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THE SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUNDS OF AMOS AND HOSEA AS REVEALED BY THEIR LITERARY IMAGERY

By

Louis A. Josephson

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

I. INTRODUCTION . . 1

II. AMOS 3

III. HOSEA 42

IV. CONCLUSION 70

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . 78

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain, so far as possible, the environment in which the prophets Amos and Hosea lived. It is assumed that the circumstances of a man's life are of prime importance in molding his character, his personality, his attitudes, and his outlook. It controls the focus of his attention, and reflects itself in what he says, both as to content and mode of expression. One who has lived in the Southern States of the United States will have a southern accent. His vocabulary and manner of speaking will reveal his approximate place of residence. A lawyer can be identified by the legal terminology which creeps into his conversation. A physician will speak the language of medicine.

Thus, it is possible to tell a great deal about a person from his mode of expression. And particularly is this true where the speaker uses examples and similes, for they are based upon his personal experiences. This study, therefore, undertakes to examine the literary imagery of the Books of Amos and Hosea. It considers all figures of speech and expressions which might reveal the backgrounds of the men who used them. The literary images, properly analyzed, are the clues from which we endeavor to construct the influences which shaped the character and personality of these prophets.

Modern critical commentaries say that certain verses in the books are not original with the authors. They are the additions and revisions of later editors. Since it is not within the scope of this thesis to treat the books exegetically, the question of originality of verses does not concern us, except that verses of doubtful authorship should not be made a basis for any conclusions. Therefore it has been necessary to eliminate those verses. There is lack of agreement among the critics themselves, and it is not always possible to evaluate the claims made. However, the present study endeavors to use the literary imagery as a whole, wherever possible, and tries to avoid any conclusion on the basis of a single doubtful verse. It is not likely that the admission or deletion of specific phrases will modify very greatly the general impressions given by the books as a whole.

The dates for the prophetic activity of the subjects of this thesis have been determined by the commentaries, and it is dufficient for our purposes to accept these dates. We therefore assume that Amos preached around the middle of the eighth century before the Christian Era, and Hosea about a decade later.

Although the Masoretic Text has been used in the work of preparing this thesis, the English translation of the Jewish Publication Society has been quoted throughout for the sake of convenience in typing the manuscript.

The following list includes those verses which have been omitted from consideration in this thesis because of doubtful authorship:

AMOS: 1:2, 9-12.
2:4, 5, 12.
4:8a, 13.
5:8, 9, 18b, 22b.
6:2, 9-11a, 14.
7:1d, 8a.
8:2a, 6, 8, 11a,
9:5, 6, 8-15.

HOSEA: 1:7.
2:1-3, 4b, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16-18, 20-25.
6:11.
7:4.
8:1b, 8b, 10, 14.
9:9.
10:3, 4, 10, 14b.
11:8b, 9a, 10b, 11.
12:1b, 4b-7, 13-14.
14:2-10.

A M O S

A M O S

Often enough we have been told that Amos was "a rude, powerfully built man from the country" (Levinger, Elma Ehrlich, and Levinger, Lee J.: The Story of the Jew, page 40) or that his orations "did not fail to betray his station. He used similes taken from his shepherd life. They showed that, while tending his flocks, he often listened to the roaring of the lion, and studied the stars in his night watches." (Graetz, H.: History of the Jews, volume 1, page 236). Can we accept these generalizations as being a true picture of the man? What was his position in the life of his time? Let us try to capture a bit of his real personality and the environment in which he moved.

First, we will set the scene. Where did Amos live? "Amaziah said unto Amos: 'O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el...'" (Amos 7:12-13) It is commonly assumed that Amaziah recognized Amos as a Judean, and commanded him to return to his native land. And yet, the verse is not conclusive, for Amos might conceivably have been an Israelite who was sent into exile. The very use of the words "flee thee away" (בְּרַח־לְךָ) have the implication that it is a decree of banishment. So this verse by itself can not be used as proof that Amos' origin was the land of Judah.

The editorial superscription of the book (Amos 1:1) says that Amos "was among the herdmen of Tekoa." Here, too, we must be careful in accepting the verse as conclusive evidence, for the statement reads "among the herdmen of Tekoa" (אשר בנקדים מתקוע). It might be taken to mean that he was not a native. Furthermore, his preachment entirely concerns Israel, and not Judea. Therefore, in order for these verses to stand as fact concerning the place of residence, we must seek additional evidence to support them.

Now, the village of Tekoa is situated on a hill in the mountains of Judah some six miles south of Bethlehem, and twelve miles south of Jerusalem. To the north of Tekoa about twenty miles stands the royal sanctuary of Beth El. The evidence for the exact placement of Tekoa need not be developed here. Be it sufficient to note that this is ascertained from references to it in other parts of the Bible, namely, II Samuel 14:2, 23:26, Jeremiah 6:1, II Chronicles 20:20, and I Maccabees 9:33.

From this hilltop can be seen many of the places mentioned by Amos in his prophecy. Beginning with the countries referred to in Chapters 1 and 2, we find that they form a complete circle around the horizon as seen from Tekoa. Damascus (1:3-5) is 150 miles to the north. Westward some thirty to forty miles, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea are the Philistine cities Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, and Ekron (1:6-8). [Also on the seacoast is the port of Tyre (1:9-10) 120 miles northward.] Across the Dead Sea and the Jordan River 30 miles to the east are Ammon

(1:13-15) and Moab (2:1-3). Except for Damascus [and Tyre] these places form a circle with Tekoa as the center, and the radius is short enough that any of the points can be reached by a day or so of travelling. This is cogent reason for believing that the statement of the superscription is true, that Amos' home was at or in the vicinity of Tekoa.

Additional geographical references made by Amos throughout his prophecy tend to reinforce the conclusions of the above discussion. In 3:9, Ashdod and Egypt are called to witness Samaria's guilt. It is probable that the verse makes use of this important Philistine city as a symbol of the country of Philistia. Such usage would be in conformity with the mentioning of the four chief Philistine cities in 1:6-8 as representing the whole country. It is not altogether clear why these two countries, Philistia and Egypt, should have been chosen to view the degradation of Samaria, but their proximity to Tekoa is of significance for us.

The local sanctuaries at Beth El (3:14, 4:4, 5:5-6, 7:10, 13) and Gilgal (4:4, 5:5) are a little over 20 miles to the north of Tekoa, on the southern border of Israel. Beer Sheba is reported to be a sanctuary visited by the Israelites according to 5:5. However, it is located 40 miles to the southwest of Tekoa, and it seems rather strange that pilgrims from Israel should go such a distance when the other sanctuaries are so much nearer home. Furthermore, the parallelism of the verse is disturbed by this additional name, and is best omitted.

"But seek not Beth El, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer Sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth El shall come to nought." It is apparent that the structure of the verse is chiastic, and that the words; "and pass not to Beer Sheba" are the additions of a later editor. (So: Harper, William Rainey: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, page 111.)

Beer Sheba is again mentioned in 8:14. Here, however, it is not as easily disposed of, and no available commentary deletes the reference. The verse also speaks of the sanctuary at Dan. This important town is located at the base of Mount Hermon (I Kings 12:28) about 125 miles north of Tekoa, midway between Tyre and Damascus. It marks the extreme north of the land of Israel, just as Beer Sheba marks the southern border of Judah. That Amos might have known of these outlying sanctuary towns without even having visited them is altogether in the realm of probability. Hence they would not modify the idea that he lived in and around Tekoa.

Beth El and Gilgal, however, are so close to Tekoa, that even without other evidence to the effect, we could surmise that he might have journeyed to them at some time during his life. That Amos did actually visit Beth El is evident from several verses. "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth El sent to Jereboam king of Israel, saying; 'Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel...' Also Amaziah said unto Amos: "...prophesy not again any more at Beth El, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house."

(7:10, 12, 13). This sets the delivery of the prophecy at the royal sanctuary. And support for this statement is found in 4:4, where it says: "Come to Beth El, and transgress, To Gilgal, and multiply transgression; And bring your sacrifices in the morning, and your tithes after three days." Not "go" and "take" but "come" (בוא) and "bring" (הביא). It is evident that the prophet is speaking at the sanctuary, the scene of the sacrificial offerings.

Samaria, too, is well known to Amos. In three places (3:9, 4:1, 6:1) he speaks of the mountain of Samaria, and in a fourth (3:12) of Samaria the city. It is on a hill, surrounded on three sides by mountains. The "mountian of Samaria" might therefore refer to the town itself, or to the mountains surrounding it. In either case, Amos is familiar with the topography there. If we leave 3:9 unamended so as to read "Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great confusions therein, and the oppressions in the midst thereof." we may take the verse to mean the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, from which one may look down into the town of Samaria located on the hill below. However, this would not affect our conclusions regarding Amos' knowledge of the region. And yet, in 4:1, we do find an interesting thing. Amos says: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria..." Bashan is the name of the region east of the Jordan, and south of Mount Hermon. It is some fifty miles northeast of Samaria. If we take this verse literally, we would have to conclude that the geography is rather

confused. Taking the verse to be highly figurative, as it appears to be, there is no difficulty. The kine of Bashan are mentioned elsewhere (Deuteronomy 32:14, Ezekiel 29:18) as being strong, well-nourished herds, which is a perfect description for the women of Samaria to whom the prophet alludes.

The very reference to the kine of Bashan indicates a knowledge of its cattle. And the simile must needs have behind it the idea of the quality of these cattle. Bashan has a soil which is rich and fertile, consisting of disintegrated lava. It is here that the oak or "allon" (אלון) grows abundantly. This tree is repeatedly connected with Bashan (Isaiah 2:13, Ezekiel 27:6 and Zechariah 11:2), a district famous for its oaks. In Amos 2:9, the oak is used as a symbol of strength. "Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks..." And the cedars, which symbolize height, are typical of the Lebanon, a region to the north of Israel. (Judges 9:15, Psalms 104:16, Isaiah 2:13, 14:8, Ezekiel 27:5, Zechariah 11:1, etc.) For Amos to have thus used the imagery indicates that the people in general knew of the strength of the oak and the height of the cedar, and reveals only that Amos had this knowledge in common with them. However, that he should choose to use the figure in his address indicates a consciousness of the trees on his part.

