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A LOVE LIKE A MORNING MIST

Hosea 5:15–6:6

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.

Hosea 5:15–6:6 belongs to a larger pericope that includes 5:8–14 as its first part.[1] The unity of 5:8–6:6 can be recognized on the basis of the following features: a) The whole pericope consistently deals with both the northern and the southern kingdoms. Nowhere else in the book of Hosea does Judah figure so notoriously and culpably as Ephraim. Only here are the two kingdoms given equal attention and receive equal condemnation. Although Judah is mentioned in the preceding pericope (5:1–7), it seems to have been inserted there as an afterthought. The same may said of the reference to Judah in 6:11: it appears to be secondary and tenuously located in its context. Here, on the other hand, the mention of Judah is essential to comprehending the nature of the offense that has brought about the prophetic denunciation. b) Like two pieces of cloth made from the same fabric, the two sections of the pericope (5:8–14 and 5:15–6:6) employ the same language and imagery of wound/healing (5:12 pus, caries; 5:13

[1]Despite many linkages with Hos. 5:8–14, Wolfgang Werner ("Einige Anmerkungen zum Verständnis von Hos 6:1–6," in *"Wer ist wie du, HERR, unter den Göttern?": Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte für Otto Kaiser zum 70 Geburtstag* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994], 354–372) insists that 5:15–6:6 is a post-exilic composition. Ehud Ben Zvi (*Hosea*, FOTL 21A/1 [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2005], 120–149) includes Hos. 5:1–7 in the pericope.

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sickness, wound, cure, heal, wound; 5:14 rend, rescue; 5:15 distress; 6:1 tear, heal, strike, bind up; 6:2 keep alive, make to stand, live). c) Both pieces are woven together at the seam by catchword threads:

5:13	לרפא			ילך
5:14		אטרף		אלך
5:15			אשובה	אלך
6:1	ירפאנו	טרף	נשובה	לכו

The Septuagint and the Syriac, as a matter of fact, introduce the song in 6:1–3 with a citation formula in 5:15 (LXX λέγοντες), thus clearly indicating that the song is recited by those people who seek the Lord in 5:15.

What distinguishes 5:15–6:6 from the previous section is the theme of repentance. This theme is introduced in 5:15 by the words אשם (acknowledge guilt, expiate) and בקש פנים (seek the face [of God]). The penitential song itself commences with the words לכו ונשובה (come, let us return) that have already been prepared for by אלך אשובה in 5:15. Moreover, the healing metaphors (6:1 heal, bandage; 6:2 revive, raise up, live) appear more prominently here than in the previous section. Another feature that sets 5:15–6:6 apart from the previous section is the use of imageries culled from nature (6:3 dawn, showers, spring rains, early downpour, earth; 6:4 morning cloud, dew, daylight).

To be able to comprehend Hos. 5:15–6:6, we must first look into its wider setting, i.e., we must investigate 5:8–14 to see what it has to contribute to the later discussion of repentance.

Hosea 5:8–14

In an article published in 1919,[2] Albrecht Alt interpreted 5:8–6:6 as a series of five oracles delivered by the prophet during and after

[2]Albrecht Alt, "Hosea 5:8–6:6: Ein Krieg und seine Folgen in prophetischer Beleuchtung," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Band II (München:

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the Syro-Ephraimite war (733–732 BC): a) The first oracle (5:8–9) is given in the course of a counter-attack launched by Ahaz of Judah against Israel. The battle alarm summons the southern territory of Israel (Benjamin) to defend itself against the invasion. Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel, in that order, reflect the military advance coming from Jerusalem. b) The second oracle (5:10) is directed against the Judahite warlords who seek to capture and annex Israelite territories. They are said to be "like those who move the boundary marker" (כמסיגי גבול 5:10). c) The third oracle (5:11) reflects the war going badly for Ephraim, here portrayed as "oppressed" (עשוק) and "crushed" (רצוץ), because it insisted on following Damascus, which was actually its enemy (צרו for the MT צו). d) The fourth oracle (5:12–14) takes place shortly after Syria is captured and Ephraim joins Judah in vassalage to Assyria: "Ephraim went to Assyria, and the house of Judah to the Great King" (מלכי רב- בית יהודה אל for the MT וישלח אל-מלך ירב).[3] The divine statement "I will rend and go away; I will carry off, none shall rescue" (ואין מציל אני אני אטרף ואלך אשא) indicates the Assyrian seizure of Gilead and Galilee. e) The fifth oracle (5:15–6:6) embodies the prophet's final assessment of the events of the Syro-Ephraimite war. As he sees it, the problem that plagues the nation is basically religious, and hence the solution must be a return to God. However, the people's facile and shallow attempt at reconciliation (6:1–3) meets further rebuke from God (6:4–6): "Your devotion is like a morning cloud, like a dew that disappears quickly (חסדכם כענן-בקר וכטל משכים הלך) …. Steadfast love is what I desire and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (חסד חפצתי ולא-זבח ודעת אלהים מעלות)."

C. H. Beck, 1953–1959), 163–187; reprinted from *NKZ* 30 (1919): 537–568. See also Wolfgang Schutte, "Eine originelle Stimme aus dem syrisch-ephraimitischen Krieg: Zu Hos 5:8–6:6," *ZAW* 99 (1987): 406–408.

[3]Alt changed וישלח to בית יהודה and מלך ירב to מלכי רב. The latter emendation is now well accepted: the MT *mlk yrb* is thought to be a Hebrew rendering of the Assyrian king's title *sarru rabu* ("Great King"). The title *mlk rb* is attested in Aramaic (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscription of Sefire*, BibOr 19 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967], 61). The *yod* in the MT is usually explained as an anaptytic vowel inserted between consonantal clusters to facilitate the pronunciation.

