new, but perennial (cf. Neh. 9; Acts 7).

**2:9 “it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them”** This is “holy war” terminology referring to YHWH fighting on behalf of His people (notice the FIRST PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUN in vv. 9,10,13). The victory belonged to Him (e.g., “hornets,” Exod. 23:28; Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12; “hail stones,” John. 10:11).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AMORITE**

The term “Amorite” is used in three senses:

1. one of the several indigenous tribes of Canaan (e.g., Gen. 10:16; 15:18-21; Exod. 3:17; Josh. 24:11; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 9:8 [nomadic tribes from Akkadian texts])
2. a general name for people to the west of Mesopotamia (cf. v. 10; Gen. 15:16; Jdgs. 6:10; II Kgs. 21:11; Ezek. 16:3, also from Assyrian and Babylonian texts)
3. inhabitants of the highlands as opposed to Canaanites who occupy the lowlands (cf. Deut. 1:7,19,20; 3:2)
4. Canaanite and Amorite are both used to designate all the indigenous tribes of Palestine/Canaan

▣ **“though his height”** This may simply be a metaphor of power (BDB 147) using trees (cedars can grow up to 100' high) or possibly a literal reference to the physical height of some of the Amorites, Og of Bashan and the Anakim of Hebron (cf. Num.13:28, 33; Deut. 1:28; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22).

▣ **“I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below”** This is an idiom or proverb of total destruction, here used of the Amorite people. Verses 9-10 refer to the Exodus and Conquest.

**2:10 “It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt”** The deliverance was prophesied to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). This special covenant relationship with the descendants of the Patriarchs is affirmed by the national group in Exod. 19-20. But collectively they turned away and rejected YHWH's covenant

(cf. Hos. 13:4-6). Israel was more responsible because she had so much more spiritual light (cf. Luke 12:48).

▣ **“I led you in the wilderness forty years”** This is a reference to the wilderness wandering period. The term “forty” is a round number in the OT. Here it refers to the thirty eight years of travel from Kadesh-Barnea to the Promised Land (by way of the trans-jordan).

▣ **“That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite”** This refers to God’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21. Notice the term “Amorite” refers to all Canaan in v. 16 and to one of several indigenous tribes in v. 21. See note at v. 9.

**2:11-12 “I raised up some of your sons to be prophets. . .Nazirites”** God’s special choice of these spiritual leaders showed His special care for Israel. But Israel caused these men (and possibly women, cf. Num. 6:2) to sin (cf. v. 12). They were God’s gift, but His people perverted their giftedness!

“Nazirites” are described in Num. 6. They could be male or female (cf. v. 2). There were several unique guidelines for their calling to continue:

1. cannot eat any product from the grapevine, vv. 3-4
2. cannot cut his/her hair, v. 5
3. cannot touch a dead body (i.e., funerals of loved ones), vv. 6-7

This special vow (temporary [e.g., Num. 6:13-20; Acts 18:18; 21:23] or life long [Jdgs.13:7; ISam. 1:1; Luke 7:33]) was a way for people who were not priests or Levites to dedicate themselves to YHWH in a special sense! It is also significant that in a male-dominated culture ancient Israelites allowed female Nazirites (and prophetesses).

For a good brief discussion see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 466-467.

**2:11 “Is this not so”** God challenges them to affirm the trustworthiness of His words of condemnation. But this is also a sorrowful, personal message from their God! The phrase “sons of Israel” has Abrahamic covenant implications. God still loves and cares for His people (His true people reflect His character!).

▣ **“declares the LORD”** This is a special phrase for God’s revelation (cf. 2:11, 16; 3:10,13,15; 4:1,5-6, 8-11; 6:6, 14; 9:7-8,12,13).

**2:13** There are two ways to understand this verse.

1. It refers to YHWH being weighed down (as an overloaded wagon) by His people’s sin (from Arabic root, cf. Isa. 43:24; and the NASB, NKJV, NET, NIV, REB translations).
2. It refers to YHWH “pressing down” (i.e., judging) His people (from Arabic root, cf. Isa. 28:27-28; and the NRSV, TEV, NJB translations or “slowing,” JPSOA).

The differences relate to which root the VERBS derive (BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* PERFECT and *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). In this case certainty is impossible.

The UBS, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Amos*, suggests a translation that follows option #2, where the people of Israel groan under God’s judgment like an overloaded cart, pp. 55-56.

**2:14-16** This described the panicked retreat of the Israeli army before the Assyrians. YHWH had been with them in the Exodus and Conquest, but now His presence was for judgment, not deliverance! He strikes fear and panic into the hearts of Israel’s best soldiers. This is an exact reversal of “Holy War”!

**2:16 “the warriors will flee naked”** This refers to the throwing off of all armor and all unnecessary clothing so that the soldiers could retreat even faster.

▣ **“in that day”** This phrase, “in that day” or “on that day,” is a way for the eighth century prophets to speak of God’s visitation (presence), both for judgment and restoration.

<b>Hosea</b>		<b>Amos</b>		<b>Micah</b>	
<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>
1:11	1:5		1:14(2)		2:4
	2:3		2:16		3:6
2:15			3:14	4:6	
2:16			3:18(2)		5:10
2:21			3:20		7:4
	5:9		6:3	7:11(2)	
	7:5		8:3	7:12	
	9:5		8:9(2)		
	10:14		8:10		
		9:11	8:13		

This pattern is typical of the prophets. God is going to act against sin in time, but He also offers a day of repentance and forgiveness to those who change their hearts and actions! God’s purpose of redemption and restoration will be accomplished! He will have a people who reflect His character. The purpose of creation (fellowship between God and humanity) will be fulfilled!

- ▣ **NASB** “declares the LORD”
- NKJV, NRSV** “says the LORD”
- TEV** “The LORD has spoken”
- NJB** “declares Yahweh”

This literary unit (1:3-2:16) repeats the term “says” (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT), showing that these judgments are from YHWH, not Amos.

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Concluding</b>
1:3	1:5
1:6	1:8
1:9	
1:11	
1:13	1:15
2:1	2:3
2:4	
2:6	

A parallel form (BDB 610 and 217 CONSTRUCT) is in 2:11 and 2:16 (e.g., 3:13; 4:3; 6:8,14; 8:3,9,11). Amos believed that YHWH Himself had spoken a clear message to him and he faithfully passes it on.

# AMOS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Authority of the Prophet's Message	Israel's Sinfulness and God's Punishment (3:1-6:14)	God's Judgment on Israel (2:6-3:2)	Israel Warned and Threatened (3:1-6:14)
3:1-8	The Privileges of Election Create a Greater Responsibility 3:1-2		Election and Punishment 3:1-2
		The Prophet's Task	The Prophetic Call Cannot be Resisted
	3:3-8	3:3-8	3:3-6 3:7-8
Punishment of Israel's Sins (3:9-4:5)		The Doom of Samaria	Samaria Will Perish for Her Corruption
3:9-10	3:9-11	0.13125 3:10-11	3:9-11
3:11-15			
	3:12-15	3:12-4:3	3:12 Against Bethel and Domestic Luxury 3:13-15

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Israel must have strongly agreed with Amos' words of condemnation in chapters 1-2, but was unprepared for his extended condemnation of their own society, 2:6-6:14, or possibly 2:6-9:6.
- B. The literary background to this chapter is the Covenant Renewal Ceremony of Deut. 27-29. This can be clearly seen in the structure of 4:6-11, where five of the curses come upon Israel each time the phrase, "Yet you have not returned to me," is used 4:6, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:

<sup>2</sup>"You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;  
Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

<sup>3</sup>Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?

<sup>4</sup>Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?

Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured *something*?

<sup>5</sup>Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?

Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?

<sup>6</sup>If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?

If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?

<sup>7</sup>Surely the LORD God does nothing

Unless He reveals His secret counsel

To His servants the prophets.

<sup>8</sup>A lion has roared! Who will not fear?

The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

**3:1-15** Notice the structure of chapter four.

1. Amos addresses the nation of Israel, v. 1
2. YHWH addresses the nation, v. 2
3. Amos asks rhetorical questions and makes a conclusion, vv. 3-8
4. YHWH speaks, vv. 9-10, 11-15

The UBS, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Amos*, sees 3:1-2 as a summary statement concluding chapters 1-2 (p. 55). However, no modern English translation follows this structure.

**3:1 "Hear"** This is the Hebrew VERB *Shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), which means "to hear so as to do" (e.g., Deut. 5:1; 6:4; 9:1). Knowledge of God always involves obedience (cf. vv. 1,13; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4). There are covenant benefits and requirements!

▣ "which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family" Amos has set up this condemnation of Israel by first condemning the surrounding nations, even Judah!



**NASB** “sons of Israel”  
**NKJV** “O children of Israel”  
**NRSV** “O people of Israel”  
**TEV** “the entire nation”  
**NJB** “Israelites”

There is a purposeful ambiguity in this phrase. In one sense it refers to all the tribes of Israel, but in another, to the Northern Ten Tribes who split away under Jeroboam I in 922 B.C. Verse 2 obviously includes all descendants of Jacob.

▣ **“against the entire family”** One reason modern western people misunderstand the OT is its focus on corporality, while most westerners focus on individual rights. The ancient people lived or died together. They lived for the good of the aggregate.

It is hard for moderns to fathom this sense of corporality. It involves corporate sin and guilt, but not corporate righteousness. Righteousness was an individual matter of faith, repentance, obedience, and worship. God’s judgment of His people impacted both the sinful and innocent.

If this concept is brought over into today, it would require an understanding that humans are responsible for their personal relationship to God, as well as sharing the corporate guilt of their societies! Sin is both commission and omission. It also implies there are national, temporal judgments, which are designed (cf. Deut. 27-29) to cause sinners to turn or return to God.

▣ **“which he brought up from the land of Egypt”** The VERB (BDB 748, KB 828) is a *Hiphil* PERFECT. The Exodus experience is the first national event for the Jewish people (cf. 2:10; 9:7). God was faithful, but this was matched by the continual unfaithfulness of the descendants of the Patriarchs (both Israel and Judah, i.e., “the entire family,” cf. Neh. 9; Acts 7).

**3:2 “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth”** This is an emphasis on God’s unique election of the descendants of Abraham for a special service (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6-8; 14:2; Hosea 2:20), which involves the evangelization of all peoples. If all humans are made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27) and if Gen. 3:15 is a promise of their redemption, then Abraham’s call was a call to bring all humans to God (cf. Gen. 12:3).

The term “chosen” is literally “known” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) and has the connotation of personal relationship (e.g., Gen. 4:1; 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 11:28; I Kgs. 8:39; Ps. 139:4; Hosea 5:3). It is this intimate acquaintance with God and His Word (e.g., Deut. 34:10) that makes their sins so repugnant. YHWH chose them to be a channel of knowledge, blessing, and salvation to all the sons and daughters of Adam. But instead, Israel took advantage of her special call, relationship, and knowledge. She was to influence the nations, but the nations influenced her!

▣ **“Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities”** This word for iniquities (BDB 730) is used only here in the book of Amos, but it is used often in Hosea (cf. 4:8; 5:5; 7:1; 8:13; 9:7,9; 10:10; 12:8; 13:12; 14:1,2) and twice in Micah (cf. 7:18,19). It means iniquity, guilt, or punishment of iniquity. In chapters one and two a different word (i.e., “transgressions” BDB 833) for sin was used, which focused on mankind’s fallen nature. In chapter three it is the consequences of evil (i.e., punishment of iniquity) that are being emphasized. Grace is free, but it brings great responsibility. The Jews were chosen, not to be pampered and privileged, but to be servants and priests to reach the whole world (e.g., Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:4-6; John 3:16; I John 2:2; 4:14). The covenant consequences of Deut. 27-29 are becoming a reality. Election and the consequences of our choices are both valid theological poles! To be biblical we must affirm both, not choose one!

The VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can mean “punish” (e.g., Hosea 1:4; 2:15; 8:13; 9:9) or “visit.” Possibly the Israelites expected YHWH to “visit” them with covenant blessing, but instead He came to punish them for their flagrant covenantal violations (cf. 5:18-20). Covenant violations bring violent covenant curses (cf. Deut. 27-29).

It must be remembered that possibly the best metaphors to help humans understand God come from the home. God’s parental love is such that He will not allow sin to totally destroy His relationship with estranged children. Discipline (i.e., judgment) is also an act of love and mercy! The goal is never short term comfort or prosperity, but long term fellowship and intimacy!

**3:3-8** These verses show that nothing just happens; there is a plan, a purpose with a resulting consequence. The context relates this either to God’s covenant relationship with Israel or God’s speaking through the prophets. This series of questions shows a cause and effect relationship, so too, God’s covenant with Israel (cf. Deut. 27-29).

**3:3 “appointment”** This Hebrew word (BDB 416, KB 419, *Niphal* PERFECT) primarily means a “prearranged appointment” (e.g., Josh. 11:5; Neh. 6:10; Job 2:11). One wonders if in this context the two men represent (1) God and the prophets (cf. v. 7); (2) God and Israel (cf. v. 2, if so the term takes on adversarial connotation, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 484); or (3) a common proverb from daily life.

**3:5** For an interesting discussion of animal traps see James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 228.

**3:6 “a trumpet is blown in the city”** In our day it would be something like a warning signal (cf. Ezek. 33:2-5).

▣ **“will not the people tremble”** This VERB (BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means tremble in fear. It is used in several contexts.

1. the very presence of YHWH (e.g., Exod. 19:16,18)
2. YHWH coming in judgment (e.g., Isa. 10:29; 19:16; 32:11; 41:5)
3. the effect of bad news on people (e.g., Gen. 27:33; 42:28; I Kgs. 1:49)

In Amos #3 fits the context best, but #1 and #2 are surely in mind!

▣ **“If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it”** An example of these covenantal consequences (cf. Deut. 27-29) can be seen in 4:6-11. The OT asserts the full sovereignty of God over all events (i.e., one causality in the universe, e.g., II Chr. 20:6; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 14:24-27; 43:13; 45:7; 54:16; Jer. 18:11; Lam. 3:33-38). For a good discussion of God and evil see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 305-306.

**3:7-8** These are extremely important verses which emphasize God’s forewarnings to His people through His prophets. The people are responsible because they knew God’s word and will (cf. 4:13), yet they rejected it (cf. 2:12; Hosea 11:1-4).

This concept of predictive prophecy is the most convincing way to show modern people the uniqueness and inspiration of the Bible. No other world religion book has predictive prophecy! There are different kinds of prophecy, such as multi-fulfillment, typological, apocalyptic, but here I am talking about direct, specific, historical prediction, like Micah 5:2. Predictive prophecy was God’s gift to His people to assure them of His control of all things (international, national, and individual). For modern people seeking evidence in a search for who to believe, it is a powerful witness!

Prophecy shows that God began the time-space continuum and He will bring it to an appropriate close. For the OT believer “the beginning” and “the end” are inseparably linked (linear time vs. cyclical time).

**3:8a** This is the climactic truth of the entire series of questions. It refers to the very beginning of the prophecy (cf. 1:2)! God is actively involved in human affairs. He has chosen Israel for a purpose (universal knowledge and redemption), but they have violated His purposes, therefore, judgment is His act of mercy for the purpose of restoring them to covenantal purity and purpose (cf. 9:7-15).

One theological question of Amos is who will be judged?

1. all Israel (cf. 9:8)
2. sinners in Israel (cf. 9:10)
3. both Israel and Judah (cf. 3:1)

The house of David will be restored (cf. 9:11), which implies that covenant purpose continues!

**3:8b** This is a personal insight from Amos. This famous phrase describes what all humans feel when they have been called by God to speak for Him. Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me, for I am ruined” (cf. 6:5). Jeremiah called it a fire in his bones (cf. 20:9).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup>Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see *the* great tumults within her and *the* oppressions in her midst. <sup>10</sup>But they do not know how to do what is right,” declares the LORD, “these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.”**

**3:9** There is a series of IMPERATIVES in this verse.

1. proclaim (BDB 1033, KB 1570), *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. say (BDB 55, KB 65), *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. assemble (BDB 62, KB 74), *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
4. see (BDB 906, KB 1157), *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Pagan nations (Philistia, Egypt) are called on to witness and judge Israel’s (i.e., Samaria, its capital) sins! They are obvious to God and mankind.

▣ **“Ashdod”** “Ashdod” is the word found in the Masoretic Text, the Aramaic Targums and the Latin Vulgate (cf. NASB, NRSV, REB, NIV). It was one of the five city-states of the Philistines. It reflects the whole nation of Philistia. The Septuagint, RSV, and NJB have “Assyria” because they think it serves a better historical parallel to Egypt (e.g., Hos. 7:11), which is also mentioned in v. 9.

Ashdod and Egypt are mentioned as two witnesses called by God to witness Samaria’s sin and then to confirm His testimony against His own people (cf. Deut. 19:15). We see this clearly in v. 13, which is a covenant lawsuit.

▣ **“the mountains of Samaria”** The singular phrase is used in 4:6 and 6:1. This is the location of the capital of the Northern Ten Tribes since the reign of Omri. It is possible that this refers metaphorically to the political life of the nation, while Bethel, 3:14, refers to the spiritual life.

It is also possible that the Philistines and Egyptians are being invited to gather on the mountains of Israel and watch Israel’s punishment for her sins. She has plundered and hoarded, now she will be plundered in the same manner (cf. 2:6-8; 3:10b).

▣ **“great tumults”** This term (BDB 223) is used in Deut. 7:23 for the confusion that YHWH will cause His people’s enemies (e.g., Exod. 23:27). However, in the cursing and blessing section (Deut. 27-29) this term is one of the curses YHWH will send on His disobedient people (cf. 28:20).

**3:10 “But they do not know how to do what is right”** The term “right” is literally “straight.” This is a metaphorical play on the Hebrew word for a “measuring reed.” This was a Mesopotamian construction tool which was used to measure walls or fences. It became a metaphor for God’s character. Therefore, all the words for sin are a deviation from the standard. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 2:6. The tragedy of this text is that the Covenant People do not know (i.e., intimate knowledge, cf. Gen. 4:1; i.e., no personal relationship) God’s Covenant responsibilities (cf. Hos. 4:6)!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:11-15**

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,

“An enemy, even one surrounding the land,  
Will pull down your strength from you  
And your citadels will be looted.”

<sup>12</sup>Thus says the LORD,

“Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear,  
So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away—  
With *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch!

<sup>13</sup>Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,”

Declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts.

<sup>14</sup>For on the day that I punish Israel's transgressions,

I will also punish the altars of Bethel;  
The horns of the altar will be cut off  
And they will fall to the ground.

<sup>15</sup>I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house;

The houses of ivory will also perish  
And the great houses will come to an end,”  
Declares the LORD.

**3:11 “thus says the Lord GOD”** This is the typical phrase denoting revelation (e.g., 3:11,12) used so often in chapters 1 and 2. Also notice the paragraph ends with “Declares the LORD” (cf. 3:13,15), which is also the pattern of 2:11,16.

The phrase “the Lord GOD” reflects the two Hebrew names for deity: (1) *Adon* and (2) YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

▣ **“An enemy”** This refers to the nation of Assyria (which is never named in Amos, but several times in Hosea [7:11; 8:9; 9:3; 10:6; 11:11]), who took the Northern Ten Tribes captive in 722 B.C. (cf. 6:7,14). Samaria, the capital of Israel, was taken after a lengthy siege (cf. v. 11d).

▣ **“Will pull down your strength”** This Hebrew term (BDB 74) can refer to (1) physical strength or (2) a physical fortress (i.e., strongholds).

▣

NASB “your citadels will be looted”

NKJV “your palaces shall be plundered”

NRSV “your strongholds shall be plundered”

**TEV** “plunder their mansions”  
**NJB** “your palaces will be looted”

For more information on “citadels” see note at 1:4.

The VERB “will be looted” (BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* PERFECT) refers to the spoils of a defeated foe that are distributed among the victorious soldiers. These spoils would include people, livestock, clothing, valuables, etc., all the possessions of the conquered people.

Notice that in v. 10 it is the Israelites who “hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.” Now the spoils of their ill gotten gain will be taken from them! They reap what they sow. This is a biblical principle (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

**3:12** This verse may stand alone. The NRSV puts it in prose when all other verses around it are poetry. The REB and NJB make it a separate strophe.

This ironical verse relates to the almost total destruction of the Northern Ten Tribes (Israel). Only a small wounded group will be left of the entire nation (cf. 5:15; 9:8). On the other hand, this may be an allusion to Exod. 22:1-13. If this is so, then this is not a metaphor of a returning remnant, but a metaphor of ultimate, complete destruction. The allusion to a shepherd implies option #1.

It is just speculation on my part, but it is interesting that the word for “legs” (BDB 502) is also used of worshipers bowing down before a deity. There may be a double entendre referring to Israel’s worship of idols (the golden calves) in YWHW’s name.

This double meaning also extends to “snatches. . .snatched” (BDB 664, KB 717, the first a *Niphal* PERFECT and the second a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). This term is often used in the sense of deliverance (e.g., Micah 4:10). Therefore, this salvation connotation is sarcastically used of Israel’s judgment. It is these plays on words and parallelism that makes Amos such powerful poetry!

▣ **“the cover of a couch”** This is a very difficult Hebrew phrase to translate. There are several theories.

1. The Masoretic Text has “in Damascus,” which is followed by the LXX, Peshitta, and subsequently the KJV and NIV translations. The Hebrew consonants for “in Damascus” can also be revocalized as “piece of leg.”
2. It may refer to a special cloth imported from Damascus, translated “silk and cushions of the bed” (cf. the ASV and NASB translations).
3. “Part of the bed” (cf. the RSV, NRSV and the closely related NEB’s translation of a “chip from the leg of the bed,” which follows the Medieval Jewish commentators, Rashi and Kimchi).

It is obvious that this refers to a very elegant piece of furniture (illustrating the opulence of Samaria, cf. TEV and NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 495, #5), of which only a broken, useless remnant remains.

The comparison seems to be that as a small piece of the sheep is rescued from the lion as a legal sign to the sheep owner, so too, a small remnant of Israel will survive. God’s judgment is a legal sign of the validity of His word (i.e., Deut. 27-29)! God’s word about salvation is trustworthy, so too, His word about covenant disobedience and its drastic consequences.

**3:13 “Hear and testify against the house of Jacob”** These VERBS (BDB 1033 and 729) are both IMPERATIVES. This phrase is parallel to 3:9. This is typical lawsuit terminology. The two pagan nations of Philistia (Ashdod) and Egypt (v. 9) are going to observe the judging of God’s people as the two required legal witnesses (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Again the question of who does “the house of Jacob” refer? Does it mean (1) the Northern Ten Tribes only or (2) does it refer to all the descendants of Jacob (Israel and Judah)?

As in v. 12, Amos uses a word that has several connotations. “Testify” (BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) can mean (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 335-336):

1. “warn”; “give assurance” (cf. Gen. 43:3; Exod. 21:29; I Kgs. 2:42; Neh. 13:15,21)

2. “command,” “prohibit,” connected to YHWH’s covenant (e.g., Exod. 19:23; Deut. 32:46)
3. here it refers to two witnesses against Israel (cf. I Kgs. 21:10,13; II Chr. 24:19). YHWH, through Amos, accuses Israel of covenant violations (both social and religious).

Again, it is the unexpected use of the term that makes Amos’ poetry so powerful!

▣ **“the Lord GOD, the God of hosts”** This is the only place in the OT that these three major terms for God are found together.

1. “the Lord” - the term, *Adon*
2. “God” - YHWH, the covenant name for God
3. “the God” - the name *Elohim*, the general name for God
4. “of hosts” - the captain of the armies of heaven or the leader of the heavenly court (cf. 3:13; 5:14-16; 6:8, 14).

See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

**3:14 “on that day”** This refers to the Day of Judgment. See full note at 2:16.

▣ **“the altars of Bethel”** Bethel is the southern site of the worship of the golden calves which were set up by Jeroboam I (cf. I Kgs. 12:26-33). It was located about 10 miles north of Jerusalem and was an ancient holy site for the Hebrew nation, related to Jacob (cf. Gen. 28:10-22).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SACRIFICIAL SYSTEMS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

(These notes are part of my OT Survey notebook)

- I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia
  - A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the god’s attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The swordbearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king, and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.
  - B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
  - C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
  - D. Israel’s ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).
- II. Ritual laws in Canaan (very similar to Israel’s)
  - A. Sources
    1. biblical accounts
    2. Phoenician literature
    3. Ras Shamra Tablets from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.
  - B. Israel’s and Canaan’s sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.
- III. Ritual Laws in Egypt
  - A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized.
  - B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was.

C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods.

D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness.

IV. Israel's Sacrificial System - Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's although not necessarily related to them at all.

A. Descriptive Phrases

1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or vegetable).
4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.
5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the divine presence.
6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).
7. The definition of sacrifice is "acted prayers" or "ritualized prayers." The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (Tyndale, *Numbers*, p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material, which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.

B. Sacrifice Involved

1. Gifts to God
  - a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord's
  - b. all that a person has, he owes to God
  - c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
  - d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.
  - e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
  - f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God's realm
  - g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.
2. Expressing consecration of one's entire life to God
  - a. The burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices.
  - b. The entire animal was burnt to express to God our deep felt homage.
  - c. This was a very expressive gift to God.
3. Fellowship with God
  - a. communion aspect of sacrifice
  - b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
  - c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship
4. Expiation of sin
  - a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
  - b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
  - c. the significance of blood
    - (1) placed on altar for man
    - (1) placed on veil for priest
    - (2) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Lev. 16)

- d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
- e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, 4:1, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14

#### V. Procedures from Leviticus for the Different Sacrifices

##### A. Leviticus 1

##### 1. Introductory Formula, "The Lord spoke to Moses," 1:1-2; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,19; 7:22, 28

- a. From the herd or flock
- b. "When," v. 2, shows that this was not mandatory but voluntary

##### 2. Burnt Offering, vv. 3-17 (6:8-13)

##### a. Altar

- (1) The brazen altar, which was also called altar of burnt offering, altar by door of Tabernacle, or altar of shittim wood, covered with bronze (cf. Exodus 27)
- (2) this distinguished it from the incense altar (golden altar) in the Holy Place (cf. Exodus 30)
- (3) coals from brazen altar were taken to incense altar
- (4) brazen altar was right in the middle of the entrance of the Tabernacle
- (5) altar had horns which were its most sacred part. The blood was applied to the horns (cf. Exod. 30:10).
- (6) The horns were possibly for:
  - (a) symbol of hands to hold offering up
  - (b) symbol of strength or prevailing power (Deut. 33:17; II Sam. 22:3.)
  - (c) later, anyone who grabbed the horns of the altar was safe until his case was decided by the court (I Kgs. 1:50-51; 2:28)

##### b. The Offering

- (1) bullock without blemish which was mentioned first because of its importance and cost, v. 3
- (2) male goat or sheep, v. 10
- (3) turtle doves or young pigeons, v. 14 (provision for the poor)

##### c. Place of Burnt Offering was at the door of the Tent of Meeting

##### d. Laying on of the Hands - this was only for the bulls, not for goats, sheep or birds, v. 4

- (1) the offerer did this himself (not the priest)
- (2) many feel it was a symbolic action of the transferring of guilt
- (3) some believe it meant that
  - (a) this animal comes from this particular individual
  - (b) the sacrifice was to be presented in the offerer's name
  - (c) the fruit of this sacrifice belongs to the one who placed his hands on the animal

##### e. Slaughtering

- (1) bull - "before the Lord" by the man making the sacrifice. The offerer had to kill, skin, and cut up the animal. The priest's role (except in case of public sacrifices) began when the man brought the animal to the altar.

- (2) sheep or goat, v. 11 - "on north side of altar before the Lord." This designated a specific place for these lesser animals.
    - (3) bird - The priest killed and offered this sacrifice. The offerer had to remove the bird's crop.
  - f. Handling of the Blood
    - (1) animals
      - (a) The priest threw blood against the altar, and sprinkled it round about the altar.
      - (b) The life of the animal was in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). Life already belonged to God, therefore, the blood represented no part of the gift of the man.
      - (c) The bird's blood was drained on the side of the altar and not consumed in fire.
  - g. Handling of the Flesh
    - (1) bull, v. 6
      - (a) The offerer skinned the offering. The priest could keep the skin (cf. 7:8)
      - (b) The offerer cut it into pieces
      - (c) The priest placed the offering on the altar in an arrangement as it was when alive
      - (d) The legs and entrails were washed with water from the laver
      - (e) The priest burned the whole animal on altar
- 3. Occasion of Burnt Offerings
  - a. Feast of Tabernacles, Booths
  - b. Day of Atonement
  - c. Feast of Weeks, First Fruits, or Pentecost
  - d. Feast of Trumpets
  - e. Wave Sheaf (Lev. 23)
  - f. Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover
  - g. Beginning of months, New Moon
  - h. Sabbath
- 4. Significance of Burnt Offering
  - a. A gift to God
  - b. Seen as the most valuable kind of sacrifice
  - c. It seems to deal with the concept of sin in general or thanksgiving
  - d. Most perfect representation of sacrificial idea
  - e. Symbolic offering of one's life
  - f. Represents complete consecration of the life of an individual to the service of God
  - g. Graded value of offering
    - (1) bull
    - (2) sheep - goat
    - (3) birds
  - h. This shows that anyone conscious of spiritual need could approach God. God made provision for all men.
- 5. Special Instructions for Priest, 6:8-12
  - a. Burnt offering remained all night on hearth of the altar

- b. Fire was to be kept burning continually under a burnt offering
- c. Instructions involving the Priest's dress
- d. Instructions involving the removal of the ashes

B. Leviticus 2:1-16 (6:14-23)

1. Introduction

- a. This chapter deals with the grain offering
- b. Grain offering was from the root meaning "gift." It became a technical term for non-animal, or vegetable gifts.
- c. After the Exile the grain offering appears as a supplement to the burnt offering and peace offering and the rabbis say it could be offered alone by the very poor.
- d. Salt covenant was also mentioned in Num. 18:19 and II Chr. 13:5. Salt was the opposite of leaven. It was used as a symbol of the covenant of God because it was non-corruptible and lasting.

2. The Grain Offering involved one's labor being given to God.

- a. It was a gift to God from the daily food of the people.
- b. It was generally a supplement (especially in post-exile days) to the burnt or peace offering.
- c. Sacrifice was God's provision for the priest. Only a small part was burnt as a memorial of the whole.
- d. The word "memorial" describes the offered portion, or that part which brings the whole before the Lord.
- e. New Testament concept of the Lord's Supper as "memorial" expresses this Old Testament concept.
- f. The distinction between the terms "holy" and "most holy" are:
  - (1) "holy" - priest and family could eat it at any clean place
  - (2) "most holy" - could only be eaten by the priests and in court of Tent of Meeting

3. Types

- a. Unbaked flour (for the rich), 2:1-3
- b. Baked loaves or cake, 2:4-11
- c. Green ears of corn or wheat (for the poor), 2:12-16
  - (1) Unbaked flour was the highest offering. It was the very best of wheat flour.
  - (2) Baked cakes
    - (a) oil was an ingredient
    - (b) prepared in oven, v. 4.
    - (c) on a baking iron, v. 5.
    - (d) in an earthen frying pan, v. 7.
  - (3) Green ears of corn or wheat
    - (a) must be parched
    - (b) broken into coarse grits
    - (c) arranged like a meal set before guests.

4. Ingredients

- a. Fine flour corresponded to an animal without blemish

- b. Oil was a symbol of prosperity and, therefore, a symbol of God's presence
    - (1) Used for food, sacrificing, medicine, and anointing
    - (2) Possibly use of oil was to replace offering of oil
  - c. Frankincense was from India or Arabia
    - (1) Seen as a very pure thing with a wonderful fragrance
    - (2) Symbolized prayer and praise
  - d. Salt
    - (1) Life-giving as well as preserving qualities
    - (2) Possibly more for table fellowship than for preserving
  - e. Elements excluded
    - (1) Leaven excluded, v. 11
      - (a) possibly because of fermentation
      - (b) leaven associated with corruption
      - (c) could be offered with first fruits and to priest
    - (2) Honey excluded
      - (a) syrup was from fruit not honeybee
      - (b) possibly because of its use in Canaanite ritual
5. Ritual of Offering
- a. It was brought to the priest. He handled the whole ceremony (2:2, 9, 16).
  - b. Part of the offering was to be eaten by priest in the sanctuary. It was most holy.
6. Significance
- a. Present from inferior to superior
  - b. Burning of a portion of it represented the consecration of a portion of one's labor to God
  - c. Apparent meaning
    - (1) Burnt offering - consecration of one's life
    - (2) Meal offering - dedication of one's daily labor
7. Special Instructions for Grain Offering, 6:14-23
- a. Offering in front of altar
  - b. Labor offered the gift to God, but in reality it supported the priesthood
- C. Leviticus 3:1-17 (7:13-34), Peace Offering
1. Introduction
- a. Why
    - (1) communion offering
    - (2) covenant sacrifice
    - (3) corporate offering
    - (4) concluding sacrifice
  - b. It expressed thankfulness to God because of fellowship with God, family, and friends.
  - c. It was usually the final act in a series of sacrifices in which reconciliation had been established.
  - d. The burnt offering expressed the costliness of obedience, while the peace offering expressed the joy and happiness of fellowship with God.
  - e. Male or female but without blemish

- f. Varieties of offering
    - (1) from herd; male or female
    - (2) the distinction that was made between the sheep and the goat was because of the fat of the tail of the sheep
      - (a) lamb of flock - male or female
      - (b) goat of flock - male or female
  - 2. Ritual
    - a. Presentation of offering
      - (1) Laid hands on offering
      - (2) Killed it at door of the Tent of meeting
      - (3) Identification of sacrifice was the same as the burnt offering
      - (4) Sprinkling of blood around altar
      - (5) Burning of choice parts on altar to God
        - (a) fat (sheep-fatty tail) symbolized prosperity
        - (b) kidneys, lobe of liver symbolized the seat of the will and emotions
        - (c) fatty portions placed on offerer's burnt offering or on morning lamb offering
    - b. Thanksgiving offering included (7:11-14)
      - (1) Unleavened cake mixed with oil
      - (2) Unleavened wafers spread with oil
      - (3) Fine flour mixed with oil
  - 3. Priest's Portion, 7:28-34
    - a. Breast belonged to priest as a wave offering
    - b. Waving involves the placing of the offering upon the offerer's hands and the priest's hands. It showed the offering offered by the offerer to God, and then its reception back by the priest.
    - c. Right thigh belonged to officiating priest
    - d. Heave offering was lifted to God and received back by the priest
  - 4. Offerer's Portion, 7:15-18
    - a. A Thanksgiving Offering shall be eaten on day of giving, v. 15
    - b. A Votive (vow) or freewill offering shall be eaten on day of offering or on the next day, v. 16
    - c. This portion was all that was not given to God and by God to the priest
    - d. God symbolically eats with the offerer and his family and friends in this offering
    - e. This offering stresses that fellowship relationships have been restored
- D. Leviticus 4:1-5:13 (6:24-30) SIN OFFERING
- 1. Introduction
    - a. This is the first offering in which atonement was the dominant element.
    - b. This sacrifice re-establishes the covenant between man and God. It restores fellowship.
    - c. This offering involves:
      - (1) Sins of ignorance
      - (2) Sins of inadvertence
      - (3) Sins of passion

- (4) Sins of omission
- (5) It did not atone for sins committed intentionally in haughty rebellion against God. There was no sacrifice for intentional, high handed, premeditated sin (cf. Num. 15:27-31).

## 2. Meaning

- a. This offering expiated the guilt and punishment for sins.
- b. This involved grace on God's part and faith on man's part.
- c. No sacrifice achieves anything by mere ritual offering. It was the offerer's faith behind the act.
- d. Yet, sacrifice was more than the mere expression of the offerer. It did something for him. It re-established the relationship with God.
- e. Ritual was a God-given means of restitution, not a substitute for personal faith.
- f. God hates any religious action without accompanying faith, Isa. 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8.

## 3. Ritual

- a. For the High Priest, vv. 3-12
  - (1) High priest - anointed priest
    - (a) Sin, in leading people wrongly
    - (b) Sin, in a personal nature
    - (c) The high priest, being the spiritual representative of the community. If he sins, all sinned in him. This was the Jewish understanding of corporality (cf. Joshua 7; Romans 5:12ff).
  - (2) Procedures
    - (a) The High Priest brought a young bullock without blemish to altar
    - (b) He laid hands on its head
    - (c) The High Priest slaughtered animal
    - (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before the veil 7 times
      - i. this cleansed the Tabernacle
      - ii. symbolically opened the way to God
      - iii. blood placed on horns of incense altar
      - iv. blood remaining poured out at base of altar of burnt offering
    - (e) He placed all the fat on the altar to be burned
    - (f) All the rest of the animal will be taken outside the camp to a clean place, v. 12, where the ashes are poured out from altar. There, the remainder of the animal is burned.
- b. For the Nation, vv. 13-21
  - (1) They sinned when commands of the law were not met, vv. 13-21.
  - (2) Procedures
    - (g) The Elders brought a young bullock without blemish to altar.
    - (b) The Elders laid hands on head.
    - (c) The Elders slaughtered the animal.
    - (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before veil 7 times.
      - i. this cleansed Tabernacle

- ii. symbolically opened the way to God
  - iii. blood placed on horns of incense altar
  - iv. rest poured out at base of altar of sacrifice
- (e) All of it offered on the altar
- (f) All the rest of the animal was taken outside the camp to a clean place, v. 12, where the ashes were poured out from the altar. There the remainder of the animal was burned.
- c. For leader, vv. 22-26
  - (1) Leader (ruler) vv. 22-26
    - (a) Leader of tribe
    - (b) Responsible person in community
    - (c) Elder
  - (2) Procedures
    - (a) The leader brought a male goat (old, shaggy goat) to altar.
    - (b) The leader laid hands on its head.
    - (c) The leader slaughtered the animal.
    - (d) A High Priest placed blood on horns of altar of burnt offering-the rest of blood poured out at base of altar of sacrifice.
    - (e) All fat is burned on the altar.
    - (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh.
- d. For individual, vv. 27-35
  - (1) For individual - when he learned he had sinned he was to make this offering
  - (2) Procedures
    - (a) The individual brought a female goat or female lamb.
    - (b) The individual laid hands on its head.
    - (c) The individual slaughtered the animal.
    - (d) A priest placed blood on horns of altar of sacrifice-rest poured out at base of altar.
    - (e) All fat placed on altar and burned.
    - (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh.
- e. Special cases involving the sin offering, 5:1-13 (These seem to involve intentional sin against a covenant partner)
  - (1) If a witness doesn't come forward and testify (failure to give information), 5:1
  - (2) Touching unclean animal, 5:2
  - (3) Touching unclean human, 5:3
  - (4) Speaking thoughtlessly with an oath, 5:4
  - (5) offering for the above sins:
    - (a) Female goat or sheep
    - (b) Two turtledoves or two pigeons
    - (c) 1/10 ephah of fine flour
- f. Sin offering ritual, 6:24-30
  - (1) Priest could eat what was left.

- (2) If blood got on clothes, clothes must be washed.
- (3) If blood got on earthen vessel, vessel was broken.
- (4) If blood got on brass vessel, vessel was washed.
- (5) If burnt offering's blood was brought into Holy Place then the flesh must be burnt and not eaten by priest.
- g. Significance of the sin offering
  - (1) There is no offering for premeditated sin—only for inadvertent sin or sins of ignorance, 5:15, 18.
  - (2) What does forgiveness involve:
    - (a) Man's part is faith
    - (b) God's part is mercy
- E. Leviticus 5:14-19 GUILT OR TRESPASS OFFERING
  - 1. Introduction
    - a. While the Sin Offering dealt with sin committed, the Guilt Offering had to do with the damage that was done to a covenant partner and what restitution was possible.
    - b. The sin and trespass offerings were very similar.
    - c. The rights of the individual were expressed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
      - (1) home
      - (2) accumulation of good
      - (3) life
    - d. This offering emphasizes the harm done to our brother in sinning and the restitution of the cost of that which was damaged plus 1/5 more.
  - 2. Sins Requiring an Offering
    - a. Against God or that which belongs to Him
      - (1) first fruits
      - (2) firstborn, 14-16
      - (3) tithe
      - (4) offering given incorrectly
      - (5) gifts of inferior value
    - b. "If a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty, and shall bear his punishment."
- F. Ancient sacrifices were offered to
  - 1. appease an angry deity
  - 2. feed a deity
  - 3. communicate with a deity
  - 4. praise a deity
  - 5. foster a sense of forgiveness or reconciliation

▣ **“The horns of the altar will be cut off”** This refers to the protrusions of the corners of the sacrificial altar. These horns may have represented (1) animal horns as a symbol of power (e.g., Jer. 48:25; Dan. 8:7; Zech. 1:18-20) or (2) a way to symbolize that the sacrifice was lifted to God. A portion of the blood of sacrificial animals was smeared on these horns (cf. Exod. 29:12; Lev. 8:15). This cultic procedure showed

that sin cost a life. The blood symbolized life (cf. Lev. 17:11,14). Therefore, the horns were the holiest part of the altar of sacrifice. This phrase, then, can mean (1) that their sacrifices have no potency or (2) since these horns functioned as places of safety (alluded to in Exod. 21:14; and specific in I Kgs. 1:50; 2:28), there is now no place of safety!

**3:15 “the winter house. . .the summer house. . .houses of ivory. . .the great houses”** These phrases are referring to (1) multiple dwellings of the self-indulgent rich (one example, Ahab’s two palaces, cf. I Kgs. 21:1,18; NJB “many mansions”) or (2) two store houses, the bottom floor used in winter and the upper floor used in summer (TEV, “every great house”). Many of these ivory carvings (i.e., inlays, cf. I Kgs. 10:18; 22:39) were of Assyrian or Egyptian deities. Israel had lost herself in (1) materialism and (2) idolatry!

▣ **“and the great houses will come to an end”** The Septuagint has “and many other houses also.” The Hebrew term (BDB 912 I) can mean (1) “great” or (2) “many.” This phrase seems to be a summary statement and not another type of house.

▣ **“Declares the LORD”** See note at v. 11. Throughout this section of Amos the divine authority of the message has been sustained by this or similar phrases (cf. 3:1,5,6,8,9,10,11,12,13,15; 2:1,3,4,6,16; 4:3,5,6,8,10,11; 5:17).

# AMOS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Punishment of Israel's Sins (3:9-4:5)	Israel's Sinfulness and God's Punishment (3:1-6:14)	The Doom of Samaria (3:9-4:3)	Israel Warned and Threatened (3:1-6:14)
4:1-3	Israel's Luxurious Excesses and Vain Piety 4:1-3	3:12-4:3	Against the Women of Samaria 4:1-3
4:4-5	4:4-5	Israel's Failure to Learn 4:4-5	The Self-deception, Obstinacy, and Punishment of Israel 4:4-5
Israel Did not Accept Correction 4:6-11	4:6 4:7-8 4:9 4:10 4:11	4:6-8 4:9 4:10 4:11-12	4:6 4:7-8 4:9 4:10 4:11
4:12-13	4:12	4:13	Doxology 4:13

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)** ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria,  
Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,  
Who say to your husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!”

<sup>2</sup>The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness,  
“Behold, the days are coming upon you  
When they will take you away with meat hooks,  
And the last of you with fish hooks.

<sup>3</sup>You will go out *through breaches in the walls*,  
Each one straight before her,  
And you will be cast to Harmon,” declares the LORD.

**4:1-13** Notice the structure of this chapter.

1. Amos addresses the wealthy women of Israel (i.e., all exploitative elements of Israeli society), vv. 1-3
2. YHWH’s sarcastic response to their religiosity, vv. 4-5
3. YHWH’s sending of the covenant curses of Deut. 27-29, but they still will not repent, vv. 6-11
4. YHWH’s threat of personal, temporal visitation, v. 12
5. Amos’ doxology to God as creator, and therefore, rightful judge, v. 13

This brief outline shows the problem of how to analyze a prophet’s poetic message. It is difficult to tell when the prophet comments and when he quotes the message of YHWH given to him. The revelation is so overpowering that the words of the prophet are merged with the words of YHWH! Outlining the message is less significant than allowing the whole message to impact the reader’s consciousness!

**4:1 “Hear this word”** The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see note at 3:1. The VERB is also used at 5:1). This prophetic formula is seen several times in Amos (e.g., 3:1; 4:1; 5:1). This is God’s message to His people. Covenant violations result in covenant judgments (cf. Deut. 27-29).

▣ **“Cows of Bashan”** This is Amos’ rural reference to the elegant society women who abused the poor for their own luxury. Bashan was an area northwest of the Sea of Galilee from the mountains of Herman to the Yarmuk River. It was famous for its beautiful cattle (i.e., the wives of the wealthy). This may not have been a negative statement, but a metaphor of well kept and well fed, pampered cattle. Being pampered has turned into demands gained at the expense of the poor (BDB 195)! On the other hand, it may refer to fattened cattle, ready to be slaughtered! Amos uses several rural metaphors from his personal experience as a sheep herder.

There is still another possibility, that these refer to cultic sexual partners.

1. not called “wives”
2. said to be on the mountain of Samaria (possible reference to the raised altar at Bethel)
3. their men not called “husbands,” but “lords” (v. 1c)
4. cows seen as gods of fertility and strength in Egypt and early Israel (cf. Exod. 32). They also became a symbol for Ba’al (i.e., the golden calves of Jeroboam I at Dan and Bethel).
5. cultic sexual acts may be alluded to in 2:7-8. God swearing by His own holiness may refer to 2:7d.

▣ **“on the mountain of Samaria”** This refers to the well fortified capital of Israel, which Omri built on the top of a mesa. It had steep cliffs and only one natural entrance.

▣ **“Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy”** These two *Qal* PARTICIPLES (BDB 798, KB 897 and BDB 954, KB 1285) are parallel and describe the actions of the wealthy women. YHWH is uniquely (i.e., compared to other ancient Near Eastern law codes) concerned about the plight of these people (especially Deuteronomy, “the orphan and the widow. . .the alien,” cf. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:14,17,19; 26:12,13; 27:19). This then is another allusion to the Mosaic Covenant. The prophets did not invent or introduce a new ethical system, but reemphasized the Mosaic covenant requirements (cf. Jer. 7:6) with their blessings and curses (i.e., Deut. 27-29)!

▣ **“say to your husband”** This is not the formal term for husband. It is a rare ancient form which meant “lord” (BDB 10); here used in the sense of “husband” (e.g., Gen. 18:12; Jdgs. 19:26-27). Irony is being expressed; “the lords” are being commanded!

▣ **“Bring now, that we may drink”** This phrase has two VERBS of command (BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphal* IMPERATIVE and BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* COHORTATIVE). These women had been indulging in luxury to the point that alcoholism and greed were the normal way of life. Their motto would have been “more and more for me at any cost!”

**4:2 “the Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness”** The VERB (BDB 989, KB 1396) is a *Niphal* PERFECT. This is a rare and serious statement that speaks of God swearing by Himself (cf. 6:8; Ps. 89:35). YHWH is an ethical God. Loving and just relationships are required, not only with Him, but with other covenant partners. True biblical faith has both a horizontal aspect (God) and a vertical aspect (others).

▣ **“the days are coming”** This is a reference to judgment day. See full note at 2:16. It is referred to as (1) “in that day,” 2:16; 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11 and (2) “the day of the Lord” in 5:18 and 20. This motif is common in the latter prophets. Israel viewed YHWH’s visitation as a day of God’s blessing, but Amos reveals it as a day of wrath and judgment.

▣	
NASB	“meat with hooks. . .fish hooks”
NKJV	“fishhooks. . .fish hooks”
NRSV	“hooks. . .fish hooks”
TEV	“hooks. . .a fish on a hook”
NJB, Young’s Lit.	“hooks. . .fish-hooks”
JPSOA	“in baskets. . .in fish baskets”

The first term (BDB 856 I, KB 1036) for “hooks” is found only here in the OT. It seems to be related to the Hebrew root for “thorn,” “spike,” or “spear.” Apparently these fancy society women and their children will have a hook placed in their lower lip by Assyrian soldiers and they will be marched out of the city naked (LXX) in single file, tied to one another as a train of unruly cattle.

The second term (BDB 186, KB 215) relates to fishing gear of some type. Because of the paralleling, “hooks” seems best. Jeremiah (cf. 16:16) uses “fishing” as a metaphor for judgment. The question one asks of this verse is, “Is it metaphorical or literal?” Assyria did use hooks or rings in the lower lip to tie refugees together during deportation marches as an intimidation factor (cf. II Chr. 33:11 of Assyrians and Hab. 1:15 of Babylonians).

The REB translates both of these terms differently. The first as “shields,” which is similar to the way the ancient versions translated the term.

1. LXX - “weapons”
2. Peshitta - “weapons”

The second term is translated as “fish-baskets” (cf. NET Bible). The LXX has “boiling caldrons.” Because the Hebrew roots are so rare, the meaning is uncertain and similar roots and cognates are used to try to fit the historical and literary context. The main point is a violent and humiliating deportation!

For me, since the context addresses the “cows of Bashan” and since Amos has a rural background, the terms should probably relate to cattle herding. It is possible that Amos changes metaphors, but because the Hebrew terms are rare, then “prod” and “hook” for controlling and moving cattle, seem best.

▣ **“and the last of you”** The word “last” (BDB 31) can refer to

1. every last one of you (cf. 1:8; 8:10; 9:1)
2. a small remnant
3. descendants or posterity

The context implies #1.

**4:3 “straight before”** The phrase “straight before” is a metaphor for the complete destruction of the protective city wall. The population was tied together in single file and exiled to a distant location to the east.

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“cast to Harmon”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“cast into Harmon”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“flung out into Harmon”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“thrown out” (word omitted)</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“herded away toward Hermon”</b>
<b>NAB</b>	<b>“cast into the mire”</b>
<b>JPSOA</b>	<b>“flung on the refuse heap”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“thrown on a dung hill”</b>

This VERB (BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* PERFECT) often has the connotation of God casting a sinner from His presence (cf. II Kgs. 17:20; 24:20; Ps. 51:11; 71:9; 102:10; Jer. 7:15). However, its use as a positive covenant promise is found in II Kgs. 13:23. Although the immediate context of Amos refers to Assyrian exile, the term itself has the implication of divine wrath. Assyria exiled Israel because of their sin and YHWH’s judgment, not Assyria’s innate power!

There have been several theories as to the meaning/wording of this phrase.

1. It is a place name of unknown location. The LXX calls it the mountain of Rimmon or Romman.
2. It is a misspelling of Mount Hermon (cf. NJB and UBS, *Translator’s Handbook*, p. 234) and, therefore, a parallel to the later phrase “beyond Damascus,” 5:27, which meant on the way to exile in Assyria.
3. The JPSOA and the REB have emendated the Hebrew text to a similar Hebrew term (BDB 199) “dung heap” (cf. Isa. 25:10), which in this context would refer to the place of disposing of the dead bodies (the “hooks” then would be for dragging away the dead bodies). Their translation reads “and flung on the refuse heap.”
4. An Aramaic Targum and some later Syrian translations have “beyond the mountains of Armenia,” which also parallels 5:27.
5. It is possible to divide the Hebrew text differently and get “cast out, O mountain of oppression” (cf. NIV STUDY BIBLE footnote, p. 1352).

▣ **“declares the LORD”** This recurrent phrase, 1:5,8,15; 2:3,11,16; 3:10,13,14; 4:3,5,6,8,10,11 and 5:17, shows whose authority, power and prestige stand behind these statements.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup>“Enter Bethel and transgress;  
In Gilgal multiply transgression!  
Bring your sacrifices every morning,  
Your tithes every three days.  
<sup>5</sup>Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened,  
And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known.  
For so you love *to do*, you sons of Israel,”  
Declares the Lord GOD.**

**4:4 “enter”** This (BDB 97, KB 112) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. Verses 4 and 5 have a series of IMPERATIVES (3 *Qal* IMPERATIVES; 3 *Hiphil* IMPERATIVES).

▣ **“Bethel. . . Gilgal”** These were early cultic centers (Bethel, Gen. 12:8; 28:10-22 and Gilgal, Josh. 4). They were popular worship sites in the eighth century B.C. (cf. Hos. 4:15; 9:15 and 12:11). Verses 4 and 5 are highly sarcastic (cf. 5:5-6).

It is possible that YHWH’s sarcastic statements in vv. 4-5 were due to

1. Israel’s love of formal worship rituals, but evil lifestyles
2. their condemnation by the prophets when God chose Jerusalem as the central sanctuary (e.g., Deut. 12:5,11,13,14,18,26; 14:23,24,25; 16:2,6,7,16).

In context option #1 is best.

It is difficult to be certain which Gilgal is referenced here. There are possibly four different Gilgals (i.e., “circle” of stones; see *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 1022-23). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* asserts that this site is close to Bethel (*Anchor Dictionary* #2), not the one mentioned in Joshua 4 (p. 330).

▣ **“Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days”** There are three theories about this verse: (1) it shows their excessive religiosity; (2) it shows the normal worship practices of the pilgrims as they attend these shrines (i.e., arrived one day, offer a sacrifice the second, and the tithe on the third day, cf. REB); or (3) the tithes refers to the third year tithe for local poor (i.e., another allusion to the Mosaic covenant, cf. Deut. 14:28; 26:12, “days” would then be a reference to “years”).

**4:5 “a thank offering also from that which is leavened”** There are two theories concerning this phrase: (1) leaven was forbidden and, therefore, shows their perversion (cf. Exod. 23:18; 34:15; Lev. 2:11; 6:17) or (2) it should be understood as “bread offering” (cf. NRSV, TEV), which was not required, but showed extra devotion. Leviticus 7:13 allows leaven in a fellowship sacrifice. It is not always a metaphor of evil.

▣ **“proclaim. . . make them known”** The VERBS are a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 894, KB 1128) and a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570). Their worship activities were an ostentatious public display of religiosity (cf. Matt. 6:2).

▣ **“For so you love to do, you sons of Israel”** Multiplied, eloquent ritual had become the essence of their faith, not social justice based on their personal faith in YHWH. They wanted to flaunt their religiosity before each other! A faith cut off from daily life!

▣ “Declares the Lord GOD” See note at 3:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:6-13**

**6**“But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities  
And lack of bread in all your places,  
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

**7**Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you  
While there *were* still three months until harvest.  
Then I would send rain on one city  
And on another city I would not send rain;  
One part would be rained on,  
While the part not rained on would dry up.

**8**So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water,  
But would not be satisfied;  
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

**9**I smote you with scorching *wind* and mildew;  
And the caterpillar was devouring  
Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;  
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

**10**I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt;  
I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses,  
And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils;  
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

**11**I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,  
And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze;  
Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD.

**12**Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;  
Because I will do this to you,  
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”

**13**For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind  
And declares to man what are His thoughts,  
He who makes dawn into darkness  
And treads on the high places of the earth,  
The LORD God of hosts is His name.

**4:6-11** These verses describe a series of calamities (curses) that will befall Israel because of her rejection of God’s covenant (cf. Deut. 27-29). These God-sent judgments include

1. no food, v. 6 (cf. Deut. 28:16-17)
2. no rain, vv. 7-8 (cf. Deut. 28:23-24)
3. dry wind, v. 9
4. dry rot, v. 9 (cf. Deut. 28:22)
5. insects, v. 9 (cf. Deut. 28:21,38-39)
6. plague, v. 10
7. war, v. 10 (cf. Deut. 28:22,49-52)

**4:6** The first two lines of poetry are parallel. Cleanness of teeth is not a dental problem, but a result of no food to eat!

The pronoun “I” is emphasized. It is YHWH Himself who “sends” (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) these covenant curses (cf. Deut. 27-29).

▣ **“I gave you”** The “I” is emphatic. God sent these disasters to bring His people back to the covenant.

▣ **“Yet you have not returned to Me”** The purpose of these calamities was redemptive (cf. vv. 6,8,9,19,11), not just punitive. The essence of repentance is both a change of mind (Greek term) followed by a change of action (Hebrew term, e.g., Jer. 3:22-4:2). See Special Topic: Repentance at 1:3.

**4:7 “I withheld the rain”** The first two lines refer to the later rains just before the maturing of the crops in March and April. Fertility is controlled by YHWH, not Ba’al!

▣ Lines 3-6 are a theological way of asserting God’s control over nature (cf. v. 8). He is able to direct the curses (cf. Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:12,23-24) to certain cities and/or localities. This is similar to the Egyptian plagues. The first nine fell on the land of Egypt, but not where the Hebrews lived in Goshen.

**4:8** This verse continues the emphasis of v. 7. Cities are personified as seeking water, but they cannot find enough to sustain life.

The term “stagger” (BDB 631, KB 681, *Qal* PERFECT) has the connotation of staggering or wandering as a result of God’s judgment (cf. 8:12; Gen. 4:12,14; Num. 32:13; Jer. 14:10; Lam. 4:15).

▣ **“Yet you have not returned to Me”** This is a repeated call for repentance (cf. vv. 6,8,9,10,11).

Notice the personal emphasis, they are to return to God, their God. He had made a covenant uniquely with them (cf. v. 2). Their part was devotion and obedience. The purpose of creation was fellowship. God wanted a personal being like Himself (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) to have a relationship with. This fellowship/relationship must conform to the nature and character of God. The fracture of this intimate fellowship is the essence of the Fall (cf. Gen. 3) and the goal of redemption (i.e., the restoration of the image of God damaged in human rebellion).

**4:9**

NASB “scorching wind”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “blight”

TEV “scorching wind”

BDB (995) defines this as “smut on crops” and gives Deut. 28:22; I Kgs. 8:37; II Chr. 6:28; and Haggai 2:17 as examples. However, Holladay’s *Lexicon* (361) defines it as “scorching” and gives the same examples. The NASB and TEV understand this as referring to the hot desert wind known as “the sirocco” (e.g., Gen. 41:6,23,27).

▣ **“mildew”** This word (BDB 439) is paired with the above word in all examples. BDB translated it “rust.” The term also means “paleness” (cf. Jer. 30:6). This is not the mildew caused by too much humidity, but the whitish powdery kind caused by lack of humidity.

▣ **“the caterpillar”** Insect infestation (i.e., locusts [BDB 160], cf. Joel 1:4; 2:25) as a judgment from YHWH for breaking the covenant can be seen in Deut. 28:38-40,42. The infestation could be (1) the locusts themselves or (2) their larvae.

**4:10 “I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt”** The term “plague” (BDB 184) is used of:

1. one of the Egyptian plagues in Exod. 9:3,15
2. a threat of God’s judgment on His own people in Exod. 5:3; Lev. 26:23-25; Num. 14:12; Deut. 28:21.

It is interesting that the Hebrew consonants for “plague” are the same for God’s “word.” There may be an intentional word play. The Israelites neglected God’s “word” and thereby reaped God’s “plague.” A return to Him and His word would abundantly restore and multiply!

▣ **“along with your captured horses”** This would refer to military equipment, but it can be understood in two ways: (1) they thought their victories, which resulted in the capture of horses and chariots would give them greater strength, but God took all of it away (NEB) or (2) the enemy captured their horses and left them without military might (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB). Most English translations use option #2.

▣ **“the stench of your camp”** This refers to the unburied bodies (cf. Isa. 34:3) of the young Israeli men who died in battle.

▣ **“rise up in your nostrils”** This may simply be a description of the rotting corpses of the dead or it is just possible it is another allusion to the Mosaic covenant. One metaphor used of YHWH favorably receiving an offering was “a soothing aroma” (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25,41; and many times in Leviticus and Numbers). A good example of a negative use is Exod. 5:21.

**4:11 “I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah”** The VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of God’s judgment, both temporal (cf. Gen. 19:25; II Kgs. 21:13; Jer. 20:16) and eschatological (cf. Hag. 2:21-22). It speaks of the total destruction of two entire cities by natural or supernatural means. To refer to Israel in the same way as the immoral “cities of the Plain” would have been a shocking insult to these Covenant People. It is another allusion to Deut. 27-29 (cf. 29:23).

▣ **“And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze”** In context the TEV translation seems correct in seeing this as an additional message to the few survivors of God’s fiery judgment (cf. Zech. 3:20), but even after all of these covenantal curses (cf. Deut. 27-29) they would not return (i.e., repent) to Him. God had tried and tried again to reach them through disasters, but they would not. Only complete judgment is left! This verse, like 3:12, denotes total destruction. Only in 9:8-15 is there a future hope!

▣ **“firebrand”** The root (BDB 15) originally meant “to be bent” or “curved.” It came to be used of a stick used to stir a fire (cf. Isa. 7:4; Zech. 3:2).

▣ **“Yet you have not returned to Me, declares the LORD”** See note at 4:6.

**4:12 “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel”** The VERB (BDB 465, KB 464) is a *Niphal* IMPERATIVE plus a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT. It often is used of spiritual preparation to meet God (cf. I Sam. 7:3; II Chr. 12:14; 27:6; Ezra 7:10). This meeting could have been positive (cf. Exod. 19:11-17), but their sin had turned God’s visit into covenant judgment (cf. 5:18-20).

There is an interesting alternate understanding of this verse which sees *Elohim*, not as referring to YHWH the covenant name or *Elohim* as the Gen. 1 name for God as creator, but as referring to the “gods” (i.e., false fertility gods) of Israel (cf. 5:26; 8:14; also esp. I Kgs. 12:28). The term *Elohim* is not used by itself to refer to Israel’s God in Amos. Only the combined name YHWH *Elohim* (cf. Gen. 2:4) is used. Joel and Amos (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries), by David Allan Hubbard, mentions a possible alternate translation which does not change the Hebrew consonants (i.e., “prepare to call your gods, O Israel,” cf. G. W. Ramsey, JBL, 89, pp. 187-191) p. 162.

If so then the doxology of v. 13 is a sharp contrast to the claims of the false gods which Israel was worshipping in YHWH's name (cf. cultic partners of vv. 1-3, along with 5:26; 8:14, and the book of Hosea).

**4:13** This verse seems to be poetic liturgy, doxology, or an early hymn to God as Creator, and thereby, Judge. Amos has several of these powerful doxological praises (cf. 5:8,8; 9:5-6).

▣ **“forms”** This VERB (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is from the concept of a potter forming clay (e.g., Gen. 2:7,19; Isa. 29:19; 45:15; Jer. 33:2).

▣ **“mountains”** Mountains were a symbol of strength and permanency.

▣ **“creates”** This VERB (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is parallel to “forms.” This VERB is used exclusively of God's creative activity. Its basic meaning is “to form or shape by cutting.”

▣ **“wind”** This Hebrew term (BDB 924) can mean “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” Here the context implies a contrast between the physical and the spiritual realms (mountains versus spirit).

▣ **“And declares to man what are His thoughts”** The Hebrew text is singular, “His thought,” which refers to God's will. This seems to refer to:

1. God's special covenant relationship to the Patriarchs and their descendants (cf. 3:2)
2. God's desire to communicate with His highest creation, mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 12:3).
3. It is possible that the PRONOUN “his” refers to mankind. Several OT texts speak of God as knowing individual human thoughts (e.g., Job 34:21-23; Ps. 94:11; [I Chr. 3:20]; Jer. 11:20; 17:10).

Even rebellious, fallen mankind can know God, not exhaustively, but adequately for fellowship. Sin is that which destroys this desire for God (i.e., human independence)! God is not just creator, He is friend and companion!

▣ **“He who makes dawn into darkness”** This can be understood in several ways.

1. another allusion to Gen. 1-2 (i.e., (1) God as creator [cf. LXX] or (2) the natural order of nature, cf. 5:9)
2. contextually related to the previous line of poetry and thereby refers to God's revelation. Spiritual truth is not a human discovery, but a divine revelation.
3. a way of asserting God's judgment on Israel (cf. 5:8,20; Jer. 13:16; Joel 2:2)
4. the parallel of 5:8 (another doxology of YHWH as creator) shows the power of God over His creation.

▣ **“treads on the high places of the earth”** This may be another connection with Deuteronomy (i.e., Mosaic Covenant, cf. Deut. 32:13). It is a metaphor for asserting God as creator (cf. Job 9:8). In Isa. 58:4 and Hab. 3:19 it was a way of referring to the blessings of God on His people.

This term *bamah* was associated with the worship of Ba'al (cf. 2:7-8) on the top of hills (e.g., Hos. 4:13; see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 284-288). This may be another way of rejecting the worship of Canaanite fertility gods and asserting YHWH's care and provision.

▣ **“the LORD God of hosts is His name”** This is similar to 3:13. Amos has spoken of the God of creation, fertility, and judgment based on the Covenant. He now states specifically and unambiguously who that deity is, YHWH of Israel (cf. 5:8b). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the emphasis of Amos 3:2-8?
2. Why are the prophets so upset over the cultic activity at Bethel and Gilgal?
3. Why is the religiosity of Amos 4:4-5 condemned?
4. What is the purpose of God sending calamities on His people?

# AMOS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Israel's Sinfulness and God's Punishment (3:1-6:14)		Israel Warned and Threatened (3:1-6:14)
A Lament for Israel	The Horror and Finality of Israel's Deserved Punishment (5:1-6:14)	A Call to Repentance	Lament for Israel
5:1-3	5:1-2	5:1-2	5:1-2
	5:3	5:3	5:3
A Call to Repentance			No Salvation without Repentance
5:4-9	5:4-5	5:4-5	5:4-7
	5:6-7	5:6-7	Doxology
	5:8-9	5:8-9	5:8-9
			Threats
5:10-13	5:10-13	5:10-13	5:10-13
			Exhortations
5:14-15	5:14-15	5:14-15	5:14-15
The Day of the Lord			Impending Punishment
5:16-17	5:16-17	5:16-17	5:16-17
			The Day of YHWH
5:18-20	5:18-20	5:18-20	5:18-20
			Against Formalism in Religion
5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-27
5:25-27	5:25-27	5:25-27	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge, O house of Israel:

<sup>2</sup>She has fallen, she will not rise again—

The virgin Israel.

She *lies* neglected on her land;

There is none to raise her up.

<sup>3</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD,

“The city which goes forth a thousand *strong*

Will have a hundred left,

And the *one* which goes forth a hundred *strong*

Will have ten left to the house of Israel.”

**5:1 “Hear”** See note at 3:1.

▣ **“dirge”** This is a specialized poetic structure that is found in vv. 2-6 and vv. 16-17. This Hebrew word “dirge” (BDB 884) refers to a particular poetic beat pattern of 3-2, 3-2 (e.g., II Sam. 1:19-27; 3:33-34). It is used quite extensively in the book of Lamentations. This form characterized funeral songs or chants (cf. vv. 16-17, 18-20). These songs were an expected part of the funeral service.

▣ **“O house of Israel”** The term “house” (BDB 108) is used in the sense of family or descendants (cf. 1:4,5; 7:9). The phrase “house of Israel” is used several times by Amos (cf. 5:1,3,4,25; 6:1,14; 7:10,16; 9:9) to refer to the Northern Ten Tribes that split off from Judah in 922 B.C. in the reign of Rehoboam. These tribes took for themselves the name of the father of the Hebrew tribes “Israel” (Jacob).

Twice in Amos the phrase “house of Jacob” is used (cf. 3:13; 9:8). It is often difficult to know if Amos is referring only to the northern tribes or if he is addressing all the descendants of Jacob/Israel.

**5:2 “she has fallen”** This (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT) is a prophetic PERFECT that describes something that will happen in the future as if it has already occurred. The term was used of death in battle (e.g., Jer. 9:22; 46:12; Lam. 2:21; Hos. 7:7).

▣ **“she will not rise again”** There are two VERBS: (1) “no more” (BDB 414, KB 418 is a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) and (2) “to rise” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). YHWH’s judgment on Israel’s eclectic religion is total, complete, once-and-for-all judgment (cf. 7:9).

However, this very same VERB is used in 9:11(twice) to promise a restoration of the royal house of Judah (i.e., “the fallen booth of David”). So again, the theological issue is:

1. God’s message presented in contrasting black and white truths (dialectic paradoxes)
2. chapter 9 refers only to Judah, not Israel.

▣ **“the virgin Israel”** This term is parallel with “house of Israel.” God took special care and provided protection for them, like an unmarried daughter or bride to be (cf. Jer. 18:13; 31:4,21). This reflects the marriage metaphor of God as husband and His covenant people as wife (e.g., Isa. 54:5; Hosea 2:19; Eph.

5:22-33). The later rabbis saw the wilderness wandering period as the honeymoon (cf. Jer. 2:2-3; Hos. 2:16). But now the context is of the rape and death of Israel by the Assyrian invasion.

▣ **“She lies neglected on her land”** The VERB (BDB 643, KB 695) means forsaken, abandoned to plunder. The land of promise is now the place of judgment.

There is a very interesting article in NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 522-524, on the theological aspect of “the land” as YHWH’s gift to the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3). Many of the Mosaic statutes are based on this concept. This is the reason why cheating fellow covenant brothers out of their family/tribal inheritance was so offensive to God. God’s concern for the land can be seen in “the Sabbath Year” and “Jubilee Year” regulations. These wealthy land grabbers had totally ignored or willfully rejected the theological basis of YHWH’s ownership and division of the Promised Land.

▣ **“There is none to raise her up”** This is the same VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086) used earlier in the verse. Here it is a *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE. It seems to be a sarcastic allusion to the inability of the Canaanite gods (whom Israel worshiped) to rescue her from YHWH’s judgment (cf. 5:6). The powerlessness, the non-existence of Canaanite deities is ridiculed!

**5:3** This was one of the covenant curses (the terms “thousands” [BDB 48] and “hundreds” [BDB 547] were military units, cf. Deut. 28:62). The emphasis in this verse is not on a remnant returning (cf. Isa. 6:13), but on the extreme military devastation that will occur. National Israel will permanently cease to exist.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:4-7**

**<sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, “Seek Me that you may live.**

**<sup>5</sup>But do not resort to Bethel,**

**And do not come to Gilgal,**

**Nor cross over to Beersheba;**

**For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity**

**And Bethel will come to trouble.**

**<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD that you may live,**

**Or He will break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph,**

**And it will consume with none to quench it for Bethel,**

**<sup>7</sup>For those who turn justice into wormwood**

**And cast righteousness down to the earth.”**

**5:4 “seek Me”** The Hebrew VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. vv. 6,14-15). The connotation of the Hebrew phrase “to seek” involved going to a sanctuary, however, the context of v. 5 demands that we must seek God on an individual, as well as corporate, basis (cf. Deut. 4:29-30; 30:1-3,10), not just in religious ritual. Our attitudes, motives, and lifestyle faith are crucial. Basically this is a call to repentance to those who know (covenantal aspect) YHWH. Fellowship with YHWH demands an ethical life.

In v. 4 Amos says, “Seek the Lord.” This same VERB is also found in v. 14, “seek good and not evil.” These three are somewhat parallel. YHWH is said several times to be good (e.g., Ps. 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29). Therefore, seeking “Me” and seeking “good” may refer to YHWH (notice the second line of v. 14). This same symbolism can be seen in Hosea 8:2-3.

The Hebrew term “seek” has several meanings.

1. inquire of

2. seek a deity in prayer and worship
3. investigate (to know the heart)
4. ask or demand

In this context #2 fits best (cf. Deut. 4:29; Hosea 10:12; Isa. 9:13; 31:1; 55:6; 65:10).



**NASB** “that you may live”

**NKJV, NRSV** “and live”

**TEV** “and you will live”

**NJB** “and you will survive”

The NKJV and NRSV are literal. The VERB (BDB 310, KB 309) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE parallel to “seek.” The sense of the IMPERATIVE is seen in the NASB, TEV, and NJB. Israel’s survival as a covenant nation is the issue! YHWH is merciful, if they turn back to Him, He will pardon, restore, and protect (i.e., as in Holy War).

This outburst of mercy is a plea from the heart of God who does not want to destroy His own covenant people (cf. Hos. 11:8-11).

**5:5 “Bethel...Gilgal...Beersheba”** These are all local centers of worship. The first two were in Israel and the third in southern Judah (cf. II Kgs. 23:8; Gen. 21:14, 31; 26:25,33; 46:1).

☐ **“Beersheba”** This was an ancient holy site connected to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Gen. 21:33; Isaac, Gen. 26:23-25; Jacob, Gen. 28:10; 46:1-7) located in southern Judah.

☐ **“For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity”** Amos is a skilled poet. Here he uses a sound play between “Gilgal” and “to go into exile” (BDB 162, KB 191, a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same term). Hebrew poetry is characterized by thought parallelism, multiple meanings of words, and sound plays.

☐ **“And Bethel will come to trouble”** This seems to be a contrast between Bethel (house of God) and what it had become (house of idolatry, cf. Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5,8).

One of the meanings of “trouble” (BDB 19) can be idolatry (i.e., “nothing,” cf. Isa. 41:29; 66:3).

**5:6 “Seek the Lord that you may live”** This is parallel to v. 4.

☐ **“He will break forth like a fire”** This may be another allusion to Deuteronomy (cf. 4:24). Fire is a metaphor for the cleansing power of God or to put it another way, His holiness! See Special Topic: Fire at 7:4.

☐ **“O house of Joseph”** It is unusual for Israel to be called the “house of Joseph” (cf. 6:6). It is usually called the “house of Jacob” (or “house of Israel,” e.g., v. 1). However, Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s two children, make up the largest land holdings and the most populous tribes of the northern kingdom.

**5:7 “for those who turn justice into wormwood”** “Justice” is a parallel to “righteousness.” These two terms often appear together in the same context in the OT (cf. II Sam. 8:15; I Kgs. 10:9; I Chr. 18:14; II Chr. 9:8; Ps. 99:4; Isa. 1:21; 5:7; 9:7; 28:17; 32:1,16; 33:5; 59:14; Jer. 4:2; 9:24; 22:3,15; 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 18:5,19,21,27; 33:14,16,19; 45:9; Amos 5:7,24). This is not the “justification by faith,” imputed righteousness of the New Covenant, but the Old Covenant mandate that YHWH wanted a people to fully reveal His character (cf. Matt. 5:19-20,48). However, sinful fallen mankind, even the covenant people, were unable to live out the holiness of God!

The PARTICIPLE (BDB 245, KB 253, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), when Israel is the subject, is used in a negative sense (cf. 5:7; 6:12; Jer. 2:21). In 4:11 Amos mentioned Sodom and Gomorrah as being overthrown, using the same root but with YHWH as the subject.

Wormwood (BDB 542) refers to any plant that is bitter (cf. UBS's *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, p. 198). The rich had prevented justice. The legal system was a bitter thing to the poor, not a haven (cf. v. 12; 6:12). This may be another allusion to idolatry in Deuteronomy (cf. 29:18; Jer. 9:14; 23:15). The cognate in Arabic means "curse."



**NASB** "cast righteousness down to the earth"

**NKJV** "lay righteousness to rest in the earth"

**NRSV** "bring righteousness to the ground"

**TEV** "cheat people out of their rights"

**NJB** "throw uprightness to the ground"

The idea here is to cast down (BDB 245, KB 253, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) with a view toward trampling underfoot (cf. Isaiah 28:2-3). Judges, like the king, were to represent YHWH.

Notice that "justice" and "righteousness" are parallel (cf. v. 24; 6:12). There is an ethical-practical aspect to biblical faith!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup>He who made the Pleiades and Orion**

**And changes deep darkness into morning,**

**Who also darkens day *into* night,**

**Who calls for the waters of the sea**

**And pours them out on the surface of the earth,**

**The LORD is His name.**

**<sup>9</sup>It is He who flashes forth *with* destruction upon the strong,**

**So that destruction comes upon the fortress.**

**5:8-9** This is a poetic doxology to God as Creator and Judge. There are three of these doxologies in Amos (cf. 4: 4; 5:8-9; 9:5-6).

