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BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN COLLOQUIAL SPEECH.
Edited by G. Currie Martin, M.A., B.D., and T. H. Robinson, M.A., D.D.
NUMBER SIX.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

TRANSLATED INTO COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH BY
J. W. POVAH, B.D.

PRICE NINEPENCE

NATIONAL ADULT SCHOOL UNION
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EDITORS' PREFACE.

THE modern translations that exist of parts or of the whole of the Old Testament are, as a rule, too expensive and too scholarly for the ordinary reader. In the case of the New Testament excellent help has been afforded by many recent translators, notably by Dr. Moffatt. In a wide experience among working men and women we have found frequent requests for a simple version of the Old Testament in similar language to that employed in the modern versions of the New Testament. By the generous help of our colleagues in this enterprise we are able to present a translation that is well within the reach of everyone, and that rests upon the best results of modern scholarship.

Literary elegance has been sacrificed to clearness of expression and simplicity of language. In the present book Major Povah has admirably reproduced the tenderness and the stormy passion which distinguish Hosea amongst the books of the Old Testament.

We are grateful for the reception given to those already issued, and have tried to benefit by many helpful criticisms received, for which we are thankful.

Suggestions and criticisms will be welcomed by us.

G.C.M.
T.H.R.

NOTE.—Throughout the footnotes, LXX denotes the Septuagint, i.e., the Greek translation of the Old Testament, made from a Hebrew text between 200 B.C. and the beginning of the Christian era ; and MT the Massoretic Text, i.e., the traditional Hebrew Text.

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THE BOOK OF HOSEA

INTRODUCTION.

ALL Israelite history runs back to Moses and implies (1) a remarkable deliverance from the Egyptians in the neighbourhood of Suez, which was ascribed to the God of Moses; (2) a covenant in the desert, in which Moses persuaded a number of independent tribes to adopt one religion, and thus laid the foundation of their national life in the recognition of a national God. The name of the God who had spoken to him in the desert, was Yahweh.

This covenant is sometimes regarded as the marriage of Yahweh and Israel (e.g. Hosea ii. 2, 7, 16, 19, 20, etc.), sometimes as Yahweh's generous adoption of Israel to be His son (e.g. Hosea xi. 1; Exodus iv. 22).

In the minds of the majority Yahweh was associated with the storm. Yet by the best minds in Israel He was felt to be more than the personification of a force of nature. It was held that Yahweh need not have been the God of Israel unless He had wanted to be; He had chosen to be Israel's God although He could have got on without Israel. The thought of Yahweh's free choice of Israel did not necessarily lead at once to Monotheism. But it carried with it the thought that Yahweh had a free will of His own—that He had character, personality—that He was not an *It* but a *He*. Hence He required more of His people than sacrifices; He required social justice.

As the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan they took over the sanctuaries of the Canaanite gods and made them sanctuaries of Yahweh. But they took over with them much of the Canaanite theology and applied it to Yahweh. They also adopted to a considerable extent the debased morals of the Canaanites.

So, in the middle of the eighth century B.C., though Elisha and Jehu had followed up the work of Elijah by exterminating many of the worshippers of the Baal of Tyre, which god Jezebel had proposed to substitute for Yahweh as the national God, the religion of the bulk of the Israelites did not differ much from

that of the surrounding nations. The religion of Yahweh had forcibly absorbed the worshippers of the Baal of Tyre; but it had absorbed their theology and morality with them.

The surrounding nations worshipped their Baalim. These Baalim (plural of Baal—"lord," "owner," "husband") were usually nature gods—symbols of the forces of nature or symbols of the "life force." To worship the Baal of the vine is not to worship the mere plant, but to worship the power that makes it grow—the "life force."

But if men picture their gods on the lines of the forces of nature, or on the lines of the "life force," or the drive of the primitive instincts in animals and men, they will inevitably use cruel and immoral rites in their worship. Are earthquakes kind? Are all men clean-minded?

In the time of Hosea Yahweh was looked upon, by the majority of Israelites at any rate, simply as the Baal of Israel. Other nations had their own Baalim. The worship of Yahweh was often idolatrous. Yahweh was worshipped with the assistance of an idol in the form of a bull. This stood for the strength and productive power of Yahweh.

Hosea Ben-Beer¹ was a younger contemporary of Amos. He belonged to the kingdom of Northern Israel. He fell in love with and married Gomer Bath-Dib². He loved her greatly. But the happiness of Hosea's home was "as a morning cloud, as the dew that passes early away." Gomer was not true to him.

Now Hosea's whole life is bound up in his love for Gomer. Why is he so cruelly tortured? Is his love for Gomer a mistake? Are all the best things in life simply cruel delusions, mere will-o'-the-wisps? Is his home ruined for ever? Shall he try to forget Gomer?

No. As he thinks it all over, he feels that his love for Gomer is not a mistake, not a delusion, not something to be forgotten. It has been "the beginning of Yahweh's speaking with him."³ It is through his love for Gomer that Yahweh has been calling him to be a prophet. His love for Gomer is from Yahweh. It is bringing him cruel suffering. But so is Yahweh's love for Israel bringing cruel suffering to Yahweh. For, as Gomer has been false to Hosea, so has Israel been false to Yahweh.

¹ Ben = "son of." ² Bath = "daughter of." ³ Hosea i. (2).

A national god was often looked upon as the husband of his people. As the Baal of Israel, Yahweh was regarded as the husband of Israel.

Hosea's charge against Israel is similar to that of Amos. The religion of Yahweh is popular, but the character of Yahweh is misunderstood. For instance, Hosea's view of Jehu's massacre of the worshippers of the Baal of Tyre is very different from that of the later historian which appears in 2 Kings x. 30.¹ To Hosea this massacre in the name of Yahweh is a crime.²

Presently Hosea's home breaks up altogether. But his love for Gomer does not die. She is sold into bondage. He redeems her. But he feels that they cannot attempt to live together again at once. They must live apart for a time in hope of the eventual restoration of their home life.³

And thus, Hosea feels, Yahweh will have to deal with Israel. Israel must go into exile. In exile she must abide many days, unable to carry out the ritual of Yahweh's religion, just as Gomer must abide many days apart from her husband.⁴

No more is known of the future of Hosea and Gomer. Was their home life restored? Was Hosea perhaps killed or deported in 734 B.C., or in 722 B.C.? We do not know. At any rate there is no sure reference in his book to either of the deportations.

In 722 B.C. the Assyrians captured Samaria. They deported many of the inhabitants and introduced conquered foreigners in their place, in accordance with the Assyrian method of making concerted rebellion difficult. Thus were produced the half-Israelite, half-heathen, Samaritans, important in New Testament times.