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Alt gives the impression that history becomes the starting point of his exegesis. He does not hesitate to emend the text in order to make it allude to the historical situation that he imagines underlies the passage. Moreover, the purported counter-attack which he used to explain 5:8–9 is sheer conjecture, imaginable perhaps but unattested in the historical records. Despite these obvious problems, Alt's basic insight has gone unchallenged for many years and has held sway on a number of influential commentaries on Hosea.

In 1966, Edwin M. Good wrote an article[4] in which he rejected Alt's historicist approach, and proposed instead a liturgical setting with two foci: legal judgment and restoration through theophany. According to Good's interpretation of 5:8–9, the summons to blow the trumpet (שופר) and the horn (חצצרה) as well as to shout (הריע) indicates a convocation to a cultic assembly at the sanctuary towns of Gibeah, Ramah, and Bethel. In this assembly, "among the tribes of Israel" (בשבטי ישראל), the prophet announces a legal decision: "After you, Benjamin, Ephraim shall become a desolation" (בנימין אפרים לשמה תהיה אחריך). This is followed in 5:10–14 by a series of three dialogues in a litigation form. The prophet would state the charge and Yhwh would decree the sentence, first against Judah (v. 10), then against Ephraim (vv. 11–12), and finally against both (v. 14). In 5:15–6:6, Good sees more allusions to the cult, e.g., the place (מקום) to which Yhwh returns (v. 15) refers to a sanctuary where he waits until the contrite people bring a guilt offering (עד אשר־יאשמו), seek his face (בקשו פנים), and in their distress search for him (בצר להם ישחרו). In their song, the people confidently express their hope for a restoration through a theophany (6:2 מוצא). The words "after two days … on the third day" recall the event at Sinai, in which the people perform a two-day purification rite in preparation for Yhwh's appearance on the third day (Exod. 19:11, 15, 16). The motif of rain suggests to Good the autumnal festival. However, Yhwh's response in 6:4–6 is not what the people expected. Instead of restorative theophany, his "coming forth" becomes an occasion for judgment (6:5 משפט). The people's devotion, he remarks, is "like a morning cloud, a dew that goes early away" (6:4 משכים הלך

[4]Edwin M. Good, "Hosea 5:8–6:6, an Alternative to Alt," *JBL* 85 (1966): 273–286.

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כענן־בקר וכטל). The last verse (6:6) reminds the people of what the Lord really wants: not sacrifice and burnt offerings, but steadfast love and knowledge of him.

What Alt has done for historical exegesis, Good does similarly for form criticism: he tries to fit the text to a literary genre. He does this not by emending the text as Alt does, but by abstracting the desired form. But what he sees in the text as a litigation process remains fuzzy. It is not clear what criteria he uses for distinguishing between divine and prophetic speeches in 5:10–14. There is no compelling reason why these verses cannot be construed entirely as a divine utterance. Yet even if they were in a form of a dialogue, still it cannot be concluded that we have here a litigation, a court trial. The alternation of divine and prophetic speeches is so common in Hosea. Moreover, although there are allusions to the cult, especially in the second half of the pericope, it is strange that Hosea would depict Yhwh delivering his criticism of cult within cult itself. The prophet even dissuades others from entering the shrines in Bethel and Gilgal (4:15), and as far as he is concerned, for the moment there is a cessation of God's presence in the cult (predicted in 3:4; actualized in 5:6).

In his commentary published in 1993, Horacio Simian-Yofre offers a novel interpretation with the following salient points:[5] a) The summons to battle in 5:8 is not aimed at meeting an actual military threat against the nation; rather, it is a rhetorical representation of a past event, well-known in Israelite tradition, in which the other Israelite tribes waged a fratricidal war against the tribe of Benjamin, nearly wiping out its population (Judges 20). The historical actualization is meant to draw out an important lesson from that war. The sarcastic remark "after you, Benjamin!" (5:8d אחריך בנימין)[6] is an admonition

[5]Horacio Simian-Yofre, *El desierto de los dioses: Teología e historia en el libro de Oseas* (Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1993), 77–97. See the book reviews by Charles C. Conroy (*Greg* 75 [1994]: 157–160) and Innocenzo Cardellini (*Bib* 75 [1994]: 572–576).

[6]The preposition אחרי ("after") is understood here as "following the example of; in the manner of." Hos. 5:7 may be paraphrased thus: "Sound the alarm for battle … just as you have done, Benjamin!" See Simian-Yofre, *El desierto*, 86.

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and a warning against taking up arms: "convocad a la guerra como ha hecho una vez Benjamín en contra de sus hermanos, y cargad con las mismas consecuencias."[7] The anachronistic reference to the "tribes of Israel" in 5:9 supports such an interpretation. b) The background of the text is without doubt a political question. The authorities of Judah are said to behave "like those who modify the boundary" (5:10). It is hard to imagine that the prophet would be referring here to a private transgression as indicated in Deuteronomy (19:14; 27:17).[8] Most likely, the issue involves a border dispute between Ephraim and Judah. The northern kingdom for its part is accused of "proceeding according to its own norm" (5:11 הואיל הלך אחרי־צו), i.e., according to its political calculation. Expediency brings it to kowtow to mighty Assyria (5:13). The text does not offer sufficient information to ascertain to which political crisis it alludes, whether for instance it has anything to do with the Syro-Ephraimite war or not.[9] But the main preoccupation of the prophet is the actual situation of antagonism between the two brother kingdoms. c) The penitential liturgy (6:1–3) does not come from an actual rite performed by the people but from the prophet's own imagination of how the people might attempt to return to God through cult. The words of the pretended liturgy serve as a foil against which Yhwh reproaches the people's facile attitude towards reconciliation (6:4–7). Yhwh shall not manifest himself as surely as the breaking of dawn or the coming of the spring rain. He will come only when he wills, because Israel's ***ḥeseḏ*** is like the morning mist that dissipates so quickly.

