

Lesson 2

Bridging the Communication Gap

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I. The Intention of God

God is a communicating God. He lives in community. He is a tripartite being. He created us and designed us in His image. He created us to live in unbroken fellowship with Him, to hear from Him, to know Him, to walk with Him. His desire for His relationship with man has always been unhindered fellowship and communication.

“And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the heavens, and all animals that move upon the earth. And God said, Behold! I have given you every herb seeding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree seeding seed; to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the heavens, and to every creeper on the earth which has in it a living soul every green plant is for food; and it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”

Gen 1:27-31

Before the entrance of sin, this fellowship was unhindered. Genesis 3:8 intimates this:

“And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God in the middle of the trees of the garden.”

Gen 3:8

- Before the entrance of sin, man had unbroken, unhindered fellowship and communication with God. This is pictured in the symbolic term “open heavens”.

Moses and the elders

“And Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as the essence of the heavens for clearness. And upon the nobles of the sons of Israel He did not lay his hands. Also they saw God, and ate and drank.”

Exo 24:9-11

Ezekiel

“And it happened in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.”

Eze 1:1

Jesus

“And Jesus, when He had been baptized, went up immediately out of the water. And lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him.”

Mat 3:16

"And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him."

Mar 1:10

"And it happened in the baptizing of all the people, Jesus also being baptized, and praying, and the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit came down in a bodily shape, like a dove on Him. And a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Son, the Beloved; I am delighted in You."

Luk 3:21-22

"Nathanael answered and said to Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel! Jesus answered and said to him, Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Joh 1:49-51

But being full of the Holy Spirit, looking up intently into Heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, Behold, I see Heaven opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Act 7:55-56

See also Acts 10:11; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Revelation 4:1; 11:19; 15:5; 19:11.

II. The Fall of Man

The entrance of sin brought a gap between perfect creator and sinful man. See Genesis 3:1-24. This gap is a gap in fellowship, a gap in communication. Instead of "open heavens" the heavens became as brass and iron. Heaven was shut against man and a great wall fixed in place.

"And your heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth that is under you iron."

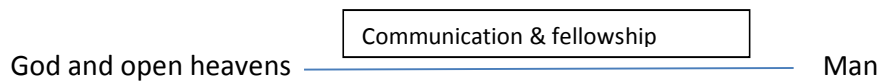
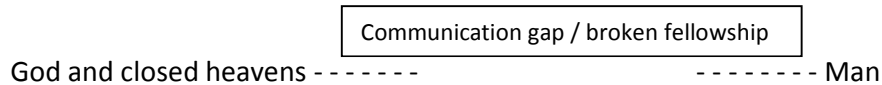
Deu 28:23

"And I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heaven like iron and your earth like bronze."

Lev 26:19

"When the heavens are restrained, and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, if they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin when You afflict them, then hear in Heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants, and of Your people Israel, for You shall teach them the good way in which they should walk, and give rain on Your land which You have given to Your people for an inheritance."

1Ki 8:35-36

Before Sin:**After Sin:****III. God's Solution to the Communication Gap**

Only God possible could have provided a solution and bridged this great divide. In Genesis, God initiated to bridge this gap, bringing in a substitutionary sacrifice, clothing Adam and Eve with coats of skin, restoring communication and fellowship through the blood.

"And for Adam and his wife Jehovah God made coats of skins, and clothed them."

Gen 3:21

In due time God gave Israel the tabernacle with its Ark of the Covenant, and from the mercy seat and Cherubim He communicated with man via the High Priest.

"And I will meet with you there, and I will talk with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubs on the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the sons of Israel."

(Exo 25:22)

We see in the following scriptures that God did commune with His own.

"And when Moses had gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of One speaking to him from the mercy-seat on the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubs. And He spoke to him."

Num 7:89

"And Jehovah went His way as soon as He had left off talking with Abraham. And Abraham returned to his place."

Gen 18:33

And He gave to Moses, when He had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

Exo 31:18

Ultimately, God used Jesus' blood of atonement to bridge the gap between God and man. Apart from the blood of Jesus, God has nothing to say to fallen man, except in judgement.

*"For the Law which has a shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things, appearing year by year with the same sacrifices, which they offer continually, they are **never***

able to perfect those drawing near. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshipers, when they had been once for all purged, would have had no more conscience of sin. **But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.** Therefore when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but You have prepared a body for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God." Above, when He said, "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings and offering for sin You did not desire, neither did You have pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God." **He takes away the first so that He may establish the second. By this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** And indeed every priest stands daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of God, from then on expecting until His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.** The Holy Spirit also is a witness to us; for after He had said before, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," also He adds, "their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." **Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies having been washed with pure water."**

Heb 10:1-22

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is My body. And He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink all of it. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Mat 26:26-28

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in Heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Heb 12:22-24

The blood speaks to God. When men reject the blood of Jesus, God's sacrifice for sin, they cannot have fellowship with God or commune with Him. They are rejecting God's bridge in Christ, through the cross.

IV. God's Communication through the Scriptures

The greatest communication of God to man is the Scriptures, the Holy Bible. God spoke His Word (John 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16) and through revelation and inspiration, using forty different men, God authored the infallible Scripture.

Refer to Figure 2.1 for a diagrammatic representation of the first challenge of interpreting scriptures. This gap between God's communication of the scriptures and our interpretation of the scriptures includes a number of factors, including and not limited to our field of experience, values, culture, education, emotions, situation and environment.

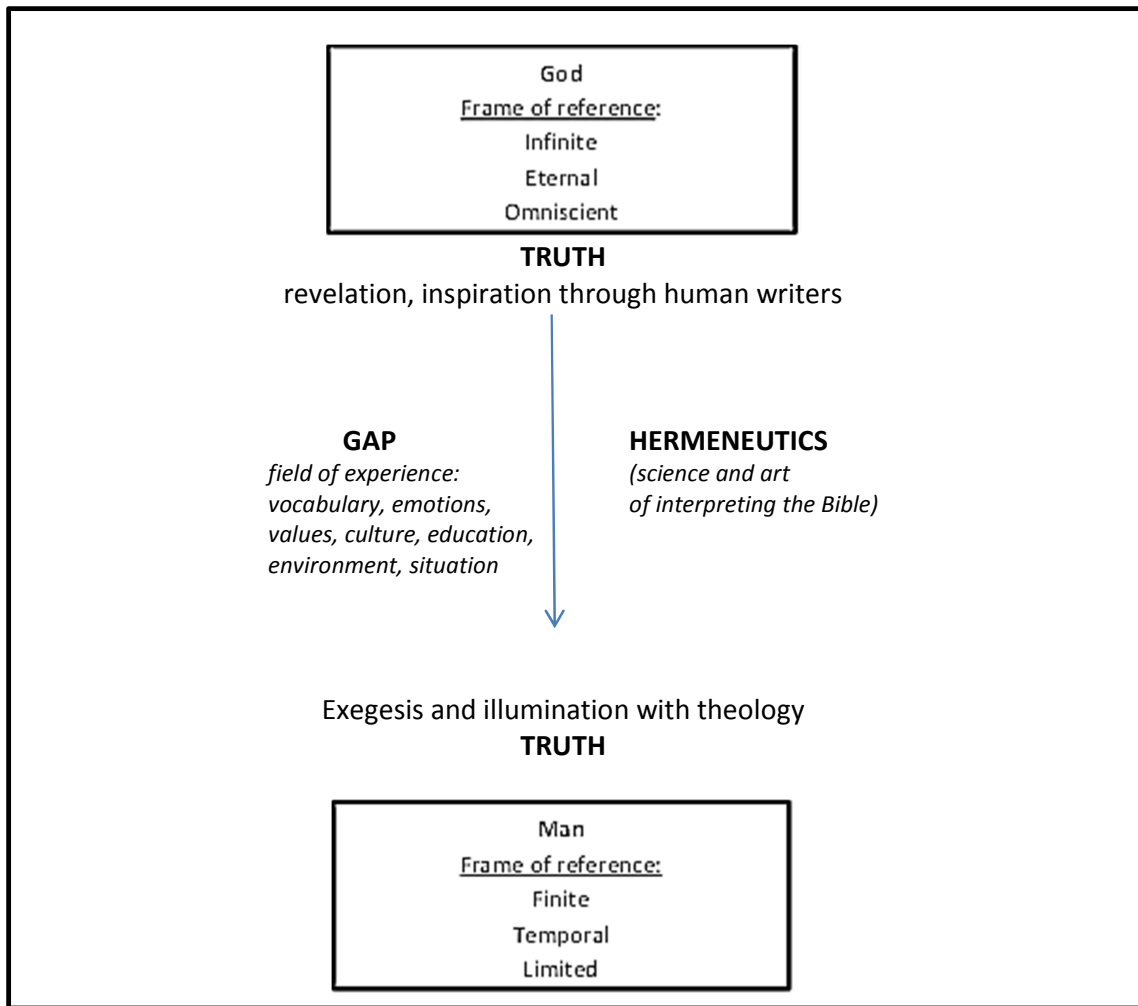


Figure 2.1. Illustration of the communication of scripture

V. The Four Gaps to be Bridged

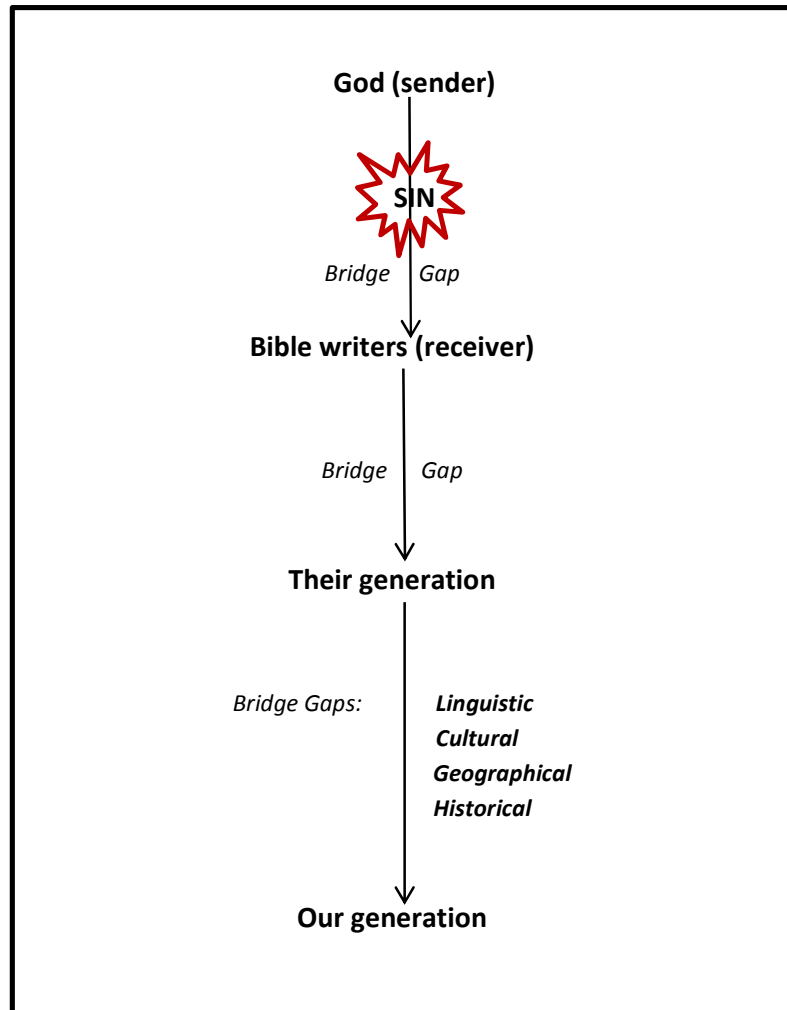


Figure 2.2. Illustration of the various gaps to be bridged

Figure 2.2 illustrates the major gaps which need to be bridged, especially between the era when the bible was actually written and today.