It seems that among those of the Northern Israelites who were not deported, were some of the disciples of Hosea, and that they

¹ This historian asserts—"Yahweh said unto Jehu, Because thou has executed well that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my mind, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

² Hosea i. 4-5.

³ Hosea iii. 1-3.

⁴ Hosea iii. 4.

collected and wrote down fragments of his utterances. The book thus formed was subsequently edited and expanded by editors in Judah.

Thus the book is not an easy one to read. In places there seems to be little connection between one sentence and the next. There are some obvious additions. Even when these have been removed, there are a good many passages which some scholars attribute to the prophet's editors rather than to the prophet himself. Moreover, the text has suffered a great deal in transmission, and in several of those passages in which the traditional Hebrew text (MT) defies translation, there is a remarkable lack of agreement between scholars as to how it should be amended.¹

None the less Hosea's editors seem on the whole to have treated him fairly and to have introduced into his book very little which is not in accordance with his spirit. Nor do the numerous places in which the exact meaning is uncertain, leave room for doubt as to what are the main lines of the prophet's teaching. The personality of the prophet is impressed on the whole book. And the book introduces us to one of the finest figures of history—the Prophet of Love.

The followers of Hosea carried on his message. It seems that the nucleus of Deuteronomy was put together by the followers of Hosea and the followers of Isaiah. And the highest note in Deuteronomy is the note which runs through the whole of Hosea—Love. Yahweh loves Israel and Israel must love Yahweh.

To-day a Jewish child repeats, in the course of his morning and evening prayers, Deut. vi. 4 and 5—"Listen, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one—and you shall love the LORD your God with all your intellect,² with all your instincts,³ and with all your 'muchness' (your 'self as a whole')."

¹ Help can sometimes be obtained from the Greek version (LXX).

² Hebrew "heart." But to Hebrew psychology the heart is the seat of the intellect. "Heart" in the Bible must often be understood to mean "mind."

³ The Hebrew word for "soul" also means "appetite," "desire," "emotion."

TABLE OF DATES.

	B.C.
David	about 1000
Disruption: Northern Israel and Judah separate Kingdoms	933
Elijah prophesying	about 860
"J" Editors active in Judah	9th century
Jehu massacres worshippers of Baal of Tyre in Valley of Jezreel	842
Jeroboam II., King of N. Israel	783
"E" Editors active in N. Israel (Ephraim)	8th century
Amos prophesying	about 760
Hosea's call to be a Prophet	
Death of Jeroboam II.; his son Zechariah succeeds him	743
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Menahem kills Shallum and becomes King	743
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HOSEA.

PREFACE.

Chapter i. 1.

Probably by a Judæan editor. Note precedence given to Kings of Judah. Hosea's work was in Northern Israel. It is doubtful whether Hosea was still prophesying when Hezekiah came to the throne. In any case Jeroboam II. died before that date.

This is Yahweh's message which came to Hosea Ben-Beeri in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—in the reign of Jeroboam Ben-Joash, king of Israel.

HOSEA'S MARRIAGE. PART I.

Chapter i. 2 to 9.

Yahweh's call to Hosea to be a prophet came to him through his love for Gomer. Gomer was not what the world calls "a girl of bad character," before Hosea married her. She is compared throughout the book to Israel, whom Hosea clearly considers to have been what the world calls "innocent," in the days of Moses when Yahweh married her (see ix. 10, xi. 1). Gomer must soon have made Hosea's home life unhappy. But she is not at first, at any rate so far as Hosea knows, unfaithful to him in the legal sense of the word. Hosea does not, it seems, doubt that Jezreel is his own child.

By calling the child Jezreel¹ Hosea compares the relation of himself and Gomer to that of Yahweh and Israel. Jezreel, the child, is a constant reminder to Hosea that Gomer, his wife, is utterly out of sympathy with him. Jezreel, the valley, where Jehu massacred the worshippers of the Baal of Tyre, is a constant reminder to Yahweh that Israel, His wife, is utterly out of sympathy with Him.

As the name he gives her indicates, Hosea realises that Lo-ruchamah² is not his child. But he forgives Gomer and does not divorce her. Thus Lo-ruchamah counts as a legitimate child of Hosea in the eyes of the world. She thus resembles the Israelites, who are brought up in the religion of Yahweh but are quite ignorant of His real character. They are thus bastards,³ calling themselves the children of Yahweh, to whose religion they are devoted, but in reality the children of Israel's "lovers," the Baalim or nature gods of Canaan. They are looked upon by Yahweh, just as Gomer's third child is looked upon by Hosea, as Lo-ammi⁴—"not my people."

Children were not weaned until they were two or three years old. So the events recorded in i. 2-9 must have extended over some years.

This is the way in which Yahweh began to communicate his message to Hosea.

Yahweh put it into Hosea's mind to woo and marry a girl of treacherous character—one who would bear him children not his own.

¹ Jezreel—"God sows." Note word-play on "Israel." Note word-play in ii. 23.

² Ruchamah—"She has been loved"—"she has been pitied"—"her father has sympathy for her."

Lo-ruchamah—"Lo," being the negative in Hebrew, reverses the meaning.

³ See Hebrews xii. 8.

⁴ Ammi—"my people"—"akin to me."

Lo-ammi—"not my people"—"not akin to me."

[And why ?] Because the country was persistently committing adultery by being treacherous to Yahweh.

So Hosea wooed and married Gomer Bath-Diblain. And when she had borne him a son, Yahweh put it into his mind to call the child Jezreel.

[And why ?] Because very soon Yahweh would punish the dynasty of Jehu for the massacre of Jezreel and would put an end to the sovereignty of Israel. On that "Day" Yahweh would break the army of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

When Gomer had borne another child, a daughter, Yahweh put it into Hosea's mind to call the child Lo-ruchamah.

[And why ?] Because Yahweh would no longer be moved by a father's sympathy for the Israelites to take their iniquity away.²

When Gomer had weaned Lo-ruchamah she bore a son. And Yahweh put it into Hosea's mind to call the child Lo-ammi.

[And why ?] Because the Israelites were not Yahweh's people, and Yahweh would not be their God.

¹ Day of Armageddon (Har-Megiddo=Hill of Megiddo), or Day of Jezreel. There is a great plain or valley dividing the hill country of Samaria from the hill country of Galilee. The north-west portion of this plain was called the Plain of Esdraelon or the Plain of Megiddo. This portion drains into the river Kishon. The south-east portion of the plain was called the Valley of Jezreel and drains into the Jordan.