Our interpretation of 5:8–14 is closer to that of Simian-Yofre than to those of Alt and Good. In particular, we take 5:8–9 to be a rhetorical actualization of the fratricidal war between Benjamin and the other Israelite tribes. We see behind 5:10–14 a political issue involving a

[7]Simian-Yofre, *El desierto*, 86.

[8]Rick Van De Water, "'Removing the Boundary' (Hosea 5:10) in First-Century Palestine," *CBQ* 63/4 (Oct. 2001): 616–629.

[9]Since the passive participles עשׁוק (oppressed) and רצוץ (crushed) as applied to Ephraim do not exclude a future sense, they cannot be made to allude to the Assyrian invasion of 733/732 BC as having already taken place.

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border dispute between Israel and Judah. The violent imagery employed by the prophet also suggests to us the possibility that bloody skirmishes might have actually taken place. Ephraim's "going to Assyria, and sending [tributes] to the Great King" (5:13) comes closest to alluding to the destructive consequence of the Syro-Ephraimite war, but war situations at other times cannot be entirely ruled out.[10]

As for Hos. 5:15–6:6, there are two main issues debated by scholars: a) whether 6:1–3 is an actual liturgy quoted or parodied by the prophet,[11] or an imagined one;[12] b) whether 6:4–5 is directed against the people in the penitential liturgy (actual or imagined),[13] or at the two nations

[10]According to Michael C. Astour ("841 BC: The First Assyrian Invasion of Israel," *JAOS* 91 [1971]: 363–389), a conflict with Assyria may have already taken place as early as 841 BC. However, it is unlikely that this is Hosea's point of reference. Patrick M. Arnold ("Hosea and the Sin of Gibeah," *CBQ* 51 [July 1989]: 447–460) presents other possible war situations.

[11]Theodore H. Robinson, "Hosea," in T. H. Robinson & F. Horst, eds., *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten*, HAT 14 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr / Paul Siebeck, 1964), 25; Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, trans. G. Stansell, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) (the German original, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 116–117; James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, OTL (London: SCM, 1969), 87; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Hosea*, KAT 23/1 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), 134; Alt, "Hosea 5:8–6:6," 184–185; Good, "Hosea 5:8–6:6," 280.

[12]Wilhelm Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, HKAT III/4, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), 43; Thomas Kelly Cheyne, *The Book of Hosea*, CBSC (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), 77; William Rainey Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), 283; Artur Weiser, *Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten*, ATD 24/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 57; Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 107–110; Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB 24 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 418; Thomas E. McComiskey, "Hosea," in T. E. McComiskey, ed., *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1992), 87–93; Simian-Yofre, *El desierto*, 91.

[13]Hans Schmidt, "Hosea 6:1–6," in *Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte und Archäologie Palästinas, Fs. Ernst Sellin* (Leipzig: A. Deichtert, 1927), 111–126; Edmond Jacob, "Osée," in E. Jacob, C.-A. Keller, & S. Amsler, eds., *Osée, Joël, Abdias, Jonas, Amos*, CAT 11a (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1965), 51; Brian Peckham,

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in conflict with each other in 5:8–14.[14] Our position on these issues will be summarized at the end of the philological analysis.

Hosea 5:15–6:6

אלך אשובה אל־מקומי	**5:15**	*I will go and return to my place*
עד אשר־יאשמו		*until they bear their guilt,*[15]
ובקשו פני		*then they will seek my face.*
בצר להם ישחרנני		*In their distress they will search for me.*

This verse is no longer a part of the theriomorphic description of Yhwh in the preceding verse. The use of אשם (be held guilty, bear punishment)[16] and בקש פנים (seek God's presence) indicates that this

History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 191; James M. Pitts, "Falling Apart and Falling Together," in C. P. Stanton, ed., *Interpreting Hosea for Teaching and Preaching* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993), 72–81; Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets I: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 71–73; Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 43–44; Cheyne, *Hosea*, 77–78; Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 283–287; Alt, "Hosea 5:8–6:6," 184–185; Weiser, *Zwölf kleinen Propheten*, 57; Robinson, "Hosea," 25–26; Wolff, *Hosea*, 116–117; Mays, *Hosea*, 87; Simian-Yofre, *El desierto*, 92–94.

[14]Henry McKeating, "Hosea," in *The Books of Amos, Hosea, and Micah* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), 109–110; Hughell E. W. Fosbroke, *Divine Transcendence in the Old Testament* (Evanston, Illinois: Seabury Western Theological Seminary, 1950), 25; Graham I. Davies, *Hosea*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), 150–151; Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, Abingdon OT Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004), 55–60; Andersen & Freedman, *Hosea*, 426; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 107–110; McComiskey, "Hosea," 87–93. For a thorough discussion of these issues, see A. A. MacIntosh, *Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 216–219.

[15]The LXX ἀφανισθῶσιν ("they shall disappear, be destroyed") presupposes the Hebrew *yĕšammû* or *yašommû* from the root *šmm*. However, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion support the MT *ye'šĕmû* ("they shall bear guilt").

[16]Aside from its usual meaning of "to become guilty, to incur guilt" (Hos. 4:15; 13:1), the verb אשם sometimes has the sense of bearing the consequence of guilt, of being punished (Hos. 10:2; 14:1; Isa. 24:6; Jer. 2:3; Zech. 11:5; Ps. 34:22–23).

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verse speaks plainly and no longer in terms of animal metaphors. Moreover, the opening line אלך אשובה is clearly intended to introduce the song that begins with the same combination of words: לכו ונשובה.