This survey of the land should be sufficient to reveal that Amos had a fair knowledge of Palestine and its environs. He was not as provincial as some would have us believe. Though Tekoa was his home, his horizon was more than local. He is particularly interested in places to the north of his home. Israel, Damascus, Tyre, and Transjordan are familiar to him. The sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal must certainly have been visited by him. But it would be equally unfair to say that he was cosmopolitan. Though he knew Judah and Israel well, he may never have gone beyond their boundaries into foreign countries.

Thus having set the background of the land, we shall turn to Tekoa for a more intimate glimpse of Amos' circumstances. Standing upon the hill where Tekoa is situated, let us face eastward. On the horizon are the mountains of Moab. The expanse of the Dead Sea spreads out far below us, some 15 miles distant. The intervening land is a steep slope, though "certainly less steep than any other part of the approach to the Central Plateau from the desert." (Smith, George Adam: Historical Geography of the Holy Land, page 272). Rocky and sparsely covered with a course growth, it forms the wilderness of Tekoa, in close proximity to, and continuous with the wilderness of the lower Jordan. "The slopes...show the mass of desert hills with their tops <u>below</u> the spectator, and therefore displaying every meteoric effect in a way they could not have done had he been obliged to look <u>up</u> to them. The cold wind that blows off them after sunset; through a gap the Dead Sea, with its heavy mists; beyond the gulf the range of Moab, cold and grey, till the sun leaps from behind

his barrier, and in a moment the world of hill-tops below Tekoa is flooded with light--that was the landscape of Amos." (ibid. page 315).

The very character of the land supplies us with a hint as to what Amos' occupation might have been. Amid this ruggedness, we can easily imagine that Amos was a shepherd, tending his flocks. His own words in 7:14-15 proclaim: "I was a herdman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees; and the Lord took me from following the flock..." (The verse is generally emended from נוקד to קוקר, and this emendation is followed here). Amos is no wealthy owner of flocks, but a common shepherd, who tends his own sheep. It is not necessary to assume the former in order to account for his travels, for he might well have gone to the cities, such as Bethel, to dispose of the wool which he had gathered from his flock. Nor need he have been occupied as a shepherd all his life, but may have changed his occupation at some time or other. More of this later.

The superscription, 1.1, also speaks of Amos as a shepherd, adding confirmation to the other verses. Here he is said to be a "noked keeper". This refers to a special kind of sheep and is used of the King of Moab (II Kings 3:4). Its wool is very choice and highly esteemed. From the superscription it appears that there were a number of shepherds caring for this kind of sheep in the region of Tekoa, for Amos was "among the herdmen of Tekoa".

In 3:12, we find a strong figure of speech which reveals the kind of life which the shepherd must have led: "As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel that dwell in Samaria escape..." The marauding lion has come forth from his den to attack the sheep. He siezes one and starts to make way with it so that he can devour it. But the ever-watchful shepherd attacks the lion in defense of his sheep, and tries to rescue the unfortunate prey. Perhaps he brings the remains of the missing sheep to his master as evidence that it was torn by the beasts. (So: Driver, S. R.: The Books of Joel and Amos, page 160).

The lion, attacker of man and beast alike, must have been greatly feared by the shepherd who was guarding his flocks in the fields. The very roaring of the ferocious animal struck fear into his heart. Says the prophet: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" (3:8) And: "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion give forth his voice out of his den, if he have taken nothing?" (3:4) The answer to these questions seems obvious to Amos and to his listeners.

The forest mentioned in 3:4 (סֻכָּה) is a sort of rough undergrowth, rather than a woodland of trees. Perhaps it might better be rendered "jungle". There is such a jungle on the road from Jericho to Bethel, whence come forth the bears that avenged Elisha (II Kings 2:24). Continuing on this road just two or three miles eastward from Jericho,

we come to the town of Gilgal. Perhaps it is this jungle that Amos had in mind. At least, it adds to our knowledge of his environment, the fact that there were jungles inhabited by lions whose roar caused the hearer to shudder.

Another description of the dangers from wild animals appears in 5:19: "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; and went into the house, and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him." Here is a triple threat. The man seems doomed no matter where he goes or what he does. At every step he is set upon. According to S. R. Driver (The Books of Joel and Amos, page 185), "bears are now found only in the far north of Palestine, about Mount Hermon, but they were once common in all parts of the country, and were dangerous both to human beings (II Kings 2:24, Lamentations 3:10) and to sheep (I Samuel 17:34)." However, they do not appear to be as feared as the lion, for the lion is the most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible. From the context of the verse here, we may safely assume that the snake's bite proved fatal. He is no less dangerous than his larger brethren.

But exposure to the beasts was not the only difficulty which beset Amos in the wilderness. The weather seems no more kindly than the animals. The storm wind blows mercilessly about the unsheltered shepherd. "...With a tempest in the day of the whirlwind." says the prophet in 1:14, comparing the storm to the fury of battle. It calls for the image of a destructive hurricane. "I have smitten you with blasting..."

(4:9) pictures the scorching and destructive effects of the east wind, blowing up hotly from the desert. This wind is known as the Simoon or Sorocco. It comes up suddenly and with great violence. Blowing from the southeast, out of the Arabian Desert, it drives before it clouds of sand, withering the vegetation, parching the land, and causing general discomfiture to the dweller of the wilderness.

The dryness caused by the heat of the east wind was no less damaging than that due to the intense summer heat. It is pictured for us in 7:4. "Thus the Lord God showed me; and behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land." Though there are emendations suggested for the verse, which clarify the wording, they do not modify the sense of the imagery in this regard. We may imagine the conflagrations which break out in field and forest during the dry season. So intense is the heat that it dries up, not only the vegetation, but also the great subterranean depths themselves. Thus the sources of water are cut off, and a drought ensues.

And dryness for the shepherd is a cruel affliction. He needs water for his flocks. Exposed to the heat of the sun all day, water is a necessity for both man and animals alike. The cool, refreshing water of some trickling stream or bubbling spring is of prime importance. Its absence is one of the greatest punishments that God could send to man. Thus

Amos says: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine into the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst." (8:11-13) Imagine the yearning that the author must have felt! The comparison of a great spiritual desire with the hunger of a famished and thirsting body is one of his most powerful figures. Nothing could be so great a tragedy as to be cut off from water in the wilderness, or without food when one is hungry.

This need for water is the basis of the most famous verse in the entire book. This is what is behind Amos' plea: "But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (5:24) He desires justice and righteousness to be unfailing and perennial, an eternal source of satisfaction for man's greatest needs. In Palestine, few indeed are the sources of water that never fail. The stream, really the Arabic wady, is a torrent which flows through a narrow valley during the rainy season, but may be a mere brook or entirely dry during the summer. During the time of its greatest importance for man, it is but a dry bed. How the prophet must have wished that such a stream might well up with water and pour forth mightily!

Famines, too, affected the land. Amos portrays this in 4:6, saying: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places..." Famines seem to have been rather frequent occurences in Palestine, being mentioned in Genesis 12:10, 26:1, 41:54, Ruth 1:1, II Samuel 21:1, I Kings 17:1, etc. And Amos' figure for famine, "cleanness of teeth," must strike the reader as being a very expressive figure, highly appropriate for the idea which the prophet wishes to convey.

Such, then, was the life of the shepherd Amos in the Wilderness of Tekoa. The lions and other wild beasts, the weather conditions, and the frequent lack of water were hardships which appear to be matters of every day concern for him. It is a life full of ruggedness, and the man who can stand up under it must indeed be, or become, strong.

In addition to his occupation as a shepherd, however, Amos declares that he is also a dresser of sycomore trees. There is no reason to doubt that he could have had some other occupation than that of shepherd during his life. The one does not preclude the other. It is sometimes said that the Sycomore can not grow at the height at which Tekoa is situated. However, we have seen that Amos did not spend all his time at the village. With his sheep, he probably wandered over a fairly wide territory, and on his way to the market to dispose of the wool, he may have gone yet further. The sycomore trees can not grow in the uplands, because they

require a warmer temperature. But they do grow abundantly in the foot-hills west of the main mountain range of Judah (Kennett, R. H.: Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as Indicated in Law, Narrative, and Metaphor, page 40-41). This is the region of the Shephelah, or Maritime Plain, bordering on Philistia. According th the Jewish Encyclopedia, (article: Sycomore, volume 12, page 612-613) they also grow freely in the valley of the Jordan, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and in Lower Galilee. It would have been possible for Amos to have worked in any of these regions, though Lower Galilee seems least likely.

As for the tree itself, "it attains the size of a walnut tree, has wide-spreading branches, and, on account of its shade, is often planted by the wayside. The fruit grows, not on branches, but on little sprigs rising directly out of the stem, and in clusters like the grape: it is something like a small fig, in shape and size, but insipid and woody in taste. The fruit is infested with an insect...and till the 'eye' or top has been punctured, so that the insects may escape, it is not eatable." (Driver, S. R.: The Books of Joel and Amos, pages 207-208). Or according to the Jewish Encyclopedia (ibid.) the fruit contains a rancid juice which must be drained off before it can be eaten. In either case, the process of dressing a sycomore tree is to snip the fruit and make a small opening in it. This appears to have been Amos' task.

The imagery of the book shows that Amos did know something about husbandry. Plowing, reaping, and threshing are mentioned as the processes by which grain is cultivated. First, the furrows are made in the ground, by having oxen draw the plow through the surface soil. Thus we read: "Do horses run upon the rock, doth one plow there with oxen?" (6:12) Though several emendations are suggested to this verse, they all retain the idea of the oxen used for plowing. When the grain is ripe, it is bundled into sheaves and carried from the fields in a sort of cart. Presumably, this too is drawn by oxen. Here we have a picture of such a cart, heavily laden: "Behold, I will make it creak under you, as a cart creaketh that is full of sheaves." (2:13). The grain is unloaded at the threshing floors. Here the oxen are used again to pull the threshing sledges. These sledges are flat boards, toothed on the under side with iron or basalt, which breaks up the grain so that it can be winnowed. This process is represented in the powerful figure of speech: "Because they have threshed Gilead with sledges of iron." (1:3).