A consideration of the map will show that this great plain must always have provided the chief battlefield of Israel. Thus "a day of Armageddon" or "a day of Jezreel" means a day of battle. Whether the battle is to be won or lost depends on the context. For one great "day of Armageddon" see Judges iv. and v. The great "day of Yahweh" was to the contemporaries of Amos the great "day" on which Yahweh would conquer all Israel's enemies. Compare the German "Der Tag." To Amos himself the day of Yahweh was the great "day" on which Yahweh would punish Israel. So Hosea says that "on that day" Yahweh will break the army of Israel on the battlefield of Jezreel or Armageddon (i. 5). Once Israel has been punished, the "day" becomes a day of restoration (i. 11; ii. 16; 18; 21;—compare the "latter days" in iii. 5). The "day" thus stands for the unique interest in history displayed by the Hebrews—an interest due to their belief that history is no objectless cycle of golden, silver, bronze and iron ages (as it is to Greek and Indian thought), but that behind history is the living God.

² Verse 7 is an addition; see below.

Chapter i. 7.

A later addition—note awkwardness of grammar—probably added after Sennacherib's failure to take Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

But Yahweh would be moved by a father's sympathy for the Judæans and would save them by the help of Yahweh their God; he would not save them by the help of their bows and swords and equipment, or of their chariots and cavalry.

HOSEA'S MARRIAGE. PART II.

Chapter ii. 2 to 23.

Between the narrative of i. 2-9 and that of iii. 1-4 occur some important events which are not recorded. In i. 9 Hosea seems to allow Lo-ammi to be reckoned as a member of his family, i.e., he forgives Gomer. Does he afterwards divorce her? Or does she run away from him? At any rate his home breaks up altogether. When next we hear of Gomer, she has come to grief and has had to barter her independence for her maintenance by becoming a bondservant. Hebrew bondservice was indentured labour rather than slavery. But in the case of Gomer the bondservice is clearly of a disreputable kind. Has she become a common prostitute? Or has she become a concubine of a "lover"?

We do not know how long an interval elapsed between i. 9 and iii. 1. Much of ii. 2-23 seems to belong to the interval.

As Gomer has made Hosea suffer, so has Israel made Yahweh suffer.

Israel, like Gomer, thinks that she can easily reform herself when she likes, that Yahweh is very good-natured, that it will all come right in the end.

But Yahweh loves Israel with a boundless generosity. He loves her far too much to let her off. He will stick at nothing—spare neither Himself nor Israel—in His endeavour to make her what He meant her to be.

Israel must be removed from the luxuries of Canaan and put back into the desert to resume the nomadic life she led in the days of Moses. But this punishment is not vindictive.

It is part of the way in which Yahweh will woo her again and enable her to make a fresh start. (For what happened in the valley of Achor, see Joshua vii. 24-26.)

Plead, O plead with your motherland.¹ Let her give up her inveterate prostitution, her shameless adultery. Lest I strip her naked like a convicted adulteress and reduce her to what she was at the beginning of her history—yes, make the land like the wilderness, turn it into a desert, and kill the soil with drought.

For her children I will not be moved by a father's sympathy. They are bastards. For their motherland has become a prostitute. She who bore them has disgraced herself. For she thought—"I will follow my lovers, who give me my bread and water, my wool and linen, my oil and wine."

So, see, I am going to make a thorn hedge across the road—build a wall across the path. She shall fail to find her way.

So when she has run after her lovers but failed to catch them, when she has searched for them but failed to find them, she will say to herself—"I will go back to my first husband, for I had better luck in the old times than I have nowadays."

And she—even she—does not know that it is I who have given her that corn and wine and oil—that it is I who have made her rich in gold and silver.² Therefore I will withdraw the corn which I give her at the harvest, and the wine which I give her at the vintage. I will snatch away my wool and my linen, which I give her for clothing. Yes! now will I uncover her shame before her lovers. Not one of them shall be able to rescue her from me. I will bring to an end all her merry pilgrimages, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her festivals. I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees, which she looked on as her earnings—as wages paid her by her lovers. I will turn them into a jungle. Wild animals shall devour them. I will punish her for keeping the feasts of the Baalim—feasts at

¹ MT adds "for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband"—a marginal note, which spoils rhythm of Hebrew and is contrary to the whole spirit of the book.

² MT adds "which they made into an image of the Baal"—a scribe's marginal note. The golden bull was meant to be an image of Yahweh.

which she makes offerings to them, decks herself in ear-rings and jewelry, follows her lovers and forgets me.

Yahweh whispers in my ear—So, see, I am going to make love to her. I will lead her into the wilderness. I will speak kindly to her. There [she shall make a fresh start]. I will give her her vineyards. I will make the pass of Achor a gate of hope. There she shall respond to my love, just as she responded in her youth, at the time when she came up from Egypt.

On that “day”—Yahweh whispers in my ear—she¹ shall call me her husband and shall no longer call me her Baal. I will make the very names of the Baalim obsolete words in the language of Israel. Their very names shall be forgotten.

I will make peace on that “day” between the Israelites and the wild animals, the birds and the reptiles. I will break the bow, the sword and all weapons of war and cast them out of the country. I will make the Israelites lie down in security.

I will betroth you to myself [O Israel] for ever. Yes, I will betroth you to myself, giving you the virtues of loyalty and justice, of affection and sympathy, as my bridal gift.² Yes, I will betroth you to myself, giving you the virtue of constancy as my bridal gift, and you shall know Yahweh.

In that “day” I will respond—Yahweh whispers in my ear—I will respond to the call of the sky and it shall respond to the call of the land; the land shall respond to the call of the corn, the wine and the oil, and they shall respond to the call of Jezreel. I will sow Jezreel in the land to be my own. I will be moved by a father’s sympathy for Lo-ruchamah. I will call Lo-ammi my people, and he shall call me his God.

HOSEA’S MARRIAGE. PART III.

Chapter iii. 1 to 4.

As Yahweh treats Israel, so Hosea treats Gomer.

Yahweh put it into my mind to woo [Gomer] again, to love her—this wife with a lover, this adulteress.

¹ So LXX; MT, “you.”

² Dowry with which a man bought a wife.

[And why?] Such was Yahweh’s love for the Israelites, though they were looking to other gods and in love with cakes of raisins!¹

So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels in money and fifteen shekels’ worth of barley.² Then I told her that for a long time she must [live alone and] wait for me, having no relations with men—yes, that for a long time I myself could not live with her.

[And why?] Because for a long time the Israelites would have to [live alone and] wait—without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without idol of Yahweh or image.

A PROMISE OF RESTORATION.

Chapter iii. 5, plus i. 10 to ii. 1, which seems to belong here.