מקום means, therefore, not the lion's lair, but an unspecified abode of God that is inaccessible to the sinful people. It cannot refer to the earthly sanctuary, as Good supposes, because the ***miškan*** symbolizes God's presence among his people (Ps. 26:8; 46:5; 74:7; 78:60);[17] and the prophet, on a number of occasions (4:15; 5:6), including here (5:15), hints that God shall withdraw or has already withdrawn from the shrine, rendering cultic activity ineffective.

עד אשר ("until") introduces a double-purpose temporal clause, which sets a time limit to God's withdrawal in v. 15a ("I shall return to my place until they bear their guilt") and, at the same time, marks the moment when the people will again approach God in the cult ("… then they shall seek my face"). See Gen. 27:44–45 which employs the same technique. The double use of the temporal clause is not easy to recognize because of the Masoretic punctuation (׃).

Thus, ובקשו פני most likely does not belong to the temporal clause.[18] The liturgical "seeking of God's presence" is not part of the condition for Yhwh's coming back to his people.[19] Only the recognition of guilt or expiation (אשם) is demanded. ובקשו פני is rather the apodosis of v. 15b.

The latter is what is meant in Hos. 5:15. The usage here is not influenced by the technical term *'āšām* ("guilt-offering") of the Priestly Code. Cf. Jacob Milgrom, *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976). Diether Kellerman ("אשם *'āšām*, *'āšēm*," *TDOT* Vol. 1, 429–437, esp. 435–436) does not sufficiently distinguish the various meanings of this word in Hosea, but *BDB*, 79, does.

[17]Especially in the theology of P (Exod. 25:9; 26:30; Lev. 17:4; Num. 16:9).

[18]Andersen & Freedman, *Hosea*, 416.

[19]For a non-cultic interpretation of ובקשו פני, see Horacio Simian-Yofre, "פנים *pānîm*," in G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 6 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 639. Simian-Yofre argues on the basis of the theriomorphic description in the preceding verse which he believes still continues up to v. 15ab (see also *El desierto*, 87).

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The cultic search for God is the consequence of the awareness of sin: "when they realize their fault, then they will seek my face." The poetic parallelism between vv. 15b and 15c confirms this interpretation:

עד אשר־יאשמו ← ובקשו פני *until they bear their guilt*
then they will seek my face.

בצר להם ← ישחרנני *in their distress*
they will search intently for me.

Here אשם and צר are parallel in thought because both refer to a situation of suffering due to sin. In line with Hosea's concept of educative punishment (cf. 5:2 מוסר), the affliction brings the people to seek remedy (cf. 5:13). They know that Yhwh has caused their affliction (5:12), so now they turn to him for relief and remedy.

The verbs בקש and שחר, standing in synonymous parallelism, are used for the act of seeking God. Both have cultic nuances in as much as the prophet himself imagines the song that follows as a part of a future penitential liturgy.[20] Despite the severity of the prophet's attack against the present cult (5:6; 6:6), rites and rituals have a legitimate place in Hosea's vision of the future (3:5; 14:2–3). This is clearly the case here where the search for reconciliation with God is depicted as a liturgical action.

The following points should be noted concerning בקש: a) Unlike in 5:6 where בקש describes an actual, concrete, and on-going cultic activity of the people, here the search for God is putative, i.e., it exists only in the mind of the prophet/God as a projection of a future reconciliation. b) Unlike 5:6 where בקש is external and inauthentic in as much as the people are not properly disposed to it ("Israel is defiled, their deeds do not permit them to return to God"), here the attempt to reach out to God is internalized and genuine: it comes as a result of the recognition of and expiation for sin (אשם), on account of which the Lord himself promises to put an end to his withdrawal from the

[20]Likewise, אשם has cultic nuance, although the expiation here has to do with a real experience of chastisement rather than simply a cultic offering in repayment for sin.

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people. c) The imagined "seeking for God's presence" in 5:15 must probably be equated with the prophet's prediction in 3:5—"afterwards the Israelites shall again seek the Lord their God … and shall come in fear"—or the idealized picture of repentance in 14:2–3. Both are located in the future, both are the consequences of punishment, and both are authentic.

שחר ("to seek diligently") is a denominative verb derived from *šaḥar* ("dawn") which appears in the song as a metaphor for God's "coming forth" (6:3). In all its occurrences in the Bible, this verb has a positive meaning of a) "seeking God" (Hos. 5:15; Isa. 26:9; Ps. 63:2; 78:34; Job 8:5), b) "seeking wisdom" (Prov. 1:28; 8:17), c) "seeking the good" (Prov. 11:27), d) "seeking [to discipline] a son" (Prov. 13:14), and e) "seeking for food" (Job 24:5). As a theological concept, it is paired with the words בקש (seek), דרש (search), שוב (turn, repent), התחנן (supplicate), and אוה (desire). More than בקש and דרש, the seeking that is associated with שחר has an overtone of intense personal involvement, deeply internalized and acutely felt: "O God, thou art my God, I *seek thee* (אשחרך), my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land without water" (Ps. 63:2). "My soul yearns for thee in the night, my spirit within me *earnestly seeks thee*" (שחרך, Isa. 26:9). Such an internalized attitude is usually borne by people like Job (8:5) who have met some personal tragedy in life, or the Israelites who have been chastised by God: "when he [God] slew them, they sought for him; they repented and *sought God earnestly* (שחרו־אל); they remembered that God was their rock" (Ps. 78:34). Hosea could not have used a better word in 5:15 than שחר, since the people's recourse to God arises from a desperate situation (צר), a result of an expiatory and disciplinary punishment of God (אשם). Here, as elsewhere, שחר is a sincere quest for reconciliation with God.