A. The Linguistic Gap

1. **Problem:** The Bible was written in three languages no longer in use today. Ancient Hebrew, Ancient Chaldee and Koine Greek.
2. **Solution:** Linguistics. Webster's dictionary defines linguistics as: "The science of languages; the origin, signification, and application of words; also called comparative philology." Study in three basic areas is needed: vocabulary, grammar and genre.
 - a. **Vocabulary:**
 - (i). Etymological word study – examining the origin, derivation, formation and history of the word.

(ii). Comparative word study – studying the occurrences of the word in scripture. The Hebrew or Greek word needs to be used, not the English word.

(iii). Cultural word study – attempting to understand the original meaning of the word in the context of the relevant culture, i.e. the word's basic customary and socially designated meaning. E.g. "adoption" today refers to the transfer of a child from one family to another, but in Hebrew culture, it referred to a child coming of age in his own family.

b. Grammar:

Understanding a sentence involves more than understanding individual words, it is also important to understand the role each word plays in the sentence. The study of grammar provides the principles for putting the parts or words together into a whole.

Languages are structurally different. Hebrew and English are both primarily analytic languages where the order of the words in the sentence determines the role each word plays in that sentence. Greek, on the other hand, is a synthetic language primarily. In other words, the ending of the word determines the role it plays in the sentence, e.g. anthropos = a man (subject); anthropo = to a man (indirect object); anthropon = a man (direct object).

Word studies apart from grammatical considerations are insufficient, to bring about correct interpretation.

c. Genre:

Literary style or kind of writing is important as it is the context, mood and stance from which the passage is drawn.

(i). Style – Is it historic, poetic, prophetic, apocalyptic?

(ii). Expression – Are there parables, allegories, psalms, riddles?

(iii). Figures of speech – Are there metaphors, similes, idioms?

Vocabulary should not be considered apart from grammar, and these should not be considered apart from genre. All three need to be taken into consideration when solving the problem of the linguistic gap.

Homework

We read in Romans 9:13, "*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*".
Please explain.

B. The Cultural Gap

1. **Problem:** The cultural contexts of the Biblical content and writers differ greatly to those of the modern day reader.
2. **Solution:** Study of the cultures within which the writers lived, as well as a study of the culture within which the relevant Biblical passage is positioned. "Culture" includes values, norms and beliefs and is the material and social manner in which people carry on their existence.

a. Material culture:

Considerations of housing, cooking utensils, dietary customs, clothing, agricultural implements, weapons, transportation, animals, art forms, religious articles are necessary.

Homework

In Jer. 2:13 reference is made to "cisterns". Explain the cultural significance of cisterns in this era and what the Lord was actually saying through Jeremiah.

b. Social culture

Considerations with respect to the manner in which people related to each other in the society being studied is important. Customs, economic practices, civil laws and legal procedures, military tactics and so forth would all impact the interpretation of passages of scriptures. As well as this, the manner in which the people lived would also be important, i.e. geographical location, worship, recreation, etc.

e.g. *And Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come to you, and you shall be clean. But Naaman was angry, and went away. And he said, Behold, I said within myself, He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Parpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? And he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spoke to him and said, My father, if the prophet had told you to do a great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather then, when he says to you, Wash and be clean? And he went down and dipped seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God. And his flesh came again like the flesh of a little boy, and he was clean.*

2Ki 5:9-14

We need to study and understand the cultures represented in the Bible as well as the cultures and frames of reference within which the Bible writers lived.

C. The Geographical Gap

1. **Problem:** the geographical context of Biblical writers is foreign to the modern day reader.
2. **Solution:** A study of the geographical settings in which the events and writing of the Bible occurred is necessary.

a. Political geography:

Cities, nations, states. E.g. Elijah's run from Mount Carmel to Jezreel (about 17 miles).

b. Geological geography:

For the most part the physical features of the Middle East haven't changed drastically since Bible days, but many names have. It is important to understand references to climate, land formations, seas and rivers to gain a fuller understanding of the entirety of the Scriptures. For example the rivers mentioned in 2 Kings 5:10;12.

c. Botanical and zoological geography:

To better understand allusions to plant and animal life in the Bible, we need to study characteristics and behavioural patterns. For example:

*"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying to Him, Go out and depart from here, for Herod will kill you. And He said to them, You go and tell that **fox**, Behold, today and tomorrow, I cast out demons and I complete cures, and the third day I will be finished."*

Luk 13:31-32

A study of biblical botany will unfold the beauty of Song of Solomon 2:1-3.

D. The Historical Gap

1. **Problem:**
The historical context of the bible and its writers differs greatly from that of the modern reader.
2. **Solution:**
It is important to become familiar with the historical setting for the requisite events in the bible and also the setting within which the writers lived. The reality is that the writers lived during an ever-changing historical landscape spanning sixteen centuries. In each era of history, the situation should be viewed from three perspectives:

a. Political:

Governments and kings and changes thereof, along with political concerns, political relationships, wars, and so forth, all would have impacted the lives the people of the respective Biblical era. This impact would have been there, whether it was conscious or subconscious. In order to best interpret the actions and the lives of Bible people and writers, it is important to immerse oneself within the relevant context.

e.g. Hos. 12:1 needs to be read with understanding of the relationships between Ephraim, Assyria and Egypt. Israel had pursued the east wind in treaty-making with Assyria (Hos. 12:1-2). When Hosea threatens that the wind, the east wind of the Lord will come rising from the wilderness (Hos. 13:15). There is little doubt that he has Assyria in mind. In Palestine the destructive wind blows off the desert to the east withering everything. In the wisdom writers and the prophets, the east wind is depicted as destructive (Job 1:19; Hos. 12:1-2; Isa. 27:8; Jer. 4:11; 13:24; 18:17; Ezek. 17:10). Here in Hosea, Israel has pursued the east wind, and the east wind brings destruction. The Lord had found Israel in the desert, and destruction comes from the desert.

b. Economic:

The economic situation, whether local or universal, would have been extremely influential on the lives of the people of the era. For example the economic wealth and need in the early church played a major role in fusing the Jewish and Gentile believers (Acts 11:27-30).

c. Religious:

Societies and the lives of the individuals therein have always been greatly influenced by religion. Throughout scripture God's people are seen in relation to other religious groups as either being influenced by them, or in conflict with them.

e.g. Lev 18:9-14. This should be understood from the context of the Canaanite and Egyptian sexual perversions. Such sins were the reason the land's inhabitants were about to be destroyed (Lev 18:1-5).

VI. Suggested Research Tools

A. The Linguistic Gap

Concordances

New Englishman's Greek Concordance (Zondervan)
New Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee (Zondervan)
Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith (Herald Press).
Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Abingdon).
Young's Analytical Concordance (Eerdmans).

Lexicons

Analytical Greek Lexicon (Zondervan)
Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, B. Davidson (Macdonald).
Greek-English Lexicon, Arndt & Gingrich (University of Chicago Press).
Greek-English Lexicon, T.S. Green (Zondervan).
Hebrew-English Lexicon, W. Gesenius (Oxford).
New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon (Zondervan).

Lexical Aids

Dictionary of Old Testament Words, Aaron Pick (Kregel).
Expositor's Greek Testament, W. Robertson Nicoll (Eerdmans).
Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W. E. Vine (Revell).
Grammatical Insights into the New Testament, N. Turner (T. & T. Clark).
Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek, B. Metzger (Theological Book Agency, Dist.)
New Testament Words, William Barclay (SCM Press).
New Testament Word Studies, J.A. Bengel (Kregel).
Synonyms of the New Testament, R.B. Girdleston. (Eerdmans).
Syntax of the Moods and Tenses, E. Burton (T. & T. Clark).
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Kittel 9Ed. Eerdmans).
Word Pictures in the New Testament, A. T. Robertson (Broadman Press).
Word Studies in the New Testament, M.R. Vincent (Eerdmans).

Grammars

Essentials of New Testament Greek, J.H. Huddilston (Macmillan).
Grammar of the Greek New Testament, A.T. Robertson (Broadman Press).
Hebrew Grammar, Wm Gesenius (Oxford University)
Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, Dana & Mantey (Macmillan).
New Testament Greek for Beginners, J.G. Machen.
Introductory Hebrew Grammar, R.L. Harris (Eerdmans).
Figures of Speech used in the Bible, E.W. Bullinger (Baker).

B. The Cultural Gap

All the Holy Days and Holidays of the Bible, H. Lockyer (Zondervan).

All the Trades and occupations of the Bible, H. Lockyer (Zondervan).
 Archaeology and Ancient Testament, J.L. Kelso (Zondervan).
 The Bible and Archaeology, J.A. Thompson (Eerdman's).
 Biblical Archaeology, G.E. Wright (Westminster Press).
 Everyday Life in Bible Times, (National Geographic Society).
 Insights into Bible Times and Customs, Weiss (Moody).
 The Life and Ties of Jesus the Messiah, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's).
 Manners and Customs of the Bible, J. Freeman (Logos International).
 Manners and Customs of Bible Lands, F.H. Wright (Moody).
 Orientations in Bible Lands, E.W. Rice (American Sunday School Union).

Bible Dictionaries

Bible Dictionary, Smith (Holt, Rinehart & Winston).
 David Dictionary of the Bible (Revell).
 International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (Eerdman's).
 The New Bible Dictionary (Eerdman's).
 Pictorial Bible Dictionary, M.C. Tenney (Zondervan).
 Ungers Bible Dictionary (Moody).

C. The Geographical Gap

All the Animals of the Bible Lands, G. Cunsdale (Zondervan).
 Animals and Birds of the Bible, B.L. Goddard (A.P. & A).
 Baker's Bible Atlas, Pfeiffer (Baker).
 Geography of the Bible, B. Daly (Harper and Brothers).
 The Macmillan Bible Atlas (Macmillan).
 Oxford Bible Atlas (Oxford Press).
 The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands, Pfeiffer & Vos. (Moody).

Also Bible dictionaries as listed above.