Many think that this passage is not by Hosea. Note reference to the ideal king of the house of David. At any rate it is in the spirit of Hosea.

Afterwards the Israelites shall again resort to Yahweh, their God, and to [the son of] David, their king. In the “latter days” they shall come with trembling to Yahweh—come with trembling to [experience] his kindness.

The Israelites shall be as numerous as the grains [of sand by the sea, which cannot be measured or counted.

Instead of being called Lo-ammi, they shall be called sons of the living God.

The Judæans and Israelites shall join hands and set over themselves one commander. They shall conquer³ the country, for glorious shall be the “day” of Jezreel.

Call your brothers “Ammi” and your sisters “Ruchamah.”

¹ Used in worship of the Baal of the vine and taken over by the popular Yahweh religion.

² This seems to be the meaning. Thirty shekels was the price of a bondservant.

³ Meaning of phrase thus translated is uncertain.

Chapter iv. 1 to 14.

The priests derived their income from the popular religion—a religion in which Yahweh was worshipped but his character was misunderstood.

In most religions sacred prostitution has been practised as part of the ritual. It was practised in Canaan. After the Conquest it seems to have been taken over by the popular Yahweh religion.

We have here an eighth century B.C. denunciation of the view which prescribes one code of sexual morality for women and allows another for men.

O Israelites, hear Yahweh's message. Yahweh has a quarrel with the inhabitants of the country. For there is no truth, kindness, or knowledge of God in the country—only perjury, murder, theft, adultery, violence. Murder follows hard on murder. That is the reason of these frequent droughts—when all who live in the country pine away—even the wild animals and the birds—when the very fish lie in heaps [in the dry river-beds]. But what good can a man do by quarrelling and uttering reproaches? My people are merely imitating their priests.¹

O priests, you persistently stumble when^a you have the light, and the prophets also stumble with you. The darkness comes! I will destroy your whole caste.

Destroy! My people have let you destroy them because they do not know me. Because you, priests, have refused to know me, I refuse to recognise you as my priests. Because you have forgotten the ideal of your God, I—even I—will forget the members of your profession.

The greater the influence of the priests the more they err concerning me. I will bring their glorious office into contempt. They derive their income from my people's error. They greedily encourage my people in their perverted religion.

So the people will become as bad as the priests. I must punish them for their conduct and pay them back in their

¹ Text here is corrupt. Most commentators agree that this is the general sense.

own coin. They will eat but not be satisfied. They will commit fornication but not multiply. For they have ceased to take any notice of Yahweh.

Fornication, wine and new wine deprive men of their wits. My people ask advice of their sacred trees—their diviners' rods declare to them [my will]! For lust for prostitutes has so muddled their brains, that they have [prostituted their intelligence to idolatry and] committed adultery against their God.

On the tops of the mountains they sacrifice, on the hills they make offerings—under oaks, poplars and terebinths, which provide convenient shade. That is why their daughters are always committing fornication and their wives adultery. I will not punish their daughters for committing fornication nor their wives for committing adultery. For they themselves go aside with harlots and maintain temple prostitutes at [my] sanctuaries.

A people is ruined when it will not think!

Chapter iv. 15 to 19. *Fragmentary Utterances.*

Although you, Israel, are committing adultery against me, I would not have Judah share your guilt.

Do not attend the sanctuary of Gilgal! Do not go up to Bethel!¹ Forbear in Beer-Sheba² to protest your devotion to me!

Yes, Israel jibs like a jibbing heifer!

How then can Yahweh let the Israelites graze like lambs in a broad pasture land?

Ephraim³ is wedded to idols! [What can Yahweh do but] let him alone?

¹ Bethel—from "Beth," house, and "El," God—means "House of God." It was the chief sanctuary of Yahweh in Northern Israel. But, owing to the fact that Yahweh was worshipped there under the form of a bull, Hosea calls the place Bethaven—from "Beth," house, and "Aven," idolatry—"house of idols."

² Inserted by many commentators to restore the rhythm.

³ Ephraim—son of Joseph—often stands for Northern Israel. Word-play occurs in Hosea with Peri, "fruit," and Pere, "wild ass."

The Israelites are a drunken mob,¹ obsessed by lust for prostitutes. Israel's rulers have fallen in love with dishonour. The wind will snatch her up, like a "dust devil,"² and whirl her away. The Israelites will wish they had never trusted in their sacrifices.

Chapter v. 1 to 14.

The government—by commission, license, taxation, etc.—make their profit out of the popular Yahweh religion.

Hosea predicts the destruction of the Ten Tribes of Northern Israel—a prediction fulfilled in 722 B.C.

Hear this, you priests! Listen, all Israelites! Court of the King, attend! It is against you that this sentence is pronounced. For you have proved a snare at Mizpah—spread yourself like a fowler's net on Tabor.

They have deepened³ the pit which was made at Shittim.⁴ But I will be a scourge to them all. I know Ephraim—yes, Israel cannot hide himself from me. Already, Ephraim, you have committed adultery against me—yes, Israel has let himself be defiled. Their own habits prevent them from returning to their God. They are obsessed by lust for prostitutes. So they do not know Yahweh. Time after time does the Majesty of Israel give clear evidence against him. But time after time do the Ephraimites⁵ fall, tripped up by the iniquity [they do not recognise]. (Judah, too, has tripped up with them!) Time after time with sacrifices of sheep and oxen do they make efforts to seek Yahweh, but they never find him. He eludes them.

¹ Slight amendments of MT are necessary to render it translatable.

² "Dust devil"—a column of dust driven along by the wind in a whirling spiral (cf. "the wings of the wind").

³ Changing one letter of untranslatable MT in accordance with many commentators.

⁴ See Numbers xxv. 1-9.

⁵ MT adds "Israel"—a marginal note.

They have defrauded Yahweh. For they have let their children grow up in ignorance of him.

Next month may see the end of them and of their estates! Sound the alarm in Gibeah! Blow the cornet in Ramah! From Bethel¹ call Benjamin to arms! Oh, Ephraim, on the day of your punishment you will be utterly exterminated.

Against the tribes of Israel I make a prediction which will certainly be fulfilled.

The nobles of Judah are no better than common swindlers. I will drown them in the deluge of my anger.

Ephraim is oppressed—his national independence is stamped out. [And why?] Because he has obstinately followed idols.²

So it is I, like moth, who am devouring Ephraim—like dry rot, devouring the Judæans. Ephraim has perceived the sickness [of the state] and Judah has perceived his wounds. So Ephraim has resorted to Assyria—sent for help to the Great King.³ But he cannot possibly heal you or cure your wounds. For it is I, like a lion, who am preying on Ephraim—yes, like a young lion, on the Judæans. It is I—I myself, who will mangle you and make off with you. I will drag you away and none shall be able to rescue you.