**5:8 "the Pleiades"** This is literally "heap" or "herd" (BDB 465, cf. Job 9:9, 38:31). This was one of the brightest of the star clusters (Hesiod calls it "the seven sisters") in the constellation Taurus. The UBS, *Translator's Handbook*, pp. 105, 242, asserts that in Palestine its setting below the horizon introduces winter. This then makes the poetic lines refer to God not as creator only, but active present controller (Providence) of the natural order.

▣ **"Orion"** This is literally "fool" (BDB 493) in the sense of aggressive. It is used to refer to a rebel. The ancients identified this constellation with Nimrod (the warrior, cf. Gen. 10:8-9). It was visible in the summer. God controls the seasons (i.e., the order and regularity of the natural world)! Apparently, God's creation and control of the stars (cf. Gen. 1:14-19) was a necessary theological statement in the light of astral worship (cf. v. 26).

▣ **"changes deep darkness into morning"** In context this speaks of God's control of the heavenly bodies (cf. Ps. 19: 24). This phrase may be parallel in concept to 4:13c.

▣ **“Who calls for the waters of the sea”** There are several theories as to the meaning of this phrase: (1) it refers to the boundaries of the oceans (cf. Gen. 1:9-10); (2) it refers to God, not Ba’al, as the source of rain (i.e., a blessing to support growth); or (3) it is possibly an allusion to the flood (a judgment motif, cf. Gen. 6). God controls the waters of creation as He does the stars. Water is the only thing in Gen. 1 that is not said to have been spoken into existence by God (cf. Gen. 1:2).

▣ **“The LORD is His name”** The name in Hebrew was very significant in describing the character of an individual. God’s name “YHWH” is from Exod. 3:14, from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

## 5:9

NASB “He who flashes forth”

NKJV “He rains”

NRSV “flash out”

TEV, NJB “brings”

The Hebrew term’s (BDB 114, KB 132, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) meaning is in doubt. Its use in Job and the Psalms implies a cheerfulness or joy (meaning of the Arabic root). However, that meaning does not fit Amos at all unless Amos is speaking sarcastically of YHWH smiling at the destruction of idolatrous Israel and her military fortifications. The NASB takes its translation from the possible meaning of the *Hiphil*, “let something flare up” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 660).

▣ **“the strong”** This may refer to the economically and politically powerful (cf. vv. 10-13; 2:14). The opposite of “the poor,” the very ones who take advantage of them! However, because of the parallel to “fortresses,” it may refer to the Israeli military.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:10-13

<sup>10</sup>They hate him who reproves in the gate,

And they abhor him who speaks *with* integrity.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor

And exact a tribute of grain from them,

*Though* you have built houses of well-hewn stone,

Yet you will not live in them;

You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.

<sup>12</sup>For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great,

*You* who distress the righteous *and* accept bribes

And turn aside the poor in the gate.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.

**5:10 “They hate him who reproves in the gate”** Those (honest judges, true witnesses) who tried to stand up and defend the poor and helpless (exactly who this refers to is uncertain, some kind of legal advocate) were vehemently attacked by the status quo leadership (cf. Isa. 59:14-15). This is another allusion to Deuteronomy’s cursing and blessing section (cf. Deut. 27:25).

The gate was the place of justice in the ancient Near East (cf. Deut. 25:1-3; Ruth 4:1-12). This is where the elders of the communities sat (cf. Deut. 19:12; 21:3,8,19; 21:3,8; 22:15; 25:7-8). These elders are addressed by Amos.

▣ **“abhor”** This (BDB 1073, KB 1765, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is a strong VERB, often used to denote God’s rejection of idolatry. It is parallel to “hate” in this context.



NASB “integrity”  
NKJV “uprightly”  
NRSV, NJB “the truth”  
TEV “the whole truth”

The term’s (BDB 1071) basic meaning is to be exact or straight. This metaphor for moral/ethical uprightness was derived from the word for a palm tree. Notice its usage.

1. Noah, Gen. 6:9
2. Abraham, Gen. 17:1
3. peace offerings, Lev. 22:21
4. godly Israelites, Deut. 18:13; Prov. 2:7; 10:9
5. God, Deut. 32:4 II Sam. 22:31,33; Ps. 18; 30,32
6. Job, Job 1:1,8; 2:3
7. God’s word, Ps. 19:7

**5:11a-b** The first two poetic lines of this verse document some of the abuses of the poor:

1. heavy rent (i.e., taken from Akkadian root) or trample on (i.e., taken from Hebrew root “to trample” [BDB 143, KB 165, *Poel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT], cf. NKJV, NRSV, NJB).
2. a tax on food
3. bribery at the gate (cf. v. 12)

The term poor (see note at 2:7) may refer to “peasant farmers” (see note at NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 951).

**5:11c-e** This is another curse for violation of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deut. 28:30,39). The rich had built luxurious homes (“well-hewn stone”) by exploiting the poor (cf. vv. 11-12). But God would not let them live with their ill gotten gain (cf. Micah 6:15). This is an allusion to the Assyrian exile.

**5:12** This verse, like vv. 10-11, lists the sins of the wealthy class against the poor (possibly small farmers) and underprivileged. These are the very ones the ethical God cares about because of their helplessness and vulnerability (cf. Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:17-22; 26:12-13; 27:19). This is another Deuteronomic emphasis. The prophets always looked back to the Mosaic Covenant.

The term translated “bribe” (BDB 497, cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; 27:25; I Sam. 12:3; Prov. 6:35) is the same term used to describe God’s “covering,” “atoning” for sin. This important theological term is used here in a derived sense of covering someone’s hand or eyes. It is a shocking use of a wonderful theological term.

**5:13** This is a very difficult verse because it seems to go against all that the prophet himself advocates and practices. This again may be a play on the semantic field of the PARTICIPLE, “he who is prudent” (BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE). The *Hiphil* can mean

1. look at (to make one wise, cf. Gen. 3:6)
2. give attention to (e.g., Deut. 32:29)
3. have comprehension (e.g., Dan. 1:4; 9:25)
4. give insight, teach (e.g., Dan. 9:22; 11:33,35)
5. act prudently (e.g., Amos 5:13)
6. prosper (e.g., Isa. 52:13; Jer. 10:21)
7. cause to prosper (e.g., Deut. 29:9)

A good example of how this term can mean #5 or #6/#7 see Jer. 23:5. If so used here, this may be another allusion to Deuteronomy (i.e., 29:9). They were meant to prosper in God's blessing (cf. Deut. 27-29), but they were prospering because they were breaking Moses' Covenant in their treatment of the powerless of their society.

It is also possible (UBS, *Handbook*, pp. 106-109) to see the key to the structure related to the two people addressed in v. 10.

1. "they hate. . .they abhor," this group is addressed in vv. 11-12
2. "who reproves. . .who speaks with integrity," these were addressed in v. 13

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> **Seek good and not evil, that you may live;  
And thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you,  
Just as you have said!**

<sup>15</sup> **Hate evil, love good,  
And establish justice in the gate!  
Perhaps the LORD God of hosts  
May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.**

**5:14 "Seek good and not evil"** Note the prophet's sharp contrasts (cf. v. 15). There is a choice to be made which has eternal consequences. "Seek" (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is another IMPERATIVE. Notice this IMPERATIVE's relationship with those in vv. 4 & 6 that emphasize ethical lifestyles. It must be remembered that biblical faith has two foci: personal relationship and deeds of love (cf. Eph. 2:8-10 and I John 3:23). Amos admonishes Israel to "seek good." Isaiah uses the same VERB to admonish God's people to seek justice (cf. Isa. 1:17). What do we care about, strive for, seek after? The answer tells us who we are and who/what we serve!

▣ **"the LORD God of hosts be with you"** This is the greatest promise that God can make (cf. Ps. 23). The title "LORD God of Hosts" has two related meanings in the OT: (1) YHWH as commander of the angelic army and (2) YHWH as controller of the astral bodies that represent angelic powers (Babylonian idolatry). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

▣ **"Just as you have said"** Amos may have been referring to

1. a common teaching of the priests/Levites
2. an often used liturgy/psalm
3. the recurrent claim that Israel was the covenant-chosen people (e.g., Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2)

### **5:15 "Hate evil, love good,**

**And establish justice in the gate"** These are three Hebrew IMPERATIVES:

1. "hate" (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
2. "love" (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
3. "establish" (BDB 426, KB 427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE)

These reflect the covenant of Moses. Notice that for Amos there is no distinction between the secular and the sacred, between the heart and the hand (cf. Micah 6:8). God's people must reflect God's character!

The term "establish" has the connotation of specific, purposeful action (e.g., Hos. 2:3). God's faithful must determine in their hearts and minds that justice, fairness, and integrity will prevail in their sphere of influence.

▣ **“Perhaps the LORD. . .May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph”** The prophet is asserting a limited hope (i.e., “perhaps” BDB 19) for those few Israelites who would repent and live out their faith (i.e., “seek Me,” v. 4; “seek the LORD,” v. 6).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord,

“There is wailing in all the plazas,  
And in all the streets they say, 'Alas! Alas!'  
They also call the farmer to mourning  
And professional mourners to lamentation.

<sup>17</sup>And in all the vineyards *there* is wailing,  
Because I will pass through the midst of you,” says the LORD.

**5:16 “Therefore”** This relates to vv. 10-13. It does not relate to the repeated admonition to repent, begun in vv. 4-6 (key word, “seek”).

▣ **“There is wailing in all the plazas. . . ‘Alas! Alas!’”** The prophet began the funeral dirge in 5:1; now judgment has come and everybody is wailing. “Plazas” would be parallel to “gates” or “markets.” Even the term “streets” (BDB 299) can mean plaza or market (e.g., I Kgs. 20:34).

▣ **“farmer”** I believe “farmer” is the referent to “the poor.” It was not the poor as in modern, western cultures, but the small farmer on ancestral land (given by YHWH) who were being exploited. The Mosaic stipulations of the Sabbath Year and the Jubilee Year were being ignored and land was permanently taken.

▣ **“professional mourners”** Near Eastern people are very expressive in their mourning rites. There were trained people available to help in this cultural grieving process (cf. II Chr. 35:25; Jer. 9:17). See James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 283-284.

**5:17 “I will pass through the midst of you”** This same phrase is used in Exod. 12:12 for the Death Angel passing through Egypt in judgment on the night of Passover. God’s coming could be for blessing or judgment (cf. v. 18). Israel viewed it as a certain blessing, but Amos revealed that it would be for judgment. What an ironic, tragic reversal (cf. vv. 18-20)! All humans made in God’s image sense their need for Him (cf. v. 14b). He wants to be with us, but our actions necessitate judgment, not fellowship!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD,  
For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you?

*It will be* darkness and not light;

<sup>19</sup>As when a man flees from a lion  
And a bear meets him,  
Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall  
And a snake bites him.

<sup>20</sup>*Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light,  
Even gloom with no brightness in it?”

**5:18 “Alas”** This is literally “woe” (BDB 222). This is an interjection of grief and mourning over the dead (cf. v. 16; Jer. 22:18; 34:5).

☐ **“you who are longing for the day of the LORD”** This VERB (BDB 16, KB 20, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) means “desire for yourselves.” These people thought God’s coming (i.e., “the day of the LORD”) would bring blessings and deliverance because they were covenant people (cf. 3:2). But because of this very reason, judgment would come. Because of the blindness of their hearts, God was coming to them as Judge (cf. 3:14; 5:18; 8:3,9,11,13), not Savior (cf. 9:11,13). Their religion resulted in a curse (cf. Deut. 27-29).

Amos is the first of the writing prophets and this is the first use of the phrase “the Day of the LORD” (see note at 2:16). It may have been a metaphor from the days of “Holy War” (i.e., Joshua and Judges). YHWH was the ever-present provider and protector of His covenant people, but in days of conflict His physical manifestation in miraculous ways delivered His people from danger. However, Israel had so violated the covenant that its privilege had turned to judgment and rejection (cf. Joel 2).

☐ **“It will be darkness and not light”** This continues the contrast on these terms (cf. 4:13c; 5:8c,20).

**5:19** There is absolutely no place to flee from God’s judgment.

**5:20** What irony! What tragedy!

☐ **“with no brightness in it”** The “brightness” (BDB 618) may be an allusion to the glory of God.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21-24**

<sup>21</sup>**“I hate, I reject your festivals,**

**Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.**

<sup>22</sup>**Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,**

**I will not accept *them*;**

**And I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.**

<sup>23</sup>**Take away from Me the noise of your songs;**

**I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.**

<sup>24</sup>**But let justice roll down like waters**

**And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”**

**5:21-24** Do these verses show that God rejects the sacrificial system given in Leviticus 1-7? There are many strong passages in the Prophets that show God’s displeasure at His people’s practice of the sacrificial system (cf. Isa. 1:11-17; Jer. 6:20; 7:21-23; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Micah 6:8). The sacrificial system was YHWH’s way of dealing with human sin so as to develop and continue a personal, loving, trusting relationship with His highest creation. However, Israel not only turned it into mere ritual and form, but even merged it with pagan practices. YHWH wants fellowship! YHWH wants a people who reflect His character! YHWH wants to reach all humans through the witness of a chosen group (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).

**5:21 “I hate, I reject your festivals,**

**Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies”** These are strong terms! They were very religious, but their attitudes and hearts were far from God. Their religiosity was an abomination to God (cf. Isa. 29:13)! The first two VERBS, “I hate” (BDB 971, KB 1338) and “I reject” (BDB 549, KB 540) are *Qal* PERFECTS, which denote a settled, complete attitude.

The term “festivals” (BDB 290) is often used to denote the three major annual feasts (cf. Exod. 23:15-16; Lev. 23). These were required feasts for all males.

The term “delight” (BDB 926, KB 1280, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is literally “smell,” which refers to the Mosaic phrase “soothing aroma,” denoting YHWH’s acceptance of a sacrifice (e.g., Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; Lev. 26:31; I Sam. 26:19).

**5:22** Religiosity without relationship is an abomination (cf. Isa. 1: 10-20; Jer. 7). YHWH does not reject the sacrificial system, but its inappropriate use (ritual without repentant faith; form without appropriate attitude)!

▣ **“I will not even look”** “Look” (BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is used in the sense of accept or acknowledge.

▣ **“fatlings”** This (BDB 597) refers to specially cared for young animals which were raised to be sacrificed.

**5:23 “take away from Me the noise of your songs”** This (BDB 693, KB 747) is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE MASCULINE SINGULAR. Even sacred, glorious music without the proper motive is a farce, hypocrisy, and an abomination to God. God desires motive, not only form!

This verse does show that the northern tribes adopted the worship forms (i.e., music developed by the prophetic guilds, cf. I Sam. 10:5) of the temple in Jerusalem (developed by David, cf. II Sam. 6:5,15). The leaders (Jeroboam I) wanted these northern altars (i.e., Dan and Bethel) to duplicate the worship techniques so that the common people would not sense a difference.

It is surprising that the VERBS are SINGULAR. It is just possible that in v. 23 Amos is addressing the high priest at Bethel.

▣

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NIV “harps”

NKJV, NET “stringed instruments”

NJB “lyres”

REV, JPSOA “lutes”

As the number of English translations demonstrates, moderns do not know to what type of stringed instrument this refers. To note the number of other instruments it is often associated with see II Sam. 6:5 and Ps. 92:3. It is possible that Assyrian wall pictures have depicted this instrument as strings with a sounding box, something like our bass fiddle. See James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* pp. 221-222.

**5:24** This is one of the most famous verses in Amos. God desires His people to focus on who He is, not on certain worship days, but on every day. True faith is what we are, not what we do; but who we are will be clearly seen in what we do, how we do it, and why we do it (cf. Matthew 7).

“Justice” and “righteousness” are parallel, as in v. 7. In this context they refer to human obedience to the Mosaic Covenant lived out in a proper relationship between God and worshiper—worshiped and worshiper.

The VERB “roll down” (BDB 146, KB 193) is a *Niphal* JUSSIVE, which denotes an IMPERATIVE sense.

▣ **“an ever-flowing stream”** This (BDB 450) refers to a spring that never runs dry (i.e., is not seasonal). It is a powerful metaphor of a life of active faith (cf. Jer. 22:3; Ezek. 45:9; Micah 6:8).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:25-27

**25**"Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? **26**You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves. **27**Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts."

**5:25** This is a very difficult verse to interpret. It can be a question (continues from v. 25) or an affirmation (linking it to v. 27, cf. TEV). There have been two lines of interpretation: (1) Amos is asserting that the children of Israel did not sacrifice in the wilderness (cf. Jer. 7:21-22 and NJB) or (2) although they did sacrifice in a limited (JB) way, the object of their sacrifice was not YHWH, but Assyrian gods who were leading them (sarcasm) into exile.

**5:26** There is much discussion on the time element of this verse. Does it refer to the forty years of wilderness wandering of v. 25 or does it refer to the future wanderings of the Assyrian exile? It seems that because the idols mentioned are Assyrian star gods this verse is referring to current time or the future exile, while v. 25 refers to the wilderness wanderings after the Exodus from Egypt.

Another possibility is that Israel had made the sacrificial system ultimate when in fact they could not perform it after they left Egypt for many years (no tabernacle). During those years personal trust in God's care, presence, and provision was the focus of their faith, not sacrifice. This does not depreciate the sacrificial system. It was surely the will of God, but God Himself was the goal, not the ritual, liturgy, and cultus! Motive and attitude were crucial!

Just a note about Stephen's quote of Amos 5:25-27 in Acts 7:42-43. Most Jews of the first century A.D. used the Septuagint translation of the OT. In some places it follows a different text from the Masoretic Text. This is a problem! However, even in the Dead Sea Scrolls both traditions are present. None of the verses affect the truth or trustworthiness of doctrine or practice. We must realize that Christianity does not stand or fall on difference between the Hebrew OT and its ancient versions or NT manuscript variation. See a discussion of this in Gleason Archer's *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp 381-382.

▣ **"Sikkuth your king"** The LXX has "booth of," however, this term is found in Assyrian documents to refer to a war god named Adar-Melek-Saturn (Ninurta in Ugaritic). Notice a deity is called "king," which shows the cultural background for YHWH as king.



NASB "Kiyyun"

NKJV "Chiun"

NRSV, TEV,

NJB "Kaiwan"

NIV, REB "the pedestal"

This also refers to an Assyrian star god, who is also identified with the planet Saturn (BDB 475). The NASB reflects the Hebrew spelling which is a combination of the consonants of the name of the star god, but the vowels from the Hebrew word "abominations" (BDB 1055). This was a common way for Hebrew scribes to ridicule the names of gods, kings, and nations (e.g., Sikkuth). The spelling "Kaiwan" is from Akkadian or Arabic.

The translation of the term as "pedestal" supposes that the term comes from the root, "to be firm" (*kwn*).

**5:27 "I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus"** This refers to the Assyrian exile, which occurred in 722 B.C. after a three year siege of Samaria (cf. possibly 4:3; and Hos. 9:3; 10:6; 11:5). This again is an allusion to the cursings and blessings section of Deut. 27-29.

▣ **“says the LORD, whose name is God of hosts”** One of the names for Israel’s God is “YHWH of hosts” or “YHWH Sabaoth” (cf. I Sam. 1:3). In this text *Elohim* is substituted for YHWH. Here the title is connected to God as the controller of a heavenly army (i.e., the stars). YHWH, not astral deities (i.e., Assyrian star gods), was Israel’s hope!

The worship of the lights of the sky is condemned in many texts (cf. Deut. 4:19; 8:2; 17:2-5; II Kgs. 23:4-5,11; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5). The OT asserts several times that God created and controls the heavenly lights (cf. Gen. 1:14-19; Ps. 19:1-6; Neh. 9:6). It is in connection with these texts that “LORD of hosts” is a condemnation of idolatry (the worship of gods/angels/spirits of the heavenly lights, cf. LXX of Deut. 32:8).

# AMOS 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Israel's Sinfulness and God's Punishment (3:1-6:14)		Israel Warned and Threatened (3:2-6:14)
Warning to Zion and Samaria		The Destruction of Israel	Against the Self-Indulgent and Their False Sense of Security
6:1-2	6:1-3	6:1-7	6:1-7
6:3-7	6:4-7		The Punishment: Plague, Earthquake, Invasion
6:8-11	6:8	6:8	6:8-11
	6:9-10	6:9-10	
	6:11-14	6:11-12	
6:12-14			6:12-14
		6:13	
		6:14	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Woe to those who are at ease in Zion

And to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria,

The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,

To whom the house of Israel comes.

<sup>2</sup>Go over to Calneh and look,

And go from there to Hamath the great,

Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.

Are they better than these kingdoms,

Or is their territory greater than yours?

<sup>3</sup>Do you put off the day of calamity,

And would you bring near the seat of violence?

**6:1 “Woe”** The pronunciation of the word sounds like exasperated or sorrowful feelings. This term (BDB 222) characterizes the book of Lamentations (cf. 5:24). The Prophets often used the literary form (a 3-2 beat) of a funeral dirge to express the disapproval of God and His coming judgment. This term is recurrent in Isaiah (cf. negative in 1:4,24; 5:8,11,18,20,21,22; 10:1; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9,10; neutral in 10:5; and positive in 55:1) and Jeremiah (cf. 22:13,18; 23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1; 50:27).

This INTERJECTION is followed by a series of PARTICIPLES, which carries the “woe” thought with each of them (vv. 1-7).

▣ **“to those who are at ease”** There is no VERB. This phrase is used as a SUBSTANTIVE. It has the prophetic connotation of “careless, wanton, arrogant” (BDB 983, cf. Isa. 32:9,11; Zech. 1:15; and Ps. 123:4). It was not their leisure or wealth or social status that was the problem, but their trust in these things instead of God.

The group is characterized in several ways in the next few verses:

1. those who *feel* secure, v. 1b
2. you who put away the evil day, v. 3
3. those who lie on beds of ivory, v. 4
4. those who improvise (sing idle songs), v. 5
5. those who drink wine from sacrificial bowls, v. 6

All of these phrases have the DEFINITE ARTICLE plus a PARTICIPLE.

▣ **“in Zion”** This seems to be parallel to “in the mountain of Samaria” (the capital of the Northern Ten Tribes). However, Zion is one of the seven hills of Jerusalem. Therefore, this could mean

1. covenant people as a whole, 3:1; 6:8
2. Judah and Israel were both sinful and guilty
3. a literary parallel, but with no distinction intended

▣ **“The distinguished men”** This is literally “pierced men” (BDB 666; KB, 718, *Qal* PARTICIPLE). The Arabic root means “one who scrutinizes” (i.e., leaders). This seems to refer to (1) former leaders with whom Israel was trying to make security agreements to protect themselves from the judgment of God (i.e., Assyrian exile) or (2) what these wealthy leaders thought of themselves (cf. v. 13; NET Bible; Tyndale Commentary).

**6:2** Depending on how one interprets v. 1, this verse would be

1. Amos' words to the arrogant leadership of the covenant people (Judah and Israel) similar to 9:7. However, this involved some textual emendations (cf. UBS, *Handbook*, #31, p. 289).
2. the leaders' comments to the people (cf. NET Bible, Tyndale commentary).

▣ **“Calnah”** This was a fortified city in Syria (cf. Isa. 10:6), which was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 B.C. It became a proverb of the coming exile of Israel. It was on this occasion that the king of Israel, Menahen, began to give tribute to Assyria.

▣ **“Hamath”** *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 33, has a good brief comment.

“A city in Syria, the southern border of which often became part of the formula for the northern idealized border of Israel (cf. I Kgs. 8:65; I Chr. 13:5). The city was an object of the Assyrian conquest (Isa. 36:19), and some of its inhabitants were exiled and settled in Israel (II Kgs. 17:24).”

It was located about 150 miles north of the city of Dan on the Orantes River.

▣ **“Gath”** The Philistines established five city-states in southwest Judah on the coastal plain. Four of those cities are mentioned earlier in Amos 1:6-8 (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron). Gath is also mentioned in Micah 1:10. It was later destroyed by the Assyrians.

**6:3** The wealthy leaders were “putting off” (BDB 622, KB 672, *Piel* PARTICIPLE; this VERB appears only here in this form and only twice in the OT, cf. Isa. 66:5) the day of God's visitation by (1) divination or (2) trying to ignore (cf. TEV) the covenant consequences of Deut. 27-29. The irony is that by their very acts they were hastening the day!

▣ **“the seat of violence”** This could refer to (1) the leaders of Israel or (2) the coming invasion of Assyria. “Seat” is understood as “throne,” which is a metaphor for “reign.”

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:4-7**

<sup>4</sup>Those who recline on beds of ivory  
And sprawl on their couches,  
And eat lambs from the flock  
And calves from the midst of the stall,  
<sup>5</sup>Who improvise to the sound of the harp,  
And like David have composed songs for themselves,  
<sup>6</sup>Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls  
While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils,  
Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.  
<sup>7</sup>Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles,  
And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.

**6:4-6** This describes the elaborate drunken banquets of the self-indulgent rich.

**6:4 “sprawl”** The term (BDB 710, KB 756) is used again in v. 7. It has a negative connotation. It is parallel to “recline” (BDB 1011, KB 1486), which may have been an unusual way to eat at this time in Palestine. If so, then both denote new, foreign, and non-traditional actions (i.e., pagan influence on Israeli leaders).

**6:5 “like David have composed songs”** This is a historical allusion to David’s musical background.

1. David himself
  - a. played for Saul, I Sam. 16:16,23; 18:10; 19:9
  - b. appointed Levitical singers, I Chr. 6:31; 15:1-16:43; 25:1-31; II Chr. 29:25-30
2. examples of David’s music
  - a. II Sam. 22
  - b. most of first two books of Psalm (cf. 72:72)
    - (1) MT asserts 73 psalms
    - (2) LXX asserts 84 psalms
    - (3) Vulgate asserts 53 psalms
  - c. called “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (cf. II Sam. 23:1)

The VERB “improvise” (BDB 827, KB 967, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is uncertain in meaning. It appears only here in the OT. In later Hebrew it means “break off” or “divide” (e.g., fruit that drops off the tree or bush). The translation “compose” or “improvise” comes from the Arabic root.

It is just possible in this context that these revelers are desecrating

1. David’s melodies, poems
2. the instruments used in the temple

## 6:6

**NASB** “sacrificial bowls”

**NKJV, NRSV** “bowls”

**TEV, NJB** “by the bowl full”

This is not so much an expression of the sacrilegious use (cf. Dan. 5:2) of sacred utensils (cf. Exod. 24:6-8; Num. 7:13) as it is an expression of their drunkenness (“bowls, not cups”; REB, “you drink wine by the bowlful”). Some see this as a magical practice based on Isa. 65:11.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)**

### I. Biblical Terms

#### A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* - This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine” BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

#### B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

## II. Biblical Usage

### A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah - Gen. 9:21; Lot- Gen. 19:33,35; Samson - Jdgs. 16:19; Nabal - I Sam. 25:36; Uriah - II Sam. 11:13; Ammon - II Sam. 13:28; Elah - I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad - I Kgs. 20:12; rulers - Amos 6:6; and ladies - Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

### B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, "Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed." (BB 58b).

### C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on "new wine" at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

## III. Theological Insight

### A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Cor. 8-10; Romans 14).

### B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

### C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

## IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- ### A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.

- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called “new wine” or “sweet wine.” C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered “aged wine” and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called “old wine” and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

#### V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation does not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible’s position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/ denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God’s will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentinian)?

▣ **“they anoint themselves with the finest of oils”** Putting oil on one’s face and arms was a sign of gladness. Their actions are in contrast to the next line of poetry. They should have been grieving over the ruin of their nation.

▣ **“the ruin of Joseph”** Joseph married an Egyptian. They had two children who were adopted by Jacob (Israel, cf. Gen. 48:8-22). Although the Messianic line came through Judah, Joseph received the “double inheritance” of the oldest child. Joseph’s two sons became the two largest tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. They were part of the ten northern tribes who broke away from Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, in 922 B.C. and started a new state under Jeroboam I. This new state was known by several titles:

1. Israel (Jacob’s new name)
2. Samaria (capital)
3. Ephraim (largest tribe)

**6:7** This refers to God’s judgment on these who cared only for themselves, but claimed to know God! Their judgment is the exact reversal of their lifestyles! First in extravagance and revelry; first in exile!

▣ **“banqueting”** This term (BDB 931, KB 634) is found only twice in the OT (here and Jer. 16:5). The Jeremiah text (and one Ugaritic text) links this term with a self-indulgent feast for the dead! If so, the sarcasm of Amos’ statement is obvious.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:8-11

<sup>8</sup>The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared:

“I loathe the arrogance of Jacob,

And detest his citadels;

Therefore I will deliver up *the* city and all it contains.”

<sup>9</sup>And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die. <sup>10</sup>Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out *his* bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, “Is anyone else with you?” And that one will say, “No one.” Then he will answer, “Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned.” <sup>11</sup>For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.

**6:6-11** The UBS, *Handbook for Translators*, p. 131, makes a good point that these verses parallel 5:21-24. With God's wrath (cf. v. 8; 5:24) comes God's judgment!

**6:8 “The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself”** See note at 4:2. The VERB “swear” (BDB 989, KB 1396) is used several times in Amos referring to YHWH swearing

1. by His holiness, 4:2
2. by Himself, 6:8
3. by the pride of Jacob, 8:7 (sarcasm, irony, or regret)

▣ **“the LORD God of hosts”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2. The repetition of these two names denoting YHWH makes this an emphasized pronouncement.

▣ **“I loathe the arrogance of Jacob”** The VERB (BDB 1060 II, KB 1672, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) is a rare (only here in the OT) but powerful term of rejection (see all the versions). BDB has “loathe,” KB has “to make repulsive, desecrate.” It is parallel to “hate” (BDB 971, KB 1338, cf. 5:21).

The term “arrogance” (BDB 144) means “exaltation,” “majesty,” or “excellence.” It is used in a positive sense toward Israel in Ps. 47:4. In this context it refers to vv. 4-6. See sarcastic parallel in 8:7. Israel's inappropriate “pride” receives God's judgment (cf. Hosea 5:5; 7:10)!

**6:9-10** This is prose, not poetry.

**6:9 “ten men”** This number was important to the Jews because it was the minimum number required for worship and other social events, possibly even military groups. Because of the use of the number ten, this judgment verse may relate to 5:3.

**6:10** This verse seems to describe the siege of Samaria, the capital of Israel. There will be so many people dead and the plague so rampant that bodies will be burned indiscriminately (cf. 8:3).

▣ **“one's uncle, or his undertaker”** There are many questions about this phrase.

1. Are there two people or one?
2. What does the word (BDB 976) translated “undertaker” by the NASB, but literally means “he who burns,” mean?

For question #1 the phrase refers to two different people who talk together in the rest of the verse (i.e., so there is no survivor in the recesses of the house).

For question #2 there have been many theories:

1. one who burns deceased bodies

2. embalming or anointing the dead with spices
3. one who burns incense on behalf of the dead
4. one who burns a sacrifice on behalf of the dead
5. a parallel term for a near Kgs. The first term would mean a near kin on the mother's side and the second term a near kin on the father's side.

For me #1 or #5 seems best. But #4 could be linked to the banquet for the dead in v. 6.

▣ **“Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned”** This is a theological affirmation of who sent the invasion. The aftermath of judgment causes a holy reverence for YHWH, missing so long in Israel. The phrase “keep quiet” (BDB 245, a Hebrew INTERJECTION) is used in contexts of YHWH's presence (cf. Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 2:13) and judgment (cf. 8:3).

**6:11** This is the concluding point of vv. 8-11. Judgment (by a foreign nation, i.e., Assyria) will fall on great and small (i.e., all the population). No one will escape (cf. 5:18-20).

▣ **“to pieces. . .to fragments”** The first term's (KB 1249) meaning is uncertain:

1. used of rain droplets (Song of Songs 5:2)
2. chopped food
3. to shatter or grind

The second term (KB 149) means to break open (cf. Ps. 141:7), like a wall (cf. Isa. 22:9). The VERB form implies a tearing into pieces (*Piel*). David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Tyndale OT Commentaries), asserts that these two terms fit an earthquake better than an invasion. He also lists the other places in Amos where he thinks the texts fit an earthquake (cf. 1:1; 2:13; 8:8; 9:1-6), p.198.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:12-14**

**<sup>12</sup>Do horses run on rocks?**

**Or does one plow them with oxen?**

**Yet you have turned justice into poison**

**And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,**

**<sup>13</sup>You who rejoice in Lodebar,**

**And say, “Have we not by our *own* strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?”**

**<sup>14</sup>For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you,**

**O house of Israel,” declares the LORD God of hosts,**

**“And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath**

**To the brook of the Arabah.”**

**6:12** These first two questions are somewhat difficult in Hebrew, but it is obvious they refer to unnatural acts. All these rhetorical questions expect a “no” answer. It was also unnatural for God's people to turn justice into poison!

▣ **“Do horses run on rocks”** “Rocks” (BDB 700) refers to large boulders or possibly to horses running up cliffs or over crags. The answer is obviously no.

▣ **“does one plow them with oxen”** It is possible to change the MT's vowels to read “plow the sea” (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB). This is accomplished by taking the plural ending of “oxen” as a separate word, “sea.”

This fits the context better. As 12a, it is meant to be an impossible act. All four questions expect a “no” answer!

▣ **“justice. . .fruit of righteousness”** See note at 5:12.

**6:13 “You who rejoice”** This Hebrew phrase implies arrogance and pride over two military victories. Israel was proud and confident in her military, but God will destroy Israel by a greater military power (cf. v. 14, the Assyrians)! The Assyrians will come from the same geographical direction as these two cities mentioned, the north.

▣ **“Lodebar”** This was a city on the eastern side of Jordan in the area of Gilead. The term (BDB 520) means “a nothing.”

▣ **“Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves”** This is apparently another city in the trans-jordan area. The term (BDB 902) means “a pair of horns,” which would denote its power. These cities were both captured by Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.).

The theological implication of the phrase is that Israel, by her own military power, captured this city, which goes against the concept of holy war. It was YHWH’s power and strength (e.g., Exod. 13:3,14,16) that enabled His people to win in battle. This claim is another sign of Israel’s arrogance and covenant ignorance.

**6:14 “I am going to raise up a nation against you”** This refers to Assyria.

▣ **“from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Arabah”** This is the traditional boundary of the Promised Land (cf. Num. 34:7-8; Josh. 13:5; Jdgs. 3:3; 1 Kgs. 8:65; II Kgs. 14:25). Judah would also be affected!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God reject the sacrifices of the northern tribes?
2. Why is God’s creative act emphasized? (vv. 8-9)
3. Why is Amos 5:25-26 so difficult to interpret?
4. Is Amos condemning wealth and the sacrificial system or something else? What?

# AMOS 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Visions of the Locusts	Five Visions of God's Judgment and a Prophecy of Restoration (7:1-9:15)	A Vision of Locusts	The Visions (7:1-9:10) First Vision: The Locusts
7:1-3	7:1-3	7:1-3	7:1-3
Visions of the Fire		A Vision of Fire	Second Vision: the Drought
7:4-6	7:4-6	7:4-6	7:4-6
Visions of the Plumb Line		A Vision of a Plumb Line	Third Vision: the Plumb-Line
7:7-9	7:7-9	7:7-9	7:7-9
Amaziah's Complaint	Amos and Amaziah	Amos and Amaziah	Amaziah Challenges Amos' Right to Prophecy
7:10-13	7:10-17	7:10-11 7:12-13	7:10-17
7:14-17		7:14-17	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 7-9 form the last literary unit. The book can be broken into three divisions: (1) judgments against the nations; (2) judgments against Judah and Israel; and (3) the visions of Amos.

1. The visions of Amos can be outlined.:
  - a. chapter 7, three visions
  - b. chapter 8, one vision
  - c. chapter 9, one vision.
2. Judgment Visions
  - a. Locust, 7:1-3
  - b. Fire (possibly famine, cf. 4:6-8; 8:11-13), 7:4-6
  - c. Plumb line (possibly weak fortifications), 7:7-9
  - d. Summer fruit, 8:1-3
  - e. Earthquake, 9:1-2 (also possibly 8:7-10)
3. It is surely possible that these visions were the very means of God’s prophetic call to Amos from shepherd to prophet. The prophet calls for mercy (visions 1 & 2), but the reality of rebellion, idolatry, and unrepentance demanded judgment. Israel must be told so they will know it is not YHWH’s weakness or lack of compassion, but their sin that has brought this on them (also a warning to Judah).

B. Amos 7:10-17 is unique because

1. it gives biographical information about Amos (notice how many of the visions are related to agriculture)
2. it is written in the third person while other sections of the book are in the first person

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop *was* after the king's mowing. <sup>2</sup>And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said,

“Lord GOD, please pardon!

How can Jacob stand,

For he is small?”

<sup>3</sup>The LORD changed His mind about this.

“It shall not be,” said the LORD.

**7:1 “Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold”** This introduction shows the relatedness of the visions (cf. 7:1,4,7; 8:1, but not 9:1-10).

▣ **“He was forming”** These visions and judgments were from God Himself (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, MASCULINE SINGULAR).

▣ **“a locust-swarm”** This type of plague is mentioned in Exod. 10:12ff. It was specifically one of the curses mentioned in Deut. 28:38-42, if God’s people did not keep his commandments. There are over twelve different words in the Hebrew language translated “locusts,” which shows the fear and commonness of this plague. It is uncertain if these words refer to types of locust or stages of their growth (cf. Joel 1:4; 2:25).

▣ **“the spring crop began to sprout”** This is literally “the latter growth” (BDB 545). It is uncertain if this refers to grass or grain. It is also uncertain if it is a second growth or a replanting. This would have been

sometime after April. The later rain had to occur before the seeds would sprout. If this crop was lost there would be no crop until the next year!

▣ **“after the king’s mowing”** This is literally “shearings” (BDB 159). This phrase is not meant to teach that the king received the first mowing as a tax on the land. This allotment for the king is mentioned only here in the entire OT. The phrase was meant to be a way to date this event in the spring.

**7:2 “finished”** This VERB (BDB 477, KB 476, *Piel* PERFECT) has the connotation of “to complete” or “destroy” (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 641). Here it functions in both senses.

▣ **“that I said”** The Prophets often serve as intercessors (cf. Exod. 32:11; Jer. 15:1; 18:20; Ezek. 9:8; Dan. 9:15-19), although usually they speak to the covenant people on God’s behalf.

▣ **“Lord GOD”** This is *Adon* and YHWH (cf. Jer. 14:7,20,21; Ezek. 9:8; 11:13). See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at 1:2.

▣ **“please pardon”** This (BDB 669, KB 757) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This word is always used for God’s forgiveness of humans (see Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 135-136).

Amos, the prophet of social justice, has become the patron of mercy! The hammer of the message of judgment has mellowed at the consequences of judgment!

It is noteworthy that Amos asked God to pardon. One wonders if this means (1) let the judgment pass or (2) forgive their sin so there is no need for judgment. Amos makes this same request for the first two visions. However Amos meant the prayer, YHWH took it in sense #1. When the third and fourth visions come there is no mercy because there has been no repentance! The time of respite was not used for spiritual renewal, but further rebellion. Patience and mercy have turned into wrath (cf. 7:8,9; 8:7,10,11)!

**7:2,5 “Jacob. . .For he is small”** Notice that the prophet’s appeal is to the nation’s “need” not to their “covenant relationship.” The Lord had promised that Abraham’s seed would be as (1) the stars of heaven (e.g., Gen. 15:5); (2) the sand of the seashore (e.g., Gen. 22:17); and (3) the dust of the earth (e.g., Gen. 13:16), but now there were so few!

**7:3**

**NASB, TEV “The LORD changed His mind about this”**  
**NKJV, NRSV,**

**NJB “The LORD relented concerning this”**

This Arabic root means “to breathe heavy” (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PERFECT). This is an anthropomorphic metaphor. The root of this word expresses deep feelings (see Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 87-88). The prophet Nahum carries this term in his name. God is often spoken of in the Bible as changing His mind or relenting (cf. v. 6; Gen. 18:22-32; Num. 14:11-20; Josh. 7:6-13; II Kgs. 22:19-20; Ps. 106:45; Jer. 18:1-16; 26:3,13,19; Jonah 3:10). God is affected by (1) our prayers and (2) His character of compassion and love (cf. Exod. 3:7; Jdgs. 2:18; Hosea 11:8-9; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 5:15). However, this should not be understood in the sense that God’s nature or purpose vacillates. It does not change (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, the Lord GOD was calling to contend *with them* by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land.**

<sup>5</sup>Then I said,  
 “Lord GOD, please stop!  
 How can Jacob stand, for he is small?”  
<sup>6</sup>The LORD changed His mind about this.  
 “This too shall not be,” said the Lord GOD.

7:4

NASB “contend”  
 NKJV “conflict”  
 NRSV (footnote) “a judgment”  
 TEV “preparing to punish”  
 NJB “summoning”

This term (BDB 936) in this context refers to a legal case against Israel (e.g., Hos. 4:1; 12:2; Mic. 6:1-2).

▣ **“by fire”** Fire is often used as a symbol of judgment (e.g., 2:5). In this agricultural context the fire may refer to the scorching heat of the sun or the plants being defoliated by the locusts. If so, the great deep may be a reference to available water (i.e., springs, rivers, rain, etc., cf. 1:2; 4:6-8).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

### A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

### B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

### C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

▣ **“the great deep”** This refers to the underground water source of rivers (cf. Gen. 1:2; 7:11; 49:15; Ps. 36:6; Isa. 51:10). This is a mythological term from the earliest known Mesopotamian nations, Sumer and Babylon, but in the OT it has been totally stripped of its mythological connotation.

In this context it refers to God’s allowing foreign invaders to destroy Israel.

**7:5 “please stop”** This (BDB 292, KB 292) is another *Qal* IMPERATIVE. However, notice this time the prophet did not appeal for forgiveness, but for the cessation of judgment. YHWH is merciful, but there is an end to His patience (cf. v. 8; 8:1).

**7:6** See note at 7:3.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:7-9**

**<sup>7</sup>Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. <sup>8</sup>The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the LORD said,**

**“Behold I am about to put a plumb line**

**In the midst of My people Israel.**

**I will spare them no longer.**

**<sup>9</sup>The high places of Isaac will be desolated**

**And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste.**

**Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”**

**7:7 “the Lord was standing by a vertical wall”** This seems to imply a wall of loose stones removed from the fields. With time these stones shifted their positions and became unstable and unsafe.

▣ **“a plumb line”** This is the only use of this particular term (BDB 59, KB 71) in the OT. It was a construction tool (cord with metal weight at the end) used to test the perpendicular alignment of buildings or walls. It is used metaphorically here to express judgment because mankind has deviated from the standard of God (cf. II Kgs. 21:13; Isa. 28:17; 34:11; Lam. 2:8).

Although most English translations accept “plumb line” as the implied contextual meaning, it is possible to argue for “tin” as the proper translation of this Akkadian loan word. If so, then the imagery would be that of a tin wall, thereby, a metaphor of “apparent protection” (i.e., a wall of weak metal, tin). Several prophets used metal imagery (cf. Jer. 15:20; Ezek. 4:3).

Whichever it is, this is a vision of judgment. Israel thinks she is militarily secure and spiritually orthodox, but she is not!

**7:8 “I will spare them no longer”** Literally “I will never (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) again pass by (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* INFINITIVE) them.” Amos realizes the depth of Israel’s rebellion and ceases to intercede on her behalf.

**7:9 “high places. . . sanctuaries”** The “high places” (BDB 119) refer to the local fertility worship sites (“will be desolated,” BDB 1030, KB 1053, *Niphal* PERFECT), while “the sanctuaries” (BDB 874) refer

to the national shrines (“will be laid waste,” BDB 351, KB 349, *Qal* IMPERFECT) at the cities of Dan and Bethel, started by Jeroboam I (922 B.C.).

▣ **“the house of Jeroboam”** This refers to Jeroboam I, who led the rebellion of the Northern Ten Tribes in 922 B.C. against Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, over the issue of forced labor and taxation. The true issue was the king’s oppressive demands on the people in order to support his opulent Oriental court (cf. I Kgs. 11).

▣ **“the sword”** The sword (i.e., war) is to be paralleled with the severity of the locust swarm of v. 1. and the consuming fire of v. 4.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:10-13**

<sup>10</sup>Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent *word* to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words. <sup>11</sup>For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’” <sup>12</sup>Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! <sup>13</sup>But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.”

**7:10-17** This account of an encounter between God’s spokesman and the leader of the Bethel sanctuary breaks into the context of several judgments:

1. locusts, 7:1-3
2. fire or famine, 7:4-6 (cf. 8:11-13)
3. plumb line, 7:7-9
4. summer fruit, 8:1-3
5. earthquake, 9:1-2 (possibly 8:7-10)

**7:10 “Amaziah the priest”** This was the chief priest (Targums) of the national golden calf shrine at Bethel. Here we see the dilemma of the people when confronted by two representatives of God. The Priest and the Prophet both claim to speak for God, both claim to have His authority.

▣ **“Jeroboam”** This refers to Jeroboam II (cf. 1:1), the current king of Israel. As is often the case the exact dates of his reign vary from scholar to scholar:

1. John Bright, 786-746 B.C.
2. E. J. Young, 783-743 B.C.
3. R. K. Harrison, 782/81-753 B.C.

There are several problems connected to dating OT events:

1. the only clear link between secular history and the OT is the battle of Charchemish in 605 B.C.
2. the reigns of the kings overlap (co-reigns)
3. the Babylonians and Palestinians date the reign of their kings differently (i.e., count or do not count first partial year).

▣ **“Amos has conspired against you”** Amaziah accused Amos of political treason (“conspired,” BDB 905, KB 1153, *Qal* PERFECT, for examples of the use of this term see II Sam. 15:12; II Kgs. 11:14; 15:15). Near Eastern kings were very conscious of their prophet’s words and popularity among the populace and feared any negative prediction.

▣ **“the land is unable to endure all his words”** Amos is speaking at Bethel. All the geographical directions of the book are given from the position of Bethel. However, this phrase implies that Amos spoke in many locations in the north, not just Bethel.

The VERB “endure” (BDB 465, KB 463, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used of enduring YHWH’s wrath (cf. Joel 2:11; Jer. 10:10). The Israelites were listening to Amos!

**7:11 “For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword’”** This refers to Jeroboam II. Amaziah slightly misquoted Amos, but in reality it was the essence of his message.

▣ **“Israel will certainly go from its land into exile”** This was a staggering judgment pronouncement. The Promised Land is no longer under YHWH’s protection! No, quite the opposite; it is under YHWH’s attack. Israel had allowed the confiscation of the land allotments (by the wealthy, powerful, and influential) of her farmers and now YHWH revoked His promise!

The Exile of Israel is mentioned several times by Amos (cf. 4:2-3; 5:5,27; 6:7; 7:17; 9:4,14).

**7:12 “Go. . .flee away”** These are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES (“go” BDB 229, KB 246, “flee” BDB 137, KB 156). There is a third *Qal* IMPERATIVE later in the verse, “eat” (BDB 37, KB 46). Amaziah wants Amos to get out of the sanctuary, the city, and the country!

▣ **“you seer”** Amaziah called Amos a seer possibly because of his public proclamation of his visions. It was a synonym for “prophet.”

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DIFFERENT HEBREW TERMS FOR PROPHET**

### Biblical Terms

1. *ro’eh* = “seer” (BDB 906), I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro’eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = “seer” (BDB 302), II Sam. 24:11; Amos 7:12. It is basically a synonym of *ro’eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi’* = “prophet” (BDB 611), cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba’a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
4. All three terms are used of the prophet’s office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro’eh*; Nathan - *Nabi’*; and Gad - *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase *ish ha - ‘elohim*, “man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The NT word “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro*, which means “before” or “for”; (2) *phemi*, which means “to speak.”

▣ **“flee away to the land of Judah”** Possibly Amaziah was charging Amos with being prejudiced against Israel or a meddling foreigner.

▣ **“there eat bread and there do your prophesying”** Apparently, some prophets were supported by the state, while others lived on the freewill offerings of the people to whom they preached. Amaziah was accusing Amos of preaching for money. Amos seems to answer in v. 14 that he already had a source of income.

**7:13 “for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence”** It is obvious that Amaziah was expressing the truth ironically when he states this is not God’s sanctuary but the king’s. The reference here is, of course, to one of the national shrines set up by Jeroboam I that became the site of the official state religion of the Northern Ten Tribes. It was later corrupted by Ahab and Jezebel (cf. I Kgs. 18-21) into the worship of the fertility gods of Canaan.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:14-17**

**<sup>14</sup>Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. <sup>15</sup>But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel.’ <sup>16</sup>Now hear the word of the LORD: you are saying, ‘You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.’ <sup>17</sup>Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.”**

**7:14 “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet”** Amos was asserting God’s call to speak not to a profession (cf. v. 15), a VERB must be supplied in this statement. The PRESENT TENSE fits this context, but not v. 15. It could be translated, “I was not a prophet.” Implication, but now I am.

This statement by Amos seems to contrast “prophet” with “son of a prophet.” If so, the distinction would be between a person called to speak for God as an individual versus a person called by God to be a part of a group of prophets (i.e., Samuel, I Sam. 10:5,6,10; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35; II Kgs. 2:3-7; 4:38; 6:1). In the latter case “son” would refer to a member of a group, not a family.

▣ **“for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs”** See full notes in Introduction. In this context it may function as a way of showing Amos’ wealth or occupation. He did not need to prophesy to eat!

**7:15 “took me from following the flock”** This VERB (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has a strong theological connotation of God’s sovereign choice and action (e.g., Exod. 6:7; Deut. 4:20,34; II Sam. 7:8; I Kgs. 11:37; Jer. 43:10). God called Amos to speak for Him!

This is a play on the word “shepherd,” used metaphorically for (1) God Himself; (2) Israel’s leaders; and (3) by implication, the nation. Israel and Judah as a whole were God’s sheep.

▣ **“Go prophesy to My people Israel”** There are several IMPERATIVES in this context.

1. “Go,” BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “Prophesy,” BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. “Hear,” v. 16, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

▣ **“My people Israel”** This is a Covenant phrase (cf. 7:8,15; 8:2) using Jacob’s new name (cf. Gen. 32:28).

**7:16** This is Amos characterizing Amaziah’s words, which were opposite of YHWH’s.

▣ **“against the house of Isaac”** This is the only use of this phrase in the OT. It may be parallel to “house of Jacob” (cf. 3:13) or “house of Israel” (cf. 5:1,3,4,25; 6:1). It was a disparaging comment by Amaziah about Amos’ preaching in the north.

**7:17** Amos says this priest’s wife will be publicly raped (and become a common prostitute), his children killed, his property divided among others, and he, himself, will go into exile for life in Assyria. He will be an example of what will happen to all of Israel’s leaders.

In a real sense these judgments on Amaziah meant that neither he nor his descendants would be priests.

1. Wife will be unfit for marriage to a priest (cf. Deut. 22:23-24).
2. No children will survive him.
3. He dies in a foreign land unable to pass on his priestly credentials.

(See David A. Hubbard, Joel and Amos (Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p. 217).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does God change His mind? How?
2. How is repentance related to forgiveness?
3. How do you know who truly speaks for God? (Prophet, Priest, or Sage)
4. Is God’s judgment eschatological or temporal?

# AMOS 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Five Visions of God's Judgment and a Prophecy of Restoration (7:1-9:15)		The Visions (7:1-9:10)
Vision of Summer Fruit	Fourth Vision	A Vision of a Basket of Fruit	Fourth Vision: The Basket of Ripe Fruit
8:1-3	8:1-3	8:1-2a 8:2b-3	8:1-3
8:4-10	The Indictment of Israel 8:4-6 8:7-8	Israel's Doom 8:4-6 8:7-10	Against Swindlers and Exploiters 8:4-7 8:8
	8:9-10		Prediction of Punishment: Darkness and Mourning 8:9-10
8:11-14	8:11-12	8:11-14	Famine and Drought of the Word of God 8:11-12
	8:13-14		Fresh Prediction of Punishment 8:13-14

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, *there was* a basket of summer fruit. <sup>2</sup>He said, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer. <sup>3</sup>The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day,” declares the Lord GOD. “Many *will be* the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence.”

**8:1 “Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold”** This phrase was used to introduce the first three visions in chapter 7. Because of its recurrent use it shows that the visions are related (cf. 7:1,4,7; 8:1).

▣ **“a basket of summer fruit”** There is a word play in the Hebrew text between the word for “fruit” and the word for “end” (cf. Dan. 8:17,19; 11:40; 12:4,6) in v. 2. These two words would have been pronounced the same way (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 920). Summer fruit (BDB 884) is the last fruit of the season, which over ripens very quickly in the heat and was an appropriate metaphor for the spiritual rottenness of the Israeli nation. They were over-ripe for judgment!

**8:2 “The end has come for My people Israel”** The VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes that the covenant between YHWH and Abraham’s descendants will be abrogated with the northern tribes.

The pain of YHWH can be sensed in the covenant phrase, “My people Israel” (cf. Hosea 11:1-4,8), but it will not be completely abrogated. There is hope (cf. 9:7-15; Hosea 11:9-11).

To allow the appearance of the covenant to continue would be cruel. YHWH’s judgment, as painful as it was, was an act of love with a real potential of restoration!

▣ **“will spare them no longer”** This phrase is very emphatic. Literally, it is “I will never (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) again pass by them” (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT).

The Covenant is broken (cf. 7:8)! His people have rejected Him by the amalgamation with Canaanite fertility worship for the last time. In Gen. 15:16 the Amorites of the Promised Land were rejected because of their godless lifestyle. Now God’s own people are being turned out because of their similar godless lifestyle. God’s patience coming to an end is also seen in Jer. 15:5-9 and Ezek. 7:2-9.

**8:3 “The songs of the palace”** The term “songs” (BDB 1010) is FEMININE PLURAL, which may denote the irony that the female singers at court would become the professional mourners. But, there were so many bodies that the only sound was silence! (For a brief discussion of mourning rites see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 56-61.)

There is a possibility of two translations: (1) “palace” (TEV, NJB, cf. 6:5) or (2) “shrine” or “temple” (NKJV, NRSV, NET, NIV, cf. 5:23). Because of v. 10 (cf. 5:23) option #2 seems best.

▣ **“will turn to wailing”** The VERB (BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* PERFECT) occurs several times in the section of Jeremiah dealing with judgment on the surrounding nations (cf. Jer. 47:2; 48:20,31,39; 49:3; 51:8). He seems to follow Isaiah’s usage (cf. Isa. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7[twice]; 23:1,6,14). A good translation of this outcry over death and destruction could be “wail,” “howl,” “shriek.”

The eighth century minor prophets used it several times in relation to YHWH’s coming judgment.

1. Hosea 7:14
2. Joel 1:5,11,13

3. Amos 8:3
4. Micah 1:8

▣ **“in that day”** This was a standardized metaphor of judgment used so often in the eighth century prophets. YHWH will visit His people for blessing (cf. Amos 9:11,13) or cursing (cf. Amos 1:14; 2:16; 3:14; 4:2; 5:8,18,20; 6:3; 8:3,9,10,11,13). See full note at 2:16.

▣ **“they will cast them forth in silence”** This refers to abnormal burial practices (i.e., no professional wailing nor any wailing at all) because of war and siege. This phrase is related to 6:10 (the same INTERJECTION is used, BDB 245, “hush”).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:4-6**

<sup>4</sup>Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land,  
<sup>5</sup>saying,  
 “When will the new moon be over,  
 So that we may sell grain,  
 And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*,  
 To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger,  
 And to cheat with dishonest scales,  
<sup>6</sup>So as to buy the helpless for money  
 And the needy for a pair of sandals,  
 And *that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?*”

**8:4 “Hear”** This is the Hebrew term *Shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). It means “to hear so as to do.” It is the key term of the significant prayer of Deut. 6:4-6 (cf. Amos 3:1,13; 4:1; 5:1).

▣ Verse 4 refers to subjugation (“trample” or “crush” BDB 983, KB 1375, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) of the poor (“the needy” parallel to “the humble of the land” and “the helpless. . .the needy,” cf. v. 6) by the rich and politically powerful (cf. 2:7; 5:11,12).

**8:5** The wealthy, powerful, and influential could not wait for the religious assemblies (i.e., “new moon,” cf. Num. 28:11; II Kgs. 4:23 and “sabbath,” cf. Exod. 31:13-17) to be over so they could instigate their illegal, improper, and unjust schemes toward the poor: (1) to make the bushel smaller; (2) the shekel bigger; (3) use dishonest scales; and (4) sell the husk of the wheat (those grain heads that fell in the dirt, BDB 655, or under-developed grain that fell through the sieve, cf. 9:9) with the wheat. All of these refer to cheating the poor when they buy food (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 20:10).

The VERBS “sell” (BDB 991, KB 1404) and “open” (BDB 834, KB 986) are both COHORTATIVE. These merchants’ desire to exploit is so strong that their actions are the commands of their own hearts.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)**

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:1). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The*

*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also, the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) system of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer’s containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. *Homer* (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
2. *Letekh* (or *lethech*, BDB 547), cf. Hosea 3:2
3. *Ephah* (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. *Se’ah* (BDB 684), e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32
5. *Omer* (BDB 771 II, possibly “a sheaf: [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. *’Issaron* (BDB 798, “a tenth part”), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21
7. *Qav* (or *kab*, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. *Kor* (BDB 499), e.g., I Kgs. 5:2,25; Ezek. 45:14
2. *Bath* (BDB 330, equal to a homer), e.g., II Chr. 2:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
3. *Hin* (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
4. *Log* (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24

C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379.

<i>homer</i> (dry) = <i>kor</i> (liquid)	1						
<i>ephah</i> (dry) = <i>bath</i> (liquid)	10	1					
<i>se’ah</i> (dry)	30	3	1				
<i>hin</i> (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
<i>omer/issaron</i> (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
<i>qav/kab</i> (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
<i>log</i> (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the *talent*, the *shekel*, and the *gerah*.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the *talent*. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one *talent* equals 3,000 *shekels* (i.e., “round weight,” BDB 503).
2. The term *shekel* (BDB 1053, “weight”) is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of *shekel* mentioned in the OT.
  - a. “commercial standard” (NASB of Gen. 23:16)
  - b. “the *shekel* of the sanctuary” (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
  - c. “by the king’s weight” (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called “royal weight” in the Elephantine Papyri.
3. The *gerah* (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per *shekel* (cf. Exod. 30:13). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit).

4. The *mina* (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70-71). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
5. The *beka* (BDB 132, “half a *shekel*,” cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a *shekel*. Its name means “to divide.”

B. Chart

1. Based on Exodus

<i>talent</i>	1		
<i>mina</i>	60	1	
<i>shekel</i>	3,000	50	1
<i>beka</i>	6,000*	100	1

\*(*gerah*, also 6,000 from Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12)

2. Based on Ezekiel

<i>talent</i>	1				
<i>mina</i>	60	1			
<i>shekel</i>	3,600	60	1		
<i>beka</i>	7,200	120	2	1	
<i>gerah</i>	72,000	1,200	20	10	1

▣ **“the new moon”** This refers to the ancient custom of observing a religious holiday at the first of the month (cf. Num. 28:11; II Kgs. 4:23). Remember, the Jews went by the lunar calendar.

▣ **“dishonest scales”** This CONSTRUCT (BDB 24, 941) denotes unfair and dishonest commercial enterprises, especially against the poor (cf. Micah 6:10-11). God hates this falsehood (cf. Prov. 11:1). It is never “business is business” with God or His people! Exploitation reveals a heart of self, greed, and fallenness.

**8:6** This verse gives an example of how poor people who could not buy food were forced to sell themselves or their families into slavery for a small amount (i.e., “a pair of sandals,” cf. 2:6).

These wealthy merchants sank so low as to sell grain mixed with husk, dirt, pebbles, etc. With profits from these fraudulent sales they purchased more slaves! Therefore, the poor paid for the exploitation of the poor!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:7-10**

<sup>7</sup>The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob,

“Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.

<sup>8</sup>Because of this will not the land quake

And everyone who dwells in it mourn?

Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile,

And it will be tossed about

And subside like the Nile of Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord GOD,

**“That I will make the sun go down at noon  
 And make the earth dark in broad daylight.  
<sup>10</sup>Then I will turn your festivals into mourning  
 And all your songs into lamentation;  
 And I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins  
 And baldness on every head.  
 And I will make it like a *time of mourning* for an only son,  
 And the end of it will be like a bitter day.**

**8:7 “The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob”** In Amos YHWH swears several times as a way to show that His words are true:

1. “The LORD God has sworn by His holiness,” 4:2
2. “The LORD God has sworn by Himself,” 6:8
3. “The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob,” 8:7

This phrase has several possibilities: (1) God’s glory in the descendants of Jacob (cf. I Sam. 15:29). The TEV translates this as “The LORD, the God of Israel, has sworn” ; (2) since no where else does God swear by another person, this may mean, “the LORD, of whom Israel is so proud, has sworn” (UBS, *Handbook*, p. 165); or (3) that the people of Jacob had become so permanently wicked that God could swear by their settled condition (cf. 6:8).

▣ **“I will never forget any of their deeds”** This is a very strong and emphatic statement.

1. a HYPOTHETICAL PARTICLE, (וְאִם)
2. a *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB, “to forget” (BDB 1013, KB 1489)
3. the NOUN “everlasting,” “perpetuity” (BDB 664)

These exploitative merchants will answer for the crimes against both their covenant brothers and sisters and their covenant God!

**8:8** This question expects a “yes” answer. This verse is apparently using the imagery of (1) an earthquake mentioned in 1:1 or (2) the destruction caused by the annual flooding of the Nile River in Egypt (cf. 9:5; Jer. 46:7-8). Because this VERB (BDB 176, KB 204, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used to describe Jonah being driven from the presence of YHWH (cf. Jonah 2:4), it may be a metaphor for exile from the Promised Land (cf. 9:1-4,5). This same word was used of YHWH driving the Canaanites out of the Promised Land, but now Israel is being removed for her sins and idolatry!

**8:9** This verse has been understood in several ways: (1) eschatological language like Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:2; 3:15; Micah 3:6; (2) a reference to the plagues on Egypt, which form the basis of the curses of Deut. 27-29; or (3) a literal reference to an eclipse (cf. 5:18-20).

In a sense the cosmic chaos of creation is recurring. The ideal setting of YHWH fellowshiping with mankind has again been disrupted. Nature is seen as being in chaos (cf. Rom. 8:19-22).

It is ironic that water can be for destruction (i.e., flood) or a symbol of God’s blessing (cf. 5:24). Mankind will experience one or the other! For an interesting discussion of the word “sea” see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 461-466.

▣ **“make the earth dark in broad daylight”** This VERB (BDB 364, KB 361, *Hiphil* PERFECT) refers to God’s action. It may reflect the plague of darkness in Egypt (cf. Exod. 10:21-22; Ps. 105:28). Here it refers to God bringing darkness, both literal (cf. 5:8) and figurative (cf. vv. 11-12). Israel’s light is darkened (cf. Jer. 13:16).

**8:10** This is a series of mourning rites (i.e., funeral songs, sackcloth, baldness) over God's judgments of Israel's worship times. Their worship will be turned to bitter mourning, like the death of an only son (cf. Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12: 10).

▣ **“baldness”** Because of Israel's connection with the Canaanite fertility cults, this could refer to “shaving” (cf. Moab, Isa. 15:2; Jer. 48:37; Philistia, Jer. 47:5; and Phoenicia, Ezek. 27:31), all of which had cultic connotations (cf. Lev. 21:5).

But it could also refer to the pulling out of the hair of the head as a sign of mourning (cf. Micah 1:16; Ezek. 7:18).

▣ **“a bitter day”** This word (BDB 600) is used at the grief over a death (cf. 5:16-17). They were expecting just the opposite (cf. 5:18-20)! This is a veiled reference to “that day,” “the day of the LORD.” See note at 2:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:11-14**

<sup>11</sup>**“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD,  
“When I will send a famine on the land,  
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,  
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.**

<sup>12</sup>**People will stagger from sea to sea  
And from the north even to the east;  
They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD,  
But they will not find it.**

<sup>13</sup>**In that day the beautiful virgins  
And the young men will faint from thirst.**

<sup>14</sup>**As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,  
Who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,'  
And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,'  
They will fall and not rise again.”**

**8:11** This may be the OT origin of one part of Jesus' beatitudes (cf. Matt. 5:6) and possibly a reference to Matt. 4:4, where Jesus quotes Deut. 8:3. Israel thought she had all she needed, but what all of us really need is fellowship with God!

**8:12** This shows a frantic but futile search for God. What a shocking metaphor! God has been seeking mankind in love, but there will come a day when they will not be able to find Him. Humans were created to need fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Hell is the removal of the possibility of being with Him!

▣ **“from sea to sea”** For a speaker in Palestine, this would refer to the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. It is not very far physically, but it signifies from one end of the country to the other.

**8:13** Even the young and strong will not be able to find God. Exhausted young people are a metaphor for YHWH's judgment (cf. Isa. 51:20).

**8:14 “the guilt of Samaria”** This refers to the golden calves (cf. I Kgs. 12:28; Hosea 8:5-6; 10:5) set up at the cities of Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam I (922 B.C.). They were meant to rival the temple in Jerusalem

as a worship site for YHWH. All of the kings of the northern tribes are condemned by the prophets because of these shrines.

There is another possible understanding of this text based on the Masoretic Text. It has the phrase, “the Ashima of Samaria” (cf. II Kgs. 17:30). If so, this then would refer to the female fertility goddess of Canaan. Whichever reference is correct, it reflects the improper worship of the Northern Ten Tribes, Israel.

▣ **“As the way of Beersheba lives”** This is an unusual reference. Beersheba is a city located in southern Judah. It was referred to earlier in 5:5. Possibly the journey itself or the route with its cultic associations or the term “way” is idiomatic of a ritual or teaching. Exactly how or what is involved in this idolatry is uncertain.

It is just possible that a geographical emphasis is what is referred to (i.e., Dan to Beersheba, cf. Jdgs. 20:1; I Sam. 3:20), which would parallel v. 12. These covenant people committed idolatry throughout the Promised Land, but now they will frantically seek for YHWH again throughout the land, but will not find Him!

# AMOS 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Five Visions of God's Judgment and a Prophecy of Restoration (7:1-9:15)		The Visions (7:1-9:10)
The Destruction of Israel	Fifth Vision	The Lord's Judgment	Fifth Vision: The Fall of the Sanctuary
9:1-4	9:1-4	9:1-4	9:1-4
	Third Doxology		Doxology
9:5-6	9:5-6	9:5-6	9:5-6
	Israel Has No Claim to Special Privilege in the Moral Realm		Sinners Will All Perish
9:7-10	9:7-8	9:7-8	9:7-10
	9:9-10	9:9-10	
Israel Will Be Restored	Prophecy of the Restoration of the Davidic Dynasty	The Future Restoration of Israel	Prospects of Restoration and Idyllic Prosperity
9:11-12	9:11-12	9:11-12	9:11-15
	Prophecy of the Glorious Age to Come		
9:13-15	9:13-15	9:13-15	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-4

<sup>1</sup>I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said,  
“Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake,  
And break them on the heads of them all!  
Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword;  
They will not have a fugitive who will flee,  
Or a refugee who will escape.

<sup>2</sup>Though they dig into Sheol,  
From there will My hand take them;  
And though they ascend to heaven,  
From there will I bring them down.

<sup>3</sup>Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,  
I will search them out and take them from there;  
And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea,  
From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.

<sup>4</sup>And though they go into captivity before their enemies,  
From there I will command the sword that it slay them,  
And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”

**9:1** This refers to the destruction of a sacred worship site (i.e., altar). The mechanism was the earthquake (cf. 1:1; 8:7-10; 9:1,9). The Israelites were trusting in their covenant relationship with YHWH, but God rejected their amalgamated religious worship (cf. 5:21-24; 8:10).

▣ **“Smite the capitals”** The VERB (BDB 645, KB 697) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This verse has two IMPERATIVES and a *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE (i.e., “quake” BDB 950, KB 1271).  
The term “capital” (BDB 499) refers to the carved (decorated) top of the support columns.

▣ **“the thresholds”** “Thresholds” (BDB 706) refers to the frame in which the door of the temple is mounted (cf. Isa. 6:4).

▣ **“break them on the heads of them all”** This is referring to the destruction of the worshipers by supernatural means, similar to Samson destroying the Philistine temple in Jdgs. 16:23-30. Here the mechanism seems to have been a divinely timed and targeted earthquake.

▣ The last three lines of v. 1 assert that no Israelite will ultimately escape God’s judgment (cf. vv. 2-3). It is similar in meaning to 5:19.

Prophetic literature is characterized by judgment passages being placed beside salvation passages. This chapter is a good example.

1. vv. 1-10, judgment
2. vv. 11-15, salvation

Both are true, but there are conditions/options based on God’s mercy and human faith/repentance. A remnant of Jews will survive to accomplish God’s redemptive plan!

**9:2-3** These verses describe the futility of trying to escape from God’s judgment (e.g., Job 34:22; Jer. 23:24; Isa. 29:15). The metaphors used are the same as in Ps. 139:8, 9-12 (also note Prov. 15:11).

**9:2 “Though they dig into Sheol”** *Sheol* (BDB 982, e.g., Isa. 5:14; 14:9; 28:15,18; 38:10) refers to the holding place of the dead. It is described as being in the earth (i.e., dig). This is similar to people trying to hide in the caves in Isa. 2:10,19-21; Luke 23:30; and Rev. 6:15-16.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?**

### **I. Old Testament**

- A. All humans go to *She’ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She’ol* characterized
  1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
  2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
  3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), but also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
  4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
  5. wicked descend alive into *She’ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
  6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
  7. people there called *Shades*, Isa. 14:9-11

### **II. New Testament**

- A. The Hebrew *She’ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
  1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
  2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
  3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
  4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
  1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
  2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
  1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped through child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev.18:21; 20:2-5
  2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
  3. The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of

Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).

4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
  - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
  - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
  - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
  - d. paralleled to *She'ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
  - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
  - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
  - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She'ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
  - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She'ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
  1. originally all humans went to *She'ol/Hades*
  2. their experience there (good or bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
  3. only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She'ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

### III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
  1. human souls exist before their physical life
  2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
  3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
  1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
  2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
  3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
  4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, II Thess. 4:13-18
  5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
  6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

### IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible:
  1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
  2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26

3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)

B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife. Probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2; Rev. 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*

B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

▣ **“though they ascend to heaven”** This is the spacial opposite of *Sheol*. The language of these verses (i.e., vv. 1-4) is reminiscent of Ps. 139:8. There is no where to hide from God!

In this verse heaven may refer to the atmosphere above the earth (cf. Gen. 1:1,14-19,20) and not God's throne (although Isa. 14:12-14 seems to merge the Jewish concept of the first heaven and the third heaven).

**9:3 “the summit of Carmel”** This may be a dual metaphor: (1) this site had very thick vegetation (BDB 502 II) with many caves or (2) this was a traditional worship site (cf. I Kgs. 18).

▣ **“though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea”** This is obviously metaphorical of sinful mankind's attempt to hide from God (cf. Job 34:21-22; Ps. 139:9-12; Jer. 16:16-17).

The Israelites were a desert people. They were afraid of vast, deep water. The last place they would hide is the deep!

▣ **“I will command the serpent and it will bite them”** This is an allusion to the mythical sea monster, Leviathan (cf. Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps. 74:13-14; 104:26; Isa. 27:1) or Rahab (cf. Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps. 89:10; Isa. 51:9). Notice God commands (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel IMPERFECT*) the chaos monster.

**9:4** This is a shocking verse. God's anger and judgment will pursue them even into exile. They will be herded like cattle into a foreign land, but even there death will await them! God will show no compassion (cf. Hos. 1:6; 2:4) because they are no longer His covenant people (cf. Hos. 1:9; 2:23). This verse reflects the consequences of breaking God's covenant (cf. Lev. 26, esp. v. 33).

▣ **“I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good”** This is exactly opposite to the covenant promises! This same metaphor and terminology occur several times in Jeremiah (cf. 21:10; 39:16; 44:11,27). It reflects the cursing and blessing sections of Leviticus 26 and especially Deuteronomy 27-29.

Notice that God has the power to command actions outside of the Promised Land in the nations supposedly controlled by other gods. These other gods are helpless but to obey. They are non-existent and cannot stop YHWH's wrath!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:5-6**

<sup>5</sup>The Lord GOD of hosts,  
The One who touches the land so that it melts,  
And all those who dwell in it mourn,  
And all of it rises up like the Nile  
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;  
<sup>6</sup>The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens  
And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth,  
He who calls for the waters of the sea  
And pours them out on the face of the earth,  
The LORD is His name.

**9:5-6** This is the last of the three doxologies, hymns, or poems to YHWH as creator (cf. 4:13 and 5:8-9).

**9:5** This may be another reference to the earthquake, 1:1; 8:8-9; 9:1 (i.e., the land, like the Nile River, rises and falls).

☐ **“Lord GOD of hosts”** This title is found in 3:13; 4:13; 5:14,16,27; 6:8,14. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2 and brief note at 5:14.

**9:6** These are difficult-to-translate creation metaphors. They speak of God as creator of heaven and earth (cf. Gen. 1; Ps. 104). He is the controller of heavenly bodies and water, both salt and fresh (i.e., forces of nature).

It is possible to translate “vaulted dome” (BDB 8) as “storehouse” and if so, then v. 6a refers to God’s dwelling place and v. 6b refers to mankind’s dwelling place, both of which are created by YHWH (cf. vv. 5a, 6d).

☐ **“The LORD is His name”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:2.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-10**

<sup>7</sup>“Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,  
O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD.  
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,  
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?”  
<sup>8</sup>Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom,  
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth;  
Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,”  
Declares the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup>For behold, I am commanding,  
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations  
As *grain* is shaken in a sieve,  
But not a kernel will fall to the ground.  
<sup>10</sup>All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,  
Those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’

**9:7-8** UBS, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Amos*, makes an interesting observation on the relationship between vv. 7 and 8. Verse 7 states very emphatically that Israel is not special, unique, or privileged, yet v. 8 shows God's special covenant care for her (cf. p. 181).

This same tension exists in the New Testament.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: "TENSIONS" (TAKEN FROM CRUCIAL INTRODUCTION TO VOL. 12, MY COMMENTARY ON REVELATION)**

**FIRST TENSION** (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15 before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7-15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are (1) the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); (2) the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14); (3) the temple is now Jesus and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19); and (4) even Israel and

its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., “Israel,” cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., “kingdom of priests,” cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus’ or Paul’s eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions instead of the teachings of Jesus in describing the end (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John’s way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God’s commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome.

### **SECOND TENSION** (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT’s uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God’s love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God’s love and purpose were so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God’s election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God’s call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission, turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

### **THIRD TENSION** (conventional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God’s redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The “if. . . then” pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one “horn of the dilemma,” God’s faithfulness or human effort, God’s sovereignty or mankind’s free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God’s OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it, yes? God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God’s ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God’s

covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

#### **FOURTH TENSION** (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than societal propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. A historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment, or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillment of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature.

This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, “Approaches to New Testament Exegesis,” in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

“Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)” (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

“No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books’ frame of reference is the reader’s contemporary age rather than the author’s. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes” (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost, and Longman III:

“Today’s readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

#### **FIFTH TENSION** (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is both present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel.

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ’s first coming, then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ’s offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ’s comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign’s manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of

the Messiah (cf. Rev. 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the Kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

#### **SIXTH TENSION** (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The immediacy of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live everyday as if it were your last, but plan and train for future ministry!

