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TYPOLOGY OF SIN, REPENTANCE, AND GRACE IN HOSEA 12:3–7

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Preliminary Remarks

1. Typology in General: Fishbane defines typology as "a literary-historical phenomenon which isolates perceived correlations between specific events, persons, or places early in time with their later correspondents."[1] The former is called the *traditum,* the latter the *traditio.* As is well known, the term typology as well as the hermeneutical features connected with it developed from early Christian patristic exegesis, the purpose of which was predominantly apologetic.[2] The impetus of typological interpretation arose from the necessity to prove that many of the events related with Jesus Christ have already been prefigured in the Hebrew Scriptures (HS).

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[1]M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 351.

[2]Against the Jews who rejected the NT, Barnabas, Justin, and Melito endeavored to show that many of the events associated with Jesus Christ have already been prefigured in Scripture. Against the Gnostics who renounced the HS, Irenaeus sought to establish the essential link between the old and the new by the use of typology. See B. McNeil, "Typology," in R. J. Coggins & J. L. Houlden, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 713.

The recognition of typologies in the New Testament is facilitated by the clear knowledge of the *traditum*: the HS. When dealing, however, with inner-biblical typology, i.e., with the patterning and prefigurations within the HS itself, the parameters of the *traditum* are not so easily defined. Its presence is not always indicated by a citation formula or by some other formal elements like כן … כאשר ("just as … so")[3] or קדמניות / אחרנות ("former / latter").[4] In most cases the *traditum* is not quoted at all, but merely alluded to, parodied, or paraphrased. The only way to detect it is to establish significant association of ideas and verbal linkages, but even this, as we shall see, is problematic.

2. Typology in Hosea 12: The difficulty of determining the *traditum* in the HS is illustrated by Hos. 12. Although Fishbane points out a number of words which Hos. 12 shares in common with the Genesis patriarchal account (e.g., מרמה, יעקב, און, etc.), it can hardly be established from these lexical connections that Hosea had at his disposal exactly the same Jacob stories that we find in Genesis. Thus when Fishbane says that the story of Jacob in Gen. 25:11–35:22 *or the reflex of it* [!] has been transformed in Hos. 12, he realizes that Genesis may not be exactly the *traditum* Hosea knew.

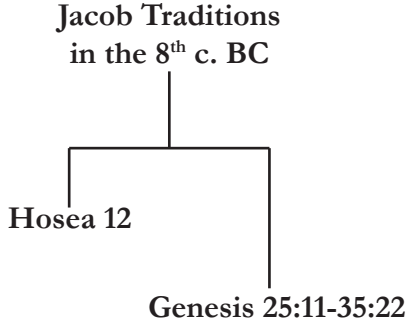
A general way of explaining the relationship between Hos. 12 and the Genesis patriarchal account would be something like this:[5]

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[3]Jos. 3:7; 4:14, 23; Isa. 11:16. Sometimes כאשר can be replaced by כ (e.g., Hos. 2:17).

[4]Isa. 43:18–19; 65:16–17. Sometimes ראשנות ("first") and חדשות ("new") are also used. For other less frequently used markers, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation,* 253.

[5]This is only a rough schema of the relationship between Hos. 12 and the Genesis account. The reality may be more complex than this and may involve intermediate stages. This schema would find support from W. D. Whitt, "The Jacob Traditions in Hosea and Their Relation to Genesis," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 8, fn. 2, and H. A. McKay, "Jacob Makes It Across the Jabbok—An Attempt to Solve the Success/Failure Ambivalence in Israel's Consciousness," *JSOT* 38 (1987): 5–6, although the latter posits other sources.



The similarity of ideas and verbal contacts between Hos. 12 and Genesis provide sufficient reason to posit a common source for both of them. We can assume both to have relied on a collection of Jacob stories that were already popular and authoritative in the eighth century BC so as to enable Hosea to allude to them and the later Pentateuchal writers and redactors to utilize them in their epic narration of salvation history.[6] Some cultic features in Hos. 12:6–7 may suggest that Hosea had access to the source through the medium of the cult (liturgical song or poetry?).

We cannot be sure whether in Hosea's time these Jacob stories have already been written or not. The presence of a shared vocabulary between Hos. 12 and Genesis suggests either that some stories have

[6]We disagree with the opinion of some scholars that the Jacob allusions in Hos. 12 are a later insertion, e.g., J. Vollmer, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, BZAW 119 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 106–107, G. A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea—A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBL Diss. 102 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 231–237, 298, R. E. Wolfe, "The Editing of the Book of the Twelve," *ZAW* 53 (1935): 115, P. R. Ackroyd, "Hosea and Jacob," *VT* 13 (1936): 253. More problematic from our point of view is the dating of the sources of Genesis. J, which has been dated traditionally to the period of the united monarchy, is now regarded by some to be a product of late Judean history, e.g., J. van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992), R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 221–242. E's existence as an independent source, not to mention its date, has also been questioned by Whybray (*Making of the Pentateuch,* 111–116).

already been fixed in writing, or that at least some expressions[7] must have already attained a certain level of standardization in the process of oral transmission.[8]

Although the Jacob stories in Genesis are extended and detailed while those in Hos. 12 are sketchy and allusive, one cannot conclude that the former is the *traditum* of the latter. Both Hos. 12 and Genesis are in fact to be regarded as *traditio*, since both reinterpret and transform the source according to their respective theologies and purposes. Our manner of conceptualizing the relationship between Hos. 12 and the Genesis account does not depend on the validity of the classical documentary source hypothesis which assumes the existence of two epic narratives (J and E) already in the eighth century—alleged "documents" that were later conflated after the fall of Samaria (721 BC) and further supplemented by D in the seventh century and by P in the exilic and post-exilic periods.[9] Such a theory is problematic because it claims too much about the written and concatenated nature of the earliest sources,[10] and it tends to regard the materials contributed by D and P

[7]Both Hosea and Genesis seem to know the same etymological stories behind the name Jacob and Israel. In addition, both know of a description of Jacob involving the verbs שׂרה and יכל (Hos. 12:5 "he strove against an angel and prevailed" // Gen. 32:28 "you strove with God … and prevailed"), and an epithet applied to Bethel with the word דבר (Hos. 12:6 "there he used to speak with him" // Gen. 35:13–15 "the place where he spoke with him").

[8]This is all the more true if Hosea is here quoting or parodying a liturgical song or poetry.

[9]F. Foresti's claim that Hosea relied on the so-called "proto-Elohistic" source assumes the correctness of the documentary hypothesis, and is based on the identification of various strands (J, E, P) in the Genesis account. The qualification "proto" indicates that Foresti himself considers Hosea's source as prior to the E strand found in Genesis ("Hos 12: a Prophetical Polemic against the Proto-Elohistic Patriarchal Tradition," *EphCarm* 30 [1979]: 179–200).

[10]For other problems, see Whybray, *Making of the Pentateuch,* 43–131. We do not agree with Whybray's claim that "the authors of the pre-exilic literature of the OT outside the Pentateuch appear to have known virtually nothing of the patriarchal and Mosaic traditions of the Pentateuch" (130). Consequently, we also reject his hypothesis that the Pentateuch is the work of a sixth century historian who utilized contemporary folklores that were not of great antiquity (221–242).

as late; whereas in truth we do not know exactly when the Pentateuchal traditions have been put together and committed to writing; and D and P may actually contain materials as old as J and E.[11]

3. Methodological Considerations: Hos. 12 may be likened to a tip of an iceberg, to use a hackneyed expression, in that below the surface meaning of the text there lies a whole body of historical traditions that are recalled and hinted at. It is this deeper level of signification that makes the message of the chapter profound. As the reader ploughs through the plain sense of the text, he uncovers the hidden wealth of ancestral lore that enriches his understanding of the prophet's message.