לכו ונשובה אל־יהוה	6:1	*Come, let us return to the Lord;*
כי הוא טרף וירפאנו		*For he has torn, and he will heal us;*
יך ויחבשנו		*He has stricken, and he will bind us up.*
יחינו מימים	6:2	*After two days he will revive us;*
ביום השלישי יקמנו		*On the third day he will raise us up,*
ונחיה לפניו׃		*that we may live in his presence.*

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ונדעה נרדפה לדעת את־יהוה	6:3	*Let us know, let us strive to know Yhwh;*
כשחר נכון מוצאו		*his going forth is as sure as the dawn;*
ויבוא כגשם לנו		*he will come to us as the showers;*
כמלקוש יורה ארץ׃		*as the spring rain that waters the earth.*

The penitential song in 6:1–3 is easily recognized as a self-contained section within the pericope by the use of the first-person plural pronoun in almost every line. The only other instance when "we, us, our" are used quite extensively is in another penitential song in 14:3b–4.[21]

The song is a well-crafted poem with two strophes, each introduced by a cohortative. The first strophe has two verses (vv. 1–2), each verse a tricolon of two or three beats. The inner lines of the strophe come in parallel couplets: 1b // 1c; 2a // 2b. Three lines end with *-ēnû*.

		Beats:	Rhyme:
1a	לכו ונשובה אל־יהוה	3	*-āy*
1b	כי הוא טרף וירפאנו	3	*-ēnû*
1c	יך ויחבשנו	2	*-ēnû*
2a	יחינו מימים	2	*-yîm*
2b	ביום השלישי יקמנו	3	*-ēnû*
2c	ונחיה לפניו׃	2	*-āw*

The strophe employs therapeutic (wound/healing) imagery—טרף (tear), רפא (heal), נכה (strike), חבש (bind up), חיה (revive), קום (raise up)—in the inner lines. The outer lines (1a and 2c) contain formulaic theological concepts that summarize the message of the strophe: "Come, let us return to the Lord … that we may live in his presence" (לכו ונשובה אל־יהוה … ונחיה לפניו׃).

The second strophe has a single verse, a quatrain introduced by an *anacrusis*. The quatrain comes uniformly in three beats. A rhyming

[21]The occurrence of the first-person plural pronoun in Hos. 7:5 ("on the day of our king") may reflect a popular designation of a particular feast. The one in Hos. 12:5 ("there he speaks with us"), if it is not actually a third-person singular pronoun as many scholars think, may reflect a liturgical usage.

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pattern in *-ʿāh* / *-āy* appears only in the opening lines (3ab). The last three lines, however, stand in thematic parallelism (3c // 3d // 3e).

		Beats:	Rhyme:
3a	ונדעה	1	*-ʿāh*
3b	נרדפה לדעת את־יהוה	3	*-āy*
3c	כשחר נכון מוצאו	3	*-ʾô*
3d	ויבוא כגשם לנו	3	*-nû*
3e	כמלקוש יורה ארץ׃	3	*-reṣ*

The second strophe utilizes similes derived from meteorological phenomena: שחר (dawn), גשם (shower), מלקוש (spring rain), יורה (autumn rain).[22] All found in the last three lines, these similes describe God's "coming forth" (מוצא // ויבוא). The opening line expresses the intent of the strophe in stereotyped theological parlance: "Let us know—let us press on to know the Lord" (ונדעה נרדפה לדעת את־יהוה).

The theme of repentance is found in the opening line of the first strophe: "Come, let us return to the Lord." The invitatory "come!" (לכו) expresses resolve to perform an action signified by the following cohortative "let us return" (נשובה).[23] With God as the object of the cohortative, שוב definitely has an ethico-religious sense of repentance. כי introduces the reason:

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[22]On Hosea's usage of various metaphors and similes, see C. J. Labuschagne, "The Similes in the Book of Hosea," in *Studies on the Book of Hosea*, OTWSA 7 (Potschestroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964), 64–76; Jacob A. Löwen, "Some Figures of Speech in Hosea," *BT* 33 (1982): 238–242; P. A. Kruger, "Prophetic Imagery: On Metaphors and Similes in the Book of Hosea," *JNSL* 14 (1988): 143–151; Carol J. Dempsey, "Hosea's Use of Nature," *BT* 39/6 (Nov.–Dec. 2001): 347–353.

[23]"The effect of the plural cohortative is frequently heightened by a verb of motion in the imperative, which functions as an auxiliary or interjection. The verbs used include הלך, בוא, קום …. Such a verb may be linked to the cohortative with a *waw* or may be juxtaposed asyndetically" (Bruce K. Waltke & Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 574). The pattern לכו + cohortative commonly appears in liturgical songs and prayers (Ps. 34:12; 46:9; 66:5, 16; 95:1; Isa. 2:3).

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a	*b*	*c*
For he →	has torn →	and he will heal us.
	b'	*c'*
	has stricken →	and he will bind us up.

Although the two lines stand in synthetic parallelism (טרף // יך; וירפאנו // ויחבשנו), they are of unequal length. Perfect symmetry is sacrificed in favor of making an emphasis on the subject: הוא ("he") is made explicit in the first line in order to drive an important theological point—it is *God* who has inflicted the wound; *he* will be the one to cure it. This statement contrasts with the previous attitude of Ephraim and Judah who, when they saw their wound, went to Assyria to seek remedy (5:13). Finally realizing that it was God who has afflicted them (5:12, 14), the people now turn to him for a cure (6:1).

The theological insight is neither new nor original. The Song of Hannah makes a similar point with extended merisms: "The Lord kills and brings life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up; the Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts" (1 Sam. 2:6–7), and so does the king of Israel who was requested to heal Naaman: "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of leprosy?" (2 Kgs. 5:7). Interestingly, Deuteronomy uses words that are very close to our text: "I put to death and bring to life; I wound and I heal" (32:29). What is new here is its realization—the old insight is recalled and relived with the experience of sin and its consequences (5:15).