Chapter v. 15 to vi. 6.

The God of the Prophets is not omnipotent in the sense of having left Himself free to do anything He likes—the omnipotence of childish day-dreams. By giving men some power of choice—making them not machines but men—He has limited His own power, rendered Himself liable to be frustrated by them—to suffer at their hands.

I will leave them and return to my temple [in heaven] until they suffer the consequences of their guilt and seek my presence.

¹ See note on iv. 15-19.

² So LXX; MT, "a line."

³ Reading *Melek rab* for *Melek Jareb*.

When they are in trouble, they always seek me energetically enough, saying—

“Come, let us return to Yahweh. For it is he who has mangled us, but only to heal us. It is he who has smitten us, but only to bind up our wounds. He will revive us in two or three days—set us on our feet that we may live in his presence. Oh, let us know Yahweh, let us run after Yahweh that we may know him! As soon as we seek¹ him energetically we² shall find him. He will come to us like the rains, like the spring showers which water the soil.”

What can I make of you, Ephraim—what can I make of you, Judah—when your affection for me is like a morning mist, like dew that passes early away?

That is why I have [but] shattered my people by [sending them] the prophets—that is why my promises have [only] brought them death—why my³ justice proves a lightning flash [to strike them].

For it is your affection that I delight in, not your sacrifices—yes, your knowledge of God, not your burnt offerings.

Chapter vi. 7 to vii. 7.

Very difficult. In places MT defies translation and commentators differ even as regards the general sense conveyed by the original.

But they, like ordinary men, have broken their covenant [with me]. Look! It is there that they have been false to me! Gilead is a city of criminals—the roads to it are marked by trails of blood!

Like brigands in ambush gangs of priests murder people seeking asylum at Shechem.⁴ Yes, they have committed atrocities.

¹ Transposing one letter of MT.

² So LXX; MT, “his going forth.”

³ So LXX; MT, “thy.”

⁴ Shechem was a city of priests and a city of refuge from the blood feud for a man who had killed another accidentally (Joshua xx. and xxi. 21).

In the land of Israel I see appalling things! There Ephraim is committing adultery against me—yes, Israel has let himself be defiled. Judah too—there is a harvest to be reaped by you!

When I try to restore my people, when I try to heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim discloses itself and the crimes of Samaria—sharp practice in business, burglary, brigandage. Yet it never occurs to them that I remember all their crimes. They are already utterly in the grip of bad habits. But I know them through and through.

By wickedness they curry favour with the king. By lies they curry favour with the nobles. They are all adulterers—like an oven heated by the baker; he may stop stirring up the fire while fermentation is taking place!¹

At court ceremonies the nobles get dead drunk.

The king associates with wasters.

Yes, their minds are hot² as an oven with their intrigues. All night their anger [merely] slumbers.³ In the morning it is blazing like a flame.

They all grow hot as an oven [with intrigues].

Like cannibals they devour their rulers! All their kings have been assassinated—not one of them calling to me for help.

Chapter vii. 8 to 16.

Like Isaiah, Hosea denounces alliances with foreign nations as treason against Yahweh Sabaoth—the God of the armies of Israel—Israel's protector.

Ephraim apes the heathen. Ephraim is a half-baked cake. Foreign [fashions] have sapped his vigour, but he himself is unaware of it. Yes, he has a grey hair here and there; but he himself is unaware of it. Time after time does the Majesty of Israel give clear evidence against him. Yet the Israelites have never returned to Yahweh their God nor sought him—not even for all this!

¹ Very difficult; reading and sense uncertain.

² So LXX; MT, “they bring near.”

³ Very difficult; reading and sense uncertain.

Ephraim is like a silly dove [fluttering about aimlessly]. They will call in the Egyptians! They will resort to Assyria for help! As soon as they go I will catch them in my net—shoot them like a bird.¹ . . .

Alas for them! For they have fluttered away, [frightened of] me.

Destruction upon them! For they have rebelled against me. And I—can I rescue them when they themselves propagate a false view of me?

They have never prayed to me honestly. They merely howl beside their altars² for corn and wine. They lacerate themselves³ according to the ritual. But [when I would lead them on] they jib.

It was I who trained them and made them strong. Yet it is of me that they are suspicious.

They are ever returning to idols.⁴ They are like a bow which never hits the target.

Their nobles will be put to death because of their arrogant boasting. Israel will be derided for this by the Egyptians.

Chapter viii. 1 to 14.

Israel's religion is a dope. He refuses to face the living God and the great ideal the living God has set before him. Israel worships Yabweh, but wants a dead Yabweh, not a living Yabweh. Hence Israel seeks to reduce Yabweh to an idol in order to gratify his religious feelings without facing the living Yabweh and striving to live up to His ideal.

It seems that Hosea was the first prophet explicitly and unequivocally to denounce the practice of employing golden bulls to represent Yabweh. To the people in general the bull of Samaria was most sacred. To say that it was not God was blasphemous! But Hosea does not regard golden bulls as the

¹ Rest of verse 12 very difficult and uncertain; here omitted.

² MT, "beds."

³ So LXX; MT, "throng," See 1 Kings xviii. 28.

⁴ So LXX; MT, meaningless.

only kind of idols. Diplomacy, politics, etc., become idols, just as easily as do the adjuncts of religious worship, if they are regarded as substitutes for the living God.

One symptom of Israel's inability to face the living God is his desire to safeguard his little country by a foreign alliance.

King-making is another symptom. Does Hosea refer to the objection to having a king at all, which appears in the later of the two accounts of the beginning of the monarchy in 1 Samuel? Or to the revolt of Jeroboam I. in 933 B.C.? Or to the events of 743 B.C.?

Trumpeter, sound the alarm! Like a vulture [the Assyrian swoops down] on Yahweh's own country!

It is because the Israelites have broken their covenant with me and rebelled against my ideal.

To me they will cry—call me their God—say, "We Israelites know thee." Israel has repudiated what is good. Let the enemy rout him!

They have made kings without my consent—princes whom I never recognized. Of their own silver and gold they have made idols [of me]—to gratify their religious feelings, but to separate themselves from me!

¹ I will repudiate the miserable bull [you have made for me], Samaria. They rouse me to anger! How long shall I have to continue to punish them! Yes,—this is Israel's idea [of me!] A smith made it! It is not God!

Samaria's miserable bull shall be smashed to atoms.

Yes [their religion is] a sowing of mere wind, but its harvest will be a tornado.