To fathom the richness and profundity of the chapter, the reader must have sufficient knowledge of those traditions that lie beneath the text.[12] Hosea presupposes such knowledge from his contemporaries. In the case of modern interpreters, they can easily lose their footing here, either by assuming naively that the stories implied in Hos. 12 are identical with those in Genesis, or by speculating about other traditions the prophet knew.

Although typological passages provide a spectrum of meanings that cannot be sharply divided, it will be useful for us to keep in mind the two opposite ends of the spectrum when interpreting the text: namely, the *literal* and the *allusive* meanings. In our opinion it would be methodologically correct to start from the literal sense, since this is the evident meaning provided by the "tip of the iceberg," then work our way to the allusive meaning.

Because of the problem of determining the exact shape of the Jacob stories to which Hosea alludes, it is important that we apply the

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[11]That some of the priestly materials may have come from the pre-exilic period is demonstrated by A. Hurvitz, "Dating the Priestly Source in the Light of the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew a Century after Wellhausen," *BZAW* 100 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988): 88–99; also J. Milgrom, "Priestly Source," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5: 454–461.

[12]Among the functions of allusion, W. G. E. Watson cites the economy factor: "a word or two evokes more than could be expressed by the poet and indirectly adds to the richness of his language" (*Classical Hebrew Poetry*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 26 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984], 302).

following methodological principles: a) The exegesis of Hos. 12 must be based primarily on the text and formulation of Hos. 12, rather than on those of Genesis. b) The Genesis account may be used to clarify what is stated in Hos. 12, but the additional information derived from their comparison may be regarded at best as a secondary proof. The weight of the evidence culled from Genesis would depend on how close its ideas and wordings are to Hos. 12. c) It is equally important to note the difference between Hos. 12 and Genesis, and to try to explain the divergence on the basis of their respective aims and theological interest. In this way we can determine what properly belongs to each *traditio*.

A. Typology of Sin (Hos. 12:4)

A typology of sin is expressed in the following lines:

בבטן עקב את־אחיו	In the womb he supplanted his brother,
ובאונו שרה את־אלהים׃	and in his manhood he strove with God.

The literal sense: The misdeeds are expressed by the verbs עקב ("supplant") and שׂרה ("strive") which also happen to be the root stems from which the names *ya'ăqoḇ* and *yiśrā'ēl* are derived, at least according to popular etymology. The purpose of the pun is not simply to give information about the origin of the patriarchal names, but to ridicule the patriarch or the nation by name-calling. The meanings given to the names are unquestionably negative: supplanting a brother is a heinous crime against family loyalty and solidarity. Fighting God is even worse than apostasy, for it takes on an overtly antagonistic (not simply indifferent) stance against God; it is irreverent and presumptuous for a mere human being to grapple with a deity. The two offenses are in fact the very antithesis of *ḥeseḏ*, which appears so often in the prophet's ethical teachings. Thus, when Hosea calls Jacob/Israel a "brother-supplanter" and a "god-basher," he taunts them while ridiculing their names.

A person's name is given much more significance in biblical times than it is today. It is not simply a tag to identify an individual, but is

itself the extension of his personality: *nomen est omen*.[13] The choice of the name is not arbitrary. A child is given a name that describes a particular circumstance of his birth (e.g., Gen. 29:31–30:24; Ex. 2:10; 1 Sam. 1:10), or typifies his character and reputation (Gen. 17:5; Jgs. 6:32). In a sense the name "creates" the person, because it is by means of the name that other people get to know him and interact with him. Thus, when Hosea plays on the negative meanings of the patriarchal names, he is in effect poking an accusing finger at the very heart of Jacob/Israel's identity. The ancestor and his progeny are "supplanters" and "rebels" in name as well as in deed.

Hosea's purpose is not to recount the whole story of the patriarch, but only to present select snap shots of his life. The way Hosea arranges the pictures aims at a global portrayal of Jacob. Two images at opposite ends of the patriarch's life—"in the womb" (בבטן) and "in his adulthood" (באונו)—are placed side by side to depict the entire course of his human existence, his whole life. Jacob has been a bad guy throughout his earthly career! Thus, through the effective use of the merismus, Hosea is able to summarize the entire life of the patriarch even in so short a poetic verse.[14]

There is another merismus in the verse which may not be so apparent but is important in Hosea's exposition of the sin of Jacob/Israel. At one end of the merismus, the transgression is committed against a fellow human being, a brother at that! At the other end, the offense is directed against God. The intent of this human-divine merismus is to convey the idea that the patriarch would pick a fight with just anybody, even his own sibling and even his

[13]J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT/Academic Press, 1991), 119.

[14]Merismus is not only found among coordinated objects (e.g., Ps. 148:12 "old men and children" / Ps. 49:2 "both high and low, rich and poor together") but also among parallel poetic lines (e.g., Prov. 3:24 "if you sit down … when you lie down …" / Prov. 4:12 "when you walk … if you run …" / Ps. 57:11 "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let thy glory be over the earth!" / Ps. 81:3 "Blow your trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon …" / Ps. 96:11 "Let the heavens be glad, let the earth rejoice").

own God. Furthermore, the human-divine merismus presents the horizontal and vertical aspects of a moral act. When Jacob assailed his elder brother, it was at the same time an affront against God. In the refracted state of the storytelling, the two sins are viewed as separate incidents with very little or no connection at all with one another. Nevertheless, from a global point of view, it is the same contentious Jacob who acts in both incidents. His transgressions at various points in his life are only particularizations or actualizations of the basic attitude of hostility toward others. The horizontal and vertical aspects of sin have their counterpart in Hosea's summons to *ḥeseḏ* and *ṣəḏāqâ*, which are attitudes and modes of acting directed to both God and human beings.

The allusive sense: The above considerations of the literal meaning of Hos. 12:4 are manifest even apart from the reader's knowledge of the birth and Jabbok stories in Genesis. Someone, however, who reflects on the passage with knowledge of the ancestral lore that lies underneath gains more insight by recalling other information culled from the tradition.

Hos. 12:4a probably derives from the same source as that of Jacob's birth story in Gen 25: 23–26 and possibly of Esau's statement in Gen. 27:36.

Hos. 12:4a	Gen. 25:22–26
In the womb (בבטן) he supplanted (עקב) his brother (אחיו).	The children struggled together within her …. The Lord said to her: "Two nations are in your womb (בבטנך), and two peoples, born to you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." Behold, there were twins in her womb (בבטנה). The first came forth … his name Esau. Afterwards his brother (אחיו) came forth, his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel (עקב), so his name was Jacob (יעקב).

Gen. 27:36

> Is he not rightly named Jacob (יעקב)? For he has supplanted me (ויעקבני) these two times.

There are similarities of ideas as well as verbal linkages between Hos. 12:4 and the Genesis account. The main theme in both passages is Jacob's supplanting of his twin-brother even when they were still in their mother's womb. Both share the following vocabularies: בטן ("womb"), עקב ("to supplant / heel"), and אחיו ("his brother").

Another point of congruence between Hos. 12 and the Genesis account is that both understand the *traditum* as a story not just about individuals but also about nations. In Hos. 12:3 the word Judah (which has been substituted for Israel) stands in parallel with Jacob, thus indicating the latter to be another name for the kingdom. The oracle in Gen. 25:23 explicitly refers to the twins in Rachel's womb as "two kingdoms" and "two peoples." This shows that the sibling rivalry has been understood already in Hosea's time as a symbol of the antagonism between Israel and other nations.[15] The prophet may have used this tradition precisely to indict Israel's engagement in international conflicts. The point of the story, in fact, would be more incisive and astute if the feud actually involved the two brother-nations Israel and Judah (cf. Hos. 5:8–9). The application to a civil war would be valid even if the Genesis account has identified Esau with the inhabitants of Edom and Seir.[16]

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[15]It is well-known that Esau/Edom in the prophetic writings (Amos 1:11–12; Jer. 49:7–22; Ez. 25:12–14; 35; Obadiah; Isa. 34; 63:1–6) has become an archetypal symbol for Israel's opponents: "the nations." For a survey of literature on this topic, see B. Dicou, *Edom: Israel's Brother and Antagonist—The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 169 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 13–17. Dicou argues that the same symbolic character is ascribed to the Genesis Edom (116–153).