D. The Historical Gap

Archaeology and Bible History, J.P. Free (Van Kampen Press).
 Archaeology and the Old Testament, Under (Zondervan).
 The Bible and Archaeology, J.A. Thompson (Paternoster Press).
 Bible History – Old Testament, A. Edesheim (Eerdman's).
 Old Testament Bible history, A. Edesheim (Eerdman's).
 The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, A. Edesheim (Eerdman's).
 The Works of Flavius Josephus (Kregel).

Also Bible Dictionaries as listed above.

VII. Conclusion

The Bible is really Deity speaking to humanity through human vessels. In many ways He adapted and communicated His message through their frames of reference. This presents four challenges to the Bible student:

- The Bible was written in 3 languages that are no longer in use today.
- The cultural contexts of the Bible writers are very different to those of today.
- The geographical context of the Bible writers is very different to that of today.
- The historical context of the Bible writers differs greatly from that of today.

It is critical that we accept the entirety of scripture. In order to do so and accurately interpret, understand and apply the Word, it is imperative that we utilise the tools available today.

Acknowledgements

Malmin, K. *Bible Research* (1976). City Bible Publishing (Revised Edition).

www.free-bible-study-lessons.net

www.theologicalstudies.org/resource-library

www.bible-history.com

http://department.monm.edu/classics/Speel_Festschrift/lewis.htm

Hughes, R. and Carl Laney, J., *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (1990). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Appendix 1

Overcoming the Culture Gap

(www.theologicalstudies.org/resource-library)

Michael Vlach

“Cultural matters are not niceties we may search out if we have the time but which we may ignore under the pressure of time and circumstances. They are indispensable for the accurate understanding of Holy Scripture.” –Roy B. Zuck

I. Defining Culture

Culture refers to “the patterns of behavior and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share. Culture distinguishes one human group from another. . . . A people’s culture includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems.” (“Culture” Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2005 <http://encarta.msn.com> © 1997-2005 Microsoft Corporation)

II. Importance of Studying Culture

Since the Bible writers and characters lived in different cultures from ours, we must do some work to understand how their environment affected what they believed, said, and did. The more we understand their culture, the more we will understand the writings of Scripture. If we fail to do this, we could become guilty of interpreting the Bible through the lenses of our twenty-first century world. When it comes to reading and interpreting the Bible we must leave our culture and transport ourselves into the culture of Bible times.

III. Examples Where Knowledge of Culture Contributes to Proper Interpretation

A. Political, International, and Civil

1. Why didn’t Jonah want to go to Nineveh?

When reading the Book of Jonah one may be surprised at Jonah’s reluctance to see the people of Nineveh repent. But in Jonah’s day the people of Assyria treated people in barbaric and cruel ways. It may be that Jonah believed that Nineveh deserved God’s wrath—not His mercy.

2. The Samaritans

Understanding who the Samaritans were will help one’s understanding of the gospels. The Samaritans were descendants of the Jews who remained in Palestine after the Assyrians defeated Israel. They came from mixed marriages between Jews and Assyrian settlers who entered the Promised Land. They also set up their own worship system where they built their own temple and sacrificed animals. Because of their mixed heritage and worship system, they were despised by the Jews. Understanding Jewish hatred for Samaritans helps us understand the significance of Jesus’ willingness to speak to a Samaritan woman (John 4), the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the account of the Samaritan leper

who returned to give Jesus thanks (Luke 17:11-19) (see J. I. Packer, Merrill Tenney, and William White, eds., *The Bible Almanac*, 509-10).

3. Third position in Babylon (Daniel 5:7, 16)

Why did King Belshazzar offer Daniel the third position in his kingdom and not the second? Belshazzar was only second in command himself. His father, Nabonidus, was actually first in command though he was temporarily out of the country.

4. Religious

1. Corban in Mark 7

"In Mark 7. . . Jesus upbraids the Pharisees soundly for their concept of corban. In the practice of corban a man could declare that all his money would go to the temple treasury when he died, and that, since his money belonged to God, he was therefore no longer responsible for maintaining his aging parents. Jesus argues that men were using the Pharisaic tradition to render God's command (the fifth commandment) of no account. Without a knowledge of the cultural practice of corban, we would be unable to understand this passage." (Virkler, p. 79).

2. Meat sacrificed to idols in 1 Cor. 8

"What was the point of meat being sacrificed to idols which Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians 8? No one today sits down to a meal in the home of a guest and asks if the meat had been sacrificed to idols. Obviously this custom pertained to a cultural setting different from today. The point is that people in Corinth would buy meat in the marketplace, offer some of it to pagan idols in one of several temples, and then take the rest of it home for dinner. Therefore some Christians felt that eating such meat involved them in idol worship" (Zuck, 84).

3. Elijah, Baal and Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18)

Why did Elijah choose Mount Carmel as the place for his showdown with the 450 prophets of Baal? The followers of Baal believed that Mount Carmel was the home of Baal. Showing the supremacy of Yahweh on Baal's home turf would be devastating to the followers of Baal.

C. Economic

1. Giving of sandal

"Why did Elimelech's closest relative give his sandal to Boaz? (Ruth 4:8, 17) According to the Nuzi tablets, discovered in present-day Iraq, in excavations from 1925-1931, such an action symbolized releasing one's right to land he walked on. This was done when a sale of land was completed" (Zuck, p. 84).

2. How much is a "denarius"?

(Rev. 6:6) A denarius is one day's wage. In Revelation 6:6 famine conditions will be so bad that a full day of work will barely be enough for a man to feed his family.

D. Legal

1. The Stolen Blessing

In Genesis 27, Jacob deceives his father, Isaac, and receives the blessing that was supposed to be for Esau. When the plot was discovered, Isaac could not change the result. Why? It might seem strange to us that such importance was placed on an oral blessing. However, recent discoveries have verified that an oral benediction (in those days) was legally as valid as a written last will and testament.

2. Daniel, Darius and the lion's den (Daniel 6)

When King Darius of Medo-Persia was tricked into making a decree that would send Daniel to the lion's den, why didn't he simply revoke his former decree since he wanted Daniel to live (Dan. 6:14)? Once a decree was made in this empire, no one, not even the king, could revoke it (see Esther 8:8).

E. Agricultural

"The Jewish involvement with the land was reflected in the teachings of Jesus Christ. His imagery and illustrations gave His listeners vivid pictures, such as a sower, pouch at his side, flinging seed across a newly plowed field. He frequently used metaphors about rich ripe grapes and fruitful vines" (Coleman, 145).

1. The Fig tree (Mark 11:12-14)

"Why did Jesus denounce a fig tree for having no fruit when it was not even the season for figs? In March fig trees in Israel normally produce small buds followed by large green leaves in April. The small buds were edible 'fruit.' The time when Jesus 'cursed' the fig tree was the Passover, that is, April. Since the tree had no buds it would bear no fruit that year. But 'the season for figs' was late May and June, when the normal crops of figs ripened. Jesus' denouncing of the tree symbolized Israel's absence of spiritual vitality (like the absence of the buds) in spite of her outward religiosity (like green leaves) (Zuck, p. 86).

2. Vines and the Vineyard

"The vine was of great importance in the religion of Israel. It was used as a symbol of the religious life of Israel itself, and a carving of a bunch of grapes often adorned the front exterior of the synagogue. The symbolism was based upon passages such as Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5:1-5 where Israel is God's vine. The importance of the vine is why the Pharisees took the point so angrily when Jesus told the story of the wicked tenants in the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-41, 45-46)" (Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, p. 111).

F. Architecture

"How could four men let a paralytic man down through a roof? (Mark 2:1-12) Most houses in the Western world are built with slanted roofs, but in Bible times roofs were flat and

often were made of tiles. Therefore it would be no problem for these men to stand on the roof, remove some of the tiles, and let the man down" (Zuck, p. 86).

G. Clothing.

Girding loins "What is meant by the command 'Gird up your loins' in Job 38:3; 40:7; and 1 Peter 1:13? When a man ran, worked, or was in battle, he would tuck his robe under a wide sash at his waist so that he could move about more easily. The command thus means to be alert and capable of responding quickly" (Zuck, p. 87).

H. Domestic

1. Burying the Father

In Luke 9:59 a man who wanted to be Jesus' disciple wanted to first bury his father. Was Jesus' denial of this request insensitive? To bury one's father meant to wait until one's father died (which could take years) so one could receive the inheritance. Thus Jesus' denial stressed the urgency of following Him immediately.

2. John's leaning on Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23)

Back then people did not sit in chairs at meals as we do today. They were either on the floor or on couches. To lean on someone, then, was not considered rude.

I. Geographical

1. Passing through Samaria

What was significant about Jesus passing through Samaria (John 4)? The Jews would not defile themselves by walking through the land of the Samaritans, whom the Jews considered half-breeds. Jesus would not partake in this prejudice.

2. Lukewarm water In Revelation 3:16

The church at Laodicea was referred to as "lukewarm." This undoubtedly is a play on the lukewarm water the people had in that city. The water in Laodicea was channeled six miles from Hieropolis. When the water left Hieropolis it was hot, but by the time it reached Laodicea it was lukewarm.

3. Going down from Jerusalem

"Why did Jesus speak of a man going 'down' from Jerusalem to Jericho when Jericho is located northeast of Jerusalem? (Luke 10:30) The elevation drop in the 14 miles from Jerusalem to Jericho is more than 2,000 feet. Obviously going from Jerusalem to Jericho then was to go down in elevation" (Zuck, 88).

J. Social

1. Mourners

Why were there flute-players and a noisy crowd at the house of the little girl who had died (see Matt. 9:23)? It was the custom then that when a person died, the family would hire professional mourners to show how much they cared for their lost loved one.

2. Sackcloth and ashes

"The Israelites used sackcloth as a ritual sign of repentance or a token of mourning. . . .The New Testament also associated sackcloth with repentance (see Matt. 11:21). The sorrowful Israelite would clothe himself in sackcloth, place ashes upon his head, and then sit in the ashes. Our modern Western custom of wearing dark colors to funerals corresponds to the Israelites' gesture of wearing sackcloth" (Packer, *The Bible Almanac*, 477).

IV. Tools for Overcoming the Culture Gap

- A. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* by Ralph Gower
- B. *Today's Handbook of Bible Times and Customs* by William Coleman
- C. *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts* by J. I. Packer, Merrill Tenney and William White
- D. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* by Fred White
- E. Commentaries

V. Cultural Practices and Present Day Application

- A. Applying culturally conditioned passages. One of the more tricky issues in Bible interpretation is knowing how and when to apply culturally-conditioned passages.
- B. The options below are guidelines for understanding when to apply culturally-conditioned passage to today.
 - 1. If an experience, situation, or command in the Bible pertains to a person's specific non-repeatable circumstances, it is not transferable to us.
 - a. Paul's instruction to Timothy to bring his cloak and scrolls is not transferable to us today (see 2 Tim. 4:11-13).
 - b. Paul telling Timothy to take some wine for his stomach is not transferable to today (see 1 Tim 5:23).
 - c. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, but this does not mean that Christian fathers are called to literally sacrifice their sons (see Genesis 22).
 - d. Solomon had many wives at one time but this does not mean that men today should have more than one wife.
 - e. In Matthew 10:5–15 the twelve apostles were told to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This command was a unique command at a unique time in which Christ's ministry was focused primarily on Israel. It is not a mandate that we should never preach the Gospel outside of Israel.
 - f. Paul's experience of being caught up to the third heaven is not a guarantee that all of us will have such an experience (2 Corinthians 12).
 - g. Jeremiah was told not to seek a wife or have children (Jeremiah 16:1-2), but this is not a call for college-age men to do the same.
 - 2. If a situation or command is never revoked and/or it is repeated in Scripture and/or it pertains to a moral/theological subject, it is permanent and transferable to us.