For the husbandman, the rains were of the greatest importance. Amos was fully aware of this when he mentioned as a punishment the lack of rain: "And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest..." (4:7) The year in Palestine is divided into two seasons, rainy and dry, corresponding roughly to our winter and summer. "Towards the end of October heavy rains begin to fall, at intervals, for

a day or several days at a time. These are what the English Bible calls the <u>early</u> or <u>former</u> rain, literally the <u>Pourer</u>. (יורה) It opens the agricultural year; the soil hardened and cracked by the long summer is loosened, and the farmer begins ploughing... The <u>latter</u> <u>rains</u> of Scripture are the heavy showers of March and April. (מלקוש) Coming as they do before the harvest and the long summer drought, they are of far more importance to the country than all the rains of the winter months." (Smith, George Adam: Historical Geography... pages 63-4). The rain (גשם) which is withheld three months before ~~before~~ the harvest must be from February onward, thus causing considerable loss of crops.

And yet, we can see plainly that Amos himself had little or nothing to do with the agricultural life of his day. For one thing, he is constantly pointing to the vineyards as being the property of others, probably of the Israelite men against whom he preaches. He says YOUR vineyards, while leveling an accusing finger. Thus: "Therefore, because ye trample upon the poor, and take from him exactions of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them, ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof." (5:11) And: "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured..." (4:9) These and other verses declaring that the vineyards will be destroyed show

plainly that Amos did not approve of the husbandman of his day. (cf. 5:17, 7:1-2, 8:1-2).

A further indication of this is that Amos does not specify the varieties of grain and wine that were cultivated in Palestine. He speaks in the most general terms of the vineyards, and says nothing at all about grain, except to use in similes some of the processes of handling the grain. Now, it is not like Amos to use general terminology, or vague allusions to things. We find that when he speaks of herding sheep or trimming sycomores, he is very definite in his imagery. The agricultural life has a remoteness for Amos which must lead us to believe that his knowledge of it came from casual observation. It is the acquaintance that any shepherd might have had, and not the intimate knowledge of one who has had long personal contact with the cultivation of the fields.

Far more characteristic of Amos is his reference to wormwood, a bitter herb. "Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast righteousness to the ground." (5:7) and "That ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood." (6:12b) are figures revealing the undersirableness of the plant. It grows mostly in the interior tablelands, especially in the deserts. This is in keeping with Amos' residende in the wilderness of Tekoa, and with the uncultivated growth which is found there.

Two other occupations are mentioned which may well be a part of Amos' life. "That ye shall be taken away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks." (4:2b) is a fine figure taken from the life of a fisherman. The nearest body of water to the region around Tekoa is the Dead Sea. But this is not a likely place for extensive fishing, since it is far below the sea level. Its high salt content would also preclude the existence of large quantities of fish in its waters. However, the lower Jordan or the Mediterranean Sea are likely spots for fishing. Whether or not Amos ever experienced this activity, he certainly knew something about it.

Bird trapping also is within the realm of his knowledge. In 3:5, we read: "Will a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where there is no lure for it? Will a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?" Evidently, the trap is some sort of net arrangement which springs up when the bird enters it, to eat the bait. This may have been a source of food, which would be a welcome change from a diet of meat, and vegetables.

That Amos had little or no home life would be a logical deduction from the nature of his occupation, and from the wilderness environment in which he lived. Constantly exposed to the weather conditons, the fields where he pastured his flocks served as his bed. His denunciation

of those who lounged upon couches is in keeping with this. Woe to them "that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches" (6:4, also 3:12 emended). Any home that he might have known was of the poorest sort. This we can see from the picture of the man fleeing before the lion and the bear, who "went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him." (5:19) There were no furnishings in the interior--not even a place to sit down. The man leans against the wall to rest himself from his exertions. It is suggested that the walls of this house were of loose stones, and that the serpent entered through the crevises. Such houses, of one room, are known to have existed in Biblical times.

A home life implies a family, and there is good reason to believe that the shepherd Amos had practically no family ties. It is interesting to note that the name of his father is not mentioned in the superscription, or elsewhere in the book. He is merely identified as "Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa." Evidently, his father's name was not preserved. Of the other prophets, the majority are mentioned as the son of so-and-so. The exceptions are: Micah the Morashtite, Nahum the Elkashite, Habakkuk and Haggai "HaNabi", and Malachi, which is evidently not a name but a pseudonym meaning "My Messenger". We can not place too much significance on this fact without research too extensive to be covered in this thesis, and call attention

to it as a possible clue, supporting the rest of the evidence.

Furthermore, there is a complete absence of reference to his own family, and but scant reference to family life in general. This, too, would seem to indicate that Amos had very little contact with a home environment. He speaks of the pregnant women of Gilead, whom the Ammonites ripped up during their invasion of the land (1:13), condemns the man and his father who go unto the same maid at the sanctuary (2:7). These alone may be understood to reflect any family relationship, and they are indeed remote. Perhaps we may add the reference in 3:1-2 to the family (המשפחה) which God brought out of Egypt, and the families of the earth (משפחות האדמה) of whom God knew only Israel. But the word is used more in the sense of clan than family. Again in 4:1, the women of luxurious tastes say to their husbands (לאדניהם): "Bring, that we may feast." It is interesting that the word אדון is used rather than the more usual בעל or איש. However, this single reference to married life is insignificant so far as Amos' own personal history is concerned.

Incidentally, at the time Amos wrote his book, he was no longer a young man. He does not even consider himself to be young! This is evident when he says: "In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst." (8:13) And in other verses, too, he appears to be an older man speaking to youth. E.g. 5:2 personifies Israel as a virgin. His experience, too, is great, and his attitudes are mature.

Not only was Amos' life without family associations, but his contacts with men in general were few. Sparse as was the vegetation of the wilderness, so sparsely was the region inhabited by men. In such a place, it must have been very lonely. In fact, Amos asks rhetorically: "Will two walk together, except they have agreed?" (3:3). If one were to see two people walking together in the wild moorlands of Tekoa, it may be inferred that they had come together as the result of a previous appointment. Amos lived almost entirely with nature, rarely with human beings.

But midst the roars of the hungry lions we hear the shouts of men. The clouds of the atmosphere give way before the clouds of battle. The shofar sounds its warning note, and men prepare for the clash of arms. Amos evidently came in contact with military affairs. He has probably witnessed the activities of the troops in the field, and might conceivably have participated in them himself. The natural pass between the central plateau of Judea and the region beyond the Jordan was by way of the Wilderness of Tekoa, where an army might travel with some ease. The other passes are far too steep. According to George Adam Smith's Historical Geography (page 272), this was the route used by the Moabites and Ammonites, with other allies, when they invaded Judea during the reign of Jehoshaphat, 875-851 B.C.E. The story of this invasion is found in II Chronicles 20.

"Shall the horn be blown in the city, and the people not tremble?" asks Amos (3:6). He visualizes the city, surrounded by its walls, with the watchman at the gates. At the approach of the enemy, the shofar is sounded as a warning to the inhabitants, causing consternation among the residents. (בעיר is emended to בשער, giving us the reading "Shall the horn be blown at the gate.") The tumult of a battle mixed with the warning notes of the shofar is also presented in 2:2: "And Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the horn." We can imagine the attacking force loudly proclaiming their victory, or shouting their battle cry, as they rush toward the city to engage it in combat. It seemed to Amos like the rush of a hurricane, as he says: "With shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind." (1:14) The onslaught will level all before it like the destructive storm wind. These figures are so highly imaginative, that Amos must have seen something of the battle. His description is evidently based on a personal experience with an attack, and most likely, as an attacker. If he were subjected to the attack himself, he would have portrayed the fear of the victims.

In fact, we find that the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel was one of peace for the land. During this time, the warfare of Israel was offensive. Their troops raided the surrounding countries. This is evident from Amos 5:3; "For thus saith

the Lord God: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left, of the house of Israel." The use of the verb "that went forth" יצא in connection with troops implies an offensive war, beyond the boundaries of the country. For this usage, we may turn to Deuteronomy 20, wherein the legislation concerning troops in the field is set forth. "When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies....the officers shall speak unto the people saying: 'What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it." And similar provision is made for the man that hath planted a vineyard and hath not used the fruit thereof, and the man that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her, and the man that is faint-hearted and fearful. Surely, this refers to offensive war, and in defending the home, no such exemptions would be made.

A further interesting fact brought out by this verse is that the military units were furnished by the towns and villages. This superceded the earlier practice of basing enrollment upon the tribes and families. Each city would call the male population to supply its quota of soldiers.

Additional support for the idea of offensive warfare is to be found in 4:10: "Your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have

made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils." A camp is part of an army operating in the field, whereas an army of defense would be quartered within the walls of a city. The stench may be from the corpses of slain soldiers after a battle, as they lay unburied on the ground. This would indicate Amos' intimate knowledge of military affairs, too.

The sword is the chief implement of killing in warfare. Combat must have been person-to-person, in a sort of duel, or free-for-all. "And I will slay the residue of them with the sword; There shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape." (9:1) This seems to picture the army in flight, retreating before its enemies. Perhaps, the soldiers are even being slain from the rear.

Cavalry horses appear to have been used in battle. Nowhere in the Bible are horses mentioned as being used for agriculture. The running horses of Amos 6:12 could not be plowing, and would also seem to be for fighting purposes: "Do horses run upon the rock?" Certainly this is unnatural and absurd. Horses would be used in the level valleys, where they could run with ease. Kennett (Robert Hatch: Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as Indicated in Law, Narrative, and Metaphor, page 59) says that the Hebrew originally fought on foot, possessing no cavalry. Later they emulated their neighbors by incorporating horses in their fighting units, and thereby called forth the indignant protests of the prophets.

The cruel treatment of prisoners of war can be seen from the way the Syrians treated the Gileadites: (1:3) "Because they have threshed Gilead with sledges of iron." The prisoners may have been placed upon the ground, and the threshing sledges toothed with iron or basalt drawn over them as though they were grain. And the women of Gilead who were with child were ripped up by the Ammonites (1:13). Such cruelty, shocking as it may seem to us today, appears to have been practiced in the time of Amos. We have not way of knowing whether he actuallly witnessed the incidents or not, but he certainly was familiar with them, as examples of the way military campaigns were conducted. Similarly, the Moabites burned the bones of the King of Edom to lime (2:1), pursuing their fallen adversary even to the grave. Such offenses against the dead must even then have been considered impious, and a shocking indignity.