[16]This information is communicated to the reader by means of the description of Esau as "red" (*'admônî* אדמוני) and "hairy" (*śē'ār* שׂער) (Gen. 25:25), and later

The usage of the verb עקב in Hos. 12:4 has its counterpart in Gen. 27:36, and in both cases the patent misbehavior of the patriarch is fixed by the name יעקב ("Is he not rightly named *ya'ăqoḇ*?"). Moreover, Esau's comment that Jacob has already tripped him up twice (פעמים) points to a habitual misdemeanor. Thus, even in Genesis there is an attempt at a global presentation of Jacob as a supplanter. While Hos. 12 conveys this through poetic merismi, Genesis does it by narrating several instances of Jacob's misconduct (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:1–35). Esau complains: "He took away my birthright; and behold, now he has taken away my blessing" (Gen. 27:36).

Did Hosea know about Jacob's wresting the birthright (*bəḵorâ*) and the blessing (*bərāḵâ*) from Esau? If the prophet was aware of the oracle[17] that "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), most likely he would have some idea of how Jacob eventually obtained the *bəḵorâ-bərāḵâ* prerogative of the firstborn.[18] In fact, Hos. 12:4 seems

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his family lived in the land of Seir, the country of Edom (Gen. 32:4; 33:14, 16). The origin of the identification of Esau with Edom/Seir in Genesis is much debated: a) E. Otto thinks that Edom and Seir are a later addition (*Jakob in Sichem. Überlieferungsgeschichte, archäologische und territorialgeschichte Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte Israels*, BWANT 110 [Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1979], 25–27). b) E. Blum considers the reference to Edom/Seir to be original (*Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984], 69–79). c) J. R. Bartlett argues that only Edom is a later addition ("The Brotherhood of Edom," *JSOT* 4 [1977]: 16–21).

[17]According to H. C. White, the oracle functions as "a micro-dialogue which sets up the basic tensions in the plot to follow. But as a speech act with a form of declaration rather than a promise, no 'uptake' is required of the addressee" (*Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* [Cambridge: University Press, 1991], 207). The oracle thus anticipates the two stories of Jacob's supplanting his elder brother.

[18]The eldest son took precedence over his brothers (Gen. 43:33). He received a double portion of the inheritance (Dt. 21:17) and became the head of the family when the father died. But the eldest could lose the rights of primogeniture for serious crimes, as Reuben did by his incest (Gen. 35:22; 49:3f), or he could relinquish it, as Esau did by exchanging his birthright for pottage (Gen. 25:29–34) (see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. J. McHugh [London: Darton,

to have applied the term עקב specifically in the sense that it has in Gen. 26:36, namely the displacement of an older brother. Yet Hosea does not tell us explicitly what is ultimately at stake in the prenatal contest.

In marked contrast to Hos. 12:4, the Genesis account gives prominence to the oracle, birthright, and blessing. On account of the theological interest of the Pentateuchal redactors who focused on the problem of the transmission of God's promise from one generation to the next,[19] the question of morality has been subordinated to this larger theme of Jacob/Israel's election. Thus von Rad senses a certain fatalism in the Genesis account: "the narrator draws a powerful picture of the most extraordinary entangled guilt, but his view of what God has decreed and accomplished keeps him from being ruffled before the question of personal guilt and subjective motives of individual persons."[20]

Yet even Genesis is not completely impervious to the moral question. Although the oracle at the beginning of the story somehow softens the harsh judgment on the characters of the story, it does not exculpate them. "The fact that God's will is known already does not deprive the people in Gen. 25–27 of their independence and their dignity, it does not relieve them of their responsibility to choose

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1961], 41). The specific meaning of the blessing given to the firstborn is to pass on favor to the next head of the family before the father dies (W. J. Urbrock, "Blessings and Curses," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1: 757).

[19]White, *Narration and Discourse,* 205. As White sees it, the problem lies precisely in this: "So long as the choice could be made on the basis of the familial status of the mother, the decision was clear, although effecting it was painful, as the stories of Hagar and Sarai made clear. But the birth of twins to Rebekah meant that grounds for favoring one son above the other could not be so objectively determined. Even the law of primogeniture is reduced to the level of technicality in the case of twins since the oldest has the status only by a matter of minutes. This enhances the possibility that the inheritance should be determined on the basis of the qualities of the sons themselves" (206).

[20]G. von Rad, *Genesis*, OTL, trans. J. H. Marks (London: SCM Press, 1972), 280.

between good and evil all the time …."[21] The sin of deception still brings its adverse consequence upon the family relationships: Jacob had to flee from his brother's ire and be banished from his homeland (Gen. 27:41–45). The moral dilemma is only resolved when the two brothers are reconciled (Gen. 33:3–4).

Hosea, on the other hand, ignores the election theme and stresses instead the issue of morality. He never gives a hint that the sibling rivalry has to do with the *bəḵorâ* and *bərāḵâ*, with the very instruments by which the destiny of Israel as a chosen people of God would be fulfilled. It is not that Hosea never recognized the privileged status of Israel, but that he stresses the ethical responsibility which goes with that status. For him the continuance of the divine blessing hinges precisely on the faithful observance of חסד and משפט (Hos. 12:7).

The other end of the merismus alludes most likely to the Jabbok incident:

Hos. 12:4b	Gen. 32:24–28
In his manhood he strove with God. (שׂרה את־אלהים)	A man (איש) wrestled with him.... Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you strove with God (עם־אלהים כי־שׂרית) and with men (ועם־אנשים).

Again, there are sufficient correspondences of words and ideas to warrant the conclusion that the two passages derive from a common tradition. Both speak of Jacob's tussle with God. Both use the words שׂרה and אלהים, which then become the explanation for the second name given to the patriarch: *yiśrā'ēl*. The fixing of the name immortalizes the incident and makes its imprint on the character of the patriarch as a "tough guy" who even challenged God.

We have pointed out earlier Hosea's use of the human-divine merismus to indicate that Jacob has the bullying habit of picking a fight with just anybody, even with a brother, even with God. The

[21]Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis,* 117.

same universalizing merismus is found in the Genesis account. In the Jabbok story, Jacob actually engages in a scuffle only with a single person (איש), but the narrator later generalizes: "he fought with God and with *men* (אנשים)." Thus, both Hos. 12:4 and Gen. 32:28 make a global judgment on Jacob as a trouble rouser.

Beyond these similarities there are profound theological differences in the interpretation of the Jabbok incident which we shall discuss in the next section.

B. Typology of Repentance (Hos. 12:5ab)

The typology of repentance is presented in the next verse (12:5ab):

וישׂר אל־מלאך ויכל	He strove against an angel and prevailed;
בכה ויתחנן־לו	He wept and sought his favor.

The literal sense: Even if we bracket our knowledge of the Genesis account, we can still see that this verse provides a transition from an act of aggression ("he strove against an angel and prevailed") to a conciliatory act ("he wept and sought his favor"). The failure of some commentators to see v. 5b as a positive action, a pleading for mercy, is due in large measure to the unexpectedness of the turn of event. How can a favorable regard for the accused be included in a judgment speech? Yet, such sudden shifts of perspective are not uncommon in Hosea (see, e.g., Hos. 2:16ff; 6:1ff; 11:8ff; 14:8ff).

In the name of thematic consistency, some scholars have interpreted Jacob's weeping and pleading as part of his trick to bamboozle the divine being into imparting a blessing on him.[22] Such an approach disparages

[22]D. McCarthy & R. Murphy, "Hosea," in R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, & R. Murphy, eds., *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 227; A. Bentzen, "The Weeping of Jacob: Hos 12:5a," *VT* 1 (1951): 58; R. B. Coote, "Hosea XII," *VT* 21 (1971): 395.

the manifest positive import of בכה ויתחנן־לו by injecting a less honorable motive on the part of the subject. Moreover, it plunges right away into speculation about the *traditum*: a) it wrongly assumes v. 5b to be still a part of the Jabbok scene; b) it asserts (without proof) that Hosea has reinterpreted the Jabbok incident as another story of deception.