"When the Bible clearly gives a command and nowhere else nullifies that command, it must be accepted as the revealed will of God" (Zuck, 93).

- a. The command to love God with all your heart, soul, and might is a moral command that is applicable to today (Deut. 6:5). Not only is this command never revoked, it is repeated in other parts of Scripture as well.
- b. The commands to love each other, pray for each other, and admonish each other are repeated many times in Scripture and are applicable to today.
- c. While the subject of capital punishment is controversial, Genesis 9:6 establishes this practice: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man." This command is never revoked in later Scripture.
- d. The commands to love and seek wisdom in Proverbs are applicable to today.
- e. The commands to practice the Lord's Supper are applicable to today (see 1 Corinthians 11:24).
- f. The commands to be baptized are applicable to today (Acts 2:38).

3. If newer revelation revokes or changes older revelation then the older command or principle is not applicable to today.

- a. Because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the Old Testament sacrificial system is no longer to be practiced (see Hebrews 10).
- b. Leviticus 11 states that certain foods could not be eaten by God's people, but in Acts 10:15 God declared that all foods are now holy.
- c. At the time of the events of Matthew 10 the disciples were told to only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. After Jesus' resurrection, though, they were told to go to all nations (see Matthew 28:19).
- d. According to the Old Testament, incest was punishable by stoning (see Leviticus 20:11). In the church, today, unrepentant incest by a person leads to excommunication (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

4. If a timeless principle is expressed in a cultural way that is different from today, apply the principle in a way that is culturally relevant to today.

Henry Virkler says, "Since a behavior in one culture may have a different meaning in another culture, it may be necessary to change the behavioral expression of a scriptural command in order to translate the principle behind that command from one culture and time to another" (Henry A. Virkler, "A Proposal for the Transcultural Problem," in *Rightly Divided*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, 240).

- a. Five times the Scripture says to greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20, etc.) Since kissing non-family members is often not acceptable today, it is probably not wise to practice this. The principle behind this practice is that we should show friendliness and love to other believers. In our culture, handshakes and hugs are probably a better way to show this.
- b. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 tells us to pray for kings. But what about believers who do not live under a king? The principle is that we pray for our leaders. For us that would involve our president and other elected leaders.

c. 1 Corinthians 8 says we should avoid eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols if it means a weaker brother would stumble over our doing this. Since eating meat sacrificed to idols does not happen today, how do we apply this? The principle here is that some activities are neither right nor wrong but can become wrong if they cause a fellow believer to stumble. Examples today may be smoking a cigar or taking a drink of wine. The Bible does not say these things are wrong, but participating in these things could make a fellow believer stumble and thus should be avoided if the opportunity for offending a fellow believer exists.

d. James 2:1-9 condemns showing partiality to the rich. In James' day that was expressed by giving the rich special seats while the poor often sat on the floor. Today partiality for the rich may be shown in other ways. Thus, the principle of not showing partiality to the rich may take different forms today than it did in James' day.

C. Principles for Determining Whether Bible Commands Are Culture-bound or Transcultural (Principles below taken from Virkler, *Rightly Divided*, 242-43)

1. Discern as accurately as possible the principle behind the given behavioral command.
2. Discern whether the principle is timeless or time-bound. Since most biblical principles are rooted in God's unchanging nature, it seems to follow that a principle should be considered to be transcultural unless there is evidence to the contrary.
3. If a principle is transcultural, study the nature of its behavioral application within our culture. Will the behavioral application given be appropriate now, or will it be perceived as out-of-date or odd? However, remember that the criterion for whether a behavioral command should be applied in our culture is not whether it conforms to modern cultural practices but whether or not it adequately and accurately expresses the God-given principle that was intended.
4. If the behavioral expression of a principle should be changed, suggest a cultural equivalent that would adequately express the God-given principle behind the original command. For example, a handshake in place of a holy kiss.
5. If after careful study the nature of the biblical principle and its attendant command remain in question, apply the biblical principle of humility. There may be occasions when even after careful study of a given principle and its behavioral expression, we still may remain uncertain about whether it should be considered transcultural or culture-bound. If we must decide to treat the command one way or the other but have no conclusive means to make the decision, the biblical principle of humility can be helpful. After all, would it be better to treat a principle as transcultural and be guilty of being overscrupulous in our desire to obey God? Or would it be better to treat a transcultural principle as culture-bound and be guilty of breaking a transcendent requirement of God? The answer should be obvious.

Appendix 2

Metaphors in Hosea

(http://department.monm.edu/classics/Speel_Festschrift/lewis.htm)

Jack P. Lewis

C. J. Labuschagne (1964-65:64) has argued that Hosea is distinctive among the prophets in the abundance of similes he uses which Labuschagne numbers as forty, more than are used by Amos and Micah combined. He noted that some metaphors used in Amos become similes in Hosea. Labuschagne also observed that Hosea refrains from using metaphors either when he compares the Lord to something or something to the Lord. Instead, he uses similes avoiding the danger of their being taken literally. In the fight against Baalism Hosea shuns any identifying of the Lord with natural phenomena, trees, plants, or animals. Beginning with Hos. 12:[11]10, "It was I who. . . through the prophets gave parables," Labuschagne (1964:64, 76) suggested that Hosea understood his task to be the use of similes in his preaching. This passage, however, already cited by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.12.13; 4.20.6 [ANF 1:435, 489]) in proof of revelation of one God through prophets, not just through one prophet, could as easily be used in proof of use of metaphors.¹

Even the casual reader of Hosea should observe that the book is full of rich metaphors.

Jerome commented,

The twelve prophets. . . have typical meanings far different from their literal ones. Hosea speaks many times of Ephraim, of Samaria, of Joseph, of Jezreel, of a wife of whoredom and of children of whoredoms, of an adulteress shut up within the chamber of her husband, sitting for a long time in widowhood and in the garb of mourning, awaiting the time when her husband returns to her (*NPNF*² 6:100).

At *Poetics* 21 [1456b.7] Aristotle (1941:1476) described the metaphor as consisting in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.

Metaphors are abundant throughout Scripture and are frequent in all the prophets. Hosea is not unique in the use of them. It can only be claimed that his are abundant and colorful.²

The criteria used to distinguish between the similes and metaphors in this study is that all images using the *kaph* of comparison have been passed over in favor of those that say a thing or person is something. In passing over similes one passes over some of Hosea's most colorful images.³

Metaphors do not have one distinctly peculiar form. They are not limited to the "A is B" form (Soskice 1990:234, 447). Two metaphors may be dovetailed as when the wind becomes a whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Caird (1984:187) shows how attention may be drawn by alternation with a simile (Hos. 5:12-14; 7:11-12). Hosea may use an image at one place as a simile and at another as a metaphor. He chose metaphors in order to make his message clearer and more impressive to his audience, but today the reference of the metaphors has become a part of the puzzle of the book. The point intended is by no means clear in all cases.

We have attempted to assemble metaphors in categories with which they deal, giving explanations where the metaphor is not self-explanatory.

I. Metaphors for Israel

A. Metaphorical Names

We may begin with metaphors for the northern kingdom which more technically may be classed as synecdoche. The metaphorical use of "Ephraim," name of the second son of Joseph (Gen. 48:14, 19, 20) to whom Jacob gave his blessing, and name of the largest of the northern tribes, is self-explanatory. The thirty-one occurrences of the name in Hosea only underscore the name's prevalence.⁴ In contrast, "Israel" occurs only twenty-one times.⁵ Though "Ephraim" is present in every chapter from 5 to 14, it does not occur at all in chapters 1-4. Amos (but not Hosea) uses "Joseph" metaphorically for the northern kingdom (Amos 5:15; 6:6).

The use of this metaphoric name Ephraim is shared with Isaiah (Isa. 7:2, 5, 8, 17; 9:9; 11:13; 28:1) and later with Jeremiah (Jer. 31:9, 18, 20) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:16, 19).

"Jacob," used in a double reference for the patriarch and for contemporary Israel, is also a metaphorical designation; but in its two Hosea occurrences (Hos. 10:11; 12:[3]2) is much less prominent than Ephraim. Hos. 12:[4-5]3-4 refers to the birth story, the wrestling story, and the Bethel story. A third occurrence of the name Jacob speaks of the patriarch's serving in Aram for a wife (Hos. 12:[13]12; cf. Gen. 28:6; 29:15, 16). At Genesis 27:36 Esau in a play on the name complains that Jacob swindled him (Ackroyd 1963:245-259; Good 1966:139-151). Hosea seems to be saying that contemporary Jacob has the traits of its ancestor. Yet another metaphorical designation of the northern kingdom is "Samaria" though that name in some of its six occurrences may be the city itself. Samaria stands in parallel to Ephraim (Hos. 7:1). God has spurned her calf which is an image (Hos. 8:5, 6). Her inhabitants mourn for the calf of Beth-aven (Hos. 10:5); her king perishes (Hos. 10:7), and she bears her guilt (Hos. 13:16).

B. Animal Metaphors for Israel

1. A Trained Heifer⁶

The *`eglah melummadhah* who loved to thresh (Hos. 10:11) may be contrasted with the earlier simile where Israel is like a stubborn cow (*parah sorerah*; Hos. 4:16), a comparison which has affinities to Amos's epithet of "cows of Bashan" for the women of Samaria (Amos 4:1). But unlike these two passages, *`eglah* does not seem to have been considered derogatory as a name or epithet in Israel. A Samaritan ostrakon (Lemaire 1977:53) has the masculine name *`Egelyaw* ("Calf of the Lord").⁷ Samson speaks of persons plowing with his heifer (Judg. 14:18). Eglah was the name of one of David's wives (2 Sam. 3:5; 1 Chron. 3:3). Jeremiah later declares Babylon to "frisk about like a heifer on the grass" (Jer. 50:11); but Egypt is a beautiful heifer annoyed by a gadfly from the north (Jer. 46:20). He also compares Ephraim to an untrained calf (Jer. 31:18), the opposite of Hosea's trained heifer.

The threshing ox was not to be muzzled (Deut. 25:4); but Ephraim will now be punished. The yoke will ride her neck and she will plow. She is elected to service. The primary problem of the metaphor is that of determining the time in Israel's history that Hosea had in mind. One

must ask, Are the times of the desert contrasted with later Canaan experiences? Is a specific historical event in mind? (Kruger 1988:148).