But for Amos, military affairs extended beyond swords and shouting of an attack, and cruelties inflicted upon the enemy. Most of his figures of speech are synecdoches: he uses the part to represent the whole. Here, too, the individual battles to which he refers are part of a wider conflict. He envisages the general political scene of his day in the region around Palestine. It is in this broad view of political life that he transcends the boundaries of Israel and Judah and reaches out to the peripheral nations.

The exordium of Amos' sermon in chapters 1 and 2 sets forth the sins of the surrounding nations. These sins are all military and political. Damascus, which stands for the country of Syria, has crushed Gilead, some 30 or 40 miles southward. (1:3-5) This appears to have taken place during the reign of Benhadad III (circum 800-750 B.C.E.), which would be contemporaneous with Amos' lifetime. Amos knows that Benhadad is the son of Hazael, who founded a new dynasty in Syria when he came to the throne as successor to Benhadad II. Interestingly enough, this is the only case where Amos appears to be familiar with the ruler of the country. Except for this reference to Benhadad III, son of Hazael, he uses the name of the capital city, or of the country, but does not refer to the actual ruler. This may strike us as strange. It may imply something definite about the political situation of the time: that Israel has political relations only with Damascus, and that the other neighbors did not have any close association with Israel. Therefore the names of their rulers were not commonly known to the people.

Next to receive the condemnation of Amos is Philistia. Gaza, its largest city, stands for the whole country, though in the following verses (1:6-8) the other important cities are also mentioned: Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron. The Philistines are accused of carrying away captives and delivering them to Edom. Just what incident this refers to is not

altogether certain, but as in the case of the sins of Damascus, we may assume that it was contemporaneous with the life of Amos. Perhaps it refers to the slave traffic which existed between the nations, or to a military campaign in which the prisoners were sold as captives. However, in the latter case, it is likely that Amos would have referred to the country which was attacked, and since he does not do so, the former case seems more probable.

The Ammonites may have supported the Syrians in their campaign against Gilead, and the lands east of the Jordan, according to the testimony of 1:13-15. Ammon lies to the south of Gilead and the land would have been crushed as between the jaws of a vise by the alliance of Syrian and Ammonite forces. Little wonder that the picture of the horrible treatment of the Gileadites still is fresh in the memory of the Israelites! And finally, Moab is rebuked for having burned the bones of the King of Edom to lime (2:1-3). This incident, too, can not be exactly identified, but refers to a war between the two countries to the east of the Dead Sea.

We may be surprised at the fact that none of these incidents has any direct connection with either Israel or Judah. Only the surrounding nations are mentioned. However, if we recall that under Jereboam II, Israel was prosperous, and that she was not invaded by foreign foes, then we can understand that Israel was herself an aggressor, and had no grievance to which

Amos might allude. Her own atrocities, if she committed any, were taken for granted ~~as a matter of course~~. It is always the enemy who is cruel and barbarous!

Furthermore, the political events concerning the surrounding nations must have been common knowledge. Not only did Amos know the facts which he sets forth in the exordium, but they were also known to the inhabitants of the country. He presents a picture familiar to all in his exordium in order to gain their sympathetic attention for his later remarks. Of course, all of the facts cited by Amos need not have been known among the populace generally, but at least a certain familiarity must have existed, or else the references would not have awakened the response in the people which Amos desired. That he should have chosen to use these countries as examples indicates his interest in, and observation of, political phenomena, was greater than that of average man of his age.

Whether these facts were embodied in any literature, or were known through tales spread abroad by word of mouth can not be concluded on the face of the verses themselves, nor is it particularly important for our purposes to ascertain this. But it is significant that the people had some knowledge of these things. Both the dwellers of the city and the shepherds out in the fields were familiar with the political circumstances. It may be suggested, however, that since all types of people apparently knew these things, it came through hearsay, rather than through literature, because

it is not likely that more than a small minority of the people could read. Caravans and commercial interchange were probably the chief means of scattering such information from one country to another. Thus ~~could~~ military victories and defeats became the subject of daily conversation among the people.

Of course, there remains the possibility that Amos obtained his knowledge by direct contact with the peoples of the surrounding nations. He may have visited them. But the remoteness of this possibility is evident from the absence of any reference to their social life. Had Amos visited any of the other countries, he would have known that conditions there were similar to those prevailing in Israel, and would have condemned them likewise. But to Amos, those other countries were only political entities. He does not present them as one who had had intimate relations with them, and who has witnessed their mode of living. Coupled with the conclusions regarding the extent of his travels, we may eliminate a visit to the surrounding lands from all consideration.

Yet, another possibility remains to be considered: Since the political situation is brought out in the exordium of the sermon for the purpose of arousing the interest of his hearers in what he is about to say about conditions in their own land, Amos confines his remarks to political facts with which all the audience can agree.

However, an examination of the imagery of the book as a whole strongly supports the idea that Amos did not know the surrounding nations intimately, and this possibility, too, has no validity.

The sins of the nations will not go unpunished. Just as these sins are political and military in their nature, so shall be the punishment for these offenses. "So will I send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad; and I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from Bikath-aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Beth-eden; and the people of Aram shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord." (1:4-5) This formula, with variations, is also applied to each of the other countries. (1:7-8, 1:14-15, 2:2-3) In each case the idea is the same: political subjection will come to the land, the ruler will be dethroned, and the people will be sent into exile.

"I will send a fire into...and it will consume the palaces of..." is a figure for the destructive force of a war which breaks down the defenses. The walled cities with their palaces of fortress-like construction will be overthrown, and the capital will be taken by the enemy. "By fire is meant the flame of war, which, partly by literal conflagrations, partly by other destructive operations, works devastation far and near." (Driver, S.R.: The Books of Joel and Amos, page 131; cf. Numbers 21:28, Judges 9:20, Deuteronomy 4:27,

32:22 for similar usage). The bar of Damascus (1:5) refers to the gate of the fortified city. This will yield before the attackers, who will enter the city and subjugate it. In other words, the attacking force will be thoroughly victorious and no manner of defense shall be able to withstand its onslaught.

Whom does Amos consider strong enough to conquer all these nations? Might he have in mind the rising power of the Assyrians? If so, we must credit him with considerable political vision. He must have detected some rumblings which foreshadowed the rise of this people to the east, and anticipated its successful invasion of the surrounding countries.

And yet, Amos was not a politician, if we mean by that term one who has intimate contacts with the court of the king. He sees the outward splendor of the royal court, with its palaces and its retinues. He pictures the ruler as a typical military despot, with his army, his walled cities, and his citadels. The sceptre is the symbol of authority (1:5, 8). The court has its princes and officers (1:15, 2:3). He views it all as a grand pageant. The king is only a symbol, a word, and not a personality. To him the rise and fall of kingdoms is much like a game of chess--a sort of diversion unrelated to the actualities of daily living. However, the political independence of the country is connected with the sinfulness or uprightness of the inhabitants. When

the nation is sinful, it must be punished. The country will be swept by enemy troops, who will carry off the populace into exile. But this punishment is not the working of man. It is in the divine province and is controlled by God. The king appears to be a mystical being having some immediate connection with the divine plan for ruling the universe. God's wrath appears not only in the flashes of lightning, and in the tempest, but in the whirlwind of battle. Political life and nature alike are manifestations of God. Famine and drought, plague and earthquake, seasons and climatic conditions are God's doings, just as are the movements of armies, and their defeats or victories. Impending political events have an inevitability - which marks them as above the realm of man's power. The destiny of nations can not be manipulated as the shepherd handles his flocks, unless it is God who is the shepherd of the nations.

But while the sins of the surrounding nations are political in nature, those which Amos attributes to the Israelites are social. "Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father go unto the same maid, to profane My holy name; And they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of them that have been fined." (2:6-8) Oppression of the poor and other injustices, sexual perversions in connection with the

religious cult, drinking in the sanctuary of wine gained at the expense of the poor through persecuting and oppressing them, and lying on borrowed garments which have been taken as a pledge and which have not been returned to the poor borrower for the night are the offenses for which Israel will be made to suffer punishment.

Amos himself can hardly have been wealthy, from what we know of his circumstances, and he is thoroughly sympathetic to the poor. He speaks of them as the righteous under-dogs who are trampled by the wealthy. "Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." (2:6, and in modified form in 8:6) shows the kind of treatment the poor men receive. If a man could not pay a debt, he was sold into slavery. "A man who could not pay, could not simply declare himself bankrupt and suffer merely an impairment of credit. If he failed to meet his obligation, there was the man himself and--it is regrettably but undeniably true--there were those who belonged to him, and the heavy hand of the creditor fell upon all of them...If then out of the sale of his property or out of the contributions of his kin, he could pay the debt, he might claim to be released. Otherwise he remained in slavery until such redemption took place." (Radin, Max: The Life of the People in Biblical Times, pages 56-57). However, the right of redemption was negated if the creditor sold his human security, and it is against this sale that Amos speaks.

We can well imagine Amos' visiting the city of Beth-el, or perhaps Gilgal or Samaria, where he stood watching the slave market. Some poor devil who owed a trifle, so little as a worthless pair of shoes, is sold into slavery, and his wife and children with him. No wonder he speaks of this man as "righteous" and feels that a grave injustice is being done. "That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the humble." (2:7): The perversion of justice has reached a point where the wealthy can do pretty much as they please, and the poor man stands no chance. He can grovel in the earth, for all they care. Justice, which should be deemed sweet and beneficial, has become turned to poison and bitterness in the hands of the unscrupulous. (5:7, 6:12). True justice is contemplated when Amos asks that it flow forth like water in a perennial stream (5:24). He thinks of justice as something refreshing and sustaining to life, in contrast to the destructive and poisonous justice which he sees being administered throughout the land.