The correct approach would be to consider first of all the obvious meaning of בכה ויתחנן־לו and its relation to the context, especially to vv. 5a and 5cd as well as the call of repentance in v. 7. Only after the literal meaning shall have been explored are we in a position to discuss the possible *traditum* of v. 5ab: its relationship with the Genesis account as well as the important differences in outlook and theology between the two traditions.

There is nothing in the text to indicate that Jacob's weeping and supplication were somehow insincere, feigned, or shallow. On the contrary, the shedding of tears (בכה) reveals an intensity of feeling that accompanies the pleading for mercy (cf. 1 Sam. 1:10; 2 Sam. 12:22; 2 Kgs. 20:3). Furthermore, the *hithpael* verb התחנן, often used in imploring for forgiveness (1 Kgs. 8:33, 47; 2 Ch. 6:24, 37; Job 30:9; Ps. 30:9), may signify an iterative or durative action ("he kept on imploring for mercy"),[23] thus showing Jacob's persistence and resolve to gain divine favor.

Lines 5a and 5b have some kind of parallelism. Each contains a pair of verbs that form a narrative sequence: וישׂר...ויכל בכה ויתחנן־לו; and the subject of these verbs is apparently the same: Jacob. Note however that בכה in the perfect conjugation breaks the sequence and may thus introduce another incident. In other words, the two lines most likely represent different episodes in the life of the patriarch.

Lines 5a and 5b are, as a matter of fact, antithetic. On the one hand, 5a describes a sinful act, an assault against a divine being, an

[23]The typical meaning of *hithpael* verbs is reflexive-reciprocal. But some *hithpael* verbs have an iterative-durative sense (E. A. Speiser, "The Durative Hithpa'el: A *tan* Form," *JAOS* 75 [1955]: 118–121; S. B. Wheeler, "The Infixed *-t-* in Biblical Hebrew," *JANES* 3 [1970–71]: 20–31).

attempt to overpower him. On the other hand, 5b expresses a contrite act, a conciliatory move, an entreaty to gain divine favor. The verse thus offers two contrasting pictures of the patriarch: one depicting the detestable side of his character (again fixed by a pun on his name ישׂראל = וישׂר אל = "god-basher"), the other his earnest desire to obtain approval from, and good relationship with, God.

The wider context confirms such an interpretation. Verse 5ab provides a turning point, a change of perspective, from a negative evaluation of Jacob in v. 4 to a positive one in v. 5cd. The juxtaposition of the sinful and graced character of the patriarch is meant to convey a conversion process that has happened in the life of the patriarch, a change of heart which then becomes a "parable" or an example for the nation to emulate, and an occasion for Hosea to summon his contemporaries to repentance (v. 7).

It is not at all form-critically anomalous that the "parable of Jacob" and the call to repentance takes place within a judgment speech, for a similar structure is found in Hos. 10:9–15. There, the "parable of the heifer" (vv. 11–13) as well as the invitation to seek the Lord (v. 12) are also found in the middle of a judgment speech. Similarly, the speech against Ephraim and Judah in Hos. 5:8–6:6 is interrupted by an imagined future reconciliation with God (6:1–3) which then serves as an appeal to repentance.

The allusive sense: Hos. 12:5a most likely alludes to the Jabbok incident:

Hos. 12:5a	Gen. 32:24–28
He strove (וישׂר) against an angel (אל־מלאך) and prevailed (ויכל).	A man (איש) wrestled with him …. When he saw that he could not prevail (יכל) …. Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel (ישׂראל): for you strove (שׂרית) with God (עם־אלהים) and with men, and prevailed (ותוכל).

The basic story line in both passages is the same: Jacob engages in a combat with somebody (איש / מלאך) who represents God. Further

indication of a common source for Hos. 12:5a and the Genesis account comes from several verbal connections between them: שׂרה (mentioned twice in Hos. 12:5a, once in Gen. 32:24–28) and יכל (mentioned twice in Gen. 32, once in Hos. 12) plus the pun on the name ישׂראל.

The fact that Jacob wrestled with *somebody* in Gen. 32:25 but with *an angel* in Hos. 12:4a does not indicate a different *traditum* for each. Hosea may have meant by an angel (מלאך) a manifestation of God in human form (איש). Genesis used איש rather than מלאך apparently to give an element of suspense to the story. The narrator wanted the reader to participate in Jacob's surprise at the discovery that the man he fought with was God (Gen. 32:31 "For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved!").[24] מלאך would have revealed the supernatural character of Jacob's opponent too soon.

It should be noted that this is the second time the Jabbok incident is alluded to in Hos. 12. Why the repetition? The answer lies, it seems to us, in Hosea's purpose. He is using poetic parallelism in v. 4 (line a // line b) and v. 5 (line a // line b) to communicate various ideas. In v. 4, Jacob's supplanting of his brother in the womb (line a) stands in synthetic parallelism with his wrestling match with God in adulthood (line b) to illustrate the contentious character of the patriarch in all his life. In v. 5 Hosea has another purpose, another message: he is using the Jabbok incident as a point of departure to explain a process of change that has taken place in Jacob: from a "god-basher" (line a) to an earnest supplicant of God's grace (line b). The double allusion to the Jabbok incident is thus not redundant once the various aims of the poetic parallelism in vv. 4 and 5 are recognized.

Despite the similarity between Hos. 12:5a and the Genesis account, there are profound differences in the way they interpret the *traditum*. Hosea focuses mainly on Jacob's sinful action at Jabbok and parodies his name to taunt his character. The positive depiction of the patriarch,

[24]A similar technique is employed in the Bethel episode: the narrator does not reveal the name of the place (Luz) until the very end of the story. He simply calls it "a place" (*māqôm*), thereby giving it a sense of mystery. See Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis,* 68.

his moment of grace, begins only in 5b, which alludes most probably to another phase in his life. Genesis, on the other hand, presents the Jabbok incident already as a conversion story, and the giving of a new name to Jacob as a symbol of the transformation that has occurred in his life as a result of that fateful encounter with the divine being.

In the Genesis account, the Jabbok incident takes place in the course of Jacob's return to his homeland, after twenty years of service with Laban in Haran (Gen. 29–31). In this journey, Jacob is dominated by an intense fear of the prospect of meeting his brother Esau. Will he find favor with him? The anxiety heightens when it was reported that Esau was coming out to meet him with four hundred men (32:7). Is he out to wage war against him? Jacob tries out various strategies: first, he divides his troops into two camps as a means of survival (32:8–9), then he sends forth a procession of gifts to try to placate his brother (32:14–21).[25] Another one of his tricks to buy off reconciliation? On the eve of his encounter with Esau, however, he has this most extraordinary experience at Jabbok in which God after the wrestling bout endows him a blessing, giving him the courage to meet his brother face to face (33:10),[26] no longer hiding behind the façade of gifts and the security of his men, but facing bravely and humbly, and in all vulnerability, the consequence of his past deed (33:3 "He himself went before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother").[27]

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[25]Fokkelman calls attention to Jacob's statement in Gen. 32:21 ("Let me cover up his face / with the present that goes before my face; / afterwards I shall see his face ….") which betrays the inadequacy of the ***minḥâ*** strategy of reconciliation. Fokkelman comments: "Is that the way to 'see the face' of one's brother? The narrator has Jacob himself betray the naiveté of this plan in an incorrect figure of speech" (*Narrative Art in Genesis,* 208).

[26]Gen. 33:10 ("for truly to see your [Esau's] face is like seeing the face of God") recalls the incident at Jabbok/Peni'el where Jacob has seen God "face to face and delivered." The word "face" (***pānîm***) is used by the narrator as a *Leitwort* for reconciliation (cf. Gen. 32:21).