2. Wild Ass

When one searches for the meaning of Hosea's wild ass metaphor (Hos. 8:9), he observes ten occurrences in the Old Testament of *pere'* of which six are literal. The wild ass quenches its thirst from springs the Lord supplies (Ps. 104:11). It does not bray over grass (Job 6:5). Zophar declares that a stupid person will get understanding when a wild ass's colt is born human (Job 11:12). Jeremiah describes suffering in a drought: "The wild asses stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals, their eyes fail because there is no herbage" (Jer. 14:6). The Lord asks Job, "Who has let the ass go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass?" (Job 39:5). A destroyed place becomes a joy of wild asses (Isa. 32:14). Sirach speaks of wild asses in the desert being a prey for lions (Sir. 13:19).

One of Job's similes for the wicked is, "Like wild asses in the desert they go forth to their toil, seeking prey in the wilderness for their children" (Job 24:5).

Metaphorical use of the ass is seen when it is said that Ishmael will be "a wild ass of a man with his hand against every man and every man's hand against him" (Gen. 16:12). Treaty curses of the Middle East by the god Sin say, "Roam the desert like the wild ass and the gazelle" and "May he roam outside his city like a wild ass" (Hillers 1964:15, 16; Wiseman 1958:60).

It has been suggested that the assonance between the first letters of *'ephrayim* and of *pere'* suggested Hosea's metaphor which, when modified by *bodhedh*, must suggest loneliness. *Bodhedh* in its two other occurrences describes a bird on a housetop (Ps. 102:[8]7) and an army straggler (Isa. 14:31).

Jeremiah later used the wild ass as a metaphor for Judah: "A wild ass used to the wilderness, in her heat sniffing the wind! Who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her month they will find her" (Jer. 2:24). But in Hosea, Ephraim does not wait to be found. She gives gifts to lovers to lure them.

C. Plant metaphors

1. The Vine

Hosea, declaring in a nominal sentence that Israel is [or was] a luxuriant (*KBS*, 150-151) [KJV: "empty;" NIV/REB: "spreading"] vine (*gephen boqeq*; Hos. 10:1) that yields its fruit, takes up one of the prominent features of the area. The earliest description of the country by the Egyptian Pepi I mentions its vines (*ANET*³ 228) and Sinuhe in the twentieth century B.C. declares that the land had more wine than water (*ANET*³ 19). In Jacob's farewell, Judah binds his foal to the vine (Gen. 49:11).

The spies brought back clusters of grapes (Num. 13:23). Pentateuchal descriptions of the country include vines among its plants (Deut. 8:8) and grapes among its fruits (Lev. 25:5; etc.) "Every man under his vine" described the ideal life (1 Kings 4:25; Mic. 4:4; Zech. 8:12). The allusions to the vine in the Old Testament are too numerous to cover here.

This feature of the area furnishes Hosea both a simile and a metaphor. The Lord had found Israel like grapes in the desert (Hos. 9:10). Can one assume an allusion to a specific period of

the past in Hosea's metaphor (Kruger 1988:148)? Hosea's picture of restoration has Israel growing as a vine (Hos. 14:[8]7).

The vine metaphor leads to description of aspects of Israel's life in plant terms. At Hos. 9:16 Ephraim's root is dried up and will never produce fruit (Kruger 1988:145).

Hosea's contemporary Isaiah gives his song of the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7) and his "shoot of the Lord's planting" (Isa. 60:21). The Psalmist speaks of a vine brought out of Egypt (Ps. 80:[9]8). Jeremiah speaks later of the choice vine having become a degenerate plant (Jer. 2:21). At Ezek. 17:6-10 the prophet presents Israel as a spreading vine (KBS, 200). All of this material lies back of the vine image of the Fourth Gospel (Jn. 15:1, 5).

2. The Standing Grain

It is not likely that Hosea is merely giving a crop report when he asserts that "the standing grain has no heads, it will produce no meal, if it did strangers would devour it" (Hos. 8:7b). Beyond the play on words *tsemach* and *qemach* the metaphor apparently expounds the connection between sowing and harvest (cf. Prov. 22:8; Job 4:8). Sowing the wind will be considered later. The metaphor suggests the futility of a course of action.

II. Metaphors for Israel's Actions

1. The Farming Metaphor

Hosea's description of Israel's problem makes use of various activities of farming. An image may be used for more than one purpose. First among these are those which deal with plowing. The folly of past action is described as "You have plowed (*charash*) iniquity (*resha`*)" (Hos. 10:13), and the outcome of that folly is the reaping (*qatsar*) of injustice (*`awlah*) and the eating of the fruit of lies. These outcomes are the opposites of righteousness and steadfast love and the resulting seeking the Lord to which Hosea has admonished in the preceding verse. This image has its role in wisdom literature. The one who sows injustice (*`awlah*) will reap calamity (Prov. 22:8). Eliphaz says, "those who plow iniquity (*`awen*) and sow trouble (*`amal*) reap the same" (Job 4:8). At the same time, the fortune in store also can be described as plowing. Judah must plow (*charash*), Jacob must harrow (*sadhadh*; Hos. 10:11).

The two stages of agriculture are also represented in the sowing metaphor. They sow (*zara`*) the wind and reap (*qatsar*) the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). They cannot escape the consequences of their actions. The harvest brings an increase of either injustice (Sir. 7:3) or of righteousness (2 Enoch 42:11) depending on the sowing.

But sowing can also be used in hopeful images. The Lord promises to sow Jezreel for himself in the land (Hos. 2:[25]23). Hosea calls on the people to sow for themselves righteousness (*tsedhaqah*) and reap the fruit of steadfast love (*chesedh*; Hos. 10:12). The Proverbs declare, "those who sow righteousness get a true reward" (Prov. 11:18).

The new beginning Hosea calls for is described as breaking up fallow ground (*nir*; Hos. 10:12; cf. Prov. 13:23). The need is described in the simile "judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field" (Hos. 10:4). Hosea's image of breaking fallow ground is repeated by Jeremiah (Jer. 4:3).

Also from farming is the harvest metaphor for coming judgment. "For you, also, O Judah, a harvest (*qatsir*) is appointed (*shith*; Hos. 6:11)," a threat which must be understood of the people as a tribe, not of an individual named Judah. The metaphor says to the audience that

God will punish you for all the evils you are doing (Loewen 1982:238).⁷ The noun *qatsir* ("harvest") is only once in Hosea, the verb is in Hos. 8:7; 10:12, 13; but as a simile the concept is used by Hosea's contemporary Isaiah (Isa. 17:5; 18:5). The metaphor is explained by the numerous Old Testament allusions to literal harvest. While harvest could be good or bad, in view of conditions, it is not to be taken in a sense of favorable reward. The judgment details are supplied by Joel 4[3]:13. In Jer. 51:33 the time of Babylon's harvest will come. The Apocalypse continues this metaphor (Rev. 14:15).

2. Herding the Wind

The wind occurs in several figures of Hosea. Ephraim herds the wind (*ro`eh ruach*), and pursues the east wind (*rodeph qadhim*) all day long (Hos. 12:[2]1). The destructive nature of the hot wind is alluded to in Isa. 40:6-7. In wisdom literature, wind (*ruach*) is a figure for that which is unstable. Life is but a breath (Job 7:7), those who trouble their households inherit wind (Prov. 11:29), and all is striving after wind (Eccl. 1:14, 17).

Hosea declares, "They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind (*suphathah*)" (Hos. 8:7). The sowing metaphor involves both the laws of correspondence and of multiplication. The sower of injustice reaps a sevenfold crop (Sir. 7:3), the mustard seed produces a tree (Mt. 13:8). Israel cannot escape the inevitable consequences of its behavior.

But in a different vein, in what appears a sound play on Ephraim and the verb used, Hosea threatens, "Though he [Ephraim] may flourish (*yaphri*) as the reed plant, the east wind, the wind of the Lord, shall come, rising from the wilderness; and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched" (Hos. 13:15). The destructive nature of the east wind is commonplace in the Old Testament (Noth 1966:32-33). It blighted the ears of grain in Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:6, 23); it made Jonah miserable (Jonah 4:8). In Isaiah it is a metaphor: the Lord removed Israel "with his fierce blast in the day of the east wind" (Isa. 27:8). "The east wind lifts up the wicked man and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place" (Job 27:21). The metaphor is developed in Ezekiel where the transplanted vine withers as the east wind strikes it (Ezek. 17:10), and the east wind cast the vine to the ground, "dried it up, and its fruit was stripped off" (Ezek. 19:12). The east wind's scattering is a simile in Jer. 18:17.

In Hosea, the dried plant metaphor shifts to the storehouse (cf. Deut. 28:12) stripped of every precious thing leaving drought and desolation (cf. Deut. 28:23).

At Hos. 4:19 a wind has wrapped (*tsarar ruach*) them in its wings, and they shall be ashamed of their altars [Heb.: "sacrifices"] (Loewen 1982:238). In Ps. 18:[11]10, the Lord rides on the wings of the wind (cf. Ps. 104:3). Another Psalm speaks of the wings of dawn (Ps. 139:9). The sun of righteousness arises with healing in its wings (Mal. [3:20]4:2). Hosea alludes to the sudden force with which wind carries things off, an idea expressed in Ps. 57:13.

3. The trader

"A trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. Ephraim has said, 'Ah, but I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself'" (Hos. 12:[8-9]7-8). *Kena'an* as a trader, who contrasts with the nomad and the farmer, is found in Job 41:6 [40:30]; Prov. 31:24; Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 16:3, 29; 17:4; Zeph. 1:11; 2:5; Zech. 14:21. Instead of devoting themselves to good deeds, the people devoted themselves to dishonest commercial dealings. Sirach later commented that sin is wedged between buying and selling (Sir. 27:2). Wisdom literature (Job 31:6; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23), as well prophetic (Amos 8:5; Ezek. 45:10) and as

Pentateuchal passages (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-15) note the problem of dishonest weights and measures.

4. A Cake Not Turned

In condemnation of Israel's international policies, Hosea charges, "Ephraim is mixed (*balal*; "kneaded") with the peoples.⁸ Ephraim is a cake not turned (*'ephrayim hayah 'ughah beli haphukkah*)" (Hos. 7:8); that is, is half-ruined. The more common word *lush* for mixing has been used in Hos. 7:4. The cake baked on hot stones is seen in 1 Kings 19:6.

Shalom Paul suggests that the metaphor means that Ephraim is incapable of doing anything to avert the threatened calamity. He sees the cake attacked both by eaters and by mold against which it does nothing (Paul 1968:117-120). Others have seen the gray hairs as a metaphor of age in which case Hosea charges that Ephraim is one who has a sprinkling of gray hairs but does not know how late it is (Hos. 7:9). Other Hosea comparisons are to the earlier youth of the nation (Hos. 2:[17]15; 11:1).⁹

5. A Sickness

"Ephraim saw his sickness (*choli*; cf. Deut. 28:59, 61) and Judah his wound (*mazor*), Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king" (Hos. 5:13).¹⁰ The prophet promptly declares that Assyria is no adequate physician, for the real enemy is the Lord who will not be frustrated in his intent to punish. The people describe their problem in disease terms (Hos. 6:1). This metaphor for distress of the land is used by Isaiah 1:6 and is taken up in Jer. 10:19; 30:12-13. Jeremiah also uses it for violence in Jerusalem (Jer. 6:7). Mic. 1:9 uses the wound image but with a different vocabulary.