**9:7** Both the questions of v. 7 expect a "yes" answer. Basically God is depreciating the covenantal uniqueness of Israel. The one and only God has led all nations to and from their current geographical locations (cf. Deut. 32:8; and possibly implied in 29:26). It must have been painful for Israel to be compared to Ethiopia, Philistia, and Syria. This is in sharp contrast to the election theology of 3:2! Israel, like all nations, will answer for their sins!

▣ **"Israel from the land of Egypt"** This is a reference to the Exodus, which was the beginning of Israel as a nation.

▣ **"Caphtor"** This refers to the island of Crete, which may have been the ancestral home of the Philistines (sea people of the Aegean).

▣ **"Kir"** This may refer to (1) a part of Mesopotamia near Elam (cf. Isa. 22:6); (2) a word which means "walls" and stands for Nineveh; (3) a river in northern Armenia; or (4) a mountain range forming the northern boundary of Syria (cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, p. 83).

**9:8** Israel will be treated like all other nations that sin, except that YHWH will not totally destroy His people of promise (cf. 5:4-7,14-15; 9:11-15). A righteous remnant of the house of Jacob will be spared! This theme is often repeated in Jeremiah.

1. Judah will survive, Jer. 4:27; 5:10,18; 33:16
2. Israel will survive, Jer. 30:11; 31:35-36

God's eternal plan of redemption (i.e., the Messiah) depends on it!

▣ **“the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful nation”** This idiom, “the eyes of the Lord GOD,” refers to His tender watchcare over His covenant people (cf. Deut. 11:12). However, the addition of the phrase, “the sinful nation,” shows the dilemma. Maybe the best way to express this is as a parent’s pain at the poor life choices of a child (cf. Hosea 11). A truly loving parent must let the consequences of poor choices play out for the long term health, happiness, and maturity of the child, but it is very hurtful to both parties.

▣ **“destroy”** This term (BDB 1029, KB 1552) is used three times in this verse. It means “to annihilate,” “to destroy,” “to terminate.” This is such a contrast to the use of this same term in Deut. 33:26-29, where it refers to God destroying His people’s enemies.

Here they are now the enemy (*Hiphil* PERFECT). Yet even here there is a glimmer of hope, “I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob” (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). Because of v. 11 this could refer to Judah!

**9:9-10** The Hebrew text is uncertain. Apparently this refers to some type of sifting process either for judgment (i.e., pebble) or for salvation (i.e., grain kernels). The context implies the righteous remnant will be spared and not one of them lost (i.e., v. 9d). But for the wicked, God will judge Israel like all other idolatrous nations (i.e., v. 10).

The VERB “shake” (BDB 631, KB 681, *Hiphil* PERFECT) refers to grain which is shaken through a sieve to remove the stones or dirt clods that may be mixed in with the heads of grain. The word translated “kernel” (NASB, NJB, while NKJ has “the smallest grain”) can also mean “pebble” (cf. II Sam. 17:13, KB 459; NRSV). This term (BDB 865) is usually translated “bundle,” “parcel,” “pouch,” or “bag.” Here it refers to an object caught in the bundling (reaping) process of stacking and tying grain stalks together in the field.

“Among all nations” probably relates to v. 4, where YHWH sends judgment even on those sinful Israelites who are taken into exile. Even in other nations God’s judgment will destroy His faithless covenant people (cf. v. 10b). There is no place to hide from God’s wrath (cf. 5:19).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,  
And wall up its breaches;  
I will also raise up its ruins  
And rebuild it as in the days of old;  
<sup>12</sup>That they may possess the remnant of Edom  
And all the nations who are called by My name,”  
Declares the LORD who does this.**

**9:11-15** The paragraph division is uncertain (all paragraph divisions are opinions, not inspiration). The context shifts unexpectedly from judgment to restoration (and from Samaria to Jerusalem). However, the message of hope is sure!

**9:11 “In that day”** This phrase appears several times (cf. 2:16; 8:3,9,18). See note at 2:16. Israel thought “that day” of God’s visitation would be a blessing, but Amos prophesied it would be a judgment (e.g., 5:18-20). Now Amos reverses the prophecy. For the righteous remnant “that day” will be a restoration of the covenant promises to David (cf. II Sam. 7). In vv. 13-14 the promises of God to Moses, especially Deut. 28:1-14, are emphasized.

It is crucial we see that the prophets of the OT always refer to the Mosaic covenant stipulations. Moses knew that the descendants of the Patriarchs could not keep the covenant (cf. Deut. 28:58-63; 29:25-28), as

did Joshua (cf. Josh. 24:19). However, Deuteronomy also holds out hope that a future day of forgiveness and restoration provided by YHWH will come (cf. Deut. 30:5) through God’s Messiah (cf. Deut. 18:18). It is this hope that the prophets pick up on and expand into an eschatological day of victory and abundance, not judgment!

▣ **“the fallen booth of David”** This idiom refers to the kingdom of David, symbolized in Jerusalem as its capital and spiritual center. The golden age of the United Monarchy (i.e., a godly king representing YHWH), with its prosperity, security, and religious faithfulness is restored.

The prediction of a coming Messiah always goes back to Judah (cf. II Sam. 7; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 33:15,17; Micah 4:1-5; 5:2-5a).

▣ **“its breaches”** Verse 11 is literally a reference to the walls of Jerusalem. It is FEMININE PLURAL, which may be a subtle way of referring to the reunification of Israel and Judah (i.e., one capital and worship center).

**9:12** This verse describes the military restoration of the limits of the Promised Land under David and Solomon. This eschatological promise takes on universal implications in Acts 15:16-17, where “Edom” is changed to “Adam” (i.e., mankind) in the Septuagint, which is quoted by James (also note Paul’s use of Hosea 1:10; 2:23 in Rom. 9:24-26)! This universal theme is also reflected in Amos 9:5-6,7 (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 42:1,4,6,10-11; 49:6; 51:4).

This restoration to the Promised Land (e.g., Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:7) is in direct contrast to vv. 1-4, 9-10. God’s relation to Abraham and his seed was based on covenant obedience. If they did not:

1. they would “be destroyed,” Deut. 4:26; 6:15; Josh. 23:15; I Kgs. 13:34; Amos 9:8
2. they would be “plucked from” the land, Deut. 28:63
3. they would be “uprooted,” Deut. 29:28; I Kgs. 14:15; II Chr. 7:20
4. they would “perish,” Josh. 23:13,16
5. they would be “cut off,” I Kgs. 9:7
6. they would “be carried away,” II Kgs. 17:6,23; 18:9-11; 25:21 (also 23:27)

But if they obeyed, then they would remain in the land, II Kgs. 18:12; 21:8; II Chr. 33:8 (cf. II Sam. 7:10).

So often in the Prophets, God’s people returning to “their own land” is emphasized (cf. Isa. 14:1-2; Jer. 16:15; Ezek. 11:17; 34:13,17; 36:24; 37:12,14,21; Amos 9:15).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:13-15**

<sup>13</sup>**“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper  
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;  
When the mountains will drip sweet wine  
And all the hills will be dissolved.**

<sup>14</sup>**Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,  
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*;  
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,  
And make gardens and eat their fruit.**

<sup>15</sup>**I will also plant them on their land,  
And they will not again be rooted out from their land  
Which I have given them,”  
Says the LORD your God.**

**9:13-15** The time element of this verse must be eschatological, for Israel will be subjugated again and again in history. This promise (political peace and agricultural abundance, cf. Deut. 27-29, another eschatological text is Joel 3:18) is still conditional on covenant obedience. This is not specifically stated, but surely implied.

**9:13 “sweet wine”** See Special Topic: Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol (Fermentation) and Alcoholism (Addiction) at 6:6.



**NASB** “all the hills will be dissolved”

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV, NJB** “all the hills shall flow *with it*”

The VERB (BDB 556, KB 555, *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT) means “melt” (i.e., God’s judgment, cf. Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5), but here it is a hyperbole of flowing grape juice by treading, a symbol of agricultural abundance!

**9:14** This restoration is a reversal of Deut. 28:38-40; Amos 5:11; Micah 6:15; Zeph. 1:13. God’s people will plant vineyards in His land and enjoy their fruit (i.e., a metaphor for security and longevity in the land, e.g., Jer. 31:5; Ezek. 28:26).

**9:15** Even this seemingly unconditional promise must be evaluated in light of the history of the Jewish people. Obviously it has both an eschatological aspect (cf. II Sam. 7:10; Jer. 24:6; 32:41; 42:10) and a historical aspect.

▣ **“the LORD your God”** The magnificent reversal (covenant - judgment - covenant) of status; they are covenant people again (cf. Hosea 2:21-23).

# INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA

## I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. It is named after the main speaker, Hosea.
- B. His name means “salvation” (BDB 448). It was originally Joshua’s name (cf. Num. 13:16). It is the same name as Hoshea (II Kgs. 17:1).

## II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the “latter prophets” (Ecclesiasticus 49:10).
- B. It is the first of the Twelve, a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b).
  - 1. Like the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, these twelve smaller books fit on one scroll.
  - 2. Their order reflects the traditional view of each book’s chronology.
- C. The order of “the Twelve” or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. However, there are problems with this view:
  - 1. The first six books are different between the MT (Hebrew text) and LXX (Greek text).

<u>MT</u>	<u>LXX</u>
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah
  - 2. Internal evidence puts Amos chronologically before Hosea.
  - 3. Hosea is probably listed first because of its length and eighth century setting.
- D. The text of Hosea is probably the most difficult of any OT book (cf. IX).
  - 1. Part of this is due to the poetic and emotional nature of the book.
  - 2. Part is due to scribal copying. The MT and the LXX are different.
  - 3. Part is due to the differences in the spoken Hebrew between Israel and Judah.

## III. GENRE

- A. The book is a mixture of prose and poetry (mostly poetry).
- B. Chapters 1 and 3 are historical narrative of the life and times of Hosea, while chapter 2 is poetry.
- C. Hosea’s life and marriage were used in an analogous way to demonstrate the waywardness of Israel and the steadfast, intimately personal love of YHWH.
  - 1. YHWH as faithful young lover (chapters 1-3)
  - 2. YHWH as loving parent (chapter 11)
  - 3. These metaphors were based on the Israeli confusion of Ba’al as “husband” and “lord” instead of YHWH.

- D. It is written in beautiful, powerful, and emotional poetry, but in disjointed units (chapters 4-14). Hosea's writings and prophecies may have been collected and edited after his death.
- E. David A. Hubbard, Hosea (Tyndale OT Commentaries), characterizes the genre when he states: "It is that profound pathos, let loose towards Israel in speech after speech, irony after irony, metaphor after metaphor, question after question, which gives the book its fire" (p. 20).
- F. There are several views about the Prophet's marriage.
  1. hypothetical (allegorical)
  2. spiritual infidelity (typological of Israel's idolatry)
  3. real marriage to a non-virgin (ritual fertility worship)
  4. real marriage to a wife who later became involved in ritual fertility worship (literal)

#### IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The consensus has always been Hosea himself, although we know little about him.
- B. The man:
  1. son of Beeri (1:1)
  2. a citizen of Israel (7:5), but which city is unknown
  3. as Amos spoke of the need for a social justice, Hosea spoke of the need for covenant fidelity
  4. he has been called
    - a. "the Jeremiah of Israel"
    - b. "the Apostle John of the OT"
  5. "Israel's first evangelist"
- C. *Baba Bathra* 15a said the men of the Great Synagogue wrote "the Twelve." This must be in the sense of compiled or edited.
- D. Some have questioned his authorship because
  1. of the references to Judah, 1:1,7,11; 4:15; 5:5,10,12-14; 6:4,11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12; 12:2
  2. of the passages of future prosperity and deliverance
  3. Hosea's marriage is described in third person in chapters one and two, but second person in chapter three
- E. Answers to objections.
  1. All the prophets view the split between Israel and Judah as wrong. Judah is always seen as the legitimate heir of the covenant promises to Abraham and David.
  2. The prophet often intersperses judgment and promise oracles. They go together as one divine message.
  3. Hosea may be a collection of his sermons and poems.

#### V. DATE

- A. Hosea is an eighth century B.C. prophet
  1. Isaiah and Micah spoke in Judah
  2. Jonah, Amos, and Hosea spoke in Israel

- B. Hosea followed and overlapped the ministry of Amos
- C. The date (see chart of the kings of the divided monarchy in Appendix) of his preaching would have been to the days of the kings mentioned in 1:1.
  - 1. Uzziah (of Judah)
  - 2. Jotham (of Judah)
  - 3. Ahaz (of Judah)
  - 4. Hezekiah (of Judah)
  - 5. Jeroboam II (of Israel)

There are several scholarly suggestions (the differences are caused by Pekah's 30 year reign, cf. II Kgs. 15:27. For a good brief answer see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 209-211):

- 1. Keil, 790-725 B.C.
  - a. 1:4, started before fall of Jehu dynasty
  - b. 10:14, present at Shalmaneser V invasion
- 2. Francisco, 750-735 B.C.
  - a. a little later than Amos
  - b. last days of Jeroboam II
  - c. not later than 735 B.C. because Assyria took the area of Gilead
- 3. Harrison, 753 to just before 722 B.C.
  - a. Jeroboam II dies in 753 B.C.
  - b. tribute paid by Menahem to Tiglath-pileser III (8:9) about 739 B.C.
  - c. events of Syro-Ephramatic War of 735-734 B.C. referred to in 5:8-6:6 (also Isa. 7-14).
  - d. days of Hosea explain references to Egypt in 7:11; 9:6, and 12:2.
- 4. La Sor, Hubbard, and Bush, 753 - til after 722 B.C.
  - a. started before Jeroboam II's death, 753 B.C.
  - b. extend to Hezekiah's reign
  - c. co-regent from 728 B.C.
  - d. king from 715 B.C.
  - e. preached during Tiglath-pileser III's reign, 745-727 B.C.

VI. HISTORICAL SETTING - See Introduction to Amos. VI.

## VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. (Taken from Introduction to the OT by Clyde Francisco, pp. 150-163)
  - 1. Introduction, 1:1
  - 2. Hosea's Domestic Crisis, 1:2-3:5
  - 3. God's Controversy with Israel, 4:1-10:15
  - 4. The Father and His Wayward Son, 11:1-12
  - 5. What is in a Name (Jacob vs. Israel) 12:1-15
  - 6. Death of a Nation, 13:1-16
  - 7. Alternative to Judgment 14:1-9
- B. (Taken from Introduction to the OT by E. J. Young, pp. 252-254)
  - 1. God's Relations with His People, 1:1-3:5
  - 2. Various Discourses of the Prophet, 4:1-14:9
    - a. The Guilt of the Northern Tribes, 4-8

- b. The Punishment of the Northern Tribes, 9:1-11:11
- c. The Future Blessings for a Repentant People, 11:12-14:9

## VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. YHWH is a personal God. Sin is against a loving God (Hosea), not just a violation of covenant rules (Amos).
- B. Biblical faith can best be characterized in interpersonal family metaphors:
  - 1. husband (God) - wife (Israel)
  - 2. parent (God) - child (Israel)
- C. YHWH has chosen to deal with fallen humanity through promise, sacrifice, and covenant. On the human side these involve personal trust and covenantal obedience.
- D. Covenantal disobedience results in judgment. Judgment is always for the purpose of restoration (cf. 1:10-2:1; 2:14-23; 3:1-5; 11:8-11; 14:1-7). Discipline is an act of parental love (Heb. 12:5ff). Israel's future blessings are conditioned on her current obedience.

## IX. THE HEBREW TEXT OF HOSEA

The text of Hosea is the most disputed in the OT. I am certainly not a Hebrew scholar, but I do bring other strengths (insights) into the interpretive process.

The state of the Hebrew text is partly due to the emotion of Hosea's writing and partly to its poetic form (genre). His metaphors are fresh and varied. This has caused problems for readers/scribes, both ancient and modern. The poetic nature, though difficult lexically, makes the natural parallelism a means of understanding lines of poetry even if the original text or lexical forms are lost. No major truth is irreparably lost because of the parallelism and the recurrent pattern of truths.

Textual emendation is helpful (and necessary), but must always remain speculative. Here is where the variety of ancient versions is helpful in seeing how other ancient interpreters have seen these disputed lines of poetry.

# HOSEA 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Superscription		Title
1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
The Family of Hosea	Hosea Marries the Prostitute Gomer and Gives Her Children Prophetically Significant Names	Hosea's Wife and Children	Hosea's Marriage: His Three Children
1:2-3	1:2-3	1:2	1:2a 1:2b
		1:3-5	1:3-5
1:4-5	1:4-5		
1:6-7	1:6-7	1:6-7	1:6-7
1:8-9	1:8-9	1:8-9	1:8-9
The Restoration of Israel	Israel's Punishment Is Not Final	Israel Is To Be Restored	Hope for the Future
1:10-2:1	1:10-2:1	1:10-2:1	2:1-3

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)** ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

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\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 1-3 form an initial literary unit which describes
  - 1. the marriage of Hosea to Gomer at God's direction, chapter 1 (told in the third person, biographical)
  - 2. a poetic account of Israel's unfaithfulness to YHWH, chapter 2
  - 3. Hosea's purchase and remarriage to Gomer at God's direction, chapter 3 (told in the first person, autobiographical)
- B. Each of the three subsections concludes with a promise of restoration.
  - 1. 1:10-2:1
  - 2. 2:16-23
  - 3. 3:5
- C. Israel's idolatry was not only a violation of law, but of love! Possibly the best analogy to comprehend covenant is the marriage vows!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

<sup>1</sup> **The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.**

**1:1 "The word of the LORD"** This is a common opening phrase (used over 250 times in the OT) for the prophets (i.e., Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). It shows that the prophets did not speak out of their own understanding, but from God's initiating revelation. The term "word" (BDB 182) relates to the Hebrew concept of the independent power of the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13).

For "Lord" see Special Topic: The Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

▣ **"Hosea"** The name means "salvation" (BDB 448). When one adds the covenant name for God, "YHWH," to the Hebrew root "salvation," the word "Joshua" (cf. Num. 13:8,16) or "Jesus" (cf. Matt. 1:21) results.

▣ **"the son of Beeri"** The name means "my well" (BDB 92). We know nothing about him. The only other occurrence of the name is Esau's Hittite father-in-law (cf. Gen. 26:34).

▣ **"during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah"** It seems rather unusual that a prophet from the Northern Kingdom would list the Judean kings in such detail. This list of kings covers a long period of time (see Appendix, "The Kings of the Divided Monarchy").

This list of Judean kings is identical to the introduction to Isaiah, therefore, many scholars have asserted that Hosea is trying to show that he is a contemporary of this southern prophet. Also it possibly shows that

(1) Hosea was against the division of the kingdoms and saw Judah as the only legitimate covenant hope or  
(2) this verse was added by later Judean scribes. With so many theories it is obvious that moderns do not know!

▣ **“during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel”** It is surprising that no other Israelite kings are listed (i.e., Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea). There have been several theories concerning this: (1) there was political confusion after Jeroboam II’s death and several kings only reigned for a short period of time (see Appendix: Kings of the Divided Monarchy); (2) the prophet spoke to both kingdoms; or (3) Judah is the legitimate Davidic line (cf. Amos 9:11-15).

For the historical setting of Jeroboam II’s day see Introduction to Amos, VI.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2-5**

**<sup>2</sup>When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.” <sup>3</sup>So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup>On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”**

**1:2**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV** “When the LORD first spoke through Hosea”

**NKJV** “When the LORD began to speak by Hosea”

**NJB** “The beginning of what Yahweh said through Hosea”

G. Campbell Morgan, *Hosea*, pp. 9-11, asserts that the ASV, “When Jehovah spoke at first by Hosea,” is the temporal key to see that Hosea, looking back over his life, writes v. 2 from the advantage of hindsight. Therefore, he asserts that Gomer was faithful when he married her, but that she became unfaithful. Therefore, from God’s foreknowledge, He knew what would happen and now from Hosea’s later years he, too, knows well the tragic marriage (also see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 294-295 and *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 322-324).

▣ **“Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry”** YHWH’s first message to Hosea has two IMPERATIVES and the implication of a third.

1. “Go” (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
2. “Take” (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
3. “Have children,” implied by context

These commands, related to marriage and children, imply that God called Hosea while he was very young, possibly around the time of the consummation of his adolescent rites (13-14 years old).

The term “harlotry” (BDB 276, KB 275) is PLURAL, which can convey (1) intensity or (2) repetition in Hebrew. It seems to refer to either a cultic prostitute (cf. 4:14; NET Bible) or probably a typical woman of his day who, because of the cultural climate of Ba’alim, was involved in promiscuous activities (at least initial sexual union with priest to ensure fertility) and, therefore, was considered (biblically) to be a harlot. This has caused much discussion among commentators:

1. Origen said that nothing unworthy of God should be taken literally, but must be spiritualized /allegorized (followed Philo).
2. Jerome and Iben Ezra (many rabbis) interpret this as a vision.
3. Calvin and E. J. Young interpret this as an allegory.

4. Martin Luther interprets this as Gomer being a faithful wife and they only acted out this drama to convey the message.
5. Wellhausen says that she became promiscuous after marriage. (KB lists one meaning as “inclined to fornicate”).

The term *znh* (BDB 275,276) in two forms (VERB, NOUN) is used four times in v. 2 and is translated variously:

1. NASB, NKJV - harlotry
2. NRSV - whoredom
3. TEV - unfaithful
4. NJB - whore

The combination of the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT intensifies the meaning:

1. has been habitually committing fornication (temporal)
2. guilty of the vilest adultery or great harlotry (type of sin)

Violated, faithful love, not just the violation of rules, becomes the central message of the prophet. The VERB is used in 1:2(twice); 2:5; 3:3; 4:10,12,13,14,15,18(twice); 5:3; 9:1 and the NOUN in 1:2(twice); 2:2,4; 4:12; 5:4. Israel does not stand guilty before an impartial judge, but before a brokenhearted lover! There are other places in the prophets where the marriage analogy is used to describe the intense relationship between YHWH and Israel (cf. Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 16, also note Eph. 5:23-33).

▣ **“have children of harlotry”** The three children are given prophetic names. It is uncertain if the last two are Hosea’s biological children because of the promiscuity of Gomer.

▣ **“for the land commits flagrant harlotry”** It is obvious that God is using an analogy between the prophet’s experience of disloyalty and God’s experience of disloyalty with Israel! However, the real purpose is to reveal the broken heart and forgiving love of YHWH. Hosea’s great truth is the undeserved, faithful, lasting love of God!

When thinking about the analogy between Israel and YHWH illustrated in Gomer and Hosea, the question comes, was Gomer unfaithful before the marriage? If so then how do we explain the analogy?

1. Abraham was a polytheist along with his family in Ur before God revealed Himself to him (cf. Genesis 11).
2. Israel was already involved in idolatry before the Exodus (cf. Exodus 32 or Amos 5:25-27).

Israel’s repeated attraction to idolatry is characterized by Moses as “they play the harlot with their gods” (e.g., Exod. 34:15,16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Num. 15:39; 25:1; Deut. 31:16). This phrase was both literal and figurative when it referred to fertility worship. The background of the metaphor was YHWH as husband and Israel as wife (e.g., Isa. 54:5; 62:4-5; Jer.2:2; 3:1,6-9,14; 31:32; Ezek. 16; 23; Hosea 2:19).

**1:3 “Gomer”** There are two people in the OT by this name.

1. Grandson, son of Japheth (cf. Gen. 10:2,3; I Chr. 1:5,6)
2. Hosea’s wife

The meaning of the name is uncertain, but the same consonants mean “end,” “come to an end” (BDB 170). One wonders if this also has symbolic meaning since the children’s names and possibly Diblaim, her father, are symbolic (similar to the names in Ruth).

▣ **“Diblaim”** This term seems to be related to the “raisin cakes” (BDB 84) of 3:1. It can mean “lump of figs” or “raisin cakes” (BDB 179). Raisin cakes were a part of the Canaanite fertility ritual (cf. Jer. 44:19).

▣ **“she conceived and bore him a son”** It is clearly stated that Hosea is the father of the first child, but not the other two.

**1:4 “Name him”** This VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The prophetic purpose related to Israel is seen in these children’s names.

▣ **“Jezreel”** “Jezreel” means “God scatters,” “God sows,” or “God makes fruitful.” Therefore, this term can refer to (1) judgment (cf. vv. 4-5) or (2) prosperity (cf. 2:22-23). In context, #1 is the obvious meaning. It refers to both a city and a valley in Galilee (Valley of Armageddon). This northern city (Omri’s second capital) was the site of the slaughter of Ahab’s house (the one whose wife popularized fertility worship in Israel) by Jehu (cf. II Kgs. 9:7-10:28), and it became a symbol or idiom for judgment.

Was Jehu punished for doing as he was commanded? This is the question that *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP, answers (pp. 235-236). Jehu did as God commanded him and wiped out the house of Ahab, but he did it with an intensity and scope that draws God’s condemnation.

▣ **“for yet a little while”** This temporal phrase (the two ADVERBS BDB 728 plus 589) is used seven times, six of them are in judgment passages (cf. Ps. 37:10; Isa. 10:25; Jer. 51:33; Hos. 1:4; Hag. 2:6). The one positive usage is Isa. 29:17.

**1:5 “I will break the bow of Israel”** The bow is a symbol of military power and stability. This occurred during the reign of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V, who invaded Israel in 724 B.C., but the naturally fortified capital of Samaria did not fall until 722 B.C. in the reign of Sargon II.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-7**

**<sup>6</sup>Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. <sup>7</sup>But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.”**

**1:6 “Name her Lo-ruhaman”** Again the VERB is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The name means “not pitied” (BDB 520, cf. 2:4,23). The term “pity” (or “mercy” NKJV note; “compassion” BDB) is used for God’s deep and tender feelings (cf. Ps. 103:13). It will be used in a positive sense in 2:19,23. God’s judgment does not imply a lack of love, just the opposite (cf. 11:8-9; Heb. 12:6-13).

▣ **“that I would ever forgive them”** What a startling statement of the purposeful, unrelenting judgment of God (cf. Amos 8:7; 9:4). Yet, in the prophets this note of finality is always balanced with salvation oracles (cf. vv. 10-11).

Grammatically this is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE (BDB 669) followed by a *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 669), the same form as in v. 2c. This form intensifies the VERB (i.e., “that I would ever forgive them”).

**1:7 “on the house of Judah”** Hosea, like Amos, speaks to both kingdoms (cf. 1:7, 11; 4:15; 5:5, 8-15; 6:4, 11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12; 12:2). Here God promises to spare Judah from the Assyrian invasion. He did this several different times. The exact number of Assyrian invasions of Palestine during this period is uncertain.

Because this statement is so shocking in a book written to Israel, many scholars have assumed it is a later Judean scribal addition. However, it may have been a way to condemn the formation of the northern tribes at the split in 922 B.C. All of the prophets condemned the northern kingdom, especially because of the rival worship sites (golden calves) of Bethel and Dan.

It may also have been a way of warning Judah not to follow Israel’s path, but they did (cf. Jer. 3:6-10).

▣ **“I will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horseman”** God will deliver (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PERFECT) Judah from the same military power to which Israel will fall, but not by natural means, rather supernatural means (cf. II Kgs. 18:13-19:37; II Chr. 32:1-23; Isa. 36-37).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup>When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. <sup>9</sup>And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God.”**

**1:8 “she had weaned. . .she conceived”** The rapid conception of these three children may reflect Gomer’s repeated, continuous, sexual activity.

**1:9 “Name him Lo-ammi”** The VERB is again a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This term means “not my people” (BDB 520, cf. 2:23). It reflects the broken covenant (cf. Josh. 24:19-28; Jer. 31:32).

▣

NASB, NRSV	<b>“I am not your God”</b>
NKJV	<b>“I will not be your <i>God</i>”</b>
TEV	<b>“I am not their God”</b>
NJB	<b>“I do not exist for you”</b>

In the MT there is no name of God (cf. NJB). This phrase powerfully states the broken covenant.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-11**

**<sup>10</sup>Yet the number of the sons of Israel  
Will be like the sand of the sea,  
Which cannot be measured or numbered;  
And in the place  
Where it is said to them,  
“You are not My people,”  
It will be said to them,  
“*You are the sons of the living God.*”**

**<sup>11</sup>And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,  
And they will appoint for themselves one leader,  
And they will go up from the land,  
For great will be the day of Jezreel.**

**1:10 “Israel will be like the sand of the sea”** In the Hebrew text chapter 2 begins with verse 1:10.

This refers to God’s promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4). This verse shows that there still is hope even in light of v. 9 (cf. Jer. 31:33; Amos 9:8-15).

Paul quotes this verse in Rom. 9:26 to express that God’s mercy extends to the Gentiles. He also quotes Hosea 2:23 in Rom. 9:25. The innumerable people of God includes all of Adam’s children!

▣ **“*You are the sons of the living God*”** This reflects the OT background for YHWH as Father. This fatherhood of God is not based on Genesis 1-2, but on His choice of Abraham and his descendants.

It is a covenant relationship. It is seen in two ways:

1. the title “father” or its analogy used, Deut. 32:6; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; 3:17
2. the use of “son” or “child,” Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 32:5,19; Isa. 1:2; Jer. 3:22; 31:20; Hos. 1:10; 11:1

The phrase “the living God,” is the root meaning of the name YHWH. YHWH is alive; idols are not! This verse is quoted in the NT as a promise to the Gentiles being included in the covenant people (cf. Rom. 9:24-26 and I Pet. 2:10). A good article about “who is the Israel of God?” is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 633-636. Because inspired NT authors quote OT texts and apply OT titles to believers, the people of God have more to do with faith in Christ than, “who is your mother” (i.e., race)!

**1:11 “the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together”** The VERB (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used of God’s eschatological gathering of His people (e.g., Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 54:7; 56:8; Jer. 31:10-14; Micah 2:12; 4:6). This verse speaks of a restoration of the united monarchy under a Davidic king (3:5; Ezek. 34:23; 37:15-28; Amos 9:11), which makes it Messianic. Many have seen this phrase as a promise reversal of v. 4. The term Jezreel has the connotation “fruitful” in this verse!

▣ **“they will appoint for themselves one leader”** Notice the divine aspect in vv. 10 and 11a, yet also the human response in v. 11b. These two covenantal aspects must be held together in revelatory tension (e.g., Deut. 17:14 vs. 15). Both are true, but how this can be so is a mystery! It is this two-sided interpersonal tension which makes marriage the ideal human metaphor for biblical covenant.

The “one leader” is a sharp contrast to the historical reality of Israeli leadership after the death of Jeroboam II. There was a succession of brief reigns and political turmoil!

# HOSEA 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Unfaithful People 2:2-5	Israel Will Suffer Public Shame and Personal Privation Like a Harlot 2:2-13	Unfaithful Gomer - Unfaithful Israel 2:2-5	Yahweh and His Unfaithful Wife 2:4-7
2:6-8		2:6-7 2:8-13	2:8-15
2:9-13			
God's Mercy on His People 2:14-20	The Lord Will Allure Israel Back 2:14-23	The Lord's Love for His People 2:14-17 2:18-23	Reconciliation 2:16-17 2:18-19 2:20-25
2:21-23			

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-15 describe God's divorce case against Israel because of her continuing idolatry.
- B. The rest of the chapter lays out God's immediate plans and future plans (by the recurring use of "therefore").
  - 1. Immediate plans
    - a. Verses 6-8, God will stop Israel from pursuing idolatry ("hedge up her way")
    - b. Verses 9-13, God will stop Israel's amalgamated worship (exiles)
  - 2. Future plans
    - a. Verses 14-20, God will woo and marry Israel again
    - b. Verses 21-23, God's covenant blessing will be poured out on Israel in the Promised Land

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah."

<sup>2</sup>"Contend with your mother, contend,

For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband;

And let her put away her harlotry from her face

And her adultery from between her breasts,

<sup>3</sup>Or I will strip her naked

And expose her as on the day when she was born.

I will also make her like a wilderness,

Make her like desert land

And slay her with thirst.

<sup>4</sup>Also, I will have no compassion on her children,

Because they are children of harlotry.

<sup>5</sup>For their mother has played the harlot;

She who conceived them has acted shamefully.

For she said, 'I will go after my lovers,

Who give *me* my bread and my water,

My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns,

And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.

<sup>7</sup>She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them;

And she will seek them, but will not find *them*.

Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband,

For it was better for me then than now!'

**2:1 "Say"** This word (BDB 55, KB 65) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE, which figuratively denotes a certain future action of restoration and unification. This verse should go with the preceding salvation oracle (1:10-2:1).

▣ **“Ammi”** This means “My people” (BDB 766). It is a covenant designation for the people of God (e.g., Exod. 6:6-7; 19:5-6). This is the reversal of 1:9 (cf. v. 23).

▣ **“Ruhamah”** This word means “pitied,” “tender mercy,” or “compassion” (BDB 933). This is an expression of the great love, compassion, and mercy of God. This is the reversal of 1:6 (cf. v. 23).

## 2:2

NASB	<b>“Contend. . .contend”</b>
NKJV	<b>“bring charges. . .bring charges”</b>
KRSV, TEV	<b>“plead. . .plead”</b>
NJB	<b>“to court. . .to court”</b>
JPSOA	<b>“rebuke. . .rebuke”</b>

This is a legal term (BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, used twice in this verse) for a lawsuit (cf. 4:1-3; 12:2; Jer. 2:5-9; Micah 6:1-8). This verse is an analogy of Hosea’s divorce (cf. Deut. 24:1-4) from Gomer. There are similar divorce formulas in Akkadian literature. The significance of Hosea’s use of the marriage contract as an analogy of the covenant between God and Israel is seen also in Isa. 50:1; 54:4-8; Jer. 3:1-20; Ezek. 16 and 23; Matt. 9:15; John 3:29; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9; 22:17.

Hosea calls on the children to plead with their mother (national Israel) to stop (lit. “put away” BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) the activity (i.e., idolatry) that has led to the divorce case.

One wonders if this metaphor of parent and children is related to the multigenerational comment of Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9-10. Evil and rebellion move through families (third and fourth generations), but the good news is that forgiveness is possible and that it also moves through generations (to a hundred generations, cf. Deut. 7:9)!

▣ **“with your mother”** This verse relates to the formal divorce charges against Israel. Usually national unfaithfulness is attributed to the father’s sins, but here and in Isa. 50:1; Ezekiel 16 it is attributed to a wife’s unfaithfulness! The covenant is broken because of their repeated unfaithfulness!

▣ **“she is not my wife, and I am not her husband”** This simple declarative statement, said publically, may have been the official announcement of a divorce in the ancient Near East. However, here the context demands that divorce is only a threat because the husband (YHWH) calls on his wife (Israel) to return lest he is forced to act (cf. v. 3).

▣ **“let her put away”** This VERB (BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) can mean “turn away from,” as in Deut. 7:4. It is used in Amos for God rejecting Israel’s worship (cf. Amos 5:23). Hosea uses this VERB often (cf. 2:2,17; 4:18; 7:14; 9:12). Context is everything!

▣ **“her adultery from between her breasts”** This may refer to (1) identifying jewelry (cf. Jer. 4:30) or marks that cultic prostitutes wore (cf. 2:13; lit. “holy thing”) or literally to a male lover positioned over a prostitute (i.e., “from her face”; “between her breasts”).

**2:3 “Or I will strip her naked”** Nakedness is one of the consequences of covenant disobedience in Deut. 28:48 (cf. Jer. 16:39; 23:29). This custom of dismissing a divorced woman publicly and stripping her naked (cf. Ezek. 16:35-42) is found in the cuneiform tablets, both from Hana and Nuzi, dating from around 1500 B.C. It is a symbol of her (1) divorced and going into slavery or (2) the fruitlessness of the land (the curses of Deut. 27-29) because of her repeated idolatry.

▣ **“I will also make her like a wilderness”** The rest of v. 3 describes one of the covenant curses (cf. Deut. 27-20) which will fall upon Israel. YHWH, not Ba’al, is the source of fertility! One of God’s ways to attract the nations to know Him was the promise of abundance. Abraham’s descendants’ lack of covenant obedience thwarted this from occurring. Therefore, this promised abundance is negated temporally, but reaffirmed eschatologically (cf. Amos 9:13-15; Joel 3:18).

**2:4 “I will have no compassion”** This is the same word (BDB 933) in a verbal form (KB 1216, *Piel* IMPERFECT) found in 1:6, which is the name of Gomer’s second child. It is used without the negative, in a positive sense in 2:19,23.

The seeming vacillation between judgment and blessing illustrates the mood swings (anthropomorphic) of God’s heart. He wants to bless, but blessing involves a personal trust and willingness to live out His character!

▣ **“Because they are children of harlotry”** The idolatry of the mother (cf. v. 5) also characterizes the children. The wife symbolizes unfaithful national Israel, while the children symbolize individual Israelites (cf. The Jewish Study Bible, p. 1146).

**2:5** Here is an example of Israel assuming that Ba’al and Asherah provided her food, clothing, and luxuries, while all the time it was the covenant God of Sinai, YHWH (cf. v. 8; the curses of Deut. 27-29; Jer. 14:22). YHWH is a jealous (love word) God (e.g., Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 6:24; 5:9; 6:15). The descendants of Abraham made YHWH jealous by going after other Gods (e.g., Deut. 32:16,21; Ps. 78:58). Later the Northern Ten Tribes (Israel) made Him jealous (e.g., Hosea 2:8) and also Judah (cf. I Kgs. 14:22; Zech. 1:14; 8:2).

There is debate among OT scholars about the sexual aspects of Canaanite worship. There is little textual or pictorial evidence for a sexually oriented fertility cult in Canaan. Much of the language in Hosea and Jeremiah is metaphorical, not literal. If this is correct then Israel and later Judah corrupted even Canaanite religion!

▣ **“For she said”** There is a repetition in this quote that might reflect a liturgy for Ba’al worship.

**2:6 “I will hedge up her way with thorns”** Hedges (BDB 962) were used (1) to keep animals or humans out of the fields or (2) for an enclosure to keep animals contained. Number 2 fits this context best.

There is a threefold repetition of metaphors in this verse.

1. hedge up (BDB 962, KB 1312, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) your way with thorns
2. wall up (BDB 154, KB 180, *Qal* PERFECT) her wall (COGNATE ACCUSATIVE)
3. her faith she will not find (BDB 592, KB 619, *Qal* IMPERFECT)

Israel’s true husband does not immediately put her away as unfaithful, but tries to lead her to repentance by blocking her access to Ba’al worship (assuming “her lovers” are fertility gods of Canaan).

If, on the other hand, “her lovers” are foreign powers (and by implication of treaty rituals their gods) then this verse is parallel to 5:13. Notice YHWH still desires repentance and restoration (cf. 5:15)! The purpose of YHWH’s judgments is always redemptive (cf. 3:5; 6:1; 14:1).

**2:7 “pursue. . .eagerly chase after”** These are both *Piel* PERFECTS. In Hosea “the lovers” (cf. v. 5) refers to Ba’al worship. However, they could also refer to political alliances (cf. 5:13, see NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 422-426).

☐ **“Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband,**

**For it was better for me then than now”** God’s purpose in temporal judgments (cf. Deut. 27-29) was to cause Israel to return to Him. Their prosperity (cf. vv. 21-23) was meant to be a way to attract the attention of the world.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup>For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil,  
And lavished on her silver and gold,  
Which they used for Baal.**

**<sup>9</sup>Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time  
And My new wine in its season.  
I will also take away My wool and My flax  
Given to cover her nakedness.**

**<sup>10</sup>And then I will uncover her lewdness  
In the sight of her lovers,  
And no one will rescue her out of My hand.**

**<sup>11</sup>I will also put an end to all her gaiety,  
Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths  
And all her festal assemblies.**

**<sup>12</sup>I will destroy her vines and fig trees,  
Of which she said, 'These are my wages  
Which my lovers have given me.'  
And I will make them a forest,  
And the beasts of the field will devour them.**

**<sup>13</sup>I will punish her for the days of the Baals  
When she used to offer sacrifices to them  
And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry,  
And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD.**

**2:8 “For she does not know it was I who gave her”** God’s heart (emphatic “I”) breaks as His bride (a segment of His covenant people) does not recognize His love and provision (cf. Jer. 14:22). Therefore, in v. 9, YHWH withholds His blessing on crops and herds (cf. Deut. 27-29).

☐ **“the grain, the new wine and the oil”** These three items represented the basic needs of life (cf. Deut. 7:13; 11:14; Joel 2:19).

☐ **“silver and gold”** God’s blessings of valuable metals (either in the Exodus or through agricultural prosperity) were used to make idols (e.g., Deut. 29:17; Isa. 40:19; 46:5-7; Jer. 10:3-10) and jewelry (cf. v. 13) in Ba’al’s honor!

☐ **“used for Baal”** “Ba’al” is the main god of Tyrian fertility worship which was introduced into Israel through Jezebel. Ba’al means “master,” “husband,” “lord” and is the name for the Canaanite storm god (sometimes war god). In the OT his consort is Asherah or Astarte (in Ugaritic myth it is Anat).

**2:9-13** This seems to refer to exile (cf. Ezek. 16:35-43).



NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “I will take back”

NKJV “I will return and take away”

The NKJV is the more literal here. There are two VERBS, “return” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT) and “take back” (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* PERFECT). The first VERB is one of the major Hebrew terms used of “repentance.” They would not return to YHWH so He returned to them and confiscated His gifts (grain, wine, oil, precious metals), which He had freely and lovingly given to His wife. He took back His gifts because she had mistakenly attributed their presence to Ba’al (cf. v. 8).

▣ **“I will also take away”** This term (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used of snatching away a prey from a predator (e.g., I Sam. 17:35; Ps. 50:22; Hos. 2:9; 5:14; Amos 3:12; Micah 5:8; Ezek. 34:10). This same violent term is used again in v. 10, where it is translated “rescue” (NASB, NRSV). The non-existent gods of Canaan nor Israel’s political allies can rescue Israel from YHWH’s judgment (cf. v. 10; 5:14)!

**2:10** Israel’s “lovers,” neither (1) lifeless idols nor (2) foreign alliances, would be able to help her.



NASB, NKJV “lewdness”

NRSV “shame”

TEV -----

NJB “infamy”

The meaning of the term (BDB 615, KB 664) is uncertain because the root is uncertain. Scholars have speculated (KB 664)

1. repulsiveness
2. shamefulness
3. foolishness

**2:11** Israel’s cultic life will cease! Regular, joyful worship occasions, given by God to acknowledge Him, have been so corrupted that He will cause them to cease.

**2:12 “I will destroy her vines and her figs”** The prophets are very conscious of the Deuteronomic covenant and many of their prophecies deal with the cursing and blessing sections of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27 - 29.

▣ **“Of which she said, ‘These are my wages Which my lovers have given me’”** This is metaphorical language related to Israel’s worship of the fertility gods of Canaan. Israel attributed the fertility of her land to the worship of these gods (cf. v. 13, Ba’al - male; Asherah, Astarte - female). Since YHWH was Israel’s true husband, her association with other gods was labeled as “spiritual” (and in relation to fertility gods, actual) adultery or marital unfaithfulness.

David A. Hubbard, Hosea in the (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, p. 79) has speculated that there is a word play here between “fig tree” (BDB 1061) and “wages” (BDB 1071, cf. 9:1).

▣ **“and I will make them a forest and the beasts of the field will devour them”** Those who grow up in desert lands are very fearful of forests. This phrase means that Israel’s cultivated lands will return to their natural state. In this environment the animals will increase and attack. This could refer to (1) attack the crops or (2) attack people (cf. 13:7-8). In context #1 fits best.

**2:13 “the days of Baal”** These are festivals of sexual orgies and imitation magic (cf. 4:13-14). The term “Ba’al” is PLURAL, possibly referring to the fact that Ba’al was worshiped at local shrines in every town and village. There is still a scholarly debate whether the sexual aspect of Ba’al worship was characteristic of Canaanite religion or added by Israel!



**NASB “offer sacrifices”**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV, NJB “burned incense”**

The VERB (BDB 882, KB 1094, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means “smoke” so it could refer to (1) incense (cf. Jer. 11:13) or (2) a sacrifice (cf. Jer. 7:9). The same ambiguity occurs in 11:2. In I Kgs. 11:8 this same term in the same form (*Hiphil* PERFECT) is used in conjunction with the VERB “to sacrifice” (BDB 256, KB 261), which seems to denote two separate acts: (1) incense and (2) sacrifice. If so, then this text should refer to incense.

▣ **“her earrings and jewelry”** Earrings were somehow connected to idolatry (cf. Gen. 35:4; Exod. 32:2). This was a common practice of dressing up for worship. Some assume that the Assyrian word for earrings (or nose ring) means the “holy thing” and that this refers to cultic prostitution. It is used in this sense in Jer. 4:30; Ezek. 23:40-43.

▣ **“so that she forgot Me”** This phrase is emphasized! YHWH is depicted (anthropomorphically) as a spurned, jealous lover. Anthropomorphically God’s feelings are affected by human choices and actions! The issue is personal relationship, here depicted as a marriage covenant. YHWH wants a fellowship with humans made in His image. This is the goal of creation.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-20**

<sup>14</sup>**Therefore, behold, I will allure her,**

**Bring her into the wilderness**

**And speak kindly to her.**

<sup>15</sup>**Then I will give her her vineyards from there,**

**And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.**

**And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,**

**As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.**

<sup>16</sup>**It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD,**

**“That you will call Me Ishi**

**And will no longer call Me Baali.**

<sup>17</sup>**For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,**

**So that they will be mentioned by their names no more.**

<sup>18</sup>**In that day I will also make a covenant for them**

**With the beasts of the field,**

**The birds of the sky**

**And the creeping things of the ground.**

**And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,**

**And will make them lie down in safety.**

<sup>19</sup>**I will betroth you to Me forever;**

**Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,  
 In lovingkindness and in compassion,  
<sup>20</sup>And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.  
 Then you will know the LORD.**

**2:14-19** What a radical transition occurs at v. 14! The God of judgment again becomes the God of faithful love! God is depicted as a faithful husband and passionate lover. What a striking anthropomorphic metaphor for God.

God, the Holy One of Israel, the Eternal Creator reveals Himself to humanity in anthropomorphic analogies which focus on human family relationships. These familial relationships help fallen mankind to understand God and His desire to know us and fellowship with us!

**2:14 “I will allure her”** This VERB (KB 984) is a *Piel* PARTICIPLE. The meaning of the term is uncertain, but the basic idea is “to persuade” or “entice” with the added connotation of (1) young lovers and (2) patience (KB 985). It is surely a love word!

Also note that the new covenant relationship is characterized by “I will” (cf. vv. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19[twice], 20, 21[twice], 22[thrice]).

▣ **“Bring her into the wilderness”** The wilderness could imply

1. a time of separation from Israel’s idols (e.g., Hos. 3:3)
2. the wilderness wandering period of Israel (cf. v. 15), seen as an intimate encounter with YHWH. Later rabbis said it was Israel’s honeymoon period with YHWH (e.g., 11:1-2; 13:4-5; Deut. 32:10-14; Jer. 2:2-3).

▣ **“And speak kindly to her”** This VERB (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) means basically “to speak,” but this term has a wide semantical field. In this context it implies “to speak intimately from one’s heart to another’s heart.”

**2:15 “the valley of Achor”** “Achor” (BDB 747) means “troubling.” This is the valley where Achan sinned and the Israeli army lost their first battle at Ai (cf. Josh. 7). However, it was the beginning of a time of entering the Promised Land (i.e., “as a door of hope”) and God asserts that if they will return to Him, He will start all over again with them (a second exodus and honeymoon period, cf. 11:1-4; 13:4-5).

**2:16 “It will come about in that day”** This is an eschatological idiom (cf. vv. 17,18,21) for an idealistic future time of YHWH’s personal presence (i.e., Messiah and His children’s covenant obedience).

▣ **“Ishi”** This means “husband” (BDB 35, e.g., Gen. 2:23; Jer. 31:32). God is often described in family terms (i.e., husband, father, Go’el). This is because He is a personal God and He wants to have an intimate relationship with His people. God as husband also explains the “jealousy” metaphor (cf. Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15).

▣ **“Baali”** This means “my master,” “my owner,” “my lord,” “my husband” (BDB 127, cf. Isa. 54:5). Apparently YHWHism became amalgamated with Ba’alim (Canaanite fertility cult): (1) notice the names of the children of Saul and Jonathan which include the term Ba’al (cf. I Chr. 9:40); (2) the Samaritan Ostraca written during the time of Jeroboam II has ten names which were formed from Ba’al and eleven names which were formed from YHWH (cf. v. 17).

YHWH’s loving providence was attributed to Ba’al (cf. v. 8). This must stop (cf. vv. 9-13)!

**2:18 “In that day”** God is promising a future restoration of Israel (cf. v. 18-23). See note at v. 16.

▣ “a covenant for them” They already had a binding, eternal covenant (e.g., Gen. 15:18; 17:2,4,7, 9,10, 11,13,14,19,21; Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8). Why would they need a new one (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)? Because YHWH was finally divorcing His faithless wife (i.e., first covenant broken), the exile was coming (removal from the Promised Land, like the Amorites, cf. Gen. 15:16).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith*, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions:

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation of and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-29).

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37. Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external performance. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God’s reflected image. The problem was not the covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ This new covenant with the earth and the animals is also seen in Isa. 11:6-9 and Rom. 8:16-25. Hosea mentions the word “covenant” (BDB 136) more often than any other eighth or seventh century minor prophet (cf. Hos. 2:18; 6:7; 8:1).

▣ **“I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land”** Absence of war can only come from God. Fallen mankind has shown a propensity for conflict and aggression. Its absence will mark the day of the new covenant (e.g., Ps. 46:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3-4; Zech. 9:10).

▣ **“And will make them lie down in safety”** The “them” is ambiguous. It could refer to (1) Israel (cf. v. 18a); (2) the animals (v. 18b-d); or (3) the relationship between humans and animals as in Eden (cf. Gen. 2).

**2:19-20** There are seven characteristics of God’s new covenant.

1. it is permanent
2. it is righteous
3. it is just
4. it is loyal and true (i.e., *hesed*, cf. 4:1)
5. it is compassionate
6. it is faithful (cf. 4:1)
7. it is a personal relationship (i.e., “to Me”[twice] and “know”).

These verses are like a wedding vow!

The VERBS in these verses are PROPHETIC PERFECTS, which are used to emphasize the surety of the fulfillment.

Also note the repeated use of “betroth” (BDB 76, KB 91, *Piel* PERFECTS) in v. 19. It is God who initiates and sets the conditions of the new covenant based on His own (i.e., Messiah) work and fulfillment! The goal is still a righteous people, but the change occurs from the inside out, not on obedience to an external standard. The metaphor changes from legal contract to marriage vows!

**2:19 “I will betroth you to Me”** The VERB (BDB 76, KB 91, *Piel* PERFECT) is used three times in vv. 19-20. It has the connotation of “to purchase with a price” (i.e., dowry, cf. Deut. 28:30). Here it denotes a gift to the bride (i.e., new covenant characteristics). What God’s people could not achieve on their own (covenant obedience) is now provided as a gift from a loving husband!

▣ **“forever”** This is the only use of *’olam* in Hosea. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ’OLAM**

This is the very common (used over 400 times) term *’olam* (BDB 761, KB 798). It is used of duration of time in several senses, each of which must be linked to the nature of the thing to which it refers.

- A. Time past (examples only)
  1. “heroes of old,” Gen 6:4
  2. “mountains and hills,” Gen. 49:21
  3. “generations of old,” Deut. 32:7
  4. “forefather,” Josh 24:2
  5. “days of old,” Isa. 51:9
- B. Continual for a lifetime (examples only)
  1. “believe in you forever” (i.e., Moses), Exod. 19:9
  2. “slave forever,” Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 27:12
  3. “all your days,” Deut. 23:6
  4. Samuel “stay there forever,” I Sam. 1:22

5. King “live forever,” I Kgs. 1:21; Neh. 2:3; Ps. 21:4
  6. “bless the Lord forever,” Ps. 115:18; 145:1-2
  7. “sing forever,” Ps. 89:1; 115:18; 145:1-2
  8. “pregnant forever (metaphor), Jer. 20:17
  9. possibly Prov. 10:25
- C. Continual existence (but with obvious limitations)
1. humans live forever, Gen. 3:22
  2. the earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; 148:6; Eccl. 1:4 (cf. II Pet. 3:10)
  3. Aaronic priesthood, Exod. 29:9; 40:15 (cf. I Sam. 2:30)
  4. the Sabbath, Exod. 31:16-17
  5. the feast days, Exod. 12:14,17,24; Lev. 16:29,31,24; 23:14,21,41
  6. circumcision, Gen. 17:13 (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
  7. the land of promise, Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4; Exod. 32:13 (cf. Exiles)
  8. ruined cities, Isa. 25:2; 32:14; 34:10
- D. Conditional Covenants
1. Abraham, Gen. 17:7,8,13,19
  2. Israel, Deut. 5:29; 12:28
  3. David, II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; Ps. 89:2,4
  4. Israel, Jdgs. 2:1 (cf. Galatians 3)
- E. Unconditional Covenants
1. Noah, Gen. 9:12,16
  2. New Covenant, Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; 50:5 (i.e., Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-30)
- F. God Himself
1. His existence, Gen. 21:33; Deut. 32:40; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; Isa. 40:28; Dan. 12:7
  2. His name, Exod. 3:15; Ps. 135:13
  3. His reign, Exod. 15:18; Ps. 45:6; 66:7; Jer. 10:10; Micah 4:7
  4. His word, Ps. 119:89,160; Isa. 40:8; 59:21
  5. His lovingkindness, Ps. 25:6; 89:2; 103:17; 118:1-4,29; Jer. 33:1
- G. His Messiah
1. His name, Ps. 72:17,19
  2. Blessed forever, Ps. 45:2,17; 89:52
  3. reign, Ps. 89:36,37; Isa. 9:7
  4. priest, Ps. 110:4
  5. pre-existence, Micah 5:2
- H. New Age life
1. everlasting life, Dan. 12:2
  2. everlasting contempt, Dan. 12:2
  3. no more tears, Isa. 65:19 (Rev. 21:4)
  4. no sun, Isa. 60:19-20 (Rev. 21:23)

Note how many different English words are used to translate this Hebrew word in the NIV

1. forever
2. old, of old

3. everlasting
4. eternal
5. lasting
6. always
7. for life
8. continue
9. regular
10. permanent
11. any time
12. ancient, ancient times
13. endless
14. forevermore
15. to the very end
16. a long time
17. long ago

▣ **“in righteousness”** The root of this term means “a measuring reed.” God is the standard by which all things are judged. See Special Topic: Righteousness at Amos 2:6.

▣ **“In lovingkindness”**

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)**

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

- A. Used in connection to human beings
  1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
  2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
  3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
  4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)
- B. Used in connection to God
  1. covenant loyalty and love
    - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
    - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
    - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
    - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
    - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
  2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
  3. kindness of God
    - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
    - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
    - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
  4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

**2:20 “Then you will know the LORD”** God wants us to know (BDB 393, KB 390) Him not as an object (idol), but in an intimate, personal relationship. This is why the prophet uses the analogy of a marriage contract. The seriousness of sin is seen as a violation of faithful love. God is depicted as a loving and faithful husband, but secondly, as a jealous lover spurned. The term “know” in Hebrew does not focus on cognitive facts, but on relationship (e.g., Gen. 4:1; 19:8; Num. 31:17,35; Jdgs. 11:39; 21:11; I Sam. 1:19; I Kgs. 1:4; Jer. 1:5). God wants a family!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:21-23**

<sup>21</sup>“It will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the LORD.

“I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,

<sup>22</sup>And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,  
And they will respond to Jezreel.

<sup>23</sup>I will sow her for Myself in the land.

I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,

And I will say to those who were not My people,

'You are My people!'

And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

**2:21-22** The VERB “respond” (BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal IMPERFECT*) is used five times in just two verses. His response is unsolicited and unconditional (e.g., Joel 2:19). A new day of promised agricultural prosperity (cf. Deut. 27-29), which was conditioned on covenant obedience, is coming, but the covenant conditions have been changed. The fallen human heart and spirit are replaced by a “new heart” and a “new spirit” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). Obedience is still the goal!

The purpose of original creation was a stage for fellowship with humankind made in God’s image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). That purpose was thwarted in human rebellion. The consequences of that rebellion has affected the planet (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). New Covenant salvation in Christ restores the damaged image and allows intimate fellowship with God and obedience.

The OT pictures this new age in Edenic (agricultural) terms, but the NT widens this metaphor to a “new heaven and a new earth” (cf. Isaiah 55-66; Revelation 21-22). The scope is no longer Palestine, but the planet!

**2:21 “the heavens”** This refers to the atmosphere around the earth from which comes the rain.

**2:22 “Jezreel”** The term “Jezreel” means “God sows,” therefore, there is a play on words here between vv. 22 and 23, as there was in 1:4 and 11. This was also the name of Hosea’s first child, which can be positive or negative (cf. 1:4).

**2:23 “I will also have compassion”** This is the name *Ruhamah*, who also was one of Hosea’s children (cf. 1:6). It is mentioned in the context three times, vv. 19 and 23 (twice). Also notice that Lo-Ammi, 1:9, another one of Hosea’s children, is mentioned as well in v. 23.

☐ **“You are My people. . . You are my God”** This promise is quoted in Rom. 9:25 and I Pet. 2:10 as widening to all people, not just Jews (cf. Isa. 11:9).

The terms *goi* (BDB 156) and *'am* (BDB 766) are often used in a distinct covenant connotation. The first refers to any nation, people, or community that is separated from or not included with the speaker (i.e., a foreigner, an outsider, a non-covenant person). The second has the connotation of inclusion (e.g., Exod. 33:13). Notice the play on these words in Hosea:

1. 1:9, Israel not *'am*
2. 1:10, used in Rom. 9:24-26 and I Pet. 2:10 as a text which includes Gentiles (*goi*) within God's covenant people
3. 2:23, sinful Israel excluded, but now reincluded based on God's mercy, not their obedience or faithfulness, but on God's mercy (cf. repeated use of "I will" in vv. 14-23).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 1 AND 2**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Did Hosea really marry a prostitute?
2. Why is marriage used as an analogy to covenant?

# HOSEA 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Will Return to God	The Restoration of Gomer	Hosea and the Unfaithful Woman	Second Account of Hosea's Marriage
3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1 3:2-5	3:1-3 The Explanation 3:4-5

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." <sup>2</sup>So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver and a homer and a half of barley. <sup>3</sup>Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." <sup>4</sup>For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. <sup>5</sup>Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

**3:1 “Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress”** Notice YHWH is the speaker! This verse begins with two *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

1. Go (BDB 229, KB 246)
2. Love (BDB 12, KB 17 [this VERB is used four times in this one verse])

He is commanding Hosea to love again an unfaithful and divorced marriage partner. The second use of “love” is a *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCT, which denotes the husband’s (i.e., Hosea as an analogy of YHWH) ongoing love!

There has been much discussion about the identity of this woman. Some believe it is impossible that this refers to Gomer and, therefore, must be another cultic prostitute or an unfaithful, divorced wife. However, to me, the symbolism of God’s faithful love for Israel demands that this is Gomer, and the term “again” (BDB 728) lends itself toward this interpretation. The legal divorce in 2:2 seems to have become a reality. Gomer continued to be unfaithful until she was sold as a slave.

The term “again” (BDB 728) could refer to the Lord speaking to Hosea a second time about Gomer, but the MT marks denote that it was part of YHWH’s words to Hosea. Although the MT’s additions beyond the consonantal text are not inspired, they represent the ancient Jewish tradition about punctuation and pronunciation. This issue will have to remain open!



**NASB** “love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband”

**NKJV** “love a woman *who* is loved by her lover” [footnote, “friend or husband”]

**NRSV** “love a woman who has a lover”

**TEV** “show your love for a woman who is committing adultery with a lover”

**NJB** “love a woman who loves another man”

The term (BDB 945) has several usages. Here are some examples:

1. friend, Jdgs. 14:20; Micah 7:5
2. associate, Zech. 3:8
3. lover, Song of Songs 5:16
4. husband, Jer. 3:1,20
5. companion, Job 30:29

The SINGULAR is unusual for a prostitute. Some scholars think it refers to her owner or unique cultic lover. I think in context it refers to her own previous husband (i.e., Hosea).

▣ **“even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel”** This is the third use of the VERB love in v. 1 (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). This is the crucial analogy!

▣ **“though they turn to other gods”** This is the term (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* PERFECT) that Moses used in predicting that the descendants of Jacob would become Canaanite fertility worshipers (cf. Deut. 31:18,20). YHWH Himself pleaded with them not to yield to this temptation (cf. Lev. 19:4; 20:6).

▣ **“and love raisin cakes”** This is the fourth use of the VERB love (*Qal* PERFECT), describing how the Israelites embraced Ba’al worship. These small delicacies were given to the worshipers after a time of sacrifice (cf. II Sam. 6:19). They are also referred to in Isa. 16:7 and Jer. 44:19 as objects of fertility worship (also possibly Jer. 48:31).

**3:2 “So I bought her for myself”** The VERB “bought” (BDB 500 II, KB 497, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to purchase by trade or money” (cf. Deut. 2:6). However, the LXX, following an Arabic cognate, has “hired.”

Apparently Hosea bought back his own wife! The price paid was half the price of a slave (cf. Exod. 21:32 and Lev. 27:4). Apparently he paid half in silver and half in produce. This must have strained his financial resources.

Who did he pay it to? The text is so brief that certainty is impossible:

1. to one special lover
2. to her owner
3. to her as a second bridal gift

Since I think that the phrase describing her lover refers to Hosea, then #3 fits the context best, but there is no other example of a second bridal gift in history or the Bible.

▣ **“fifteen shekels. . . a homer”** See Special Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Weights and Volumes at Amos 8:5.

▣ **“a homer and a half of barley”** The word “homer” (BDB 330) means “a donkey load.” This equals about five bushels. Therefore, the purchase price includes about 7.5 bushels.

**3:3 “You shall stay with me for many days”** There was apparently a time of purification for the adulteress. It is analogous to the period of the exile for the people of God.

**3:4** There has been much discussion about the meaning of this verse. There are three major theories:

1. these three couplets represent a contrast between YHWHism and Ba’alim
2. these relate to aspects of idolatry, which had become the norm for Israel’s religious practices (cf. 8:4-5;10:7-8,15)
3. these refer to the exilic period when Israel was separated from the Promised Land

▣ **“sacred pillar”** Sacred pillars were originally set up as memorials

1. by Moses in Exod. 24:4 as a way to commemorate the establishment of the Covenant of Sinai (e.g., Josh. 4:3,9,20)
2. to some great event or to an appearance of God
  - a. Shechem, (cf. Josh 24:26);
  - b. Bethel (cf. Gen. 28:18)
  - c. Gilead (cf. Gen. 31:45)
  - d. Gilgal (cf. Josh. 4:5)
  - e. Mizpah (cf. I Sam. 7:12)
  - f. Gibeon (cf. II Sam. 20:8)
  - g. En-Rogel (cf. I Kgs. 9:9)

They came to be connected to the idolatrous sins of Ba’al worship and are condemned in Exod. 34:13; Deut. 12:3; 16:22; Micah 5:13. This demonstrates how the same practice or items or place can be accepted in an older part of the OT, but condemned in other parts.

▣ **“ephod”** This originally referred to a priestly garment (e.g., I Sam. 2:18; 22:18). A special one was worn by the High Priest (e.g., Exod. 25:7; 28:6-35). The Urim and Thummim were kept in a pouch behind the breastpiece, which was attached to the front of the ephod (cf. Exod. 28:30).

The ephod was a sign of YHWH’s priests. It became an attempt to legitimize unlawful shrines, sanctuaries, and priests (e.g., Jdgs. 8:26-27; 17:5; 18:14,17,18,20). Possibly a life sized idol was draped with an elaborate cloak. This then would imply the place of divine revelation (an oracle).

▣ **“household idols”** Literally this is *teraphim* (BDB 1076). The etymology and origin are uncertain.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: TERAPHIM**

From differing parts of the OT a composite description is difficult:

1. small and portable household idols, Gen. 31:19,34,35
2. large idol shaped like a human, I Sam. 19:13,16
3. idols used in homes, but also in shrines, Jdgs. 17:5; 18:14,17,18
4. idols used for knowing the future or will of the gods/god
  - a. condemned and paralleled with divination, I Sam. 15:23
  - b. condemned and paralleled with mediums, spiritists, and idols, II Kgs. 23:24
  - c. condemned and paralleled with divination, shaking arrows, and inspecting a sheep's liver, Ezek. 21:21
  - d. condemned and paralleled with diviners and false prophets, Zech. 10:2

**3:5 “Afterwards”** This is a common ADVERB (BDB 29) used in a number of ways. Here it seems to refer to the time after YHWH's period of judgment. A related term (BDB 31), “in the last days,” is used at the end of v. 5. It denotes a future event from the author's perspective. The exact time frame is ambiguous. YHWH will judge His people, but after that, following a period, He will restore them!

These future orientations and time markers are a theological way of asserting YHWH's knowledge of and control over history. YHWH's judgments must be seen against the big picture of His accomplishing His ultimate goal of fellowship with humankind! Even judgments are parental love (cf. Hosea 11).

▣ **“the sons of Israel return and seek the LORD”** Here are the two pillars of biblical faith; one is negative and one is positive (e.g., Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; 26:20). We must “turn from”—that is repentance (i.e., “return” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see Special Topic at Amos 1:3), and we must “turn to”—that is faith (i.e., “seek” BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 5:6,15; 7:10; Isa. 45:19; 65:1; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3). Another element of Israel's change of heart is seen in v. 5 in the words “they will come trembling.” This term seems to involve a new “awe” and “respect” for God.

▣ **“David their king”** David was the ideal king. YHWH made perpetual promises to him and his seed in II Sam. 7. Hosea's peer, Amos, also mentions an eschatological return to a Davidic king (i.e., the Messiah, cf. 1:11; Amos 9:11-15; Jer. 33:15,21-22,25-26; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-28). The political split between Judah and Israel was seen as temporary and sinful (e.g., 3:4; 7:7; 10:15) because of Jeroboam I's setting up of the golden calves (e.g., 8:5) at the cities of Bethel and Dan as rival cultic centers to Mt. Moriah.

▣ **“they will come trembling to the LORD”** This VERB (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in a similar way (and same form) by Hosea's fellow eighth century prophet in Judah, Micah (cf. 7:17). It is used in several senses:

1. positives of the faithful
  - a. respect God's word, Ps. 119:16
  - b. no fear for the faithful, Ps. 78:53; Prov. 3:24; Isa. 12:2; 44:8
  - c. sense of awesome joy at YHWH's deliverance, Isa. 60:5; Jer. 33:9; Hos:5
2. negative of sinners, Ps. 119:120; Isa. 33:14; 44:11

▣ **“and to His goodness”** The NOUN “goodness” (BDB 375) is paralleled with “YHWH.” This term is used in many senses. It can describe Israel’s God. It is meant to describe Israel. It is the opposite of sin, evil, and darkness (cf. Amos 5:14-15)! It can be translated “prosperity” or “blessing” (e.g., Jer. 31:12,14). God wanted to bless Israel as a reward for covenant fidelity and attract the world to Himself. However, Israel could not/did not obey. This resulted in judgment (cf. Deut. 27-29; 30;15).

Eschatological blessing will not be dependant on human covenant performance, but on a divine performance matched by a new willingness and ability for godliness (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)! Verse 5 is another reversal of Israel’s current condition, another promise of hope and restoration, another prophecy about a coming Davidic king/Messiah!

▣ **“in the last days”** Throughout the book of Hosea there is an eschatological element. The Jews only saw two ages—the current evil one and the age of the Messiah who was to come. However, from further revelation in the NT we know that there are two comings of the Messiah instead of one. We currently live in the last days, which is an overlapping of these two Jewish ages. The last days are the period of time from Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem to His Second Coming.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME**

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw it as a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism):

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age (Dan. 2:44-45). However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Rev. 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

# HOSEA 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Charge Against Israel	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel	The Lord's Accusation Against Israel	General Corruption
4:1-10	4:1-3	4:1-3	4:1-4
		The Lord Accuses the Priests	Against the Priests
	4:4-6	4:4-6	4:4-6
	4:7-14	4:7-10	4:7-11a
The Idolatry of Israel		The Lord Condemns Pagan Worship	Worship in Israel is Idolatrous and Debauched
4:11-14		4:11-13a	4:11b-14
		4:13b-14	A Warning to Judah and Israel
4:15-19	4:15-19	4:15-19	4:15-19

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **BASIC OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS 4-11**

- A. Chapters 4-5 comprise a literary unit that describes Israel's faithlessness.
- B. Chapters 6-10 are a literary unit that describes Israel's punishment.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel,  
For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land,  
Because there is no faithfulness or kindness  
Or knowledge of God in the land.  
<sup>2</sup>There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery.  
They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.  
<sup>3</sup>Therefore the land mourns,  
And everyone who lives in it languishes  
Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky,  
And also the fish of the sea disappear.

#### 4:1

NASB                    “Listen to the word of the LORD”  
NKJV, NRSV        “Hear the word of the LORD”  
TEV                    “Listen to what he says”  
NJB                    “Hear what Yahweh says”

The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means to hear so as to perform. It is used several times in Hosea (cf. 4:1; 5:1; 9:17), but many times in the other eighth century prophets.

1. Amos, 3:1,13; 4:1; 5:1; 7:16; 8:4,11
2. Micah, 1:2; 3:1,9; 5:15; 6:1[twice],2,9; 7:7

See note at Amos 3:1.

▣ “the LORD has a case” This term (BDB 936) has two main senses.

1. a legal lawsuit, Isa. 1:23; 41:21; Jer. 2:9; 25:31; 50:34; Hos. 4:1; 12:3; Micah 6:2; 7:9
2. a dispute or controversy, Isa. 41:11; 58:4; Jer. 15:10; Hosea 2:2

YHWH is victim, prosecuting attorney, and judge! The court case is one of three common literary techniques used by the prophets.

1. legal case (i.e., divorce case)
2. funeral dirge (judgment oracle)
3. salvation promise (deliverance oracle)

▣ “against the inhabitants of the land” The land of Palestine/Canaan had a special theological significance. This starts with God’s promise to Abraham to give him a seed, a name, and a land (cf. Gen. 12:1-1). This promise is reaffirmed in a special “covenant trance” in Gen. 15:12-21. The land will be cleansed of Canaanite fertility worship (cf. v. 16). When the people of God become involved in the same abominations they, too, must be cleansed from YHWH’s land!

▣

NASB, NRSV,  
TEV                    “faithfulness”  
NKJV                   “truth”  
NJB                    “loyalty”

See Special Topic at Jonah 3:5.



**NASB** “kindness”  
**NKJV** “mercy”  
**NRSV** “loyalty”  
**TEV** “love”  
**NJB** “faith”

This is the Hebrew word *hesed* (BDB 338, cf. 6:4). See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*Hesed*) at 2:19.

▣ **“knowledge”** This is the theme (e.g., 2:20; 4:6; 5:4; 6:6,6) of the book—that we should know God not as an object (an “it,” an idol), but in a personal, intimate relationship (a person). The term “know” (BDB 395) in the OT is related to a personal, intimate relationship (cf. Gen. 2:20; 4:1; Jer. 1:5). The marvelous part of this truth is that not only can sinful humans know God, but that they are known by Him (cf. Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:1ff). He seeks us!

**4:2** Instead of faithfulness, kindness, and knowledge, Israel was depicted by the terms mentioned in v. 2 (all INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES), which refer to the breaking of the Ten Commandments (i.e., specifically the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 8th). The Ten Commandments are God’s will for mankind in society. They are not given to restrict mankind’s freedom, but to accentuate his communal happiness! But Israel knowingly broke all moral boundaries (BDB 829, KB 971, *Qal* PERFECT)!

**4:3** **“everyone who lives in it languishes”** The term (BDB 51, KB 63, *pulal* PERFECT) means to become weak and by connotation weak by drought (e.g., Joel 1:10; Isa. 16:8; 24:4; 33:9; Jer. 12:4). The fire (i.e., drought) of God’s Deuteronomic judgments (cf. Deut. 27-20 and Lev. 26) has come (cf. Amos 7:4).

1. the land mourns
2. the people languish
3. the animals disappear

Physical creation (especially YHWH’s Promised Land) was affected by mankind’s sin (cf. Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:18-25). This passage is a divine judgment even more severe than the flood (cf. Gen. 6-9) because even the fish are affected (cf. Zeph. 1:2-3). Ironically judgment from too much water is now judgment from not enough water (i.e., drought)! Chaos has returned!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof;  
 For your people are like those who contend with the priest.**

**<sup>5</sup>So you will stumble by day,  
 And the prophet also will stumble with you by night;  
 And I will destroy your mother.**

**<sup>6</sup> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
 Because you have rejected knowledge,  
 I also will reject you from being My priest.  
 Since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
 I also will forget your children.**

**4:4-5:7** This literary unit deals with the sins of the priests!

**4:4** The first two VERBS are JUSSIVES:

1. let no one find fault, *Qal* JUSSIVE
2. let none offer reproof, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE.

These both have legal connotations (e.g., #1 Jdgs. 6:31-32; #2 Amos 5:10). But who is the speaker in 4a?

1. an unnamed objector (cf. Amos 5:10)
2. a priestly representative (i.e., High Priest)
3. the nation of Israel (represented by priest and prophet)
4. YHWH Himself (the Judge speaks, cf. v. 5c)



**NASB, NKJV** “For you people are like those who contend with the priest”

**NRSV** “For with you is my contention, O priest”

**TEV** “my complaint is against you priests”

**NJB** “it is you, priest, that I denounce”

**JPSOA** “for this your people has a grievance against [you], O priest”

The NASB does not fit the context well. A different revocalization and a doubling of one consonant can result in “My contention is against you, O Priests,” which fits the context (cf. v. 6) better.

**4:5** The VERB “stumble” (BDB 505, KB 502, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated twice. To stumble is the opposite metaphor of “faithfulness” (i.e., sure footedness).



**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV** “And I will destroy your mother”

**TEV** “and I am going to destroy Israel, your mother”

**NJB** “and I will make your mother perish”

**JPSOA** “And I will destroy your kindred”

The NET Bible (p. 1562) suggests an emendation (two consonant changes). “You have destroyed your own people.” This then would not be a quote from YHWH, but the first in a series of condemnations of the priests. Priests are condemned (1) for not teaching the truth of God’s covenant and (2) for living lives of corrupted fertility practices.

**4:6** “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

**Because you have rejected knowledge”** The term “destroy” (BDB 198, KB 225, *Niphal* PERFECT) means “to cut off” and thereby to cease to exist. The people were guilty, not because they did not understand, but because they knowingly turned away and refused (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* PERFECT) to obey God. This was especially true of the religious and political leaders.

▣ **“I also will reject you from being My priest”** The nation of Israel was meant to be priests to all the world (cf. Exod. 19:4-6). Here, however, it refers to the priests who were to instruct the people in the law of God (cf. Lev. 10:11; Deut. 17:10-11; 33:10; Jer. 18:18; Mal. 2:6-7), which they did not!

▣ **“Since you have forgotten the law of your God”** Knowledge has two aspects: (1) personal relationship; and (2) covenant obligations. They forgot (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT) YHWH and His covenant so He will forget (*Qal* IMPERFECT) their descendants. This is a reversal of the covenant promises of Exod. 20:6 and Deut. 5:10; 7:9! Priests (and Levites) were to be the teachers of Israel, but they became the corruptors of Israel! They could no longer serve as sacrificial offerers!