[27]Fokkelman notes how the main character develops in this episode: "Misgivings after vv. 2–3; humbleness and suspenseful waiting in v. 4ff; death-

Thus, unlike Hos. 12:4, Genesis does not view the Jabbok scuffle as sinful. It is not recounted to illustrate the quarrelsome nature of the patriarch. How can he be faulted when the fight has been initiated by his opponent (Gen. 32:25)? True, his unglamorous name is again parodied in the narrative (*ya'ăqoḇ – yabboq – yē'ābēq*), but the giving of the new name *yiśrā'ēl* is more to his credit, and the reason for it is salutary: "for he strove with God and men, and prevailed." He is praised for his tenacity and assertiveness in obtaining a blessing from his foe! To be sure, these are the same traits that can easily turn into aggressiveness and contentiousness, but at this particular point in his life, so the Genesis story goes, Jacob has found a way to put them to good use. "If all his life is a struggle, then this episode introduces an element of greatness in that struggle."[28]

In Hosea's collage of images, however, the wrestling match at Jabbok is placed on the debit side of Jacob's character portrayal. The harsh picture is not mitigated by the fact that it was the man (אִישׁ) who has provoked Jacob into a squabble, or that the patriarch has not recognized his foe to be a divine being until after the fight. Hosea says bluntly: "he fought God … he managed to fight an angel." Jacob indeed is the assailant and he knowingly defies a deity. In keeping with his true character as *ya'ăqoḇ* (= "supplanter") and *yiśrā'ēl* (= "god-basher"), his action is thus totally sinful and reprehensible. Yet even in Hosea, as we shall see, Jabbok is just a prelude to a genuine act of contrition.

The other half of the verse (5b) possibly alludes to the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau,[29] although it is also possible that some other

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agony in v. 8, leading to a measure of panic in v. 9; and an impressive prayer, in which Jacob, leaning on God's promises, searches for the right attitude of faith and only expresses his fear in the cry of distress 'deliver me' after thanking God. Jacob is growing under the immense stress of the circumstances, is shedding the 'old Adam'" (*Narrative Art in Genesis,* 204).

[28]Z. Adar, *The Book of Genesis: An Introduction to the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 118–119.

[29]The possible allusion of Hos. 12:5b to Gen. 33 has been proposed by W. L. Holladay, "Chiasmus, the Key to Hosea 12:3–6," *VT* 16 (1966): 56–58, L. M.

lost tradition recounting the patriarch's supplication with God may underlie the text:

Hos. 12:5b	Gen. 33:1–11.16
He wept (בכה) and sought his favor (ויתחנן־לו).	Esau ran to meet him … and they wept (ויבכו). "What do you mean by all this company I have met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor (למצא־חן) in your sight. If I find favor (מצאתי חן) in your sight, then accept my present … for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God, with such favor have you received me. Accept … my gift, because God has dealt graciously with me (חנני) …. Let me find grace (אמצא־חן) in the sight of my lord …."

The two passages have some common ideas and vocabulary. Both recount an incident of weeping (בכה), involving Jacob alone in Hos. 12:5, and the two brothers in Gen. 33:4. The main action or preoccupation of Jacob in both passages is seeking or finding favor (חנן, מצא חן, התחנן). Jacob seeks his brother's favor (Hos. 12:5; Gen. 33:8, 10, 15) and finds it (Gen. 33:4, 10)! The word חן and its cognates are thus used as the *Leitwort* for the reconciliation between the two brothers. The verb חנן is also used for God's graciousness to Jacob (Gen. 33:5, 11), for the blessing (*bərāḵâ*) which is then shared with his brother (Gen. 33:11).

The discrepancy between the singular בכה in Hos. 12:5 and the plural ויבכו in Gen. 33:4 is not crucial. Hos. 12:5b mentions only Jacob's unilateral action of seeking pardon from his brother ("he wept and implored him"), whereas Gen. 33 describes also Esau's response of

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Eslinger, "Hosea 12:5a and Genesis 32:29: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," *JSOT* 18 (1980): 92, S. L. McKenzie, "The Jacob Tradition in Hosea XII 4–5," *VT* 36 (1986): 315–316, F. I. Andersen & D. N. Freedman, *Hosea*, AB 24 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 609, 613, J. Lust, "Freud, Hosea and the Murder of Moses: Hosea 12," *ETL* 65 (1989): 86, S. H. Smith, "Heel and Thigh: The Concept of Sexuality in the Jacob-Esau Narratives," *VT* 40 (1990): 464–473.

forgiveness, thus resulting in a bilateral act of reconciliation ("they wept"). Nor should the difference in the forms of the verb חן, התחנן, מצא חן, חנן be insisted upon. What matters is the common usage of these verbs in establishing or restoring personal relationships.

That seeking or finding grace (חן) in Gen. 33 refers to an authentic act of reconciliation can be deduced from the following: a) Jacob approaches his brother in humility, "bowing himself to the ground seven times" (v. 3) and calling him "my lord" (vv. 8, 13, 15); b) Esau forgives his brother not on account of the gifts (v. 9), but out of his own initiative and graciousness: "Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (v. 4);[30] c) Jacob reevaluates the meaning of the gifts: they now become a symbol of God's *blessing* (ברכה) being shared with his brother (vv. 10–11), a token restitution of that which Jacob has taken away from his brother(!), and Esau accepts it (v. 11).

There is, however, genuine ground for doubting the connection of Hos. 12:5b to the story of the meeting and reconciliation of Jacob and Esau in Gen. 33. It is not clear whom Jacob implores in Hos. 12:5b (ויתחנן־לו). The immediate antecedent of לו is not Esau but the angel (God).[31] For this reason, some scholars think Hosea is alluding here to another tradition, now lost, in which Jacob sought God's favor.[32]

The problem of identifying the *traditum* of Hos. 12:5b should not minimize the importance of this verse as a turning point in Hosea's

[30]Interestingly, the action here has a striking resemblance with the episode of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers (Gen. 45:14–15) and Luke's Parable of the Prodigal Son (15:20 "he ran and embraced him and kissed him").

[31]S. L. McKenzie argues, however, that the verses in Hos. 12:4–5 are chiastically arranged so that v. 5b actually corresponds with v. 4a which deals with Jacob's brother (אחיו) ("Jacob Tradition," 312).

[32]E. M. Good, "Hosea and the Jacob Tradition," *VT* 16 (1966): 144; T. E. McComiskey, "Hosea," in T. E. McComiskey, ed., *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing House, 1992), 201.

character portrayal of Jacob.[33] Gen. 33 itself provides a good example of how the words בכה, חנן, and מצא חן have been effectively used to convey the process of reconciliation between Jacob and Esau. There can be little doubt that בכה ויתחנן־לו in Hos. 4:5b refers also to a genuine search for reconciliation, although the identity of לו remains an open question.

C. Typology of Grace (Hos. 12:5cd)

After presenting a lachrymose Jacob pleading for mercy, Hosea portrays him now in positive light: as somebody privileged with an encounter with God:

בית־אל ימצאנו	At Bethel he meets him.
ושם ידבר עמנו	and there he speaks with him/us.

The literal sense: The text does not specify who meets whom at Bethel, but in most theophanies it is God who initiates the encounter. So it is most natural to regard him as the subject of the verbs, and Jacob as the object. Bethel's parallelism with שם indicates that it is the name of the place and that it is used in the sentence as an adverb ("at Bethel"). The non-perfective verbs ימצא and ידבר in a historical recollection may indicate an iterative action: "At Bethel he used to meet him; and there he used to speak with him/us."