6. A Child Who Refuses To Be Born

"The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son: for now he does not present himself at the mouth of the womb" (Hos. 13:13). The picture of the woman in childbirth is common in the prophets (Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer. 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; Mic. 4:9) and can be a simile for a man's distress (Jer. 30:6). The woman unable to bring forth the child is a metaphor for a crisis where tragic consequences of policies have to be faced. Hezekiah used this image but in a different way from Hosea (cf. 2 Kings 19:3; Isa. 37:3). The blessings of a speedy delivery are alluded to (Isa. 66:7-11).

There is a time to be born (Eccl. 3:2); but here in Hosea, Ephraim is an unwise son at the mouth of the womb who, not recognizing the time, will not come forth. It is not that the mother is weak but that the baby is stupid (*ben lo' chakham*).¹¹ Elsewhere the nation is called a people without understanding (*'am lo' yabhin*; Hos. 4:14). Deuteronomy accuses the nation of being senseless (*lo chakham*; Deut. 32:6), void of understanding (*'ein bahem tebunah*), with the wish that they were wise children (Deut. 32:28-29). Ephraim does not know what is happening to him (cf. Hos. 2:[10]8; 7:2, 9). When he should be born anew, he lacks the wisdom. Death can only be the outcome, and that is a choice Ephraim has made. He is responsible. The womb becomes the grave, both mother and child inevitably will die, and the next verse of Hosea announces death. The description contrasts with Israel's earlier expressed optimism, "we may live before him" (Hos. 6:2). The childbirth image becomes a part of apocalyptic literature.

7. Hired Lovers

Ephraim has hired lovers (Hos. 8:9). For *hithnu*, BHS proposes *nathenu*. Chapter 2, in the allegory, repeatedly alludes to lovers the woman has chased after (Hos. 2:[7]5, [9]7, [12]10, [14]12, [15]13). A bridal gift is proposed by Shechem who is willing to give both *mohar* and *mattan* for Dinah (Gen. 34:12).

The lovers in Hosea are political allies. Kings in the Middle East sent gifts to each other; sometimes the receiver complained that the gift was inadequate. A vassal king sometimes had to bring gifts (cf. 1 Kings 20:5-7; *ANET*³, 483ff). One is most likely to think of the tribute paid by Menahem (2 Kings 15:11). Israel vacillated between Egypt and Assyria. Later in Ezekiel, the prostitute pays men to make love to her (Ezek. 16:33).

Israel loved the harlot's hire on all threshing floors (Hos. 9:1). The financial profit from political involvement is "gifts from her lovers" (Hos. 2:[12]10); but she also considered her agricultural prosperity to be gifts from the Baals though it came from the Lord (Hos. 2:[10-12]8-10).

8. The Marriage

One does not have to solve the age-old questions of literal, vision, allegory, or dream to recognize the metaphorical use of Hosea's marriage (Fensham 1984; Rollis 1990; Schmidt 1989; Freedman 1980). The divine command led him to act out symbolically the Lord's marriage to Israel.

In the marriage metaphor (apparently first used among the prophets by Hosea), Israel is the wife of the Lord, the only woman chosen by the only God (Hos. 2:[4ff.]2ff.). The idea is later used by Jeremiah (Jer. 2:2) and by Ezekiel though Ezekiel speaks of two women corresponding to the two kingdoms (Ezek. 16; 23). The image is further developed in Eph. 5 and the book of Revelation.

The Lord's relation to Israel expounded as a marriage, compared by Hosea to his own relation to Gomer, is not developed out of the divine marriage motif so well known in the Middle East. God's and Israel's relationship developed out of experiences in Egypt and the desert.

The nation is conceived also to be the mother (*'em*; Hos. 2:[4]2; 4:5) who has borne (*harah*) children that are the people of Israel (Hos. 2:[4, 7]2, 5). The same terminology appears in Isa. 50:1; cf. 54:1-5 and in the book of Ezekiel for the ancestress of the nation (Ezek. 16:3, 4, 45; 19:2, 10; 23:2). The separate members of the nation are considered her children (Hos. 2:[4-7]2-5).

The Lord is spoken of as husband (*'ish*; Hos. 2:[18]16), but Isaiah in a similar statement uses *ba'al* (Isa. 54:5; cf. Ex. 21:22), a term that Hosea rejects. The husband image is used by Jeremiah (Jer. 2:2; 3:1) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:32). Unlike the Canaanite gods, the Lord is never conceived as having sexuality. In Hosea, he has no Asherah as his counterpart. Some scholars have argued that the inscriptions of Kuntillet `Ajrud attest one there. Names with *ba'al* as the theophoric element include Jerubbaal (Gideon; Judg. 7:1), Eshbaal the son of Saul (1 Chron. 8:33), and other names. A Reubenite was named Baal (1 Chron. 5:5). In the metaphor, Hosea states for the Lord, "She is not my wife and I am not her husband" (Hos. 2:[4]2). The Lord in Isaiah asks, "Where is your mother's bill of divorce with which I

sent her away?" He answered that it was because of your transgressions (*pasha`*; Isa. 50:1). Jeremiah speaks of sending Israel away with a decree of divorce (Jer. 3:8). The divorce required the bill of divorce and the sending (*shalach*) of the woman out of the house (Deut. 24:1-4). While the verb *shalach* is used in both Isaiah and Jeremiah as also in Mal. 2:16, this verb occurs in Hosea for sending to the great king (Hos. 5:13) and in the Lord's threat of sending fire (Hos. 8:14), but not for severance of Hosea's marriage relationship.

In certain Old Testament passages the verb drive out (*garash*) is a common verb for any sort of driving out, in particular for the displacement of nations such as the driving out of the Canaanites before Israel (Ex. 34:11; 33:2), Balak's wanting to drive Israel out (Num. 22:11), or expelling women from their house (Mic. 2:9). The divorced woman becomes a *gerushah* (Lev. 21:14; 22:13; Num. 30:[10]9; Ezek. 44:22). Hosea uses this verb in a threat of driving Israel out of the Lord's house (Hos. 9:15), but not for Hosea's action with his wife. Neufeld, from Near Eastern parallels, argues that "She is not my wife and I am not her husband" (Hos. 2:[4]2) is a divorce formula (Neufeld 1944:180). Buss finds the evidence inadequate for Israel (Buss 1969:97-89). The goal of the discipline is to win the woman back not to divorce her. The Lord withdraws his support.

Israel is accused of acting unfaithfully (*boghadh*; Hos. 5:7) and of having borne illegitimate children (*banim zarim*). Isaiah also accuses the nation of being false (Isa. 48:8). Jeremiah takes up this verb *baghadh* in describing the unfaithfulness of the nation (Jer. 3:20; 5:11; 9:1), also using the corresponding adjective for both halves of the nation (Jer. 3:7, 8, 10), and the charge is further used by Malachi (Mal. 2:11).

In describing Israel's behavior as wife it becomes obvious that Hosea has in mind the image of the streetwalker who is seeking her sex partner (Hos. 2:[9]7). He uses the non-technical verb *matsa'* which at times is also used in erotic settings. The woman finds her partner (Prov. 7:15). The one seeking wisdom finds her (Prov. 8:17). The man who finds a wife finds a good thing (Prov. 18:22), and the maid finds the lover in Canticles (Song 3:1, 2; 5:6; see Van Selms 1964.)

Though primarily expounded in the first three chapters (narrated in chapter one in the third person and in chapter three in the first person), the marriage metaphor gives meaning also to allusions in the second half of the book where one encounters dealing faithlessly, hiring lovers (Hos. 8:9), bearing alien children (Hos. 5:7), loving no more, driving Israel from the house (Hos. 9:15), and rejecting (*ma'as*; Hos. 9:12).

Hosea uses the term *na'aph* (cf. Ex. 20:14) six times, first literally in sacred prostitution (Hos. 4:14-18), but then in the metaphor, "they are all adulterers" (Hos. 7:4; cf. 4:14; Jer. 9:1) suggesting wicked deeds, treachery, intrigue, and dealings of foreign policy (Brueggemann 1968 41-42). Adultery means adherence to a worship that is foreign to the Lord, but also involves breach of moral laws (Hos. 4:2).

As Gomer played the harlot, so a spirit of harlotry (Hos. 4:12) has estranged Israel from the Lord.¹² Hosea uses some form of *zanah* twenty times. The Pentateuch speaks of playing the harlot (*zanah*) after foreign gods (Ex. 34:15-16), after satyrs (Lev. 17:7), and after Molech, mediums and wizards (Lev. 20:5, 6) while the Psalms speak of disloyalty to the Lord with the

same vocabulary (Ps. 73:27). The image is repeated by Jeremiah (Jer. 3:2), Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:28; 20:30; 23:35), and Nahum (Nah. 3:4). Israel's faithlessness in the desert is *zenuth* (Num. 14:33). She played the harlot after other gods (Ex. 34:15, 16; Deut. 31:16); and the temptation to such is mentioned (Num. 15:39).

Whoredom is a metaphor in Hosea for Israel's international relations as she deals first with Egypt and second with Assyria rather than trusting the Lord (Hos. 7:11; 8:9-10; 12:[2]1; 14:4). But the same metaphor is also used for her false worship depicted in the woman's pursuit of lovers (Hos. 2:[9]7, [15]13), her loving raisin cakes (Hos. 3:1), her divination (Hos. 4:12), her sacrificing on the mountains (Hos. 4:13), her actions at the high places of Aven (Hos. 10:8), her idolatry (Hos. 4:17-19), and her insincerity (Hos. 7:14). Hosea speaks of Israel's loving the harlot's hire on all threshing floors (Hos. 9:1; cf. Mic. 1:7; Isa. 1:21). The beginning of apostasy was at Baal-peor (Hos. 9:10); but there was the use of pillars (Hos. 10:1), worship of the calf of Samaria (Hos. 10:5), and sacrificing to Baal (Hos. 11:2; 13:1). Middle Eastern treaty-curses use harlot imagery (Hillers 1964:58-60). Jeremiah (Jer. 13:26-27) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:37-38; 23:10, 29) speak of the stripping of the harlot (cf. Hos. 2:[5]3).

9. The Son

The prodigal son metaphor is one of the best known of the book (Hos. 11:1); however, the image is by no means unique. Moses was commissioned to tell Pharaoh, "Israel is my firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22). The people as sons are seen in Deut. 14:1; the LXX has the plural "sons" here in Hosea. Isaiah speaks of the Lord's having brought up children who rebelled (Isa. 1:2). According to Deuteronomy, the rebellious son was to be stoned (Deut. 21:18-21); but here in Hosea the Lord's love interposes.