Should their seed spring up, it cannot spread. It will never yield bread. Should it yield bread, this would be devoured by foreigners.

Devoured! Israel is devoured! They are already an unmarketable commodity among the nations. For they have grovelled to Assyria! (Ever a fractious wild ass is Ephraim!)²

¹ MT, "he has repudiated."

² Word play between Ephraim and Pere, "wild ass."

They have hired lovers! Even if they make a present of themselves to all the nations, now will I whip them in. They must cease¹ for a while ²from anointing kings and princes.²

For the more altars Ephraim has built,³ the further have they led him from the goal. Were I to write down for him the outline of my ideal, he would think it belonged to a foreign religion!

The Israelites offer sacrifices to hold communion [with Yahweh]. Yahweh does not accept them. Now must he remember their iniquity and punish their errors. They must return to Egypt.

Israel has forgotten his maker and built palaces!

Judah has constructed a chain of fortresses. So I must light a fire in his cities to consume their citadels.

Chapter ix. 1 to 8.

The teaching of Moses about Yahweh has been obscured by the heathen ideas which have been taken over from the Canaanites by the popular Yahweh religion. Hence either Assyria or Egypt—Hosea does not know which—will conquer and deport Israel.

Rejoice not so loudly, O Israel, in your heathenish religion! It is merely adultery against your God. You love to indulge in immoral harvest rites on all your threshing floors.

Threshing floors! Their threshing floors and wine vats will not nourish them. Their new wine will disappoint them!⁴ They⁵ will pour out no drink offerings to Yahweh and prepare⁶ him no sacrifices. Their bread⁷ will be like the bread of

¹ So LXX; MT, "and they began."

²⁻² So LXX; MT, "from the burden of a king, princes."

³ MT adds "to sin."

⁴ So LXX; MT, "her."

⁵ Transposing verses 3 and 4.

⁶ MT, "be sweet"?

⁷ MT, "they have."

mourners. All who eat of it will thereby make themselves unclean.¹ For they will eat merely to appease their hunger and not to hold communion with Yahweh.

²[And why?]² They cannot remain in Yahweh's land. Ephraim must return to Egypt. In Assyria they must eat unclean food.¹

Alas, for the festival days! Alas, for the days of pilgrimage to Yahweh!

For see! they must go to Assyria.³ Egypt must be their rendezvous. [There they will die and] be buried in the cemetery of Memphis. As for their precious silver idols—thistles shall replace them, thorns shall grow in their sanctuaries.

Arrived is the time of punishment! Arrived is the time of retribution! Oh, let the Israelites perceive it!

[Why say you?—"The prophet is irreligious, the inspired man is mad"?

Because of your great iniquity and your great animosity [against me for speaking of it].

I⁴ am Ephraim's watchman with my God. Wherever I go they lay traps for me. There is animosity against me among the priests of my God.

Chapter ix. 9 to 17.

Verse 9 seems to refer to Judges xix. 22. For Baal-Peor see Numbers (xxv. 1 to 3). Perversions of religion and perversions of the sex instinct are closely connected. Sexual malpractices have rotted the vigour of the nation. This is shown by the falling birth-rate. Contrast the freshness and vigour of the early days of the nation, suggested in verse 10a. Yet what matters the falling birth-rate? Soon all the children who are being brought up, will be destroyed by the invader.

¹ Mourners, being "unclean" by the dead, could not eat of sacrificial meals. Therefore they could not hold communion with Yahweh. In exile the Israelites would not be able to offer firstlings or first-fruits at any sanctuary of Yahweh. Therefore all their food would be "unclean."

² Transposing verses 3 and 4.

³ MT, "from destruction."

⁴ MT, "prophet."

In the age of the prophets there was no doctrine of a life worth living beyond death. Children, by keeping a man's name alive on earth, provided what we may call a substitute for immortality. Childlessness was regarded by the Israelites as the worst possible curse. But so dreadful will be the destruction of Israel, that Hosea feels that childlessness will be better than the rearing of children to be slaughtered. Compare Jeremiah xvi. 1 to 4 and Paul's earlier view of marriage in 1 Corinthians vii., written when he expected that disasters, ushering in the end of the world, would shortly begin. Contrast Ephesians v. 22 to 33,¹ written when he had realised that the expectation of an immediate end of the world, taken over by the first generation of Christians from the Jewish Apocalyptists, was erroneous. Compare also Luke xxiii. 27 to 31, where Jesus predicts the horrors which were actually to occur at the siege and fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.)

ix. 9.

They practice unnatural vice—the sin of Gibeah. Yahweh must remember their perversion, punish their errors.

ix. 10, 11, 16, 12, 13.

[Delightful] as grapes in the wilderness was Israel when I found him there. Fresh as a first ripe fig were your fathers when I chose them. But when they came to Baal-peor, they consecrated themselves to Baal² and became as loathsome as the idols they loved.

Ephraim—fruitful Ephraim—his birth-rate is dwindling like a bird vanishing into the blue. No children, no motherhood, no fatherhood.

¹ In the New Testament the writers, almost without noticing that they are doing so, ascribe the position held in the Old Testament by "message (or word) of Yahweh," "messenger (or angel) of Yahweh," "Yahweh," to Jesus of Nazareth. So in Ephesians v. 22-33 the figure of marriage, once employed by Hosea as a symbol of the relation of Yahweh to Israel, is now employed as a symbol of the relation of Christ to the Church—the new Israel. Compare use of word "saviour" in Hosea xiii. 4 and Ephesians v. 23.

² Reading Baal—later scribes so disliked this word that they often substituted Bosheth, "shame."

¹Ephraim is a worm-eaten tree. His roots are dried up. No fruit can [the fruitful ones] bear. What children they bear—darlings of their mothers—I must kill!¹ Of what children they rear I must bereave them—not one shall survive. (Yes, alas for the parents too when I depart from them!) Ephraim's children are destined² to provide game for the sport of the nations. Ephraim can produce children merely to be slaughtered!

ix. 14. *Hosea speaks.*

Give them, O Yahweh—what can I ask thee to give them?—Best give them miscarrying wombs and shrivelling breasts!

ix. 15. *Yahweh speaks.*

All their crimes are focussed in [my sanctuary in] Gilgal. Yes, it is there that I began to hate them. Because of their evil habits I will expel them from my sanctuary. I will love them no more. All their leaders are jibbers!

ix. 17. *Hosea speaks.*

My God will reject them, because they have not listened to him. They must become vagabonds [Cains] among the nations!

Chapter x. 1 and 2, 5 to 8.