The forms of the verb are particularly revealing of the situation the people are in. The first verb (טרף), in the perfect tense, indicates that punishment has already been given and is now being experienced by the people. This is followed by another verb (וירפאנו) in the *wəyiqtol*,[24] which still awaits future fulfillment. A similar pattern occurs in the

[24]"The conjunction does not mark *wəyiqtol* as successive or subordinate; it is rather an unmarked connector, though it may introduce (for lexical rather than grammatical reasons) a clause that is logically or temporally subordinate to its predecessor" (Waltke & O'Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 562–563, #33.4b). The RSV's translation "… that he may heal us" is legitimate, but it already interprets

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next line with the original ויך[25] followed by ויחבשנו. The song, therefore, presupposes a lived experience of sin and its consequences; at the same time, it expresses hope for a future restoration.

The next two lines also stand in synonymous parallelism (יחינו // יקמנו;[26] מימים // ביום השלישי), but this time in a chiastic fashion:

a *b*
He will revive us → after two days,
b' *a'*
on the third day → he will raise us up.

The verbs יחינו ("he will revive us") and יקמנו ("he will raise us up") continue the therapeutic imagery of v. 1.[27] The position of מימים and ביום השלישי at the center as well as their coming one after the other make these time adverbial phrases the focal point of the verse. Unfortunately, the significance of the time-reference "after a couple of days, on the third day" has eluded scholars.

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healing as the purpose of God's punishment. The more literal translation "… and he will heal us" is to be preferred.

[25]The ו of the original ויך has been assimilated to the preceding word.

[26]The parallel pair חיה and קום are also found in Isa. 26:14a, 19a; 2 Kgs. 13:21. Michael L. Barré ("New Light on the Interpretation of Hos 6:2," *VT* 28 [1978]: 131–135) gives equivalent word-pairs in Aramaic and Akkadian.

[27]The MT text points חיה as a *piel* "to preserve life, revive" (Num. 31:15; Josh. 9:15; Isa. 7:21); but even in *hiphil* חיה is used for healing (2 Kgs. 5:7; Isa. 38:16). Joanne N. M. Wijngaards' study which sees חיה in Hos. 6:2 as part of the covenant context ("Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Contexts: Hos 6:2," *VT* 17 [1967]: 226–239) analyzes the meaning of חיה without taking into account its word-pair קום. According to Barré ("New Light," 136), the usage of חיה // קום in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Akkadian "points beyond all doubt to only two possible interpretations of the parallel pair: it refers either to recovery from sickness or to resurrection from death." The context of Hos. 6:2 suggests cure from illness, even if later rabbinic exegesis gives the expression a much more eschatological character (Harvey K. McArthur, "On the Third Day," *NTS* 18 [1971–1972]: 83–84). Cf. Teresa Sola I Simon, "Os 6,2: El gran referent de la Resurrecion 'el tercer dia,'" *RCT* 23 (1998): 249–265.

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a) Some take it as a rhetorical device of the n/n+1 sort, which may have a real numerical value or simply be an idiom for a short time, similar to the English expression "in a day or two" or "soon."[28] This explanation flounders on two counts. First, ימים (dual) and יום השלישי (ordinal) are not the usual cardinal numbers employed in the n/n+1 formula. Second, by the use of different prepositions—מן (after) and ב (in)—the two adverbial phrases become tautological, and thus a definite number appears to be indicated: "after two days = on the third day."

b) Other scholars prefer to see here an allusion to the Sinai theophany that happened "on the third day" (Ex. 19:11, 16).[29] This explanation, however, is not persuasive: never does the context of Hos. 6:2 suggest that Yhwh's appearance is expected (see discussion of מוצא further below). Only healing is awaited, and the Sinai episode provides no instance of a cure.

c) A more likely explanation comes from 2 Kgs. 20:1–11 where a miraculous healing is foretold. When Hezekiah became sick and at the point of death, he wept bitterly and prayed to the Lord who answered him through the prophet Isaiah: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you; *on the third day* you shall go up to the house of the Lord" (v. 5, cf. v. 8). The Lord promised not only

[28]The early grammarians thought that the n/n+1 arrangement simply expressed a number not exactly specified or an indefinite total (*GKC*, 437); but it is now generally recognized that the formula can have a real numerical value in some instances (Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence x/x+1 in the Old Testament," *VT* 12 [July 1962]: 300–311; John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968], 93–102). Stuart (*Hosea-Jonah*, 108) also utilizes the n/n+1 argument. "Three days" simply represents a short while for Johannes B. Bauer ("Drei Tage," *Bib* 39 [1958]: 354–358), McComiskey ("Hosea," 88), and Mays (*Hosea*, 95).

[29]Good, "Hosea 5:8–6:6," 280; Simian-Yofre, *El desierto*, 96. Christoph Barth ("Theophanie, Bundesschliessung und neuer Anfang am Dritten Tag," *EvT* 28 [1968]: 521–533) further sees an allusion to covenant making in the expression "on the third day." Walter Brueggemann ("Amos iv 4–13 and Israel's Covenant Worship," *VT* 25 [1965]: 1–15) argues similarly for Amos 4:4 "the morning on the third day."

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to add fifteen more years to the king's life, but also to deliver his city from the hand of the Assyrian king. The third day (real or symbolic) may be a popular motif connected with medical prognosis.[30] On that day, recovery from sickness is expected, and (if God wills) healing takes place, so that appropriate thanksgiving to the Lord is offered in the temple.