And what is the result of all this oppression? Amos sees it when he goes to the cities of Israel. There, are wealth and luxury. In contrast to his own humble circumstances, he sees the self-indulgent "oppressors" with their summer houses and winter houses, the walls of which are inlaid with ivory panels (3:15), who "sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, or on silken cushions of a bed" (3:12)

"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that thrum on the psaltery, that devise for themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls and annoint themselves with the chief ointments." (6:4-6). That the social conditions are thus represented in terms of physical objects indicates Amos' interest in the comfortable circumstances of the wealthy, which he lacked in his own rustic existence, and ~~which~~ which he looked upon with suspicion when possessed by others. These comforts, seemingly gained at the expense of the poor, stood for injustice to Amos, and for this readon he deplores them.

But the social abuses and oppressions have other implications. "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say unto their lords: 'Bring, that we may drink.'" (4:1) The drinking of wine is assailed by Amos. This is associated with the other abuses, in-so-far as the wine is bought with money gained by oppressing the poor. The self-indulgent ladies of Samaria urge on their husbands in order to supply them with wine. "And they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of them that have been fined." (2:8) Thus their abuses are carried into the very precincts of the sanctuary, and moral degeneration

becomes religious degeneration. Garments taken as pledges are used for the self-indulgence practiced by the carnally-minded Israelites in the name of religion, at the expense of the poor. They lie down at the sanctuary with partners in sin beside the altars, reposing on garments taken in pledge from the poor, which they have neglected to return before nightfall.

Now this is in contravention of the law in Exodus 22:26f which provides that: "If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious." This law is part of the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 21-23, and it was evidently being ignored in the time of Amos. He himself is familiar with the law, and opposes its violation. And in the previous verse, we find (Exodus 22:25): "If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall you lay upon him interest." This law, too, was violated by those who sold their fellow-men into slavery. It seems that Amos is a staunch supporter of this legislation, which was not being observed in his day. Evidently, the whole code was known to him. This Israelite document, promulgated about a century before Amos preached, is part of his background. It indicates that Amos spent considerable time in the northern

kingdom. Furthermore, his detailed knowledge of the social and religious conditions prevalent there supports this view.

Although these abuses do take place in the sanctuary, Amos is not opposed to the sacrificial cult per se. When he says: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings, I will not accept them; Nietner will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts." (5:21-22) it is not to the cult that Amos objects, but to the hypocrisy which is involved in it. The oppressors and perverters of justice observe the sacrifial obligations, thus hoping to escape punishment for their wrong doings. They use the sanctuaries as a cloak of respectability, hiding beneath it their abuses of the moral standards and ethical principles of their day. Thus do they say: "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the sabbath that we may set forth corn? Making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances of deceit." (8:5). The sabbaths and new moons were observed by suspending trade, but the grasping Israelite merchants kept closed their shops not out of religious feeling, but because they could not flaunt their non-observance of religion before the world. Thus, for Amos, the sin is not the sacrifice at the altar, but the perversions which go with the cult. If it were the sacrifices to which he objected,

we might expect him to condemn the high places also, but he says nothing about them. Nor does he refer to the presence of the calf in the sanctuary. The priests tolerated the physical pleasures and other abuses in the sanctuaries to increase their own emoluments, perhaps, and it is against these corrupt practices that Amos preaches.

Though Amos himself is not a Nazarite, there are a number of indications that he was subject to Nazaritic influences. For one thing, he objects to the drinking of wine, and he predicts the destruction of the vineyards. "Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof." (5:11) says the prophet. And in the verses cited above (2:8, 4:1, 6:6, 6:8) he speaks against the wine-drinking of the wealthy Israelites. Among the sins of the nation, he enumerates; "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? Saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets saying: "Prophesy not.'" (2:11-12). And in general, his views are those of a Judean shepherd who upholds the Yahwistic practices, and opposes the Baal cult.

Neither is Amos a professional prophet, as he himself states to Amaziah: "I am no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son." (7:14). He is not identified with those groups who used the prophetic technique as a source of livlihood. Amos has lived

a rugged life in the wilderness. He has seen the operation of the divine law in nature. He is a thorough-going realist. When he visited the cities of Israel, and saw the wrong-doing in the sanctuaries, he contemplated these matters, and felt keenly the injustice of it all. Thus came to him the urge to speak out against injustice, and to make his brilliant plea for righteousness: "The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (3:8).

H O S E A

H O S E A

There is much less definiteness among the writers who treat of Hosea's life than there is among those who deal with Amos. The picture which they present is not at all clear, except on the single point of his married life. The reason for this is to be found in the character of the book itself. There are fewer direct statements to aid the analyst, and the indirect references which it contains are far more obscure. While the Book of Amos has an internal unity, Hosea is very disjointed, and often corrupt. The critical commentaries have a difficult time ~~of it~~ trying to reconstruct the original text of Hosea. None-the-less, a thorough study of his literary imagery reveals a fairly clear picture of the man and his background.

It is readily apparent that Hosea was a resident of the Kingdom of Israel. Like his older contemporary, his preaching and the conditions which he described applied to the Northern Kingdom. In some two dozen verses there are direct references to Israel (3:1,4. 4:15,16. 5:1,3,5,9. 6:10. 8:2,3,6,8. 9:1,7,10. 10:1,3,6,9, 11:1,8. 12:13. 13:1,9.). Ephraim, the name of the tribe inhabiting the southern part of the kingdom, is frequently used by Hosea synonymously with Israel. In verses with an obvious parallelism, Israel appears in one half of the verse, and Ephraim in the other

(5:3,5,9. 7:1. 10:6. 11:8. 12:1. 13:1.). The names also appear in consecutive verses where they have an interchangeable meaning (4:16-17. 8:8-9,11. 9:1,3. 9:7-8. 9:10-11. 9:13-14. 10:9,11. 11:1,3. 12:1-2.). Ephraim stands alone in a few cases, but even here, it is obviously the Northern Kingdom that is meant. (5:11,12;13,14. 6:4. 7:8,11. 9:16. 12:9. 13:12.).

There are a number of references to Judah which must receive consideration. The majority of them appear as parallels to Ephraim (5:10,12,13,14. 6:4,11. 10:11.). It will be noted that most of these are cases where Ephraim does not stand in direct proximity to Israel. By simply substituting Israel for Judah in these verses, the difficulty is readily overcome. The change to Judah probably crept in at a later time, at the hand of a Judaistic editor. There are some who say that the change may have been made by Hosea himself when he retired to Judah to write his book. However, this theory is hardly tenable. It is not likely that the author would introduce Judah into his prophecies simply by alluding to it in passages which deal with conditions in Israel. He would not change the text in this way without writing a whole section concerning Judah. Of the remaining verses which mention Judah, (1:7. 2:2. 4:15a. 5:5bβ.) the commentaries say that they are later additions which are to be deleted.

Samaria is used synonymously with Israel and Ephraim: "When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, for they commit falsehood." (7:1). It is the capital of Israel: "As for Samaria, her king is cut off." (10:7) and appears to be used in a synecdoche to represent the whole kingdom. Similarly, it may mean the whole kingdom in 8:5-6: "Thy calf, O Samaria, is cast off; Mine anger is kindled against them; How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? For from Israel is even this: The craftsman made it, and it is no God; Yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in shivers." Or these verses might conceivably convey the idea that the city of Samaria contains a sanctuary. In 10:5 it is probably the kingdom which is meant: "The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in dread for the calves of Beth Aven" for in this context it refers to the destruction of the political power of Israel by Assyria. Therefore, we need not assume that Hosea ever visited the city of Samaria on the basis of these references.

The Valley of Jezreel to the north of Samaria, the capital, is a rich agricultural district, perhaps the richest in the land. It is mentioned by Hosea as the name of his son in 1:4-5, where he gives it symbolic meaning in connection with the impending overthrow of the kingdom. Therefore, it, too, has no significance for the locale of Hosea's life.

Chapter 10, verse 5 also introduced to us the name Beth Aven, which appears to refer to a sanctuary. This name is generally assumed to be an allusion to Amos 5:5, which reads: "And Beth-el shall come to nought." ובית אל יגיע לאון: From this it is inferred that Beth Aven is really Beth El and Hosea had the verse in Amos in mind when he deliberately chose this play on the name. However, such an assumption is not necessary. There is a region to the east of Beth El which is known as the Wilderness of Beth Aven. Hosea 10:8 may be a reference to this wilderness: "The high places also of Aven shall be destroyed, even the sin of Israel. The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; And they shall say to the mountains: 'Cover us', and to the hills: 'Fall on us.'" The sanctuary town of Beth El might also have been known by the name of Beth Aven, and the two names may be as interchangeable as Israel and Ephraim. Joshua 7:2 says: "And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Beth-el." Now Ai is located about two miles to the southeast of Beth-el, and the Wilderness of Beth Aven passes between the towns of Ai and Beth-el. This would seem to confirm the idea that Hosea uses the name of the wilderness for the sanctuary town which borders on it, and indicates a certain amount of knowledge of this region.

Amos 5:5 suggests to us another verse from Hosea. Amos says: "But seek not Beth-el nor enter into Gilgal." Compare this to Hosea 4:15, which reads: "And come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven." This coupling of the two sanctuaries in an admonition has a striking resemblance which may be more than accidental. However, we need not assume that Hosea knew of Amos' utterance, for it may have been a common saying of the time among the prophetic groups, or among the people. The use of 'come' אבא in connection with Gilgal is most interesting. It may only be used as another verb in parallel with "neither go ye up to Beth-aven." But the wording of this verse seems to hint that the prophet is actually speaking in Gilgal, just as Amos delivered his message at Beth El. Gilgal is condemned by Hosea again in 9:15 and 12:12. At least we must conclude that Hosea knows the sanctuaries at Beth El and Gilgal, the chief sanctuaries of his day.

Two other cities in the vicinity are mentioned: Gibeah and Ramah. In 5:8, we read; "Blow ye the horn in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah; Sound an alarm at Beth-aven: 'Behind thee, O Benjamin!'" These hill-top cities lie along the border between Israel and Judah, a few miles south of Beth El, somewhat to the north of Jerusalem, and 15 or 20 miles due west of Gilgal. They are all in the same general region, which is collectively known as Benjamin. It is here that Hosea reveals his greatest knowledge of

geography. When we consider, also, that Ephraim is the specific name for the territory immediately to the north of this region, and is closely associated with it, then it would seem most probable that Hosea's life was spent here.