The obvious meaning of the passage is that God has been meeting and talking to Jacob in Bethel. The two verbs, however, have special theological nuances that can hardly be missed. Aside from

[33]Some scholars think that 5b still deals with the Jabbok incident. They consider בכה ויתחנן־לו as a dramatic description of Jacob's request for a blessing from his opponent. Even with this interpretation, the patriarch's action can hardly be placed in the debit side of his character. The blessing, after all, is a serious matter for the Israelites, worth striving for. Moreover, in the Jabbok episode, the request and granting of the blessing mark the end of the hostility, and open a new chapter in Jacob's relationship with his God, symbolized by the giving of a new name.

encountering, מצא has the meaning of choosing. The same word, as a matter of fact, is used in Hos. 9:10 ("Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel") with reference to electing the nation, selecting it, giving it a special status. Likewise, in some particular contexts, דבר—either as a verb[34] or a noun[35]—is equated with blessings and promises uttered by God to chosen individuals or his people. The theological import of מצא and דבר, as we shall see, will become obvious once the *traditum* of this verse is brought to the surface.

Thus, no matter how utterly vile and adverse the appraisal of Jacob's character is in the earlier verses, it can hardly be doubted that 5cd now presents him in a favorable light, as a person singled out to be a recipient of God's blessing and revelation. Even Bethel, which is usually replaced by later editors with the derisive name *Bêth-Aven* ("House of Iniquity"), is given here its true significance as God's abode.[36] The more congenial picture here of the patriarch has already been prepared for by his conversion in the previous verse. Indeed, the privileged status he gets at Bethel (5cd) may be regarded as an answer to his supplication (5ab). At last he has found grace!

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[34]Promise/blessing to Abraham (Gen. 18:19; 24:27), to Sarah (Gen. 21:1f), to Jacob (Gen. 28:15), to Israel (Gen. 49:28; Dt. 1:11, 14; 6:3), to Moses (Ex. 32:34), to the ancestors (Dt. 19:8), to David (2 Sam. 23:3). In Deuteronomy, the stock phrase כאשר דבר יהוה ל refers to divine promises (Dt. 1:11, 21; 6:3; 9:3; 10:9; 11:25; 12:20; 15:6; 18:2; 26:18; 27:3; 29:12; etc.).

[35]Promise/blessing to David (1 Kgs. 2:4; 6:12), to Israel and Judah (Jer. 29:10; 33:14), to Abraham (Ps. 105:42).

[36]Some scholars, like H. L. Ginsberg ("Hosea's Ephraim, More Fool than Knave: A New Interpretation of Hosea 12:1–14," *JBL* 80 [1961]: 344–345), Good ("Hosea and the Jacob Tradition," 146), and Foresti ("Hos 12: A Prophetic Polemic," 183) speculate that a certain Canaanite god, 'El-Bethel, appeared to Jacob in that place. However, whatever its origin, Bethel was in fact a Yahwistic shrine in Hosea's time (Hos. 4:15). Fishbane's assertion (*Biblical Interpretation,* 378) that the encounter with the *'ĕlohîm* represents a "negative prototype" is not backed up by proof.

The allusive sense: The graced status of Jacob becomes even more luminous once the historical tradition alluded to by Hos. 12:5cd enters into the picture.

Genesis contains two accounts of God's appearance to Jacob: the first happened during his flight to Haran/Paddan-Aram (28:10–22), the second upon his return to his homeland (35:9–13). Hos. 12:5cd does not allude directly to any of these, although Hosea most probably knew the *traditum* that underlies Gen. 28:10ff. The reasons for this are: a) Hos. 12:5cd is closest in idea and wording to a series of formulaic statements in Gen. 35:13–15 which refer back to the first encounter; b) Hos. 12:7 has some faint recollection of Gen. 28:10ff.

Hos. 12:5cd	Gen. 35:13–15
At Bethel (בית־אל) he met him, And there (שׁם) he spoke (ידבר) with him/us.	… in the place where he spoke with him (במקום אשׁר־דבר אתו). And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spoke with him (אתו במקום אשׁר־דבר). So Jacob called the name of the place where he spoke with him Bethel (המקום אשׁר דבר אתו שׁם בית־אל).

Hosea's half-verse "there he spoke with him/us" (ושׁם ידבר עמנו) echoes the thrice repeated statement "the place where he spoke with him" (המקום אשׁר־דבר אתו), which appears to be an epithet of Bethel. Although only the word דבר (plus שׁם in Gen. 35:15) is shared by the two statements, their ideas are so alike. Both identify Bethel as the locus of God's דבר to the patriarch.

Two things should be noted with regard to the formulation in Hos. 12:5cd: a) The non-perfective conjugation ידבר is probably iterative, in which case more than one divine appearance to Jacob may be meant by the statement; if so, Hos. 12:5cd generalizes the epithet "where he used to speak with him/us." b) The *double entendre* him/us (עמנו) may indicate a usage of the tradition in which the people ("us") have come to identify themselves with the patriarch ("him"). A liturgical usage?

The prominence given to דבר in the epithet indicates the importance of the divine word spoken to Jacob, and through him to the nation ("us"). Although Hosea does not tell us what God actually said to Jacob, the two Genesis accounts do. The promise consists in the following: a) God shall give the patriarch numerous progeny and the land of Canaan to dwell in (Gen. 28:13–14; Gen. 34:11–12 = P);[37] b) God shall protect him wherever he goes and shall bring him back safely to his homeland (Gen. 28:15 = J).[38] Most likely only the second promise is alluded to in Hos. 12:7.

Did Hosea know about the promise of numerous descendants and a homeland? The statement in Hos. 2:1 ("Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea …"), which resembles the pledge of countless offspring in Gen. 28:14 ("Your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth …"), is considered by many scholars to be a later addition.[39] Yet the promise of land and progeny seems a

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[37]God's second appearance to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 35:9–13) is generally regarded as the work of P (von Rad, *Genesis,* 338; C. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, trans. J. J. Scullion [London: SPCK, 1985], 549). "The divine address to Jacob (P) … is introduced (v. 9) and concluded (v. 13) with virtually the same words as those to Abraham in Gen. 17:1, 22 …. This extensive parallelism intends to say that the choice of Abraham is continued in Jacob; physical descent is accompanied by the granting of a divine revelation and with it the promise directed toward the people of God" (Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 552).

[38]Westermann regards the divine promise in Gen. 28:15 as the work of J, to which other vows in vv. 13–14 have been subsequently heaped up (cf. Gen. 26:3–5, 24–25). Jacob's vow in vv. 20–22 is also an expansion (*Genesis 12–36*, 453). "The promise in v. 15 differs from that in vv. 13–14 inasmuch as it is not only adapted to the situation of Jacob in flight but also is fulfilled in his lifetime and accords with the life-style of the patriarchs. Just as the promise of a son is characteristic of the Abraham cycle, so is the promise of presence and assistance characteristic of the Jacob cycle (Gen. 26:3, 24; 28:15[20]; 31:3; 32:10; 46:3; [48:15, 21; 50:24])" (*Genesis 12–36*, 455). Von Rad, on the other hand, considers all of vv. 13–15 to be the work of J (*Genesis*, 284–285).

[39]B. Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den zwölf Propheten," *ZAW* 31 (1911): 18; W. Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten,* 2nd ed., HKAT III/4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), 14; K. Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton*, Kurzer Handkommentar 13

logical consequence of Jacob's acquisition of the *bəḵorâ-bərāḵâ*, and thus may not be entirely a product of later theology.[40]

In Gen. 28:15, God assures Jacob: "Behold, I am with you … I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you" (אשר דברתי לך). Note the use here of דבר with respect to the promise that God will guard Jacob on his way and restore him to his home (Gen. 28:15). This promise is probably the specific point of reference of *dibbēr* in Bethel's epithet המקום אשר־דבר אתו of Gen. 35:13–15, which is also echoed, albeit faintly, in ושם ידבר עמנו of Hos. 12:5d. As we shall see later, further linkage between Hos. 12:7 and Gen. 28:15 confirms this interpretation.

Hos. 12:5cd, therefore, recalls God's appearance to Jacob during his flight to a foreign country. In a situation of grave danger to his life, Jacob receives God's assurance of protection until he is safely returned home. By this encounter Jacob is thus lifted from his debased status as "supplanter" and "god-basher" to that of a graced person.