Whatever explanation is given for the time reference, it is important to realize that we are dealing here with liturgical poetry that may be used at various occasions. Perhaps we should not insist too much on its literal meaning. If "wound" or "illness" can signify any kind of human predicament (e.g., war, pestilence, natural calamity, etc.), why cannot "after two days, on the third day" be any length of time in which healing takes place? The definiteness of the expression does not make it less of a metaphor.

The first strophe of the penitential song ends with a profound theological statement: ונחיה לפניו, which can be interpreted either as a consequence ("then we shall live before him") or as a motive ("that we may live before him") of God's healing activity. Either one makes good sense.

"To live in the Lord's presence" (חיה לפניו) has an ethico-religious sense. This is clear from its only other occurrence in the Bible. In Gen. 17, Yhwh made a promise to Abraham: "Walk in my presence, and be blameless; and I will make a covenant with you, and will multiply you exceedingly" (v. 1). A little later, the Lord announced to the patriarch that he would give him a son through whom the promise of numerous descendants would be fulfilled. Abraham, still a bit incredulous, thought at first that Ishmael was meant, so he exclaimed: "Oh that Ishmael might live in your presence!" (v. 18).[31] This wry remark is at

[30]Barré ("New Light," 138–140; also "Bullutsa-rabi's Hymn to Bula and Hosea 6:1–2," *Or* 50 [1981]: 241–245) refers to a number of medical prognoses in Akkadian texts that contain a temporal expression, the most frequently mentioned of which is "within three days." What is more interesting is that the Akkadian equivalent to חיה // קום also appears in such texts.

[31]Ephraim A. Speiser (*Genesis*, AB 1 [New York: Doubleday, 1964], lxviii) suggests the meaning "by your will" for this idiom; so do Andersen & Freedman

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the same time a wish that his son might prove a worthy conduit of God's promise and blessings. "That he might *live in your presence*" (לפניך יחיה) takes up the ethical requirement of the covenant: "walk in my presence" (התהלך לפני).[32] The two idioms are synonymous.

Hence, the result of, or reason for, God's healing action will not just be physical restoration—not just, e.g., bringing about peace after a war, or rebuilding after a devastation, or survival after a plague—but more profoundly, the Lord's healing power shall eradicate sin, the basic source of the people's estrangement from him.[33] In that way, the Lord shall reestablish the people in faith and moral integrity. Ultimately, this is the noble purpose of the summons to reconciliation with God: "Come, let us return to the Lord … that we may live in his presence."

The second strophe of the penitential song takes up another theme that is closely related with reconciliation: knowledge of God.[34] It opens with the double cohortatives inviting the people to a deeper knowledge of God: "Let us know—let us strive to know the Lord" (3ab את־יהוה ונדעה נרדפה לדעת).[35] Scholars who denigrate the penitential song are unable to do justice to the prominent place Hosea gives to these themes

(*Hosea*, 522) and Millard C. Lind ("Hosea 5:8–6:6," *Int* 38 [1984]: 401).

[32]"To walk before the Lord" is the more common idiom, e.g., Gen. 24:40; 1 Sam. 2:30; 12:2; 1 Kgs. 2:4; 3:5, 6; 8:23, 25; 9:4; 2 Kgs. 20:3; 2 Chr. 6:16; 7:17; Ps. 56:13; 116:9; Isa. 38:3; Mal. 3:4.

[33]The metaphor of healing is often applied to religious and moral restoration (Hos. 7:1; 11:3; 14:4; Isa. 6:10; 19:22; 30:26; Ps. 107:20; 147:3; 2 Chr. 7:14). Jeremiah (3:22; 14:19; 17:14; 30:13, 17) and Deutero-Isaiah (53:5; 57:18–19) have a special predilection for this metaphor.

[34]Robert G. Boling, "Repenting, Praying and Knowledge of God according to Hosea," in C. Osiek & D. Senior, eds., *Scripture and Prayer: A Celebration of Carroll Stuhlmueller* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 20–32.

[35]The repetition is not anomalous once it is recognized that the first cohortative is an *anacrusis*, and that reiteration is a common device in Hebrew for making an emphasis.

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of repentance and knowledge of the Lord. "It is quite unjustified to say that these terms are used here in some lesser sense than that in which Hosea used them."[36] The auxiliary verb רדף (pursue) expresses commitment, preoccupation, and effort to succeed or attain the goal.

The following three lines (3cde), although asymmetrical and unrhymed, are closely linked to one another by word-pairs (מוצאו // יבוא; נשם // מלקוש // יורה) as well as the triple use of the particle כ. All the similes ("dawn, rain, spring rain, autumn rain") describe God's "coming forth" (מוצא // בוא) as certain (נכון).

Object Described		Similes
His coming forth is sure	|	as the dawn,[37]
He will come	|	as the rain for us,
	|	as the spring rain
	|	or autumn rain for the earth.[38]

Scholars who consider "the third day" in the previous strophe as an allusion to the Sinai theophany also speculate that מוצא refers specifically to God's theophany, and behind the song is a presumptuous confidence on the part of the people that Yhwh's appearance at Sinai can be repeated in cult. Such conjecture, however, is baseless: a) מוצא ("coming out, issue, source, spring") is never used in the Bible to designate a theophany. Deut. 8:3 מוצא־פה (divine utterance) and

[36]Davies, *Hosea*, 151.

[37]The emendation by F. Giesebrecht—***kešaḥarēnû kēn nimṣa'ēhû*** ("when we seek him, we shall find him")—based on the LXX, and followed by a number of scholars (Wellhausen, Nowack, Smith, Marti, Gordis) and also by the BHS apparatus, is ingenious but requires considerable alteration.

[38]יורה can be either a noun ("autumn rain") placed asyndetically with מלקוש ("spring rain") or a *qal* active participle of יורה ("to throw, shoot, rain") as in the RSV: "as the spring rain that waters the earth."