Israel was a luxuriant vine. He³ grew richer and richer. The richer he grew, the more altars he built. The more prosperous his country, the finer the sacred pillars he made. But the Israelites are not single-minded. Now must they suffer punishment. [Yahweh] will break down their altars—ruin their sacred pillars.⁴

¹ Read 16 after 11.

² So LXX; MT, "like I have seen Tyre transplanted."

³ Meaning of MT very uncertain. (Translation here is in accordance with one of the numerous amendments which have been proposed.)

⁴ For x. 3 to 4 see below; it seems to be out of its place.

For the 'miserable bull of Bethel² the inhabitants of Samaria will lament.³ Yes, its people will mourn for it. Its priests will be in agony⁴ for it. For its rich gold will have been stripped off it and taken away to a foreign land. The object itself must be carried to Assyria as a "present" to the Great⁵ King. Ephraim will be disgraced; yes, Israel will wish he had never trusted in his diplomacy.

Samaria will collapse—her king will be like a twig on a torrent! The idolatrous high places—Israel's error—will be destroyed. Thorns and thistles will grow on their altars. The Israelites will say to the mountains—"Cover us"—and to the hills—"Fall on us!"

Chapter x. 3 and 4.

Seems out of its place or a later addition.

For now they will say—"We have no [real] king since we do not fear Yahweh. As for the king [we have], what can he do for us? Nothing but make⁶ and break promises, and enter into alliances with foreigners—while his administration of justice is as useful as weeds among the corn!"

Chapter x. 9 to 11.

In verse 10 Israel's "two perversions" are probably (a) the worship of Yahweh under the form of a bull, and (b) the monarchy. Or (c) unnatural vice (cf. "days of Gibeah") may be one of them. Verses 9 and 10 are very difficult and uncertain.

¹ So LXX; MT plural.

² See note on iv. 15 to 19.

³ MT, "sojourn."

⁴ MT, "rejoice."

⁵ Reading *Melek rab* for *Melek Jareb*.

⁶ So LXX; MT, "They make . . . their administration . . ."

Ever since the days of Gibeah¹ have you gone wrong, O Israel! The Israelites persist in that sin. Must not the attack be pressed home against Gibeah—against the black-guards?

²I will chastise them in my fury—nations shall combine against them to chastise³ them for their two perversions.

Ephraim is a⁴ heifer fond [of the easy work] of threshing corn. But I will fit a yoke on her fair neck. I will put Ephraim into draught. Judah must plough. Jacob must harrow before he can thresh.

Chapter x. 12 to 13a.

Suggested by the agricultural metaphors of 11. See verses 12 to 13a in R.V. The Hebrew says "sow," "reap," "fallow ground," "plough," "reap," because agriculture was the chief industry in Israel in the days of Hosea. The translation here given is a paraphrase, seeking to apply Hosea's thought to a commercial community.

Lay out your capital honestly. Make your profits in accordance with the law of kindness. Look into your business methods. It is time to seek Yahweh that he may come and teach you honesty. You have invested in evil enterprises. You have made unjust profits. You have lived on shams.

Chapter x. 13b to 15.

There are at least five differing views as to who this Shalman was. Some event, well-known in the author's day, is referred to.

Since you have trusted in your policy—in the strength of your armies, the din of battle shall arise among your tribes. All

¹ See Judges xix. 22.

² MT, "In my desire, that I may chastise them."

³ So LXX; MT, "When they combine."

⁴ MT adds—"that is taught—a marginal note."

your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman stormed Beth-arbel and destroyed it, dashing in pieces mothers and children. Thus must¹ I do to you, O Israelites,² because of your great wickedness. The king of Israel shall utterly collapse—[like a dream] in the morning!

Chapter xi. 1 to 9.

When Israel was a child, he attracted my love and I called him out of Egypt to adopt him as my son.

The more I³ have called them the more they have avoided me.³ It is with the Baalim that they hold communion—to images that they make offerings.

It was I who taught the baby Ephraimites to walk. [When they tumbled down] I⁴ would pick them up in my⁴ arms. Yet they never knew that I had healed their bruises.

I led them humanely with ropes of love⁵ . . .

Israel must⁶ return to Egypt. The Assyrian must be his king. [And why?] Because the Israelites have refused to return [to me].

So the sword must be brandished against their cities. Their gates must be stormed. They will be swallowed up by their own diplomacy.

My people have a bias towards refusing to face me!⁷

How can I let you go, Ephraim? How surrender you, Israel? How can I let you become like Admah⁸ or make you

¹ So LXX; MT, "he did."

² So LXX; MT, "Bethel."

³ So LXX; MT, "they called them, so they went from before them."

⁴ So LXX; MT, "he . . . his."

⁵ Rest of verse very difficult and uncertain; here omitted.

⁶ Reading on lines of LXX.

⁷ Rest of verse very difficult and uncertain; here omitted.

⁸ Admah and Zeboiim, cities associated with Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis xiv. 2), cited by Hosea as examples of vice and subsequent destruction in the same way as Sodom and Gomorrah are cited by Amos iv. 11 and Isaiah.

like Zeboiim? My mind recoils from the thought! All my emotions are in conflict! Must I not give effect to my anger? Must I not come back¹ to destroy Ephraim? For I am God and not man, in the midst of you a transcendent one. . . .²

Chapter xi. 10 and 11. Later addition—note confused metaphors—a promise of restoration.

They will follow Yahweh. Yahweh will roar like a lion—yes, it is he who will roar. Sons will hurry from the west. They will hurry, like sparrows, out of Egypt—yes, like doves, out of Assyria. Yahweh whispers in my ear—"I will bring³ them back to their own homes."

Chapter xi. 12, xii. 1 to 3a, 7 to 11, 14.

Hosea's unpopular view of the character of the national ancestor, Jacob (Ya'aqob), whose name resembles the verb 'aqab, "to follow at the heel," "over-reach." The Canaanites or Phœnicians were the great traders of the day. Ephraim considers that "business is business," and that one cannot afford to be over-particular; but Yahweh will overthrow all Israel's commercial civilisation, taken over from the Canaanites, and reduce the Israelites to the nomads they were when he met them at Horeb.

Note the force of "in whom there is no guile" in John i. 47.

Ephraim besets me with lies—yes, the Israelites beset me with falsehood.⁴ . . .

¹ See v. 15.

² Rest of verse very difficult and uncertain; here omitted.

³ So LXX; MT, "will make them dwell."

⁴ Rest of verse, of uncertain meaning, is probably a later addition. It is here omitted.

What Ephraim feeds on is mere wind! The dreams he pursues are but a sirocco!¹ All day long they pile up lies and fraud.² They make treaties with Assyria—pay tribute in oil to Egypt. Yahweh has a quarrel with Judah. He must punish Jacob for his conduct—pay him back in his own coin.