D. Doxology (Hos. 12:6)

At this juncture (Hos. 12:6), there occurs a doxology in praise of the divine name:

(Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1904), 8, 20–22; E. Day, "Is the Book of Hosea Exilic?" *AJSL* 26 (1909–10): 126–127; W. R. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, ICC clx (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), 246–248; Wolfe, "Editing of the Book of the Twelve," 93–94; F. Nötscher, *Zwölfprophetenbuch oder kleine Propheten*, Echter Bible (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1958), 8; J. M. Ward, *Hosea: A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 23–24; M. J. Buss, *The Prophetic Word of Hosea: A Morphological Study*, BZAW 111 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 8; I. Willi-Plein, *Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments*, BZAW 123 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 120; Yee, *Composition and Tradition,* 68; G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), 49.

[40]Von Rad notes the antiquity of the concept: "The twofold promise of land and posterity shows us that here again we have met that ancient tradition from the pre-Mosaic faith of Israel's ancestors, for a share of tillable land and posterity was what was promised to those nomads by their god (cf. 15:7ff)" (*Genesis*, 285).

ויהוה אלהי הצבאות	YHWH, the God of hosts!
יהוה זכרו	YHWH is his remembrance!

The function of the doxology here is not to introduce a divine saying, as in later biblical writings where a similar epithet is perfunctorily attached to citation formulae. Rather, its aim is theological: it identifies the God who appeared to Jacob at Bethel as YHWH (Gen. 28:13–15), the God of the Exodus (Ex. 3:14–15). It was YHWH who promised the patriarch, and through him the nation: "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land" (Gen. 28:15), a promise which he later fulfilled by bringing Israel out of the land of slavery (Hos. 12:13–14!). Its aim is also doxological: it gives praise to God who has just shown his graciousness to Jacob, raising him from the status of sinner to that of a graced person. By recalling God's name the people acclaim YHWH's role as the protector-God of Jacob/Israel.

YHWH's epithet "God of hosts" does not appear at all in the Pentateuch, and so it seems a bit surprising that this title is found among the patriarchal allusions in Hos. 12. The epithet, however, is very ancient: it appears first in connection with the cultus at the northern Israelite shrine of Shiloh where the Ark of the Covenant was kept; later, when the ark was transferred to Jerusalem, the title became in vogue among writers belonging to the Zion tradition. The Yahwistic cult at Bethel, however, may have continued to use the epithet, which is then picked up by Hos. 12.

E. Call to Repentance (Hos. 12:7)

The Jacob typology reaches its climax in a call to repentance:

ואתה באלהיך תשוב	So you, by your God, you must repent.

חסד ומשפט שמר	Keep *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ*!
וקוה אל־אלהיך תמיד	Wait for your God continually!

The literal sense: This call is addressed primarily to Hosea's contemporaries. The singular "you" (אתה) stands for the nation which has been depicted in Hos. 12 as a corporate person (vv. 2, 3, 8–9, 15).

The verb שוב is used here by the prophet for an act of repentance. As in 3:5 and 11:5, it occurs without a complement ("to God") which normally determines its ethico-religious meaning. Its character as a word of repentance is deduced instead from the context: a) It comes immediately after the typological allusions to Jacob's sin and coming to God's grace, a "parable" which then serves as an example for the people to follow. b) As in other calls to repentance (6:3, 6; 10:12; 14:3), it is accompanied by an exhortation to moral life.

The phrase "by/with your God" (באלהיך) reminds the people of YHWH's assistance in the reconciliation process: he takes the initiative to win his people back (3:5), e.g., by chastising them (5:2), temporarily withdrawing from them (5:6, 15), making them suffer for their sins (5:15), bringing the tumult of war upon them (10:4), or offering them reprieve (11:8–9). He makes them live through a desert-experience again (2:16–17; 12:10) so as to educate them and heal their apostasy (14:5). More positively, God exhorts them to make goodness as their aim (3:5), to seek *ḥeseḏ* and *daʿaṯ ʾĕlohîm* (6:6), to strive after *ṣəḏāqâ* (10:12). He has given them his *tôrāh* to live by (4:6; 8:12).

Although God's initiative sometimes borders on a unilateral action—"He loves the people of Israel though they turn to other gods" (3:1; cf. 11:8–9)—he expects his people to reciprocate so that the *bərîṯ* that binds them may become truly dialogic, as all love relationships are: "he persuades her … she will respond …" (2:16–17). The book in fact closes on a note of hope that someday that response would come (14:2–4; cf. 6:1–3). Having shown YHWH to have done all he

can to bring the people back to himself, Hosea now invites them to cooperate with God's endeavor: "You, with the help of your God, you must repent!"

באלהיך ("by means of your God") also implies that the people ought to repent in God's own term, not theirs. This point is accentuated in Hos. 5:4, 6, where the people's custom of offering livestock to appease God has now been rendered ineffective by his withdrawal. He desires not sacrifice and holocausts but steadfast love and knowledge of the Lord (6:6). So as not to miss the point, the call to repentance in 12:7 lays down God's requirement: "Keep *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ*!"

Like *ḥeseḏ/ṣəḏāqâ* in Hos. 10:12, the words *ḥeseḏ/mišpāṭ* are virtues that govern both religious and social relationships.[41] The people are urged to show faithfulness to God as well as *kindness* and *justice* to one another. It is interesting to note that these are precisely the values that serve as an effective antidote to the social illnesses which preoccupy the prophet in the chapter:

ḥeseḏ vs. political treachery and violence (v. 2).

mišpāṭ vs. economic cheating and oppression (vv. 8–9).

In addition, *ḥeseḏ,* which is also the loyalty or faithfulness shown to God, provides the remedy for the apostasy and false worship mentioned in v. 12.

שׁמר is geared toward performance of an obligation. It is used, for instance, for fulfilling a vow (Dt. 23:24), following orders and commands (Jer. 35:18; Ex. 20:18), discharging an office (Num. 3:10; 18:7), celebrating feasts (Ex. 23:15), keeping the Sabbath (Dt. 5:12; Lev. 19:3, 30). Inasmuch as *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ* belong to God's injunctions (*tôroṯ*), they must faithfully be observed, i.e., practiced.

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[41]H. Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets*, American University Studies Ser. 7/141 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 309–311.

שמר is also an apt word for the interior disposition demanded by God. The most basic meaning of this word is "to keep, to watch, to preserve." It is used for tending a flock (Gen. 30:31; 1 Sam. 17:20; Hos. 12:13), maintaining a garden (Gen. 2:15), keeping watch of the Ark (1 Sam. 7:1), protecting a property (Ex. 22:6, 9), having charge of a house (2 Sam. 15:16; 16:21; 20:3), guarding the vessels (1 Sam. 17:22), preserving life (Prov. 13:3; 16:17; 19:16; 22:5), etc. All these actions imply an internalized attitude of caring for something that is precious and important. According to Hos. 12:7, the values that must be kept and cherished are *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ*.

The word שמר is picked up again in vv. 13–14 where, aside from the obvious meaning of tending the flock, it may allude to Jacob's keeping *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ* during his service in Aram (see Jacob's protestation in Gen. 31:38ff). On account of the good deed, God continues to bless the patriarch by delivering his descendants from slavery in Egypt and safeguarding them: "Jacob observed (שמר) … Israel has been preserved (נשמר)!"

The exhortation to "hope in your God always" (קוה אל־אלהיך תמיד) has a deep theological significance. קוה appears often in the Psalms (27:14; 37:34; 40:1; 130:5) and the Book of Isaiah (8:17; 40:31; 49:23; 51:5) where it designates an attitude of patient waiting and hopeful trust in God's power to save, usually held by people in a situation of suffering and distress. קוה is the religious stance of those who have already accepted their sinfulness and borne the painful consequences of their guilt (cf. Hos. 5:15 אשם), and are now just waiting humbly and expectantly for God to lift them up from their misery. They recognize that God is their only savior (cf. 13:4).