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:7-10**

<sup>7</sup>**The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me;  
I will change their glory into shame.**  
<sup>8</sup>**They feed on the sin of My people  
And direct their desire toward their iniquity.**  
<sup>9</sup>**And it will be, like people, like priest;  
So I will punish them for their ways  
And repay them for their deeds.**  
<sup>10</sup>**They will eat, but not have enough;  
They will play the harlot, but not increase,  
Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.**

**4:7** “The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me” “They” seems to refer to the people who were bringing sacrifices to the priests who performed cultic activities (cf. vv. 8-10). The more God gave His people, the more they turned away from Him (see a similar example using the prophets in 11:2).



**NASB, NKJV** “I will change their glory into shame”  
**NRSV** “they changed their glory into shame”  
**TEV** “I will turn your honor into disgrace”  
**NJB** “they have bartered their Glory for Shame”

As you can see from the translations the textual issue is over who the subject is, YHWH (NASB, TEV) or Israel (NRSV, NJB). The MT has YHWH as the subject (BDB 558, KB 560, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). However, Jewish tradition changes the VERB to a *Hiphil* PERFECT. This emendation is followed by the Jewish Targums (Aramaic translation and commentaries) and the Peshitta (Aramaic Christian translation).

The term “shame” (BDB 885) is the opposite of “honor” (cf. Ps. 83:16; Prov. 3:35; 13:18). In this context it refers to idolatry (cf. v. 18). They shared God’s glory as His covenant people, but they exchanged this for self-centered sexual fertility worship (the glory of Ba’al).

**4:8** “They feed on the sin of My people,

**And direct their desire toward their iniquity”** This seems to relate to the priests’ lusting after the meat of the sin offerings (cf. Lev. 6 : 26), but metaphorically it implies that they joined in the fertility rites.

The phrase “direct their desire toward” is literally “lift one’s soul to.” It is used six times in this sense (cf. Deut. 24:15; Ps. 24:4; Prov. 19:18; Jer. 22:27; 44:14, and here).

**4:9** “like people, like priest” This is a common proverb which reflects an obvious truth as the priests were to be judged for their known sin, so too, the people.

▣ “I will punish them for their ways” The VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* PERFECT) basically means “to visit” or “attend to.” YHWH can visit for blessing or judgment, based on the covenant fidelity of the people (cf. Deut. 27-29; Lev. 26).

**4:10** Though they seek fertility idols, they will not find enough food, nor children (e.g., Hag. 1:6)! The growth in population implied in v. 7a is now at an end!

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:11-14**

<sup>11</sup>Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding.

<sup>12</sup>My people consult their wooden idol, and their *diviner's* wand informs them;

For a spirit of harlotry has led *them* astray,

And they have played the harlot, *departing* from their God.

<sup>13</sup>They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains

And burn incense on the hills,

Under oak, poplar and terebinth,

Because their shade is pleasant.

Therefore your daughters play the harlot

And your brides commit adultery.

<sup>14</sup>I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot

Or your brides when they commit adultery,

For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots

And offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes;

So the people without understanding are ruined.

**4:11** This is obviously a proverb. Sin robs people of moral sight and they grope in darkness as drunk, blind men” (cf. Isa. 28:1-4). See Special Topic: Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol (Fermentation) and Alcoholism (Addiction and Abuse) at Amos 6:6.

**4:12** Israel was seeking to know the future and control it by improper means (cf. Deut. 18:9-13).



NASB	“wooden idol”
NKJV	“wooden <i>idols</i> ”
NRSV, TEV	“a piece of wood”
NJB	“a block of wood”

This term (BDB 781) means “tree” or “wood.” A slightly different form is used in 4:17; 8:4; 13:2; 14:8 and means “idols.” Since this is paralleled with rod/wand/staff it may refer to a tree oracle or a reference to the Asherah pole/carved stake and not a humanoid-shaped wooden idol.



NASB	“ <i>diviner's</i> wand”
NKJV	“staff”
NRSV	“divining rod”
TEV, NJB	“stick”

This term (BDB 596) means “a tree,” “a staff,” or “a rod.” Some of its uses are:

1. a wooden weapon (cf. I Sam. 17:40,43; Ezek. 29:9)
2. a walking stick (cf. Gen. 32:20; Exod. 12:11)
3. a stick to control an animal (cf. Num. 22:27)
4. young trees (e.g., Gen. 30:37-39, 41; Jer. 1:1)
5. a shepherd’s staff (cf. Zech. 11:7,10,14, see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1088)

▣ **“a spirit of harlotry”** The term “spirit” has nothing to do with demon possession here, but it is used in the OT for “mindset,” “character” or “energizing center.” Here is a list of how this term is used to express human characteristics or feelings:

1. bitterness of spirit, Gen. 26:35
2. shortness of spirit, Exod. 6:9
3. oppressed in spirit, I Sam. 1:15
4. sullen in spirit, I Kgs. 21:5
5. impatient in spirit, Job 21:4; Prov. 14:29
6. haughty in spirit vs. humble in spirit, Prov. 16:18-19; Isa. 66:2
7. faithful of spirit, Prov. 11:13
8. staggering in spirit, Isa. 19:14
9. grieved in spirit, Isa. 54:6

This describes Israel’s lust after the fertility gods of Canaan (cf. 5:4). The interpretive issues were these cultic sexual acts (cf. vv. 3-14) or it could be a metaphor of unfaithfulness (e.g., Exod. 34:15-16; Lev. 20:5; Jdgs. 2:17; 8:27,33; I Chr. 5:25; Ps. 73:27; 106:39).

▣ **“departing from their God”** Literally this is “from under God” (BDB 1065), implying their deserting God’s authority.

**4:13 “They offer sacrifices. . .burn incense”** These could refer to two separate cultic acts or just incense burning. No sacrificial altars are connected to local Ba’al worship.

▣ **“on the top of the mountains. . .on the hills”** This could refer to two things: (1) the highest part of the topography was the site of the local Ba’al altar or (2) the altars of Ba’al/Astarte were made of cut stones with a central phallic symbol (raised pillar) and an Asherah carved pole (cf. Deut. 12:2; Jer. 2:20; 3:6; Ezek. 6:13).

▣ **“oak, poplar, and terebinth”** Trees marked sacred sites because they reflected the presence of underground water, which was extremely important for desert people. There is no record of Israel ever worshipping trees, although they held them to be sacred sites (e.g., Gen. 13:18; Jdgs. 4:5). In this context the trees were used as shade for the fertility practices of Ba’al.

**4:14** It is possible that these statements are really questions expecting a “yes” answer. There is no double standard with God. Both men and women are condemned for their promiscuous fertility rites (cf. Deut. 23:17-18). There are three types of women involved: (1) new brides; (2) cultic prostitutes; and (3) other local women.

It is also grammatically and contextually possible to see the priests as the recipients of the cultic acts of v. 14. The priests who should have known better, also participated in the sexual activities and set a disastrous pattern for the community! If this is accurate, then the women mentioned in v. 13 may be the priests’ own families!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:15-19**

**<sup>15</sup>Though you, Israel, play the harlot,  
Do not let Judah become guilty;  
Also do not go to Gilgal,  
Or go up to Beth-aven  
And take the oath:**

**“As the LORD lives!”**

**<sup>16</sup>Since Israel is stubborn**

**Like a stubborn heifer,**

**Can the LORD now pasture them**

**Like a lamb in a large field?**

**<sup>17</sup>Ephraim is joined to idols;**

**Let him alone.**

**<sup>18</sup>Their liquor gone,**

**They play the harlot continually;**

**Their rulers dearly love shame.**

**<sup>19</sup>The wind wraps them in its wings,**

**And they will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**

**4:15** This verse has a series of JUSSIVES:

1. “Do not let Judah become guilty” (BDB 79, KB 95, *Qal* JUSSIVE)
2. “Do not go to Gilgad” (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* JUSSIVE)
3. “Do not go up to Beth-aven” (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* JUSSIVE)
4. “Take the oath” (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* JUSSIVE)

▣ **“Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Do not let Judah become guilty”** This plea is paralleled in Ezekiel 23 (cf. Jer. 3:6-18). Judah should have seen and feared, but she did not! She is even more responsible!

▣ **“Do not go to Gilgal”** This was a possible reference to the site of the first campsite of Joshua when the Israelites entered the Promised Land. It had now become an idolatrous shrine (see notes at Amos 4:4; 5:5). The other possibility is that it refers to a northern Gilgal, which was the location of a school of the prophets (cf. II Kgs. 2:1; 4:38), which later became a worship center for Ba’al (cf. 9:15, 12:11; Amos 5:5, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 330).

▣ **“Beth-aven”** This refers to Beth-el (cf. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5; Amos 5:5), “house of God,” which was sarcastically changed to “house of wickedness” (BDB 110). This was one of the two sites of the “golden calf” worship set up by Jeroboam I (cf. I Kgs. 12:28-29). Originally the calf represented YHWH (cf. Exod. 32), but quickly became corrupted into a fertility symbol.

▣ **“And take the oath:**

**“As the LORD lives”** This oath reflects the covenant name for God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at Amos 1:2. The negative form v. 15c is implied in 15d-e.

**4:16 “Since Israel is stubborn,**

**Like a stubborn heifer”** The term “stubborn” (BDB 710, KB 770) is used twice comparing Israel with a non-cooperative (i.e., disobedient to authority) plow animal. This is often used of a rebellious spirit:

1. of a son, Deut. 21:18-21
2. of a ruler, Isa. 1:23 (cf. Hos. 9:15)
3. of children, Isa. 30:1
4. of a people, Isa. 65:1-7
5. of God’s people, Jer. 6:28

“Stubborn” and “rebellious” often occur together (cf. Deut. 2:18,20; Ps. 78:8; Jer. 5:23).

▣ **“Can the LORD now pasture them”** This can be a statement or an unmarked rhetorical question. Context implies a judgment scene (i.e., exile), not the tender care of a shepherd.

▣ **“Like a lamb in a large field”** Lambs do not like large fields, but small enclosures.

**4:17 “Ephraim is joined to idols”** Ephraim was the largest tribe in Israel, so it stood for all the Northern Ten Tribes. Their first king, Jeroboam I, was from the tribe of Ephraim. The term “joined” is a strong term for the political (and by implication, religious) union between allies (BDB 287, KB 287, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Gen. 14:3).

David A. Hubbard, *Hosea* (The Tyndale OT Commentaries), suggests that the term “joined” should be interpreted in light of its use in magical texts (cf. Deut. 18:11; Ps. 58:5). If so, Israel has been “charmed” or “under a spell,” possibly linked to 4:12; 5:4 (p. 110). My problem with this is not linguistic, but theological. Personified evil should not be used as an excuse for fallen mankind’s sin. These people sinned “open-eyed” against the love of their covenant God. Though evil, both natural and personal, is a part of our fallen world, humans are still responsible for their actions (cf. v. 18c).

▣ **“Let him alone”** What a horrendous judgment (BDB 628, KB 679, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). God allows His people to have their own desires and choices (and their consequences) because of their spiritual blindness (cf. 5:4; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

**4:18** Happy hour is over! The term “rulers” is literally “shield” (BDB 171). It usually refers to political leaders, but here it may include the priests and prophets (cf. v. 5).

**4:19 “The wind wraps them in its wings”** The “wings of the wind” are metaphorical for

1. foreign alliances (cf. 12:1)
2. YHWH’s coming judgment (cf. 13:15, i.e., YHWH used Mesopotamian powers to exile His people, cf. Jer. 22:22)
3. evil spiritual influences (i.e., “wind” translated “spirit,” cf. 4:12; 5:4)

YHWH is depicted as riding on the wings of the wind (cf. II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3). YHWH’s presence can denote covenant safety and protection or as here, covenant justice and the consequences of covenant violations!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 3 AND 4

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is David mentioned in the context of northern Israel in chapter 3?
2. Explain the aspects of biblical faith mentioned in 3:5.
3. Define in your own words the terms: faithfulness, kindness, and knowledge.
4. How does modern man participate in idolatry?

# HOSEA 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Impending Judgment on Israel and Judah	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	The Lord Condemns Pagan Worship (4:11-5:3)	Against the Priests and the Royal Family
5:1-7	5:1-2		5:1-2 The Effects of Obduracy
	5:3-4	Hosea Warns Against Idolatry 5:4-7	5:3-7
	5:5-7	War Between Judah and Israel	Brother Wars Against Brother
5:8-15	5:8-14	5:8-9	5:8-12
		5:10-12	The Folly of Foreign Alliances
		5:13-14	5:13-15
	5:15-6:3	5:15	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-7**

**<sup>1</sup>Hear this, O priests!**

**Give heed, O house of Israel!**

Listen, O house of the king!  
For the judgment applies to you,  
For you have been a snare at Mizpah  
And a net spread out on Tabor.

<sup>2</sup>The revolvers have gone deep in depravity,  
But I will chastise all of them.

<sup>3</sup>I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me;  
For now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot,  
Israel has defiled itself.

<sup>4</sup>Their deeds will not allow them  
To return to their God.  
For a spirit of harlotry is within them,  
And they do not know the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him,  
And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;  
Judah also has stumbled with them.

<sup>6</sup>They will go with their flocks and herds  
To seek the LORD, but they will not find *Him*;  
He has withdrawn from them.

<sup>7</sup>They have dealt treacherously against the LORD,  
For they have borne illegitimate children.  
Now the new moon will devour them with their land.

**5:1, 2 “Hear”** See note at 4:1. This chapter starts out with three IMPERATIVES related to hearing God’s message.

1. Hear, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, “hear and obey,” e.g., Deut. 6:4
2. Give heed, BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, “listen attentively,” e.g., Isa. 10:30; 28:23; 34:1; 49:1; Micah 1:2
3. Listen, BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, “give ear” e.g., Gen. 4:23; Num. 23:18; Isa. 32:9

These different VERBS are given to show three different groups of hearers:

1. O priests
2. O house of Israel
3. O house of the king

▣ **“Mizpah...Tabor...gone deep in depravity”** There are three different geographical settings mentioned here (matching the three IMPERATIVES and three groups). “Gone deep in depravity” should be translated by the place name “Shittim” (BHS suggested emendation, cf. Num. 25:1ff).

▣ **“Mizpah”** This (BDB 859) means “outpost” or “watchtower.” There are so many towns by this name which are scattered throughout the Promised Land that the exact site is uncertain. However, we do know that it was the site of a sacred pillar which was the symbol of the male fertility god, Ba’al.

▣ **“Tabor”** This (BDB 1061) is a possible allusion to Deut. 33:18-19. Like any other ancient site it was once devoted to YHWH, but now it had become amalgamated with Tyrian Ba’alim.

▣ **“a net”** The term (BDB 440) could refer to a fishing net, but because of the parallel with snares used for birds, it probably means that here (e.g., 7:12; Prov. 1:17). The priests were trying to ensnare faithful worshippers of YHWH into the amalgamated worship of the fertility gods at YHWH worship sites.

## 5:2

NASB, NKJV **“The revolvers”**

NRSV, NJB **“Shittim”**

TEV **“at Acacia City”**

This (BDB 962) could mean “swerver” or “revolter,” but many scholars assume this line of poetry to mean “. . .and the pit of Shittim they have made deep” (i.e., another city to match the three IMPERATIVES and three groups of people).

The MT has the VERB “make deep” (BDB 770, KB 847, *Niphal* PERFECT), used in the sense of Israel’s low view of the value of human life (cf. 4:2; 6:9). The same word is used in 9:9 to refer to the sin and death at Gibeah (cf. Jdgs. 19).

It is also possible to render this line of poetry as “the revolvers have gone deep in slaughtering” (BDB 1006). If this is correct then this may refer to child sacrifice (cf. Isa. 57:5 and Ezek. 23:39).

**5:3 “Ephraim and Israel”** After the Jewish kingdom divided in 922 B.C. the northern tribes were known by the following names: (1) by their capital city, Samaria; (2) by their largest tribe, Ephraim (e.g., Isa. 7:9,17); and (3) by the collective term for their ancestor Jacob, Israel.

▣ **“I know. . .is not hidden from Me”** These two VERBS (#1 BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, #2 BDB 470, KB 469, *Niphal* PERFECT) are parallel to highlight the omniscience of God (on an individual level see Ps. 69:5; 139:15). He knows their idolatry (cf. v. 3b &c), which is made all the worse because they are His covenant people (cf. Amos 3:2, “you only have I known,” NRSV).

▣ **“Israel has defiled herself”** The VERB (BDB 379, KB 375, *Niphal* PERFECT) means “to be ceremonially unclean” by the violation of a Mosaic covenant requirement or prohibition (cf. 6:10; 9:3-4; Micah 2:10). The “clean” vs. “unclean” theology is seen clearly in Lev. 10:10; Deut. 12:15,22; 15:22; Ezek. 22:26; 44:23).

## 5:4 “Their deeds will not allow them

**To return to their God”** This verse personifies Israel’s idolatry (cf. v. 5). Some scholars see this in combination with 4:12,19 as a personal evil influence.

The people of Israel had become so settled in their evil character (i.e., “spirit of harlotry”) that they had passed the point of no return (cf. 4:17; Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24,26).

▣ **“they do not know the LORD”** The Hebrew term “to know” implies intimate relationship (cf. Gen.4:1). They had no personal relationships with God though they were active participators in religious ritual and liturgy (cf. Isa. 29:13). Lack of knowledge, both personal and covenantal, is the recurrent theme of Hosea (cf. 2:20; 4:1,6; 6:3,6).

## 5:5

NASB **“the pride of Israel testifies against him”**

NKJV **“the pride of Israel testifies to his face”**

NRSV **“Israel’s pride testifies against him”**

TEV **“the arrogance of the people of Israel cries out against them”**

NJB **“Israel’s arrogance is his accuser”**

Some see this as a reference to YHWH because of Amos 8:7, but in this context it refers to Israel's trust in her covenantal status. She was very religious and cultically active. It is this very pride in ritual, liturgy, and form which judged them in two areas: (1) form without true faith and (2) faith in the wrong god. "To whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48). This covenant knowledge makes their attitudes and actions even more evil!

▣ **"stumble. . .stumbled"** The VERB (BDB 505, KB 502) is used twice in v. 5. In the OT God's will for His people was characterized as a path or way. To leave the path or stumble on the way was a metaphor for sin and rebellion (cf. 14:1).

Often "stumble" is paired with "fall" (cf. Prov. 24:17; Isa. 3:8; 31:3; Jer. 6:15; 8:12; 46:6,16), but also used in a metaphorical sense.

**5:6 "They will go with their flocks and herds"** Israel tries to approach YHWH through her many sacrifices, but He will not be found (cf. Amos 5:21-23; Isa. 1:10-15; Jer. 14:12; nor His word, Amos 8:12)! The sacrificial system, which was a way for sinful humans to approach a holy God, has been abrogated! The Covenant is broken!

**5:7 "They have dealt treacherously against the LORD"** The VERB (BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* PERFECT) is regularly used of a marriage covenant (e.g., Mal. 2:14-16). Here it is used of Israel being faithless to YHWH (cf. Jer. 3:20).

▣ **"illegitimate children"** This could be taken

1. literally, priests and people actively involved in fertility rituals
2. metaphorically, Israel seeking foreign alliances to protect herself from invasion instead of seeking YHWH

▣ **"the new moon will devour them with their land"** Again notice the literary technique of personification. YHWH rejects all of Israel's holy days (cf. 2:11).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-15**

**<sup>8</sup>Blow the horn in Gibeah,**

**The trumpet in Ramah.**

**Sound an alarm at Beth-aven:**

**"Behind you, Benjamin!"**

**<sup>9</sup>Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke;**

**Among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure.**

**<sup>10</sup>The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary;**

**On them I will pour out My wrath like water.**

**<sup>11</sup>Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,**

**Because he was determined to follow *man's* command.**

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim**

**And like rotteness to the house of Judah.**

**<sup>13</sup>When Ephraim saw his sickness,**

**And Judah his wound,**

**Then Ephraim went to Assyria**

**And sent to King Jareb.**

**But he is unable to heal you,  
Or to cure you of your wound.**

**<sup>14</sup>For I will be like a lion to Ephraim**

**And like a young lion to the house of Judah.**

**I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver.**

**<sup>15</sup>I will go away and return to My place**

**Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face;**

**In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.**

**5:8-15** This seems to refer to the Syro-Israeli war, 735-732 B.C. Israel and Syria rebelled against Assyria and wanted Judah to join in their rebellion. Judah would not, so they attacked her in order to force her to join (cf. II Kgs. 16:1ff and Isa. 7:1ff.).

The problem with assuming that the background to these war poems is the Syro-Ephraimatic War is that Assyria mentioned in v. 13 is sought after by Israel. This does not fit the situation of an Assyrian attack based on a rebellion by Syria and Israel.

**5:8** This verse announces the invasion of Israel. God's judgment has come in the form of a foreign pagan nation (Assyria) being His instrument in cleansing the land!

The three cities of v. 8 (Gibeah, Ramah, and Beth-aven) are to be annexed by Judah (i.e., Benjamin). This may be an allusion to "those who move a boundary" in v. 10. These cities were possibly taken from Judah by Jehoash (Joash) king of Israel (cf. II Kgs. 14:8-14; II Chr. 25:17-24).

**5:8 "Blow the horn"** This VERB (BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) refers to the shophar (ram's left horn, BDB 1051). It was not used in conjunction with other musical instruments. It was used for

1. cultic events
  - a. movement of the Ark
  - b. feast days
  - c. end-time events
2. military events
  - a. approach of an invader
  - b. summoning troops
  - c. call off an attack

In this context #2 a fits best (e.g., Jer. 4:5; 6:1; Joel 2:1,15).

▣ **"The trumpet"** This (BDB 348) is a straight trumpet of bronze. It was

1. used with other instruments for worship
2. used to call assemblies
3. used at coronations of the king
4. used to start festivals
5. used for military functions

This context fits #5 best.

▣ **"Sound the alarm in Beth-aven"** The VERB (BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) was used of a war cry, a victory shout, and a horn blast. Here a warning shout fits best.

Beth-aven means "house of wickedness" (cf. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5). It refers to Bethel ("house of God"), where one of the golden calves set by Jeroboam I was worshiped as an image of YHWH (cf. Amos 5:5).



NASB “Behind you, Benjamin”  
 NKJV, NRSV “*look* behind you, O Benjamin”  
 TEV “into battle, men of Benjamin”  
 NJB “we are behind you, Benjamin”

This does not fit the context so many translators follow the Septuagint, which might reflect a different Hebrew tradition, “tremble in fear, O Benjamin.”

**5:9**

NASB “Among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure”  
 NKJV, NRSV “Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure”  
 TEV “People of Israel, this will surely happen”  
 NJB “on the tribes of Israel I have pronounced certain doom”

This reflects the certainty of God’s judgment coming to pass (e.g., Isa. 14:24,20-27; 25:1; 46:10).

**5:10 “The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary”** Judah took advantage of a time of weakness in Israel and annexed some of Israel’s southern territory. The moving of the boundary is an ancient atrocity (cf. Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28; 23:10; Job 24:2).

**5:11 “oppressed, crushed”** These are both *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLES (#1 BDB 1075, KB 1785; #2 BDB 929, KB 1206). Here they are used of foreign invaders (cf. Isa. 52:4; Jer. 50:33). These same two terms are used of the economic exploitation of the wealthy (e.g., 12:7; Deut. 24:14; Jer. 7:6; Amos 4:1).



NASB “Because he was determined to follow *man’s* command”  
 NKJV “Because he willingly walked by *human* precept”  
 NRSV “because he was determined to go after vanity”  
 TEV “because she insisted on going for help to those who had none to give”  
 NJB “for having deliberately followed a lie”

The problem term is “command” (BDB 846), which is used only here and in Isa. 28:10 (cf. v. 13). The NIV takes it from another Hebrew root and translates it as “idols” (TEV, NJB), which follows the Targums, Septuagint, and Syriac versions.

Much of the religiosity of our own day is simply tradition and not God’s Word (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23).

**5:12**

NASB, NKJV “moth”  
 NRSV “maggots”  
 TEV “destruction”  
 NJB “ringworm”

Literally this is “gnawing worm” or “moth larvae” (BDB 799, cf. Ps. 39:11; Isa. 50:9; 51:8). It was a metaphor of destruction (cf. TEV). God would judge Israel and Judah with worms and rot (BDB 955).

It is possible that the word for “moth” (°51 BDB 799) may be from another root (°55, BDB 799) meaning “waste away,” but here of inflammation.



NASB, NKJV,  
 NRSV “rotteness”  
 TEV “ruin”

**NJB** “gangrene”  
**NAB** “maggots”

The term (BDB 955) means “worm eaten.” Some scholars assume that “moth” may refer to “maggot eater” as a parallel.

However, in all the other places this term occurs it refers to a rotteness in the bone (cf. Job 13:28; Prov. 12:4; 14:30; Hab. 3:16).

**5:13** Both Israel’s and Judah’s response to God’s judgment was to seek help from political alliances with pagan empires, but not repentance and faith toward their covenant God.

▣ **“sickness”** This term (BDB 318) means “disease” or “sickness.” It is a metaphor for sinfulness (e.g., see Isa. 1:5-6 and 53:4 for the same concept). This “sickness” was one of the warnings that Moses gave to the people if they disobeyed the covenant (e.g., Deut. 7:15; 28:59,61).

▣ **“wound. . .wound”** this term (BDB 267) means “to push out” (i.e., dirt and foreign matter in a wound, to clean). See its use in Jer. 30:13. If a wound was not cleaned and bandaged infection was certain and usually fatal. Israel was so sick and Judah so unclean that death (i.e., God’s judgment) and exile were certain. Only God could restore and clean. He would do that if they repented and sought after Him (cf. v. 5).

▣ **“King Jareb”** This seems to refer to a nickname for Tiglath-pileser III who was king of Assyria. The term means “king pick a quarrel” or “king fighting cock” (BDB 937, “warrior,” cf. 10:6). It can be revocalized to mean “great king” (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB). A brief listing of Assyrian kings of this period would be: Tiglath-pileser III, 745-727 B.C.; Shalmaneser V, 727-722 B.C.; Sargon II, 722-704 B.C.; and Sennacherib, 704- 681 B.C.

**5:14** God describes Himself (i.e., “I, even I”) as a lion and a young lion in the ferocity of His judgment (cf. 13:6-8; Ps. 50:22; Amos 1:2). It was not the power of the pagan nations, nor YHWH’s impotence that caused the exiles of God’s people, but their continuing sin and rebellion. God used these nations (Assyria, Babylon, Persia) for His purposes.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT**

Often an individual’s or nation’s power is described as being like a lion, the king of the predators.

1. Judah, Gen. 49:9; Micah 5:8
2. YHWH on Israel’s behalf, Num. 24:9; Isa. 31:4; 35:9; Hos. 11:10
3. Israel as a defeated lion, Ezek. 19
4. tribe of Dan, Deut. 33:22
5. David’s power over lions, I Sam. 17:34-37
6. Saul and Jonathan, II Sam. 1:23
7. symbolic protectors of the throne of Solomon, I Kgs. 10:19-20
8. God uses lions as punishment, I Kgs. 13,20; II Kgs. 17:25-26; Isa. 15:9; metaphor in Job 4:10; Jer. 2:30; 49:19,44; Lam. 3:10; Amos 3:4,8,12; 5:19; Hos. 5:14; 13:7-8; Nah. 2:11-12
9. describe David’s enemies from whom God will deliver him, Ps. 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13,21
10. a metaphor for unknown evil, Prov. 22:13; 26:13; 28:15
11. used to describe Babylon’s military, Jer. 4:7; 49:19-22; 51:38

12. the military of the nations against God's people, Jer. 5:6; 25:32-38; 50:17; Joel 1:6
13. how God's people treat Him, Jer. 12:8
14. how God's leaders treat the people, Ezek. 22:25; Zeph. 3:3
15. metaphor for king's anger, Prov. 19:12; 20:2
16. metaphor for the godly, Prov. 28:1;
17. metaphor for the Messiah, Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5

In light of usage #11 and #12 in Jeremiah, Daniel's metaphor of the Babylonian military as a fast moving lion is obvious. Empires of the Fertile Crescent often used lions to symbolize the nation (e.g., the winged lions on the Istar Gate of the city of Babylon).

**5:15** This verse holds a glimmer of hope for repentance and restoration, but it is conditional (cf. 2:7). It reflects the bad news/good news of Deut. 4:25-31.

▣ **“Until they acknowledge their guilt”** The VERB (BDB 79, KB 95, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “held guilty” (i.e., guilt due to covenant violations, which demands judgment, cf. 5:15; 10:2; 13:16; Ps. 34:21-22; Isa. 24:6; Jer. 2:3; Ezek. 6:6; Joel 1:18; Zech. 11:5).

▣ **“seek My face. . .earnestly seek Me”** See note at 3:5. There are two different Hebrew roots.

1. BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* perfect, e.g., Exod. 33:7; Deut. 4:29; I Chr. 16:11; II Chr. 7:14; Hosea 3:5; 5:6; 7:10; Amos 8:12; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3
2. BDB 1007, KB 1465, *Piel* IMPERFECT, e.g., Prov. 8:17; Isa. 26:9; Hosea 5:15

# HOSEA 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Call to Repentance	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	The People's Insincere Repentance (6:1-7:2)	The Israelite's Reply
6:1-3	(5:15-6:3)	6:1-3	6:1-6
Impenitence of Israel and Judah (6:4-7:10)			
6:4-11	6:4-6 6:7-11	6:4-6 6:7-10 6:11-7:2	Disorder in Israel 6:7-7:2

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>"Come, let us return to the LORD.**

**For He has torn us, but He will heal us;**

**He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.**

**<sup>2</sup>He will revive us after two days;**

**He will raise us up on the third day,**

**That we may live before Him.**

**<sup>3</sup>So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.**

**His going forth is as certain as the dawn;**

**And He will come to us like the rain,**

**Like the spring rain watering the earth.”**

**6:1 “Come”** This is an *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 229, KB 246). It seems that 6:1-3 describes the true repentance called for in 5:14-15, but when one reads 6:4-6 it is obvious that the repentance is only skin deep and not a permanent change of character or the inauguration of a personal relationship.

▣ **“let us return”** This is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427). See Special Topic: Repentance in the Old Testament at Amos 1:3.

Verses 1-3 may be the words of the priests. This whole context has been addressing them. This then would be their liturgical response to YHWH’s call for repentance in 5:15.

▣ **“He has torn us”** This term (BDB 382, KB 380, *Qal* PERFECT) may be an allusion to 5:14. YHWH is described in judgment as a ferocious lion (cf. Job 16:9). This same term is used in Amos 1:11, but it is uncertain if it refers to YHWH or Edom’s anger. The phrase “has torn” is parallel to “has wounded” (BDB 645, KB. 697, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE [in form, but not function, *Old Testament Parsing Guide* by Beall, Banks, and Smith, p. 655]). This term in context could mean, “to smite with a single non-lethal blow” (e.g., Exod. 21:15,19) or “to smite repeatedly” (e.g., Exod. 2:11,13; 5:16).

▣ **“He will heal us”** The term “heal” (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is parallel to “will bandage” (BDB 289, KB 289, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Israel recognizes that the source of her judgment is YHWH and that if they repent He will forgive and restore.

**6:2 “revive us. . .raise us”** The first VERB (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is from the root “to live” or “revive” (e.g., Ps. 119:50,93). It is parallel to “raise” in the next poetic line.

This may be standard theology they had heard. They were counting on the unchanging merciful character of God to revive, rescue, and deliver them! They had forgotten and ignored the covenantal requirement of faith and obedience, but wanted its benefits!

▣ **“after two days”** This may be a Hebrew idiom of a short period of time (e.g., Jdgs. 11:4).

▣ **“on the third day”** This refers to (1) a common proverb for the establishment of an agreement (cf. Josh. 9:16-17; II Sam. 20:4; Ezra 10:8-9) or (2) simply a literary pattern (i.e., two. . .three) denoting a brief period. Israel was hoping YHWH would forgive and restore quickly! However, some commentators (I think wrongly) use this verse as a scriptural proof for Jesus being in the grave three days (cf. I Cor. 15:4).

**6:3 “let us know, let us press on to know”** Both of these VERBS are *Qal* COHORTATIVES. They speak of a desire for an intimate, interpersonal fellowship with YHWH. This is the theme of Hosea (cf. 2:8,20; 4:1,6; 5:4; 6:3,6).

▣ **“the dawn. . .the rain. . .the spring rain”** These describe the regularities of nature, so too, the character of YHWH. His basic desire is fellowship with humans made in His image. This was/is the purpose of creation! His love is to the thousandth generations (cf. Deut. 7:9); His anger only to the third and fourth generations (cf. Deut. 5:9). God’s settled gracious character is the hope of mankind!

One of my favorite authors is F. F. Bruce. He has a good article about the rains in Palestine in *Answers to Questions*, p. 13. This book has been so helpful to me that I highly recommend it to you.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:4-11**

<sup>4</sup>What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
For your loyalty is like a morning cloud  
And like the dew which goes away early.  
<sup>5</sup>Therefore I have hewn *them* in pieces by the prophets;  
I have slain them by the words of My mouth;  
And the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth.  
<sup>6</sup> For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,  
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.  
<sup>7</sup>But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;  
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.  
<sup>8</sup>Gilead is a city of wrongdoers,  
Tracked with bloody *footprints*.  
<sup>9</sup>And as raiders wait for a man,  
So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem;  
Surely they have committed crime.  
<sup>10</sup>In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;  
Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself.  
<sup>11</sup>Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you,  
When I restore the fortunes of My people.

**6:4** “What shall I do with you” Literally this is “what may I do to you” or “what can I make of you.” YHWH speaks directly through Hosea. God is amazed at the shallowness and shame of His people’s religiosity, but He is also broken hearted at their deserved judgment (cf. 11:8-9).

▣ “For your loyalty is like a morning cloud” Their repentance was superficial and their loyalty (i.e., covenant faithfulness) continued to be a mockery. The term “loyalty” (*hesed*, BDB 338) is the same term translated “kindness” in 4:2. See Special Topic: Lovingkindness at 2:19.

▣ “And like the dew which goes away early” “Dew” (BDB 378) is used in two senses in the OT:

1. a way for crops to get moisture in the summer (positive)
2. a metaphor for fleetness (negative)

In Hosea 6:4 the absence of Israel’s repentance is matched in 13:3 by the swiftness of her judgment.

**6:5** This verse’s parallelism shows the inspiration of the prophets’ (Amos through Elisha) message. The second line is possibly the origin of the metaphors of Rev. 1:12,16. God’s words are a powerful force!

▣

NASB, NKJV	“the judgments on you are <i>like</i> the light that goes forth”
NRSV	“my judgment goes forth as the light”
TEV	-----
NJB	“my sentence will blaze forth like the dawn”

It is possible to divide the Hebrew consonants differently and have “my judgment goes forth like the light” (cf. LXX, Peshitta, and Targums).

The term “light” (BDB 21) alludes to “the dawn” (BDB 1007) in v. 3b. As the dawn surely comes, so too, God’s message of judgment through His prophets.

**6:6 “I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice”** God looks at the heart! Motive is the key (cf. Jer. 9:24)! This is one of the key theological passages in the book (cf. 8:7; 11:12). “Loyalty” is the same as v. 4, but here it is true covenant love/loyalty. Jesus used this concept in His discussion with the Pharisees in Matt. 9:13; 12:7. This does not imply that God wanted them to stop sacrificing, but to be careful to have the right motive (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-13; Jer. 7:21-23; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8). For a good discussion see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp.207-208, 294-295). The sacrificial system was a way to show the seriousness of the sin and the willingness of God to accept sinners into fellowship with Himself. However, when it was turned into ritual without repentance and faith, it became a farce, a barrier to a true interpersonal relationship with God.

### 6:7

**NASB** “But like Adam they had transgressed the covenant”

**NKJV** “But like men they transgressed the covenant”

**NRSV** “But as soon as they entered the land at Adam, they broke the covenant”

**NJB** “But they have broken the covenant at Adam”

At first, this seems to be a reference to Adam, our original forefather, but on closer examination of the context there seems to be two cities (Adam in Gilead and Shechem) linked to covenant breaking. Hosea mentions many cities and historical allusions. Some to ancient events, some to contemporary events that we do not know about and some to future events of restoration and hope. This event at Adam in Gilead on the road to Shechem is a mystery. But, it involved priests so it may have been political or religious. Since Shechem is a “city of refuge” it may have involved an issue of asylum. The translations, both ancient and modern, differ widely on their understanding of this verse. However, based on context, I think “Adam” must be understood as the city mentioned in Josh. 3:16. The “there” (BDB 1027) in v. 7b supports this interpretation.

The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to pass over,” “pass through,” or “pass by.” In this context it means to transgress, violate the known boundary (e.g., 8:1; Num. 14:41; Deut. 17:2; 26:13; Ps. 17:3; Isa. 24:5). See Special Topic: Covenant at 2:18.

### ▣

**NASB** “There they have dealt treacherously against Me”

**NKJV** “There they dealt treacherously with Me”

**NRSV** “there they dealt faithlessly with Me”

**TEV** -----

**NJB** “there they have betrayed me”

The VERB (BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to deal unfaithfully to a covenant” (i.e., marriage as an analogy to YHWH, e.g., Isa. 24:16; Jer. 3:20; 5:11; Mal. 2:15). The term is used several times in Isa. 33:1.

Notice the very personal aspect of this act of faithlessness (i.e., “against Me”). This same VERB is used in 5:7 in connection to the marriage vows!

### 6:9 “as riders wait for a man,

**So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem”** Possibly Shechem remained faithful to YHWH and other priests would kill worshipers going to Shechem so that they would have more worshipers at Bethel or Gilgal or, possibly the priests of Shechem were so jealous that they wanted to stop the pilgrims passing through their town from going to other cultic sites. It is obvious that whoever is the premeditated perpetrator

(for a good discussion of this Hebrew term and its relationship to the Ten Commandments see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 114-116 and 148-149), the priests are far from their original call.

**6:10 “a horrible thing”** This term is used several times in Jeremiah in different connotations:

1. the basic meaning is rottenness (cf. Jer. 29:17)
2. the corruption of the religious leaders (cf. Jer. 5:30-31; 23:14)
3. the corruption of the nation as a whole (cf. Jer. 18:13)

▣ **“Israel has defiled itself”** This VERB (BDB 379, KB 375, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used several times to denote fertility worship (e.g., 5:3).

### 6:11

**NASB** “Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you,  
When I restore the fortunes of My people”

**NKJV** “Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you,  
When I return the captives of My people”

**NRSV** “For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed.  
When I would restore the fortunes of my people”

**TEV** “And as for you, people of Judah, I have set a time to punish you also for what you are doing”

**NJB** “For you too, Judah, a harvest is in store,  
When I restore my people’s fortune”

This verse is ambiguous. It seems to refer to the judgment (i.e., harvest, cf. Jer. 51:33; Joel 3:13) that will also fall on Judah for her idolatry (cf. 8:14; 12:2), yet the next line implies a hope of restoration. It is possible that 6:11b should go with 7:1a.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 5 AND 6

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the historical setting of the war mentioned in 5:8-15.
2. Why is 6:1-4 thought to only be superficial repentance?
3. Define the Hebrew term “to know.”
4. Why is v. 11 so hard to interpret?

# HOSEA 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Impenitence of Israel and Judah (6:4-7:10)	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	The People's Insincere Repentance (6:1-7:2)	Disorders in Israel (6:7-7:2)
7:1-3	7:1-7	Conspiracy in the Palace  7:3-6  7:7	Conspiracy The Order of the Day in Israel  7:3-7
7:8-10	7:8-10	Israel and the Nations  7:8-12	Israel Ruined by Relying on Foreign Nations  7:8-12
Futile Reliance on the Nations			
7:11-12	7:11-13		The Ingratitude and Punishment of Israel
7:13-16	7:13-16  7:14-16	7:13-16	7:13-16

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-7

<sup>1</sup>When I would heal Israel,

The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered,  
And the evil deeds of Samaria,  
For they deal falsely;  
The thief enters in,  
Bandits raid outside,

<sup>2</sup>And they do not consider in their hearts  
That I remember all their wickedness.  
Now their deeds are all around them;  
They are before My face.

<sup>3</sup>With their wickedness they make the king glad,  
And the princes with their lies.

<sup>4</sup>They are all adulterers,  
Like an oven heated by the baker  
Who ceases to stir up *the fire*  
From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

<sup>5</sup>On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine;  
He stretched out his hand with scoffers,

<sup>6</sup>For their hearts are like an oven  
As they approach their plotting;  
Their anger smolders all night,  
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.

<sup>7</sup>All of them are hot like an oven,  
And they consume their rulers;  
All their kings have fallen.  
None of them calls on Me.

**7:1 “When I would heal Israel”** The content of this line of poetry seems to go best paired with the last line of chapter 6 (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate, NKJV, NASB).

▣ **“heal”** The word “heal” (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used often by Hosea to describe God’s spiritual renewal of His people from the sickness of rebellion (e.g., 5:13; 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; 14:4). In the OT sin is described as a sickness (e.g., Ps. 103:3; Isa. 1:5-6).

▣ **“iniquity”** Israel’s sin is described as “iniquity” (i.e., corruption, 4:8; 5:5; 8:13; 9:7,9; 10:10; 12:8; 13:12; 14:1-2, BDB 730) and “evil deed” (BDB 949, cf. 7:2,3; 9:15; 10:15[twice]).

▣ **“uncovered”** This VERB (BDB 162, KB 191, *Niphal* PERFECT) means to reveal by uncovering (e.g., 2:10; I Sam. 2:27; 14:8; Isa. 53:1). It has a sexual aspect in Isa. 57:8, as it does here (i.e., fertility worship).



**NASB, NRSV** “they deal falsely”  
**NKJV** “they have committed fraud”  
**TEV** “they cheat”  
**NJB** “for deceit is their principle of behavior”

The VERB (BDB 821, KB 950, *Qal* PERFECT) addresses Israel’s “fraud” and “lies” (cf. Jer. 6:13; 8:8,10).

▣ **“The thief enters in,**

**Bandits raid outside”** The “enter in” and “on the outside” may be a way of referring to (1) the sin of all the people or (2) invasion (e.g., Jer. 18:22) and exile.

The “thief” (literally “band” BDB 151 I) was used earlier in 6:9 (cf. II Chr. 25:9,10,13).

▣ **“Israel. . . Ephraim. . . Samaria”** These are three terms used to describe the Northern Ten Tribes after the division of the people of God in 922 B.C. between Jeroboam I, a labor leader from the tribe of Ephraim, and Rehoboam, Solomon’s son.

**7:2 “I remember all their wickedness. . . They are before My face”** This refers to God’s documentation of the sins of His covenant people. To forgive is to forget (e.g., Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 18:22; 33:16), but to remember (cf. 8:13; 9:9) is the sign of unrepentance (“they do not consider in their hearts”) and the consequent judgment that follows (e.g., Jer. 14:10; 44:12).

▣ **“their deeds are all around them”** This VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of a military or enemy surrounding someone (e.g., Job 16:13; Ps. 17:11; 88:11). This same term is used again in 11:12, where Ephraim surrounds God with lies.

**7:3 “they”** There has been much discussion about who “they” refers to in vv. 3-6. There are two main theories. This refers to political conspirators (cf. v. 7 and NET Bible) who are somehow related to the bandits and thieves that are mentioned in v. 1. Openly their loyalty is to the king, but privately they plot his assassination (cf. 8:4). After the death of Jeroboam II, a rapid succession of six kings occurred (cf. v. 7): Zechariah, 746-745 B.C., who was assassinated; Shallum, 745 B.C., who was assassinated; Menahem, 745-738 B.C., who was an Assyrian vassal (cf. II Kgs. 15:19); Pekahiah, 738-737 B.C., who was assassinated; Pekah, 737-732 B.C., who was assassinated; Hoshea, 732-724 B.C., who was imprisoned by Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17:4).

This refers to priests who have been the object of Hosea’s scorn since 4:4-6,7-10,11-14; 5:1-7. And now they are involved in political unrest. It is possible that these two can be combined. It is the priests who are functioning along with the princes as political conspirators.

**7:4 “They are all adulterers”** This is either (1) another reference to the fertility worship (literal) or (2) a reference to their covenant faithlessness (figurative, cf. Jer. 9:2).

▣ **“Like an oven heated by the baker”** There is an illusion to these political conspirators or priests as being bakers and ovens. The metaphor seems to be (1) that they rise early to plan their treason (cf. vv. 6,7,8b) or (2) that they do not pay attention to their task and ruin the bread.

**7:5 “On the day of our king”** This possibly refers to an annual coronation celebration, a birthday celebration, or a special day honoring a military victory.

▣ **“the princes”** This could refer to the king’s family or to courtiers. They are mentioned often in Hosea (cf. 7:5,16; 8:4,10; 9:15; 13:10).

▣ **“became sick with the heat of wine”** The political leaders are liars (v. 3), drunkards (v. 5), and schemers (vv. 5-7). Drunkenness is a major problem of fallen mankind (cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; Isa. 28:1, 7). It is often used as a metaphor for God’s judgment.

▣  
NASB, NKJV      “scoffers”  
NRSV              “mockers”  
TEV                -----  
NJB                “people who laugh at him”

This term is found only here. It can mean “rebel” (i.e., plan a takeover with rebels) or from another root, “mock” (i.e., receive counsel from drunken courtiers).

**7:6 “plotting”** This term (BDB 70) refers to an ambush (cf. Jer. 9:8, the VERB form in Jer. 51:12). This is the premeditated murder that Exod. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 restrict!

**7:7 “All their kings have fallen”** See note at 7:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:8-16**

<sup>8</sup>Ephraim mixes himself with the nations;

Ephraim has become a cake not turned.

<sup>9</sup>Strangers devour his strength,

Yet he does not know *it*;

Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him,

Yet he does not know *it*.

<sup>10</sup>Though the pride of Israel testifies against him,

Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God,

Nor have they sought Him, for all this.

<sup>11</sup>So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense;

They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

<sup>12</sup>When they go, I will spread My net over them;

I will bring them down like the birds of the sky.

I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.

<sup>13</sup>Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me!

Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me!

I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.

<sup>14</sup>And they do not cry to Me from their heart

When they wail on their beds;

For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves,

They turn away from Me.

<sup>15</sup>Although I trained *and* strengthened their arms,

Yet they devise evil against Me.

<sup>16</sup>They turn, *but* not upward,

**They are like a deceitful bow;  
 Their princes will fall by the sword  
 Because of the insolence of their tongue.  
 This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.**

**7:8 “Ephraim mixes himself with the nations”** This refers to Israel’s foreign alliances with both Assyria and Egypt (cf. vv. 11,16). The term “mixes” has a sacrificial connotation (BDB 117, KB 134, *Hithpolel*, e.g., Exod. 29:2, 40; Lev. 2:4; 7:10).

Foreign alliances involved invoking the names of their gods. Israel turned to foreign gods for help instead of YHWH (cf. vv. 13-15).

▣ **“Ephraim has become a cake not turned”** This is a baking metaphor (cf. vv. 4,6,7) to describe a cake that is burned on one side and raw on the other. This seems to apply to the uselessness of these covenant people of God. For a good discussion of ancient baking and ovens see *Bible Background Commentary, OT*, p. 756 or any Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. I recommend the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (5 vols.).

**7:9** This seems to refer to the heavy tribute demanded by Assyria. Again Israel’s ignorance is emphasized (“know” BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, twice, cf. 4:1).

▣

**NASB, NRSV “Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him”**

**NKJV “gray hairs are here and there on him”**

**TEV “Their days are numbered”**

**NJB “even his hair is turning grey”**

This is a metaphor of declining strength and imminent death!

**7:10 “the pride of Israel testifies against him”** This implies that because of Israel’s knowledge of YHWH through Scripture (i.e., Moses) and the prophets, they are more guilty for following after fertility gods and covenant acts of violence.

Israel had come to the place that she thought her military strength made her stable (cf. 5:5), but her idolatry had brought spiritual apostasy and weakness.

▣ **“they had not returned to the LORD their God”** YHWH’s heart breaks that His own people do not come to Him (cf. v. 7d). See Special Topic: Repentance in the OT at Amos 1:3.

The two VERBS (#1 “return” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT and “sought” BDB 134, KB 152, *Qal* PERFECT) imply a turning from (repentance) and a seeking after (faith, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

**7:11** This verse shows the folly of hoping in political alliances instead of YHWH (cf. v.16; 8:9-10, 13; 9:3, 6; 11:11; 12:1). The NIV Study Bible has an interesting note, “Menahem turned to Assyria (II Kgs. 15:19-20) and Pekah to Egypt. Hosea alternated in allegiance to both (II Kgs. 17:4)” (p. 1330).

**7:12 “When they go, I will spread My net over them”** This implies YHWH’s control of foreign empires. He, not Assyria nor Egypt, controls Israel’s destiny.

▣ **“I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation of their assembly”** This could refer to

1. Jeroboam I’s declaration which set up the gold calves

2. subsequent kings of Israel who disobeyed Him
3. the council of these kings who agreed to this (foolishness of Israel's leaders)

The LXX changes “assembly” to “rumor of their *coming* affliction.”

**7:13-15 “strayed from Me. . .rebelled against Me. . .speak lies against Me. . .do not cry to Me from their heart. . .turn away from Me. . .devise evil against Me”** Notice the personal elements (“Me” used 6 times) of the rebellion against God by His people. The first three VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS, which show a settled condition; the last two are IMPERFECTS, which show repeated, ongoing rebellion.

**7:13 “redeem”** This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to buy back” or “to purchase.” It has a wide use in the OT: (1) it is similar to the term *go’el*, but lacks the kinship emphasis; (2) it is used primarily as deliverance from bondage, both physical and spiritual; (3) examples: Exod. 13:13, 15; 20:30; 21:8; Ps. 34:22; 49:7, 8, 15; 130:7, 8; Isa. 1:27; and 29:22.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

### I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Gaal*, which basically means “to free” by means of a price paid. A form of the term *go’el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Lev. 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah*, which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”:
  - a. the redemption of the first born, Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17
  - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption, Ps. 49:7,8,15
  - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion, Ps. 130:7-8

B. The theological concept involves three related items.

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment:
  - a. physical
  - b. social
  - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration
  - a. of the nation, Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
  - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go’el*).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
  - a. father
  - b. husband
  - c. near kin

Redemption was secured through YHWH’s personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

## II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.
1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
  2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
  3. *Luō*, "to set free"
    - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
    - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
      - (1) to redeem Israel, Luke 24:21
      - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people, Titus 2:14
      - (3) to be a sinless substitute, I Pet. 1:18-19
    - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption, deliverance, or liberation"
      - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
      - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
      - (3) Jesus' better, once-offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
  4. *Apolytrōsis*
    - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
      - (1) Luke 21:28
      - (2) Romans 8:23
      - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
      - (4) Hebrews 9:15
    - b. redemption in Christ's death
      - (1) Romans 3:24
      - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
      - (3) Ephesians 1:7
      - (4) Colossians 1:14
  5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14), which links release to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice; the one who dies for "all" (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT implies:
1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
  2. Mankind's bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3) and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
  3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6).

4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and physical intimacy with the Triune God.

▣ **“but they speak lies against Me”** This may refer to (1) attributing to Ba’al the benefits of YHWH; (2) so mixing Ba’al worship with YHWH that no one could know and find YHWH; (3) falsehoods about God’s character, (e.g., 6:1-3) characterization; or (4) promising prosperity and deliverance.

**7:14** The first line of v. 14 parallels the pain of YHWH as in v. 7. Many of the words and phrases that follow can be understood against the background of Ba’al worship:

1. “wail,” ritual mourning for the death of Ba’al
2. “beds,” may refer to the sexual activity at the Ba’al shrines (cf. Isa. 57:7)
3. “new wine,” seen as a gift from the fertility gods (Ba’al and Asherah/Astarte)
4. “assemble” (*grr* BDB 657), following the Septuagint (cf. REV, NEB, JB) may be “gash” (*gdd* BDB 151), which also refers to cultic acts (cf. I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6) of Ba’al worship

See David Allan Hubbard, Hosea (Tyndale OT Commentaries), p. 141.

▣ **“assemble”** The Hebrew VERB (BDB 157, KB 184, *Kithpolel* IMPERFECT) here is uncertain. Several translations see this as assembling for the purpose of evil (cf. ASV, NASB, RSV, and KJV, alternate meaning of BDB 151, “to gather in bands”). However, another possible translation based on an emendation is the term (BDB 151) “gash” or “attack.” This is found in the Septuagint, the Jerusalem Bible, and the New English Bible. It is an expression that is used of Ba’al worship (cf. I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 42:5; 48:37) and is forbidden by the law of Moses (cf. Deut. 14:1 and Lev. 19:28; 21:5).

▣

NASB	“They turn away from Me”
NKJV, NRSV	“they rebel against Me”
TEV	“what rebels they are”
NJB	“they are rebelling against me”

**7:15 “I trained and strengthened their arms”** Here is the metaphor of God as (1) a loving parent (cf. 11:1-4) or (2) one who prepared Israel for battle by teaching them to trust in Him (i.e., Holy War).

▣ **“They are like a deceitful bow”** This seems to refer to the concept of “missing the mark,” which is one of the Hebrew expressions for “sin.” Here the war weapon is undependable.

# HOSEA 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Apostasy of Israel	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	The Lord Condemns Israel for Idol Worship	An Omen
8:1-10	8:1-6	8:1-3 8:4-10	8:1-7
	8:7-10		Israel Ruined by Relying on Foreign Powers 8:8-10 Against the Outward Show of Worship
8:11-14	8:11-14	8:11-13 8:14	8:11-14

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>*Put the trumpet to your lips!*

**Like an eagle *the enemy* comes against the house of the LORD,  
Because they have transgressed My covenant**

**And rebelled against My law.**

**<sup>2</sup>They cry out to Me,**

**“My God, we of Israel know You!”**

**<sup>3</sup>Israel has rejected the good;**

**The enemy will pursue him.**

**<sup>4</sup>They have set up kings, but not by Me;**

**They have appointed princes, but I did not know *it*.**

**With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves,**

**That they might be cut off.**

**<sup>5</sup>He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, saying,**

**“My anger burns against them!”**

**How long will they be incapable of innocence?**

**<sup>6</sup>For from Israel is even this!**

**A craftsman made it, so it is not God;**

**Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces.**

**<sup>7</sup>For they sow the wind**

**And they reap the whirlwind.**

**The standing grain has no heads;**

**It yields no grain.**

**Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.**

**8:1 “the trumpet”** This refers to the “shophar” or “ram’s horn” (BDB 1051), which was used for religious purposes and to communicate information to military troops. See note at 5:8. God is calling Assyria to punish Israel (cf. v. 3b; Deut. 28:49; Isa. 10:5).

▣ **“an eagle”** This refers to a vulture (BDB 676). The symbolism is clear, an unclean bird of prey, which has been sent by God, symbolizing the invading Assyrian army (Targums) with its corresponding death and destruction.

▣ **“the house of the LORD”** This refers to the people of God, here the northern tribes, Israel (cf. 9:3-4,15, NIV). Although the NET Bible translates it as “the temple of the LORD.”

▣ **“transgressed My covenant”** This means “gone beyond the boundary” (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 6:7; Deut. 17:2; Josh. 7:11,15; Jdgs. 2:20; II Kgs. 18:12; Jer. 34:18).

Hosea uses the concept of covenant several times (cf. 2:18; 6:7; 8:1). His unique message from God transforms sin from violation of a law to violation of love (i.e., marriage covenant).

▣ **“rebelled against My law”** This means “reject rightful authority” (BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PERFECT). The two phrases (“transgressed” and “rebelled”) in this verse are in a Hebrew parallel relationship (both *Qal* PERFECTS, as are “My covenant” and “My law”).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 712, offers an interesting list of Israel’s sins against YHWH:

1. “go after my lovers,” 2:5,13
2. “forgot Me,” 2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6
3. “is stubborn,” 4:16; 9:15
4. “dealt treacherously against the Lord,” 5:7; 6:7

5. “deal falsely,” 7:1; 10:2
6. “lie,” 7:3; 10:13; 11:12
7. “strayed from Me,” 7:13
8. “have rebelled against Me,” 7:13; 8:1
9. “speak lies against Me,” 7:13
10. “do not cry to Me from their heart,” 7:14
11. “turn away from Me,” 7:14

### 8:2 “They cry out to Me,

“My God, we of Israel know You” They knew God as far as ritual and cultic liturgy (i.e., “cry out” BDB 277; KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT), but they did not know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) Him in personal relationship and faith. What a tragedy to have the form of godliness but not to know God (cf. 7:14; Isa. 29:13; II Tim .3:5).

**8:3 “Israel has rejected the good”** This VERB (BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in v. 5. Israel rejected God’s covenant. He rejects their “calf” worship! This seems to refer to YHWH’s covenant obedience (cf. Amos 5:14, 15; Micah 6:8), which denotes a healthy, loving, prosperous society.

**8:4 “They have set up kings, but not by Me”** Note the parallel between the first two lines. The next two lines are parallel to v. 5’s first two lines and the last two of v. 6. All of these refer to the golden calves. Images meant to represent YHWH (cf. Exod. 32), but which had turned into fertility idols!

“They” refers to the leaders (priests and princes) of Israel. They had turned away from the Davidic kings (in Judah) and appointed their own leaders and made their own worship sites (the two “calves” set up by Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan). The contemporary example is the series of kings after Jeroboam II, (see note on 7:3). YHWH was their true king and only He could designate His earthly representative.

**8:5 “calf”** Jeroboam I, the new leader of the northern tribe (in 922 B.C.) did not want his people to continue to worship in Jerusalem so he set up two golden calves as a symbol of YHWHism in Dan in the north and Bethel in the south in order to keep his people at home. This was thoroughly denounced (e.g., Exod. 32:4-5; I Kgs. 12:28-29; Hosea 13:2).

▣ **“He has rejected. . . My anger burns against them”** God’s feelings about these alternate worship sites is clearly expressed:

1. “Reject” (BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT) is a strong term; the same root in the *Hiphil* means “stench”! The NIV translates it as “throw out.”
2. “Anger burned” (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT) is used to describe God’s reaction to covenant disobedience (e.g., often in Moses, Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:26; 31:17; rare in the prophets, Isa. 5:24-25).



NASB, NRSV	“How long will they be incapable of innocence”
NKJV	“How long will it be until they attain to innocence”
TEV	“How long will it be before they give up their idolatry”
NJB	“How long will it be before they recover their innocence”

This is a rhetorical question that demands a negative response. Israel has been permanently rendered incapable of innocence or purity!

**8:6** This verse may be a sarcastic response to Israel’s (of all people) idolatry. Those who were warned to have no image of God (cf. Exod. 20; Deut. 5) have a calf—two of them!

**8:7 “For they sow the wind,**

**And they reap the whirlwind”** The first two lines form a proverb that speaks of our responsibility to God both corporately and individually (i.e., the spiritual principle of sowing and reaping, cf. 10:12-13; 12:2; Job 4:8; II Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“strangers would swallow it up”** This is a reference to the exile of Israel by Assyria (cf. Isa. 1:7). The crops (if there are any, cf. v. 7, lines c,d) that Israel had thanked Ba’al for would not be enjoyed by others (i.e., Assyrians).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:8-10**

**<sup>8</sup>Israel is swallowed up;**

**They are now among the nations**

**Like a vessel in which no one delights.**

**<sup>9</sup>For they have gone up to Assyria,**

**Like a wild donkey all alone;**

**Ephraim has hired lovers.**

**<sup>10</sup>Even though they hire *allies* among the nations,**

**Now I will gather them up;**

**And they will begin to diminish**

**Because of the burden of the king of princes.**

**8:8 “Israel is swallowed up”** This VERB is used as a metaphor of suddenness of death (*Sheol*, cf. Prov. 1:12) and destruction. Here it is used for Israel being taken into exile (e.g., Ps. 124:3; Jer. 51:34; Lam. 2:16).

▣ **“Like a vessel in which no one delights”** The term “vessel” (BDB 479) has a wide semantic field:

1. something made by man from precious materials (i.e., the golden calves)
2. a precious container of some kind (e.g., Jer. 25:34d)
3. items taken into exile (i.e., “baggage,” e.g., Jer. 46:19; Ezek. 13:3,4,7)
4. metaphor of a defeated nation (e.g., Jer. 48:38)

There may be an intentional ambiguity between #4 and #1! The descendants of Israel were to be “a special treasure among all the people,” “a kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but now they were just like the nations. God’s purpose of revealing Himself to the world through them (cf. Exod. 19:5c; Amos 3:2) has been thwarted!

**8:9 “they have gone up to Assyria”** This VERB (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in the sense of compass direction. Although Assyria is to the northeast, the only road to it was directly north. North became a metaphor for evil and invasion. This verse is about Israel seeking a political alliance with Assyria for protection.

▣ **“Like a wild donkey all alone”** One of the characteristics of wild donkeys (BDB 825) during mating season (allusion to the fertility cult) is their uncontrollableness (cf. Jer. 2:23-24). Israel was acting just this way toward idolatry.

▣ **“Ephraim has hired lovers”** The VERB (BDB 1071, KB 1759, *Hiphil* PERFECT) has the connotation of hired cultic lovers (cf. 2:12). This refers to the foreign alliances (e.g., v. 10; Ezek. 16:36-37). These

political alliances always involved, to some extent, the deities of the nation. The irony is that her lovers are now enemies (cf. v. 3)!

In this context it is obvious that fertility worship is used as a way to denote spiritual adultery. It is difficult to know if this is (1) literal, (2) metaphorical, or (3) both. There is very little direct evidence of a sexual component to Canaanite Ba'al worship. Israel may have added this, which makes their guilt even more abominable!

**8:10** “Even though they hire *allies* among the nations. . .the burden of the king of princes” This refers to the heavy tribute demanded by Assyria (whose king is called “the king of princes,” which is parallel to the Babylonian title, “king of kings”).

▣ “Now I will gather them up” The VERB (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is commonly used for God gathering His scattered people after a judgment, but here it means to gather them for judgment (i.e., exile).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:11-14**

<sup>11</sup>Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin,  
They have become altars of sinning for him.

<sup>12</sup>Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law,  
They are regarded as a strange thing.

<sup>13</sup>As for My sacrificial gifts,  
They sacrifice the flesh and eat *it*,  
*But* the LORD has taken no delight in them.  
Now He will remember their iniquity,  
And punish *them* for their sins;  
They will return to Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces;  
And Judah has multiplied fortified cities,  
But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings.

**8:11** “Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin” This refers either to (1) the golden calf worship at both Dan and Bethel or (2) the local Ba'al shrines in each village on every high hill. The irony is that Israel's religiosity was not helpful, but disastrous! The phrase “altars for sin” is repeated twice for emphasis.

**8:12** “Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law” God has clearly and repeatedly revealed Himself to them (i.e., “ten thousand precepts”, e.g., 11:2 and II Kgs. 17:13-15 for Judah). Their problem was not lack of information, but lack of (1) truth; (2) covenant loyalty; and (3) personal faith (cf. 4:1)! They rebelled against God's light and truth.

▣

NASB, NRSV “They are regarded as a strange thing”  
NKJV “*But* they were considered a strange thing”  
TEV “But they reject them as strange and foreign”  
NJB “Ephraim regards it as alien to him”

The term “strange thing” (DBD 266, KB 267, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used in several senses:  
1. non-family members (e.g., Deut. 25:5; Hosea 5:7)

2. not conforming to proper regulations
    - a. incense, Exod. 30:9
    - b. fire, Lev. 10:1
  3. adulterers, e.g., Prov. 2:16; 5:3,20; 7:5; 22:14
  4. foreigners (enemies, invaders), e.g., 7:9; 8:7; Isa. 1:7; 25:2,5; 29:5; 61:5; Jer. 51:51; Ezek. 28:7,10
- God's law had become to them as a non-family foreigner!

**8:13 “They sacrificed the flesh and ate it”** Notice the use of NOUN (BDB 257) and VERB (BDB 256) for emphasis. This seems to refer to the selfish motive of appetite in the performing of religious ritual, especially the communal meal (cf. Lev. 7:15-18).

▣ **“But the LORD has taken no delight in them”** The term “delight” (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* PERFECT) means “accept” (people, cf. Jer. 14:10; Ezek. 20:40 and sacrifices, cf. Jer. 14:12; Ezek. 20:41). This verse and concept are paralleled by 5:6. God is only pleased with cultic ritual when it is accompanied by heartfelt faith and obedience (cf. Amos 5:21- 28; Micah 6:6-8).

▣ **“Now He will remember their iniquity”** See note at 7:2.

▣ **“They will return to Egypt”** This seems be a metaphor for a reverse Exodus or a way of referring to slavery (cf. 7:16; 9:3). When you compare this to 11:5 it seems like a contradiction. However, I think this is using Egypt as a symbol of slavery. Israel will return to slavery, but this time it will be to the nation of Assyria (i.e., exile).

Israel will not “turn” (i.e., repent BDB 996, KB 1427) so she will “return” (i.e., exile, same VERB).

**8:14 “Israel has forgotten”** Israel has “forgotten” (BDB 1013, KB 1484, *Qal* IMPERFECT) God and His covenant (cf. 2:13; 4:6; 13:6), so God will “remember” (cf. v. 13d) her iniquities!

▣ **“Maker”** This is the DIRECT OBJECT of “forgotten” and it is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the VERB “to make” (BDB 793, KB 889). There is an irony between Israel making idols (i.e., golden calves) for themselves (cf. v. 6) and forgetting the One who made them (cf. Gen. 1:26; Isa. 17:7).

It is possible that “maker” refers to God’s initiation to form a people (i.e., call of Abraham, the Exodus, the giving of the Law at Sinai), not Genesis.

▣ **“built palaces. . .fortified cities”** Israel was trusting in her wealth (cf. v. 14c). Judah was trusting in her military might. The Maker is not impressed by human makings. They will be destroyed! In II Kgs. 18:13 Sennacherib is said to have captured all of the fortified cities of Judah.

▣ **“I will send fire”** NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 533, “the punishment prophesied for Israel’s enemies often included the burning of cities (Jer. 43:12-13; 49:27), expressed with particular effect in Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5; Hosea 8:14, where the concept of holy war probably lies behind the formula, ‘I will send fire upon...’” If so, then instead of God fighting for and defending Israel, He is the very One who is her enemy! What a shocking reversal, so characteristic of the prophets’ messages!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who does the “they” refer to in 8:4?
2. Why was “golden calf” worship such an abomination to YHWH?
3. Is 8:13 in contradiction to 11:5?

# HOSEA 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judgment of Israel's Sin	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	Hosea Announces Punishment for Israel	The Sorrows of Exile
9:1-2	9:1-17	9:1-6	9:1-6
9:3-6			Persecution, the Prophet's Reward for Foretelling Punishment
9:7-9		9:7-9	9:7-9
		Israel's Sin and Its Consequences	Punishment for the Crime at Baal-Peor
9:10-16		9:10-12	9:10-14
		9:13-14	
		The Lord's Judgment on Israel	Gilgal
		9:15-16	9:15-17
		The Prophet Speaks About Israel	
9:17		9:17-10:8	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)** ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations!

For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.

You have loved *harlots'* earnings on every threshing floor.

<sup>2</sup>Threshing floor and wine press will not feed them,

And the new wine will fail them.

<sup>3</sup>They will not remain in the LORD'S land,

But Ephraim will return to Egypt,

And in Assyria they will eat unclean *food*.

<sup>4</sup>They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD,

Their sacrifices will not please Him.

*Their bread will be* like mourners' bread;

All who eat of it will be defiled, For their bread will be for themselves *alone*;

It will not enter the house of the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>What will you do on the day of the appointed festival

And on the day of the feast of the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>For behold, they will go because of destruction;

Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them.

Weeds will take over their treasures of silver;

Thorns *will be* in their tents.

**9:1 “Do not rejoice”** This verse may reflect a harvest festival (cf. v. 5). These times were the occasion of Ba'al praise and worship (initiation magic). YHWH will turn their promiscuous festivals into funeral dirges!

This VERB (DBD 970, KB 1333, *Qal* JUSSIVE in meaning, but not form, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 856) means “rejoice” or “delight” (cf. 7:3). Israel was acting like just another of the “nations” (BDB 766).

This is the first of several cultic words:

1. rejoice, v. 1
2. exultation, v. 1
3. libations, v. 4
4. sacrifices, v. 4
5. day of the appointed festival, v. 5

But, the bottom line was v. 1b, “you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.” Wailing was appropriate (cf. Isa. 22:12-14), not rejoicing!

We need to take a lesson on worship from the Jews. Their worship times were events of great joy in the goodness of God and His creation. In this context, however, God informed them that exaltation is inappropriate because of His impending judgment on their idolatry. In the OT (Deuteronomy especially) prosperity is a sign of God's blessing, but in this historical setting it was a deceptive, short-term situation. Israel was trapped in ritual and idolatry and YHWH will discipline her (like He will Judah for the same actions, e.g., Jer. 2; Ezek. 23).

▣ **“like the nations!”** This was the problem! They had turned the worship of YHWH into a form of the Canaanite Ba'al worship.

▣ **“you have played the harlot”** They were practicing the fertility worship of the Canaanite pantheon. They were committing physical adultery and spiritual adultery (e.g., 1:2; 4:10,13,14,15,18[twice]; 5:3; 9:1) in YHWH’s name!

▣ **“loved harlots’ earning”** Israel’s love (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT) is directed toward “a harlot’s hire” (BDB 1071, cf. 2:5,12). The same VERB is used of foreign alliances in 8:10. It is very difficult to know if this is literal or figurative.

▣ **“on every threshing floor”** This (BDB 175) was the site of separating the grain from the husk. It was usually on the top of hills so that as the grain was thrown into the air the wind would blow away the lighter husk and the heavier grain would fall into a pile. Because fertility worship was a form of initiation magic, this was the very site the sexual activity occurred (e.g., 4:11-14). But notice YHWH’s reaction in vv. 2,11,14,16!

**9:2** YHWH, not Ba’al, was the source of fertility (cf. 2:16).

**9:3 “They will not remain in the LORD’S land”** The Promised Land (e.g., Lev. 25:23; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Ezek. 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6), and for that matter, all land, belongs to YHWH (e.g., Exod. 9:29; 19:5). YHWH prophesied the cleansing of His land of Amorites in Gen. 15:16. If His people do the same abominations He will remove them also (cf. Lev. 18:24-28). They did, He did!

▣ **“But Ephraim will return to Egypt”** When one compares 7:8,11,16; 8:13 and this passage with 11:5, there seems to be a contradiction. Egypt probably is symbolic of slavery (i.e., exile in Assyria). However, some scholars see it as a reference to political alliance. Hoshea, the last king of Israel, appealed to Egypt for help against Assyria.

▣ **“Assyria”** This is a specific reference to the exile that occurred to the Northern Ten Tribes in 722 B.C. with the fall of Samaria (cf. 8:9-10).

▣ **“they will eat unclean food”** Exile will bring a stop to many of their cultic rituals. The development of the synagogue will preserve their traditions, but many of the Levitical ordinances will be impossible to do without an active temple (cf. vv. 4-5). Ezekiel 4:13 implies that bread, eaten in a foreign land is unclean!

**9:4 “They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD”** It must be remembered that fermented wine was a part of the sacrificial system and, therefore, not considered to be corrupt (cf. Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:1-10; Ps. 104:14-15). The reason that the sacrifices of vv. 3-4 are unclean is because they are in a foreign land. See Special Topic: Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol (Fermentation) and Alcoholism (Addiction and Abuse) at Amos 6:6.

▣ **“mourners’ bread”** This (BDB 536 CONSTRUCT 19) is a metaphor of corruption. It was defiled because it was associated with the dead. It was made out of barley, usually eaten by the poor. It was also unclean because it was made and eaten in Assyria.

**9:5 “What will you do on the day of the appointed festival”** This was a question to jar them into reality. Their worship was about to be totally disrupted and their population deported!

### 9:6 “Egypt will gather them up

**Memphis will bury them”** Memphis (BDB 592) is the capital of Lower Egypt and we learn from archaeological discovery that it was the site of an extremely large burial area (VERB BDB 868, KB 1064, *Piel* IMPERFECT). The meaning is (1) the survivors of the exiles will die in large numbers in exile and slavery (i.e., as in Egypt) or (2) those survivors who flee to Egypt will die there!

▣ **“Weeds will take over their treasures of silver”** There are two basic theories concerning “their treasures of silver”: (1) it refers to idols and, therefore, the misuse of holy places; (2) it refers to their extravagant houses and, therefore, the destruction of their opulent society (cf. 8:14); or (3) because of v. 2 and Isa. 7:23, it may be a metaphor for their vineyards.

▣ **“Thorns will be in their tents”** This is metaphorical of their empty houses or it is another reference to their worship shrines (cf. 10:8).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-9

<sup>7</sup>The days of punishment have come,  
The days of retribution have come;  
Let Israel know *this*!  
The prophet is a fool,  
The inspired man is demented,  
Because of the grossness of your iniquity,  
And *because* your hostility is so great.  
<sup>8</sup>Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a prophet;  
Yet the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways,  
And there is only hostility in the house of his God.  
<sup>9</sup>They have gone deep in depravity  
As in the days of Gibeah;  
He will remember their iniquity,  
He will punish their sins.

9:7 **“The days of punishment”** This means “visitation” (BDB 824 CONSTRUCT 398). This is a neutral term, but because of the context (parallelism of line 2), it means visitation for the purpose of judgment and that judgment is now (i.e., “have come” repeated).

▣ **“The days of retribution”** The prophets often use the courtroom metaphor to communicate truth. This refers to a judicial decision (BDB 1024 CONSTRUCT 398). It can mean guilty or not guilty. Because of the context, it refers to God’s imminent judgment.

▣ **“Let Israel know *this*”** This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used in a JUSSIVE (command) sense. Israel claimed to know in 8:2, but obviously they did not know Him or His prophet!

▣ **“The prophet is a fool,**

**The inspired man is demented”** These two lines of parallel poetry are difficult to translate. This seems to be the people’s response to Hosea’s message (same word used in Jer. 29:36). Apparently they were trying to associate him with the earlier ecstatic prophetic groups (cf. I Sam. 10:6ff) and thereby ridicule his message. God’s word was strange to them because of the depth of their sin (cf. 8:12).

David A. Hubbard, *Hosea* (Tyndale OT Commentaries), p. 159, makes an interesting comment about “the inspired man,” which is literally “the man of the spirit.” He asserts that it is used in a negative sense because of Hosea’s use of “spirit” in such negative ways (cf. 4:12,19; 5:4).



**NASB** “Because of the grossness of your iniquity”  
**NKJV** “Because of the greatness of your iniquity”  
**NRSV** “Because of your great iniquity”  
**TEV** “your sin is so great”  
**NJB** “great is your guilt”

The last two poetic lines of v. 7 are a summary of the cause of Israel’s coming exile. They do not know God or His law!

The term “grossness” (BDB 913) means “multitude” or “abundance.” It is used of God’s laws in 8:12, but here of Israel’s sins.



**NASB** “*Because your hostility is so great*”  
**NKJV** “. . .and great enmity”  
**NRSV** “. . .your hostility is great”  
**TEV** “You people hate me so much because your sin is so great”  
**NJB** “all the greater then the hostility”

The NOUN “hostility (BDB 966) expresses a settled enmity and grudge against God and His spokespersons. It is used only in Hosea 9:7 and 8.

### 9:8

**NASB** “Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a prophet”  
**NKJV, NJB** “The watchman of Ephraim *is* with my God”  
**NRSV** “The prophet is a sentinel for my God over Ephraim”  
**TEV** “God has sent me as a prophet to warn his people Israel”

This Hebrew phrase is very ambiguous. There are three theories: (1) Ephraim was meant to be God’s representative (cf. Exod. 19:5-6); (2) Ephraim was persecuting God’s prophet; or (3) there is a possibility that it could refer to Ephraim following false prophets. Hosea expresses how he sees himself, a prophet, a watchman, a true and obedient covenant man.