The son implies the metaphor of a father (cf. Deut. 32:5-6). The father-son metaphor is further developed by Hosea in the teaching or leading to walk. Mal. 1:6 speaks of the reverence due a father.

10. Devouring rulers¹³

"They devour ('*akhal*) their rulers (*shophetim*; Hos. 7:7)" is not an accusation of cannibalism. Fire also devours (Hos. 8:14) and aliens devour Ephraim's strength (Hos. 7:9).

11. Divided Heart

Their heart is divided (*chalaq libbam*; Hos. 10:2). Hebrew psychology attributed functions of loyalty to the heart. In a simile, Ephraim is a dove silly and without sense. They limp between opinions (cf. 1 Kings 18:21).

12. Treasured Iniquity

The iniquity ('*awon*) of Ephraim is bound up (*tsarur*; Hos. 13:12) which is parallel to "kept in store" (*tsaphan*). Job answers his friends, "You say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their sons'" (Job 21:19). He states "my transgression (*pasha*) would be sealed up (*chatham*) in a bag" (*tseror*; Job 14:17). The metaphor seems to have arisen from the fact that money was stored in bags in places of safe keeping. The metaphor may be contrasted with Isaiah's binding and sealing his teaching in his disciples (Isa. 8:16).

13. The Fruit of Falsehood

You eat the fruit of falsehood (Hos. 10:13). As the righteous eat the fruit of their deeds (Isa. 3:10), so also do the wicked. The calamity is the natural consequence of action.

14. Ephraim's Death

Ephraim incurred guilt through Baal and died (*muth*; Hos. 13:1); the fate is the opposite of being exalted (*nasa'*). It is no physical death that is spoken of. Now Ephraim continues to sin.

III. The Lord's Actions

1. The Lord's Net

The net metaphor (Kruger 1992) is used both for Israel's action and for the Lord's. *Resheth*,¹⁴ a noun derived from *yarash*, occurs in parallel with *pach* (Hos. 5:1)¹⁵ where Hosea charges that the priests "have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor," the exact meaning of which is unknown. A fowler's snare (*pach*; cf. Amos 3:5), which is parallel to "hatred" (*mastemah*), is on all the ways of the prophet (Hos. 9:8; see Buss 1969:84). *Pach* is used elsewhere of a trap in the way of the godly (Prov. 22:5; cf. Ps. 140:[6]5; Jer. 18:22) and, according to Eliphaz, used of the exigencies of life (Job 22:10). Jeremiah depicts the wicked as hunters (Jer. 5:26-27).

Net hunting for fish (*ANEP*, no. 112), birds (*ANEP*, no. 189), and animals is attested in Mesopotamian texts (*ANET*³, 115a), as well as being depicted in art from both Mesopotamia and Egypt. On objects from Lagash and Susa enemies are depicted caught in nets (*ANEP*, nos. 298 and 307).

A Proverb declares "in vain the net is baited while the bird is looking on" (Prov. 1:17). Literal net hunting makes the net a fitting metaphor for snares set by enemies. The net is spread by the arrogant (Ps. 140:[6]5), the wicked (Ps. 10:9; 57:6), and the flatterer (Prov. 29:5) for the feet of the innocent or for the neighbor. However, the feet of the ensnarer may be thrust into his own net (Job 18:8). The foot of the nations is caught in the net they hid (Ps. 10:16). The Psalmist complains that his opponent has hidden his net without cause (Ps. 35:7). The writer pleads that the wicked be caught in the net they have spread (Ps. 35:8); but there is also the plea that the Lord will pluck feet out of the snare (Ps. 31:[5]4), and there is the expressed confidence that the Lord will do so (Ps. 25:15).

Hosea's metaphor of the Lord's net with the Lord acting as a fowler arises out of his simile where Israel is like a silly dove in her vacillation between Egypt and Assyria. With his net the Lord will bring Israel down like birds of the air that he may chastise their wicked deeds (Hos. 7:12; cf. Amos 9:2). Ezekiel threatens that the Lord will spread his net over the prince in Jerusalem and bring him to Babylon (Ezek. 12:13; cf. Job 19:6). He repeats the metaphor for fate of the Judean king (Ezek. 17:20). The nations spread their net over the prince of Judah (depicted as a lion) and carried him to Babylon (Ezek. 19:8). Fallen Jerusalem later laments that the Lord spread a net for her feet (Lam. 1:13). The same threat of use of the Lord's net is made against Pharaoh (Ezek. 32:3).

2. The East Wind of the Lord

Israel had pursued the east wind in treaty-making with Assyria (Hos. 12:[2]1). When Hosea threatens that the wind, the east wind of the Lord (*qadhim ruach 'adhonai*), will come rising from the wilderness (Hos. 13:15), there can be little doubt that he has Assyria in mind. In Palestine the destructive wind blows off the desert to the east withering everything (Noth

1966:32-33). In wisdom writers and the prophets the east wind is depicted as destructive (Job 1:19; Hos. 12:[2]1; Isa. 27:8; Jer. 4:11; 13:24; 18:17; Ezek. 17:10). Here in Hosea the punishment is "measure for measure." Israel has pursued the east wind, and the east wind brings destruction. The Lord had found Israel in the desert, and destruction comes from the desert.

3. Stumble

The verb *kashal* is obvious enough in its image, used at times for literal stumbling (cf. Lev. 26:27; Ps. 31:11; Neh. 4:4; Isa. 28:7).¹⁶ Israel will stumble by day and the prophet by night (Hos. 4:5). Both Israel and Judah will stumble in guilt (Hos. 5:5-7). Repentance is needed because Israel has stumbled in iniquity (*'awon*; Hos. 14:[2]1). The metaphor is common (cf. Ps. 64:[9]8; 2 Chron. 25:8). Idols make people to stumble (Jer. 18:15). The wicked make someone fall (Prov. 4:16). The priests cause many to stumble (Mal. 2:18).

4. The Sword¹⁷

The sword's raging, consuming, devouring is a metaphor for a military invasion (Hos. 7:16; 11:6; 13:16; cf. Lev. 26:25; Deut. 32:42).

5. Breaking the Bow¹⁸

The bow is both a metaphor and a simile in Hosea. Israel is like a deceitful bow (Hos. 7:16); but breaking the bow (Hos. 1:5; 2:[20]18) is a metaphor for breaking the military power, a metaphor later used by Jeremiah (Jer. 49:35). Hannah's prayer declares "The bows of the mighty are broken" (1 Sam. 2:4). A century earlier than Hosea, Jehu had slain Joram with a bow (2 Kings 9:24).

Hosea's vision of peace envisions the abolition of the bow (Hos. 2:[20]18). Israel had foolishly depended on military might (Hos. 14:[4]3). The Psalmist praises the Lord as one who breaks the bow (Ps. 46:9; 76:13), and Zech. 9:10 speaks of the battle bow cut off. The metaphor appears in treaty curses (Hillers 1958:60).

6. The Shepherd

Though the term "shepherd" does not occur in Hosea, the metaphor of shepherding lies back of the question, "Can the Lord now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?" (Hos. 4:16).¹⁹ The Lord had fed Israel in the desert (Hos. 13:5). The Septuagint elaborates, "I tended you as a shepherd in the desert." The Hebrew verb is used literally for Jacob's action (Hos. 12:[13]12) and for the threshing floor not feeding (Hos. 9:2). The shepherd image is used for Ephraim's herding the wind (Hos. 12:[2]1). Bible students know the Lord's shepherding best from the 23rd Psalm; but the concept is common.

7. The Physician

The Lord is not called a physician in Hosea, but in superficial repentance the people affirm, "For he has torn that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up" (Hos. 6:1). But the Lord had affirmed that Assyria and its king [in which Israel trusted] cannot heal (Hos. 5:13). When the Lord wants to heal Israel the corruption is revealed (Hos. 7:1).²⁰ Ephraim did not know that the Lord is the one who healed them (Hos. 11:3). The prophet may be playing here on the sounds of *'ephrayim* and *repha'thim*. In the closing chapter, the Lord promises to heal Israel's backslidings (Hos. 14:[5]4). This metaphor can suggest deliverance

from political distress, from apostasy, and from being remiss in duties (2 Chron. 30:20). It can mean making the way new and prosperous; but it also concerns religious and moral attitudes (Osborn 1956:75). The Pentateuch declares, "I am the Lord your healer" (Ex. 15:26). In this image, the prophet uses an Old Testament commonplace²¹ later developed further in the New Testament.

8. The Teacher

The Lord is a teacher (*musar*; Hos. 5:2; LXX: *paideutes*; Vul.: *eruditor*) with overtones of redemption (cf. Jer. 30:12-17; see Wolff 1974:99, 127, 184f.). The Lord is one who chastises (Hos. 7:12; 10:10) for wicked deeds.²² The Lord has trained and strengthened Ephraim's arms in vain (Hos. 7:15). With Israel's repentance, the Lord can come and teach righteousness (Hos. 10:12).²³

9. Walling In

The Lord walls in (*gadhar*) Israel's way (Hos. 2:[8]6). Job complains that the Lord has blocked his way (Job 19:8), and the Lord had walled in Jerusalem (Lam. 3:7; see Kruger 1988:147).

10. Hewn by the Prophets

That the Lord has hewn (*chatsabh*; cf. Hos. 6:5) Israel by the prophets, which is parallel to "I have slain them by words of my mouth," has affinities with Isaiah's statement "with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). The concept has little in common with the fate of the prophets of Baal and Astarte that Elijah and Jehu slew with the sword, not with the prophet's mouth. In Isaiah, the Servant's words are compared to a sword (Isa. 49:2). The idea that the word of the Lord is sharper than a two-edged sword is expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 4:12).

11. The Prophet a Watchman of Ephraim

Hosea declares the prophet to be a watchman of Ephraim (Hos. 9:8). The watchman metaphor is developed by Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:17; 33:1-9). The watchman's task is often mentioned in the Old Testament (Isa. 21:6-7; 52:8; 56:10; 62:6; Jer. 6:17; Mic. 7:4; Hab. 2:1; see Brueggemann 1968:85).

12. Broken Altars

The Lord threatens to break the altars with a verb which means to break the neck (*`araph*; Hos. 10:2);²⁴ they will be overturned.

IV. Metaphors of Hope

A. Betroth

The marriage metaphor has been carried full circle by Hosea when he speaks of the Lord's betrothing (*'arosh*) Israel (Hos. 2:[21-22]19-20). While the verb appears eleven times in the Old Testament, the three occurrences expressing emphasis in this setting of Hosea are its only figurative uses. Betrothal (Deut. 20:7; 28:30) was taken more seriously in Israel than is engagement in the USA; the betrothed girl is spoken of as a "neighbor's wife" (Deut. 22:23-24). The Lord, through Hosea, describes his betrothal in the same words David used in describing his (2 Sam. 3:14), but the enduring nature is stressed. It is forever (*le'olam*).