That *hope* (קוה) is a constitutive dimension of Hosea's concept of repentance can be deduced also from the allegory in 2:16–17 where the cognate תקוה occurs. There the renaming of the Valley of Achor ("Trouble") into a "Door of Hope" (פתח תקוה) becomes a harbinger of the salvation which the repentant Israel can expect from God.

The allusive sense: In his call to repentance, Hosea may have further utilized the episode of Bethel in which God made a promise

to Jacob that he would be with him wherever he goes and that he would lead him back safely to his homeland. Note that some of the vocabularies in that promise are reused in the summons:

Hos. 12:7	Gen. 28:15
You, by your God, you shall return/repent (תשוב)	I am with you and will keep you (שמרתיך) wherever you go, and make you return (והשבתיך) to this land …
Keep (שמר) *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ*.	

There is some parallelism between the two statements in that both speak of God helping Jacob *return,* a word rendered by the verb שוב. The idea of God assisting Jacob return is expressed in Hos. 12:7 by באלהיך ("by the help of your God"), and in Gen. 28:15 by the causative *hiphil* verb השבתיך with God as subject ("I shall make you return = lead you back"). The word שמר also occurs in both passages, although it expresses two entirely different ideas.

On the allusive level, Hos. 12:7 can mean thus: "You [Jacob], by the help of your God, you shall return [home]." Hosea has spiritualized or allegorized the concept of returning home by giving it the meaning that it now has, namely to repent or return to God. This is not the first time that the prophet has taken advantage of the multifarious meanings of שוב. In 11:5, he exploits the two meanings of שוב for ironic effect. Note also 3:5 where the absolute and idiomatic uses of שוב produce rich nuances.

The occurrence of שמר in both passages may be purely a coincidence. The moral injunction in Hos. 12:7 is nowhere to be found in the Bethel episode. Is it an expansion made by the prophet? Its vocabulary, except for *ḥeseḏ,* does not figure much in his book: קוה and תמיד crop up only here, and משפט is used elsewhere in Hosea only as a forensic judgment.[42]

[42]Hos. 5:1, 11; 6:5; 10:4. Hos. 2:21 is most likely a later addition.

The combination *ḥeseḏ ûmišpāṭ* appears only in Ps. 101:1 (probably pre-exilic), and *qawwēh,* as we have noted, turns up every now and then in the Psalms. Thus, there is some merit to the suggestion that Hosea may have taken this verse from the cultic instruction to remind the people about the true meaning of repentance.[43]

F. The Strophic Structure of Hos. 12:3–7

At this point we would like to draw attention to the arrangement of the Jacob materials in Hos. 12:3–7:

	Hosea 12:3–7	**Verse Structure**	**Purpose or Message**
3a 3b 3c	*rîb* vs. the nation Jacob = Judah/Israel retributive justice	tricolon with synonymous parallelism in 3bc	God will deal with the nation as it deserves
4a 4b	Birth story Jabbok incident	merismic parallelism	global portrayal of Jacob's sinfulness
5a 5b	Jabbok incident Weeping/ Supplication	antithetic parallelism	turning point repentance
5c 5d	Bethel episode	synthetic parallelism	God's grace to Jacob and "us"

[43]G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT/Academic Press, 1993), 72.

	Hosea 12:3–7	Verse Structure	Purpose or Message
6a 6b	Doxology	synthetic parallelism	In praise of YHWH for his grace
7a 7b 7c	Summons to repentance Moral injunction	tricolon with synthetic parallelism in 7bc	Summons to Israel, what true repentance entails

Several points should be noted:

1) Whereas the outer verses (3 and 7) have three lines, the inner verses (4, 5, and 6) come in couplets. The specific meaning of each couplet is determined by its verse structure, e.g., an antithetic parallelism juxtaposes two lines with contrasting ideas (sin vs. grace), a merismic parallelism conveys a total view by citing the opposite extremes (from birth … to adulthood; human … divine).

2) The arrangement of the verses shows a progression from a negative portrayal of Jacob to a positive one, with v. 5ab as the turning point. The typology of Jacob is then followed by a doxology and the call to repentance:

Introduction	Jacob Typology			Contemporary Message	
v. 3	v. 4	v. 5ab	v. 5cd	v. 6	v. 7
justice ⇨	sin ⇨	repentance ⇨	grace ⇨	doxology ⇨	call

3) Hosea's arrangement of the Jacob materials is not chronological (like Genesis) but rhetorico-theological, i.e., the choice and sequence of the materials are dictated by the conventions of Hebrew poetry and by the message which the prophet wants to impart, namely repentance. V. 4 already encompasses the entire life of Jacob, not just his birth but also his adulthood, and all points in-between. The prophet mentions

the Jabbok match twice, each time for a different purpose. He puts the Jabbok scuffle ahead of the Bethel encounter, whereas Genesis shows the reverse. This can be explained by the fact that Hosea and Genesis evaluate the Jabbok incident differently: the prophet uses the fight as an example of Jacob's rebelliousness against God, whereas Genesis looks at it positively as the patriarch's audacity and determination to get a blessing from a divine being.

4) The outer verses are the Jacob typology's link with the present situation. They are more directed to Hosea's contemporaries than to the patriarch. V. 3 identifies Judah/Israel with Jacob, thereby setting up the typology, and v. 7 invites the people to return to God by practicing the moral virtues. V. 3 also lays down the principle of retributive justice ("God will deal with the nation as it deserves"), which then anticipates the linkage of genuine repentance with the observance of *ḥeseḏ* and *mišpāṭ* in v. 7.

Conclusion

Part of the complication of the typological exegesis of Hos. 12:3–7 is that we do not know the definite shape of the *traditum* to which Hosea alludes. Although we recognize some likeness of ideas and verbal linkages between Hos. 12 and the Genesis account which make us think that both originate from a common source, there are also significant points of divergence especially in the way they treat the materials. Each interprets and refashions the *traditum* according to its theological viewpoint, literary interest, and purpose.

Because of this inherent difficulty, we have relied primarily on the literal meaning of the text, and only secondarily on its comparison and contrast with the Genesis account. On the basis of the surface meaning alone, it is already quite clear that Hos. 12 presents Jacob as a model of repentance. This is illustrated in a series of couplets in vv. 4–5, each of which has a particular point to make. The first couplet (v. 4) uses merismic parallelism to paint a global picture of Jacob's sinfulness: he has been an unruly person throughout his life ("In the womb he has supplanted his brother, in his maturity he has striven with

God"). The second couplet (v. 5ab) employs an antithetic parallelism to describe Jacob's transformation, from being hostile and defiant against God ("He managed to fight an angel") to being submissive and conciliatory ("He wept and sought grace from him"). The third couplet (v. 5cd) utilizes synthetic parallelism to recall the graced status of the patriarch/nation ("At Bethel [God] used to meet him, and there he used to speak with him/us").

The typology reaches its zenith in the prophetic call to repentance, which is now primarily addressed to the contemporary nation: "You, by means of your God, you shall repent." Although the summons still has some ring of the divine promise made to Jacob that he shall safely be brought home, Hosea has now spiritualized the concept of *returning home* and made it into an invitation to *return to God*. And as the prophet is wont to do in his other appeals to repentance, he spells out its moral implication: "Observe ***ḥeseḏ*** and ***mišpāṭ,*** hope in your God always!"

The plea in Hos. 12:7 expresses some key ideas associated with Hosea's understanding of true repentance, e.g., his insistence on a) the divine initiative in drawing the people to real conversion, b) the practice of moral virtues as an essential requirement of returning to God, c) *hope* in God's saving act as a proper attitude of a contrite people.

Thus, Jacob is being depicted in Hos. 12 not just as an archetype sinner, but also as a model of repentance. Such ambivalent portrayal of the patriarch can be traced back to the attitude of Hosea himself, who incorporated the typological allusions into the oracle of judgment against Ephraim in order to depict the nation's infidelity within the larger canvas of God's promise of blessing to his people. In living out the tension between their sinful character and graced status, the people ought to be conscious of the need always to return to their God.

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