Additional place names are Tabor, Mizpah, and Gilead. "For ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." (5:1) refers to Mt. Mizpah, the location of which is uncertain, but generally assumed to be in Gilead, and to Mt. Tabor, just north of the Valley of Jezreel. However, there is also a Mizpah in Benjamin which plays a leading role in history on a number of occasions, and there seems to be no reason for not identifying the reference in 5:1 with this place. Gilead, mentioned in 6:8 and 12:12 is rather obscure, also, and is variously identified as the city of Mizpah, capital of Gilead; and as the region of Gilead in the Transjordan territory. On the basis of these references, we can come to no conclusions, except that they suggest the range of Hosea's knowledge of Palestinian geography.

Egypt and Assyria are mentioned side by side as the foreign powers to whom Israel appeals for help (7:11. 9:3. 11:5. 12:2.). Assyria is mentioned alone (5:13. 8:9. 10:6.) and Egypt, too, (7:16. 11:1.) with the same idea in mind. These verses point to the political conditions of the time, which must have been generally known. Only in one case do

we find anything which indicated tat Hosea knew about life in a country outside of Israel. If the text is correct, 9:6 says: "Yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them." According to Harper (William Rainey: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, page 330.), "In this description reference is made to the numerous and vast burial grounds of Egypt, one of the largest being at Memphis. Memphis occupied an important position on the Nile, a short distance south of Cairo, whence it commanded the whole of Egypt, of which it was the most important city during the greater part of its existence." Beyond this one verse we have nothing of any significance.

Egypt is cited three more times in connection with the story of the Exodus (12:10, 14. 13:4.). This seems to have been a common tradition in those days, and from it we can deduce nothing of consequence concerning Hosea's place of residence, or of his travels.

What is the character of the land where Hosea lived? No doubt, it was a fertile district, where cultivation of the soil was the chief occupation. The fields yielded luxuriant growths. Grains and grapes were abundant. Repeatedly do we find reference to the various kinds of produce: "For she did not know that it was I that gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil,..Therefore will I take back My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will snatch away My wool and My flax." (2:10-11)

"And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees." (2:14) "For she hath said: 'I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.'" (2:7). But the references to agriculture are not confined to Chapter 2 alone. In 4:11, we read: "Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away the heart." In 7:14: "They assemble themselves for corn, and wine, they rebel against Me." In 10:1: "Israel was a luxuriant vine, which put forth fruit freely; As his fruit increased, he increased his altars; The more goodly his land was, the more goodly were his pillars." And in 9:10: "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her season." Here the imagery is quite vivid. Hosea must have come from an agricultural background where the land was fertile and was cultivated intensively. The very variety of produce mentioned indicates how thoroughly familiar he is with the vineyard and the grain field. Wheat, corn, barley, and flax, wine, new wine, and figs are specified in the different verses. This can only be the writing of an active husbandman.

Furthermore, he clearly sets forth the processes connected with the cultivation of grain. Plowing, sowing, reaping, and threshing are familiar to him. "Ephraim is a heifer well broken, that loveth to thresh, and I have passed over upon her fair neck; I will make Ephraim to ride, (Israel) shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods. Sow to yourselves

according to righteousness, reap according to mercy, break up your fallow ground; For it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and cause righteousness to rain upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies: For thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men." (10:11-13). Here we see the plowing of the ground to prepare it for sowing. When the grain is ripe, the reapers gather the sheaves. Then it is threshed by the hoofs of young oxen, apparently for them a pleasurable task. Similarly, in 8:7: "They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; It hath no stalk, the bud that shall yield no meal." The character of the seed determines the fruit. Threshing is further described in 13:3: "As the chaff that is driven with the wind out of the threshing floor." Additional imagery in 3:2, 9:1, 9:16, and elsewhere in the book shows that Hosea had an intimate working knowledge of agricultural methods. From this we may assume that he was a grower of grain and a planter of grapes. Though his occupation is nowhere mentioned, such a conclusion seems warranted on the basis of the imagery.

The animals mentioned by Hosea are almost entirely domestic, a further indication of the character of his background. "For Israel is like a stubborn heifer; Now shall the Lord feed them as a lamb in a large place?" (4:16). The cow and the lamb are found among the husbandmen, and the figure points to a prosperous farmer. The feeding in a wide pasture

signifies luxuriant fields. Similar imagery appears in 5:6: "With their flocks and with their herds they shall go to seek the Lord." and in 4:3: "Therefore doth the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein doth languish, with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven; Yea, the fishes of the sea are also taken away." Surely this is not the voice of a shepherd. The language which uses flocks and herds and fowl is that of a 'gentleman farmer'. Care of a domestic animal is indicated in 11:4: "And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I fed them gently." Perhaps the animal has been used for plowing, and at feeding time he is relieved of the yoke.

How different such a life must have been from one spent in the wilderness! Hosea looked upon the wilderness as the most undesirable sort of place. Thus we read: "Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst." (2:3) The wilderness is a barren place, lacking in water and stripped naked of vegetation. It is an unproductive region, in contrast to the cultivated lands where vegetation flourished. Though Amos could live there with his sheep, Hosea could not make his living there, for he depends upon the fertility of the soil. One does not expect to find grapes in the wilderness, for: "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw

your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first season." (9:10) The dry quality of such a region is again shown in 13:5: "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." But most interesting of all the verses is 13:15: "For though he be fruitful among the reed-plants, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord coming up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up; He shall spoil the treasure of all precious vessels." The east wind is the scorching Sirocco. It comes from the east or southeast, out of the desert. This is significant for the geography of Hosea. He must have been to the west of the wilderness, or to its northwest. The use of 'up' points to a more northerly position with reference to the wilderness, as in the case of coming up out of Egypt. Just what does the wilderness refer to here? The wilderness of Sinai? In such case, Hosea is thinking of the whole land of Israel in relation to Sinai, which is a rather broad and general geographical concept. It would be the conception of a man who is quite cosmopolitan. This does not seem very probable for Hosea, who refers not at all to the surrounding nations. He knows only Israel. Egypt and Assyria are mentioned because of the political situation, without involving direct knowledge of these lands. Hence this idea does not seem probable.

Furthermore, wildernesses exist in various parts of Palestine. They may be found in the midst of cultivated areas, as well as

in regions of transition from cultivated land to desert. The wilderness of Beth Aven is conceivable as the point of reference. Hosea is apparently acquainted with this area. Or some other such place may be intended. We can not reach any definite conclusion on this point beyond that Hosea knows the character of a wilderness, that he may have visited one, and that he had not lived there for any length of time.

The sirocco itself does not trouble Hosea greatly. He was probably well sheltered from its effects, so that he did not experience the full strength of it. With adequate water supply and a luxuriant growth of vegetation in the fields which could withstand some parching, Hosea took the wind more or less for granted, as something which occurred but did not work any particular hardship. Thirst and dryness do not appear to have affected him, for he alludes to them only impersonally. In fact, 6:4 and 13:3 speak of an abundant dew in the early morning, which passes away when the sun becomes hot. "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that early passeth away." (13:3).

Wild animals, too, do not affect him. We read: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of (Israel); I, even I, will tear and go away, and there shall be none to deliver." (5:14). "They shall walk after the Lord, who shall roar like a lion; For He shall roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west." (11:10)

This is not so very convincing. He seems to know wild animals rather intimately.

And: "Therefor am I become unto them as a lion; As a leopard will I watch by the way; I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the enclosure of their heart; And there will I devour them like a lioness, the wild beast shall tear them." (13:7-8) The lion roars and tears, and the bear and the leopard threaten man. Yet, these animals do not seem very fearsome to Hosea, and it is doubted whether they caused him any harm.

In general, Hosea seems to live a fairly comfortable life. He was able to clothe his wife in flaxen and woolen garments. He supplied her with wine, corn, and other delicacies. (2:7, 10, 11, 15.), "And she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels." (2:15). The vineyards which Amos declared to be the possession of the wealthy are part of Hosea's life. When Hosea rebuked the princes saying: "The princes of (Israel) are like them that remove the landmark," (5:10), he implied that he himself was a landowner, who resents any threatened loss of his property. He makes no protest against the institution of slavery, but takes it for granted. He merely pays the price to buy back his wife, and lets it pass as an accepted institution of his day. "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley." (3:2). This seems to have represented the standard price for the redemption of a slave. He may even have owned slaves himself, and had them work his fields and vineyards for him. Poverty,

and the social abuses against which Amos so strongly protests receive no mention from Hosea. Nowhere does he show the signs of sympathy for the poor, the oppressed, the needy. His outlook is that of a man of wealth, who himself does not suffer privation.

His economic status is further indicated by the type of home life which he had. When, in 9:6, he says: "Thorns shall be in their tents," he has in mind the nomads of the fields, whose life contrasts with his own settled existence. And in 12:10: "I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents," refers to the nomadic life which God will bring upon the people as a punishment. He looked down upon the nomadic shepherds as being of a lower social stratum.

The whole first three chapters of his book, and large portions of the rest reveal the importance of the home and the family for Hosea. Even if we assume that the story of his wife's unfaithfulness is pure fiction, it none-the-less indicates that Hosea had a strong interest in home life, or he would not have chosen it as an example. Yet there is adequate reason for believing that the incidents recorded in Chapters 1-3 are true and come from actual experiences. While the names of the children are allegorical, that of Gomer the daughter of Diblaim is a genuine name, without symbolic meaning. If the story as a whole were an allegory, we would certainly expect Gomer to have a name indicative of her character.

The story itself has a number of interesting points regarding marriage and family relations. The marriage is presented in this simple fashion: "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim." It appears that Hosea himself arranged the marriage, and not his father. All the way through, he is the master of his own destiny, acting from choice, or as he relates it, from Divine direction. There may have been a dowry, but Hosea does not mention it. Perhaps to a man of his wealth it was a mere formal arrangement, which was of little consequence, something to be taken as a matter of course. Hosea, and not Gomer, names the children, indicating a patriarchal type of family. (1:4, 6, 9). That Hosea knew of his wife's harlotry at the time of the birth of her second and third children seems likely from the names "Not Beloved" and "Not My Kin." These names are descriptive of Hosea's feelings at the time. Hence we might have expected him to cast her out and punish her for her wrong-doing. However, he allowed her to remain with him, and it is she herself who runs from him after other lovers. One might expect even the greatest of loves to turn to hate or jealousy when one' wife bears two adulterous children, and leaves her husband for another man. Yet in spite of all this, he takes her back. Unbounded love and a very forgiving nature alone could account for this. It could not have been mere sensual passion for the woman, since he does not allow

carnal relations between himself and his wife when she is returned to him.