▣ “the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways” The next two lines of poetry seem to describe Israel’s opposition to God’s message by attacking the messenger. God’s people who need and should welcome God’s message are filled with hostility instead of eager receptiveness!

▣ “in the house of his God” This could refer to some YHWHistic shrine (i.e., Bethel or Dan), but it may refer to the whole land (cf. 8:1; 9:4,15).

### 9:9

**NASB** “They have gone deep in depravity”  
**NKJV** “They are deeply corrupted themselves”  
**NRSV** “they have deeply corrupted themselves”  
**TEV** “they are hopelessly evil”  
**NJB** “they have become deeply corrupt”

The two VERBS of this line of poetry:

1. make deep - BDB 770, KB 847, *Hiphil* PERFECT

2. spoil, ruin - BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Piel* PERFECT

function together as a hendiadys, where the second VERB is the main idea and the first serves as an ADVERB. This term, spoil, is used of the spiritual condition of those who worshiped at (1) the golden calf Aaron made in Exod. 32:7; Deut. 9:12; 32:5; (2) of the Israelites at the golden calves of Jeroboam I, Hosea 9:9; (3) of Judah in Isa. 1:4; Jer. 6:28; Ezek. 20:44; 23:11; Zeph. 3:7; (4) of human nature in general in Ps. 14:1; 53:1.

▣ **“in the days of Gibeah”** There is a list of historical allusions beginning in v. 9 and running through chapter 10. These are linked to specific cities and the idolatry that occurred in them. Gibeah is mentioned in 10:9. There are several possibilities: (1) this was Saul’s home; (2) this was the site of Saul’s first sin (cf. I Sam. 13:8-14); (3) this refers to the events of Judges 19-21; or (4) modern interpreters are uncertain of the exact historical reference.

▣ **“He will remember”** When God “remembers” it is a reference to judgment. Man calls on God to forget! God calls on man to remember the covenant (cf. 7:2; 8:13; 13:12).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:10-14**

<sup>10</sup>**I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;**

**I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*.**

***But* they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,**

**And they became as detestable as that which they loved.**

<sup>11</sup>**As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird—**

**No birth, no pregnancy and no conception!**

<sup>12</sup>**Though they bring up their children,**

**Yet I will bereave them until not a man is left.**

**Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them!**

<sup>13</sup>**Ephraim, as I have seen,**

**Is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre;**

**But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter.**

<sup>14</sup>**Give them, O LORD—what will You give?**

**Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.**

**9:10 “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. . .the earliest fruit of the fig tree”** YHWH found fruitfulness and potential in Abraham’s descendants. This is another example of the Jews idealizing the wilderness wandering period as a time of Israel’s courtship and honeymoon with God (cf. 2:14-19; Deut. 32:10). This is an explanation of God’s choice of Israel, beginning not with Abraham or the Patriarchs, but with the Exodus (Moses).

▣ **“Baal-peor”** This refers to Shittim on the Plains of Moab (BDB 128), where Israel apostatized with the Moabite women in fertility worship. This was Balaam’s advice to the Moabite king on how to defeat Israel (cf. Num. 25:1-9). This is possibly referred to in 5:2 and the same terminology is in v. 9a. This place became a symbol of rebellion and idolatry (e.g., Deut. 4:3-4; Joshua 22:17; Ps. 106:28; and here.)

▣ **“devoted themselves to shame”** This VERB (BDB 634, KB 684, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) means “to vow” or “to make a promise.” As Israel committed herself to God at Sinai (cf. Exod. 19-20), it was not too long until she committed herself to Ba’al at Shittim.

The term “shame” is a common term to denote idolatry (BDB 103). It was used by the prophets as another name for Ba’al. Israel broke her devotion to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19-20) and went after Ba’al! The honeymoon was over!

It is parallel to “detestable” (BDB 1055), which also refers to idolatry (cf. Deut. 29:17; II Kgs. 23:13,24; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 4:1; 7:30; 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; 7:20; 11:18,21; 20:7,8,30; 32:23).

**9:11 “Ephraim”** This name means “fruitful.” It was a name used for the Northern Ten Tribes because it was the largest tribe in Israel. The “fruitful” will become the unfruitful! The blessing of God will be revoked because of covenant disobedience (cf. Deut. 27-29).

▣ **“their glory will fly away like a bird”** Their glory refers to their covenant relationship with YHWH (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Amos 3:2).

Hosea uses birds in several different senses.

1. Israel like a silly dove (political alliances) - 7:11
2. Israel like a trembling dove (shocked returnees) - 11:11
3. vulture/eagle of judgment - 8:1
4. netted birds (judgment) - 5:1; 7:12
5. escaped bird - 9:11

▣ **“No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception”** Ironically, they thought fertility came from Ba’al but, in reality, it came from YHWH and in judgment all fertility will cease (cf. vv. 14, 16).

**9:12 “woe to them indeed when I depart from them”** God will leave them as He did Judah in Ezekiel 10:18ff. What a horrible, ultimate judgment (cf. 4:17; and Rom. 1:23,26,28). This is an example of a funeral lament (woe), which is another characteristic metaphor and poetic beat used by the prophets.

**9:13 “Is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre”** There are several theories (See Hubbard, Hosea, p. 166) about this passage: (1) it is a reference to Tyre’s fertility (cf. Ezek. 27:28); (2) Tyre is referred to as the source of Ba’al worship (cf. I Kgs. 18:31); or (3) that Ephraim spread out geographically as far as Tyre.

▣ **“But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter”** This seems to refer to (1) child sacrifice to Molech (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35) or (2) false faith in Ba’al will result in YHWH’s judgment on human fertility (cf. vv. 11,12,14,16)

**9:14** The VERB “give” (BDB 678, KB 733) is used sarcastically three times in this verse.

1. *Qal* IMPERATIVE - give them!
2. *Qal* IMPERFECT - what will You give?
3. *Qal* IMPERATIVE - give them. . .!

This seems to be the prophet Hosea praying to YHWH to give Israel what she deserves (i.e., no fertility, the punishment fits the sin, fertility idolatry).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 47, has an interesting suggestion about this line. The author, Robert B. Chisholm, speculates that the ancient blessing of Jacob to Joseph, which used the term “breast and womb” to denote fertility, is here intentionally used to seek non-fertility as a punishment for Israel’s seeking after the fertility idols!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup>All their evil is at Gilgal; Indeed,  
I came to hate them there!**

**Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house!**

**I will love them no more;**

**All their princes are rebels.**

**<sup>16</sup>Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up,**

**They will bear no fruit.**

**Even though they bear children,**

**I will slay the precious ones of their womb.**

**<sup>17</sup>My God will cast them away**

**Because they have not listened to Him;**

**And they will be wanderers among the nations.**

**9:15 “All their evil is at Gilgal”** Gilgal means “a circle of stones.” This was (1) the site of Joshua’s memorial of the stones taken from the Jordan River; (2) it is also the place of Saul’s anointing (cf. I Sam. 11:14-15). Hosea seems to condemn the monarchy (cf. 7:3-7; 8:4, 10, 13; 13:9-11); (3) this was the place of Saul’s sin (cf. I Sam. 13:1-14); and (4) it may have been a site in the north where fertility worship was practiced.

▣ **“I came to hate them there”** This is strong language (“hate” BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT) describing YHWH’s reaction to sin (e.g., Deut. 12:31; Isa. 63:3-6; Jer. 12:8; Amos 5:21; 6:8).

▣ **“I will drive them out of My house. . . I will love them no more”** Oh my, what a judgment! The covenant is broken. God has divorced Israel for her unfaithfulness. She is sent from God’s house (i.e., the Promised Land).

This last phrase, “I will love them no more” is a combination of:

1. “do again” or “do more” (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE in form)
2. “love” (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

YHWH is finished with Israel!

▣ **“All their princes are rebels”** Their leaders were meant to be God’s representatives, but they were rebellious.

**9:17 “My God will cast them away”** Notice Hosea calling YHWH, “My God,” with the implication that He is no longer Israel’s covenant God (cf. Deut. 31:16-18).

The VERB (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can mean “reject,” “despise,” or “destroy.” It is used in Hosea in 4:6 (twice) and here. They “reject” His Law (cf. 8:12; Isa. 5:24; 30:9,12; Jer. 6:19; 8:9; Ezek. 5:6; 20:16; Amos 2:4); He rejects them (cf. Jer. 33:24).

▣ **“Because they have not listened to Him”** It is not Assyria’s and Babylonia’s strength, but Israel’s sin that caused the exile. The Mesopotamian gods are not stronger than YHWH. YHWH uses them to judge His people (e.g., Isa. 10:5; 44:28-45:7).

▣ **“they will be wanderers among the nations”** This is the fulfillment of the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 27-29 (cf. Deut. 28:58-68)!

# HOSEA 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Sin and Captivity	Because of Constant Rebellion the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	The Prophet Speaks About Israel (9:17-10:2)	The Destruction of Israel's Cultic Objects
10:1-2	10:1-2		10:1-10
10:3-8	10:3-10	10:3-4 10:5-8	
		The Lord Pronounces Judgment on Israel	
10:9-11		10:9-10	Israel Has Disappointed Yahweh's Hope
	10:11-12	10:11-13a	10:11-15
10:12-15			
	10:13-15	10:13b-15	

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Israel is a luxuriant vine;

He produces fruit for himself.

The more his fruit,

The more altars he made;

The richer his land,

The better he made the *sacred* pillars.

<sup>2</sup>Their heart is faithless;

Now they must bear their guilt.

The Lord will break down their altars

And destroy their *sacred* pillars.

### 10:1

NASB, NRSV,

NJB

“Israel is a luxuriant vine”

NKJV

“Israel empties *his* vine”

TEV

“The people of Israel were like a grapevine that was full of grapes”

“Luxuriant” (BDB 132 I, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is found only here. The Septuagint has “a vine with beautiful branches.” This seems to be an allusion to 9:10 (cf. Ps. 80:8-13). God made Israel fruitful (this is one possible meaning of *bqq*). However, the more YHWH blessed them, the more they went after the Ba’als (cf. 11:1). What irony! The vine was often a symbol for Israel (e.g., Deut. 32:32; Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-8).

It is possible to take the VERB as “empty” (BDB 132 I) and thereby Israel as a vine that does not produce God’s desired fruit (cf. 9:10-17).

▣ “He produces fruit for himself” The rest of this verse is an allusion to 8:11 (cf. BDB 915) or 12:11 (cf. Jer. 2:28; 11:13).

▣

NASB

“The better he made the *sacred* pillars”

NKJV

“They have embellished *his* sacred pillars”

NRSV

“He improved his pillars”

TEV

“The more beautiful they made the sacred pillars they worship”

NJB

“The richer he made the sacred pillars”

NET Bible

“They adorned the fertility pillars”

Prosperity did not turn their hearts back to God (as it was intended, cf. Deut. 27-29), but magnified their worship and thanksgiving to Ba’al. They improved his worship sites and neglected YHWH’s temple!

**10:2 “heart”** In Hebrew thought the heart, not the emotions, is the center of the will and the intellect.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
  - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
  - b. used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. the heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms:
  - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart" (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
  - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
  - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
  - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
  - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"



NASB	"faithless"
NKJV, NJB	"divided"
NRSV	"false"
TEV	"deceitful"

The Hebrew term (BDB 325 II, KB 322, *Qal* PERFECT) is "smooth." It is a metaphor of insecure footing, therefore, interpreted as treacherous or unreliable (cf. New Berkeley version "Their heart was slippery"). This is the only place in the OT where this VERB is used of a "heart." Usually it refers to a tongue. This faithlessness can refer to (1) Ba'al vs. YHWH or (2) trust in the God of Israel vs. political alliances with Egypt and/or Assyria. The opposite metaphor of sure footedness is the source of the OT term for faith (cf. BDB 52-54).

It is possible to take the VERB as "divided" (BDB 324) meaning their devotion (i.e., heart) was split between YHWH and Ba'al. However, this term is used mostly in Chronicles and not the prophets.

▣ "they must bear their guilt" See 4:15; 5:15; 13:1,16; Micah 5:10-15).

▣ "their altars. . . their *sacred pillars*" These objects of worship are often associated with the idolatrous fertility practices of Ba'al (uplifted stone pillar, i.e., phallic symbol, cf. 3:4; I Kgs. 14:23-24) and Asherah (raised, cut stone altar with a place for a carved stake or live tree).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:3-10

<sup>3</sup>Surely now they will say, “We have no king,  
For we do not revere the LORD.

As for the king, what can he do for us?”

<sup>4</sup>They speak *mere* words,

With worthless oaths they make covenants;

And judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.

<sup>5</sup>The inhabitants of Samaria will fear

For the calf of Beth-aven.

Indeed, its people will mourn for it,

And its idolatrous priests will cry out over it,

Over its glory, since it has departed from it.

<sup>6</sup>The thing itself will be carried to Assyria

As tribute to King Jareb;

Ephraim will be seized with shame

And Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel.

<sup>7</sup>Samaria will be cut off *with* her king

Like a stick on the surface of the water.

<sup>8</sup>Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed;

Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars;

Then they will say to the mountains,

“Cover us!” And to the hills, “Fall on us!”

<sup>9</sup>From the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel;

There they stand!

Will not the battle against the sons of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?

<sup>10</sup>When it is My desire, I will chastise them;

And the peoples will be gathered against them

When they are bound for their double guilt.

**10:3 “We have no king”** This may reflect I Sam. 8:4-9. Hosea often speaks against the northern monarchy (cf. 7:3-7; 8:4, 10, 13; 13:9-11). The original dynasty (Jeroboam I) did not last. There were numerous changes in leadership (i.e., king).

**10:4 “They speak *mere* words, With worthless oaths they make covenants”** This is a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, emphasizing that they speak (BDB 150, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) human words with no meaning (cf. Isa. 58:13). This contrasted their oaths/covenant to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19-20) with their oaths/covenants to foreign powers. Israel’s oaths cannot be trusted. They are based solely on self interest.

The second line of poetry has two INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES. This construction draws attention to this second line and not the VERB of line one.

▣ **“judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds”** This may refer to the injustice of the judges (cf. Amos 2:6; 5:12; 6:12).

**10:5 “Samaria”** Samaria, the mountain ridge fortress, was built by Omri (cf. I Kgs. 16:24) and became Israel’s capital. After 922 B.C., when the kingdom split, the Northern Ten Tribes under Jeroboam I were known as Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria, and the Southern two tribes, under Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, were known as Judah.



**NASB** “will fear”  
**NKJV** “fear”  
**NRSV, NJB** “tremble”  
**TEV** “will be afraid”  
**NET Bible** “will lament”

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 158, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to dread.” This VERB can mean “reverential respect” (i.e., worship) or “fear” (i.e., it being taken away, cf. vv. 5-6). Many scholars suppose an emendation based on the parallelism “to lament” (BDB 626).

▣ **“the calf of Beth-aven”** This refers to the golden calf that Jeroboam I set up at Bethel (cf. 4:15; 5:8; I Kgs. 16:28-29). The golden calves (Bethel and Dan) were not meant to be idols, but representatives of YHWH (cf. Exod. 32:4-5). The term Beth-aven (BDB 110), which is translated “house of vanity,” is a word play on Bethel (“house of God”). This is an example of Jews corrupting a name (god or place) because of its association with idolatry.



**NASB, NRSV** “idolatrous priests”  
**NKJV** “its priests”  
**TEV** “the priests who serve the idol”  
**NJB** “its idol-priests”

This refers to the priests at the royal sites of Bethel and Dan being addressed as Ba’al’s priests (cf. II Kgs. 23:5; Zeph. 1:4).

These Hebrew consonants *kmr* have several meanings.

1. to be warm (or blackened) BDB I
2. to be black (from Syriac) BDB II
3. to lay prostrate, BDB III
4. a snare or net

These consonants are the regular term for “priests” in Canaan and Akkadian. These priests of the north were seen by Hosea as foreign priests!



**NASB** “cry out over it”  
**NKJV** “shriek for it”  
**NRSV** “wail over it”  
**NRSV (footnote)** “exult” (Hebrew)  
**TEV** “will weep over it”  
**NJB** “they exult in its glory”

The MT has “will rejoice” (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT), but it may be used in sarcasm.

▣ **“its glory”** This term (BDB 458 II) is usually used of YHWH (cf. I Sam. 4:21-22), but here it is used in a sarcastic sense of a calf-idol that originally was meant to represent YHWH, but had long since come to represent Ba’al.

**10:6 “King Jareb”** This seems to be a reference to Tiglath-pileser III. It is literally a metaphor meaning “the Great King,” literally “a king that contends” (BDB 937, cf. 5:13).

▣ **“Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel”** The VERB (BDB 202, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used also in 2:5 and 4:19. Idolatry made them “ashamed.”

Their faulty counsel (BDB 420) was mentioned earlier in 7:12 (cf. Jer. 7:24). There have been several other suggested options for “counsel.”

1. its disobedience
2. its wooden idol (cf. 10:5)

The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, and NJB have “wooden idol.”

**10:7 “Samaria will be cut off *with* her king”** The VERB (BDB 198, KB 225, *Niphal* PERFECT) means to remove, to destroy (cf. v. 8). YHWH allowed a northern king because of the arrogance of Rehoboam, but he did evil in His sight by setting up the golden calves. Now He will remove him in His wrath (cf. 13:11).

▣

NASB “Like a stick on the surface of the water”

NKJV “Like a twig on the water”

NRSV, TEV “Like a chip on the face of the waters”

NJB “Like a straw drifting on the water”

The Hebrew here is very difficult. It can refer to a piece (twig or splinter) of wood (BDB 893 II, cf. Joel 1:7) or “foam” (Vulgate).

**10:8 “the high places of Aven”** This means “vanity” or “nothingness” (BDB 19). This term is often applied by the Jews as a word play to corrupt place names and the names of people who were involved in idolatry.

The “high places” can refer to (1) the top of hills (i.e., threshing floors) or (2) the raised, cut stone altars of local Ba’al shrines (cf. 4:13).

▣ **“Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars”** This may be a reference to a curse (cf. Gen. 3:18) or a sign of non-use (cf. 9:6).

▣ **“say to the mountains,**

**‘Cover us!’ And to the hills ‘Fall on us’”** The first VERB (BDB 491, KB 487) is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE. The second VERB (BDB 656, KB 709) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This is used in Luke 23:30 and Rev. 6:16 as an expression of the horror at God’s judgment. Here there may be a theological connection between “mountains” and “hills” and Ba’al worship.

**10:9 “From the days of Gibeah you have sinned”** This could be another anti-monarchical statement because this was Saul’s hometown and the site of his first sin against God (cf. I Sam. 13:8-14). It could also be a reference to the sins recorded in Judges 19-21.

▣ **“When it is My desire”** This phrase (BDB 16) has no VERB. It seems to be a way to express God’s will (i.e., judgment).

Hosea, the second writing prophet, depicts God in very emotional (anthropomorphic) metaphors.

1. wild beast, 5:14; 13:7,8
2. hate, 9:15
3. strong desire to judge, 10:10
4. anger, 11:9; 13:11

Human language describing God is always metaphorical and analogical. Humans are sinful, temporal, and restricted to this planet. Our vocabulary and mental ability cannot fathom an eternal, holy, personal being!

▣ **“I will chastise them”** The VERB (BDB 415, KB 418, *Qal* IMPERFECT) generally means “educate” or “inform” (morally) by discipline. Here it refers to discipline (i.e., judgment) because of covenant violations.

▣ **“the peoples will be gathered”** God will gather (BDB 62, KB 74, *Pual* PERFECT) the nations (BDB 766) to judge His people.

▣ **“double guilt”** Literally this is “two of their iniquities.” The phrase “double guilt” comes from the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate. It could refer to (1) a play on the name Ephraim (“double fruitful”); (2) the two sins of following Ba’al and forsaking YHWH (cf. Jer. 2:13); or (3) the golden calves set up at Bethel and Dan.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:11-15**

<sup>11</sup>**Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh,  
But I will come over her fair neck *with a yoke*;  
I will harness Ephraim,  
Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself.**

<sup>12</sup>**Sow with a view to righteousness,  
Reap in accordance with kindness;  
Break up your fallow ground,  
For it is time to seek the LORD  
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.**

<sup>13</sup>**You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice,  
You have eaten the fruit of lies.  
Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors,**

<sup>14</sup>**Therefore a tumult will arise among your people,  
And all your fortresses will be destroyed,  
As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,  
When mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children.**

<sup>15</sup>**Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness.  
At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.**

**10:11 “Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh”** This poetic line refers to the easier task of threshing out the grain. The following lines prophesy that she will be made to do the difficult work of plowing (i.e., yoke on her neck).

▣ **“Judah will plow”** This refers to a future series of Babylonian exiles (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.).

▣ **“Jacob will harrow for himself”** The VERB (BDB 961, KB 1306, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is parallel to “plow.” It is also used in Job 39:10 and Isa. 28:24. Jacob may refer to:

1. another name for Israel
2. a way to refer to all the tribes (i.e., Israel and Judah).

**10:12 “Sow with a view to righteousness,**

**Reap in accordance with kindness”** What a surprising verse in this judgment context. There are three *Qal* IMPERATIVES (sow, reap, till [break]). This VERB seems to be an appeal by the prophet (or God Himself) for the people to return to God (cf. Prov. 11:18). These first three poetic lines state a universal truth, “whatsoever we sow, that shall we reap” (cf. 8:7; 12:2; Job 4:8; Ps. 126:6; Prov. 11:18; 22:8; Jer. 4:3; II Cor. 9:6 Gal. 6:7).

The term “kindness” (BDB 338) is the Hebrew term *hesed*, which means “covenant loyalty,” both toward God and one’s covenant partners (cf. 4:1; 6:4-6; 12:7; Micah 6:8). See Special Topic: *Hesed* at 2:19.

▣ **“Break up your fallow ground”** This is a metaphor of repentance (cf. Jer. 4:3).

▣ **“For it is time to seek the LORD”** The VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT. It has a covenant connotation (e.g., Deut. 4:29). YHWH can be found if people truly seek Him (e.g., Jer. 29:13). Seeking YHWH is sinful Israel’s only hope of avoiding destruction (cf. 10:12; Isa. 55:6-7; Amos 5:4,6). The proper time to seek the Lord is now!

▣ **“Until He comes to rain righteousness on you”** This is a surprising agricultural metaphor (i.e., annual and regular rainfall) for spiritual reality (i.e., righteousness). This is a recurrent theme in the prophets (e.g., 2:19-20; 6:3; 14:5; Ps. 72:6-7; Isa. 44:3-4; 45:8; Joel 2:23; 3:18).

**10:13 “You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice”** God’s desire for a “righteous” and “loyal” people (v. 12), using an agricultural metaphor (“break up fallow ground”), has unfortunately resulted in exactly the opposite fruit—wickedness and injustice.

They have “trusted” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT) in their own power instead of YHWH’s. the result (vv. 14-15) is violent destruction!

▣ **“Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors”** The historical setting was a time of great prosperity and military victory (see Introduction). Israel (like Judah, 8:14) was trusting in her military power (cf. Jer. 9:23-24).

The phrase “your way” (BDB 202) is translated “chariots” (cf. 14:3) in the Septuagint, which makes for good parallelism, but requires an emendation. It may be possible to read the consonants from a Ugaritic root as “power.”

**10:14 “As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel”** This is possibly a reference to Shalmaneser III who reigned from 858-824 B.C. He is referred to in the Bible in II Kgs. 17:3 and 18:9. It could also refer to Salamanu, King of Moab, who was a contemporary with Tiglath-pileser III. Beth-arbel is an unknown site and the exact historical reference is uncertain.

▣ **“mothers were dashed in pieces with their children”** This was a gruesome aspect of Assyrian exile. The army killed all of the very old and very young who could not travel into exile. This, of course, included pregnant women. This was done to shock and traumatize the population (cf. 13:16).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 9 AND 10

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the references to fertility worship in Hosea 9 and 10.
2. List the cities that are referred to in 9:9-10:15.
3. Will Israel be exiled to Egypt or Assyria? Explain 11:5 compared to 7:10; 8:13; 9:3.
4. Explain the Hebrew's use of "shame."

# HOSEA 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Continuing Love for Israel	Because of Constant Rebellion, the Judgment of the Lord is Upon Israel (4:1-14:9)	God's Love for His Rebellious People	God's Love Despised: His Vengeance
11:1-4	11:1-7	11:1-4	11:1-6
11:5-7		11:5-9	God's Love Stronger than His Vengeance 11:7-9
11:8-11	11:8-9 11:10-12	11:10-11	The Return From Exile 11:10-11
God's Anger with Judah's Sin		Israel and Judah are Condemned	
11:12-12:14		11:12-12:6	11:12

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-4**

<sup>1</sup>When Israel *was* a youth I loved him,  
And out of Egypt I called My son.

<sup>2</sup>The more they called them,

**The more they went from them;**

**They kept sacrificing to the Baals**

**And burning incense to idols.**

**<sup>3</sup>Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,**

**I took them in My arms;**

**But they did not know that I healed them.**

**<sup>4</sup>I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love,**

**And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws;**

**And I bent down *and* fed them.**

**11:1-4** Hosea is characterized by its fresh and varied metaphors to describe God and His actions. Two of the most powerful and personal metaphors are (1) God as faithful lover, chapters 1-3 and (2) God as loving parent (male and female), chapter 11. God has revealed himself to fallen humanity by choosing things that humans have experienced—deeply personal and powerfully moving things—and has said, “I am like that to you.” This is why family metaphors and analogies are used so often in the Bible in relation to God. All humans have experienced the deep feelings of human love and many have experienced parenthood. Through these experiences God has clearly revealed himself and the depth of His love and loyalty (cf. 11:8-9).

**11:1 “When Israel was a youth I loved him”** This is very similar in emphasis to 9:10 and 10:1. It focuses on YHWH’s love and choice of the descendants of Abraham (cf. Deut. 4:32-40) in Egypt to uniquely be His people (cf. Amos 3:2, which reflects Exod. 19:5-6), which was a prophetic fulfillment of Gen. 15:12-21.

God chose a man to choose a family to choose a nation to represent Him to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). Out of this family would come the Messiah (i.e., typological use of this text in Matt. 2:15 in the life of Jesus).

▣ **“And out of Egypt I called My son”** The term “son” in the singular in the OT can refer to (1) the nation of Israel (e.g., 1:10; Exod. 4:22); (2) the King of Israel (e.g., II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7); or (3) the Messiah (e.g., Ps. 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). This reference is used of Jesus as a child being taken to Egypt to protect Him from Herod in Matt. 2:15, however, in this context it refers to the nation of Israel. Notice the emphasis on election, “I called” (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT). In the OT election is primarily for service (Israel’s place in YHWH’s redemptive plan), while in the NT it is primarily for salvation (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

**11:2 “they called them”** This refers to the prophets (cf. LXX translation and II Kgs. 17:13-18; Isa. 6:10; Jer. 7:25-26). However, Israel acted just like human teenagers. The more God called them (the Septuagint and the Syriac have “God” instead of “they”), the more they did just the opposite (cf. v. 7b).

David A. Hubbard, *Hosea* (Tyndale OT Commentaries), re-divides line 2 and thinks that “they” refers to tempters like the “Ba’al of Peor fertility-worshipping women of Num. 25. The lines would become “the more they called them, The more they went from me” (p. 187). The Jerome Biblical Commentary asserts “they” refers to all the local Ba’al altars (p. 262). To a wayward son, bent on self and sin, the call of idolatry was louder and stronger than the call of a loving parent (i.e., Prodigal Son of Luke 15).

Whichever theory is true the settled wayward character is emphasized! Her past commitments are lost in her current desires.

▣ **“Ba’al”** This refers to the male Canaanite fertility god. For a full discussion of the Canaanite pantheon see *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, by William Foxwell Albright.

▣ **“They kept sacrificing to the Baals, And burning incense to idols”** These two lines of poetry are parallel. Nothing is known of animal sacrifices to Ba’al, therefore, the sacrifices (BDB 256, KB 261, *Piel IMPERFECT*) may refer to offering incense (BDB 882, KB 1094, *Piel IMPERFECT*).

There was some sacrificing of children to Molech, the fertility fire god. This may be referred to in Hosea in some of the passages about the slaughter of children.

**11:3 “it was I who taught Ephraim to walk”** This is a rare VERB form (BDB 920, KB 1183, *Tiphel*) with an unusual meaning for the root (“foot”). Verses 3 and 4 show the love of God expressed in the metaphor or analogy of YHWH as a loving parent, both father and mother (emendation of v. 4b,c). The father either (1) went before His child to walk or (2) went before His child in example and/or protection.

▣ **“But they did not know that I healed them”** Can you feel the pain of YHWH in this phrase? His own people, who He saved out of Egypt and uniquely revealed Himself to, were attributing His love gifts to them as coming from the Canaanite fertility gods! Wounded love!

The VERB “healed” (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal PERFECT*) is often used for God forgiving sin, as seen in Hosea 5:13, 6:1; 7:1; Exod. 15:26; the parallelism of Ps. 163:3; and Isa. 1:5-6, examples of national sin described in terms of a physical disease (also note Isa. 53:5 and I Pet. 2:24-25).

**11:4 “with cords of a man, with bonds of love”** This refers “to a child-training leash.” God’s discipline is as much a sign of His love as any of His mercy actions (cf. Heb. 12:5-13). Loving parental discipline is the key to understanding God’s actions and guidelines to sinful mankind, who are in the process of destroying themselves in the freedom and knowledge of the tree of good and evil. He will not let us go unchallenged! He will not stand by and let us destroy ourselves.

▣ **“yoke”** The Hebrew term “yoke” (BDB 760) seems out of place in this context (however, it could refer to 10:11). Yet, by changing a vowel and doubling the last consonant, it is possible to insert the Hebrew term “infant” (BDB 760, cf. 14:1), which seems to fit the context of parental care much better (cf, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 401). A possible translation would be like the New American Bible and The Jerusalem Bible “as one who lifts an infant to his cheek.” This is possibly a reference to YHWH as a nursing mother.

God is not a male or female. He is an eternal, personal, spirit present throughout time, space, and all dimensions of reality. He created male and female as a means of reproduction on this planet. He incorporates the best of both in Himself.

There are several places where this femininity is specific.

1. Gen. 1:2, “brooded over the waters” - this is a female bird word
2. Hosea 1:4; Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 - God as a nursing mother

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:5-7**

**<sup>5</sup>They will not return to the land of Egypt;**

**But Assyria—he will be their king**

**Because they refused to return to Me.**

**<sup>6</sup>The sword will whirl against their cities,**

**And will demolish their gate bars**

**And consume *them* because of their counsels.**

**<sup>7</sup>So My people are bent on turning from Me.**

**Though they call them to *the One on high*,**

**None at all exalts *Him*.**

**11:5 “They will not return to the land of Egypt”** This is a seeming contradiction to 7:16; 8:13; 9:3. There are two possible theories of interpretation: (1) Egypt is a symbol for slavery or (2) Egypt is another example of political alliances. Theory 2 seems to fit the context of chapter 11:5 best, however, theory 1 seems to fit the context of the other references better.

It is possible to translate “not” as “surely,” this would solve the seeming contradiction.

▣ **“But Assyria—he will be their king”** This is a clear prophecy of the Assyrian exile (cf. 7:11; 8:9-10; 9:3; 10:6). It is possible that the verse refers to rejecting Israel’s trust in political alliances with both Egypt and Assyria. Assyria as king may reflect 10:3. Israel wanted a king like the nations (cf. I Sam. 8:5); now they had one!

▣ **“they refused to return to Me”** The term “return” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is the OT term for repentance. See Special Topic: Repentance in the OT at Amos 1:3.

The pain of God’s heart can be seen in the VERB “refused” (BDB 549, KB 540, *Piel* PERFECT). It was not ignorance on Israel’s part for which they were culpable, but open-eyed rebellion against YHWH and His law (cf. 7:13-15; 8:1,12).

**11:6 “The sword will whirl against their cities”** The VERB (BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of dancing, the turbulence of storms, or writhing in the pain of childbirth. Here it is the flashing, whirling action of a personified sword as it devastates the cities of Israel.

▣ **“gate bars”** This term (BDB 94) refers to (1) the wooden beams used to secure city gates at night (Israel was trusting in her fortifications, cf. 8:14; 10:14) or (2) to divination (cf. Isa. 44:25; Jer. 50:36) and as parallel to “counsel.”

▣ **“because of their counsels”** This could refer to (1) the policies of Jeroboam I, who set up the golden calves; (2) the ongoing policies of the different dynasties who succeeded him; or (3) the decision of political advisors. This is referred to several times in Hosea (e.g., 7:12).

**11:7 “So My people are bent on turning from Me”** The VERB (BDB 1067, KB 1736, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), which is used literally in Deut. 28:66, “to hang something before someone,” here is a metaphor for a tendency or natural leaning toward someone/something (but not YHWH).

The term “turning from” (BDB 1000) means to “turn back” or “apostatize” (cf. 14:5; in Jer. 3:6 of Israel; in Jer. 2:18; 3:22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7 of Judah, often translated “faithless”). Instead of turning to God in repentance they turned away from Him in apostasy!

The opening “My people” is an allusion to 1:9 (i.e., “Lo-Ammi”), but with the future hope of the full hope of 2:23 (i.e., Ruhamah, cf. 1:6 and Ammi)!

▣ **“None at all exalts Him”** This is the problem of fallen mankind, especially the covenant people (e.g., Isa. 53:6 a,b, quoted in the NT by Peter in I Pet. 2:25).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:8-11**

**<sup>8</sup>How can I give you up, O Ephraim?  
How can I surrender you, O Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?  
My heart is turned over within Me,**

**All My compassions are kindled.**

**<sup>9</sup>I will not execute My fierce anger;**

**I will not destroy Ephraim again.**

**For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,**

**And I will not come in wrath.**

**<sup>10</sup>They will walk after the LORD,**

**He will roar like a lion; Indeed He will roar**

**And His sons will come trembling from the west.**

**<sup>11</sup>They will come trembling like birds from Egypt**

**And like doves from the land of Assyria;**

**And I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD.**

**11:8 “How can I give you up”** The heart of YHWH is breaking (cf. third set of parallel lines in this verse, cf. 6:4) as His rebellious child turns away from a loyal loving parent. In the OT a child like this could be stoned to death (cf. Deut. 21:18-21). How or where do justice and love meet?

▣ **“How can I surrender you”** This VERB (BDB 171, KB 545, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means “to deliver up” or “give over.” This word is used only three times in the OT and only in Gen. 14:20 with a similar meaning.

▣ **“Admah. . .Zeboiim”** These are cities of the Plain were identified and destroyed for their wickedness along with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 10:19; 19:24-25; Deut. 29:23). They no longer existed; God must judge Israel, but not to extinction.

▣ **“My heart is turned over within Me”** This VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Niphal* PERFECT) is the general word for “to turn” or “overturn.” It is used to describe God’s overthrow of the cities of the Plain (alluded to in the previous two parallel lines of v. 8) in Gen. 19:21,25,29; Deut. 29:22. It is not that God has changed His anger toward Israel’s sin and rebellion, but that His love and mercy will provide a future salvation. This is the essence of the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38, which is based on the character of God, the work of the Messiah, and the wooing of the Spirit, not human performance of an external code. God has changed His ways of dealing with fallen humanity (cf. a second possible meaning of the VERB, TEV, NIV, NET Bible).

▣ **“All My compassions are kindled”** This term for “compassions” (BDB 637) is used in only three places in the OT, Isa. 57:18; Zech. 1:13; and here. The VERB “kindled” (BDB 485, KB 481, *Niphal* PERFECT) means “to grow warm or tender,” and was originally used of heating fruit in the ground to ripen it (e.g., Gen. 43:30; I Kgs 3:26; and here).

**11:9 “I will not execute My fierce anger”** The CONSTRUCT “fierce anger” (BDB 354 and 60) is also found in 8:5 (e.g., Exod. 32:12 at the golden calf of Aaron; Num. 25:4 at Israel’s idolatry at Shittim; Num. 32:13-15 at Israel’s lack of faith about entering the Promised Land; Josh. 7:26 at Achan’s sin at Ai; Deut. 13:17 at idolatry of a city and many more).

▣ **“I will not destroy Ephraim again”** God chooses to have mercy (cf. Jer. 26:3). But this does not mean that they were not punished (cf. v. 10a; Jer. 30:11).

▣ **“For I am God”** This is the name *El* (BDB 42 II). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

▣ **“not man”** This should go without saying (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Job 9:32), but in our day the physicalness of God is asserted as the model of “image and likeness” in Gen. 1:26-27. God is spirit! God is holy (this context is the only place in Hosea that this characteristic is attributed to YHWH, cf. 11:12).

▣ **“the Holy One in your midst”** This (BDB 899, 872) is similar in meaning to the term, “Immanuel” which means “God with us” (BDB 769, cf. Isa. 6:12; Isa. 7:14). The Bible begins with God and humans in a garden (cf. Gen. 1-2) together and ends with God and humans in a garden together (cf. Rev. 21-22). The essence of biblical faith is God and His highest creation in fellowship, not only spiritually but physically. Humans were created for fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). There was never meant to be a transcendent and immanent distinction. Only human sin caused the need!

▣

NASB **“And I will not come in wrath”**

NKJV **“And I will not come in terror”**

NRSV (footnote) **“I will not enter the city”**

TEV, NJB **“I will not come to you in anger”**

This ambiguous Hebrew phrase can be understood in several ways depending on the Hebrew root:

1. “to burn” or “to consume” (BDB 128)
2. “to remove” or “to destroy” (BDB 128)
3. “with” plus “agitation” or “wrath” (BDB 786)
4. MT, “and I will not enter the city” (VERB BDB 97, OBJECT BDB 746 II), which would link it to 8:14; 10:14, YHWH’s presence demanded judgment

**11:10 “He will roar like a lion”** “Roar” here does not refer to an act of violence on the part of a wild animal, but a parent calling her little ones home.

▣ **“And His sons will come trembling from the west”** There may be a word sound play between YHWH’s “fierce anger” (BDB 354) and “they will come trembling” (BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used twice, cf. 10:11). This term is used (1) in Gen. 42:28 at fear over an act of God; (2) in I Sam. 10:4 at fearful respect of God’s prophet; and (3) in I Sam. 21:1 as fear in the presence of King David. The ADJECTIVE is used of awe and reverence at God’s word in Isa. 66:2; Ezra 9:4; 10:3.

The direction of the coming “west” (literally “the sea”) is surprising since Assyria is to the east. Some scholars see vv. 10 and 11 as a return from three directions (i.e., from everywhere, cf. Isa. 11:11-12).

1. the islands and coast land at Palestine, v. 10
2. Egypt, v. 11
3. Assyria, v. 11

**11:11 “They will come. . .from Egypt. . .from the land of Assyria”** Many Jews fled Egypt during the Babylonian invasion and exile. God will bring His people home!

▣ **“I will settle them in their houses”** This is a reference to one of the promises of God mentioned in the cursing and blessing section of Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:12**

<sup>12</sup>Ephraim surrounds Me with lies

And the house of Israel with deceit;

**Judah is also unruly against God,  
Even against the Holy One who is faithful.**

**11:12** The Massoretic Text lists verse 12 with chapter 12. Context confirms this! The last phrase of verse 12 is one of the central passages of the entire book (cf. 6:6; 8:7). It emphasizes God’s faithfulness and Israel’s faithlessness. This is the tension between an unconditional (God’s character) and conditional covenant (human obedience).

▣ **“Ephraim surrounds Me with lies”** The VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT) was used earlier in 7:2, where Israel’s evil deeds surround them.

Israel’s lies could be (cf. 7:13)

1. covenant violations (broken promises)
2. political counsel (foreign alliances, 7:3)
3. religious divination (idol-priests)
4. false prophets (prosperity and security)
5. false information about YHWH

▣

**NASB** “Judah is also unruly against God”

**NKJV, NRSV** “Judah still walks with God”

**TEV** “the people of Judah are still rebelling against me”

**NJB** “(But Judah still is on God’s side)”

The Hebrew is ambiguous. The question remains, “Are the last two poetic lines in parallel or in contrast?” Is Judah contrasted with a sinful Israel or are Judah and Israel contrasted with a faithful Holy God?

Some scholars see the VERB as “wander” or “roam” (BDB 923, e.g., *Hiphil*, Gen. 27:40; *Qal*, Jer. 2:31); others see it as (BDB 921, *Qal*, Isa. 14:2; Ezek. 34:4; *Hiphil*, Isa. 41:2).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Define and explain OT election.
2. Why is God described as a husband and a parent?
3. Why are political alliances condemned in all the OT prophets?

# HOSEA 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Anger with Judah's Sin		Israel and Judah are Condemned	
11:12-12:8	Rebellion and Restoration (12:1-14:9)	11:12-12:6	Political and Religious Perversity of Israel
	12:1		12:1-2
	12:2-6		Against Jacob and Ephraim
		Further Words of Judgment	12:3-9
	12:7-9	12:7-9	
12:9-14			Reconciliation
	12:10-14	12:10-11	12:10-11
			New Threats
		12:12-14	12:12-14

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Ephraim feeds on wind,

And pursues the east wind continually;  
He multiplies lies and violence.  
Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria,  
And oil is carried to Egypt.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD also has a dispute with Judah,  
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;  
He will repay him according to his deeds.

<sup>3</sup>In the womb he took his brother by the heel,  
And in his maturity he contended with God.

<sup>4</sup>Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed;  
He wept and sought His favor.

He found Him at Bethel  
And there He spoke with us,

<sup>5</sup>Even the LORD, the God of hosts,  
The LORD is His name.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, return to your God,  
Observe kindness and justice,  
And wait for your God continually.

<sup>7</sup>A merchant, in whose hands are false balances,  
He loves to oppress.

<sup>8</sup>And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich,  
I have found wealth for myself;  
In all my labors they will find in me  
No iniquity, which *would be sin*."

<sup>9</sup>But I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt;  
I will make you live in tents again,  
As in the days of the appointed festival.

<sup>10</sup>I have also spoken to the prophets,  
And I gave numerous visions,  
And through the prophets I gave parables.

<sup>11</sup>Is there iniquity *in* Gilead?  
Surely they are worthless.  
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,  
Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps  
Beside the furrows of the field.

**12:1 “feeds. . .pursues”** Both of these VERBS are *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, which speak of continual action.

▣ **“wind”** “Wind” (BDB 924) is a term in both Greek and Hebrew which emphasizes “emptiness” or “vanity” (e.g., Job 7:7; Eccl. 1:14,17; Isa. 41:29) as well as “spirit,” “wind,” or “breath.” It refers to Israel’s attempts to protect herself by foreign alliances (Egypt in II Kgs. 17:4).

▣ **“the east wind”** This probably metaphorically refers to Israel’s continual political alliances with Assyria (cf. 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 13:15; II Kgs. 17:3). However, it might literally refer to the sirocco desert winds that destroy the vegetation and, therefore, are a metaphor of invasion (cf. Isa. 27:8). In Jer. 18:17 and Ezek. 17:10; 19:12; 27:26 it refers to Babylonian invasion.

▣ **“He multiplies lies and violence”** Israel’s lies have been a recurrent theme (cf. 12:12). See note at 7:13.

The term “multiplies,” in the *Hiphil* form, is used several times in Hosea.

1. lavished (multiplied) silver and gold, 2:8
2. multiplied altars for sin, 8:11
3. multiplied fortified cities, 8:14
4. more (multiplied) altars, 10:1
5. multiplied lies and violence, 12:1
6. multiplied visions, 12:10

God’s multiple gifts (#1, #6) were matched by Israel’s multiplied sin!

▣ **“he makes a covenant”** The VERB “makes” is “to cut” (BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Covenants were originally established by cutting an animal into two parts and the covenant parties walking between them (cf. Gen. 15:17). The possible/probable etymological meaning of the Hebrew “covenant” (BDB 136) was “to cut.”

▣ **“with Assyria”** Israel first attempted to resist Assyria, but later tried to make a political alliance with her (cf. II Kgs. 17:3-6).

▣ **“oil is carried to Egypt”** Israel sent “oil” (common in Israel, cf. Deut. 8:8, but not in Egypt) to Egypt as a gift to try to lure Egypt into a political alliance against Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17:4).

**12:2** The term “dispute” (BDB 936) means a legal lawsuit (cf. 2:2; 4:14; Deut. 25:1; II Sam. 15:2,4; Micah 6:2; 7:9). Judah and Jacob are both guilty (cf. 4:9b). Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap (cf. 8:7; 10:12-13; Job 4:8; Ps. 126:5; Prov. 11:18; 22:8-9; II Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7). This negative statement toward Judah may be contextually related to the “negative” (?) state in 11:12c.

**12:3-4** This is a play on the names Jacob and Israel. “Jacob” is defined in Gen. 25:26 as, “one who took his brother by the heel.” The term can also mean “supplanter,” “usurper,” or “deceiver” (BDB 784). The term “Israel” is defined in Gen. 32:28 as “one who contends with God.”

Bethel was once a special holy site where Jacob (Israel) met God. Now Israel had turned it into an especially evil, idolatrous location.

▣ **“he contended with God. . .he wrestled with an angel”** These are parallel. The angel of the Lord is in view as a personal, physical representative of God Himself (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 24:7,40; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-32; Zech. 3:1-2).

**12:5 “the God of hosts”** This verse has three names for the God of Israel. This is a reference to the God of Hosts, which means (1) the “captain of the armies in heaven”; (2) the “head of the heavenly council” (BDB 838, e.g., II Sam. 5:10); or (3) in Babylonian astral worship context it can refer to the stars of heaven, which they saw as supernatural beings who influenced their lives. This is the most common title for God in the post-exilic books (cf. Amos 3:13; 6:14; and 9:5). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

▣ **“The LORD is His name”** This is literally “His memorial” (BDB 271). Names reveal and reflect character traits (e.g., Ps. 135:13). This refers to the name YHWH, which was revealed to Moses in Exod. 3:14. Before this time the patriarchs addressed God as *El Shaddai* (cf. Exod. 6:2-3). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

**12:6** Here is the call to repentance again (“return” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but functioning as a JUSSIVE). And again these special terms reappear (cf. 2:19; 4:1; 6:6; 10:12; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8). Knowing God must result in lifestyle change that reflects His character!

▣ **“Observe. . . wait”** These are both IMPERATIVES:

1. observe, BDB 1036, KB 1501, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. wait, BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (cf. Lam. 3:25; Micah 7:7).

**12:7 “A merchant”** This is a word play on “Canaanite” (BDB 488 II, cf. Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 16:29; 17:4). This seems to be a reference of sarcasm. The term can mean either an ethnic group or a merchant. Israel was acting like the Canaanites (i.e., “false balances,” cf. Prov. 11:1; 20:23; Amos 8:5).

▣ **“He loves to oppress”** This VERB (BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in Deut. 24:14. Oppression of the poor is not allowed among God’s people (cf. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; Amos 4:1; Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:29; Zech. 7:10). This is the opposite of v. 6! This word is often used in a negative sense of Israel loving the wrong things (cf. 4:17-18; 10:11; 12:7; Amos 4:4-5; Micah 3:1-2).

**12:8** Israel thought her dishonestly gained wealth could save her (cf. 8:14).

▣

NASB **“No iniquity, which *would be* sin”**

NKJV **“They shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin”**

NRSV **“No offense has been found in me that would be sin”**

TEV **“And no one can accuse us of getting rich dishonestly”**

NJB **“But of all his gains he will keep nothing because of the sin of which he is guilty”**

The Septuagint retranslates this following some Hebrew MSS, “None of his labors shall be found *available* to him by reason of the sins which he has committed,” which seems to be the indictment of the prophet or court prosecutor.

If the MT is retained Israel is asserting she will never bear his guilt.

**12:9 “I have been the LORD your God”** This is the full covenant title of Israel’s God (cf. v. 5; Exod. 20:2).

▣ **“I will make you live in tents again,**

**As in the days of the appointed festival”** This can refer to two opposite interpretations: (1) the wilderness time was seen as the ideal time between God and Israel, (cf. 2:14; 9:10; 11:1-4; Jer. 2:2; Amos 2:10) or (2) in a negative sense as the Jews lived in the make-shift houses during the Feast of Booths (cf. Lev. 23:42-44), God will, in His judgment, make them live in make-shift houses on a permanent basis (opposite of 8:14). The immediate context (i.e., v. 8) demands option #2.

**12:10 “I have also spoken”** This verse asserts that YHWH has adequately revealed Himself and His will to Israel through the prophets (cf. 6:5). He did this in visions and parables. He earlier had revealed Himself through His laws (i.e., the writings of Moses, cf. 4:6; 8:1,11).

The prophets were covenant mediators. They did not bring additional requirements, but turned people’s thoughts back to their commitments to the ancient covenants (i.e., Abraham, the Patriarchs, Moses, David). They check the motives as well as the performance of these covenant stipulations. They draw out the current application and significance of the ancient God-given ways.

- ▣
- NASB, NJB “parables”
- NKJV “symbols”
- NRSV “destruction”
- TEV “warnings”

This is probably the OT background for Jesus’ use of parables (BDB 197 I). The context and emphasis is on God’s active revelation in the life of Israel, but they would not listen (cf. Isa. 6:9-13). Parables both enlighten the believing and confuse the unbelieving (cf. Mark 4:10-12).

Some scholars think the Hebrew means “oracle of doom” (BDB 198 II, cf. 4:5,6; 10:7,15[twice]; NRSV, TEV).

- 12:11**  
NASB, NRSV,  
NJB “iniquity”  
NKJV, TEV “idols”

This is the term *awen*, which can mean “trouble,” “sorrow,” “wickedness,” or “idolatry.” The parallel in the next line, “worthless” (BDB 996), implies that both refer to idolatry (Canaanite fertility worship).

- ▣ “Gilead” Also see 6:8-9.

- ▣
- NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV, TEV “they sacrifice bulls”
- NJB “they sacrifice to bulls”

A better understanding may be “to bulls” (i.e., the golden calf replicas).

- ▣ “Gilgal. . .the heap of stones” This is a play on the term “Gilgal,” which means “circle of stones” (BDB 166). For that matter there may be an intentional word play between “Gilead,” “Gilgal,” and “stone heaps.” Because of Israel’s rebellion, this sacred site will be turned from a memorial to God into a heap of stones (i.e., pieces of the Ba’al pillars) and a plowed field!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:12-14**

- <sup>12</sup>Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram,  
And Israel worked for a wife,  
And for a wife he kept *sheep*.  
<sup>13</sup>But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt,  
And by a prophet he was kept.  
<sup>14</sup>Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger;

**So his LORD will leave his bloodguilt on him  
And bring back his reproach to him.**

**12:12 “Now Jacob”** This seems to relate to vv. 4-6, which relates to the historical life of Jacob (i.e., Israel, cf. Gen. 28-30).

**12:13 “by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt”** This must refer to Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15; 34:10).

**12:14** The nation of Israel is not acting like Israel, but like Jacob and will bear her own sin. The blood guilt may refer to murder or child sacrifice (i.e., to Molech).

# HOSEA 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Relentless Judgment on Israel	Rebellion and Restoration (12:1-14:4)	Final Judgment on Israel	Idolatry Punished
13:1-3	13:1-3	13:1-3	13:1-3 The Punishment for Ingratitude
13:4-8	13:4-13	13:4-8	13:4-8 The End of the Monarchy
13:9-11		13:9-11	13:9-11 The Inevitability of Ruin
13:12-14		13:12-16	13:12-14:1
13:15-16	13:14-16		

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)** ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-3

<sup>1</sup>When Ephraim spoke, *there was* trembling.

He exalted himself in Israel,  
But through Baal he did wrong and died.

<sup>2</sup>And now they sin more and more,  
And make for themselves molten images,  
Idols skillfully made from their silver,  
All of them the work of craftsmen.

They say of them, “Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!”

<sup>3</sup>Therefore they will be like the morning cloud  
And like dew which soon disappears,  
Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor  
And like smoke from a chimney.

**13:1** “When Ephraim spoke *there was* trembling” There are two possible understandings of this verse. This is an unusual use of the term “Ephraim” because it seems not to be a reference to the entire Northern Ten Tribes, but to the arrogance (“He exalted himself,” BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT) of that individual tribe only (e.g., Jdgs. 8:1; 12:1). The fear of this tribe can be seen in that when it spoke, the other tribes “trembled” (BDB 958). Remember that Ephraim and Manasseh are half-tribes because they are the children of Joseph (cf. Gen. 48), but they represent the largest tribe, both geographically and numerically.

The second possibility is that Ephraim stands for the leaders and king of the capital, Samaria. It was the first king who set up the golden calves as a rival to the Jerusalem temple (cf. I Kgs. 16:31). It was Ahab and Jezebel who brought Ba’al worship to Israel (cf. I Kgs. 16:31).

▣ **“Baal”** This refers to the male fertility god of the Canaanite pantheon. For an excellent reference see William Foxwell Albright’s book, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, page 72ff.

▣ **“he did wrong and died”** This refers to the powers and preeminence of the tribe ceasing (“died” BDB 559, KB 562, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used metaphorically of God’s judgment, e.g., of Moab in Amos 2:2; of Israel in Ezek. 18:31).

**13:2** “molten images. . . idols” This may refer to the golden calves of Bethel and Dan (cf. line 5). However, these descriptions do not exactly fit them. They were made of wood and overlaid with gold. Therefore, this may refer to images at local Ba’al shrines (cf. 2:8; Isa. 46:6; Jer. 10:4).

▣ **“Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves”** We learn from I Kgs. 19:18 and Job 31:27 that kissing the idol was part of Ba’al worship (the VERB could be an IMPERFECT or a JUSSIVE, NASB). This is one example of how the supposed worship of YHWH, by means of the golden calves, was corrupted into Ba’al worship. They worshiped what they made that could not see, hear, or act!

**13:3** There are four elements mentioned which describe Israel in her transitoriness and rebellion, which will be quickly judged and removed: morning cloud, dew, chaff, and smoke.

▣ **“chimney”** Literally this is “window” (BDB 70). Chimneys were non-existent in the ancient world. The buildings had small windows close to the ceiling for the purpose of letting the smoke out. Many homes placed the fire in the center of the room and allowed the smoke to exit at whatever window was possible.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:4-8**

<sup>4</sup>Yet *I have been* the LORD your God  
Since the land of Egypt;  
And you were not to know any god except Me,  
For there is no savior besides Me.  
<sup>5</sup>I cared for you in the wilderness,  
In the land of drought.  
<sup>6</sup>As *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied,  
And being satisfied, their heart became proud;  
Therefore they forgot Me.  
<sup>7</sup>So I will be like a lion to them;  
Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.  
<sup>8</sup>I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs,  
And I will tear open their chests;  
There I will also devour them like a lioness,  
As a wild beast would tear them.

**13:4 “Yet I have been the LORD your**

**God Since the land of Egypt”** This is how YHWH introduced His Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). This again is a reference to the Exodus as the courtship and marriage time between God and Israel (cf. vv. 5; 2:14; 9:10; 12:9).

▣ **“you were not to know any god except Me”** This phrase is in the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:3; Deut. 5:7). The VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT) implies intimate, personal relationship (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLES, e.g., Isa. 43:3; 11:14; 45:15,21-22; 63:8).

▣ **“For there is no savior besides Me”** YHWH was the only One and the only Redeemer (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, e.g., Isa. 43:3,11,14; 45:15,21-22; 63:8).

**13:5 “I cared for you in the wilderness”** The VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) is literally “to know” (i.e., meaning chosen and given special knowledge of YHWH). God’s special care of Israel showed His love (cf. Deut. 32:10).

The ancient Greek and Syriac translations have “feed” (BDB 944) instead of “cared.”

▣  
NASB, NRSV      **“In the land of drought”**  
NKJV              **“in the land of great drought”**  
TEV                **“desert land”**  
NJB                 **“in a land of dreadful drought”**

This CONSTRUCT means “intense heat and dryness.” It is a way of alluding to YHWH’s supernatural provision of water during the wilderness wandering period (e.g., Exod. 15:22-26; 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13; 21:16).

**13:6** What a tragedy! God’s blessings (“satisfied” [twice] BDB 959, KB 1302, the first *Qal* IMPERFECT and the second *Qal* PERFECT) turned into self-centered pride and spiritual fatness (cf. Deut. 6:10-12; 8:11-20; 32:13-15).

▣ **“Therefore they forgot Me”** Here is the tragedy. They took the physical, but missed the truly valuable—a personal relationship with the only Creator, Redeemer God (cf. 2:13; 4:6; ;8:14; Deut. 8:14; 31:16,20; 32:15,18; Jdgs. 10:6).

**13:7-8** These are references to wild animals as metaphors of God’s judgment: lion, leopard, bear, and lioness (e.g., Jer. 2:15; 4:7; 5:6; Ps. 7:2; 50:22). This animal attack contrasts the shepherding imagery of v. 6.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>*It is your destruction, O Israel,  
That you are against Me, against your help.*  
<sup>10</sup>Where now is your king  
That he may save you in all your cities,  
And your judges of whom you requested, “Give me a king and princes”?  
<sup>11</sup>I gave you a king in My anger  
And took him away in My wrath.

**13:9** **“That you are against Me, against your help”** What an irony! Israel had forsaken her only help (e.g., Jer. 2:17,19). The Greek and Syriac translations have, “For who will help you?”

**13:10-11** This seems to be another reference that relates to Hosea’s negative attitude toward the monarchy (cf. 7:3-7; 8:4,10,13; 10:3), but it may also reflect Deuteronomy 28 (esp. vv. 36,52). The line 11a, “I gave you a king in My anger,” reflects II Sam. 8:4-9. The next line, 11b, represents the exile by Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17:1-6).

**13:10** **“Where now is your king”** The MT has “I want to be your king,” but the ancient translations (Greek, Syriac, and Vulgate) emend the text to read like the NASB.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;  
His sin is stored up.  
<sup>13</sup>The pains of childbirth come upon him;  
He is not a wise son,  
For it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb.  
<sup>14</sup>Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?  
Shall I redeem them from death?  
O Death, where are your thorns?  
O Sheol, where is your sting?  
Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

**13:12** **“bound up”** The VERB (BDB 864, KB 1058, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means the retention of guilt.

▣ **“His sin is stored up”** The VERB (BDB 860, KB 1049, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) is a metaphor for “remembered” or “cataloged” (cf. 7:2; 8:13; 9:9).

**13:13** This metaphor (“pains of childbirth” BDB 408, KB 411, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) seems to refer to (1) Israel as an unborn son who is reluctant to come out of the womb and, therefore, is spiritually dead (cf. II Kgs. 19:3; Isa. 37:3) or (2) labor pains as a symbol of judgment (cf. Micah 4:9-10). Israel should have recognized the pain and repented (cf. Isa. 21:3; 26:17).

**13:14 “Shall I ransom. . . Shall I redeem”** These two parallel phrases can be interpreted as INTERROGATIVES (questions, cf. NASB) or as INDICATIVES (statements, cf. NIV). The Septuagint translates them as INDICATIVES and this is quoted by Paul in I Cor. 15:55. However, the Masoretic Text, in context, seems to imply that they are questions (NASB) and they imply judgment (v. 14e NET Bible).

The first VERB (BDB 804, KB 911) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT and second VERB (BDB 145, KB 169) a *Qal* IMPERFECT. See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at 7:13.

▣ **“Sheol”** See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Amos 9:2.

▣ **“thorns. . . sting”** These are metaphors (i.e., “plagues” BDB 184 and “destruction” BDB 881) of the means and fear of death.

▣ **“Compassion will be hidden from My sight”** The NIV translation groups this use with vv. 15-16.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:15-16**

<sup>15</sup>Though he flourishes among the reeds,  
An east wind will come,  
The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness;  
And his fountain will become dry  
And his spring will be dried up;  
It will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article.  
<sup>16</sup>Samaria will be held guilty,  
For she has rebelled against her God.  
They will fall by the sword,  
Their little ones will be dashed in pieces,  
And their pregnant women will be ripped open.

#### **13:15**

NASB “Though he flourishes among the reeds”

NKJV “Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren”

NRSV “Although he may flourish among the rushes”

TEV “Even though Israel flourishes like weeds”

NJB “Though Ephraim bears more fruit than his brothers”

The MT has “though he a son of brothers may bear fruit.” The ancient translations (Greek, Syriac, Latin) have “he causes division between brothers.” Modern translations such as the NASB assume an emendation of “reed” for “brother.”

The VERB “bear fruit” (BDB 826, KB 903, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is a word play on “Ephraim.” However, God’s east wind (Assyria) is coming and he will be fruitful no more (i.e., the water will be dried up). War will devastate his people, his most vulnerable ones (cf. v. 16)!

▣ **“The wind of the LORD”** This phrase refers to Assyria as a chosen tool of God for the chastisement of His people, Israel (cf. 12:1; Isa. 10:5).

**13:16 “They will fall by the sword”** This refers to the collapse of the capital, Samaria, in 722 B.C. by Assyria. This verse vividly describes the horror of ancient warfare (see note at 10:14). The entire population suffers (cf. Isa. 10:24-27).

# HOSEA 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Restored at Last	Rebellion and Restoration (12:1-14:9)	Hosea's Plea to Israel	The Inevitability of Ruin (13:12-14:1)
14:1-3	14:1-3	14:1-3	The Sincere Conversion of Israel to Yahweh
		The Lord Promises New Life for Israel	14:2-9
14:4-7	14:4-7	14:4-8	
14:8	14:8-9	Conclusion	
14:9		14:9	Concluding Admonition
			14:10

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,

For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

<sup>2</sup>Take words with you and return to the LORD.

Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity  
 And receive *us* graciously,  
 That we may present the fruit of our lips.  
<sup>3</sup>Assyria will not save us,  
 We will not ride on horses;  
 Nor will we say again, 'Our god,'  
 To the work of our hands;  
 For in You the orphan finds mercy.”

**14:1 “Return”** This (BDB 996, KB 1427) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. “Return” is a recurrent theme in Hosea (e.g., 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; 7:10,16; 11:5; 12:6; 14:1-2). True repentance brings physical and spiritual benefits! Remember that repentance is related to personal relationship (i.e., “return to the LORD your God,” e.g., 2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6; Amos 4:6,9,10,11) as much as it is to rules!

▣ **“stumbled”** The OT metaphor of footing is used to describe the spiritual life. Sure footing is a sign of a healthy spiritual life, while stumbling (BDB 505, KB 502, *Qal* PERFECT) is a sign of sin (cf. 5:5b; Isa. 3:8; 59:10,14; Jer. 46:6).

**14:2 “Take words with you and return to the LORD”** This sentence (14:1 in MT) has four *Qal* IMPERATIVES and one *Piel* COHORTATIVE. God demands that they respond appropriately!

1. “take” - BDB 542, KB 534
2. “return” - BDB 996, KB 1427
3. “say” - BDB 55, KB 65
4. “present” - BDB 1022, KB 1522 (*Piel* COHORTATIVE)

Notice the repetition of “take.” If Israel will truly repent then God will completely accept and restore them! This refers to the sacrificial system (i.e., MT “our lips as bulls”). To better understand this phrase we should add “take words not lambs.” This affirms the proper restoration of Mosaic sacrifice.

▣ **“Take away all iniquity”** The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is surrounded by IMPERATIVES. This phrase occurs several times (7) in the OT with God as its subject (cf. Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Ps. 32:5; 85:2; Isa. 33:24; Hosea 14:2; Micah 7:18) and always means “remove iniquity” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 162). It is a plea from truly repentant covenant people.

▣

NASB, NKJV	“And receive <i>us</i> graciously”
NRSV	“accept that which is good”
TEV	“accept our prayers”
NJB	“accept our wealth”

The variations in translations are due to the confusion over which meaning *tob* (BDB 373) should carry.

1. good, KB 371 I (LXX, NASB, NRSV, NJB)
2. speech, KB 372 IV (i.e., “take words” line 1; TEV, NET)

▣

NASB	“That we may present the fruit of our lips”
NKJV	“For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips”
NKJV (footnote)	“For we will offer the bull calves of our lips”
NRSV	“and we will offer the fruit of our lips”

TEV “and we will praise you as we have promised”  
 PESHITTA “then he will recompense you for the prayer of your lips”  
 NJB “instead of bulls we will dedicate to you our lips”  
 REB “we shall pay our vows with cattle from our pens”  
 NET Bible “that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls”

The VERB basically means “to complete,” here to pay a vow (e.g., II Sam. 15:7; Ps. 50:14; 66:13; 116:14,18; Isa. 19:21). This refers to confession, prayer, and praise. This passage is used by modern Judaism to rationalize the place of prayer as a substitute for sacrifice (cf. Ps. 50; 69:30-31).

The above translation and interpretation, so popular among Jewish sources, reflects the Septuagint. The MT reads, “offer bulls.” The Hebrew is uncertain and the context must fill in the necessary gaps!

**14:3 “Assyria will not save us”** In this verse there are allusions to political alliances and the things that human leaders tend to trust: (1) foreign alliances (Assyria’s treaties, cf. 5:13); (2) military power (Egyptian horses, cf. Ps. 20:7); and (3) idols (“work of our hands,” i.e., Canaanite fertility gods).

▣ **“To the work of our hands”** Hosea ridicules idolatry in 4:12; 14:3; Isaiah in 2:18,20; 17:7-9; 31:7; and Jeremiah in 10:3-5,8-9,14-15. This attitude reflects Exod. 20:4-5; 34:17; Lev. 19:4; 26:1; Deut. 4:15-19,25; 5:8.

▣ **“For in You the orphan finds mercy”** God is again depicted as a merciful parent as in 11:1-4 (cf. Ps. 68:5; Lam. 5:3). The orphan represents the powerless and vulnerable people of society. God’s people should care for these kinds of people (e.g., Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:11-12; 24:17,19; 26:12-13; 27:19).

The VERB “finds mercy” (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Pual* IMPERFECT) is the same as one of Hosea’s children (negated) in 1:6; 2:4, but mercy is restored in 2:1,19,23 and here! This is a covenant term like “My people” (cf. 1:9 vs. 2:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:4-7**

**<sup>4</sup>I will heal their apostasy,  
 I will love them freely,  
 For My anger has turned away from them.**  
**<sup>5</sup>I will be like the dew to Israel;  
 He will blossom like the lily,  
 And he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*.**  
**<sup>6</sup>His shoots will sprout,  
 And his beauty will be like the olive tree  
 And his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*.**  
**<sup>7</sup>Those who live in his shadow  
 Will again raise grain,  
 And they will blossom like the vine.  
 His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.**

**14:4 “I will heal their apostasy”** In verses 4-8 God speaks! The VERB (BDB 950, KB 1272) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. Healing is an OT metaphor for forgiveness (cf. 5:13; 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; Ps. 103:3; Isa. 57:18; Jer. 3:22).

The term “apostasy” (BDB 1000) is literally “turning back” (cf. 11:7). It is used in Jeremiah for turning away from YHWH (cf. Jer. 2:19; 3:22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7; Judah is called faithless in 3:6,8,11,14; also notice 7:24). If Israel “turns back” (i.e., repents) from sin (cf. 14:1) YHWH will “heal their turning back” (i.e., apostasy) tendencies! His anger has “turned away from them” (cf. Deut. 30:1-10). Notice the series of word plays on *shub* (BDB 996).

▣ **“I will love them freely”** This VERB (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is parallel to heal in line 1. Grace (God’s unchanging character), not merit (humans ever-changing heart and motives), is the key to the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). However, an initial and ongoing response is demanded, not only repentance and faith (cf. Deut. 30; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:21), but also obedience (cf. Luke 6:46) and perseverance (cf. Rev. 2-3).

▣ **“My anger has turned away from them”** The term “anger” (BDB 60) is from “nose” or “face.” Anger can be seen in a red face and hard breathing. Here is an anthropomorphism for God’s deep feelings.

There is a play on the word “turn back” or “return” (BDB 996) in this context:

1. return, v. 1
2. return to, v. 2
3. turn away, v. 4
4. also in v. 7

**14:5 “the dew”** Dew (literal here, not like 6:4; 13:3) is the only source of moisture in Israel between the two rainy periods and is crucial for crops to mature. Verses 5-7 describe the agricultural signs of God’s blessings (cf. Deut. 27-28).

There is a series of JUSSIVES in vv. 5-6:

1. “blossom,” v. 5 - BDB 827, KB 965, *Qal* IMPERFECT - JUSSIVE in meaning
2. “will stake its roots,” v. 5 (i.e., will take root) - BDB 645, KB 697, *Qal* JUSSIVE
3. “sprout” (lit. “go”), v. 6 - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT - JUSSIVE in meaning
4. “will be” - BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE

▣ **“Lebanon”** This is the land north of Israel called Phoenicia, whose capital is Tyre. It was famous for its trees. In this context

1. trees, v. 5 (parallel to city)
2. trees, v. 6 (parallel to olive trees)
3. wine, v. 7 (parallel to vine)

In context, this may be a veiled reference to Ba’al, who Jezebel from Tyre, brought into Israel. The fertility of Lebanon was from YHWH, not Ba’al (cf. v. 8).

**14:6-7 “olive tree. . .grain. . .vine”** The three main crops of Palestine are olive oil, grains, and grapes. YHWH gave them this fertile land (e.g., Deut. 8:7-9; 11:9-12). These were from YHWH, not Ba’al! The restoration of God’s people to the land flowing with milk and honey is described as agricultural abundance (cf. Amos 9:13-15), but in reality it is the intimacy of the interpersonal relationship that is the greatest joy of a restored and renewed people/family!

**14:7 “Those who live in his shadow”** The VERB (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT) means to sit or to dwell. This is a metaphor of (1) God as a mother bird who protects her young under her wings (cf. Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7; Matt. 23:27) or (2) because of the agricultural context of vv. 5-7 and 8, this probably refers to God as a provider of a fruitful tree (cf. v. 8; Ezek. 17:22-24).

It is YHWH, not Ba’al, who is the source of fertility and stability (cf. v. 8).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:8-9

**<sup>8</sup>O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?**

**It is I who answer and look after you.**

**I am like a luxuriant cypress;**

**From Me comes your fruit.**

**<sup>9</sup>Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;**

***Whoever* is discerning, let him know them.**

**For the ways of the LORD are right,**

**And the righteous will walk in them,**

**But transgressors will stumble in them.**

**14:8 “what more have I to do with idols”** This is a Hebrew idiom of rejection (e.g., Jdgs. 11:12; II Sam. 16:10; 19:22; I Kgs. 17:18; II Kgs. 3:13; II Chr. 35:21; John 2:4).

▣ **“It is I who answer”** Idols cannot answer, but YHWH can. This same VERB (BDB 772, KB 851) is used repeatedly in 2:21-22, which sets the stage for the great promise of 2:23!

▣ **“and look after you”** This VERB (BDB 1003 II, KB 1449, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has the connotation of “regard with watchful care,” (root “to bend down to look at”).

This same VERB is used in 13:7 with the connotation of “lie in wait to ambush” (cf. Jer. 5:26). Context is determinative!

The God of Israel is alive and attentive, while the gods of Canaan are lifeless idols of wood and metal who cannot see, hear, speak, move, or help!

▣ **“I am like a luxuriant cypress”** This is the only place in the OT that God is described as a tree.

▣ **“From Me comes your fruit”** YHWH, not Ba’al, is the source of blessing. What a tragedy when God’s people do not know this truth.

**14:9** This is a wisdom proverb much like the book of Revelation, “Let him who has an ear hear.” The VERBS “understand” (BDB 106, KB 619) and “discern” (BDB 106, KB 122) are both JUSSIVES (the second in meaning, but not form). Hosea must be read more than once and enacted!

▣ **“Whoever”** This closing wisdom saying focuses on an individual (not corporate) response to Hosea’s teaching. The nation was unable to repent, but individuals can respond to God’s love appropriately! Choice is an individual covenantal concept (cf. Ezek. 18). We are responsible individually because we must respond to God individually.

▣ **“the ways. . .walk. . .stumble”** Here are three terms that describe the life of faith in metaphors of physical walking (e.g., Prov. 23:19). This reflects OT Wisdom Literature’s “the two ways”: choose God, walk in Him and live or choose sin and walk in it (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Rom. 8:4-5). The early church was originally called “the Way” in Acts. Biblical faith is a lifestyle. Eternal life has observable characteristics.

▣ **“right. . .righteous”** The Hebrew root is a “straight edge.” Today we would say a “ruler.” Therefore, all Hebrew words for “sin” refer to a deviation from this standard. The standard is God Himself! See Special Topic: Righteousness at Hosea 2:19.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 13 AND 14

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Was Hosea against the concept of monarchy?
2. Why does Paul quote 13:14 in I Cor. 15?
3. Describe the literary metaphors used in verse 9.
4. What two metaphors does Hosea use to describe God?
5. What is the central theme of the book?

# INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

## I. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named after the main character, but I think the author was a sage at the royal court in Israel who heard Jonah give an account of the mission to King Jeroboam II and realized the theological implications!
- B. Jonah's name means "dove" (BDB 402). This was a symbol of the nation of Israel:
  - 1. used by David as a reference to God, Psalm 68:13
  - 2. used by David as a reference to Israel, Psalm 74:19 (also Hosea 11:11)
  - 3. used by Song of Songs as an affectionate metaphor, 2:14; 5:2; 6:9
  - 4. used by Hosea as a negative reference to Israel (northern tribes), Hosea 7:11
  - 5. used by Isaiah as a reference to foreign nations that are seeking YHWH, Isa. 60:8

## II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the "latter prophets" (*Ecclesiasticus* 49:10).
- B. "The Twelve" is a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b):
  - 1. they fit on one scroll, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel
  - 2. they represent the twelve tribes or the symbolic number of organization
  - 3. they reflect the traditional view of the book's chronology
- C. The order of "the Twelve" or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. However, there are problems with this view
  - 1. The first six books are different between the MT and LXX.

<u>MT</u>	<u>LXX</u>
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah
  - 2. Internal evidence puts Amos chronologically before Hosea.
  - 3. The date for Joel is highly debated. I list him as an early post-exilic prophet along with Obadiah.
- D. Jonah is read annually on the Jewish fast day of *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement), which made the book well known.

## III. GENRE

- A. It is different from the rest of the Minor Prophets (it is mostly narrative). Except for 2:2-9 it is prose, which is a prayer in poetic form, and a brief prophecy in 3:4.

- B. The genre of Jonah has been debated. Many scholars are uncomfortable with the miraculous, predictive, and theological aspects of the books. Therefore, there has been much speculation about its genre. Many others are surprised by the series of unusual events and ironic reversals!
  1. allegory
  2. Jewish Midrash
  3. parable
  4. typology
  5. purposeful hyperbole (see note at 1:2, also see *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 458-459)
  6. historical narrative similar to the recorded lives of Elijah and Elisha in the books of I & II Kings
  
- C. Jonah's name is rare in Hebrew as was his father's (i.e., Amittai, BDB 54). A man and father by these names are mentioned in II Kgs. 14:25. He lived during the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C.). The Jews have always asserted the historical validity of Jonah (cf. III Macc. 6:8; Tobit 14:4,8; Josephus' *Antiq.* 9.10.2). Jesus referred to Jonah as an historical person, Matt. 12:39-40; 16:4 and Luke 11:29.
  
- D. It is possible that Jonah, like Job, was written and/or expanded by a sage to teach a theological truth (i.e., God's love for all people, even pagans). Most prophetic books record the messages of the prophet, but in Jonah the only prophetic message is five words in 3:4.
  
- E. Jonah is the most missionary book in the OT. The theme of the universal love of God for all humans was a radically new perspective (cf. Isaiah and Micah).

#### IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The author may be the main character. He is introduced in 1:1, like the other Minor Prophets. This is the traditional view.
  
- B. Jonah and his father, Amittai, were rare Hebrew names; both occur in II Kgs. 14:25. He was a prophet from Gath-hepher in Jeroboam II's time (cf. Josh. 19:13), in the tribal area of Zebulun, three miles northeast of Nazareth.
  
- C. It is possible that a Hebrew sage at the royal court of Israel took the life of a historical person and expanded it to present a theological truth (similar to the book of Job). Possibly Jonah was called by the king of Israel (Jeroboam II) to defend himself for preaching to Israel's enemy. Jonah was a royal northern prophet (cf. II Kgs. 14:25). This may explain why he seems so antagonistic to the Ninevites in the book. A sage may have heard his defense and seen the theological implications and expanded and recorded Jonah's experience (conversation with Dr. John Harris, ETBU, 1998).

#### V. DATE

- A. If the author is Jonah of II Kgs. 14:25, then a date during the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C., see Appendix for dates) must be advocated.
  
- B. Jonah is often said to have been written late, but this is usually based on
  1. the rejection of predictive prophecy
  2. the rejection of the supernatural elements of the book as historical
  3. the assumption that it addresses post-exilic national pride and exclusivism

## VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. There are two dates in the history of Assyria that could be the occasion of the repentance of Nineveh:
  - 1. a tendency toward monotheism (i.e., Nebo) during the reign of Adad-Nirari III (805-782 B.C.), the last strong ruler before Tiglath-pileser III took the throne in 745 B.C.)
  - 2. a major plague in Assyria in the reign of Assurdan III (771-754 B.C.)
- B. There are two periods in Jewish history that especially needed Jonah's message:
  - 1. an eighth century date, Israel needed Jonah's call to repent
  - 2. a post-exilic date, Israel needed to recognize her arrogance and national pride

## VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. The chapter divisions show the progression of the plot.
- B. Brief Outline (basically in two parts, chapters 1,2 and 3,4)
  - 1. chapter 1 - God's will rejected and replaced by Jonah's will. God wins!
  - 2. chapter 2 - Jonah repents (poem written in past tense and depicts worship in the temple in Jerusalem).
  - 3. chapter 3 - God's will received; Nineveh repents.
  - 4. chapter 4 - God's character revealed in contrast to Jonah's attitude and action.

## VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. This book clearly demonstrates God's power and sovereignty over nature, nations, and revelation. God has a freedom to act even beyond His covenant with Israel!
- B. In this book the Gentiles (sailors, Ninevites) are religious and seek God, while the Hebrew prophet is rebellious and flees from God.
- C. God's (the main character of the book, as in all OT books) love for all mankind is seen clearly in 3:10 and 4:2,11. God not only loves humans, but also the animals, 4:1. It also demonstrates the power of repentance and faith in YHWH (and His word and prophet).
- D. The hated, cruel Assyrians are accepted by YHWH on the basis of their repentance and faith in Him, 3:5-9. They are not required to become Jews (cf. Acts 15).
- E. Jonah symbolizes God's call to Israel to be a kingdom of priests to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:4-6). Israel became nationalistic, exclusivistic, and prideful instead of evangelistic and redemptive (cf. parable of the Good Samaritan; Luke 10:25-37).
- F. In many ways this book parallels the themes of Jesus' parable about the two sons in Luke 15:11-32, with Jonah (Israel) being the older brother.
- G. Other theories of purpose are
  - 1. the power of repentance (read at *Yom Kippur*, and see Matt. 12:41)
  - 2. how justice (role of prophet) and mercy (character of God) meet
  - 3. the freedom of a just God to act in mercy
  - 4. contrast of God's love and Jewish nationalism
  - 5. God's forgiveness of one generation does not protect other generations

# JONAH 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jonah's Disobedience	Jonah's First Call to Preach to Nineveh	Jonah Disobeys the Lord	Jonah Rebels Against His Mission
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-16
The Storm at Sea			
1:4-9	1:4-6	1:4-5 1:6	
	1:7-10	1:7-8	
Jonah Thrown into the Sea		1:9-10a	
1:10-16		1:10b-11	
	1:11-16		
		1:12	
Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance	Jonah is Miraculously Saved	1:13-16	
1:17-2:9	1:17-2:10	1:17	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

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\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices.**

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup>The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, <sup>2</sup>"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." <sup>3</sup>But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

1:1

NASB

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NKJV, NRSV

"now"

TEV

"one day"

NJB

-----

There is an opening prefix (*wa*) to the VERB not translated by NASB and NJB. This is a textual marker for historical narrative (e.g., Jdgs. 1:1; I Sam. 1:1; Ruth 1:1). This gives a hint that the author wants his work to be understood as historical.

▣ **"The word of the LORD came to"** This is a common prophetic formula (e.g., Jer. 1:2,4; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1), but here it refers to the Lord's commission.

▣ **"Jonah"** "His name means "dove" (BDB 402). See Introduction I. B.

▣ **"Amittai"** His name means "firmness," "faithfulness," or "truth" (BDB 54). Both the names, Jonah and Amittai, are rare (son and father) and appear only one other time in the OT in II Kgs. 14:25. This shows the historicity of this book.

1:2 **"Arise. . .go. . .cry"** All of these VERBS are *Qal* IMPERATIVES. They denote an urgency! This, like v. 1, is a typical prophetic call (cf. 3:3-4; Jer. 13:4, 6). Jonah's call in chapter 1 is repeated in chapter 3.

▣ **"Nineveh"** It was made the capital of the Assyrian Empire by Sennacherib and was located on the Tigris River in modern Iraq, but its existence was much earlier (cf. Gen. 10:11). It was destroyed by Babylon in 612 B.C. The name itself (BDB 644) is related to *Ishtar*.

▣ **"the great city"** The ABD, vol. 3, p. 938, makes a good point about the recurrent use of the ADJECTIVE "great" (BDB 152):

1. great city, 1:2; 3:2,3; 4:11
2. great wind, 1:4
3. great storm, 1:4,12
4. extremely frightened, 1:10
5. fear the Lord greatly, 1:16
6. great fish, 1:17

7. “from the greatest,” 3:5
8. nobles (great one), 3:7
9. “greatly displeased Jonah,” 4:1
10. “Jonah was extremely happy,” 4:6

Ancient Hebrew does not use ADJECTIVES often, therefore, this unusual repetition of “great” (also note 4:10, another use of the same root BDB 152) causes one to think it might be a textual marker to denote a hyperbolic literary account. The original readers would have quickly recognized this obvious overuse of “great.”

For a brief discussion of biblical hyperboles see *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 329.

▣ **“cry”** The same word (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used in vv. 2 and 6. It implies “preach” or “proclaim” (i.e., the will of YHWH, e.g., Isa. 40:2,6; 58:1; Jer. 2:2; 3:12; 7:2; 11:6; 19:2; 20:8; 49:29). Nineveh’s judgment would have caused Jonah’s contemporaries to applaud (cf. Nah. 3:19).

▣ **“their wickedness”** This NOUN, ADJECTIVE, and VERB (BDB 947 & 949), “evil,” (the opposite of good and life) is also used in a seemingly purposeful repetition:

1. the “wickedness” of the Ninevites, 1:2
2. the “calamity” of the storm, 1:7,8
3. the king’s request that his people “each may turn from his wicked way,” 3:8,10
4. God saw their repentance (cf. 3:10) and turned from His planned “calamity,” 3:10
5. Jonah’s great anger, 4:1 (double use of root)

The focus of evil has shifted from Nineveh to the prophet! What an ironical reversal!

Assyria was possibly the cruelest (cf. Nah. 3:1,10,19) and most arrogant (cf. Isa. 10:12-14) nation Israel ever had to deal with. We learn of their treatment of prisoners from the Assyrian cuneiform texts and wall pictographs. This may represent one part of the irony of the book. Nineveh, like Israel, was wicked (cf. Nahum), yet God would freely forgive if they repented (a spiritual condition). Repentance, not national origin, is crucial with YHWH (cf. Amos 9:7).

▣ **“has come up before Me”** This is the theological concept of God in heaven knowing fully the actions on earth (cf. Hosea 7:2). God is not only the God of Israel, but of all the earth (cf. Amos 9:7). Sin always elicits divine response!

**1:3 “rose up to flee”** This is shocking and surprising, the exact opposite of what was expected in response to a divine call. The exact reason for his reluctance is not given here (cf. 4:2). Jonah hated Assyrians!

▣ **“Tarshish”** The name (BDB 1077) can refer to (1) precious stones or (2) a distant port. Traditionally it has been identified as a Phoenician city (i.e., Tartessos) in southern Spain on the Atlantic ocean, but some archaeological evidence points to the island of Sardinia (cf. Gen. 10:4). It could be a metaphor for the farthest end of the world. Jonah wanted to get away from God’s call and foolishly thought he could (cf. Ps. 139:7-12). Possibly he thought YHWH was limited to the Promised Land.

▣ **“he went down”** There is a recurrent use of the VERB “went down” (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT) in 1:3 (twice), 5 (and an additional sound play on “fallen sound asleep”), and 2:7. This “going down” may symbolize Jonah’s descent into rebellion (cf. ABD, vol. 3, p. 938).

It is possible that this phrase refers to Jonah’s commission to go and preach to Nineveh coming to him while he was in the temple in Jerusalem. The Bible writers always speak of “going down from” or “going up to” the temple. The temple was located on high ground (i.e., Mt. Moriah, one of the seven hills of Jerusalem), but the phrase had a theological connotation also. There was no place on earth on par with YHWH’s presence in the Jerusalem temple.

▣ **“Joppa”** This is modern Tel-Aviv. It is the only natural seaport on the Palestinian coast. In this period of history it was not part of Israel.

▣ **“found a ship”** The Hebrews were not seafarers. For Jonah to resort to a sea voyage shows his desperation. The ship was probably Phoenician. This seagoing ship had two cargo decks with a third half-deck. It required 30 to 50 rowers.

▣ **“the fare”** The MT has “her fare” (BDB 969). Most Jewish commentators say Jonah was wealthy because he rented the entire ship (e.g., *Nedarim* 38a), but the Septuagint (LXX) has “his fare.”

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. <sup>5</sup>Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. <sup>6</sup>So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.”**

**1:4 “The LORD hurled a great wind”** Be careful to note the different uses of divine names. Often pagans use *Elohim*, but when in connection with Jonah, YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

The VERB (BDB 376, KB 373, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means to send a violent storm (i.e., hurl, cf. Jer. 16:13; 22:26). The same word is translated “cast” in 1:5,15. God is in control of history and nature.

▣ **“great wind. . .great storm”** See note at v. 2.

▣ **“the ship was about to break up”** Surprisingly (and uniquely here) the VERB (BDB 990, KB 1402, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) personifies the ship as “thinking itself will break up”!

**1:5 “the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god”** The two VERBS, “became afraid” (BDB 431, KB 432) and “cried” (BDB 277, KB 277), are *Qal* IMPERFECTS, implying ongoing action.

The term “gods” in vv. 5 and 6 is *Elohim* (see Special Topic at Amos 1:2). It is a Hebrew PLURAL so it can be translated “gods” in v. 5 and “god” in v. 6. The sailors are depicted as calling on different gods, therefore, they must be from different Gentile nations. In a sense they represent all Gentile nations.

Sociologists and anthropologists tell us that all societies have a religious aspect. Humans are religious beings. I think this reflects Gen. 1:26-27, that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God, marred though they may be (cf. Gen. 3).

▣ **“lain down, fallen sound asleep”** This is irony. While the sailors pray and lighten the boat, Jonah sleeps. The implication is unstated. He apparently was not bothered by his flight from God’s will or the danger to the sailors’ lives. This seems to imply a spiritual callousness or, because of the rareness of this term (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Niphal* IMPERFECT), it could refer to a divine stupor or trance (for a related term cf. Gen. 15:12; I Sam. 26:12).

**1:6 “the captain. . .call on your god”** What irony! Here is a pagan asking YHWH’s covenant spokesman to pray. God had asked Jonah to “rise up” and “call” (both *Qal* IMPERATIVES, cf. v. 2) to Nineveh. Now the same words are found in the pagan captain’s words to Jonah!

▣ **“Perhaps your god”** This same “cover all bases” theology has caused the modern phenomenon of eclectic religions, like Bahai. This statement sets the stage for the major purpose of the book of Jonah. Non-Jews need to know about the one true God! They are hungry to know Him (Augustine, “every man has a God-shaped hole in his heart and thereby needs God”).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:7-9**

**<sup>7</sup>Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup>Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” <sup>9</sup>He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”**

**1:7 “Come”** This (BDB 229, KB 246) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. It is followed by two COHORTATIVES:

1. cast, BDB 656, KB 709
2. learn (“know”), BDB 393, KB 390

▣ **“let us cast lots”** This was a common way to consult a deity in the ancient east. Even Israel used the Urim and Thummim (cf. Exod. 28:30), which was a similar technique (cf. Josh. 7:14; I Sam. 14:40-42; Acts 1:26). Notice God did reveal His will in this way. This verse shows the crew’s belief of supernatural divine causality (cf. v. 14).

**1:8 “Tell”** This VERB (BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) implies a prayer (i.e., tell us we pray...). It starts a series of questions seeking to know about Jonah.

**1:9 “I am a Hebrew”** This was the common word used by the sons of Jacob to describe themselves (BDB 720). It is from the Akkadian root *habiru*, which means “who has crossed over.” The Hebrews were part of the large migration of Semitic peoples moving across the Near East in the second millennium B.C.

▣ **“and I fear”** The VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) does not truly seem to reflect Jonah’s attitude toward YHWH, *Elohim* (here described as the Creator).

▣ **“the LORD God of heaven”** This was the common post-exilic title for YHWH (e.g., II Chr. 36:23; Ezra 1:2; Neh. 1:4,5; 2:4,20), yet by this alone one cannot date the book of Jonah as post-exilic. It was also used by Abraham (cf. Gen. 14:19,22; 24:3,7). It is just possible that these Phoenician sailors worshiped a fertility god called “the lord of heaven” (cf. B. Porten, “Baalshamem and the Date of Jonah,” pp. 240-241, in a book by M. Carrez, J. Dore, and P. Grelot [eds]). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

▣ **“who made the sea and the dry land”** This refers to the one creator-redeemer God (i.e., *Elohim*, cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3). Notice He is God of that which is causing the problem, i.e., the sea.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-14**

**<sup>10</sup>Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. <sup>11</sup>So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. <sup>12</sup>He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” <sup>13</sup>However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming**

*even stormier against them.* <sup>14</sup>Then they called on the LORD and said, “We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.”

**1:10** This is irony—pagans surprised and frightened (a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, “became extremely frightened”) by someone running from God who claims “to fear” God (cf. v. 9), but who acts in opened-eyed rebellion.

**1:11**

**NASB** “for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy”

**NKJV, NRSV** “for the sea was growing more tempestuous”

**TEV** “the storm was getting worse”

**NJB** “for the sea was growing rougher and rougher”

This phrase is a Hebrew idiom (cf. v. 13), made up of two *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES.

1. walking (BDB 229, KB 246)
2. raging (BDB 704, KB 762)

**1:12** “Pick me up and throw me into the sea” Both of these VERBS are IMPERATIVES (the first, BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE and the second, BDB 376, KB 373, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). There have been several theories about the meaning of this action: (1) a self sacrifice for the lives of the sailors (but this does not fit the tenor of the plot); (2) the ultimate escape from God’s mission; or (3) the penalty for his personal rebellion. God thwarts Jonah’s ultimate escape attempt. The great fish is a means of deliverance from death at sea and a transport to do God’s will (but Jonah does not know this until it spits him out on to the land)!

**1:13** “the men rowed *desperately* to return to land” Again we see the irony of pagan sailors trying diligently to save a rebellious Jonah, who could have cared less about an entire pagan city! The word “rowed” is literally “dig” (BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT). It denotes strenuous effort.

**1:14** “they called on the LORD” “LORD” here refers to YHWH. These Phoenician pagans called upon YHWH (Jonah’s God) three times in their prayer—irony again. These pagans are more willing to pray than Jonah and more conscious of sin and the value of human life.

▣ “innocent blood” This is a Hebrew idiom (cf. Deut. 21:8 and Matt. 27:24-25).

▣ “for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased” The VERB “pleased” (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) implies God’s ability to accomplish His purposes and plans (e.g., Ps. 115:3; 135:6 and compare Isa. 46:10; 55:8-10; Dan. 4:35).

Theologically speaking there is no place to start discussing God without a sense of His sovereignty. The mystery comes at the interface between a sovereign God and a free human moral agent. Jonah shows how God works even with a reluctant human vessel.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PREDESTINATION (CALVINISM) VERSUS HUMAN FREE WILL (ARMINIANISM)

This passage is a balance to other NT passages on election. I thought it might be theologically helpful to provide my commentary notes from Rom. 8:29 and 9, as well as Eph. 1.

- I. Romans 8:29 - Paul uses “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”) twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it refers to God’s covenant love for Israel before time began. Remember that the term “know” in Hebrew is related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Here it was included in a chain of eternal events (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). This term was linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God’s foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity’s future response, which would be human performance. This term is also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.”foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”)

The terms “foreknow” or “predestine” are both compounds with the preposition “before” and therefore, should be translated “to know before,” “to set bounds before,” or “mark off before.” The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:13-14; and Rom. 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things. There is a preset divine plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelagius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

- A. “predestined” (*proorizō*, “to set the bounds before”)

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God’s love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their world-view. God is for all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? God views all history as present. Humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of truth given in dialectical tension. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). We were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility. This is the major truth of the passage. This is the goal of Christianity. Holiness is God’s will for every believer. God’s election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God, which was given to man in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6), is to be restored.

- B. “conformed to the image of His Son”—God’s ultimate goal is the restoration of the image lost in the Fall. Believers are foreordained to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4).

## II. Romans 9

- A. Chapter 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God's sovereignty (the other being, Eph. 1:3-14), while Rom. 10 states humans' free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. "everyone" v. 4; "whosoever" vv. 11,13; "all" v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical half-truths. Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid.
- B. This same truth (found in Rom. 9:23) is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God's sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption. This great truth should never be softened or diminished.

However, it must be balanced with God's choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some Old Testament covenants, like Genesis 15, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditioned on human response (e.g., Eden, Noah, Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation; no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Rom. 9) and human free will (Rom. 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

## III. Ephesians 1

- A. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation, which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Rom. 9 on God's sovereign choice and Rom. 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven only, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner, etc).

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

- B. "He chose us" in Eph. 1:4 is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE, which emphasizes the subject. This focuses on the Father's choice before time. God's choice must not be understood in the Islamic

sense of determinism, nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense as some versus others, but in the covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). This text and Rom. 9 are the biblical basis for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Co1:12). This could relate to (1) our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21) or (2) God's desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). God's will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

"In Him" is a key concept of Eph. 1:4. The Father's blessings, grace, and salvation flow through Christ (cf. John 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (LOCATIVE of SPHERE) in v. 3, "in Christ"; v. 4, "in Him"; v. 7, "in Him"; v. 9, "in Him"; v. 10, "in Christ," "in Him"; v. 12, "in Christ"; and v. 13, "in Him" (twice). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all are potentially elect in Him. All of God the Father's blessings flow through Christ.

The phrase "before the foundation of the world" is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; I Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God's redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present, and future, but not to God.

The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God's call is not to a selected few of Adam's children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself (cf. I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13), in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our theologies speak louder than the biblical text.

The term "blameless" (*amōmos*) or "free from blemish" is used of (1) Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19); (2) Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:6); (3) Paul (cf. Phil. 3:6); and (4) all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; I Thess. 3:13; 5:23). God's unalterable will for every Christian is not only heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 4:19; I Pet. 1:2). Believers are to reflect God's characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

Grammatically the phrase, "in love," in this verse could go with either v. 4 or v. 5. However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

- C. In Eph. 1:5 the phrase, "He predestined us," is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This Greek term is a compound of "before" and "mark off." It refers to God's predetermined redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind's salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled, paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (predestination vs. human free will; security of the believer vs. perseverance of the saints; original sin vs. volitional sin; sinlessness vs. sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification vs. progressive sanctification; faith vs. works; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility; transcendence vs. immanence).

God's choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. vv. 9 & 11). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern day ultra-Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23,32; John 3:16-17; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus

2:11; II Pet. 3:9). God's grace (God's character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. vv. 6a, 7c, 9b), as God's mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Rom. 9-11.

Fallen mankind's only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Isa. 53:6 and several other OT texts quoted in Rom. 3:9-18). It is crucial in interpreting these first theological chapters to realize that Paul emphasizes those things which are totally unrelated to human performance: predestination (chap. 1), grace (chap. 2), and God's eternal plan of redemption (mystery, 2:11- 3:13). This was to counterbalance the emphasis of the false teachers on human merit and pride.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup>So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. <sup>16</sup>Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.**

**1:16 “the men feared the LORD greatly”** Several events such as the storm, Jonah's words, and the storm being stopped, caused them to be awestruck (a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE). These pagans' growing knowledge caused fear, but not so for Jonah, who had much greater knowledge (cf. 4:2).

▣ **“offered a sacrifice”** This is another COGNATE ACCUSATIVE.

▣ **“and made vows”** This is another COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, showing an intensity. Their response is very Jewish (cf. Ps. 116:17-18). Perhaps they had talked further with Jonah.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:17**

**<sup>17</sup>And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.**

**1:17 “the LORD appointed a great fish”** The VERB “appoint” (BDB 584, KB 599, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is used in all four miraculous occurrences.

1. the great fish, 1:17
2. the vine, 4:6
3. the worm, 4:7
4. the scorching east wind, 4:8

This phrase emphasizes that God did not create here, but assigned an existing creature to act on His behalf (like the donkey in Num. 25). The God who made Jonah controls history and nature. I believe in a supernatural, personal, loving, present God! However, the miraculous is not the major theological focus of the overall message of the book (i.e., God's love for all humans, even pagans; and Jewish arrogance and pride).

▣ **“three days and three nights”** This phrase can mean three full days, but since it is used of Jesus' burial and time in *hades* (cf. Matt. 12:39-40; Luke 11:29-32), it probably means part of one day, all of the next day, and then part of a third day. It is not meant to be a specific time indication.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jonah not want to go to Nineveh?
2. How do the sailors spiritually measure up to Jonah's spirituality in this account?
3. Why has "the great" fish bothered so many people?
4. What is the purpose of the book?

# JONAH 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance	Jonah Is Miraculously Saved		
1:17-2:9	1:17-2:10	Jonah's Prayer 2:1-9	Jonah is Saved 2:1-10
2:10	2:10		

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

- A. This prayer (vv. 1-9) is beautiful theological poetry. It looks like a refined literary work, not an emotional extemporaneous cry to God. However, it contains so many words about "water" (cf. vv. 3,5) that it truly reflects Jonah's experience.
- B. This prayer has many similarities with the thanksgiving Psalms. Jonah was well acquainted with temple liturgy.

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-9**

- <sup>1</sup>Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,  
<sup>2</sup>and he said,

“I called out of my distress to the LORD,  
 And He answered me.  
 I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;  
 You heard my voice.  
<sup>3</sup>For You had cast me into the deep,  
 Into the heart of the seas,  
 And the current engulfed me.  
 All Your breakers and billows passed over me.  
<sup>4</sup>So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight.  
 Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.'  
<sup>5</sup>Water encompassed me to the point of death.  
 The great deep engulfed me,  
 Weeds were wrapped around my head.  
<sup>6</sup>I descended to the roots of the mountains.  
 The earth with its bars *was* around me forever,  
 But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.  
<sup>7</sup>While I was fainting away,  
 I remembered the LORD,  
 And my prayer came to You,  
 Into Your holy temple.  
<sup>8</sup>Those who regard vain idols  
 Forsake their faithfulness,  
<sup>9</sup>But I will sacrifice to You  
 With the voice of thanksgiving.  
 That which I have vowed I will pay.  
 Salvation is from the LORD.”

**2:1** God had purposely allowed and even structured the predicament in which Jonah found himself (cf. 1:4, 17; 2:3).

▣ **“to the LORD his God”** These are the two most common names for Israel’s deity, YHWH and *Elohim*. See the Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

**2:2 “I called out”** This VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) is used often in Jonah (8 times) and in two senses:

1. to proclaim, 1:2; 3:2,4,5
2. to pray, 1:6,14; 2:2; 3:8

It is parallel to “I cried” (BDB 1002, KB 1443, *Piel* PERFECT) for help (e.g., Ps. 30:2-3; 119:146; Isa. 58:9).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “out of my distress”

NKJV “because of my affliction”

TEV “in my distress”

This NOUN (BDB 865) comes from the concept of “narrow or restricted,” meaning to apply pressure (i.e., crushing grapes with ones’ feet, e.g., Ps.18:4-6; 22:11; 25:17; 118:5,120:1).

▣ **“depth of Sheol”** There may be a play on the term “depth,” which is literally “belly” (BDB 105) and Jonah’s physical location “inside the great fish” (BDB 588). The term *Sheol* refers to the holding place of the conscious dead (parallel to “pit,” cf. Ps. 30:3). As the grave is the resting place of our physical body at death, so *Sheol* is the place of our personhood. The OT does not provide much information about life after death. From what little is provided we learn

1. there is a conscious life after physical death
2. the dead are with family
3. there is no fellowship or joy
4. both good and evil people are there
5. God is present there, but not worshiped (cf. Ps. 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; 139:8).

See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Amos 9:2.

▣ **“You heard my voice”** This is a Hebraic idiom for God’s hearing and responding to His covenant people’s prayers.

**2:3** There are many terms in vv. 3 and 5 that relate to the sea. This may be an allusion to the chaotic waters of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1). As God brought order in creation from chaos, so too, in Jonah’s life. The waters have separated Jonah from God (cf. v. 4; Ps. 69:1,2,14,15; 88:6,7,17), but in reality they (i.e., the fish) become his transport to do God’s will.

There are several sets of parallels.

1. the deep, v. 3 (BDB 846)
2. the great deep, v. 5 (BDB 1062)
3. engulfed, v. 3 (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT)
4. encompassed, v. 5 (BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT)
5. engulfed, v. 5 (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT)
6. the current, v. 3 (BDB 625)
7. breakers, v. 3 (BDB 991)
8. billows, v. 3 (BDB 164)
9. the waters, v. 3 (BDB 565)

▣ **“You had cast me into the deep”** This VERB (BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) shows that Jonah recognized his well-deserved fate and that it was God who used the storm (cf. 1:4) and the sailors (cf. 1:15) to execute His judgment.

**2:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“I have been expelled”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“I have been cast out”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“I am driven away”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“I had been banished”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“I am banished”</b>

This VERB (BDB 173, KB 204, *Niphal* PERFECT) means driven away by force. It is found only here in the OT. In Aramaic it was used of divorce (BDB 176). Jonah knew this was a consequence of his sin and rebellion at rejecting God’s commission. At this point he did not know the fish was a means of his deliverance (cf. Ps. 31:22)!

Jonah (or sage) may have chosen this word because it can also mean the tossing of the sea (i.e., another sea word, e.g., Amos 8:8; Isa. 57:20).



**NASB, NRSV,**  
**NJB** “from Your sight”  
**NKJV** “of Your sight”  
**TEV** “from your presence”

The connotation of this phrase is “from your presence in the temple” (cf. parallel in the next line).



**NASB** “Nevertheless”  
**NKJV** “Yet”  
**NRSV, NJB** “how”  
**TEV** “and”

The question is, “Does this line of poetry assert that Jonah believes he will see the temple again (NASB, NKJV) or that he will not (NRSV, TEV, NJB)?” Is the word an ADVERB (BDB 32) or an ADVERSATIVE (BDB 36)? Does this line follow Jonah’s sense of impending death (ADVERB) or Jonah’s sense that God will deliver (ADVERSATIVE)? Because Jonah’s plight is described in vv. 3-6 and God’s help is described in vv. 7-9, it seems that v. 4, in context, should be translated “how” (ADVERB, BDB 32). However, there seems to be a note of hope in v. 6c, why not in v. 4b?

▣ **“Your holy temple”** The temple in Jerusalem housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Jews believed that God dwelt between the wings of the cherubim over the Ark (e.g., Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89; I Sam 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; Ps. 80:1; 99:1). This was the place where heaven and earth, the spiritual and physical met! Jonah believed he would worship God again in Jerusalem (cf. v. 9).

## 2:5

**NASB** “Water encompassed me to the point of death”  
**NKJV** “the water encompassed me *even* to my soul”  
**NRSV** “the waters closed in over me”  
**TEV** “the water came over me and choked me”  
**NJB** “the waters round me rose to my neck”

The VERB (BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT) is often used in the Psalms for a life threatening time of intense suffering from which YHWH delivers (e.g., II Sam. 22:5; Ps. 18:4; 116:3).

The word translated “me,” “my soul,” “my neck” (BDB 723) is the term *nepshesh*, which denotes “breath” or “life” (e.g., Gen. 2:7). Here and in Ps. 69:1; 105:18; and Isa. 5:14 it has the connotation of a throat (or neck) about to be choked with water (i.e., death of a person).

▣ **“Weeds”** This word (BDB 693) can mean salt water, seaweeds, or fresh water reeds. Here it is obviously the first meaning. The sense here is that Jonah is being drowned, choked by water and seaweeds. He is descending into the realm of the dead.

**2:6 “I descended to the roots of the mountains”** The OT uses the physical direction “down” to describe *Sheol* (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15; Isa. 5:14; 14:19). The term *Sheol* and “pit” (BDB 1001) are parallel (cf. Ps. 30:3). It is this metaphorical expression of Jonah’s sense of approaching the underworld that makes his experience the object of Jesus’ comment (cf. Matt. 12:40-41; Luke 11:30). Jonah believed he was going to die, but God had mercy on him! God’s judgment was not His last word. There was purpose in the punishment.



**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV, NJB** “the roots of the mountains”

**NKJV** “the moorings of the mountains”

The term (BDB 891) normally means to “cut off” or “shape,” but it cannot mean that in this context. In *Ecclesiasticus* 16:19 (written about 180 B.C.) it means “the foundations of the world.” The BDB offers “extremity” as a translation. Possibly the ancient Jews believed the gate to *Sheol* was at the bottom of the sea, even below the mountains. Jonah was expecting death and entrance into *Sheol*, the pit. This term is meant to be a poetic parallel to “bars” and “the pit.”



“**The earth with its bars**” The term “bars” (BDB 138) usually refers to gate bars. This is a metaphor for *Sheol* as a prison holding the dead, which once entered, could not be exited (e.g., II Sam. 12:23; Job 7:9-10; 10:21).



“**You have brought up my life**” This VERB (BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is exactly opposite of “descended” (or “to bring down”).

**2:7**

**NASB** “I was fainting away”

**NKJV** “my soul fainted within me”

**NRSV** “my life was ebbing away”

**TEV** “I felt my life slipping away”

**NJB** “my soul was growing ever weaker”

The VERB (BDB 742, KB 814, Owen’s *Analytical Key* identifies it as a *Hithpael* PERFECT; *OT Parsing Guide* identifies it as a *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT; and the NIV Interlinear by Kohlenberger also identifies it as an INFINITIVE).

The term itself means to grow weak or faint, here in the sense of death (e.g., Isa. 57:16).



“**I remembered the LORD**” In the OT, humans are reminded again and again to remember (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT) the Lord and His goodness (e.g., Deut. 8:11-20; Ps. 77:11-12). God, on the other hand, is called on to forget mankind’s sin and rebellion (notice all the metaphors for forgetfulness, cf. Ps. 103:3,11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). See notes at Hosea 7:2 and 8:13.

**2:8** This verse seems out of context. It may be an allusion to Ps. 31:6. It may be a reference to Nineveh’s idolatry. Jonah may be trying to explain why he did not want to preach to the Assyrian capital.



**NASB, NRSV** “idols”

**NKJV, TEV** “worthless idols”

**NJB** “false gods”

There are two terms in this phrase with closely related meanings, which intensify the thought.

1. “vain” (BDB 996) means that which is “empty,” “nothing,” or “vanity” (e.g., Ps. 31:6; Jer. 18:15)
2. “idols” (BDB 210) means “vapor,” “breath,” which is a metaphor for “vanity” (e.g., Deut. 32:21; I Kgs. 16:13,26; Ps. 31:6; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 8:19; 10:8,14-15; 14:22; 51:17-18).



**NASB** “Forsake their faithfulness”

**NKJV** “forsake their own Mercy”

**NRSV** “forsake their true loyalty”

**TEV** “abandoned their loyalty to you”

**NJB** “abandon their faithful love”

The VERB (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “leave” (e.g., Gen. 2:24), “forsake” (e.g., Deut. 28:20; 31:16; Jdgs. 10:10; Isa. 55:7; Jer. 1:16), “lose.”

The contextual question is, “Does this phrase refer to

1. lovingkindness humans receive from their God (i.e., context of the book, cf. 4:2)
2. the faithfulness humans should show to their God (i.e., the immediate context, cf. vv. 7,9)?

**2:9 “I will sacrifice to You,**

**With the voice of thanksgiving”** This implies that Jonah’s sacrifice may be verbal, not animal. See note as Hosea 14:3.

This VERB (BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) and “I will pay” (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* COHORTATIVE), are both strong promises of what Jonah will do when he gets back to the temple in Jerusalem (BDB 623, i.e., offer a thank offering), what the sailors had done to YHWH in 1:16.

▣ **“Salvation is from the LORD”** The Hebrew term “salvation” (BDB 447) referred primarily to physical (e.g., Ps. 3:8; but notice Isa. 45:17) deliverance, not spiritual salvation (i.e., NT use of concept). Jonah wanted out of the fish! YHWH wanted the Ninevites to know Him (NT sense).

Jonah knew the right theology, he mouthed the right words, but he refused to act on them!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10**

<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

**2:10 “the LORD commanded the fish”** In Jonah YHWH commands and uses (1) a wind and storm; (2) a great fish; (3) a plant; (4) a worm; and (5) a desert wind. These are used to show God’s (1) sovereignty; (2) love for Gentiles; and (3) His anger against Jewish exclusivism.

▣ **“vomited”** This is a very strong negative term in Hebrew (BDB 893, KB 1096, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Isa. 19:14; 28:8). This may have been YHWH’s reaction to the flowery prayer of Jonah!

# JONAH 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jonah Preaches at Nineveh	Jonah's Second Call to Preach to Nineveh (3:1-4:11)	Jonah Obeys the Lord	The Conversion of Nineveh and God's Pardon
3:1-4	3:1-5	3:1-4	3:1-10
The People of Nineveh Believe			
3:5-9		3:5	
	3:6-9	3:6-9	
3:10	3:10	3:10	

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)**  
***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-4**

<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. <sup>4</sup>Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

**3:1 “the word of the LORD came to Jonah”** This reflects 1:1. Jonah is structured in such a way that Jonah’s first commission (chapters 1-2) is contrasted with his second commission (chapters 3-4).

▣ **“the second time”** Oh, the grace of God, both to Jonah and to Nineveh!

**3:2 “Arise, go”** These two *Qal* IMPERATIVES parallel 1:2. God repeats His mandate.

▣ **“the great city”** See note on “great” (BDB 152) at 1:2.

▣ **“proclaim”** The *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 894, KB 1128) parallels 1:2.

The content of the proclamation is not stated here. In 1:2 the subject of the revelation was that the wickedness of Nineveh had risen up before God.

▣ **“to”** There is a slight, but theologically significant, change from 1:2. The PREPOSITION has changed from “against” (BDB 752) in 1:2 to “to” (BDB 39) here. God is opening the door to the possibility that the Ninevites might respond appropriately to His word of judgment.

**3:3** This opening sentence is quite a contrast with Jonah’s actions in 1:3. What a difference a room in the fish hotel can make!

▣ **“exceedingly great city”** The Masoretic Text includes “to God” (see note below). This shows God’s care for all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; Exod. 19:5; Ezek. 18:23,32; John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14)! The author of Jonah uses the ADJECTIVE “great” often. See note at 1:2.

▣	
NASB	-----
NKJV	-----
NRSV	-----
TEV	-----
NJB	-----
JB (footnote)	“great before God”
ABPS	“before God”
Peshitta	“in the presence of God”
Rotherham	“before God”
Young’s Literal	“before God”
JPSOA (footnote)	“literally, ‘a large city of God’”

Exactly why the major English translations leave out the phrase, “to God,” is uncertain. It is also uncertain what this means or implies. Nineveh’s sin had risen to God, but also its accomplishments.

The other option is to see the phrase as “to gods,” which would speak of Nineveh’s idolatry and sin. However, the change of the PREPOSITION from “against” in 1:2 to “to” in 3:2 seems to depreciate this option.

▣ **“a three days’ walk”** There has been some controversy about the physical dimensions of Nineveh. Ancient non-biblical Latin writers described it as sixty miles in circumference with 1500 towers built into the walls. The walls themselves were 100’ high and wide enough for three chariots to ride side by side (Diodorus Sicucus of the 4th century). Modern archeology has determined the size as just under eight miles in circumference. This phrase includes the city and its suburbs. The three days can (1) mean part of two

days and one whole day; (2) refer to Jonah walking around the city and preaching at several places; or (3) include the city and its surrounding communities.

**3:4 “he cried out”** This VERB (BDB 894) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. One assumes he spoke in Aramaic. He only spoke five words. This was not a “turn or burn” sermon. This was just a “burn” proclamation.

▣ **“forty days”** This is a very common number in the Bible to denote a long period of indefinite time (longer than a lunar cycle, but shorter than a season, e.g., Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Num. 13:25; Deut. 9:9,11; I Sam. 17:16; I Kgs. 19:8). It often is associated with a period of testing or judgment:

1. Noah’s flood, Gen. 7:4
2. wilderness wanderings of Israel, Exod. 16:35; Ps. 95:10
3. Moses’ fasting, Exod. 24:8; Deut. 9:9,11
4. Philistine domination of Israel, Jdgs. 13:1
5. Elijah’s fasting, I Kgs. 19:8
6. Ezekiel’ symbolic actions, Ezek. 4:6
7. God’s judgment on Nineveh, Jonah 3:4
8. Jesus’ fast, Matt. 4:2

Surprisingly, the Septuagint has “yet three days.”

▣ **“overthrown”** This same VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) is used of God destroying Sodom in Gen. 19:29 (the NOUN at BDB 246). It can imply

1. positive (“turn,” i.e., vast majority of usages, cf. Hos. 11:8-9)
2. negative (“overturned” or “overthrown,” which did happen in 621 B.C.)

It is possible, in light of God’s character (cf. 4:2), that God’s message through Jonah had a hint of a good outcome, that even Jonah recognized (cf. v. 2; 4:1-4).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:5-9**

**<sup>5</sup>Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup>When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. <sup>7</sup>He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. <sup>8</sup>But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”**

**3:5 “the people of Nineveh believed God”** This is a shocking verse. The people of Nineveh had such little information about God (*Elohim*). They had less than the sailors of chapter 1. Yet, God accepted their faith and turned away His judgment (see 4:11)!

What does this VERB (BDB 52, KB 63), “believe,” mean? Originally it referred to something firm, stable, sturdy. It developed a metaphorical extension of that thing or person who is faithful, loyal, dependable, trustworthy.

Notice its usage in the writings of Moses (which Paul uses as his OT evidence for justification by grace through faith in Romans 4 and Galatians 3).

1. Abraham believed YHWH about a child to come (Gen. 15:6).
2. Israel believed in God’s message and messenger (Exod. 19:9).
3. Moses is faithful (Num. 12:7).
4. God is faithful (Deut. 7:9).

5. trust

a. negatively

- (1) Israel did not believe God and His words (Num. 14:11; Deut. 1:32; 9:23).
- (2) Moses and Aaron did not believe in God and His words (Num. 20:12).
- (3) Jacob did not believe Joseph was alive (Gen. 45:26).
- (4) Israel did not believe Moses (Exod. 4:1,5,8,9,31).
- (5) Israel has no assurance (Deut. 28:66).

b. positively

- (1) Israel believed in God and His spokesperson (Exod. 14:31).

This brief list shows the variety and importance of the Hebrew word. See a brief article in NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 427-433. This same variety is followed in the Koine Greek New Testament (see Special Topic below).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH (*PISTIS* [noun], *PISTEUŌ*, [verb], *PISTOS* [adjective])**

A. This is such an important term in the Bible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6). It is the subject of Jesus' early preaching (cf. Mark 1:15). There are at least two new covenant requirements: repentance and faith (cf. 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

B. Its etymology

1. The term "faith" in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God's nature, not ours.
2. It came from a Hebrew term (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53), which meant "to be sure or stable." Saving faith is mental assent (set of truths), moral living (a lifestyle), and primarily a relational (welcoming of a person) and volitional commitment (a decision) to that person.

C. Its OT usage

It must be emphasized that Abraham's faith was not in a future Messiah, but in God's promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this promise by trusting in God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, which took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).

D. Its NT usage

The term "believed" is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*) which can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

E. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *Eis* means "into." This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus:
  - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
  - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
  - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)

- d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
- e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
- f. into Light (John 12:36)
- g. into God (John 14:1)
- 2. *En* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
- 3. *Epi* means “in” or upon, as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5,24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
- 4. The DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
- 5. *Hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
  - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
  - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
  - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
  - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
  - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
  - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
  - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
  - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
  - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
  - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
  - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

▣ **“fast. . .sackcloth. . .sat on the ashes”** These were signs of mourning (e.g., II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; II Kgs. 6:30; Neh. 9:1) and a public sign of repentance (e.g., Deut. 9:9,18,25; I Sam. 6:7; Ezra 10:6; Neh. 9:1; Jer. 36:6-9; Joel 2:12). See Zondervan *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 302-307.

▣ **“from the greatest to the least of them”** This included not only all of the people, but even the domestic animals (cf. vv. 7-8).

This phrase also adds evidence to the hyperbolic nature of Jonah. In the history of revivals never has every person in a society repented and believed!

**3:7 “Do not let man, beast, herd or flock taste a thing. . .or drink water”** This was a serious, total fast! No time limit was given, but life could not be sustained without fluids much past three or four days.

### 3:8

NASB, NKJV	“beast”
NRSV	“animals”
TEV	“cattle and sheep”
NJB	“all” (implying man and animal)

Apparently animals were to have a relationship with humans (Gen. 1-2), but the fall (Gen. 3) affected this and replaced friendship with fear. This friendship will be restored (e.g., Isa. 11:6-9; 65:15; Hosea 2:18). God created (cf. Job 38:39-40:34) and loves (cf. 4:11) the animals. If the description of Genesis 1-2 is literal and the consummation of Revelation 21-22 is literal then heaven will be a restored Eden (intimate fellowship between the angelic realm, the human realm, and the animal realm)!

▣ **“call on God. . .each turn from his wicked way”** This phrasing expresses both the corporate and the individual aspects of this repentance. The two aspects of salvation are faith and repentance (see Special Topic at Amos 1:3, e.g., Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Jesus affirms the need for true repentance in Matt. 12:41 and Luke 11:32. This is something even Israel refused to do (cf. Jer. 18:8). Notice the general name for God, *Elohim*, is used.

### 3:9

NASB, NRSV,

NJB

“Who knows”

NKJV

“who can tell”

TEV

“perhaps”

This is the INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN “who” (BDB 566) and the VERB “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), which is an idiom expressing a possibility (e.g., II Sam. 12:22; Esther 4:14; Joel 2:14).

▣ **“turn”** This term is used of the Ninevites and of God (it was used in the king’s edict in v. 8, twice in v. 9, and again in v. 10). This is the general OT term for repentance (BDB 996, KB 1427). God is affected by (1) mankind’s response to His Word and (2) the prayers of believers. Biblical repentance involves a change of mind (Greek term) followed by a change of actions (Hebrew term). See Special Topic: Repentance in the Old Testament at Amos 1:3.

▣ **“relent”** This root (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PERFECT) literally means “to sigh.” It denotes heavy breathing. This is the same root as the name of the prophet, Nahum.

This is an anthropomorphic phrase describing God (e.g., Exod. 32:14; Ps. 106:45; Jer. 18:8; Amos 7:3,6 and note Hosea 11:8-11). This is a good example of

1. the freedom of God
2. conditional covenants requiring an appropriate human response

Predestination must be balanced with the choices of human free will. God surely knows, but He has created mankind as free moral agents. God’s future actions are in some sense conditioned on current human motives, choices, and actions. This is why prophecy (not Messianic) is conditional. Jonah’s prophecy will not be fulfilled! All prophecies have a conditional element (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 129-130 and *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 70-75).

▣ **“that we will not perish”** This is exactly parallel to the ship captain’s statement in 1:6.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:10**

**<sup>10</sup>When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.**

**3:10 “God relented”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase which expressed God’s willingness to respond to His highest creation—mankind, made in His image and likeness! Most of God’s relationships (not all, He has an eternal redemptive plan which is unaffected by human choice) with mankind are conditioned and affected by their faith and repentant (e.g., Exod. 32:14; I Sam. 15:11; Jer. 26:3,13) responses.

# JONAH 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jonah's Anger and God's Kindness	Jonah's Second Call to Preach to Nineveh (3:1-4:11)	Jonah's Anger and God's Mercy	The Grievance of the Prophet and God's Answer
4:1-4	4:1-5	4:1-3 4:4	4:1-4
4:5-8	4:6-8	4:5-8	4:5-11
4:9-11	4:9-11	4:9 4:10-11	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-4**

<sup>1</sup>But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. <sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD,

**please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” <sup>4</sup>The LORD said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?”**

**4:1 “it greatly displeased Jonah”** The ADJECTIVE (BDB 949) and VERB (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Qal* IMPERFECT) are COGNATES, which intensifies the meaning (cf. Neh. 2:10). Jonah was angry that God was going to spare Nineveh.

Jonah uses **רָעָה** often and in several senses.

1. wickedness, 1:2
2. calamity, 1:7,8; 3:10; 4:2
3. displeased, 4:1
4. discomfort, 4:6

The term used of Ninevites is now used of Jonah (cf. *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 385). What a reversal! Sin without light is one thing, but sin with light is far more serious and condemnable (cf. Luke 12:48).

▣ **“he became angry”** This Hebrew VERB means “to burn” (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. vv. 1,4,9[twice]). Jonah became angry even before the deadline of forty days was complete. Jonah’s worst fear, that Nineveh would repent and that YHWH would spare them, had come to pass. Jonah was accurate in his theology (cf. 1:9; 4:2), but failed in love (cf. I Cor. 13:1-8).

**4:2 “He prayed”** In an attitude of anger, with an I-told-you-so prayer, Jonah was trying to justify or rationalize his previous rebellious actions (i.e., “to forestall this I fled to Tarshish”).

▣ **“You art a gracious and compassionate God”** Jonah is angry about this (i.e., God’s not punishing Assyria’s sin)! This mercy is the very nature of God which had saved Jonah from the sea. The source of this theological statement is Exod. 34:6 then repeated in Num. 14:18-19; Neh. 9:17,31,32; Ps. 86:5, 15; 103:8,11-13; 145:8; Jer. 32:18-19; and Joel 2:13. Jonah uses words similar to those of Joel; possibly he was influenced by Joel’s prophecy.

The ADJECTIVE “gracious” (BDB 337) is used only of God. The ADJECTIVE “merciful” (BDB 933) is from the NOUN “womb,” which denotes intense parental love (cf. Hosea 1:6; 2:4 vs. 2:19,23[twice]).

The CONSTRUCT “slow to anger” (BDB 74 and 60) is an idiom that is literally “long of nose” (i.e., slow to flare the nostrils, cf. Num. 14:18; Neh. 1:3). Love, not wrath, is God’s basic character (cf. Isa. 28:21; Lam. 3:33).

For the CONSTRUCT “abounding in lovingkindness” (BDB 912 and 338) see Special Topic: Lovingkindness at Hosea 2:19.

▣ **“one who relents concerning calamity”** See notes at 3:9 and 10.

**4:3 “please take my life”** The death wish (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Num. 11:15; Jer. 20:14-18; I Kgs. 19:4) expressed in this verse (cf. 4:8) is very different from Jonah’s attitude while he was in the great fish.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup>Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. <sup>6</sup>So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. <sup>7</sup>But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next**

**day and it attacked the plant and it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."**

**4:5 "he made a shelter"** This is the word "booth" (BDB 697), which refers to a temporary shelter such as was used in the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:40-42). God provided a better shade by means of the plant (probably a castor bean plant, but this word occurs only in this context, cf. v. 6). In desert areas shade can make a temperature difference of sixty degrees! This again shows God's love versus Jonah's anger.

**4:6 "appointed"** This does not mean that God created here, but that He assigned (BDB 584, KB 599, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. vv. 6,7,8) an existing creation a task to perform (cf. 1:17). God is in control of nature (i.e., a plant, 4:6; a worm, 4:7; and a scorching east [cf. Gen. 41:6] wind, 4:8; as well as a great fish, 1:17).

▣ **"Jonah was extremely happy"** This is a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE (BDB 970, VERB and NOUN), like v. 1, "greatly displeased" or 1:16, "feared greatly."

**4:8 "scorching east wind"** This refers to the sirocco, which is a hot, dry, dusty, strong east wind from the desert (cf. Exod. 10:13), which could easily destroy foliage. It usually is used in judgment contexts (e.g., Ps. 48:7; Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 17:10; Hosea 13:15).

The term "scorching" (BDB 362) is used only here in the OT. BDB says, "we make no attempt to explain." However, KB 353, gives the ancient translations:

1. Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate have "scorching" or "muggy"
2. the Aramaic Targums have "silent" (cf. NRSV)

Ultimately KB (slightly changed the MT by one consonant) says "sharp" or "scorching" (wind), meaning "hot." The term appears once in the DSS meaning "east wind."

▣

NASB "he became faint"

NKJV "he grew faint"

NRSV "he was faint"

TEV "about to faint"

NJB "he was overcome"

This point of unconsciousness (i.e., faint, cf. Amos 8;13) parallels his experience in the great fish (cf. 2:7). Here sunstroke was the cause (cf. Isa. 49:10).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which *came up* overnight and perished overnight. <sup>11</sup>Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

**4:9-11** These verses show God's love in contrast to Jonah's selfishness and racial pride. God's love even extends to the animals (cf. 3:8; 4:11).

#### 4:10,11

NASB “compassion. . .compassion”

NKJV “pity. . .pity”

NRSV, NJB “concerned. . .concerned”

TEV “fell sorry. . .pity”

This VERB (BDB 299, KB 298 *Qal* PERFECT, v. 10 and *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 11) means “have pity” or “look on with compassion.” It is used in a negative sense in Isa. 13:18; Jer. 13:14; 21:7; Ezek. 5:11; 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:5,10; 16:5; 24:14. This is not the same word for “compassion” used by Hosea (BDB 933, KB 216, cf. 1:6; 2:4,19,23).

Several of Jonah’s words and phrases seem to come from Joel 2, this term as well (cf. Joel 2:17, i.e., “spare”).

**4:10 “which came up overnight and perished overnight”** This phrase is an idiom for the transitoriness of earthly things (cf. Isa. 40:6-8). Jonah had the immediate perspective; YHWH had the eternal. Jonah was self-centered; YHWH was concerned for the welfare of human beings made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), now estranged from Him (cf. Gen. 3, esp. v. 15).

**4:11 “120,000 persons”** Some see this as referring to the total population; others, because of the phrase, “do not know,” think it refers only to children (e.g., Isa. 7:15). The contextual emphasis seems to be that these cruel pagans (citizens of Nineveh and surrounding small cities) are ignorant of God, yet they are more spiritually responsive than God’s knowledgeable, covenant prophet!

## THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS OF JONAH

- A. God’s children often rebel against Him and have improper attitudes.
- B. Unbelievers often show more compassion and concern than believers.
- C. God loves all humans and is actively involved in their salvation (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; Exod. 19:5; Ezek. 18:23; 33:11; John 1:29; 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; II Pet. 3:9).
- D. Faith and repentance are all that is necessary for salvation, not complete theological knowledge or ritual (cf. Acts 16:31).
- E. God’s nature is accurately stated in 1:9 and 4:2.
- F. God controls history, nature, and is even involved in the minor events of life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Do we have a full account of Jonah’s preaching?
2. Were the people of Nineveh truly saved?
3. What message did this book have to Israel? (and to your life?)
4. Explain repentance in your own words. Define the Hebrew and Greek concepts of repentance.
5. Contrast (Israel’s) Jonah’s knowledge of God and the (Gentiles’) pagan sailors’ and Ninevites’ knowledge of God and faith toward Him.
6. What is the meaning of Jesus’ use of this account in Matthew 12:38-45?

# INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

## I. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named after the prophet.
- B. His name is a shortened form of Micaiah (Jdgs. 17:1,4; I Kgs. 22:13), which meant “who is like YHWH” (BDB 567). Jeremiah 26:18 has the full name in the Hebrew text (i.e., Micaiah). No father is given, which implies a poor, rural, family origin.

## II. CANONIZATION — This book is part of the “latter prophets” (cf. *Ecclesiasticus* 49:10), which includes Isaiah through Malachi with the exception of Daniel and Lamentations. Micah is mentioned specifically in *Ecclus.* 48:10.

- A. It is one of “the Twelve,” a grouping of minor (relatively short books) prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b)
  - 1. like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel they (the Twelve) fit on one scroll
  - 2. they reflect traditional Jewish view (*Baba Bathra*) of each book’s chronology
- B. The order of “the Twelve” or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. However, there are problems with this view. The order of the first six books differ between the MT (Masoretic Hebrew Text) and the LXX (Greek Septuagint):

<u>MT</u>	<u>LXX</u>
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah

- a. Internal evidence puts Amos chronologically before Hosea.
- b. The date for Joel is highly debated. I list him as an early post-exilic prophet along with Obadiah.

## III. GENRE

- A. Although like Amos in theology, it is different in style. Micah is not the beautiful poetry of Amos, but it has such powerful statements of truth.
- B. It is characterized by messages of judgment and restoration placed side by side with no transitions (like Hosea and Amos, which may reflect a type of Hebrew parallelism developed from Hebrew poetry). Truth is painted in two colors, black and white (similar to the Apostle John’s writing style).

- C. This prophet gave powerful, passionate, insightful messages from YHWH the Covenant God to His people (Judah and Israel).
- D. Micah is a prophet of prediction:
  1. the fall of Samaria to Assyria, 1:5-7; 6:9-16
  2. the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, 1:9-16; 3:12; 4:10-12; 6:9-16
  3. the return of the exiled Jewish people, 2:12-13; 5:5b-9; 7:7-20
  4. the birth place of the Messiah, 5:2 and His universal kingdom, 5:4
  5. the coming faith of Gentile nations, 4:1-5

#### IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Traditionally Micah the prophet from Moresheth (1:1), probably Moresheth-gath (i.e., “possession of Gath,” cf. 1:14; Josh. 15:44; II Chr. 11:8; 14:9,10; 20:37, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem), is seen as author of the entire prophecy or at least the source of the messages (later edited or compiled).
- B. Some modern scholars have attempted to divide the book of Micah among several authors as they have the writings of Moses. However, there is internal evidence that the book has unity:
  1. Several chapters begin with the Hebrew term “hear” (*shema*, BDB 1033, KB 1570, cf. Deut. 6:4), 1:2; 3:1; 6:1. The use of this word may reflect the author’s outline of his own prophecies (or an editor’s).
  2. The metaphors “shepherds”/”sheep” are used throughout 2:12, 3:2-3; 4:6; 5:4; 7:14.
  3. Literary device called “interruption - answer” is characteristic of all sections of the book (cf. 2:5,12; 3:1; 6:6-8; 7:14-15).
  4. There are allusions (24 passages) throughout the book to other eighth century prophets’s words (e.g., 4:1-3 with Isa. 1:2-4, see Zondervan’s *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 214).
- C. Micah, in many ways, is similar in personality and message to Amos. Their home towns are only twenty miles apart. They were both men from the country, not involved in the political and power struggles of the royal courts, as Isaiah was. They both identify with the poor, powerless, and socially ostracized. Neither of them was from prophetic families (cf. 3:5-8).
- D. Micah, living on the coastal plain, would have experienced all of Assyria’s invasions into Judah.

#### V. DATE

- A. The length and time of Micah’s ministry is stated from 1:1, “days of Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah” (for the dates of these kings see Appendix). He prophesied about 735-700 B.C. This was after Amos and Hosea, but overlaps the long prophetic ministry of Isaiah.
- B. Jeremiah 26:18 specifically states that he prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah.
- C. Since 1:1 addresses Samaria as well as Jerusalem and 6:1-16 is a court scene predicting the fall of Israel, he must have started prophesying before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Bruce Waltke (Tyndale OT Commentary), asserts that Micah’s ministry fell between Amos and Hosea, p. 138.

- D. His ministry also went beyond the fall of Samaria. The book seems to collect messages from throughout his ministry.

## VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. Micah is an eighth century prophet who ministered in the southern kingdom (Judah) along with his contemporary, Isaiah.
- B. It was a time of prosperity and military expansion (see Introduction to Amos). There was much religious activity, but it was the Canaanite fertility cult using YHWH's name.
- C. The restored and growing Empire of Assyria under the dynamic leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III (see Appendix for dates) was poised to strike.
- D. The Jewish Study Bible makes an interesting comment, "The name Sennacherib does not occur anywhere, the disaster is not particularly associated with the name of any Judahite king, nor is the world of the text directly associated with chronological information. These features are not the result of chance. The book of Micah does not set any of its literary units in a narrowly marked historical period. The result is a literary work that may be read in general terms because it down-plays particular historical situations" (p. 1207).

## VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. This book is characterized by abrupt changes: 2:5,12; 3:1; 6:6-8; 7:14-15. The author switches from judgment to salvation oracles, compare 2:10-11 with 2:12-13. This demonstrates a literary technique (possibly Hebrew parallelism borrowed from Hebrew poetry) and not a chronological order.
- B. Basic Outline
  - 1. The coming judgment upon the people of God, 1:1-16
    - a. exile of the north, 1:5-7
    - b. exile of the south, 1:9-16 (3:12)
  - 2. the punishment and restoration of the people of God, 2:1-13
    - a. social sins of the wealthy, 1-11
    - b. future hope, 12-13
  - 3. the leadership of the people of God condemned, 3:1-12
    - a. civic leaders, 1-4, 9, 11
    - b. prophets, 5-7, (the true prophet, v. 8), 11
    - c. priest, 11
    - d. consequences, 12 (4:10)
  - 4. the restored future glory of the people of God, 4-5
    - a. universal invitation for all nations, 4:1-5
    - b. invitation to the lame, outcast, and weak, 4:6-8
    - c. the believing community attacked but victorious, 4:9-13
    - d. the coming of the Messiah, 5:1-5a
    - e. future victory over Assyria, 5:5b-9
    - f. the current judgment of the people of God, 5:1, 10-15

5. God brings His people to court, 6
    - a. the prophet speaks for God, 1-5
    - b. the people of God respond, 6-7
    - c. the prophet answers for God, 8
    - d. God's judgment falls on the city of His people: either Jerusalem and/or Samaria, 9-16
  6. God's condemnation and promised blessing of His people continued, 7
    - a. the people of God's ongoing social sins, 1-6
    - b. the people of God's future leader will be like God, 14-20
 (See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 919.)
- C. Alternate outline from J. T. Willis, quoted by Bruce Waltke (Tyndale OT Commentaries), pp. 144-145
1. three parallel sections following the same pattern of judgment and hope
    - a. each section starts with "hear" (cf. 1:2; 3:1; 6:1)
    - b. each section uses the "shepherding" terminology (cf. 2:12; 4:8; 5:4; 7:14)
  2. the sections are
    - a. 1:2 - 2:13
    - b. 3:1 - 5:15
    - c. 6:1 - 7:20
 Bruce Waltke (Tyndale OT Commentaries), vol. 23a, follows J. T. Willis' basic outline and adds subtopics (p. 150.)
  3. The Heading
    - a. Judgment and deliverance (1:2-2:13)
      - (1) Samaria to be leveled (1:2-7)
      - (2) Lament over the towns of Judah (1:8-16)
      - (3) Venal land barons sentenced to exile (2:1-5)
      - (4) Polemic against false prophets (2:6-11)
      - (5) A remnant survives in Zion (2:12-13)
    - b. False leaders denounced, a righteous king promised (3:1-5:15)
      - (1) Shepherds turned cannibals (3:1-4)
      - (2) Prophets who preach for profit (3:5-8)
      - (3) Jerusalem to be leveled (3:9-12)
      - (4) Zion to be exalted (4:1-5)
      - (5) The lame become strong (4:6-7)
      - (6) Jerusalem's dominion restored (4:8)
      - (7) God's secret strategy (4:9-13)
      - (8) The once and future king (5:1-6)
      - (9) A fragrance of life, a smell of death (5:7-9)
      - (10) The Lord protects his kingdom (5:10-15)
    - c. Hope in darkness (6:1-7:20)
      - (1) How to stay alive (6:1-8)
      - (2) Curses fulfilled (6:9-16)
      - (3) The ship of state breaks apart (7:1-7)
      - (4) Song of victory (7:8-20)

## VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Micah, like Amos, condemned the social sins of the wealthy and powerful (cf. chapters 2–3).
- B. Micah, like Hosea, condemned the religious apostasy of prophets and priests (3:11).
- C. Micah predicted the fall and exile of both Israel (cf. 1:5-7; 6:9-16) and Judah (cf. 1:9-16; 3:12; 4:10-12; 6:9-16) because of their idolatry and covenant infidelity.
- D. God is just. His people will be punished. God is also gracious and faithful to His covenant, His people (remnant) will be redeemed and restored (cf. 2:12-13; 5:5b-9; 7:7-20).
- E. God wants His people to reflect His character (6:8), not faithless ritual (6:6-7).
- F. Israel, Judah, and believing Gentiles will be blessed through the coming Messiah to be born in Bethlehem (5:2). This new leader will be like YHWH (7:18-20).

# MICAH 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Superscription		
1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
The Coming Judgment of Israel	Threats Directed Against Samaria and Jerusalem	A Lament for Samaria and Jerusalem	The Judgment of Samaria
	(1:2-3:12)		
1:2	1:2-7	1:2-4	1:2-4
1:3-5			
		1:5-7	1:5-7
1:6-7			
Mourning for Israel and Judah			Lament for Jerusalem and the Lowland Towns
1:8-9	1:8-9	1:8-9	1:8-15
		The Enemy Approaches Jerusalem	
1:10-11	1:10-16	1:10-14	
1:12-13			
1:14-16			
		1:15-16	
			1:16

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

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\*Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, and Three**

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>The Word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, O peoples, all of you;

Listen, O earth and all it contains,  
And let the LORD God be a witness against you,  
The LORD from His holy temple.

<sup>3</sup>For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place.

He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.

<sup>4</sup>The mountains will melt under Him,

And the valleys will be split,  
Like wax before the fire,  
Like water poured down a steep place.

<sup>5</sup>And all this is for the rebellion of Jacob

And for the sins of the house of Israel.

What is the rebellion of Jacob?

Is it not Samaria?

What is the high place of Judah?

Is it not Jerusalem?

<sup>6</sup>For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country,

Planting places for a vineyard.  
I will pour her stones down into the valley,  
And will lay bare her foundations.

<sup>7</sup>All of her idols will be smashed,

All of her earnings will be burned with fire,  
And all of her images I will make desolate,  
For she collected *them* from a harlot's earnings,  
And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.

**1:1 “The Word of the LORD”** These prophecies are not Micah’s words, thoughts, or feelings, but YHWH’s (cf. Hosea 1:1)! This is revelation, not political or theological guesswork.

▣ **“Micah”** This is a short form of the Hebrew name *Micaiah*, which means “who is like YHWH” (cf. Jer. 26:18). This prophet was a “country preacher” (i.e., no mention of his father or ancestor) like Amos, not associated with the professional prophetic guild or the court prophets (i.e., Isaiah).

▣ **“the Moresheth”** This refers to the city mentioned in 1:14 (Moresheth-Gath), which was a small village between Lachish and Gath in the Philistine area about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

▣ **“in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah”** See chart, “The Kings of the Divided Kingdom” in the Appendix. The exact dates on these reigns are disputed because of (1) different ways to count the ascension year and (2) the dates of co-reigns. See Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.

▣ **“which he saw”** The term (BDB 302) is used of prophets in an ecstatic state receiving a message from God (e.g., Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; Amos 1:1; Hab. 1:1). Often it refers to prophecies or visions of judgment (e.g., Isa. 2:1; 28:7; 30:10; Amos 1:1). The term is often used to describe a prophet as a “seer” (e.g., Amos 7:12; Micah 3:7; Isa. 29:10; 30:10). See Special Topic: Prophet (The Different Hebrew Terms) at Amos 7:12.

▣ **“Samaria”** The capitals stand for the nations. Most of Micah’s prophecy deals with the southern kingdom of Judah. However, his prophecy is introduced by a judgment pronouncement against the capital of the Northern Ten Tribes, Samaria (cf. 1:2-9). This may have been a literary technique to get the attention of the people in Judah or it may show how Micah was influenced by Amos’ ministry and message, who also was a prophet to the north and included references to Judah.

**1:2 “Hear”** Chapters 1 and 6 both use the literary technique of a court scene to describe God’s legal case against His people. Both of them begin with the word “hear” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), as does chapter 3. See notes at Amos 3:1 and Hosea 4:1. This threefold use of *shema* (i.e., hear so as to do, cf. Deut. 6:4) may reveal the author’s outline (see Introduction, VII. C.). However, Micah uses this word often (cf. 1:2; 3:1,9; 5:15; 6:1[twice],2,9; 7:7). Seven of them, like this one, are *Qal* IMPERATIVES (cf. 3:1,9; 6:1,2,9).

▣ **“Listen”** The VERB (BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE), meaning “give attention to,” is parallel to “hear.” This same pattern is found in Isa. 28:23; Hosea 5:1, and Zech. 1:4 and similar in Jer. 34:1; 49:1.

▣ **“let the LORD God be a witness against you”** The VERB (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE) matches the two previous IMPERATIVES (hear, listen) and now God is a witness! This is obviously a court scene. God witnesses wickedness (e.g., Jer. 29:33) and then He becomes one who testifies in court (e.g., I Sam. 12:5; Mal. 3:5). He is (1) the judge; (2) the witness; and (3) the one who exercises the court’s decision.

▣ **“O peoples. . .O earth”** In Jewish law, two or three witnesses are needed to confirm a point in a law court (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Therefore, God of the earth and all the people of the earth itself are to be the witnesses in this court case (cf. Deut. 4:26; Isa. 1:2). YHWH Himself acts as a witness against His own people (cf. Deut. 31:19-21,26).

▣ **“the LORD God”** Literally this is translated *Adon* - YHWH (e.g., Isa. 56:7). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

▣ **“The LORD from His holy temple”** YHWH symbolically dwelt above and between the wings of the Cherubim, which were on the lid of Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was housed in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem (cf. Exod. 25:22). This is where heaven and earth, the spiritual and the physical, the transcendent and the immanent met. The line of poetry in v. 2d is parallel to v. 3a (also a judgment idiom, cf. Isa. 26:21).

For the word “holy” see Special Topic at Amos 2:7.

**1:3 “tread on the high places of the earth”** This VERB (BDB 201, KB 231, *Qal* PERFECT) is also in Amos 4:13, which speaks of the intimate presence of God with His physical creation (cf. Job 9:8). The term “earth” (BDB 75) may mean “land” (i.e., His land, the Promised Land), but here probably all creation.

“To tread” may imply (1) God’s intimate presence or (2) His judgment in the symbol of crushing grapes with His feet (e.g., Isa. 63:3; Lam. 1:15).

The term “high places” (BDB 119) can refer to the mountains of the earth or, because the same word is used in v. 5 for the local fertility altars, it may reflect YHWH’s destruction of these local worship sites (cf. v. 7).

**1:4** God’s coming (for blessing or judgment, in this context, judgment) is often associated with upheavals in nature (e.g., Exod. 19:16-20; Ps. 18:7-15; 97:1-6; Isa. 40:4; 64:1-2; Joel 2:30-31; Amos 9:5). Verse 4 has a poetic pattern of parallelism (i.e., line 1 goes with line 3 and line 2 with line 4). This is incipient apocalyptic imagery. Human sin has affected physical creation (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 8:19-22).

▣ **“fire”** See Special Topic: Fire at Amos 7:4.

▣ **“poured”** This VERB (BDB 620, KB 669) and “smashed” (BDB 510, KB 507) are both *Hophal* forms, which are PASSIVE and ACCUSATIVE.

**1:5 “all of this is for the rebellion of Jacob. . . Israel”** See Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry at Amos 1:2. Lines 1 and 2 of v. 5 are a good example of synonymous parallelism. There are no VERBS in v. 5.

▣ **“Samaria”** This is the capital of the Northern Ten Tribes called Israel, built by Omri, whose son, Ahab, married Jezebel and thereby introduced Canaanite fertility worship into the northern kingdom (cf. I Kgs. 16:29-33; 17-18). It was a heavily fortified city that took the Assyrians three years to conquer (finally Sargon II in 722 B.C. did). These capitals are a way of referring to the nation as a whole. The leaders (kings, prophets, and priests) of both Israel and Judah are responsible for their nation’s idolatry and collapse!

▣ **“What is the high place of Judah”** The word “place” is plural in the Masoretic Text; therefore, it might refer to the idolatrous high places of Ba’al spread throughout the land (cf. II Chr. 34:3-4,7). By parallelism it refers to the capital of Judah, Jerusalem.

**1:6-7** YHWH is the speaker as He may be in vv. 8-16.

**1:6 “Samaria a heap of ruins”** This refers to the fall of the city in 722 B.C. under Sargon II of Assyria.

▣ **“Planting places for a vineyard”** Samaria will be so destroyed she will look like an open field which could be turned into a vineyard. This is parallel in thought to Jerusalem being plowed as a field (cf. 3:12; Jer. 26:18).

▣ **“I will pour her stones down into the valley”** This refers to Samaria’s stone fortifications being pulled down from the mesa into the valley.

**1:7** This reflects the worship of the female fertility god, Asherah, which amounted to spiritual adultery against YHWH, thus divorce court.

▣ **“earnings”** The term (BDB 1072-1073) is used three times and refers to Israel’s idolatry (TEV, cf. Deut. 23:18; Isa. 23:17). In some contexts it refers to foreign alliances (e.g., Ezek. 16:23-29) and may be an allusion to them here (cf. NRSV). The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1281, suggests three possible meanings:

1. the wages of cultic prostitutes (who were used to beautify the shrines)
2. the produce of the land regarded as a gift from Ba’al
3. the offerings at the idol shrines used to beautify the shrines
4. gold and silver idols sold at the shrines (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 207)

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8-16**

**<sup>8</sup>Because of this I must lament and wail,  
I must go barefoot and naked;  
I must make a lament like the jackals  
And a mourning like the ostriches.**

**<sup>9</sup>For her wound is incurable,  
For it has come to Judah;  
It has reached the gate of my people,  
*Even to Jerusalem.***

**<sup>10</sup>Tell it not in Gath,  
Weep not at all.  
At Beth-le-aphrah roll yourself in the dust.**

**<sup>11</sup>Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir in shameful nakedness.  
The inhabitant of Zaanan does not escape.  
The lamentation of Beth-ezel: “He will take from you its support.”**

**<sup>12</sup>For the inhabitant of Maroth  
Becomes weak waiting for good,  
Because a calamity has come down from the LORD  
To the gate of Jerusalem.**

**<sup>13</sup>Harness the chariot to the team of horses,  
O inhabitant of Lachish—  
She was the beginning of sin  
To the daughter of Zion—  
Because in you were found  
The rebellious acts of Israel.**

**<sup>14</sup>Therefore, you will give parting gifts  
On behalf of Moresbeth-gath;  
The houses of Achzib *will* become a deception  
To the kings of Israel.**

**<sup>15</sup>Moreover, I will bring on you  
The one who takes possession,  
O inhabitant of Mareshah.**

**The glory of Israel will enter Adullam.**

**<sup>16</sup>Make yourself bald and cut off your hair,  
Because of the children of your delight;  
Extend your baldness like the eagle,  
For they will go from you into exile.**

**1:8-9** This could signal (1) the personal mourning of Micah (cf. Ibn Ezra; NET Bible footnote 1, p. 1622); (2) vv. 8-16 could continue YHWH's direct speech (cf. The Jewish Study Bible, p. 1207) using human metaphors (cf. Hos. 11:8) and Hebrew sound plays (cf. Isa. 10:24-32); or (3) the Targums change "I" to "they" and have the speaker be corporate Israel.

**1:8 "Because of this"** In v. 5 "this" referred to Samaria's sin, but in v. 8 it refers to God's judgment (by means of a foreign invasion) on His people, both Samaria (722 B.C.) and later Jerusalem (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.).

▣ **"lament. . .wail. . .go barefooted. . .naked. . .lament. . .mourning"** All of the VERBS in v. 8 are COHORTATIVE in form and/or meaning.

1. NASB, NRSV - lament  
NKJV - wail  
TEV - mourn  
NJB - howl  
(BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* COHORTATIVE)
2. NASB, NRSV  
NJB - wail  
NKJV - howl  
TEV - lament  
(BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE)
3. NASB - "I must go barefoot and naked"  
NKJV - "I will go stripped and naked"  
NRSV, NJB - "I will go barefoot and naked"  
TEV - "I will walk around barefoot and naked"  
(BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* COHORTATIVE)
4. NASB - "I must make a lament"  
NKJV - "I will make a wailing"  
NRSV - "I will make lamentation"  
TEV, NJB - "I will howl"  
(BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but COHORTATIVE in meaning because of parallelism)

These are all signs of mourning. Possibly the prophet was dressed in sackcloth when he preached. This scene is continued in v. 16 (cf. Amos 8:10). The animals mentioned represent both the absence of people and the presence of the demonic (cf. NEB).

"Naked" would mean not total nudity, but wearing just the inner loincloth without the usual outer robe (cf. I Sam. 19:24; II Sam. 6:20; Isa. 20:2-4; John 21:7). However, Assyria used total nudity as a way to embarrass and demoralize its captives (cf. v. 11; Isa. 47:2-3; Jer. 13:26; Hosea 2:3,10).

▣ **"ostriches"** The word (BDB 419, "greed"; better KB 421; "ostrich" in the Septuagint and Vulgate, NKJV, NRSV, TEV) refers to an animal that sounds to humans as "mourning." Ostriches make little sound, therefore, some think "owls" (cf. Peshitta, NJV, NJB, NEB, NIV, REB has "desert-owl"). Also because it

is one of several creatures that lived in the ruins of destroyed cities (cf. Isa. 13:21; 34:13; 43:20; Jer. 50:39). However, the Hebrew word is simply uncertain.

**1:9** The shocking sin of the Northern Ten Tribes had infected the tribe of Judah (i.e., “wound,” cf. Isa. 1:5-6; Jer. 10:19; 14:17; 15:18; 30:12-17). At this point in the message the prophet must have surprised his Judean hearers at his denunciation of them along with the Northern Ten Tribes (cf. Ezek. 23). For God, judgment was the only option so that His idolatrous children might turn back to Him!

▣ **“For her wound is incurable”** The term “wound” (BDB 646) is used as a metaphor for sin. There are several different terms used:

1. here, *mkh* (BDB 646) - Isa. 1:6; Jer. 6:7; 30:12,17
2. *mzr* (BDB 267) - Hosea 5:13
3. *hbrh* (BDB 289) - Ps. 38:5; Isa. 53:5
4. *mhll* (BDB 319) - Isa. 53:5

Sin is also depicted as a disease in Deut. 32:29; II Chr. 7:14; Ps. 30:2; 41:4; 103:3; 107:20; Isa. 6:10; 30:26; 57:18-19; Jer. 3:22; 17:14; 33:6; Hosea 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; 14:4, which YHWH heals!