There is no one to whom the Lord pays a bride price; in a literal betrothal it went to the father of the bride (cf. Gen. 24:53; 34:12), and the price might be money or service (Deut. 22:29; 2 Sam. 3:14). The Lord's bride price, according to Hosea, consists of five traits from the character of the Lord himself, the first four of which are in pairs. There is *tsedheq* ("righteousness") and *mishpat* ("justice"), *chesedh* ("steadfast love") and *'emunah* ("faithfulness"), and there is *rachamim* ("mercy"). The outcome is "You shall know the Lord." a situation lacking in Israel's forgetting him (cf. Hos. 2:[15]13).

B. Rain Salvation

The Lord is the giver of rain (Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23). To rain becomes a metaphor of supply as the Lord rains bread from heaven (Ex. 16:4). Joel 2:2 speaks of God's giving early rain for your vindication (*hammoreh litsedhaqah*). But rain can designate either favorable or unfavorable items. God rains fury (Job 20:23) and coals of fire and sulfur on the wicked (Ps. 11:6). Hosea promises that God will rain salvation (Hos. 10:12) upon you (*yoreh tsedheq lakhem*).²⁵

C. David

As Hosea speaks of the Israelites returning and seeking the Lord their God and David their king (Hos. 3:5), it is disputable whether he speaks of an individual or a dynasty. He uses a theme common in the prophets. Amos speaks of the rebuilding of the fallen tent of David (Amos 9:4), Isaiah of the shoot from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1; cf. 55:3, 4), and later Jeremiah speaks of the Lord's raising up a righteous branch to reign as king (Jer. 23:5) and of Judah serving the Lord their God and David their king (Jer. 30:9). Hosea's and Jeremiah's statements differ only in the verb used. With a like expectation, Ezekiel has one shepherd: "my servant shall be prince over them" (Ezek. 34:23, 24); and the joined Judah and Joseph have one king: "my servant David shall be king over them" (Ezek. 37:24, 25).

D. The Valley of Achor, a Door of Hope

The Valley of Achor is mentioned three times in Scripture, first for the site of Achan's punishment (Joshua 7:26), second in Isaiah's promise that it becomes a place for sheep to lie down (Isa. 65:10), and third in Hosea's statement that the Lord will make it a door of hope (Hos. 2:15).

E. Great Shall Be the Day of Jezreel (Hos. 1:11 [2:2])

The Lord threatens to visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu which house had its last representatives in Jeroboam II and his son Zechariah (2 Kings 14:29). There is no question that the revolt of Jehu, part of which took place in Jezreel, is being thought of. While it is granted that many battles (Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Josiah; etc.) have been fought in the valley, more puzzling is any effort to connect the breaking of the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel (Hos. 1:5) with a known event. But also puzzling is the metaphor "Great will be the day of Jezreel" (Hos. 1:11[2:2]) which is a part of the change of fortunes of the section indicated by reversal of the children's names.

The "day of Midian" (Isa. 9:[3]4; cf. Judg. 7:15-25; cf. 4:14) and "the day of Jerusalem" (Ps. 137:7) form linguistic parallels; but these are days of disaster. The adjective "great" (*gadhol*) modifies the day of the Lord in Joel 2:11 and Mal. [3:23]4:5. Hosea has "the day of the feast of the Lord" (Hos. 9:5) but no description of the "day of the Lord" comparable to those of Amos or Joel. The day of Jezreel is here a day of sowing (cf. Hos. 2:[25]23) not a day of scattering. A gathering of Israel and Jacob (cf. Ezek. 32:21), the appointing of one head (cf. Hos. 3:5; Ps. 18:[44]43), and going up from the land (*`alu min-ha'arets*; cf. Ex. 1:10) forms its context.²⁶ Jeremiah later promises a revival by sowing the land with people and animals (Jer. 31:27).

V. Is Egypt a Metaphor?

In Hosea, Egypt (mentioned fifteen times) often appears in conjunction with Assyria (Hos. 7:11; 9:3, 6; 11:5, 11; 12:[2]1) and in Hos. 7:16; 9:6 appears as the destination of those fleeing from destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. They return to the land from which they have been delivered (Hos. 9:3; cf. Deut. 28:68). Deuteronomy has a prohibition of a king's taking people back to Egypt (Deut. 17:16). There can be no question that when Hosea mentions Assyria he literally means Assyria. Did he then mean metaphorical Egypt?²⁷ Return to Egypt is mentioned in connection with punishment of sins (Hos. 8:13; 9:3, 6); but Hos. 11:5 in the M.T. states, "he shall not return to Egypt."²⁸ The Septuagint changes the time of reference in eight cases to the past (Pisano 1991). Did Hosea anticipate the flight of portions of Israel to Egypt to escape the Assyrians? Such a flight from Judah to escape the Babylonians later did take place (cf. Jer. 43:1-7). Hosea envisions a return from Egypt (Hos. 11:11; cf. 2:[17]15).

Conclusion

The relevance of this survey of Hosea's metaphors to the hermeneutic problem may be stated in several observations. First, a metaphor must be recognized as a metaphor otherwise a literal meaning will be given which the prophet never intended. The interpreter cannot by-pass or consider indifferent the metaphors. He cannot select one and regard it as the key to the entire book. The metaphors are important in revealing how the prophet thought both as to the Lord and to Israel.

Second, the context must be the basis of determining a metaphor as well as the means of interpreting it (Soskice 1990:447).

Third, one cannot safely deduce conclusions concerning Hosea's past, as Beebe did when he suggested "the profusion of kitchen metaphors in his book may even point to his having been a cook or baker" (Beebe 1989:3). With such logic one could make Hosea a priest, a farmer, and several other things. The metaphors come from the life of the times but do not demand a knowledge of an expert.

Fourth, one should interpret the metaphors, in as far as possible, from the eighth century B.C. viewpoint rather than from the twentieth century in order to grasp what Hosea's intent was. Since many are a part of the Old Testament tradition, their meaning by other writers must be considered.

Fifth, the school of Alexandria did not consider metaphors a part of the literal meaning of Scripture while the school of Antioch did (Grant 1952:1,111). The twentieth century person is more likely to side with Antioch in this quarrel. The metaphors should not be considered an invitation to hang esoteric meanings on the words of the prophet.

Guide to Abbreviations

ANEP *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*, James B. Pritchard, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

ANET³ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, James B. Pritchard, editor (3rd edition; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, A. Roberts and S. Donaldson, ed. (Buffalo: The American Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

BDB *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

BHS *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/77).

JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

NSL *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*.

KBS *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, ed., revised by J. J. Stamm (Leiden/New York/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994-).

KJV King James Version.

LXX Septuagint.

M.T. Masoretic Text.

NIV New International Version.

NPNFCC *A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, P. Schaff and A. Wace., ed. (1890-1900; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952).

NRSV New Revised Standard Version.

OTWSA *Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suider Africa Proceedings*.

REB Revised English Bible.

TJNT *Theological Dictionary to the New Testament*, (G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, editors (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976.)

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-).

TWOT *Theological Wordbook to the Old Testament*, R. L. Harris, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

VT *Vetus Testamentum*.

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Notes

1. Childs (1979:379) attributes the metaphorical understanding of Hosea's language to a later generation.
2. Mays (1969:7): "Metaphors pour from his mouth. There is hardly an oracle which does not contain at least one, and often they are multiplied within a simple saying or Hosea throws up one image after another to heighten the impact of his speech."
3. The Lord is like a devouring animal (Hos. 5:13; 13:7-8) and like maggots and rotteness (Hos. 5:12); but is also like the dew (Hos. 14:[6]5) and a fruitful tree (Hos. 14:[9]8). His coming is like the dawn and showers (Hos. 6:3). Israel is like a heated oven (Hos. 7:4-6), a silly dove (Hos. 7:11), an ensnared bird (Hos. 7:12), a useless vessel (Hos. 8:8), grapes found in the desert (Hos. 9:10), and a stubborn cow (Hos. 4:16). Their faithfulness is like morning mist (Hos. 6:11), like dew, chaff, and smoke (Hos. 13:8). Israel can be like a plant in Lebanon (Hos. 14:[6]5 and like wine of Lebanon (Hos. 14:[8]7).
4. Hos. 5:3, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14; 6:4, 10; 7:1, 8, 11; 8:9, 11; 9:3, 8, 11, 13; 10:6, 11; 11:3, 8, 9, 12; 12:[2]1, [9]8, [15]14; 13:1, 12; 14:[9]8.
5. Hos. 4:15, 16; 5:3, 5; 6:10; 8:2, 3, 8; 9:7, 10; 10:1, 6, 8, 9, 15; 11:1, 8; 12:[13]12.
6. Goshen-Gottstein 1960:64-66; Robertson 1936-1937:16-17.
7. Stuart (1987:112) considers the image to have favorable connotations.
8. A literal cake is described in 1 Kings 17:13, and bread making in Ex. 29:2; Lev. 2:4; Num. 7:13.
9. Cf. Isa. 54:4; Jer. 2:2; 3:24, 25; 22:21.
10. C. Weber, "*chalah*," *TWOT*, 656.
11. The LXX is very different: "He is your wise son, because he shall not stay in the destruction of your people."
12. S. Erlandsson, "*zanah*," *TDOT* 4:102.
13. M. Ottosson, "*akhal*," *TDOT* 1:237-38.
14. Cf. Ps. 9:16; 31:5; 35:7; 57:7.
15. Ps. 91:3; 124:7; 140:[6]5; 141:9; 142:4.
16. R. L. Harris, "*kashal*," *TWOT*, 457-58.
17. E. Yaumachi, "*cherebh*," *TWOT*, 320-21.
18. L. J. Coppes, "*qesheth*," *TWOT*, 819.
19. While the NIV/NRSV/REB read the statement as a question, Anderson and Freedman (1980:377) question that it should be.
20. Wolff (1974:106) renders the statement as a past action.
21. Ps. 6:[3]2; 30:[3]2; 41:[5]4; 107:20; 147:3; Jer. 8:22; 15:18; 17:14; Lam. 2:13.
22. R. D. Branson, "*yasar*," *TDOT*, 6:129-134.
23. G. Bertram, "*paideuo*," *TDNT*, 5:606.
24. *BDB*, 791.
25. See *Cairo Document* 6:10-11.
26. One interpretation has the people sprout up from the land as a result of God's sowing (cf. Hos. 2:[25]23) with the series of elements who answer. Various elements answer Jezreel (Hos. 2:[24]22).
27. This view is suggested by Wolff (1974) and Mays (1969) on Hos. 9:3. Hummel (1979:295) takes Egypt as a symbol of the grave or Sheol. Buss (1969:97-98, 138) sees Egypt as standing

for the chaos out of which Israel was once saved. McComisky (1992:184) sees Egyptian bondage as a motif for impending Assyrian captivity and the Exodus as its future restoration. 28. The LXX omits the negative and renders the verb as an aorist perfect (*katoikesen*). *BHS* (followed by NRSV and REB) proposes that the negative be read as *lo* and taken with the preceding statement. The NIV takes the statement as a rhetorical question.