In the womb [Jacob] overreached his brother.³ He is a regular Canaanite—armed with false balances, loving extortion!

Ephraim thinks—"Well, at any rate, I have grown rich. I have made money. My profits are the result of fair business. They do not make my hands what anyone could call dirty."

But I am Yahweh, your God since you came out of Egypt. I will make you nomads again as you were when I met you [at Horeb].

Time after time do I put my message in the minds of the prophets. It is I who have granted visions in abundance—who give you hint after hint through the prophets.

In⁴ [my sanctuary at] Gilead there is a perverted religion⁴—mere waste of time! In the sacred Stone Circle at Gilgal they sacrifice oxen. Their altars, even theirs, shall become stone heaps in ploughed fields.⁵

Ephraim has bitterly provoked his master. His master will not clear him of his mortal guilt—he will pay him back for his insults.

Chapter xii. 3b to 6, 12 and 13.

An editor, either misunderstanding Hosea or feeling that Jacob had been harshly dealt with, fitted into Hosea's text some passages in which Jacob appears to great advantage. This editor derives the name "Israel" (the other name for Jacob) from Yisreḥ—"He perseveres"—and El—"God."

¹ Sirocco = a hot east wind.

² So LXX; MT, "destruction."

³ Rest of verse 3 and verses 4, 5, 6, are a later insertion; see below.

⁴ MT, "if . . . idolatry."

⁵ For 12 and 13 see below.

There may perhaps be a link between the added passages in that the verb translated "keep" in verse 6 is the same as the verb translated "kept" in verse 12 and in verse 13.

xii. 3b to 6.

With all his energy Jacob persevered with God—persevered with an angel and prevailed. He prayed to him—prayed with tears. At Bethel he found God—yes, there God spoke with us.

And Yahweh is the God of our armies—Yahweh is his name.

You, too, by the help of your God, must return [to him].

Keep kindness and justice and wait for your God without ceasing.

xii. 12 and 13.

Jacob fled to the country of the Aramæans—yes, Israel served for a wife—for a wife he kept sheep.

By a prophet Yahweh brought up Israel out of Egypt—yes, by a prophet was Israel kept.

Chapter xiii.

Ephraim has made "the great refusal" to face the living God and to "walk" (i.e. "make progress") with the living God. To Hosea idolatry is perverted religion; cf. 1 John v. (20 and 21). Idolatry implies that God is regarded as an It rather than as a He, or as less alive in the present than in the past.

The popular idol in the days of Hosea was a golden bull. But according to the principle proclaimed by Hosea, a book, a creed, an "infallible Church," a "life force," "natural law," or a philosophical Absolute, are equally idols or dead gods if they are regarded as substitutes for the living God.

Once, whenever Ephraim spoke, men trembled. He was prince¹ in Israel. But he incurred guilt [by confounding me] with the Baalim—and lies dead.

¹ MT, "lifted up."

Even now the Israelites continue in their error. They have made themselves molten images out of their own silver—idols to suit their own ideas [of me]! Smith's work is it all! Such things they call God!¹

Men, when they sacrifice, kiss miserable bulls! Therefore they are like a morning mist—like dew that passes early away—like chaff that is swept away by the gale from the threshing floor—like smoke that goes out through the window.

Yet I, Yahweh, have been your God since you left Egypt. You have no experience of any God but me. No other has ever been your saviour. It was I who was your² shepherd in the wilderness, in the dreadful land of drought.

But the better their pasturage, the more the Israelites gorged themselves. They gorged themselves and became arrogant. That is why they have forgotten me.

So I must prey upon them like a lion. Like a panther must I lurk beside their path. I must fall on them like a bear bereaved of her whelps, break their chests, and devour them on the spot like a lion—yes, wild animals shall tear them to pieces. Since³ I am your destroyer, O Israel, who⁴ is there to help you? Where now is your king? Let him save you! Where are all⁵ your nobles? Let them right you!⁵ Yes, where are all those of whom you said—"Give me a king and nobles"? I gave you kings in my anger and deposed them in my fury.

Ephraim's iniquity is repressed. His error is hidden [from his consciousness]. It is time for him to be born [to a bigger life]. He is a laggard child. He refuses to face the new birth.

Can I rescue them from Sheol? Can I redeem them from death! Come, Death, with your plagues! Come, Sheol, with your destruction! I must banish compassion from my mind!

Although Ephraim—the fruitful one—be more fruitful than all his brothers, there will come a sirocco [from Assyria], Yahweh's wind, rising from the wilderness. Ephraim's fountains will fail, his springs will run dry. [The Assyrian] will plunder the treasury of all its precious jewels.

Samaria must bear her punishment, for she has rebelled against her God. Her men will be killed in action, her children dashed to pieces, her women with child ripped up.

Chapter xiv. 1 to 8.

Return,¹ O Israel, to Yahweh your God. For you are fallen, tripped up by the iniquity [you have not recognised]. Take with you [instead of a sacrifice] your confession and return to Yahweh. Say to him—"Take away our iniquity altogether and accept what is good [in us], that so we may render as our thank-offering the fruit² of our grateful lips. We will not look to Assyria to save us, nor trust in the chariots [of Egypt]. Never again will we call our own inventions God! For it is thou who are moved by a father's sympathy for the orphans."³

I will cure their refusal to face me. I will love them generously.

Now that the anger⁴ which I launched against him has returned, I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily, strike root [and stand firm] like the Lebanon range. His branches shall spread. He shall be like the olive-yards in beauty, like the forest of Lebanon in scent.⁵

What further use can Ephraim have for idols? It is I who will respond to him and take care of him. I am ever green like the cypress. It is through me that your harvest is assured.

¹ MT, "to them."

² So LXX; MT, "I knew thee."

³ MT, "he."

⁴ MT, "in me."

⁵⁻⁵ MT, "in all your cities, and your judges."

¹ The word "to repent" is in Hebrew "to return (to God)."

² So LXX; MT, "bulls."

³ Cf John xiv. 18 margin.

⁴ See Hosea xi. 9.

⁵ Verse 7 is an addition; see below.

Chapter xiv. 7, a later addition ; note plural.

Once¹ more shall Yahweh's protecting shadow be their home. They shall enjoy their lives like a well-watered garden.² They shall be prolific as the vine and fragrant as the wine of Lebanon.

Chapter xiv. 9.

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Let the wise understand this and the understanding prove it by experience. Yahweh's ways are straight and level. The loyal make progress in them, but the rebellious trip up in them.

¹ So LXX ; MT, "The dwellers in his shadow shall return."

² MT, "They shall live, corn."

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