▣ **“gate”** The city gate was the social, commercial, judicial center of a city (e.g., Amos 5:10,12,15).

**1:10-16** Isaiah uses word plays to compare cities to their judgment in Isa. 10:24-32. Micah follows this pattern. Verses 10-16 contain a series of Hebrew word plays between certain towns in the *Shephelah* or coastal plains of Judah. They would have been affected by the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (although there were several earlier encroachments, i.e., Sargon II in 711).

**1:10 “Tell it not in Gath”** The VERB (BDB 616, KB 665) is *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning. This may be an allusion to II Sam. 1:20, where David grieves over the death of Saul and Jonathan. This would imply, “Do not tell Judah’s enemy, the Philistines, who live in Gath.” The Philistines invaded Judah in 735 B.C. to gain territory.

▣ **“Weep not at all”** The VERB is a combination of an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of “weep” (BDB 113, KB 129) and a *Qal* IMPERFECT, which is JUSSIVE in meaning.

▣ **“Beth-le-aphrah”** There is a play on the term *aphrah*, which sounds very close to the term “dust” (BDB 779), therefore, “house of dust” (Beth-le-apharah).

The VERB “roll” (BDB 814, KB 935, e.g., Jer. 6:26; Ezek. 27:30) is repeated, a *Hithpael* PERFECT and a *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE. It is similar in sound to the word Philistine (those who live in Gath).

There is an interesting article on gestures in the Bible in the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 326-328. It lists several uses of dust in mourning:

1. sit in dust, Isa. 47:1
2. roll in dust, Micah 1:10
3. bowed down to the dust, Ps. 44:25; 119:25
4. dust (ashes) on the head, II Sam. 1:2; Neh. 9:1; Esther 4:1; Job 2:12; Isa. 58:5; Jer. 6:26

**1:11 “Go on your way”** The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The inhabitants of this city are to parade in shame as they are taken into exile by Assyria.

▣ **“Shaphir”** This is a play on the name “beautiful city” or “pleasant city” (BDB 1051, cf. Josh. 15:48), which is now shamed (BDB 102) and naked (BDB 289), which was the punishment of prostitutes (cf. Ezek. 23:29).

▣ **“Zaanan”** This is a sound play on the name of the city and the VERB “coming out” or “going out” (possibly נָטַל BDB 838 or BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* PERFECT). This city will not be able to escape God’s coming judgment (i.e., exile). They cannot leave their besieged city, but will leave their homeland forever.

▣ **“Beth-ezel: He will take from you its support”** Possibly this is a sound play on “house of removal” or “house of nearness.” God will take away this city’s foundation (i.e., support, BDB 765, this is the only use of this term with this meaning) or take it into exile. The meaning of the city’s name is uncertain (BDB 111) as is the whole line following it.

**1:12 “Maroth Becomes weak waiting for good”** The name of this city (BDB 598, cf. Josh. 15:59) sounds like “bitterness” (BDB 600, cf. Ruth 1:20) and is a play on the Hebrew term “waiting for good” (or MT “writhing”) with “good” meaning physical deliverance.

▣ **“calamity has come down from the LORD”** The term “calamity” is from the Hebrew root “evil” (BDB 948 II). These types of verses in the OT do not describe God’s character as much as denote monotheism (there is only one ultimate causality in the universe). The One Cause (i.e., YHWH *Elohim*) is ethical and covenantal. Disobedience brings consequences!

▣ **“Jerusalem”** This is a word play between the concept of “calamity” (BDB 948 II) and the latter part of the word “Jerusalem” (BDB 436), which means “peace and safety” (BDB 1022).

**1:13 “Harness”** The VERB (BDB 958, KB 1299) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The meaning is uncertain, but refers to binding or attaching something, so in a context of horses and chariots it refers to their rigging.

▣ **“Lachish”** This is a sound play on “Lachish” (BDB 540) as a military installation (cf. II Chr. 32:9; Jer. 34:7) chiefly for chariots, which sounds like the Hebrew term “to the steeds” (Hebrew PREPOSITION, and, BDB 940, cf. I Kgs. 4:28). Lachish would have been the strongest and best fortified of all the cities listed.

▣ **“daughter of Zion”** This is an idiom for Jerusalem; Zion being one of several hills inside the walls.

**1:14 “Moresheth”** This was Micah’s hometown. Its name sounds very much like the Hebrew word “purchase price of a wife” (BDB 555, e.g., I Kgs. 9:16). This play on marriage practices can be seen in v. 14a. With exile coming there will be no more weddings. The wedding gifts (cf. I Kgs. 9:16) will now be parting gifts or wedding gifts as the wife leaves the father’s house (i.e., exile).

▣ **“Achzib”** This Hebrew city’s name (BDB 469, cf. Josh. 15:44) is very close to the Hebrew term “deception” (BDB 469).

**1:15 “Mareshah”** This city’s name in Hebrew is uncertain (BDB 601). There is a sound play between the VERB (BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) meaning “the one who takes possession” and the city’s name.

▣ **“Adullam”** This is the cave (BDB 726) where David hid from Saul (cf. I Sam. 22:1-2). This phrase may mean (1) the leaders (i.e., “glory of Israel”) of Israel (cf. TEV) will enter the underworld; (2) David’s old place of hiding; or (3) that YHWH Himself will send an heir (NKJV) or conqueror (NRSV) to Mareshah and then Adullam. God Himself (the glory of Israel, cf. I Sam. 15:29) will judge and destroy these cities. The NJB considers the cities as “the glory of Israel.” Obviously the poetry is ambiguous, but the context is one of judgment, not deliverance.

**1:16 “Make yourself bald and cut off your hair”** The first three VERBS are all IMPERATIVES:

1. “make bald” - BDB 901, KB 1140, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “cut off” (shear) - BDB 159, KB 186, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “extend” - BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These were signs of mourning (cf. Isa. 15:2; Jer. 16:6; Amos 8:10), but they often became associated with idolatry (cf. Lev. 21:5; Deut. 14:1).

▣ **“children of your delight”** This means (1) your idolatry (Canaanite fertility worship) has been judged and your illegitimate children have paid the price; (2) you should mourn over the loss of your children. Assyria killed the very young and the very old, then took the rest into exile (cf. Amos 7:17); or (3) the word “children” is a metaphor for the small cities surrounding Jerusalem.

▣ **“the eagle”** This probably refers to the white headed griffin vulture that, from a distance, looked as if it were bald. Its presence was a sign of carnage (i.e., warfare, cf. Jer. 48:40; 49:22; Hosea 8:1).

▣ **“For they will go into exile”** Micah is the first prophet to assert the exile of the southern two tribes. This must have caused them some great consternation because they were depending on God’s promises to the Davidic throne made in II Sam. 7. One wonders if the prophet Micah was discredited when this did not occur in 701 B.C.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Which of Micah’s three contemporaries, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, is he most like?
2. Why does Micah begin his prophecy with Samaria?
3. Why are vv. 9 and 16 so startling?

# MICAH 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Woe to Evildoers	Threats Directed Against Samaria and Jerusalem	The Fate of Those Who Oppress the Poor	Against Land-Grabbers
2:1-2	2:1-5	2:1-2	2:2-4
2:3-4		2:3-4	
2:5		2:5	2:5
Lying Prophets			The Prophet of Misfortune
2:6-9	2:6-11	2:6-7 2:8-10	2:6-11
2:10-11			
Israel Restored		2:11	Promises of Restoration
2:12-13	2:12-13	2:12 2:13	2:12-13

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 1-2 form a literary unit. God's judgment on Samaria (the capital of Israel) should have been a warning to Judah!

- B. As chapter 1 is in the literary form of a court scene, chapter 2 is in the literary form of a funeral dirge.
- C. This chapter has many similarities to the book of Amos, Micah's eighth century contemporary to the Northern Ten Tribes.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Woe to those who scheme iniquity,  
 Who work out evil on their beds!  
 When morning comes, they do it,  
 For it is in the power of their hands.

<sup>2</sup>They covet fields and then seize *them*,  
 And houses, and take *them* away.  
 They rob a man and his house,  
 A man and his inheritance.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, thus says the LORD,  
 "Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity  
 From which you cannot remove your necks;  
 And you will not walk haughtily,  
 For it will be an evil time.

<sup>4</sup>On that day they will take up against you a taunt  
 And utter a bitter lamentation *and* say,  
 'We are completely destroyed!  
 He exchanges the portion of my people;  
 How He removes it from me!  
 To the apostate He apports our fields.'

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, you will have no one stretching a measuring line  
 For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD."

**2:1 "Woe"** This interjection, "ah," "ha," means "alas" (BDB 222, e.g., Isa. 1:4,24; 10:5; 17:12; 28:1; 55:1; Jer. 22:18; 34:5; Amos 5:16; 6:1). This is the characteristic literary marker of a funeral dirge (i.e., a 3-2 beat). As chapter 1 was replete with words of lamentation and mourning (cf. vv. 8,10,11,16), so chapter 2 continues this theme (cf. v. 4).

▣ **"to those who scheme iniquity. . . Who work out evil on their beds"** These are parallel lines. The first VERB "scheme" (BDB 362, KB 359) and the second, "work out" (BDB 821, KB 950) are both *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES. This reflects the premeditated plans of evil Israelites (cf. Ps. 36:1-4; Prov. 23:7; Isa. 32:7). In this context it is referring to ways to get more land from the poor rural farmers.

▣ **"When morning comes, they do it"** The VERB in the second line is repeated, but here it is a *Qal* IMPERFECT denoting continuing action. Sin starts in the thought life (cf. Hosea 7:6). The rabbis said our mind is like a plowed field ready for seed. What our eyes see, our ears hear, and what our thoughts dwell on becomes our actions!

▣ **“For it is in the power of their hands”** This is the OT equivalent of “might makes right.” Just because we can does not mean we should. There is an ethical God. He has made an ethical world. All humans will give an account to Him of their stewardship of the gift of life!

**2:2 “They covet fields, and then seize *them*. . .They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance”** These are four parallel lines (chiastic structure) with two strong VERBS.

1. “covet” - BDB 326, KB 325, *Qal* PERFECT
2. “seize” - BDB 159, KB 186, *Qal* PERFECT
3. “take away” - BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT
4. “oppress” - BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* PERFECT

Remember the extreme importance that the Jewish people placed on land inheritance within the Promised Land (cf. Lev. 25:23; Num. 33:54; 36:1-12; Josh. 12-21). God’s gift to all the descendants of Abraham was now in the hands of greedy, wealthy exploiters. Micah, growing up and living in a small rural community, had seen it again and again.

The term “house” can refer to a place of dwelling or to one’s family (as could the term “inheritance”). These exploiters wanted everything—land, children, adults, and all their property!

**2:3 “Therefore, says the LORD,**

**Behold, I am planning”** The INTERJECTION “behold” (בִּהַר, BDB 243 II) denotes a surprising statement of outcome. The UBS *Helps For Translators* series on Micah, says, “This is a way of showing that something new and unexpected is about to happen” (p. 82).

This is irony. As evil humans plan (same VERB as was used in v. 1, “scheme”), so too, God plans (i.e., “we reap what we sow, e.g., Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“against this family”** The term “family” means clan (BDB 1046). Notice the aggressive sin of some affects the complacent, silent majority and the whole nation (cf. Amos 3:2) is judged!

▣

NASB	“calamity”
NKJV, TEV,	
NJB	“disaster”
NRSV	“evil”

This Hebrew term (BDB 949) means “evil,” “distress,” or “wickedness.” In Exod. 32:12,14 it refers, as here, to the judgment of God (cf. Deut. 29:11,12; Amos 9:4). It is used twice in v. 3 and also in 3:2,11.

▣ **“you cannot remove your necks”** The VERB (BDB 559, KB 561) is a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT. This idiom of conquest is also used in Lam. 1:14; 5:5. It refers to a yoke on the neck of an ox which directs its activity.

▣ **“walk haughtily”** Israel had become proud and arrogant (i.e., eighth century historical setting). God will change their walk and mind about this (cf. Isa. 2:11,12).

**2:4 “On that day”** This refers to the time of God’s judicial activity, sometimes, as here, it is temporal, other times it is eschatological (i.e., the Day of YHWH).

▣ **“taunt”** This refers to a song or proverb (i.e., *mashal*, BDB 605 II), which others speak to denote the current condition/situation of a person or group. It becomes a training tool for warning others not to do the same.

▣ **“lamentation”** This refers to a funeral dirge (BDB 624, KB 675, *Qal* PERFECT). The taunt is v. 4c-f (four lines of poetry).

This term (BDB 624, KB 675) is repeated three times in the Masoretic Hebrew Text:

1. the VERB (*Qal* PERFECT)
2. the NOUN (MASCULINE SINGULAR)
3. the NOUN (FEMININE SINGULAR)

This repetition denotes a grievous lamentation (wailing).

▣ **“We are completely destroyed”** This is a COGNATE construction used for emphasis:

1. BDB 994, KB 1418, a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
2. BDB 994, KB 1418, a *Niphal* IMPERFECT

**2:4 “He exchanges the portion of my people”** The term “exchanges” (BDB 558, KB 560, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is a legal term for the transfer of a land title. Verses 4 and 5 are the wail of the powerful, wealthy, influential Israelites (who stole from the poor) over the coming exile. But notice, it is not sorrow for their actions, but sorrow over the consequences of their actions. They are reaping what they sowed (in kind)!

▣ **“To the apostate He appoints our fields”** This can refer either to (1) an apostate (i.e., one who turns back, BDB 1000, NKJV) or (2) JPSOA has “rebel” from “ravager,” which denotes the Assyrian invaders (from similar Hebrew root, BDB 1000, NRSV, TEV, NJB). The irony is that these rich and powerful Jewish land grabbers are calling others (i.e., the invaders) land grabbers.

**2:5 “you will have no one stretching a measuring line”** The LXX changes the VERB “exchange” in the previous verse to “measure” to match this line of poetry.

▣ **“For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD”** This refers to the sacred division of the Promised Land (Josh. 12-21). This statement is tantamount to the powerful, wealthy, influential being excommunicated from the Promised Land, both temporally and eschatologically (cf. v. 10). This passage implies that God’s judgment to these exploiters is even more severe than Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9 (“visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children”). This exclusion is permanent and transgenerational!

▣ **“by lot”** The term “lot” (BDB 174) originally referred to the Urim and Thummim carried by the High Priest on his chest behind the twelve stones. It is not certain what form this mechanical means of knowing YHWH’s will took:

1. different colored stones
2. stones with “yes” or “no” painted on them
3. stones with letters on them
4. other unknown means.

The NT word for “clergy” comes from this Hebrew concept.

▣ **“the assembly of the LORD”** This is a covenant phrase. The Septuagint translates the term *qahal* by *ecclesia* (gathering or assembly, which was later used by the NT believers as a title for themselves, i.e., church).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:6-11**

**“Do not speak out,” so they speak out.**

***But if they do not speak out concerning these things,***

**Reproaches will not be turned back.**

**<sup>7</sup>Is it being said, O house of Jacob:**

**'Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient?**

**Are these His doings?'**

**Do not My words do good**

**To the one walking uprightly?**

**<sup>8</sup>Recently My people have arisen as an enemy—**

**You strip the robe off a fellow-Israelite,**

**From unsuspecting passers-by,**

***From* those returned from war.**

**<sup>9</sup>The women of My people you evict,**

**Each *one* from her pleasant house.**

**From her children you take My splendor forever.**

**<sup>10</sup>Arise and go,**

**For this is no place of rest**

**Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction,**

**A painful destruction.**

**<sup>11</sup>If a man walking after wind and falsehood**

**Had told lies *and said*,**

**'I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,'**

**He would be spokesman to this people."**

**2:6-7** Verses 6-7 are dialogue. Micah speaks. It is hard to be certain where Micah starts and stops and where the rich, speaking as a group, start and stop.

Leslie Allen (New International Commentary on the Old Testament), p. 292, has a good translation of vv. 6 and 7: "...stop your preaching, they preach. They should stop preaching in this vein: humiliation won't overtake us: the community of Jacob is party to the covenant. Has Yahweh lost His temper? Is this the way He acts? Do not His promises spell good fortune? Do not we keep company with the One who keeps His word?"

Verses 6 and 7, to some extent, seem to reflect the rich's traditional covenant theology, but it fails to adequately understand the covenant requirement (cf. Deut. 27-28).

**2:6 "Do not speak out, so they speak out"** There is a play (the VERB is repeated three times) on the term "speak out" or "prophesy" (BDB 642, KB 694, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, i.e. "to drop a message on someone," cf. v. 6 [3 times, all *Hiphil* IMPERFECTS]; v. 11 [twice, also Amos 7:16]). The term "speak out" is literally "to drip" (cf. Deut. 32:2; Ezek. 20:46; 21:2).

**2:7** This verse has three (NASB, NKJV) or four (NRSV, TEV, NJB) questions. Who is speaking is uncertain. Some translations say (1) the condemned rich; (2) the false prophet (NKJV); or (3) YHWH Himself.



**NASB "Is it being said, O house of Jacob"**

**NKJV "*You who are* named the house of Jacob"**

**NRSV "Should this be said, O house of Jacob"**

**TEV** “Do you think the people of Israel are under a curse”

**NJB** “Can the house of Jacob be accursed”

The divergence is due to a *hapox legommenon*, “should it be said” (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). The NET Bible emends it to an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root resulting in “Does the family of Jacob say?”

The word “accursed” (NJB) or “cursed” (TEV) is the result of an emendation to the term “said.”

▣ **“the Spirit of the LORD”** In context this does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but the personality of YHWH (i.e., YHWH’s Spirit, cf. 3:8). Here with the BERB (BDB 894, KB 1126, *Qal* PERFECT) it refers to the Lord’s patience (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB) or lack of anger.

**2:8 “Recently My people have arisen as the enemy”** The VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086) is a *Polel* IMPERFECT. The covenant people have repeatedly broken their obligations to the Mosaic Covenant. This is what the exploiters refused to acknowledge! God’s people were acting like an invading enemy against their own covenant brothers and sisters.

The problem in translating this phrase is that the MT is using “my people” as the attackers and exploiters, when in the following lines they are the exploited. Several translations emend the MT to “but you rise up against my people as an enemy” (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NET Bible).

▣ **“You strip the robe off a fellow-Israelite”** The VERB (BDB 832, KB 980) is a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT. This reflects the action of the rich in exploiting the poor. This passage reflects the greed and heartlessness of the wealthy, influential, Israelite land grabbers in evicting poor people from their houses and taking their clothes (even their children) as a guarantee for money borrowed (cf. Exod. 22:26,27).

Notice the groups impacted by this exploitation:

1. covenant brothers, v. 8b-c
2. military veterans, v. 8d
3. covenant women, v. 9a-b
4. covenant children, v. 9c

▣

**NASB** “From unsuspecting passers-by”

**NKJV** “From those returned from war”

**NRSV** “From those who trust you, as they pass by”

**TEV** “Men returning from battle, thinking they are safe at home, but there you are, waiting to steal”

**NJB** “on those who feel safe you inflict the damage of war”

From these different translations it is obvious that the Hebrew is ambiguous or defective. From context the robe is demanded from unsuspecting strangers. The phrase about “returned from war” is what causes the confusion.

The best interpretation of this ambiguous phrase is that when Jewish soldiers returned home from fighting foreign enemies (potential invaders and land grabbers) they thought they were safe, but not so. Their own covenant brothers attacked them unexpectedly and took their land and possessions!

**2:9 “The women of My people you evict”** The VERB (BDB 176, KB 204, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means “to drive out” (cf. Hosea 9:15). This implies that the husbands have already been sold into indentured servitude.

▣ **“From her children you take My splendor forever”** These children become slaves and worse (as did the fathers). Their rightful inheritance as God’s covenant people in the Promised Land was lost to greed and exploitation. They will also be corporately affected by the judgment of God (i.e., exile) that will come to

national Judah, as it did to Israel. But in the future, they will receive their inheritance again (cf. v. 5). So “forever” is a way of showing intensity, not time here.

This may metaphorically reflect the policies of the Assyrian army of killing the very young (and the very old) before exiling the parents.

**2:10 “Arise and go”** These two VERBS (BDB 877, KB 1086, “arise; and BDB 229, KB 246, “go”) are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES. This either reflects (1) a warning to the faithful few (i.e., the remnant) or (2) more probably, God’s judgment of the nation (i.e., exile).

▣ **“this is no place of rest”** This term is used of the Promised Land in Deut. 12:9; Ps. 95:11. It is an idiom for invasion and exile.

▣ **“Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction”** This term (BDB 380) is used in the OT to describe the abominations of the Canaanites. Micah uses this same term to accuse the people of God of similar acts (cf. Lev. 18:24ff) that caused God to remove the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:6). He now removes the Israelites.

There is another COGNATE construction:

1. VERB, BDB 287 II, KB 285, *Piel* IMPERFECT (“bring a destruction”)
2. NOUN, BDB 287, KB 285 (“a painful destruction”)

▣

NASB	“painful destruction”
NKJV	“utter destruction”
NRSV	“grievous destruction”
TEV	“doom this place to destruction”
NJB	“extortionate pledge”

The *Niphal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 599, KB 637) is literally “made sick” (e.g., Jer. 14:17). Physical illness is used as a metaphor for sin and rebellion (e.g., Isa. 1:5-6).

**2:11 “If a man, walking after the wind and falsehood”** This seems to refer to the message of the false prophets who are readily embraced, while true prophets are rejected (cf. v. 6). These false teachers were always preaching covenant health, wealth, and prosperity (cf. 3:5; based on proof-texts from Deut. 27-29). They always ignored the covenant responsibilities (see *The Disease of the Health, Wealth Gospels* by Gordon Fee). Most OT covenants are conditional!

This phrase is a play on the words “spirit” and “wind” (BDB 924, cf. Hosea 8:7, 12:1).

▣ **“I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor”** This would refer to God’s agricultural abundance, promised in Deut. 28. Here it may refer to the spiritual effects of prosperity (cf. Isa 5:11,12,22; 28:7). Drunkenness is often a metaphor of judgment in the OT.

See Special Topic: Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol (Fermentation) and Alcoholism (Addiction) at Amos 6:6.

▣ **“He would be spokesman to this people”** The message of the prosperity promised to the covenant people (Deut. 28), yet separated from covenant responsibility (Deut. 27,29), was a favorite theme (as it is today). These false teachers promised peace (cf. 3:5) and prosperity, but in reality, God’s judgment, not blessing, was swiftly approaching!

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:12-13**

<sup>2</sup>**"I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,  
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.  
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;  
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture  
They will be noisy with men.**

<sup>13</sup>**The breaker goes up before them;  
They break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it.  
So their king goes on before them,  
And the LORD at their head."**

**2:12-13** These verses are a radical change from judgment to hope, which characterizes this book. There have been several theories concerning this radical change: (1) John Calvin and Kimchi see vv. 12 and 13 as referring to the deportation into exile; (2) it is possibly another quote from the false teachers (i.e., a response to v. 10); (3) this is Micah's personal hope in YHWH's protection; or (4) an insertion of the later redactor. I prefer the sudden shifts to the poetic parallelism known as antithetical parallelism, so common in Hebrew Wisdom Literature, and prophetic poetry.

**2:12 "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob"** This is a promise of future restoration to the Promised Land through YHWH's power by YHWH Himself (cf. Deut. 30:4; Jer. 23:3; 31:8). Even though Israel was judged because of the wicked, all of its people paid the price of invasion and exile. God will set it straight for those (and their descendants) who truly trust and obey Him!

Verse 12 is in the first person ("I"), but v. 13 is in the third person. This is common in Hebrew, but here, possibly v. 12 is YHWH speaking and v. 13 Micah's comment and development.

▣ **"the remnant of Israel"** This theological concept becomes a recurrent hope in the Prophets. It refers to a small group of faithful, believing, obedient, covenant Israelites from which YHWH will build His kingdom (cf. 4:6-7). The majority of the covenant people (i.e., descendants of Abraham) are not believers, not obedient, and not right with God. They deserve temporal and eschatological judgment.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES**

The OT concept of "a faithful remnant" is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel's past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Jdgs. 6-7).

▣ **“like sheep in the fold,**

**Like a flock in the midst of its pasture”** This may be a play on (1) a place name, *Bozrah* (MT, JPSOA), which was known for its excellent sheep or (2) a parallel to a pasture and, therefore, a protected enclosure (i.e., sheepfold, which requires an emendation to the MT).

These allusions to sheep and shepherding are covenant metaphors for YHWH’s care and provision (cf. Psalm 23). The sheep are guarded and cared for. The last line of v. 12 seems to imply (1) a joyful group or (2) as in NKJV and NIV, a large number of people.

**2:13** Micah seems to be speaking again (i.e., third person references to YHWH). This verse is Messianic text. The Davidic kingship will be restored (cf. II Sam. 7).

There is a word play between “breaker” (v. 13a, BDB 829, KB 971, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) and “break out” (v. 13b, BDB 829, KB 971, *Qal* PERFECT). The king will lead his people out of the pen of the exile into a large pasture, where they run and jump with joy! Notice the concept of pen is used in two senses: in v. 12 as a protective enclosure, but in v. 13 as a restrictive enclosure.

Notice how the Davidic King (cf. v. 13c) is paralleled with YHWH (cf. v. 13d). This implies a divine king (cf. 5:2-4)! However, this context could be seen as YHWH, the One who caused the exile is the very One who reverses it. The king may be a way of referring to God (cf. 4:7; I Sam. 8:7).

▣ **“the gate”** This was an Old Testament metaphor for the power of a city or city-state. This is a word play between the gate of the sheepfold and the national power (i.e., Assyria), which exiled the Northern Ten Tribes (in. 722 B.C.).

# MICAH 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Wicked Rulers and Prophets	Threats directed Against Samaria and Jerusalem  (1:2-3:12)	Micah Denounces Israel's Leaders	Against the Rulers Who Oppress the People
3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1-4	3:1-4
3:4	3:4		
3:5-7	3:5-8	3:5-7	3:5-8
3:8-12		3:8-11	To the Rulers: Prophecy of the Ruin of Zion
	3:9-12		3:9-12
		3:12	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER** - God calls the leaders of Judah to account.

- A. Political rulers, 3:1-4
- B. Prophets, 3:5-8
  1. false, vv. 5-7
  2. true, v. 8
- C. Rulers, priests, and prophets, 3:9-12
- D. There is an obvious parallelism between A. and C. (i.e., "hear," *shema*, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)

#### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup>And I said,

'Hear now, heads of Jacob  
And rulers of the house of Israel.  
Is it not for you to know justice?

<sup>2</sup>You who hate good and love evil,  
Who tear off their skin from them  
And their flesh from their bones,

<sup>3</sup>And who eat the flesh of my people,  
Strip off their skin from them,  
Break their bones,  
And chop *them* up as for the pot  
And as meat in a kettle.”

<sup>4</sup>Then they will cry out to the LORD,  
But He will not answer them.  
Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time,  
Because they have practiced evil deeds.

**3:1** This is a strong contrast to 2:12-13. The abrupt transition from judgment to restoration characterizes this book. This literary technique may be unconsciously related to the antithetical parallelism of Hebrew poetry! Chapter 3 picks up again on the theme of divine judgment.

▣ **“Hear”** This is the Hebrew *Shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), which means to hear so as to do (cf. 1:2; 3:1; 6:1). This word seems to outline the book. See note at 1:2.

▣ **“heads of Jacob. . .rulers of the house of Israel.**

**Is it not for you to know justice”** All three lines of poetry refer to the political leaders of Judah (cf. vv. 9-10) who should have been trained in the Mosaic law (cf. Deut. 12:17), but followed a policy of greed and self-centeredness (cf. Amos 5:15; Isa. 1:16,17). Calling Judah, Israel, probably shows (1) this was spoken after the fall of the Northern Ten Tribes to Assyria in 722 B.C. or (2) it was a way of showing condemnation (e.g., Ezek. 23).

▣ **“justice”** The Hebrew term (BDB 1048) has a wide semantic field:

1. the act of judging (e.g., Isa. 41:1; 59:11; Hosea 5:1,11; 10:4; Micah 7:9)
2. justice
  - a. an attribute of God (e.g., Hosea 2:19)
  - b. an attribute of man (e.g., Micah 3:1; 6:8; Isa. 1:17)
3. ordinance
  - a. of God (e.g., Jer. 8:7)
  - b. of king (e.g., I Sam. 8:9,11)
4. judge’s decision (e.g., Exod. 21:1,31; 24:3)
5. one’s legal right (e.g., Isa. 10:2; 49:4; Jer. 5:8)
6. custom (e.g., I Kgs. 18:28; II Kgs. 11:14; 17:34)

This term is found several times in Micah (cf. 3:1,8,9; 6:8; 7:9) as well as other eighth century prophets.

1. Isaiah, 41 times
2. Amos, 4 times

3. Hosea, 6 times

**3:2-3** Instead of acting like shepherds, these political leaders (cf. Ezek. 34) acted like butchers (i.e., “tear off,” “strip off,” “break,” “chop”). The phrase, “eat the flesh of my people,” is used in this similar metaphorical sense in Ps. 14:4, 27:2 and Prov. 30:14.

**3:2 “You who hate good and love evil”** The two VERBS (BDB 12, KB 17) are both *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES. These leaders’ response was exactly opposite from God’s will (cf. Isa. 1:16-17,21-23,26; 5:7,8,20; Amos 5:15).

**3:4 “Then they will cry out to the LORD,**

**But He will not answer them”** The VERB “cry out” (BDB 227, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a legal term for appealing to the court for help. As these wicked judges did not hear the cries of the poor aliens, orphans, and widows, God will not hear their cry either (cf. Deut. 31:17,18; 32:20; Prov. 21:13; Isa. 1:15; 59:2; 64:7; Jer. 33:5; James 2:13).

▣ **“He will hide His face from them at that time”** The VERB (BDB 711, KB 771) is JUSSIVE in form, but not in meaning. The “them” refers to the faithless leaders. This is ultimate rejection and parallel to “He will not answer them” and “He will hide His face from them.”

▣ **“Because they have practiced evil deeds”** Here is the problem. God’s people have repeatedly and flagrantly rebelled and rejected their covenant obligations. They are now reaping what they sowed (cf. 7:13; Isa. 3:10,11; Gal. 6:7).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:5-12**

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets

Who lead my people astray;

When they have *something* to bite with their teeth,

They cry, “Peace,”

But against him who puts nothing in their mouths,

They declare holy war.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore *it will* be night for you—without vision,

And darkness for you—without divination.

The sun will go down on the prophets,

And the day will become dark over them.

<sup>7</sup> The seers will be ashamed

And the diviners will be embarrassed.

Indeed, they will all cover *their* mouths

Because there is no answer from God.

<sup>8</sup> On the other hand I am filled with power—

With the Spirit of the Lord—

And with justice and courage

To make known to Jacob his rebellious act,

Even to Israel his sin.

<sup>9</sup> Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob

And rulers of the house of Israel,  
 Who abhor justice  
 And twist everything that is straight,  
<sup>10</sup>Who build Zion with bloodshed  
 And Jerusalem with violent injustice.  
<sup>11</sup>Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe,  
 Her priests instruct for a price,  
 And her prophets divine for money.  
 Yet they lean on the LORD saying,  
 'Is not the LORD in our midst?  
 Calamity will not come upon us.'  
<sup>12</sup>Therefore, on account of you,  
 Zion will be plowed as a field,  
 Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins,  
 And the mountain of the temple *will become high places of a forest.*”

**3:5 “Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets”** The prophets were one of several ways to know the will of YHWH. The very ones who were to reveal God, did not know Him (cf. Hosea 4:1). I Samuel 28:6 mentions three ways Saul inquired of YHWH:

1. dreams
2. Urim and Thummim (i.e., High Priest)
3. prophet (i.e., Samuel)

▣ **“Who lead my people astray”** The VERB (BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) means “to cause to err” (cf. Amos 2:4; Hosea 4:12; II Kgs. 21:9; Isa. 3:12; 9:16; Jer. 50:6). This refers to the false prophets mentioned in 2:6-7; 3:10-11.

▣ **“When they have *something* to bite with their teeth”** This refers to the eating of food (i.e., gifts from the people they prophesied for, cf. 3:5, lines 4 and 5). They prophesy for hire, not for God (cf. Isa. 59:9-11). They tell the generous clients just what they want to hear (i.e., peace and prosperity); they tell their poor clients problems and scarcity.

The term “bite” (BDB 675, KB 729, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) usually refers to a snake bite.

▣ **“They cry, ‘Peace’”** Literally *shalom* (BDB 1022) is the Hebrew word which means “wholeness.” Apparently, if the prophets were well-fed (i.e., paid in food, cf. I Sam. 9:7-8), they would proclaim good news (e.g., Jer. 5:12; 6:13-14; 8:10-11; 13:14; 23:17; Ezek. 13:10); if they were not well-fed, they would proclaim “holy war” (BDB 536). Their message was based on selfish interests, not YHWH’s will. These prophets were available for private, as well as, royal consultations.

However, giving a gift to a prophet was a common practice (e.g., I Kgs. 14:3; II Kgs. 4:42; 8:8-9). It is the manipulation of the message that is the problem!

▣ **“They declare holy war”** The term “holy” is not in the MT, but comes from the VERB (BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* PERFECT), which comes from the Hebrew root for “holy.” It is used to describe setting apart certain people for war in Jer. 51:27; Joel 3:9 and here (cf. Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 177). The implication is that God will send bad things, problems, conflicts against those who are not generous with the prophets (i.e., God’s spokesperson). I sense this same technique today in America

in tithing sermons that pronounce doom if you do not give a current percentage to the church (i.e., storehouse tithing)!

**3:6 “night. . .darkness. . .sun will go down. . .day will become dark”** These are four terrible metaphors (no sunlight used by Isaiah) for the removal of God’s Spirit and insight from the rulers and prophets. Darkness is used as a metaphor for lack of revelation (i.e., light, e.g., Ps. 82:5; Prov. 2:13; 4:19; Isa. 59:9; II Pet. 1:19; I John 1:6; 2:11). The darkness will result in judgment (cf. Amos 5:18-20). Another metaphor in Amos 8:11-12 is famine of God’s word. God will not respond to their prayers or their prophets!

▣ **“vision”** Visions (BDB 302) and dreams (BDB 321) were often paralleled (cf. Job 33:15; Isa. 29:7; Dan. 7:1) as ways of receiving God’s message. Usually (but not exclusively) visions occurred in the day and dreams at night.

▣ **“divination”** This (BDB 890, KB 1115) was an ancient means of knowing God’s will through some physical or mechanical means (e.g., negative, Deut. 18:9-22; positive, I Sam. 28:6 and Gen. 44:5,15).

**3:7 “seers”** This was the earliest name for prophets (BDB 302, e.g., I Sam. 9:9; II Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 9:22; 25:5; Isa. 30:10; Amos 7:12).

▣  
NASB, NKJV      “ashamed”  
NRSV, TEV      “disgraced”  
NJB              “covered with shame”

The VERB (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* PERFECT) means to be ashamed (e.g., 7:16; Hosea 4:19; 10:6; 13:15 and many times in Isaiah).

▣  
NASB              “embarrassed”  
NKJV              “abashed”  
NRSV              “put to shame”  
TEV                “humiliated”  
NJB                “covered with confusion”

This VERB (BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* PERFECT) is parallel with “ashamed” and also means ashamed. They are both used together in Isa. 24:23. It is used of

1. idolaters in Isa. 1:29
2. diviners here
3. Babylon in Jer. 50:12

▣ **“mouths”** Literally this is “mustache” (BDB 974). This symbol of covering the mustache meant (1) grief (cf. Ezek. 24:17,22) or (2) shame (i.e., lepers, Lev. 13:45).

▣ **“Because there is no answer from God”** These leaders are suffering the same lack of communication with God as the leaders described in v. 4 (cf. I Sam. 28:6). Heaven is silent!

**3:8** As verses 5-7 have been a discussion of false prophets, v. 8 is a description of a true prophet who is in full communication with God (cf. Ps. 89:13-14, the prophet shares or better reflects the character of God). Notice the true prophet is filled (BDB 569, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT) with (1) power (BDB 470); (2) YHWH’s Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2; Ezek. 2:2); (3) justice (BDB 1048 “judgment”); and (4) courage (BDB 150 “might”) to make sin known (cf. Isa. 58:1). What a contrast with the leaders’ shame, grief, and impotence!

Although the full doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is not obvious in the OT, the personal presence of God with and within humans is revealed:

1. Bezalel, Exod. 31:3; 35:31
2. Joshua, Deut. 34:9
3. Saul, I Sam. 19:23-24
4. Elijah, I Kgs. 18:46
5. Ezekiel, Ezek. 1:3; 37:1; 40:1
6. Micah, Micah 3:8
7. Messiah, Isaiah 11:2; 48:16; 61:1 (Luke 4:18-19)

Also notice the connection between the prophets and the Spirit in Hosea 9:7.



NASB	“On the other hand”
NKJV	“but truly”
NRSV, TEV	“but as for me”
NJB	“Not so with me”

Literally the MT has “but indeed I.” The Hebrew ADVERB (BDB 19) is a strong ADVERSATIVE (used often in Job, cf. 1:11; 11:5; 12:7; 13:4; 14:18; 17:10; 33:1).

☐ **“Jacob. . .Israel”** As the last two lines of v. 8 show Micah addressing both Judah’s sins and Israel’s sins, so too, lines 1 and 2 of v. 9.

**3:9**

NASB, NKJV	“Now hear this”
NRSV	“hear this”
TEV	“listen to me”
NJB	“kindly listen to this”

This phrase is literally “hear I pray this.” The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE, followed by a PARTICLE used for entreaty (נא) and then the demonstrative ADJECTIVE “this.”

☐ **“Who abhor justice”** The VERB (BDB 1073, KB 1765, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) means regard as an abomination (e.g., Amos 5:10; 6:8; Isa. 14:19; 49:7). These leaders were not sincerely wrong, but haters of the right, good, and godly (cf. Isa. 5:20; Amos 6:12). The term “justice” (BDB 1048) is repeated in vv. 8 and 9.

☐ **“And twist everything that is straight”** The VERB “twist” (BDB 786, KB 875, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means “to pervert” or “to make crooked” (cf. Prov. 10:9; 28:18; Isa. 59:8).

The term “straight” is the etymological root of the OT term for “justice” or “righteousness,” which meant a straight edge or measuring reed (cf. Isa. 5:20). Most of the Hebrew words for sin speak of a deviation from this divine standard. See Special Topic: Righteousness at Hosea 2:19.

**3:10 “Zion. . .Jerusalem”** Zion is the name of one of the seven hills upon which Jerusalem was built. It often is used to refer to the whole city or nation.

☐ **“with bloodshed. . .with violent injustice”** These two NOUNS are parallel (cf. Jer. 22:13,17; Hab. 2:12).

**3:11** All three groups of leaders are mentioned in this verse and all three are condemned for their greedy, materialistic attitude (cf. 7:3; Isa. 56:9-12; Jer. 5:30-31; 6:13-14; 8:8-12; 14:13-18,22-23; 26:10-15,16; Ezek. 13; 22:23-31).

▣ **“pronounce judgment for a bribe”** This shows the corruption of the judiciary (cf. 7:3; II Chr. 19:7; Isa. 1:23; 5:23). Wealth controlled every aspect of Jewish life.

▣ **“priests instruct for a price”** One role of the priests (and Levites) was to educate the people on the precepts of the Mosaic Law (e.g., Deut. 33:10; II Chr. 15:3; 17:9). Priestly understanding and teaching (and living) of the Mosaic Law was crucial to a healthy, spiritual Israel (cf. Hosea 4:6).

▣ **“Yet they lean on the LORD, saying”** The term “lean” is used of leaning on a staff (BDB 1043, KB 1612, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 23:4). These leaders were wrapping their evil deeds and nations in religious dress. Their mouth said one thing; their actions another (cf. Isa. 29:13)! They were claiming YHWH’s protection (covenant benefit) because of their covenant relationship to Him, but were completely ignoring the covenant requirements (cf. Deut. 27-29; Lev. 26; Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13).

▣ **“Calamity will not come upon us”** This must have been a recurrent theme of the false prophets, which became a cultural proverb (cf. Jer. 5:12; 23:17; Amos 9:10), but they were wrong (cf. 2:3).

**3:12** This must have been an extremely startling statement to the people of Judah. They trusted in God’s promises that Jerusalem and the Temple would never fall (i.e., Isaiah’s promises to Hezekiah, probably based in II Sam. 7), and yet, because of their flagrant neglect of the ethical aspects of the covenant, God would take them into exile (cf. Jer. 26:18). Jerusalem would be like Samaria (cf. 1:6)! This is the first prophetic mention of the fall of Jerusalem (“plowed as a field”) and the Temple (i.e., overgrown with vegetation, literally “a high place of a forest”). This is theologically parallel to Isa. 5. I am sure that Micah was discredited in 701 B.C. when this did not occur (i.e., Sennacherib’s army destroyed by God, cf. II Kgs. 19:35-37), however, the prophet was vindicated in 586 B.C., when this prophecy was literally fulfilled under the siege of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, asserts that the king (i.e., Hezekiah, cf. 1:1) and people of Judah responded to Micah’s message and, therefore, God relented of His judgment (p. 36).

▣ **“on account of you”** They (the political and religious leaders) were not only going to experience the judgment of God (like the wealthy exploiters), their activities were the reason for the judgment of God!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MICAH 2-3

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What was the essence of the false prophets' message in 2:6-11?
2. Why is 2:12-13 such a radical break from the context?
3. How does one tell the difference between a false prophet and a true prophet?
4. How can God promise to always have a man on the Davidic throne (II Samuel 7), and yet predict the total destruction of Jerusalem and the monarchy?

# MICAH 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Lord's Reign in Zion	Prophecies of Israel's Glorious Future and the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom  (4:1-5:15)	The Lord's Universal Reign	The Future Reign of Yahweh in Zion
4:1-3	4:1-4	4:1-2 4:3-4	4:1-4
4:4-5	4:5	4:5	4:5
Zion's Future Triumph		Israel Will Return from Exile	The Scattered Flock is Gathered to Zion
4:6-8	4:6-7 4:8	4:6-7 4:8-12	4:6-7 4:8  The Siege, Exile, and Liberation of Zion
4:9-10	4:9-10		4:9-10  Her Enemies to be Crushed on the Threshing Floor
4:11-12	4:11-13		4:11-13
4:13		4:13-5:1	The Distress of the Davidic Dynasty 4:14-5:1
4:14			

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## BACKGROUND STUDY

Micah 4:1-3 is very similar to Isa. 2:2-4. It is obvious that literary borrowing has occurred from one or the other or they both borrowed from a third source.

The book of Micah seems to reflect two historical dates, as well as an eschatological position. Throughout the book, either (1) the Syro-Ephramatic War of 735 B.C. is the background or (2) the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib the Assyrian in 701 B.C. However, at the beginning of chapter 4, we realize that these two historical crises foreshadowed (1) the Babylonian invasion (v. 10) and (2) the ultimate crisis of history, the Kingdom of God. Several questions are left unanswered!

1. Does any OT prophet see the two comings of the Messiah?
2. Does this refer to a Jewish oriented millennium or a church oriented eternity?
3. Are the nations becoming believers and followers of YHWH (vv. 1-4) and/or His messiah or are they enemies to the bitter end (vv. 11-13)?

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>And it will come about in the last days

That the mountain of the house of the LORD  
Will be established as the chief of the mountains.  
It will be raised above the hills,  
And the peoples will stream to it.

<sup>2</sup>And many nations will come and say,  
“Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD  
And to the house of the God of Jacob,  
That He may teach us about His ways  
And that we may walk in His paths.”  
For from Zion will go forth the law,  
Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>And He will judge between many peoples  
And render decisions for mighty, distant nations.  
Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
And never again will they train for war.

<sup>4</sup>And each of them will sit under his vine  
And under his fig tree,  
With no one to make *them* afraid,  
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

<sup>5</sup>Though all the peoples walk  
Each in the name of his god,  
As for us, we will walk  
In the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

**4:1,3-5** These are words from Micah, as are vv. 9-13. In v. 2 the nations speak and in vv. 6-8 YHWH speaks. This entire section is similar to Isa. 2:2-4.

**4:1 “in the last days”** This phrase (BDB 31 CONSTRUCT with BDB 398) is repeated often in the OT (cf. Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30; 31:29; Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1). BDB (p. 31) describes it in this way, “The final period of history so far as the speaker’s perspective reaches that sense thus varies with the context, but it often equals the ideal or Messianic future.”

The phrase has some variation:

1. Dan. 2:28 - BDB 1079 CONSTRUCT with BDB 1095 (“the end of days”)
2. Ezek. 38:8 - BDB 31 CONSTRUCT with BDB 1040 (“the latter years”)

In Ezek. 38 the phrase is parallel to the famous prophetic phrase “that day” (cf. Ezek. 30:2-3; 38:10,14,18; 39:11; also Isa. 2:12; 10:3; 13:6,9; 34:2,8; 61:2; Jer. 30:7,8; Joel 1:15; 2:11,31; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14, 15, 16,18).

The Jews of the interbiblical period developed a concept of two ages: the current evil age (begun in Gen. 3) and an age of righteousness inaugurated by the Messiah (cf. Micah 3:12-13; 5:1-5a). However, from further NT revelation (i.e., progressive revelation), we understand that the Messiah came not once, but twice. The period from the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem until the Second Coming could be called the “last days.” The interpretive issue is when does the Second Coming occur? (1) some unknown future time; (2) before an earthly thousand year reign; (3) before the beginning of eternity? Part of this question deals with how we view the future. Is it earth-like (restored Garden of Eden) or totally different (cf. I Cor. 15:35-49)? Is the Bible literal (dispensational premillennial) or literary (see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruninghooks*)? See Special Topic: The Two Ages at Hosea 3:5.

▣ **“the mountain of the house of the LORD”** Jerusalem was built on seven hills. The two major ones were Mt. Moriah, on which the Temple stood, and Mt. Zion (i.e., site of the old Jebusite fortress and David’s palace), which became a literary metaphor for the whole city (cf. v. 2).

The imagery of a mountain as the dwelling place of god/God is recurrent in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Hebrew (e.g., Ps. 48:2; 87; Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 28:14), and Greco-Roman literature. There is an interesting article, “Divine Assembly,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 50-53 and also “Mountain” (pp. 572-574).

1. for Mesopotamia - ziggurats (man-made mountains)
2. for Canaan - Mt. Zaphon
3. for Hebrews - Mt. Zion/Moriah or a mountain in the north
4. for Greeks - Mt. Olympus

Micah has just predicted the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. 3:12). Now he asserts that God’s universal kingdom will come to fruition in Jerusalem. God will establish His reign on a renamed Mt. Zion (i.e., “New Jerusalem,” cf. Revelation 21). The ruined hill will become the most important mountain on the earth (note the parallelism between lines 2, 3, and 4). For the difference between OT prophecies about the future and NT prophecies, see full note at 4:7.

▣ **“It will be raised above the hills”** This is figurative language representing the preeminence of the temple in Jerusalem. Always Jewish people say, “Let us go up to Jerusalem.” This concept is now widened into a universal sense. Mt. Moriah is viewed as the highest, most significant elevation on the planet, that place that is closest to God!

▣ **“the peoples will stream to it”** Notice this wonderful universal element in 4:1-3. This is a recurrent theme in the OT (cf. Ps. 22:27; 66:4; 86:9; Isa. 19:21,23; 27:13; 45:20-25; 50:6-8; 66:23; Jer. 3:17; 4:2; 12:14-16; Zech. 2:11; 8:20-23; 14:16).

Notice how in the OT people come to God's mountain on the temple, but in the NT His people are sent out (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). There is a new temple—Jesus—and by faith in Him each believer becomes a temple. Instead of coming to the temple in Jerusalem, the NT temples go to the nations! God's universal, eternal, redemptive plan is now functioning!

For the difference between these OT prophetic predictions and the NT forecast of the future kingdom see full notes in the Special Topic at 4:7.

Notice the startling contrast between 3:12 (i.e., exile) and 4:1 (i.e., restoration and glorification). Also notice the universal nature of the coming reign of the Messiah (cf. 2:13; 5:2-5a). This universal aspect is so characteristic of Isaiah and Micah (e.g., Dan. 7:9-10,13-14). It is uncertain if they come once and go home or come every year like a Jewish annual feast.

It is to be noted that in a context of Babylonian exile (cf. v. 10) the VERB “will stream” (BDB 625, KB 676, *Qal* PERFECT) is the same VERB *Qal* IMPERFECT) used to describe the captive nations streaming away from Babylon in Jer. 51:44. Cyrus (cf. Isa. 44:28-45:3), God's chosen vessel, allowed all the exiled people to return home.

**4:2 “And many nations will come and say”** Verse 2 records the supposed comment of the nations. All people are welcome (e.g., Isa. 11:10; 49:22). If there is one God (i.e., monotheism, cf. I Kgs. 8:43,60), all humans are made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), and He promises to redeem all mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15), then “one people” is the ultimate goal (cf. Gal. 3:23-29; Eph. 2:11-3:13). YHWH chose to reveal Himself through national Israel, but ultimately through the ideal Israelite, His Servant (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12), His Son (cf. Ps. 2: II Sam. 7).

Verse 2 has several IMPERATIVES:

1. “come” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “go” - BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “teach” - BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning
4. “walk” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

#### ▣ “That he may teach us about His ways

**And that we may walk in His paths”** There are three aspects to biblical faith: first is knowing God (personal relationship), second is knowing God's will (Scripture, cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 119:1-176), and the other is living God's will (Scripture obedience, cf. Isa. 51:4-8). God wants a people who reflect His character. God's goal has always been to reach the world (cf. lines 6 & 7)! Humans were created for fellowship with God!

**4:3 “And he will judge between many peoples”** This is an extreme contrast between Judah's judicial actions and YHWH's (cf. 3:1, 9, 11). YHWH's judgments (i.e., Messiah's judgments [so Ibn Ezra], Isa. 11:3-5; Micah 5:4) will result in social peace, not exploitation (cf. Isa. 2:2-4).

#### ▣ “Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares

**And their spears into pruning hooks”** It is a beautiful metaphor to describe the peace of the days of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 46:9, 76:3; Hosea 2:18; the reverse in Joel 3:10).

The exact nature of these agricultural implements is uncertain (BDB 88 III). They were made of metal and were used, not like a wooden plow to turn over soil, but to scratch a furrow. This was usually a metal tipped piece of sharpened wood.

▣ **“And never again will they train for war”** The VERB “train” (BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means to learn (e.g., Deut. 4:10; 17:19; Ps. 119:73). It can refer to warfare (cf. I Chr. 5:18; Song of Songs 3:8). Not only is the coming restoration universal, it is also permanent (cf. vv. 5 line 3; 7 line 4).

#### **4:4 “And each of them will sit under his vine**

**And under his fig tree”** Israel and Judah were agricultural societies. This idiom denoted a peaceful and happy agricultural life. These phrases reflect the restoration of all descendants of Abraham back to the Promised Land, where each had their family land restored (cf. I Kgs. 4:25; Isa. 36:16; Zech. 3:10).

▣ **“With no one to make *them* afraid”** In the OT if God’s people live in light of His promises and covenant, He will defend them (cf. Lev. 26:3-6). This text in Micah reflects the Messiah’s presence and rule (which reflects an eschatological setting).

▣ **“For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken”** This speaks of the power and trustworthiness of God’s Word (cf. Isa. 40:5,8; 45:23; 55:11). God’s promises and trustworthiness are the basis of man’s faith (cf. I Kgs. 8:56).

The title for God, “LORD of hosts,” in a context relating to Israel and Judah, refers to God the commander and leader of the army of angels. In some contexts (i.e., Mesopotamian astral worship) it refers to the pagan theory of gods/angels behind the lights in the sky (i.e., planets, stars, constellations, comets, etc.). see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Amos 1:2.

**4:5** This verse seems to be out of context. This is a strange verse in a context which speaks of the universal and permanent reign of the one true God, YHWH of Israel. Some see it as:

1. This glorious future is not here yet because currently every nation has its own god (cf. II Kgs. 17:29).
2. Not all people of all the nations would recognize YHWH even in a future ideal time (e.g., Rev. 22:15).
3. This is an affirmation of those who have come to Jerusalem (cf. vv. 1e, 2a, 3a,b) and now affirm YHWH their sovereign and God forever.

The tension in this chapter between “believing nations” and “unbelieving nations” is seen in the contrast between vv. 1-4 and v. 5!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:6-8**

**“In that day,” declares the LORD,  
“I will assemble the lame,  
And gather the outcasts,  
Even those whom I have afflicted.**

**<sup>7</sup>I will make the lame a remnant,  
And the outcasts a strong nation,  
And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion  
From now on and forever.**

**<sup>8</sup>And as for you, the tower of the flock,  
Hill of the daughter of Zion,  
To you it will come—  
Even the former dominion will come,  
The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.**

**4:6-8** This continues the theme of earlier chapters in Micah, God as shepherd (cf. 2:12-13, Ps. 23; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34), who cares for those who society has rejected (cf. Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1-2; Jer. 31:8; zeph. 3:19). No one is left out or left behind!

**4:6 “In that day”** See note at 4:1.

▣ **“lame”** This word means “limping flock” or “wounded sheep” (BDB 854 II, cf. Zeph. 3:19).

▣ **“assemble”** As lame and outcast are parallel, so too, the VERBS:

1. “assemble” - BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. “gather” - BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

▣ **“outcasts”** This refers literally to sheep who have left the flock (i.e., banished ones, BDB 621, cf. Zeph. 3:14).

▣ **“Even those whom I have afflicted”** God Himself brought judgment on His people (here the exiled “lame” and “outcast”) in order to bring them back to the place of personal faith. God disciplines those who are part of His family (cf. Heb. 12:5ff).

**4:7 “a remnant. . . a strong nation”** God always starts with a small group (e.g., Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc.), but this small group of believers is meant to become more than the stars of heaven, the sands of the sea, and the dust of the earth (Genesis promise to the Patriarchs). They (believers in YHWH) are meant to fill the earth.

God Himself or His Messiah (i.e., depending on 1) which covenant one affirms and 2) your personal, biblical world view) will gather and accomplish this universal task (Ezek. 36:22-38). God’s plan has always included all human beings (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). In Genesis the Garden of Eden is the special place; in Exodus-Joshua the Promised Land is the special place; in the prophets Jerusalem is the special place; in the NT it is New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

For the theological implications to “remnant” see Special Topic at Micah 2:12.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

REB

“the outcasts”

NRSV

“those who were cast off”

TEV

“those who are left”

NJB

“the far-flung”

JPSOA

“the expelled”

NIV

“those driven away”

NAB

“those driven far off”

The Hebrew text is uncertain. Several emendations have been suggested:

1. “to be far off” - BDB 229, KB 245
2. “weaklings”
3. “sick ones”
4. “weary ones” (JB)

▣ **“the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion”** There is a literary parallel between reigning and shepherding in the Old Testament (e.g., shepherd, 5:4,6 and reign, 4:7; 5:12).

▣ **“From now on and forever”** This parallels v. 5d. God’s promises are sure. God’s plans are permanent. However, there is a progressive revelation. The OT has become the NT. God reveals Himself in fuller ways and categories, but the goal is always life with Him! See Special Topic: *’Olam* (forever) at Hosea 2:19.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE VS. NT PREDICTIONS**

(This is taken from my commentary on Revelation, “Crucial Introductory Article”)

### **FIRST TENSION** (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thesalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15 before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham’s call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God’s people are the surrounding nations of the ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7-15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are (1) the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); (2) the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14); (3) the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19); and (4) even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., “Israel,” cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., “kingdom of priests,” cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

### **SECOND TENSION** (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose were so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet. 2:59), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

### **THIRD TENSION** (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if...then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it, yes? God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

#### **FOURTH TENSION** (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than societal propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark. 13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a

book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)” (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

“No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books’ frame of reference is the reader’s contemporary age rather than the author’s. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes” (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

“Today’s readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

**4:8 “tower of the flock”** This is possibly (1) a special place name near Bethlehem itself, where sacrificial sheep for daily sacrifice were raised (i.e., Jerome and possibly Gen. 35:2,1 or *Migdal-eder*). This will become the focus of prophecy in 5:2, which relates to the Messiah’s (who is the sinless Lamb of God, cf. John 1:29) birthplace or (2) it refers to the king/shepherd watching over his people from the capital (here it is God or His messiah).

It is possible, using poetic synonymous parallelism, to understand:

1. “in Mount Zion,” v. 7 line 3
2. “tower of the flock,” v. 8 line 1
3. “hill of the daughter of Zion,” v. 8, line 2 (cf. vv. 10,13)
4. “the daughter of Jerusalem,” v. 8 line 5

as referring to the capital of the south (i.e., Jerusalem, cf. Isa. 24:23).

▣ **“Hill of the daughter of Zion”** This is possibly another place name, *Ophel* (BDB 779 I). *Ophel* was the district of Jerusalem where David’s palace was located. It may be an allusion to a restored Davidic dynasty (cf. II Sam. 7).

▣ **“Even the former dominion will come”** This section may reflect Isa. 1:24-26. After Israel is judged, she will be restored to her previous greatness. This, of course, is metaphorical for restoration because, in reality, her future is far more extensive (i.e., universal) than her past (i.e., kingdom of David and Solomon).

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-13**

<sup>9</sup>“Now, why do you cry out loudly?  
Is there no king among you,  
Or has your counselor perished,  
That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?”

<sup>10</sup>Writhe and labor to give birth,  
Daughter of Zion,  
Like a woman in childbirth,  
For now you will go out of the city,  
Dwell in the field,  
And go to Babylon.  
There you will be rescued;  
There the LORD will redeem you  
From the hand of your enemies.

<sup>11</sup>And now many nations have been assembled against you  
Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,  
And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’

<sup>12</sup>But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD,  
And they do not understand His purpose;  
For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.

<sup>13</sup>Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion,  
For your horn I will make iron  
And your hoofs I will make bronze,  
That you may pulverize many peoples,  
That you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain  
And their wealth to the LORD of all the earth.

**4:9-13** The historical setting is again ambiguous, but because of v. 10, it seems to reflect the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by neo-Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar II.

**4:9** “why do you cry out so loudly” This refers to the time of exile. See Jer. 8:19.

▣ **“Is there no king among you”** This seems to be a sarcastic comment on chapter 3. The king was God’s representative, and yet, if the king is evil, to whom can the people turn?

▣ **“has your counselor perished”** King and counselor are parallel and refer to the head of the royal line. In Isa. 9:6 it is one of several titles of the coming Messianic king. See Isa. 3:1-3.

▣ **“like a woman in childbirth”** Birthing (cf. v. 10 lines 1-3) is an OT metaphor of judgment and pain (cf. Isa. 42:14; Jer. 4:31; 6:24). In Mark 13:8 and Rom. 8:22 it is used of the birth pangs of the new age (i.e., for ever and ever).

**4:10**

**NASB** “Writhe and labor to bring forth”  
**NKJV** “be in pain and labor to bring forth”  
**NRSV** “writhe and groan”  
**TEV** “twist and groan”  
**NJB** “writhe in pain and cry aloud”

Both of these VERBS (“writhe” BDB 296, KB 297, and “labor” BDB 161, KB 189) are *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

▣ **“For now you will go out of the city, Dwell in the field”** This is specifically referring to a forced exile after the capture of Jerusalem. These people will be forced to live out of doors while they are being marched to new homes and fields far away.

▣ **“And go to Babylon”** This is a specific allusion to the powerful Mesopotamian nation that conquered Assyria and the Fertile Crescent. Assyria took captive the Northern Ten Tribes (Israel) in 722 B.C. (cf. chapters 1-2). Babylon took captive the Southern Two Tribes (Judah) in 586 B.C. (cf. 3:12).

Many scholars are surprised at such a specific reference to Babylon. This same non-chronological aspect can be seen in Isa. 13-14. However, it must also be mentioned that Babylon can be a way of referring to Mesopotamia, for there was a Babylonian Empire before Assyria and even long before that (cf. Gen. 10:10). It could also, following Gen. 11:4-9, refer to anti-God world powers (like Daniel). This would follow John the Apostle’s use in the book of the Revelation (cf. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21).

▣ **“There you will be rescued;**

**There the LORD will redeem you**

**From the hand of your enemies”** Here is another glimpse of hope (lines 7-9) amidst the blackness of judgment (lines 1-6). There is another radical subject break after v. 10. The new subject is introduced in vv. 11-12. The text moves from deliverance to another future attack beyond their return from Babylon.

**4:11 “now many nations have been assembled against you”** This seems to refer to the mercenary troops found both in the Assyrian (e.g., Sennacherib, 701 B.C.) and Babylonian armies (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C.). However, those who are looking for a certain pre-millennial position often find credence in their position from passages like this in the Prophets.

▣

**NASB** “Let her be polluted”  
**NKJV** “Let her be defiled”  
**NRSV** “Let her be profaned”  
**TEV** “must be destroyed”  
**NJB** “Let us desecrate her”

The VERB (BDB 337, KB 335, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning) means “to be polluted or profaned” (cf. Ps. 106:38; Jer. 3:1,9). This same root is used in Isa. 9:16; 10:6).

▣

**NASB, NJB** “let our eyes gloat over Zion”  
**NKJV** “let our eyes look upon”  
**NRSV** “let our eyes gaze upon”  
**TEV** “we will see”

The VERB is parallel to the one above. It (BDB 302, 301, *Qal* JUSSIVE) is one general term “to see.”

The *USB Translator's Handbook* suggests that these two VERBS had a sexual connotation and this was the reason why the metaphor of “daughter” is used in vv. 8, 10, 13 (p. 129) or possibly the Promised Land’s ritual defilement by foreign troops is the connotation of the two parallel VERBS (p. 129).

**4:12** When those who do not know YHWH or His Word view history, they see Him judging His own people. They miss the goal of a special covenant people as a means for all people to know God. Abraham’s descendants did not keep the covenant, did not reveal God, so God chose to reveal Himself (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

In this chapter the tension between (1) believing nations and (2) attacking, unbelieving nations is accentuated. The poetry is brief and ambiguous. It is difficult (impossible) to systematize it. These are flashes of truth, of future events, or literary metaphors. Two great truths are taught:

1. God’s will of a restored believing humanity will be a reality.
2. Some will not believe and will attack God by attacking His people.
3. One group will be with God forever; one group will be destroyed!

▣ **“He has gathered them”** This seems to imply that God has gathered Israel’s and Judah’s enemies to allow her to destroy them (cf. v. 13; Isa. 13-14; Ezek. 38-39; Joel 4; Zech. 14).

**4:13** Verses 12-13 must be taken together to understand God’s comment. He calls His restored covenant people to devastate those pagan nations which God used to punish His own people for their sins (cf. v. 12; Isa. 41:15-16; Jer. 51:20-23; Habakkuk).

The first two VERBS (“arise” BDB 877, KB 1086 and “thresh” BDB 190, KB 218) are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

But in v. 13 God is speaking to His restored covenant people (i.e., New Covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34). One day His people will be victorious. God wanted to use Abraham’s descendants. He wanted the world to know Him and come to Him, but Abraham’s seed did not and the world could not!

▣ **“to the LORD of all the earth”** Again, notice this universal emphasis. In context this chapter relates to God’s first covenant people, but in light of Jesus, it refers to the new covenant people!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are the books of Isaiah and Micah so similar?
2. Is it unusual for the Old Testament prophecies to have a universal implication?
3. Why is v. 5 out of context?

# MICAH 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Prophecies of Israel's Glorious Future and the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom (4:1-5:15)		The Distress and Glory of the Davidic Dynasty (4:1-5:3)
The Coming Messiah	5:1	God Promises a Ruler from Bethlehem	
5:2	5:2-5a	5:2-5a	
5:3-5a			The Future Conqueror of Assyria 5:4-5
Judgment on Israel's Enemies		Deliverance and Punishment	
5:5b-6	5:5b-6	5:5b-6	The Future Role of the Remnant 5:6
5:7-9	5:7-9	5:7-9	5:7
			Yahweh Will Destroy All Temptations 5:8-14
5:10-15	5:10-15	5:10-15	5:15

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Micah contains much prophetic material. See Introduction III. Genre D.
- B. Some translations take 5:1 (i.e., 4:14 in Hebrew text) with chapter 4 (cf. TEV). If so then it relates to 4:9-10, where Jerusalem is attacked and exiled.  
However, other translations take it with 5:1-5a (NASB, NJB, NIV), which would form a contrast between Jerusalem and a faithless king and evil leaders versus Bethlehem with a great coming king and godly leader.
- C. This chapter is very specific about the birthplace of the Messiah. Micah wrote in the eighth century B.C. and precisely predicted the village of Jesus' birth. Some will deny the date of Micah, but if you do not accept the 750's then Micah was translated into Greek (i.e., the Septuagint in 250-150 B.C.). This is still well over a hundred years before His birth.  
The predictive element unique to the Bible shows:
1. the inspiration of the Bible
  2. the sovereignty of YHWH over history
  3. the reality of the Messiahship of Jesus
- D. This chapter also predicts the pre-existence (v. 2, lines 4,5) of the Messiah as well as the type of reign He will employ (vv. 4-5, line 1). This is shockingly specific prophecy. What a wonderful and accurate Bible we have been given by God.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-5a

<sup>1</sup>Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops;

They have laid siege against us;

With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.

<sup>2</sup>But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

*Too* little to be among the clans of Judah,

From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.

His goings forth are from long ago,

From the days of eternity.”

<sup>3</sup>Therefore He will give them *up* until the time

When she who is in labor has borne a child.

Then the remainder of His brethren

Will return to the sons of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>And He will arise and shepherd *His flock*

In the strength of the LORD,

In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.

And they will remain,

Because at that time He will be great

To the ends of the earth.

<sup>5</sup>And this One will be *our* peace.

## 5:1

**NASB** “Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops”

**NKJV** “now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops”

**NRSV** “now you are walled around with a wall”

**TEV** “People of Jerusalem, gather your forces”

**NJB** “now look to your fortifications, fortress” (4:14)

This verse is 4:14 in the Hebrew text. There are several translation options:

1. The NASB, NKJV, and TEV follow the MT (BDB 151 I, cf. Jer. 5:7; and translate the VERB the same way).
2. The Septuagint has “now you are walled about with a wall” (i.e., siege, cf. NRSV, REB). It changes the Hebrew VERB “gather” (BDB 151, KB 177, *Hithpoel* IMPERFECT) to a similar Hebrew word meaning “to build a wall” (BDB 154, i.e., strengthen against a siege, cf. Ezek. 13:5, NJB).
3. Another possible translation is “you are slashing yourself, daughter of slashes” (BDB 151, but it would require a revocalization, cf. JPSOA, Moffatt translation, NET). This last possibility could be accurate because of the connection between “slashing oneself” and
  - a. idolatry (cf. Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 47:5; Hosea 7:14) or
  - b. grief (cf. Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37)

Verse 1 describes the situation as it was (Jerusalem about to be sieged), where vv. 2-5 describe the situation that will be in the end time (Jerusalem home of the great King). This same temporal transition can be seen in vv. 5-9 in contrast with vv. 10-14.

Chapter 4, vv. 9-13, deals with Jerusalem. It is possible that 5:1 (MT 4:14) is one paragraph relating to a besieged capital (Jerusalem).

If 5:1 goes with 5:2-5a, then there is a contrast between weak, helpless Jerusalem and God’s new leader from Bethlehem (David’s hometown). The Judean monarchy is hopelessly lost in sin and faithlessness (except for a few godly kings, e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah). God will raise up another faithful king of David’s line, who will fully follow YHWH (cf. Gen. 49:9-10; II Sam. 7)!

▣ **“They have laid siege against us”** The VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321) is a *Qal* PERFECT. Remember the time setting is not in the VERB, but in the context. This obviously refers to a siege, but which one? There are several theories.

1. The historical setting may be Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah and his unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. ( cf. II Kgs. 19:35-36).
2. Nebechadnezzar II also invaded and besieged Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 24-25).
3. Many scholars believe this may also reflect the future invasion of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple by Titus in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)

Number 1 fits the author’s time best, while #3 fits the Messiah’s time best.

▣ **“With a rod”** The term “rod” (BDB 986) meant a stripped tree branch (shorter than a staff) used as a means of discipline

1. for children, Prov. 10:13; 13:24; 22:8,15; 23:13,14; 26:3; 29:15
2. for God’s judgment on the nations, Ps. 2:9 (cf. 110:5-6); Isa. 9:4; Rev. 2:27; 19:15
3. for judgment on His own people, Isa. 10:5,24; 14:29

Assyria was called the “rod of God’s anger” in Isa. 10:5,24. However, God will also strike Assyria because of her sins (cf. Isa. 30:31). “Rod” is a Hebrew idiom for a king ruling (BDB 986, cf. 7:14; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

▣ **“they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek”** The judge is a title for the King of Israel. To smite one on the cheek was a sign of great insult (cf. I Kgs. 22:24; Job 16:10; Lam. 3:30; Acts 23:2), which shows

Assyria's contempt and Israel's weakness. What YHWH had done to His covenant people's enemies (cf. Ps. 3:7), He now allows to happen to them!

Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* asserts that this judge is the Messiah (p. 887).

**5:2-5a** This whole paragraph marks a radical transition from God's judgment (siege, exile) on Jerusalem and Judah to God's marvelous restoration (cf. 4:6-8,12-13). This vacillation is common in prophetic literature and perhaps is (1) the work of later editors or (2) the mind set (antithetical parallelism) of the Hebrew prophets.

**5:2 "Bethlehem Ephrathah"** Ephrathah (i.e., a clan of the tribe of Judah, cf I Sam. 17:12; Ruth 1:2; 4:11; note I Chr. 2:19,24,50) is added because there was another "house of bread" (Beth-lehem) in the northern tribal allocation of Zebulun (cf. Josh. 19:15). Bethlehem was known as Ephrath (cf. Gen. 38:19; 48:7). It was a very small village, only noted because it was the birthplace of King David (cf. I Sam. 16:1, and thereby, a way to refer to a future Davidic Messianic King, cf. II Sam. 7; Ps. 89). This verse is quoted in Matt. 2:6 and alluded to in Luke 2:4 and John 7:42.

▣ **"little"** This term (BDB 859 I) is often used in a pejorative sense of least.

1. clans, I Sam. 9:21
2. tribes, Ps. 68:27
3. horns, Dan. 8:9
4. towns, Micah 5:2

(list from NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 830)

▣ **"clans"** The term "clans" is the Hebrew term "thousands" (BDB 48 II). The Hebrew term for thousand, *eleph*, can be used as:

1. a family or clan unit, Num. 10:4; Josh. 22:14; Jdgs. 6:15; I Sam. 10:19; 23:23; Micah 5:2; Zech. 9:7
2. a military unit, Exod. 18:21,25; Deut. 1:15
3. a literal thousand, Gen. 20:16; Exod. 32:28
4. a symbol, Gen. 24:60; Exod. 20:6 (Deut. 7:9); 34:7; Jer. 32:18

Bethlehem was so small that she is not even mentioned in Joshua 15 as supplying troops for the Judean army, or in Nehemiah as supplying workers for rebuilding Jerusalem's walls.

▣ **"of Judah"** Because of Moses' prediction about the descendants of Jacob's son, Judah (BDB 397) in Gen. 49:8-12, esp. v. 10, it became the accepted prophecy that the Messiah would be of Judah's line, family of Jesse (cf. II Sam. 7).

▣ **"for Me"** This phrase is emphasized in the MT. The Messiah comes at YHWH's bidding. He is YHWH's full and perfect, human, righteous leader, One who accurately and completely reflects the God of Israel. The students of the OT (the rabbis) were not expecting an incarnation (i.e., God becoming a man), but an empowerment (i.e., like the Judges). God Himself was the true king (cf. I Sam. 8:7).

▣

NASB **"His goings forth are from long ago,  
From the days of eternity"**

NKJV **"Whose goings forth *have been* from of old,  
From everlasting"**

NRSV **"Whose origin is from of old,  
From ancient days"**

**TEV** “Whose family line goes back to ancient time”

**NJB** “Whose origins go back to the distant past,  
To the days of old”

These two lines are parallel. The VERB, going forth (BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a very common VERB. It was used in Micah eight times (e.g., [1] of the Lord coming in 1:3; [2] of God’s law going forth in 4:2; and [3] of repentant Israel being restored in 7:9 [a new exodus, 7:15]). It can refer to the Messiah’s origin (Genenius, NRSV, NJB) or actions (cf. vv. 4 and 5a).

These two lines could refer to (1) the pre-existence of the Messiah (cf. Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:1,14-15; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; I Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8) or (2) a way of referring to famous descendants of the past (i.e., Abraham, Noah, or more probably, David). This whole verse alludes to a Davidic king, of David’s line, from David’s hometown. David was viewed as the ideal king.

The term “eternity” (BDB 761) is *’olam*. See Special Topic: Forever (*’Olam*) at Hosea 2:19.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 347, which discusses *’olam*, makes this comment,

“While it is tempting to see here a reference to the eternal preexistence of the Messiah, no such an idea is found in biblical or postbiblical Jewish literature before the ‘Similitudes of Enoch’ (first century B.C. - first century A.D.; see I Enoch 48:2-6.”

I think, although there are hints in the OT of an incarnation, the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day were surprised at His claims of equality with God (e.g., Mark 2:5-7; John 1:1-14; 8:58 and Paul, II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13). A partial list of OT texts that have been used to assert the full deity of Jesus follows:

1. Ps. 2:7, quoted in Heb. 1:5 (see esp. 1:2-3)
2. Ps. 45:6-7 quoted in Heb. 1:8-9
3. Ps. 110:1 quoted in Heb. 1:13
4. Isa. 9:6; Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 5:2 alluded to in Luke 1:32
5. Dan. 7:13 quoted in Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62
6. Zech. 13:7 quoted in Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27
7. Mal. 3:1 quoted in Mark 1:1-3; Luke 2:26-27

Special Topic: The Trinity following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive:

1. the Gospels
  - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
  - b. John 14:26
2. Acts - Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
3. Paul
  - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
  - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
  - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
  - d. Gal. 4:4-6
  - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
  - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
  - g. II Thess. 2:13
  - h. Titus 3:4-6

4. Peter - I Pet. 1:2

5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT:

1. Use of plurals for God

a. Name *Elohim* is plural, but when used of God always has a singular VERB

b. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7

c. “One” in the *Shema* (BDB 1033) of Deut. 6:4 is plural (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)

2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity

a. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16

b. Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19

c. Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22

d. Zech. 3:1-2

3. God and Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14

4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12

5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10

6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers:

1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father

2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit

3. Arius - denied deity to the Son and Spirit

4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea

2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)

3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

**5:3 “He will give them up until the time”** In context the PRONOUN can refer to (1) YHWH or (2) His Messiah. It think it refers to YHWH in v. 3, line 1, but to the Messiah in v. 3, line 3 and is purposeful ambiguity!

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is another very common VERB, which can mean “give,” “put,” or “set.” Here it connotes “deliver up,” usually in a judgment context (cf. Num. 21:3; Jdgs. 20:13; I Sam. 11:12; II Sam. 14:7; 20:21; I Kgs. 14:16; Hosea 11:8).

▣ **“she who is in labor has borne a child”** There are several possible biblical antecedents:

1. It goes back to YHWH’s first promise of redemption by a male deliverer through a woman in Gen. 3:15.

2. It relates to Micah’s contemporary, Isaiah, who several years earlier mentioned a special birth (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-16).