Certainly Hosea did not have to take back his wife after she had left him, and his action was purely voluntary. He might have permitted her to remain in slavery, without redeeming her, or he could have divorced her for her adultery. Of course, a large dowry could have caused him to hold on to his wife as long a s possible, but since she had created the grounds, it is probable that he could have divorced her or left her in slavery without losing it. And furthermore, Hosea seems to be independently wealthy and not dependent upon his wife's dowry for financial needs. He recognizes the procedure for divorce when he says: "Because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of My house; I will love them no more." (9:15). To drive out of one's house (שלח) is the technical way of expressing divorce in the Hebrew, and as it is used here that is the idea which is meant. God's relation to Israel is that of a husband to his wife. If God would divorce Israel for its wrong-doings, surely Hosea would be justified in driving out his adulterous wife. Yet, he does not once mention anything which might signify such an intention.

The relationship between husband and wife must have been monogamous. This is implicit in the story of Gomer, and also in the relationship between God and Israel. Nowhere does Hosea say anything which might be taken to mean that polygamy is permitted or practiced. He speaks of Gomer as

his wife and of himself as her husband (1:2, 2:4).

The constant reference to harlotry and adultery points to an interest in the home and in the purity of home life. (1:2. 2:4, 7, 11. 4:2, 11, 13, 14, 18.) Of course, this sensitivity to and consciousness of woman's unfaithfulness is probably a direct result of his own unfortunate experience. And yet, the very fact that he takes his own experience to be such a tragedy must mean that before it had occurred he had very definite ideals on the subject of marital fidelity. His own home life as a child must have been rich. Only out of a full and intimate family experience in youth could such strong love as he shows toward Gomer have been born. He has been nurtured in affection and his emotional life has been thoroughly cultivated. The very mention of his father's name in the superscripture (1:1) and of Gomer's father in 1:3 is indicative of an interest in family tradition which fits in with the rest of the imagery.

But even more conclusive on this point is his interest in children, and his tenderness toward his fellowman. One of the severest penalties that Hosea can think of is the dry breast and the unproductive womb. "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; There shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception. Yea, though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there be not a man left." (9:11-12). "Give them, O Lord, whatsoever Thou wilt give; Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." (9:14).

And again he uses the figure of the birth pangs as a severe form of punishment: "The throes of a travailing woman shall come upon him." (13:13). Indeed, all the stages in the process of conception and birth seem known to him. The paternal care of a child is demonstrated in 11:3: "And I, I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms: But they knew not that I healed them." The father aids the struggling infant in its first efforts to stand upright. When the child is injured, the father treats its wounds. Similar figures of speech abound in other parts of the book, but these are sufficient to illustrate Hosea's attitude and to demonstrate that he was a home-loving man.

One further bit of evidence along this line is his reference to the processes of baking. In 7:6-8 we read: "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; (their baker (emend to their anger-- בַּעֲסָם for בֹּקֵר) sleepeth all the night, In the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; All their kings are fallen, there is none among them that calleth unto Me. Ephraim, he mixeth himself with the peoples; Ephraim is become a cake not turned." The Jewish Encyclopedia, article on Oven, informs us that: "The usual word for oven, 'tannur', designates the baking oven...It commonly

consists of a large pot or jar which is half filled with small bricks. These, when properly heated, serve to bake the dough spread over them or stuck to the sides of the jar." The figure of Ephraim mixing himself with peoples means a loss of identity by blending, as when the ingredients of dough are kneeded. The cake which is not turned becomes baked on one side but not on the other. It is not thoroughly done and is 'inconsistent'. All of this relates to baking as a home industry and since it is quite accurate in detail, baking must have been an intimate part of Hosea's experience. Such a picture is also completely in harmony with his agricultural background, for the grain which he raised in the fields became the dough which he baked into cakes.

Hosea has not had intimate contact with military affairs. Perhaps he has seen troops, but they were not in action. He has seen no service in the field, has he nor/participated in military duty. He mentions as weapons the sword and the bow: "They are become like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue." (7:16). Similarly: "They shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up." (14:1). And: "It shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (1:5). In the latter case, the bow is the symbol

of political power. Authority rested in military force. In 5:8, the trumpet and the shofar are cited as warning signals, apparently in case of an invasion: "Blow ye the horn in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah; sound an alarm at Beth-aven: 'Behind thee, O Benjamin!'" It is said that this is a description of an actual battle scene, which Hosea may have witnessed, but there seems to be no evidence to warrant such a conclusion. The alarm is sounded, but we do not see its effect upon the people. There is no action, no feelings of terror or excitement. Only in 10:14 do we see anything of the sort: "Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy hosts, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled." And this single reference does not seem very convincing. The political overthrow is much more vividly expressed in imagery relating to birth, as indicated above.

The political turmoil which existed at this time is very evident in Hosea's writings. Israel feels politically insecure, and bargains with Assyria and Egypt for aid. "And Ephraim saw his sickness, and (Israel) his wound, Ephraim went to Assyria, and (Israel) to King Contentious (emended to many kings: מַלְכֵי רָב for מֶלֶךְ יָרֵב); but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound." (5:13). Such assistance will not avail. Hosea predicts the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. He does not accept government as an indestructible institution.

"And Ephraim is become like a silly dove, without understanding; they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria." (7:11). The dove must have been considered simple, unplanning, flying wherever the will of the moment led it. So, too, the government of Israel was uncertain and impulsive, full of inconsitencies. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." (7:9). The tribute which Israel paid to their foreign allies sapped its strength. "Ephraim striveth after the wind, and followeth after the east wind; all day he multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt." (12:2). All their plans to save the kingdom are in vain, for there is nothing left but a shadow. "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; it hath no stalk, the bud that shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up." (8:7). The same picture runs throughout the book, and additional verses say the same thing.

There can be no doubt as to Hosea's attitude toward the government of the Northern Kingdom.

To him, it is a thoroughly human institution, and he views it with its weaknesses. "For the children of Israel shall sit many days without king and without prince." (3:4) "The princes of (Israel) are like them that remove the landmark; I will pour out My wrath upon them like water." (5:10) "They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. On the day of our king the princes make him sick with the heat of wine, he stretcheth out his hand with scorners. They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen, there is none among them that calleth unto me." (7:3,5,7.). The exact nature of the weaknesses are not very explicit, and we get a general impression of political instability rather than specific acts. Hosea seems to view it from a distance, rather than from a point of immediate contact. Yet the king and the princes seem to be very real persons to him, and not some mysterious power or symbol.

One historical incident does receive the attention of Hosea. In 1:4-5 he says: "Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while and I will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." This refers to the massacre of the family of Ahab in the valley of Jezreel by Jehu in 843 B.C.E., one century earlier. The successors of Jehu were on the throne,

and Hosea thus predicted their overthrow. Apparently Hosea must have had a good opinion of Ahab, and could not have known of his judicial murder of Naboth in the field of the valley of Jezreel.

Among the traditions which appear to have been familiar to Hosea are the Exodus from Egypt, and the wandering in the desert. Concerning the former he says: "But I am the Lord they God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed season." (12:10), "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." (11:1) and "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou knowest no God but Me, and beside Me there is no saviour." (13:4). With regard to the wandering in the wilderness, he says: "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." (13:5) and "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her season; but so soon as they came to Baal-peor, they separated themselves unto the shameful thing, and became detestable like that which they loved." (9:10). Of Sinai, however, he makes no mention. This is in keeping with the idea that the Sinai legislation came later. As a matter of fact, we find in Hosea what appears to be a rudimentary form of the Ten Commandments. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel! For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no

truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. Swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; They break all bounds, and blood toucheth blood." (4:1-2). Comparing these verses with the Decalogue in Exodus 20, we find the following parallelisms:

1. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Exodus 20:2)
   cf. Hosea 12:10 and 13:4 cited above.
2. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me ... (Ex. 20:3-6)
   No exact equivalent in Hosea.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain... (Ex. 20:7). Perhaps the same as "swearing" in Hosea 4:2. means to take an oath by the name of the deity.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy... (Ex. 20:8-11).
   No exact equivalent in Hosea.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother... (Ex. 20:12).
   No exact equivalent in Hosea.
6. Thou shalt not murder: "Killing"
   Thou shalt not commit adultery: "committing adultery"
   Thou shalt not steal: "stealing"
   Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor: "lying" perhaps.

   Here we have a fairly exact parallel between Exodus 20:13 and Hosea 4:2.

The Decalogue of Exodus 20:2-14 is associated with the reforms of Hezekiah about 700 B.C.E., so Hosea preceeds by about 30-40 years. It is possible that Hosea's teaching had some direct or indirect effect upon the production of the Decalogue, though we must admit that Hosea's statement as we have it here is very fragmentary. At least, Hosea recognized evils in his own day which became the subject of legislation later. These conditions are also pictured in other parts of the book. In 7:1 we read: "For they commit falsehood; and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers maketh a raid without." Adultery has already been discussed under Hosea's family life, and the numerous references to the subject are cited there. Murder is mentioned in 6:9. Surely the morality of the people was not all that could be desired. The standards set up by the Decalogue were certainly not the accepted moral standard of Hosea's time to the extent that their violation brought automatic punishment. Hosea had to call attention to the violation, and to point out that they were wrong.

It has been said that Hosea was a priest, or came from a priestly family. In 3:4 he says: "For the children of Israel shall sit solitary many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim." True, this indicates a certain familiarity with the priestly accouterments and appertanances. And he

does make frequent refernees to the priests and their functions. His knowledge of history indicates one who is cultured, and is interested in the past. And he reveals a knowledge of the cult. However, his critical attitude toward the sacrifices would tend to disprove such a theory. If he were a priest of the sanctuary, he would want the sacrifices to continue as his source of livlihood. However, he expresses resentment toward the sacrificial cult, both in the sanctuaries and on the high places. In 12:12 we read: "If Gilead be given to iniquity becoming altogether vanity, in Gilgal they sacrifice unto bullocks; yea, their altars shall be as heaps in the furrows of the field. In 4:13: "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and offer upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good." And again in 10:8 he shows a dislike for the high places: "The high places also of Aven shall be destroyed, even the sin of Israel. The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountins; 'Cover us', and to the hills: 'Fall on us.'" Other similar statements occur in 5:6: "With their flocks and with their herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them." and in 4:19, 7:14, 9:4, 10:1-2, 10:8.

He also condemns the Calf, the idolatrous symbol of the sanctuary: "Thy calf, O Samaria, is cast off; Mine anger

is kindled against them; How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? For from Israel is even this: The craftsman made it, and it is no God; yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in shivers." (8:5-6). "The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in dread for the calves of Beth-aven; for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof shall tremble for it, for its glory, because it is departed from it." (10:5). The priests seem to be equally to blame for the conditions which prevail along with the people and the rulers. Thus in 5:1 he addresses himself to all three groups: "Hear this, O ye priests, and attend, ye house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king, for unto you pertaineth the judgement; for ye have been a snare upon Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." People and priest alike are guilty: "And it is like people, like priest; and I will punish him for his ways, and recompense him for his doings."

Hosea's religious attitudes may be designated anti-Baal. The sacrifices, the calf, and the other abuses which he opposes are all part of the Baal cult. Gomer is symbolic of the unfaithfulness of the people to God, and their worship of the Baal. Hosea's constructive program is one of Hesed: of direct relationship with God. He would do away with the indirect relationships through idols, sacrifice, and the like. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou

hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children." (4:6). Hosea would have the Israelites return to the love of God, their Father, that He might again bestow upon them His love as His children.

C O N C L U S I O N.

The books of Amos and Hosea complement one another. What the one tells us objectively, the other presents from the author's subjective experience, and vice versa. Taking the two of them side by side gives us a much clearer conception of the lives and backgrounds of both men than if either of them was taken independently. Therefore let us proceed to a brief comparison and contrast.

Amos was probably a native of Judah. He lived around Tekoa on the eastern slope of the Judean mountain range as it descended from the central plateau toward the Dead Sea. In this wilderness region with its sparse vegetation, scarcity of water and exposure to the prevailing weather conditions he spent most of his life. The harshness of this environment hardened him and its rugged grandeur made him feel a certain measure of exaltation.

The region could sustain but one type of occupation: that of shepherd. The flocks would graze wherever they could find vegetation, and when it was gone they would move on is search of other pasture places. Wherever they came upon a scrub growth, there they would pause. Out of the jungles would come the roar of the hungry lion. The wild beasts were ready to seize any stray sheep as his prey. The shepherd had to be continually on the alert to defend his flocks against the marauder.

The scarcity of water placed a premium upon the flowing streams and few of these could be counted on to give water through the heat of the Palestinian summer. The perennial stream was almost an anomaly. Thirst for water was an even greater hardship than scarcity of food or threat of danger from the beasts. To the further discomfiture of the shepherd and his flocks, hot winds would blow up from the desert, carrying with them clouds of sand. The Sirocco parched vegetation, man and beast alike.

The shepherd was a nomad, and had neither home nor home influences. Mostly he lived by himself with nature and his flocks as his only companions. Rarely would he encounter another shepherd. The variety of circumstances which he had to meet offered to him a real challenge. He had to be versatile, to be the master of his environment in as many ways as possible. Whatever exigency might arise he had to be able to meet single-handed. Except when the forces of nature proved themselves mightier, he was the master.

Primarily Amos dealt with nature rather than with human beings. His references to the physical environment are such that we may conclude that they were a most important part of his life. They are spoken of incidentally in similes, and seem to come (so) naturally to him. He is not an onlooker at some beautiful bit of scenery, writing about a grand view which has impressed him, but he writes about these things as though they were a part of his every-day life. The wilderness, the streams, the

wind and the rain were his, more truly than parents, friends and neighbors.

Amos did not confine his life entirely to Tekoa and its wilderness, however. Some fifteen miles to the north of Tekoa was the border between Judah and Israel and just beyond the border land the sanctuary towns of Beth El and Gilgal. These he visited and what he saw there caused him first to marvel, later to criticize, and finally to express open disapproval. Contrasted with his own life of poverty and hardship, he saw the wealth and ease of the Israelite land-owners. The absence of social contacts made him extremely sensitive to existing social conditions. His observation of the laws of nature made him rigorous is his ethical judgements. His sense of justice was extremely strong. Austerity and not emotion, realism and not idealism colored his outlook.

His sympathy for men was sympathy for the poor; those whose economic circumstances were comparable to his own. He constantly cried out against the wealthy, who oppressed the poor. The wealthy land-owners lived in luxury, knowing nothing of the afflictions of famine and drought in the mountain fastnesses of Tekoa. In his solitude as a shepherd Amos contemplated these things, and criticized them. His objectivity is the objectivity of one who lives apart, and looks upon the scene from a distance. He does not see the softer lights of friendliness and home life. He sees only

the contrast between the poor and the rich, the oppressed and the oppressor, the dweller of the wilderness and the city dweller.

Amos' knowledge of events is largely contemporaneous, and does not expend backward into history. His range of knowledge is broad but it is not deep. He has very little interest in the past. This is understandable in the light of the character of his existence. His environment required concentration on a wide variety of current conditions.

Hosea was an Israelite, probably living in the fertile portions of Southern Israel in the territory just a little north of that inhabited by Amos. Here the soil sustained a flourishing agricultural life, which yielded large returns to the landowner. The grain grew abundantly and at the harvest season it was taken to the hilltop threshing floors for winnowing in the wind. These "high places" were the scenes of rejoicing and festivities after a successful season, and the Canaanite Baal rites were performed there. In taking over the agricultural techniques from the native Canaanites, the Israelites also came to adopt some of their religious practices which were associated with the raising of grain. The vineyards, too, supplied a steady flow of wine from the wine-presses, and similar rites were connected with the ingathering of the grapes.

Existence in such a region was relatively secure and sheltered. Grain and wine could be stored so men were not dependent upon momentary weather conditions for their food and drink. The Sirocco, the storm, and the normal seasonal changes held no real discomfort for the husbandman. The animals were domesticated and there was no feeling of fear because of the wild beasts. The care of fields and vineyards was the work of many men, and villages must have dotted the countryside. Home life and social life brought men into association with one another. The wealthy landlords had both summer houses and winter houses, where they could relax and enjoy a measure of luxury.

Hosea comes from the environment which Amos saw as an outsider. He lived the settled life of a husbandman. Sheltered from the weather and the beasts, with an adequate supply of food and drink, he had none of the problems which faced Amos as a shepherd. His settled existence was accompanied by a rich home life which developed his social sympathies and emotions. Out of his contacts with relatives and friends grew the tender devotion to men and God which is so evident in his writings. He resents the lack of kindness among his neighbors, and the unwide political policies of the rulers whose weak condition causes them to yield tribute to Egypt and Assyria.

Hosea's hardships were his social adjustments. His marital unhappiness made him as sensitive to emotional situations as Amos' exposure to a rugged natural environment made him sensitive to physical situations. Hosea's social consciousness was an outgrowth of his social contacts, while Amos' social consciousness came from his isolation.

Hosea, too, visited the sanctuaries, but being a man of wealth, he accepted the abuses of oppression and slavery as part of the status quo. He saw a different sort of abuse. He lived during a period of political unrest, when the Israelite state is wavering like stalks of grain in the wind. He sees government as a thoroughly human institution and not as a pageant. Political rule is made of human stuff--of kings and princes who have their ambitions, their hatreds, their jealousies, and their other faults.

Hosea's range of knowledge did not have to be as broad as Amos'. He did not have to adapt himself to the widely variant conditions which one meets in the desert and the wilderness. The husbandman has an interest in the past, by which he seeks to explain his present life. It is the aristocrat whose interest turns to geneologies and history, not the beggar and the adventurer. Hence we may say that Hosea's knowledge was less contemporary and more historical than Amos'.

Thus far we have shown the differences between the two men. But perhaps the contrast is not as sharp as we have drawn it. Amos had some bit of Hosea's environment in his own background, even if it was only the visits to the sanctuary cities. These could not have left him totally unaffected. And Hosea knew something of the shepherd's way of life. It was all a matter of emphasis. They probably had as much in common as the average citizens of their day. Both were dependent upon nature for the rainy season and the dry season, and for the productivity of the soil. They both lived in approximately the same region, along the border between Judah and Israel. Both knew the conditions which prevailed in the northern kingdom. The prevailing agricultural and pastoral techniques were familiar to them both, though in varying degree.

For all the differences in their backgrounds, their religious ideas and ideals have strong similarities. Amos and Hosea alike objected to the sacrificial cult as a corrupt institution, and to the Baal worship. Both desire direct knowledge of God, and ethical living. Though they cloak their ideas in figures peculiar to their own environments, the ideas themselves are not disparate. Drinking and adultery are discountenanced. They see punishment as the natural consequence of evil, and God's hand will cause this punishment. Their familiarity with the political situation of the time is the common knowledge of the citizen.

Neither A mos nor Hosea was a professional prophet or a priest. They appear to have been average citizens of their respective environments. Amos, the shepherd, lived in the wilderness. Hosea, the husbandman, lived in the midst of fertile fields. But both felt the urge to preach to the people, and to quicken their religious feeling. Both wanted a living religion to revitalize the life of the people. Their backgrounds and personalities differed, but their ideals were similar. Though they gave expression to them, each in his own language, they worked for the same ends. Both were men of God.

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MAP OF PALESTINE

Showing the places Referred to in the Books of Amos and Hosea.

Scale of Miles

0 5 10 15 20 25

Approximate border between Judah and Israel (Ephraim):

Mount Lebanon

Damascus

Mount Hermon

Tyre

Dan (?)

BASHAN

Mount Carmel

Mt. Tabor

Valley of Jezreel

GILEAD

Mizpah (?)

Samaria

Mt. Ebal

Shechem

Mt. Gerizim

Beth El

Ramah

Ekron

Gilgal

Gibeah

AMMON

Jerusalem

Ashdod

Bethlehem

Askelon

Tekoa

Gaza

MOAB

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