3. It goes back to 4:9-10, which uses the same metaphor for Jerusalem.

4. It relates to the Messianic community (i.e., the faithful remnant), as in Revelation 12, bringing forth the Messiah.

The whole point of v. 3 is that God has allowed a limited judgment to overwhelm His faithless covenant people in order to gloriously restore them!

▣ **“Then the remainder of His brethren**

**Will return to the sons of Israel”** This may refer to one or two groups: (1) “the remnant” and (2) “the sons of Israel” (cf. Isa. 10:20-27). Historically this would refer to the Jews taken into exile reuniting with those Jews who remained in the Promised Land, but eschatologically it refers to “all Israel” (cf. Rom. 9-11, esp. 9:6). The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 428, says it refers to “brothers” of the coming ruler (cf. v. 2). As always, poetic prophecy is brief, ambiguous, and difficult to interpret. It is almost impossible to interpret without (1) a specific historical setting; (2) a literary context; and (3) OT or NT parallel passages. See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (this has been a very helpful book for me in interpreting prophecy).

▣ **“return”** There is a play on the word *shub* (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal IMPERFECT*), which denotes

1. a literal physical returning (from exile)
2. a spiritual repentance (from idolatry and rebellion)

This alludes to 2:12-13 and 4:6-8.

**5:4** This is a description of the characteristics of the Messianic reign (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5,6-9,11-16):

1. He will stand (i.e., endure or remain, e.g., Ps. 102:26; 111:3,10; 112:3,9; Eccl. 1:4; Isa. 14:26; 66:22; Hag. 2:5)
2. He will shepherd His people (David was a shepherd, YHWH is described by him in these terms in Ps. 23)
3. He will come in the strength of the Lord
4. He will come in the majesty of the name of the Lord, his God
5. He will be great
6. He will reign to the ends of the earth (BDB 75 e.g., Ps. 2:8; 22:27-28; 59:13; 72:8)
7. In v. 5, line 1 (which should go with v. 4) He will reign in peace (cf. v. 4, line 4)

Notice how 5:4 describes the same time period as 4:1-4.

**5:5a “And this One will be our peace”** Peace is the Hebrew word *shalom* (BDB 1022). It speaks of wholeness. The Jews use it for a greeting and a farewell. Its eschatological use here is possibly a contrast to the contemporary false prophets’ message of peace (cf. 3:5 and 5:5, line 2, v. 6).

This verse is speaking of a ruler who will bring peace (cf. v. 4) and will himself be called peace (cf. Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:14).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:5b-9**

<sup>5b</sup>**When the Assyrian invades our land,**

**When he tramples on our citadels,**

**Then we will raise against him**

**Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.**

<sup>6</sup>**And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,**

**The land of Nimrod at its entrances;**

**And He will deliver us from the Assyrian**

**When he attacks our land**

**And when he tramples our territory.**

**<sup>7</sup>Then the remnant of Jacob  
Will be among many peoples  
Like dew from the LORD,  
Like showers on vegetation  
Which do not wait for man  
Or delay for the sons of men.**

**<sup>8</sup>And the remnant of Jacob  
Will be among the nations,  
Among many peoples  
Like a lion among the beasts of the forest,  
Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,  
Which, if he passes through,  
Tramples down and tears,  
And there is none to rescue.**

**<sup>9</sup>Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries,  
And all your enemies will be cut off.**

**5:5 line 2-v. 9** Assyria was God's chosen instrument to punish Israel (cf. Isa. 10:5). God's covenant people had gone so far into Ba'al worship they did not know YHWH (cf. Hosea 11:1-4). God breaks His covenant so He can reestablish it! Assyria is a limited judgment (cf. v. 3).

The time frame for this paragraph is uncertain. Assyria may be a way of referring to all godly anti-YHWH nations (cf. Zech. 10:10-11), which would be similar to the name Babylon (used in the book of Revelation).

### **5:5 “Then we will raise against him**

**Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men”** Number sequences are common in Ugaritic and OT literature (e.g., Prov. 6:16; 30:15,18,21,29; Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6, and another example is in Ecclesiasticus 11:25). The emphasis is on the adequate number of godly leaders to accomplish YHWH's will who will be available in that day. Assyria will be judged by YHWH in the end (cf. Isa. 10:24-27).

There is the question of why does the text have “we will raise” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* PERFECT). Does this imply that scattered Israel will be the source of God's deliverance or is it a way of referring to God's actions (cf. v. 3 line 1) or His Messiah (cf. v. 3 line 3; vv. 4-5 line 1)? This same tension is seen when comparing, “we will raise,” v. 5 line 4 and “they will shepherd,” v. 6 line 1 vs. “he will deliver” (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT). v. 6 line 3.

The ambiguity of this text and the lack of any historical basis for Jewish soldiers conquering Assyria cause many (and rightly so) to

1. make Assyria stand for any world power who is against God's people
2. the conqueror is not “they” but “he” (the ideal ruler of vv. 2-5a) will subdue all end-time opposition (similar to Ps. 2 or Ezek. 38-39 or Dan. 11:36-45).

**5:6 “Nimrod”** This name (BDB 650) relates to the founding of Babel (i.e., Babylon) and Nineveh (i.e., Assyria in Gen. 10:8-12). Nimrod is called a mighty hunter who established the first kingdom of Mesopotamia (“the land between the Rivers,” i.e., the Tigris and Euphrates). Therefore, these two terms, Assyria and Nimrod, are (1) simply synonyms or (2) it refers to neo-Babylon under Nebopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar.

▣ **“He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land”** This is not what happened in history! Therefore, is this

1. a future reference to Cyrus (i.e., 539 B.C. Babylon falls, cf. Isa. 44-45)
2. a reference to the eschatological future (i.e., Messianic period)
3. a reference to the message of the contemporary false prophets (more probable)

**5:7-9** Quite often in Micah (and other prophets) there has been the promise that God would bring His remnant (see Special Topic at 2:12) back to Jerusalem. See also Special Topic: OT Predictions of the Future vs. NT Predictions of the Future at 4:7. However, in this context, God will scatter the remnant of faithful believers throughout the earth that they might be a blessing (i.e., “dew from the LORD”), v. 7, and a champion for justice and godliness, v. 8. If this is accurate then YHWH is using the exiles to scatter His people (i.e., the purpose of Genesis, “be fruitful and multiply,” which fallen mankind refused, cf. Gen. 10-11). His scattered people are His witnesses to all the nations, which fulfills Gen. 12:2-3; 22:18; 26:4; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8!

However, I must admit that it is possible to see both phrases (i.e., vv. 7-8) relating to judgment (cf. v. 9; II Sam. 17:12). There is much discussion as to whom this verse refers. Some see it as scattered Israel, some see it as the end-time people of God (cf. Romans 9-11; 2:28-29; Galatians 3).

It is just possible that this entire context (i.e., 5b-9) reflects the false hopes and predictions of the false prophets (cf. 3:5). Micah is characterized by radical switching from judgment to redemption. If so, then 5:1-5a is the true prophet’s prediction, while 5:5b-9 relates to false hope of the false prophets!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES**

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

**5:7 “dew”** “Dew” in the OT has several meanings:

1. God’s blessing, Gen. 27:28; Num. 11:9; Deut. 33:13,28; Prov. 19:12; Hosea 14:5; Zech. 8:12
2. lack of it was a divine curse, II Sam. 1:21; I Kgs. 17:1; Hag. 1:10
3. it evaporated quickly in the sunlight, so it was a metaphor for transient things, Exod. 16:13-14; Isa. 18:4; Hosea 6:4; 13:3 (similar to mist, vapor, smoke)
4. a metaphor for life or youth, Isa. 26:19
5. a metaphor of pervasiveness, II Sam. 17:12

(see *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 206-207)

▣

NASB	“wait for”
NKJV	“tarry”
NRSV	“depend upon”
TEV	-----
NJB	“depend on”

This VERB (BDB 875 I, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERFECT) in the *Piel* form has three basic meanings:

1. look eagerly for, Job 3:9; 6:19; Isa. 5:2,4,7; 59:9,11; Jer. 8:15; 13:16; 14:19,22; Hosea 12:6
2. lie in wait for, Ps. 56:6; 119:95
3. wait (linger) for, Micah 5:7

Humans wait patiently for moisture because they can do nothing to provide it. It must come “from the Lord.”



NASB	“delay”
NKJV, NRSV	“wait for”
TEV	-----
NJB	-----

This VERB (BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* IMPERFECT) in *Piel* form has two meanings:

1. wait for, Micah 5:7
2. hope for, Micah 7:7

Humans know that there is that part of life (i.e., spiritual vitality) which they cannot produce, manufacture, or implement themselves!

▣ It is obvious that vv. 7 and 8 are parallel in structure. The interpretive issue is, are they parallel in emphasis? Verse 7 seems to be a positive emphasis, but v. 8 seems negative (cf. v. 9).

They may be another example of antithetical parallelism (e.g., Prov. 19:12 uses both “lion” and “dew”). Dispersed Israel will be both a blessing and a curse. God will bring truth to the nations through them, but also judgment. Light brings responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48).

▣ **“lion”** Lion is a common metaphor for strength and power in the ancient Near East. See Special Topic: Lions in the OT at Hosea 5:14.

▣ **“there is none to rescue”** This is an idiom of divine power (cf. Deut. 32:39; Job 10:7; Ps. 50:22; Hosea 5:14 and related phrases in Job 9:12; 23:13; and Isa. 42:44).

**5:9** This strophe in verses 7-9 is so ambiguous that several theories have been put forth by translators and commentators. Verse 9 may be a clear summary of verses 7-8, addressed directly to the conquering eschatological remnant.

The term “cut off” (BDB 503, KB 500, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, possibly in JUSSIVE sense) seems to foreshadow vv. 10,11,12,13, which is an obvious judgment context related to Canaanite society which trusted in

1. its military
2. its fortifications
3. its religious practices and idols

This false hope and false worship affected many nations in and around Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16), including Israel and Judah.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:10-15**

<sup>10</sup>“And it will be in that day,” declares the LORD,  
“That I will cut off your horses from among you  
And destroy your chariots.

<sup>11</sup>I will also cut off the cities of your land

**And tear down all your fortifications.**

**<sup>12</sup>I will cut off sorceries from your hand,  
And you will have fortunetellers no more.**

**<sup>13</sup>I will cut off your carved images  
And your *sacred* pillars from among you,  
So that you will no longer bow down  
To the work of your hands.**

**<sup>14</sup>I will root out your Asherim from among you  
And destroy your cities.**

**<sup>15</sup>And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath  
On the nations which have not obeyed”**

**5:10-15** God’s people were trusting not in God, but (1) in their military might, v. 10; (2) in their fortifications, v. 11; (3) their sorceries, v. 12; and (4) their idolatry, vv. 13-14 (e.g., Isa. 2:8). YHWH must stop this by asserting His power and will. This repeated use of “I” reminds me of Ezek. 36:22-38 (description of the New Covenant).

**5:10 “in that day”** This is a reference to God’s judgment day (cf. 4:1, 6).



**NASB, NKJV** “cut off”  
**NRSV** “destroy”  
**TEV** “take away”  
**NJB** “tear.. .tear away”

The VERB (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* PERFECT) in the *Hiphil* form is a common metaphor (“cut off”) for a complete destruction and removal (e.g., vv. 9,10,11,12,13; Isa. 9:14; 10:7; 14:22; Amos 1:5,8; 2:3; Zech. 9:10).

▣ **“your horses”** God’s people (i.e., kings), against the direct commands from God (cf. Deut. 17:16), went to Egypt to multiply their military power (i.e., chariots). This need not be literal, but stands for military power in every age!

▣ **“chariots”** Chariots were the ultimate weapon of that day. They seem to have been introduced into this area (originally from Hyksos in Egypt) by the Phoenicians or Philistines who plated them with iron and made them the most formidable weapon available.

**5:11 “And tear down all your fortifications”** We know from Assyrian documents that in 701 B.C. Sennacherib captured forty six walled cities of Judah (cf. v. 14b).

**5:12 “sorceries. . .fortune tellers”** Verses 12-14 refer to the activity of sorcerers (BDB 506, attempting to know and control the future) among the people of God. They are condemned in Lev. 19:26 and Deut. 18:9-22. Many were brought into Israel by Jezebel (cf. II Kgs. 9:22).

**5:13 “carved images. . .sacred pillars. . .the work of your hands”** These refer to various idols which the people of God were worshipping (cf. Gen. 28:18,22; Deut. 16:22).

**5:14**

**NASB** “Asherim”  
**NKJV** “wooden images”  
**NRSV, NJB** “sacred poles”  
**TEV** “the images of the goddess Asherah”

This refers to some type of wooden pole (BDB 81, i.e., carved stake or live tree representing the tree of life) positioned next to the uplifted rock on Ba'al platforms (i.e., heights). It represented the female fertility god of Canaan (e.g., Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:21; Jdgs. 3:7; 6:25,26; I Kgs. 14:23; II Kgs. 18:4; II Chr. 31:1), while the sacred pillars of v. 13 refer to the male fertility god (i.e., *Ba'al*). These foreign fertility gods and goddesses were introduced from Phoenicia (Jezebel) and were very popular among the people of God (cf I Kgs. 18-19).



**NASB, NKJV,**  
**TEV, NJB** “your cities”  
**NRSV** “your towns”

Some scholars speculate that since “cities” were referred to earlier (i.e., v. 11, BDB 746) that the same root here should be paralleled to “Asherim” of v. 14 line 1. To do so they have speculated a Ugaritic root or possibly an Arabic root (cf. REB, “blood-spattered altars”). The Jewish Study Bible’s footnote and the NET Bible suggest an emendation which yields “idols.”

**5:15 “I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath”** The terms (plus PREPOSITION “in”) “anger” (BDB 60 I) and “wrath” (BDB 404) are hendiads which intensify the meaning (i.e., in great wrath).

Another option is to see v. 15 as a separate thought. YHWH will purify and restore His covenant exiled people, but for those of the nations that do not respond (cf. v. 7) He will destroy all idolaters.

▣ **“On the nations which have not obeyed”** The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT) means to hear so as to obey. See note at 4:1. The same term, but in an IMPERATIVE form, is repeated in 6:1.

The nations who heard of YHWH from the scattered, exiled covenant people must respond to the truth they have heard (cf. v. 7).

This seems to be completely out of context with the previous passage, however, it does emphasize the truth that God does not play favorites with nations, even Israel and Judah. He is God of all the earth, but only the covenant people had His true word through His true prophets.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it so important that Micah, who lived 750 years before the birth of Jesus, was able to pinpoint the exact location of His birth?
2. Why are vv. 7-9 so unusual in the context of 8th century prophets?
3. How is our country so like Israel in connection with vv. 10-14?
4. How do you explain the similarity of Isaiah 2:6-8 with Micah 5:10-14?

# MICAH 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Pleads with Israel	A Series of Laments, Threats, and Denunciations Directed Against All Classes of Israelites  (6:1-7:7)	The LORD's Case Against Israel	Yahweh's Case Against Israel
6:1-2	6:1-2	6:1 6:2	6:1-5
6:3-5	6:3-5	6:3-5  What the Lord Requires	
6:6-7	6:6-8	6:6-8	6:6-8
6:8			
Punishment of Israel's Injustice			Against Tricksters in the City
6:9-12	6:9-16	6:9-16	6:9-15
6:13-16			The Example of Samaria  6:16

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 6

- A. YHWH brings His people to court in vv. 1-5. He documents His faithfulness to them in vv. 3-5. This is a common literary device in the prophets (e.g., Isa. 1; Jer. 2; Hosea 4).
- B. The people answer God's charges in vv. 6-7.

- C. The Prophet speaking for YHWH summarizes His will for His people in v. 8
- D. The prophet speaking for YHWH delineates the sins of the rich and powerful of Israel in vv. 9-16. Because of them the covenant curses of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 are now invoked (e.g., Rev. 26:26; Deut. 28:15,18,40,51).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Hear now what the LORD is saying,

“Arise, plead your case before the mountains,  
And let the hill hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the LORD,  
And you enduring foundations of the earth,  
Because the LORD has a case against His people;  
Even with Israel He will dispute.

<sup>3</sup>My people, what have I done to you  
And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.

<sup>4</sup>Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt  
And ransomed you up from the house of slavery,  
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>My people, remember now  
What Balak king of Moab counseled  
And what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
And from Shittim to Gilgal,  
In order that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

**6:1-2 “Hear”** There are several IMPERATIVES in vv. 1-2:

1. “Hear” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, i.e., in the sense of a prayer petition) - *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “Arise” (BDB 877, KB 1086) - *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “Plead your case” (DBD 936, KB 1224) - *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. “Hear” (BDB 1033, KB 1570) - *Qal* IMPERATIVE used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. “Listen” (BDB 1033, KB 1570) - *Qal* IMPERATIVE

“Hear” is a way for Micah to start a new section (cf. 1:1; 3:1; 6:1). The second IMPERATIVE “arise” is MASCULINE SINGULAR. It could refer to Micah as God’s spokesman or collectively to the nation. Option #1 fits best.

This chapter is a court scene, like chapter 1. Notice the number of terms with a legal connotation:

1. “Arise” (i.e., to testify, e.g., Deut. 19:15-16 and false witnesses in Ps. 27:12; 35:11), v. 1
2. “Plead” (i.e., to contend in court; negatively, e.g., Isa. 1:17; 3:13; 97:16; positively 7:9; Ps. 103:8-14, esp. 9; Jer. 50:34)
3. “Hear” (i.e., in the sense of a jury or judge, e.g., 1:2)
4. “Listen” (same word as #3)
5. “Indictment” (same word as #2)
6. “A case” (same word as #3 and #5)

7. “Dispute” (BDB 406, KB 410, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, i.e., adjudication of a judge, e.g., Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3)

YHWH is divorcing His covenant people because of their repeated unfaithfulness (Hosea) and sin (Amos). This court scene may continue through chapter 7.

▣ **“before the mountains. . .hills”** In the OT it takes two witnesses to confirm truth (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:5). YHWH calls “the mountains” and “hills” to witness against Israel and Judah as He does “heaven and earth” (cf. Deut. 4:26; 31:28; 32:1; Ps. 50:4 and Isa. 1:2). Several times in the OT mountains are personified (e.g., II Sam. 1:21; Ps. 68:15-16; Isa. 35:1). These were the very places (i.e., “high places”) *Ba'al* and *Asherah* were worshiped.

**6:2** This verse is legal metaphor. YHWH turns from addressing His collective people, Judah, to address the permanent, foundational, personified witnesses, the mountains and hills.

▣ **“His people”** Privilege (covenant people, cf. v. 3; Rom. 9:4-5) brings responsibility!

▣ **“Even with Israel He will dispute”** This does not refer to the Northern Ten Tribes (i.e., Israel) only (cf. v. 16), but here to all of the tribes, the descendants of Jacob (Israel).

**6:3-5** YHWH asks His people why, when He has been faithful, they have continued to be rebellious. YHWH is using a covenant treaty pattern (i.e., Hittite Suzerein Treaties of the second millennium, which also form the outline of the book of Deuteronomy and Joshua 24) to recall His faithful acts.

**6:3 “what have I done to you”** YHWH asks them to bring their complaints or charges against Him (cf. Jer. 2:5). Where, when, how has He not been faithful to His covenant responsibilities?

▣ **“Answer Me”** This is a legal term (BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), which means “to give evidence against” (cf. Exod. 20:16; Deut. 5:20; II Sam. 1:16). YHWH is acting as one party in a divorce case.

**6:4 “I brought you up. . .Egypt”** This refers to YHWH’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:6 and relates to the events of the exodus. The exodus is the foundational act in the history of national Israel (cf. Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6; 7:8). This event clearly showed YHWH’s faithful commitment to His covenant responsibilities (e.g., Amos 2:10; 3:1; 9:7). God’s grace came before the Mosaic law.

▣ **“ransomed”** This word literally means “to buy back” (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT). It was used in the sense of buying someone back from slavery or a prisoner of war. See Special Topic:Ransom/Redeem at Hos.7:13.

▣ **“I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam”** God had provided the needed revelations and godly leadership, but His people had rebelled, even during the exodus. God’s people have a track record of rebellion (cf. Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7).

Notice Miriam is mentioned in a parallel way to Moses and Aaron.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

### **I. The Old Testament**

#### **A. Culturally women were considered property.**

1. included in list of property (Exod. 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exod. 21:7-11)
3. women's vows annulable by socially responsible male (Num. 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

#### **B. Practically there was a mutuality**

1. male and female made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Lev. 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazarites (Num. 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Num. 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deut. 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Prov. 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chr. 25:5-6)
9. son and daughter will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

#### **C. Women were in leadership roles**

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21)
2. women gifted by God to weave material for the Tabernacle (Exod. 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Jdgs. 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah asked to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kgs. 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Queen Esther, a godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

### **II. The New Testament**

#### **A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia)**

#### **B. Women in leadership roles**

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four virgin daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

### **III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?**

#### **A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths, which only apply to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?**

1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.
  2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts:
    - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel (cf. Acts 15; Galatians 3)
    - b. first century Judaism
    - c. Paul's obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
      - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome (I Corinthians 6)
      - (2) remaining a slave (I Cor. 7:20-24)
      - (3) celibacy (I Cor. 7:1-35)
      - (4) virgins (I Cor. 7:36-38)
      - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (I Cor. 10:23-33)
      - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11)
  3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in human words, addressed to a particular culture at a particular time.
- B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation. But then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Corinthians 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35 he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches there were problems with women exercising their new-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *Corinth After Paul Left*), which could have caused difficulty for their church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

*How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)

*Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* by Gordon Fee

*Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

**6:5 “remember now”** This (BDB 269, KB 269) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. YHWH wants His covenant people to remember an earlier time of testing and revelation (i.e., Num. 22:5-6).

▣ **“Balak. . . Balaam”** This event is recorded in Numbers 22-25.

▣ **“Shittim”** This was the last camping site of Israel before entering the Promised Land. It is also the scene of the sin of Israel with Moabite women (i.e., fertility worship, cf. Num. 33:49 and Josh. 3:1).

▣ **“Gilgal”** This was the first camping site within the Promised Land (cf. Joshua 4:19). Even in the midst of their sin and rebellion at Shittim, God forgave them and brought them safely through the raging, flooding Jordan into the Promised Land.

Taken together the mentioning of these two locations would imply the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River during its flooding season.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:6-8**

**<sup>6</sup>With what shall I come to the LORD**

**And bow myself before the God on high?**

**Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,**

**With yearling calves?**

**<sup>7</sup>Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,**

**In ten thousand rivers of oil?**

**Shall I present my first-born *for* my rebellious acts,**

**The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

**<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O man, what is good;**

**And what does the Lord require of you**

**But to do justice, to love kindness,**

**And to walk humbly with your God?**

**6:6-7** In verses 6-7 the literary form of diatribe (i.e., a supposed objector) is used. The prophet uses a supposed collective person to voice the false views which were commonly held by the people of Judah. They thought God was being unfair to them and that He only wanted more sacrifices.

**6:6**

**NASB** “the God on high”  
**NKJV** “the High God”  
**NRSV** “God on high”  
**TEV** “the God of heaven”  
**NJB** “God All-high”

This (BDB 43, CONSTRUCT BDB 928) is metaphorical for the Most High God or exalted God (cf. Ps. 99:2; 113:4; 38:6; Isa. 57:15).

▣ **“yearling calves”** These were unblemished calves used for sacrifice from the age of eight days to one year (cf. Lev. 9:3 and 22:27).

**6:7 “in thousands of rams. . . rivers of oil”** The people are (1) charging God of being unreasonable in His requirements. However, God never asked for these things. They reflect pagan worship practices. Or (2) on some national occasions large numbers of sacrifices are given (i.e., dedication of Solomon’s temple, e.g., I Kgs. 8:63). Could this representative speaker be talking of an event of national repentance (i.e., ritual sacrifice)?

▣ **“first-born. . . fruit of my body”** Is this a purposeful distortion (i.e., hyperbole) or a sincere misunderstanding of Genesis 22 or Exod. 13:2-12? There are several places in the Mosaic Law where human sacrifice is condemned (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31).

It is possible that God’s people had become so spiritually confused that they attempted to worship YHWH in the form of *Molech*, the fertility fire god of Ammon (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 3:27; 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Amos 5:26; Acts 7:43).

God’s people attempted to save the nation by offering an innocent one (“child”). In some way they had logically extended the sacrificial system (cf. Leviticus 1-7) in an inappropriate direction. However, it is this same concept that is behind Genesis 22 and Calvary (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

**6:8 “He has told you”** The VERB (BDB 616, KB 665) is a *Hiphil* PERFECT and may reflect v. 4. God had provided a revelation of His character and will (esp. as it related to sacrifice, cf. I Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16-17; Isa. 1:11-17; Hosea 6:5-6). This verse seems to reflect the comment of Micah.

▣ **“O, man”** This VOCATIVE is addressing the idolatrous covenant people of Judah. This verse is not addressing how Gentiles might be saved (i.e., works righteousness), but how covenant people must live in grateful response to God’s forgiveness (which in the OT was symbolized as the sacrifice of an innocent animal cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). For a good brief discussion of this topic see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 336-337.

▣ **“what is good”** This verse is the most famous saying of Micah. It refers to the priority of loving, interpersonal relationships on a high level of care and love (cf. Ps. 14:1,3; 37:3; 51:17; Hosea 12:6 and described in Ps. 15:2-5), not cultic performance (i.e., sacrifice) only (cf. Isa. 1:13; Amos 5:21-23). This verse is a wonderful definition of what is good (BDB 373 II) in God’s eyes (cf. 3:2; Isa. 1:17; 5:20; Amos 5:14-15).

▣ **“require”** This VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which represents continuous action. The term means “to demand” or “ask for” (e.g., Deut. 18:19; 23:21).

▣ **“justice”** In this context “justice” (BDB 1048) refers to social fairness, which is discussed in vv. 9-11. The OT knows no distinction between the secular and the sacred! All of life is sacred! See note at 3:1.

There is a series of three *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “Do justice” (BDB 793, KB 889)
2. “Love kindness” (BDB 12, KB 17)
3. “Walk humbly” (BDB 229, KB 246)

The word “humbly” (BDB 857, KB 1039) is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE.

Biblical faith affects every aspect of daily life. Faith is a lifestyle, not just a theology or creed. The divine covenant gift of eternal life (i.e., the restoration of the image and likeness of God lost in the fall) has observable characteristics (both in relation to God and other humans). This verse is one of the best in the OT describing these characteristics.

▣ **“love kindness”** This is the powerful covenant word *hesed* (BDB 338). It refers to God’s covenant loyalty. It reflects God’s sacrificial, no-strings-attached, love. I think this term, in many ways, is analogous in meaning to the NT *agape*. See Special Topic: *Hesed* at Hosea 2:19.

▣ **“walk humbly”** This is an acknowledgment of human need (i.e., possible meaning of this rare word “humble,” BDB 557, cf. Prov. 11:2) and God’s provision (Mosaic covenant requirements). Ritual without the proper attitude (cf. Isa. 29:13 vs. 57:15 and 66:2d) is an abomination (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Matt. 23:23). “Walk” in the Bible is (1) a metaphor of identification with someone (e.g., Gen. 5:24; 6:9; Job 34:8; Ps. 1:1; Mal. 2:6) and/or (2) a metaphor for daily living (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Biblical faith is daily, not weekly or annually, personal relationship directed toward God and other human beings!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:9-16**

<sup>9</sup>The voice of the LORD will call to the city—

And it is sound wisdom to fear Your name:

“Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?”

<sup>10</sup>Is there yet a man in the wicked house,

*Along with* treasures of wickedness,

And a short measure *that is* cursed?

<sup>11</sup>Can I justify wicked scales

And a bag of deceptive weights?

<sup>12</sup>For the rich men of *the* city are full of violence,

Her residents speak lies,

And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

<sup>13</sup>So also I will make *you* sick, striking you down,

Desolating *you* because of your sins.

<sup>14</sup>You will eat, but you will not be satisfied,

And your vileness will be in your midst.

You will *try* to remove *for safekeeping*,

But you will not preserve *anything*.

And what you do preserve I will give to the sword.

<sup>15</sup>You will sow but you will not reap.

You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil;

And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.

<sup>16</sup>The statutes of Omri

And all the works of the house of Ahab are observed;

**And in their devices you walk.  
Therefore, I will give you up for destruction  
And your inhabitants for derision,  
And you will bear the reproach of My people.”**

**6:9 “The voice of the LORD”** The message begins in line 3 and continues to v. 16. This word “voice” (BDB 876) is used several times for God speaking (cf. Exod. 19:19; I Kgs. 19:13; Isa. 6:8; Ezek. 10:5). The NJB has “He thunders to the city,” which alludes to Exod. 19:13,16.

▣ **“the city”** This refers to Jerusalem, the special place where YHWH caused His name to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5,11), the location of the temple.

▣ **“it is sound wisdom to fear Your name”** The phrase is a comment from Micah or a later editorial addition (omitted in JB and NJB). It was a wisdom saying. The NRSV puts it in brackets.

The Hebrew term (BDB 444) translated “sound wisdom” is a technical term used in wisdom literature (cf. Job 11:6; 12:16; 26:3; Prov. 2:7; 3:21; 8:14; 18:1; Isa. 28:29).

The term “fear” is an emendation from the Hebrew “to see” (BDB 906, cf. NKJV) following the Septuagint (BDB 431), which fits the context better and is found in NASB, RSV, NRSV, TEV, NEB, REB, NIV.

The word “name” stands for the person of God (BDB 1027, cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; Acts 7:59; 9:14,21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22).

▣ **“Hear”** This (BDB 1033, KB 1570) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The NKJV has “Hear the Rod!”; NIV has “Heed the rod.”

▣ **“O tribe”** This follows the Septuagint. The Masoretic Text has “rod” (BDB 641, i.e., “shepherd’s staff,” cf. Exod. 4:17; Isa. 10:5). The Hebrew root can mean (1) rod; (2) staff; (3) branch; or (4) tribe. God addresses His people’s social exploitations of the poor and needy covenantal brothers and sisters (cf. v. 12).

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“Who has appointed its time”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“Who has appointed it”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“ . . .an assembly of the city”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“you people who have assembled in the city”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“ . . .of assembled citizens”</b>

The NASB and NKJV follow the Hebrew text while the NRSV, TEV, and NJB choose an emendation (not in the LXX).

If the MT is followed it speaks of God’s sovereign establishment of Jerusalem and His judgment of it!

### **6:10**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“Is there yet a man in the wicked house”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“Can I forget the treasures of wickedness”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“In the houses of evil people and treasures”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“Can I overlook the false measure”</b>

The first word in the MT is uncertain:

1. are there (MT, NKJV)
2. can I forget (NRSV)

3. can I bear (NJB)

The context of false scales (i.e., vv. 10-11) seems to demand revocalization (change of the vowels but not consonants) of the Masoretic Text to the commercial metaphor (cf. v. 11). The MT is in the form of a question which expects a “yes” answer.

**6:10-11 “short measure. . .wicked scales. . .deceptive weights”** The MT of v. 11 is in the form of a question, but expects a “no” answer. These are examples of commercial cheating (cf. Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5). For a full discussion of Hebrew weights and measures see the Special Topic at Amos 8:5.

**6:12 “the rich”** Micah’s message to the privileged, powerful, influential, and wealthy covenant citizens is very similar to that of Amos’. Notice how line 2 and line 3 are parallel. All three lines are a summary of vv. 9-10 and the opposite of v. 8.

**6:13-15** God will judge the people of Jerusalem by siege and exile. All their ill-gotten gains will be enjoyed by others. Notice the reason for these actions is not the weakness of YHWH in protecting His people from foreign gods, but their sin (cf. vv. 13b,16)!

**6:13**

**NASB, NKJV** “I will make *you* sick”

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB** “I have begun to strike you down”

The NASB and NKJV follow the MT; the others follow the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate.

▣ **“Desolating you”** This term (BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) is found in many Akkadian medical texts translated “paralyze,” “numb” and “lame.” Therefore, the first two lines of poetry in v. 13 have a medical metaphor related to sinning covenant people.

**6:14**

**NASB** “your vileness will be in your midst”

**NKJV** “hunger *shall be* in your midst”

**NRSV** “there shall be a gnawing hunger within you”

**TEV** “you will still be hungry”

**NJB** -----

The problem is the term “vileness” or empty (i.e., hunger, BDB 445). Its meaning is uncertain. KB (446) has “to be dirty.” The Peshitta translates it as “filth” (i.e., dysentery). It is also uncertain if it refers to (1) an individual or (2) the sinful society.

▣

**NASB** “You will *try* to remove *for safekeeping*”

**NKJV** “You may carry *some away*”

**NRSV** “you shall put away”

**TEV** “you will carry things off”

**NJB** “you will store up”

The VERB “remove” (BDB 690 I, KB 744, *Hiphil* [this form is used everywhere also in the OT of moving a boundary stone] JUSSIVE) is understood to be an attempt to hide possessions or valuables for safe keeping, but it will not be effective!

The next line of poetry uses the VERB “preserve” or “save” (BDB 812), which was used in Isa. 5:29 of a lioness licking her food to preserve it. The NKJV seems to follow this scavenger metaphor, as does the NET Bible.

**6:15 “sow but. . .not reap”** This is part of the curse for breaking the covenant (cf. Deut. 28:30 ff).

▣ **“will not anoint yourself with oil”** Olive oil had many purposes in the ancient Near East. One of them was to rub on the skin in preparation of a social event. It was a symbol of happiness and joy. The lack of oil was seen as a divine judgment (cf. Deut. 28:40).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “grapes

NKJV “sweet wine”

TEV “wine”

This is the Hebrew term for “new wine” (BDB 440). See Special Topic at Amos 6:6.

**6:16 “Omri”** This was a politically effective king (cf. I Kgs. 16:21-28, for dates of reign see Appendix). His name became the common name for the Northern Ten Tribes in the Assyrian records (i.e., House of Omri). This title became a symbol for their godless living. It characterized Judah (e.g., II Kgs. 17:19,22)!

▣ **“Ahab”** This is Omri’s son who married Jezebel, who brought numerous prophets of *Ba'al* and *Asherah* into Samarian society (cf. I Kgs. 16:29-34; 18; 21:25, for dates of reign see Appendix).

▣

NASB “derision”

NKJV, NRSV “hissing”

TEV “despise”

NJB “a laughing-stock”

This is the Hebrew word “hissing” (BDB 1056), which was a cultural way of showing disgust and rejection (cf. II Chr. 29:8; Jer. 19:8; 25:9,18; 29:18; 51:37).

▣

NASB, NKJV “you will bear the reproach of My people”

NRSV “so you shall bear the scorn of my people”

TEV “People everywhere will treat you with contempt”

NJB “hence you will endure the scorn of other peoples”

The different translation options are based on:

1. The MT - NASB, NKJV, NRSV
2. The Septuagint - TEV, NJB

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God bring His people to court?
2. Why are vv. 6-7 so upsetting?
3. Is God concerned with our business life?

# MICAH 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Sorrow for Israel's Sins	A Series of Laments, Threats, and Denunciations Directed Against All Classes of Israelites  (6:1-7:7)	Israel's Normal Corruption	Universal Injustice
7:1-2	7:1-7	7:1-4a	7:1-6
7:3-4		7:4b-6	
7:5-7		7:7	7:7
Israel's Confession and Comfort	God Will Show His Steadfast Love to Israel and Shame Will Cover Her Enemies	The Lord Brings Salvation	Zion Insulted by Enemies
7:8-10	7:8-10	7:8-10	7:8-10  A Prophecy of Restoration
7:11-13	7:11-13	7:11-13	7:11-13
God Will Forgive Israel		The Lord's Compassion on Israel	A Prayer for the Confusion of Zion's Enemies
7:14	7:14-17	7:14	7:14-17
7:15		7:15-17	
7:16-17			A Plea for God's Forgiveness
7:18a-c	7:18-20	7:18-20	7:18-20
7:18d-19b			
7:19c-20			

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter can be analyzed by who is speaking and who is spoken to.
- B. The NIV Bible outlines the speakers as
  1. Micah, vv. 1-7, 11-13, 16-20
  2. Zion, vv. 8-10, 14
  3. God, v. 15
- C. It is difficult
  1. to separate the prophet speaking and God speaking
  2. because Hebrew poetry changes subjects often for literary effect

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Woe is me! For I am

Like the fruit pickers and the grape gatherers.  
There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,  
Or a first-ripe fig *which* I crave.

<sup>2</sup>The godly person has perished from the land,  
And there is no upright *person* among men.  
All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;  
Each of them hunts the other with a net.

<sup>3</sup>Concerning evil, both hands do it well.  
The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe,  
And a great man speaks the desire of his soul;  
So they weave it together.

<sup>4</sup>The best of them is like a briar,  
The most upright like a thorn hedge.  
The day when you post a watchman,  
Your punishment will come.  
Then their confusion will occur.

<sup>5</sup>Do not trust in a neighbor;  
Do not have confidence in a friend.  
From her who lies in your bosom  
Guard your lips.

<sup>6</sup>For son treats father contemptuously,  
Daughter rises up against her mother,  
Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
A man's enemies are the men of his own household.

**7:1 “Woe is me!”** This is an individual lament (BDB 47). although at times it moves into the area of a corporate plea. This is a common literary technique of the Psalms (cf. Ps. 5,13,22,55,71).

It is uncertain who is speaking:

1. the prophet himself
2. the prophet as YHWH's spokesperson
3. the prophet on behalf of the godly remnant



**NASB** “I am like the fruit pickers”  
**NKJV** “For I am like those who gather summer fruit”  
**NRSV** “For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered”  
**TEV** “I am like a hungry person who finds no fruit left”  
**NJB** “a harvester in summer time”

The NASB has left out the term “summer” (BDB 884) which denotes “heat.” This gathering is not the initial harvest, but the last picking. YHWH waited and waited for fruit, but there was never a harvest!

▣ **“Like the fruit-pickers and the grape gatherers”** Micah craves righteousness (or a righteous people or righteous leadership, i.e., v. 3) as a hungry man craves food (cf. Matt. 5:6). The concept of righteousness as food is found throughout the Bible (cf. Amos 6:12; John 15:1-8; Phil. 1:11; Gal. 5:23).

The Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSOA) says v. 1 refers to Samaria. They search for food, but cannot find it (i.e., because of [1] the siege or [2] God’s famine, cf. Deut. 27-28). The JPSOA continues this thought through v. 7.

However, I think this context relates to Jerusalem. In one sense they are too late (i.e., the harvest of their unrighteousness has occurred—exile) and in another sense they are too early (i.e., the promise of restoration in the future has not yet come).

▣ **“first ripe fig, which I crave”** These early figs were very sweet and sought after. They first appeared in June, although, the major harvest did not occur until August. Micah (as God’s spokesman) is searching for righteousness as a man longs for these first figs.

**7:2 “The godly person”** This is the ADJECTIVE form of the covenant term, *hesed* (see Special Topic at Hos. 2:19), which means God’s unconditional, no strings attached, covenant loyalty (e.g., v. 18; 6:8; 7:18; Jer. 5:1). It is parallel to “upright *person*.” This is referring to a covenantally faithful person, of which there is none (e.g., Ps. 12:1; Isa. 57:1)!

▣ **“All of them lie in wait for bloodshed”** The VERB (BDB 79, KB 83) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, which is often used in Joshua and Judges and is translated “ambush.” This is a metaphor of hunting to describe the scheming violence of the elite of God’s people (i.e., the greedy, wealthy, powerful leaders).

▣

NASB “bloodshed”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “blood”

TEV “murder”

This term (BDB 196) is literally “blood.” It is used often in the eighth century prophets (mostly Ezekiel, cf. Hosea 1:4; 4:2; 6:8; 12:14; Jonah 1:14; Micah 3:10) to describe violence and death.

▣ **“Each of them hunts the other with a net”** They exploit each other at every opportunity. Their motto would be “more and more for me at any cost!” Persons made in God’s image, covenant partners, have no value!

**7:3 “Concerning evil, both hands do it well”** This is another striking metaphor of ambidextrous evil. The VERB (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) means to do something well or thoroughly. Here a word normally used of doing something good is used of purposeful evil!

▣ **“The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe”** The leaders were seeking rewards (i.e., bribe, cf. 3:11; Exod. 23:8; Deut. 10:17; 16:19; 27:25) instead of justice.

▣ **“And a great man speaks the desire of his soul;**

**So they weave it together”** This verse describes the corrupt judicial and political situation (cf. 3:1-12; Isa. 59:9-12; Jer. 8:8-12; 22; 23; 26:12-15). The wealthy man tells the judges and governmental officials what he wants and they find a way to get it for him, no matter what it takes. God’s covenant people have become corrupt. They look and act just like all other fallen nations!

The VERB “weave” (BDB 721, KB 783, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is found only here. The related form is found in Joel 2:7 as “deviate” or “swerve.” This term may be a play on the concept of sin as a deviation from God’s standard (i.e., righteousness).

**7:4** This seems to be sarcasm (cf. JPSOA translation), but it is possibly related to the idea that everything they tried to do to prepare for invasion did not work (cf. Isa. 22:5). There seems to be a change of subject in v. 4. The first two lines describe the ungodly mentioned in vv. 2-3. However, the next three lines may refer to (1) the prophets (watchmen, cf. Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 3:17; Hos. 9:8) or (2) Judah’s preparations for siege.

▣ **“confusion”** This term (BDB 100) is used to describe God’s judgment (e.g., Isa. 22:5).

**7:5-6** These verses show (1) the level of corruption that had occurred within the Judean society or (2) the stress caused by the siege. Everyone was out for personal gain (cf. vv. 2-3; Jer. 9:4; 12:6). There were no true friends (i.e., Prov. 17:17; 27:6,9).

This verse has two IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES and one IMPERATIVE:

1. “do not trust” - BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE
2. “do not have confidence” - BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE
3. “guard” - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

**7:6 “son treats father contemptuously”** The VERB (BDB 614, KB 663, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) means “treat with contempt,” “dishonor,” or “scoff” (e.g., Deut. 32:15; Jer. 14:21; Nahum 3:6). This metaphor is also used in the NT in an eschatological sense (cf. Matt. 10:35-36; Mark 13:12; Luke 12:53). God knows how this feels (cf. 2:18).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:7-8**

**7**“But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD;

I will wait for the God of my salvation.

My God will hear me.

**8**Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.

Though I fall I will rise;

Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.

**7:7 “I will watch expectantly for the LORD”** Notice the sharp contrast between v. 7 and vv. 1-6. The VERB (BDB 859, KB 1044, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is used in a COHORTATIVE sense. Patient trusting in God’s actions is evidence of faith (e.g., Ps. 38:15; 39:7; 42:5; 130:5; Isa. 8:17; Lam. 3:25).

▣ **“I will wait for the God of my salvation”** Notice the personal element in the faith/salvation. The VERB (BDB 403, KB 407) is a *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE. These two (three) poetic lines are parallel and describe a faithful, trusting, covenant follower of YHWH.

▣ **“My God will hear me”** Micah has previously announced that YHWH will not hear and respond to the prayers of evil Israelites or Judeans (e.g., 3:4), but He will surely hear and respond to those who keep His covenant in faith (cf. 6:8).

**7:8-13** The interpretive question is, “Does v. 8 go with v. 7 or start a new strophe?” Most English translations start a new thought at v. 8 (NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, but not NASB).

It seems that vv. 8-10 may need to be separate from 11-13 because the last two verses reflect the will of YHWH for future restoration and universal influence.

**7:8 “Do not rejoice over me”** The VERB (BDB 403, KB 407) is a *Hiphpael* COHORTATIVE.

▣ **“O my enemy”** The enemy here could be the invading nations, but in reality the enemy was the sin nature of the covenant people (all people). This reminds me of the prayer in Ps. 19:12-13.

▣ **“Though I fall I will rise”** The VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086) is a *Qal* PERFECT. This could refer to individual restoration or the corporate restoration from the Exile (possibly purposeful ambiguity, cf. 4:13).

▣ **“Though I dwell in darkness”** The VERB (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to sit” or “to dwell.”

Darkness is used often in the OT as the opposite of “light.” This term can refer to an eschatological situation (e.g., Isa. 9:1; 29:18). The author feels cut off from YHWH because of the corporate sin and the resulting judgment. The worst aspect of judgment is the absence of God’s personal presence!

▣ **“the LORD is a light for me”** This is a striking biblical metaphor for (1) truth versus falsehood; (2) healing and health versus rottenness and corruption; (3) moral goodness versus evil; or (4) joy versus gloom. Notice this verse personifies this Light as God (cf. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; I Tim. 6:16; I John 1:5). Knowing Him, obeying Him, serving Him forms believers’ personal relationship with God (i.e., same personification is found in John 14:6).

In Isa. 9:2 people will see a great light and a light will shine on them. This Messianic light is Jesus (cf. John 8:12; 12:35-36,46). Verse 8 highlights God’s presence with the faithful in times of distress, while v. 9 promises a future day of personal physical encounter.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:9-13**

**<sup>9</sup>“I will bear the indignation of the Lord  
Because I have sinned against Him,  
Until He pleads my case and executes justice for me.  
He will bring me out to the light,  
And I will see His righteousness.**

**<sup>10</sup>Then my enemy will see,  
And shame will cover her who said to me,  
'Where is the LORD your God?'  
My eyes will look on her;  
At that time she will be trampled down,  
Like mire of the streets.**

**<sup>11</sup>It will be a day for building your walls.  
On that day will your boundary be extended.**

**<sup>12</sup>It will be a day when they will come to you  
From Assyria and the cities of Egypt,  
From Egypt even to the Euphrates,  
Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.**

<sup>13</sup>**And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,  
On account of the fruit of their deeds.**

**7:9 “Because I have sinned against Him”** Micah (like Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel) acts as a representative of the people. Personal disaster, as well as corporate disaster, is directly related to our individual and corporate rebellion against God (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)! Many godly Judeans will suffer because of their rebellious society.

Again there is the fluidity between “I” (NASB) and “we” (TEV). This prophet is acknowledging the sin of his society (cf. Isa. 6). Sin is the problem, exile the result, but restoration is the sure hope and promise of God.

▣ **“Until He pleads my case”** This legal metaphor is also seen in 6:1-5. In different passages God acts as a prosecuting attorney (e.g., 6:2), a defense attorney (7:9), as well as judge.

▣ **“He will bring me out to the light”** This is a play on God as light in v. 8 line 3. God is light and He brings truth to light. Several times in this context “see” is used (cf. 9 line 5, 10 line 3, 16 line 1, cf. Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; I John 3:2; Rev. 22:4).

▣ **“I will see His righteousness”** God’s character as Righteous Judge is seen in His judicial actions. God’s character as Merciful Father is also seen in His forgiveness and restoration (i.e., forensic justification by grace through faith). He will make good His promises to the faithful remnant and to humanity! This is similar to Job’s statement in Job 19:25-27. See Special Topic: Righteousness at Hosea 2:19.

**7:10 “Then my enemy will see”** The VERB (BDB 906, KB 1157) is JUSSIVE in form, but IMPERFECT in meaning.

▣ **“Where is the LORD your God”** All ancient wars involved the national gods. The Jews were confused in their theology concerning YHWH’s help on behalf of “the nations” who judged His people (cf. Habakkuk). YHWH used godless nations to bring His rebellious people back to Himself. Yet, He will also judge those nations (i.e., Assyria, Babylon) which He used. At first the Jews would have thought that the gods of these pagan nations were stronger than YHWH, but the reality was that it was their sin (cf. v. 9), not YHWH’s impotence, that caused their demise. YHWH will vindicate His name (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) by also judging the invading nations (cf. v. 13).

▣ **“she will be trampled down,**

**Like mire of the streets”** The CONSTRUCT “mud of the streets” (BDB 376 and 299) is often used as a metaphor of defeat (e.g., II Sam. 22:43; Ps. 18:42; Zech. 10:5), as is “lick the dust” in v. 17 (cf. Isa. 49:23).

**7:11** This verse seems to refer to the city of Jerusalem, however, the phrase for “building your walls” (BDB 124 and 154 CONSTRUCT) is not usually used for city walls (cf. Amos 9:11), but for boundary markers (e.g., Isa. 54:11). So, the capital may be a metaphor for all the people of God.

The “walls of the city” was a way of referring to its security. YHWH will restore His people’s land and confidence in Himself.

**7:12 “they will come to you”** There have been three major theories as to how to interpret this verse: (1) the Jews returning home from the Exile; (2) all the nations coming with tribute to the restored people of God; and (3) Israel’s ideal boundaries.

**7:13 “On the account of the fruit of their deeds”** Outside of the Promised Land, there will be judgment and calamity because of the nation’s sins (as there was in Canaan because of Israel’s sin, cf. v. 9). Sin has results (cf. Rom. 8:19-22).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:14-20**

- <sup>14</sup>Shepherd Your people with Your scepter,  
The flock of Thy possession  
Which dwells by itself in the woodland,  
In the midst of a fruitful field.  
Let then feed in Bashan and Gilead  
As in the days of old.
- <sup>15</sup>As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,  
I will show you miracles.”
- <sup>16</sup>Nations will see and be ashamed  
Of all their might.  
They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth,  
Their ears will be deaf.
- <sup>17</sup>They will lick the dust like a serpent,  
Like reptiles of the earth.  
They will come trembling out of their fortresses;  
To the LORD our God they will come in dread,  
And they will be afraid before Thee.
- <sup>18</sup>Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity  
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?  
He does not retain His anger forever,  
Because He delights in unchanging love.
- <sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us;  
He will tread our iniquities underfoot.  
Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins  
Into the depths of the sea.
- <sup>20</sup>Thou will give truth to Jacob  
And unchanging love to Abraham,  
Which thou didst swear to our forefathers  
From the days of old.

**7:14 “Shepherd Your people with Your scepter”** The VERB (BDB 944 I, KB 1258) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This last section of the book is a prayer addressed to the Covenant God. The hope of v. 7 is expanded! Here is a combination of the shepherd metaphor and the kingly metaphor (cf. Ps. 23 also Isa. 40:11; Micah 2:12; 4:6-7; 5:4; Zech. 9:16). God is both Shepherd and King. The word “scepter” (BDB 986) can refer to a royal scepter or a shepherd’s rod.



NASB “Which dwells by itself”  
NKJV “who dwell solitarily”

**NRSV** “which lives alone”  
**TEV** “although they live apart”  
**NJB** “living confined”

Is this a metaphor of

1. confinement, NJB
2. unity, NKJV
3. abundance
4. purity



**NASB** “a fruitful land”  
**NKJV** “Carmel”  
**NRSV** “a garden land”  
**TEV** “rich pastures”  
**NJB** “meadow land”

This term (BDB 502) can refer to (1) a good pasture land (i.e., parallel to Bashan and Gilead); (2) a forest (e.g., Isa. 10:18; 29:17; 32: 15); or (3) Mt. Carmel (known for its fertility) is found in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate translations.

▣ **“Let them feed”** This VERB (BDB 944 I, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning) is from the same root as “Shepherd” (v. 1 line 1). The sense of the plan of v. 14 is that the people were confined, but now freed, as they were in the Exodus by YHWH’s power!

▣ **“Bashan and Gilead”** This was the rich pasture area in the northern trans-jordan region that was known for fertility and prosperity.

▣ **“As in the days of old”** This is an idiom for covenant renewal (cf. Isa. 63:11; Amos 9:11). It refers to the beginning of the nation at the Exodus.

**7:15** God reminds them of His historical acts on their behalf (cf. Neh. 9:9-14 [Exodus]; 15-21 [wilderness wanderings]; 22-25 [the conquest of Canaan]). He urges them to remember His wonderful provisions during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exodus - Numbers), which was also a period of judgment.

**7:16** The nations who confronted God’s people were humbled (i.e., “put their hands on their mouth,” e.g., Jdgs. 18:19; Job 21:5; 29:9; 40:4). It will be so again because His renewed covenant people go forth in His power and presence (cf. Psalm 2).

**7:17-18** The Tyndale Commentary, vol. 23A, has an interesting comparison between God’s deliverance at the Red Sea (expressed in Moses’ song) and Micah’s victory praise (p. 203):

1. “tremble” (BDB 919), Exod. 15:14 and Micah 7:17
2. “dread” (BDB 808), Exod. 15:16 and Micah 7:17
3. immobility caused by fear, Exod. 15:16 and Micah 7:16 (different term)
4. God’s mighty acts, Exod. 15:11 and Micah 7:15 (different term)
5. Israel as God’s inheritance (BDB 635), Exod. 15:17 and Micah 7:14,18
6. same rhetorical question, Exod. 15:11, “who is like Thee” and Micah 7:18, “who is like Thee”
7. enemies cast into the sea, Exod. 15:1,4-5 and Micah 7:19

Bruce Waltke adds, “Moses’ song looked back upon the Lord’s victory, Micah’s song looks forward in faith to an even great wonder” (p. 203).

**7:17 “They will lick the dust like a serpent,**

**Like reptiles of the earth”** There are two basic possibilities: (1) kissing the victor’s feet (cf. Ps. 72:9; Isa. 49:23) or (2) unclean animals (cf. Gen. 3:14; Lev. 11). This was a Hebrew idiom of military defeat.

The question is whether this verse (1) simply records the fear of the nations in light of YHWH’s power and love for Israel or (2) describes the conversion of the nations. In context option #1 fits best, but in light of the NT option #2 fits best. At this point please see the Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at Micah 5:7-9.

**7:18 “Who is a God like You”** This refers to the graciousness of God and is a play on the prophet’s name, which means “who is like YHWH” (cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Deut. 7:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10; Joel 2:13).

▣ **“who pardons”** This common Hebrew VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) has the connotations of (1) to lift up (e.g., 4:1); (2) to carry (e.g., 6:16; 7:9); (3) to take away (e.g., 2:2); and (4) to pardon (e.g., Hos. 1:6; 14:2). There is a series of phrases in v. 18 which describe God’s graciousness and forgiveness (cf. Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22). When God forgives, God forgets!

The parallel VERB “passes over” (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) means “to pass over,” “to pass through” (e.g., 2:13; Amos 5:17) in the sense of “to overlook” (i.e., out of sight, out of mind, cf. v. 19). This same VERB is used in Amos 7:8 and 8:2 in a judgment sense. Only here and in Prov. 19:22 does it have the sense of forgiveness.

▣ The UBS *Translator’s Handbook on the Books of Obadiah and Micah* points out that several Hebrew words for sin are used in vv. 18-19:

1. iniquity (BDB 730, i.e., to twist)
2. transgression (BDB 833, i.e., to rebel)
3. sins (BDB 308, i.e., to miss the mark)

The point being that all of the covenant people’s covenant violations are forgiven (p. 191).

▣ **“the remnant”** this is a recurrent theme (cf. 2:12; 4:7; 5:7,8).

▣ **“He does not retain His anger forever”** The VERB (BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means “to take hold of so as to retain” (cf. Exod. 9:2). This is an anthropomorphic phrase which describes God as a parent who punishes His children, but does not reject them and longs to restore fellowship (cf. Ps. 103:8).

**7:18**

**NASB “He delights in unchanging love”**

**NKJV “He delights in mercy”**

**NRSV “He delights in showing clemency”**

**TEV “you take pleasure in showing your constant love”**

**NJB “he delights in showing faithful love”**

The VERB (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) is also used in Jer. 9:24 and Hosea 6:6. It is important to know what the Lord “delights” in (and does not, cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11).

The term “unchanging love” (BDB 338 I) is *hesed*, which is also found in 6:8; 7:18,20; Hosea 2:19; 4:1; 6:4,6; 10:12; 12:6; and Jonah 2:8; 4:2.

This is the Hebrew covenant word *hesed* again. It means God’s unconditional covenant loyalty. See Special Topic at Hosea 2:19.

**7:19** This is a series of metaphors for forgiveness followed by forgetfulness. When God forgives, He forgets (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Ps. 103:8-14). Out of sight, out of mind! What a great promise. Many believers have experienced God's forgiveness, but not His forgetfulness!



**NASB, NRSV** "He will tread our iniquities underfoot"

**NKJV** "And will subdue our iniquities"

**TEV** "You will trample our sins underfoot"

**NJB** "tread down our faults"

This VERB (BDB 461, KB 460, *Qal* IMPERFECT) basically means "subdue" (e.g., Gen. 1:25) or "bring into bondage" (e.g., Jer. 34:11,16; Neh. 5:5). Here it is used figuratively of the defeat and vanquishment of believers' sins.

**7:20 "truth. . .unchanging love"** The two characteristics of YHWH are to be reproduced in His people. "Truth" (BDB 54) in the OT implies trustworthiness or faithfulness (see Special Topic at Jonah 3:5). The second is *hesed* (BDB 338 I) or covenant faithfulness (see Special Topic at Hosea 2:19). God will produce a people of righteousness (i.e., not by performance, cf. Jer. 31:31-34, as in the OT, but by His mercy and grace, cf. Ezek. 36:22-38, as in the NT).

▣ **"Jacob. . .Abraham. . .our forefathers"** There was a relationship between God and His people that was unique in its promises and in its obligations. Verses 18-20, along with the book of Jonah, were read on the Day of Atonement in the Synagogue. On the afternoon of New Years day Orthodox Jews go to a place of running water and empty their pockets while reciting vv. 18-20. This is called *Tashlich* or "thou will cast." It emphasizes not only the covenant responsibility (i.e., removal of all sin), but also the mercy of God!

The theological issue in this conclusion is not God's gracious character, but the shocking addition of a new covenant in Christ (cf. John 14:6). Is Israel saved by covenant obedience or by restoration to Judah? The real issue is the validity of the new message of Jesus (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9-11; Gal. 3; 6:16).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this chapter written for an individual or for a member of the corporate community?
2. Define the Hebrew word *hesed*.
3. Explain the contrast between vv. 7 and 8 and vv. 1-6.
4. Why is the question of v. 10 so important in light of the condition of the people of God?
5. List the gracious characteristics of God in vv. 18 and 19.

## APPENDIX ONE

### KINGS AND EVENTS OF THE BABYLONIAN, PERSIAN, AND GREEK DYNASTIES

- 612 B.C. Nineveh falls to neo-Babylonian army (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 608 Pharaoh Necho II marched to Carchemesh to halt expansion of neo-Babylonian power  
Josiah, King of Judah, tries to stop him  
Death of Josiah and assumption of throne by his son, Jehoahaz  
Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, replaced Jehoahaz on the authority of Pharaoh Necho II within 3 months  
Palestine and Syria under Egyptian rule  
Josiah's reforms dissipate
- 605 Nabopolassar sends troops to fight remaining Assyrian army and the Egyptians at Carchemesh  
Nebuchadnezzar chased them all the way to the plains of Palestine  
Nebuchadnezzar got word of the death of his father (Nabopolassar) so he returned to Babylon to receive the crown  
On the way back he takes Daniel and other members of the royal family into exile
- 605 - 538 Babylon in control of Palestine, 597; 10,000 exiled to Babylon
- 586 Jerusalem and the temple destroyed and large deportation
- 582 Because Jewish guerilla fighters killed Gedaliah another last large deportation occurred

### SUCCESSORS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

- 562 - 560 Evil-Merodach released Jehoiakim (true Messianic line) from custody
- 560 - 556 Neriglissar
- 556 Labaski-Marduk reigned
- 556 - 539 Nabonidus:  
Spent most of the time building a temple to the mood god, *Sin*. This earned enmity of the priests of Marduk.  
Spent the rest of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom.

He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar

Belshazzar:

Spent most of his time trying to restore order.

Babylonia's great threat was Media.

### **Rise of Cyrus**

585 - 550 Astyages was king of Media (Cyrus II was his grandson by Mandane)

550 Cyrus II, a vassal king, revolted

Nabonidus, to restore balance of power, made alliances with:

1. Egypt
2. Creus, King of Lydia

547 Cyrus marched against Sardis (capital Lydia) and captured all of Asia Minor

539 Gobiyas took Babylon without resistance (Dan. 5; Belshazzar Nabonidus' co-regent; also Gobiyas possibly Darius the Mede, Dan. 5:31).

Oct. 11, 539 Cyrus entered as liberator from Nabonidus' moon goddess, *Zin*

### **Cyrus' Successors**

530 Cyrus' son succeeded him (Cambyses II)

530 - 522 Reign of Cambyses (Elephantine Papyri)

Added Egypt in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire

522 - 486 Darius I came to rule

He organized the Persian Empire along Cyrus' plan of satraps

He set up coinage like Lydia's

486 - 465 Xerxes I (Esther)

Put down Egyptian revolt

Intended to invade Greece, but was defeated in the Battle of Thermopyly in 480

Xerxes I was assassinated in 465

480 Battle of Thermopyly

465 - 424 Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah, and Malachi)

Greeks continued to advance until confronted with Peloponisian Wars

Wars lasted about 20 years

During this period the Jewish community is reconstructed

423 - 404	Darius II Authorized the feast of unleavened bread in the Elephantine Temple
404 - 358	Artaxerxes II
358 - 338	Artaxerxes III
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III

## GREECE

359 - 336	Philip II of Macedon built up Greece He was assassinated in 336
336 - 323	Alexander the Great (Philip's son) Routed Darius II at battle of ISUS He died in 323 in Babylon of a fever after conquering the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece</li> <li>2. Lysimachus - Thrace</li> <li>3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon</li> <li>4. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine</li> <li>5. Antigonus - small part of Asia Minor</li> </ol>

### **Seleucids vs. Ptolemies**

301	Palestine was under Ptolemy's rule for 100 years
175 - 163	Antiochus Epiphanes Wanted to Hellenize Jews, constructed gymnasium Constructed pagan altars; priests were mistreated
Dec. 13, 168	Hog was slain on the altar by Antiochus Epiphanies. Some consider this to be the abomination of desolation.
167	Mattathias and sons rebel. Mattathias killed. Judas took control. Judas Maccabeus wages successful guerilla warfare
Dec. 25, 165	Temple rededicated

# RULERS

## BABYLON

## MEDIA

626 - 605	Nabopolassar dies (“Nabu, Protect the Sun”) 625 - 585 Cyrzares
605 - 562	Nebuchadnezzar II (“Nebo, Protect the Boundary”) 585 - 550 Astyages
562 - 560	Evil Merodack 550 Cyrus II
556	Labaski Marduk
556 - 539	Nabonidus  Belshazzar
539 -	Gobiyas

## MEDO-PERSIAN

550 - 530	Cyrus II (538 Medo-Persian dominate power called Achaemenian Empire)
530 - 522	Cambyses II (Egypt added and Cyprus)
522	Gaumata or Pseudo, Smerdis (reign 6 months)
522 - 486	Darius I (Hystaspes)
486 - 465	Xerxes I (Esther’s husband)
465 - 424	Artaxerxes I (Ezra and Nehemiah in Palestine)
423 -	Xerxes II
424 - 404	Darius II Nothus
404 - 359	Artaxerxes II Mnemon
359 - 338	Artaxerxes III Ochus
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III Codomannus

## GREEK

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon

336 - 323 Alexander the Great

323 - Generals divide Empire

1. Cassandea - Macedonia
2. Lysimicus - Syria
3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt
5. Antigonus - Asia Minor (killed in 301 B.C.)

The Ptolemies controlled Palestine, but in 175 - 163 control passed to the Seleucids

175 - 163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler

\*Dates and names have been mostly taken from *A History of Israel* by John Bright, pp. 461-471.

## APPENDIX TWO

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE POWERS OF MESOPOTAMIA

(using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff.)

#### I. Assyrian Empire (Gen.10:11)

A. Religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.

B. Tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:

1. 1354-1318 - Asshur-Uballit I:
  - (a) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish
  - (b) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop
2. 1297-1266 - Adad-Nirari I (powerful king)
3. 1265-1235 - Shalmaneser I (powerful king)
4. 1234-1197 - Tukulti-Ninurta I
  - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south
5. 1118-1078 - Tiglath-Pileser I
  - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia
6. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
7. 972- 967 - Ashur-Resh-Isui II
8. 966- 934 - Tiglath-Pileser II
9. 934- 912 - Ashur-Dan II
10. 912- 890 - Adad-Nirari II
11. 890- 884 - Tukulti-Ninurta II
12. 883- 859 - Asshur-Nasir-Apal II
13. 859- 824 - Shalmaneser III
  - Battle of Qarqar in 853
14. 824-811 - Shamashi-Adad V
15. 811-783 - Adad-Nirari III
16. 781-772 - Shalmaneser IV
17. 772-754 - Ashur-Dan III
18. 754-745 - Ashur-Nirari V
19. 745-727 - Tiglath-Pileser III:
  - a. called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kings 15:19
  - b. very powerful king
  - c. started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
  - d. In 735 B.C.. there was the formation of the "Syro-Ephramatic League" which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the transjordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refused to join and was invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advise of Isaiah (cf. II Kgs. 16; Isa. 7-12).
  - e. In 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722). Thousands of Jews from the Northern Kingdom were exiled to Media (cf. II Kings 15).
20. 727-722 - Shalmaneser V
  - a. Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs.17)

- b. besieged Samaria in 724 B.C.
- 21. 722-705 - Sargon II:
  - a. After a three year siege started by Shalmaneser V, his successor Sargon II conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
  - b. The Hittite empire is also conquered.
  - c. In 714-711 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdad Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
- 22. 705-681 - Sennacherib:
  - a. In 705 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19).
  - b. Sennacherib also put down the rebellion in Elam and Babylon.
- 23. 681-669 - Esarhaddon:
  - a. first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt
  - b. had great sympathy with Babylon and rebuilt its capital city
- 24. 669-633 - Ashurbanipal:
  - a. also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
  - b. His brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon (later demoted to viceroy). This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon, but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652 led by his brother (who had been demoted to Viceroy).
  - c. fall of Thebes, 663 B.C.
  - d. defeated Elam, 653, 645 B.C.
- 25. 633-629 - Asshur-Etil-Ilani
- 26. 629-612 - Sin-Shar-Ishkun
- 27. 612-609 - Asshur-Uballit II:
  - a. enthroned king in exile in Haran
  - b. the fall of Assher in 614 B.C. and Nineveh in 612 B.C.

## II. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- A. 703-? Merodach-Baladan
  - Started several revolts against Assyrian rule
- B. 652 Shamash-shum-ukin:
  - 1. Esarhaddon’s son and Asshurbanipal’s brother
  - 2. he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated
- C. 626-605 Nabopolassar:
  - 1. was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
  - 2. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast
  - 3. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Ninevah fell in 612 B.C.
  - 4. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king.
  - 5. In 608 Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kings 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kings 23), opposed the movement of the Egyptian army

through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoakaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 B.C. at Carchemesh on the Euphrates River.

On his way back to Egypt Pharaoh Necho stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, on the throne (cf. II Kings 23:31-35).

6. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of his father's death and returned to Babylon to be crowned. Later, in the same year, he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.

D. 605-562 - Nebuchadnezzar II:

1. From 597-538 Babylon was in complete control of Palestine.
2. In 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kings 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months when he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the City of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
3. In 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the City of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
4. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.

E. 562-560 - Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was also known as Amel-Marduk (Akkadian, "Man of Marduk")

- He released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf. II Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).

F. 560-556 - Neriglissar

- He assassinated Evil-merodach, who was his brother-in-law
- He was previously Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 39:3,13)

G. 556 - Labaski-Marduk

- He was Neriglissar's son who assumed kingship as a boy, but was assassinated after only nine months (Berossos).

H. 556-539 - Nabonidus (Akkadian, "Nebo is exalted"):

1. Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar
2. He spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god "Sin" in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
3. He spent most of his time trying to put down revolts (in Syria and north Africa) and stabilize the kingdom.
4. He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital, Babylon (cf. Dan.5).

- I. ? - 539 - Belshazzar (co-reign)
  - The city of Babylon fell very quickly to the Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Gobryas may have been the Darius the Mede of Dan. 5:31; 6:1. “Darius” means “royal one.”

III. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 41:2,25;44:28-45:7; 46:11; 48:15):

- A. 625-585 - Cyaxares was the king of Media that helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
- B. 585-550 - Astyages was king of Media (capital was Ecbatana). Cyrus II was his grandson by Cambyses I (600-559, Persian) and Mandane (daughter of Astyages, Median).
- C. 550-530 - Cyrus II of Anshan (eastern Elam) was a vassal king who revolted:
  - 1. Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
  - 2. Astyages' general, Harpagus, led his army to join Cyrus' revolt
  - 3. Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
  - 4. Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
    - a. Egypt
    - b. Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor)
  - 5. 547 - Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia) and it fell in 546 B.C.
  - 6. 539 - In mid-October the general Ugbaru and Gobryas, both of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Ugbaru was made governor, but died of war wounds within weeks, then Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
  - 7. 539 - In late October Cyrus II “the Great” personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
  - 8. 538 - Jews and others (cf. the Cyrus Cylinder) were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples (cf. II Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). He also restored the vessels from YHWH's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Marduk's temple in Babylon (cf. Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5).
  - 9. 530 - Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him briefly as co-regent, but later the same year Cyrus died while in a military campaign.
- D. 530-522 - reign of Cambyses II
  - 1. added Egyptian empire in 525 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire;
  - 2. he had a short reign:
    - a. some say he committed suicide;
    - b. Herodotus said he cut himself with his own sword while mounting his horse and died of the resulting infection.
  - 3. brief usurpation of the throne by Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata) - 522
- E. 522-486 - Darius I (Hystapes) came to rule
  - 1. He was not of the royal line but a military general.
  - 2. He organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf. Ezra 5-6; also during Haggai's and Zechariah's time).
  - 3. He set up coinage like Lydia.
  - 4. He attempted to invade Greece, but was repulsed.
- F. 486-465 - Reign of Xerxes I:
  - 1. put down Egyptian revolt
  - 2. intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. and Salamis in 479 B.C.
  - 3. Esther's husband, who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible, was assassinated in 465 B.C.

- G. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) reigned (cf Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
  - 1. Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars
  - 2. Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian)
  - 3. Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years
  - 4. during this period the Jewish community is strengthened
  - 5. brief reign of Xerxes II and Sekydianos - 423
- H. 423-404 - Darius II (Nothos) reigned
- I. 404-358 - Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) reigned
- J. 358-338 - Artaxerxes III (Ochos) reigned
- K. 338-336 - Arses reigned
- L. 336-331 - Darius III (Codomannus) reigned until the Battle of Issus 331 and was defeated by Greece

#### IV. Survey of Egypt:

- A. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550
- B. 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1570-1310):
  - 1. 1570-1546 - Amosis
    - a. made Thebes the capital
    - b. invaded southern Canaan
  - 2. 1546-1525 - Amenophis I (Amenhotep I)
  - 3. 1525-1494 - Thutmose I
  - 4. 1494-1490 - Thutmose II - married Thutmose I's daughter, Hatshepsut
  - 5. 1490-1435 - Thutmose III (nephew of Hatshepsut)
  - 6. 1435-1414 - Amenophis II (Amenhotep II)
  - 7. 1414-1406 - Thutmose IV
  - 8. 1406-1370 - Amenophis III (Amenhotep III)
  - 9. 1370-1353 - Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
    - a. worshiped the Sun, Aten
    - b. instituted a form of high-god worship (monotheism)
    - c. Tel-El-Amarna letters are in this period
  - 10. ? Smenkhare
  - 11. ? Tutankhamun (Tutankhaten)
  - 12. ? Ay (Aye-Eye)
  - 13. 1340-1310 Haremhab
- C. 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1310-1200):
  - 1. ? Rameses I (Ramses)
  - 2. 1309-1290 - Seti I (Sethos)
  - 3. 1290-1224 - Ramesses II (Ramses II)
    - a. from archaeological evidence most likely Pharaoh of the exodus
    - b. built the cities of Avaris, Pithom and Ramses by Habaru (possibly Semites or Hebrew) slaves
  - 4. 1224-1216 - Marniptah (Merenptah)
  - 5. ? Amenmesses
  - 6. ? Seti II
  - 7. ? Siptah
  - 8. ? Tewosret

- D. 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1180-1065)
  - 1. 1175-1144 - Rameses III
  - 2. 1144-1065 - Rameses IV - XI
  
- E. 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (1065-935):
  - 1. ? Smendes
  - 2. ? Herihor
  
- F. 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (935-725 - Libyan):
  - 1. 935-914 - Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
    - a. protected Jeroboam I until Solomon's death
    - b. conquered Palestine about 925 (cf. I Kgs. 14-25; II Chr. 12)
  - 2. 914-874 - Osorkon I
  - 3. ? Osorkon II
  - 4. ? Shoshnek II
  
- G. 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty (759-715 - Libyan)
  
- H. 24<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (725-709)
  
- I. 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (716/15-663 - Ethiopian/Nubian):
  - 1. 710/09-696/95 - Shabako (Shabaku)
  - 2. 696/95-685/84 - Shebteko (Shebitku)
  - 3. 690/689, 685/84-664 - Tirhakah (Taharqa)
  - 4. ? Tantamun
  
- J. 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (663-525 - Saitic):
  - 1. 663-609 - Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
  - 2. 609-593 - Neco II (Necho)
  - 3. 593-588 - Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
  - 4. 588-569 - Apries (Hophra)
  - 5. 569-525 - Amasis
  - 6. ? - Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
  
- K. 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (525-401 - Persian):
  - 1. 530-522 - Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
  - 2. 522-486 - Darius I
  - 3. 486-465 - Xerxes I
  - 4. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I
  - 5. 423-404 - Darius II
  
- L. Several brief dynasties (404-332)
  - 1. 404-359 - Artaxerxes II
  - 2. 359/8 - 338/7 - Artaxerxes III
  - 3. 338/7 - 336/7 - Arses
  - 4. 336/5 - 331 - Darius III

\*for a differing chronology see Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 2 p. 231.

## V. Survey of Greece:

### A. 359-336 - Philip II of Macedon:

1. built up Greece
2. assassinated in 336 B.C.

### B. 336-323 - Alexander II “the Great” (Philip’s son):

1. routed Darius III, the Persian king, at the battle of Isus
2. died in 323 B.C. in Babylon of a fever at 32/33 yrs. of age
3. Alexander’s generals divided his empire at his death:
  - a. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
  - b. Lysimicus - Thrace
  - c. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
  - d. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
  - e. Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)

### C. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies struggle for control of Palestine:

#### 1. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):

- a. 312-280 - Seleucus I
- b. 280-261 - Antiochus I Soter
- c. 261-146 - Antiochus II Theus
- d. 246-226 - Seleucus II Callinicus
- e. 226-223 - Seleucus III Ceraunus
- f. 223-187 - Antiochus III the Great
- g. 187-175 - Seleucus IV Philopator
- h. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes
- i. 163-162 - Antiochus V
- j. 162-150 - Demetrius I

#### 2. Egyptian (Ptolemaic Rulers):

- a. 327-285 - Ptolemy I Soter
- b. 285-246 - Ptolemy II Philadelphus
- c. 246-221 - Ptolemy III Euegetes
- d. 221-203 - Ptolemy IV Philopator
- e. 203-181 - Ptolemy V Epiphanes
- f. 181-146 - Ptolemy VI Philometor

#### 3. Brief Survey:

- a. 301 - Palestine under Ptolemy rule for 181 years.
- b. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
  - (1) constructed gymnasiums
  - (2) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple
- c. 168 - December 13 - hog slain on the altar in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Some consider this to be “the abomination of desolation” in Daniel 8.
- d. 167 - Mattathias, priest in Modin, and sons rebel. The best known of his sons was Judas Maccabeas, “Judas the Hammer.”
- e. 165 - December 25 - Temple rededicated. This is called Hanukkah or “Festival of Lights.”

For a good discussion of the dating problems, procedures and presuppositions see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 10-17.

**APPENDIX THREE**

**CHART OF THE ENTIRE OLD TESTAMENT  
(on following page)**