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Ps. 89:35 מוצא שׂפתים (promise)[39] relate more to giving oracles than to the manifestation of God himself.[40] b) The similes used in this verse do not fit the stereotyped depiction of hierophanies in the Bible. The usual phenomena that accompany divine appearances are those that evoke what Rudolph Otto calls *mysterium tremendum*,[41] e.g., thunders (רעם/קלת), lightning (ברקים), thick clouds (ענן כבד), trumpet blast (קל שׁפר), smoke (עשׁן), fire (אשׁ), earthquake (רעשׁ), storm (סופה), tempest (סערה), etc.—extraordinary and spectacular events that elicit fear and awe from those who experience them. The more common, gentle, and predictable שׁחר, נשׁם, מלקושׁ, and יורה are not found in numinous context.

מוצא must be understood then in the broadest possible term. Note that it is paired with **ויבוא** which is also generic. In the context of Hos. 5:15–6:6, these terms designate God's "coming forth" from his place (5:15a מקום) to be with his people after some period of absence. His presence will be felt in various ways according to the needs of the people who await him—perhaps through a cure of somebody who is ill, through a bountiful harvest after a spell of drought, through a restoration of peace after a period of war and chaos, etc. The song is thus a eulogy to God's steadfast love for his people (note the contrast with the people's ***ḥeseḏ*** in 6:4c). His beneficent **מוצא** is awaited with the certainty (נכון) of the dawn and the seasonal rains.[42]

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[39]**מוצא שׂפתים** (lit. "utterance of the lips") is not restricted to God's promise. It is also used of a person's vow to the Lord (Deut. 23:24), a marriage vow (Num. 30:13), and Jeremiah's vow (Jer. 17:6).

[40]Andersen & Freedman's suggestion that **מוצא** in Hos. 6:3c refers to God's solemn vow (*Hosea*, 423) is unlikely because of its parallelism with **ויבוא** ("and he will come") in 3d.

[41]Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of Holy*, trans. W. Harvey (London: Darton, 1958), 1–40.

[42]Else Kragelund Holt ("Excursus 1: The Cult of Yahweh and the Canaanite Fertility Cult," in *Prophesying the Past: The Use of Israel's History in the Book of Hosea*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 194 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 81–88, esp. 85) detects Ugaritic mythological features in this verse. The similes, however, are a sterling Yahwistic depiction of the benevolence of God (Ps. 72:5–7;

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Yhwh's coming is not an outcome of the liturgy itself, as if by sheer ritual performance God's מוצא results automatically. The Lord requires אשם, not the cult. Hosea's idyllic portrayal of the penitential liturgy presupposes that the participants have already realized their sin and expiated for it (5:15b אשם), and that in their distress (5:15 צר) they now turn to God. We must assume, therefore, that the idealized future liturgy is authentic and not an empty ritual. In such a situation, the people can truly expect God's מוצא. When and how the Lord will come depend entirely on his volition. What the people are sure of is that he will come, he will answer their plea, because he is a faithful God, an *'ēl nākôn* (1 Sam. 23:23).

Although the words and ideas of the song are typically Hosean,[43] some motifs may have been borrowed from existing poems or sayings:

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2 Sam. 23:4; Isa. 55:10–11; Deut. 32:2; 1 Kgs. 17:1; 18:1, 45) and not a syncretistic adaptation of Canaanite religion. We must heed the advice of Mark S. Smith ("Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel: Observation on Old Problems and Recent Trends," in W. Dietrich & M. A. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein?: JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, OBO 139 [Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1994], 226) that certain essentialist oppositions posed between Israelite and "Canaanite" religion need to be reconsidered: "It is necessary to challenge the assumption that 'Canaanite' religion was a 'nature' or 'fertility' religion while Israel was not." In a more thorough and convincing way, Yvonne Sherwood (*The Prostitute and the Prophet*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 212 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 214–235) "deconstructs" this naive notion regarding the Yhwh-Baal hierarchy (opposition).

[43]Hos. 5:15–6:3 is a late insertion according to Karl Marti (*Das Dodekapropheton*, KH 13 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr / Paul Siebeck, 1904], 9, 52), Rolland E. Wolfe ("Editing of the Book of the Twelve," *ZAW* 53 [1935]: 93), E. Day ("Is the Book of Hosea Exilic?" *AJSL* 26 [1909–1910]: 129), and Ina Willi-Plein (*Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments*, BZAW 123 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971], 146–149). On the basis of its similarity with Deut. 4:29–30, Gale A. Yee (*Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBL Diss. 102 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 146–147; also "Hosea," in *The New Interpreter's Bible Vol. VII: Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature, Daniel, the Twelve Prophets* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1996], 249) assigns 5:15–6:3 to an exilic redactor.

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e.g., the expected recovery from sickness "on the third day" may reflect a common motif in medical prognosis, the merisms applied to God have parallels in other parts of the Bible, and so do the meteorological similes used for God's care and providence for his people. Even ***da'aṯ 'ĕlohîm*** is a theological jargon that Hosea shares with others, including his opponents (8:2 "To me they cry, my God, we know thee"; cf. 4:6).

מה אעשׂה־לך אפרים	6:4	*What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?*
מה אעשׂה־לך יהודה		*What shall I do with you, O Judah?*
וחסדכם כענן־בקר		*Your love is like a morning mist,*
וכטל משׁכים הלך׃		*like the dew that goes away early.*
על־כן חצבתי בנביאים	6:5	*Thus I have hewn them by the prophets,*
הרגתים באמרי־פי		*I have slain them by the words of my mouth,*
ומשׁפטיך אור יצא׃		*And my judgment goes forth like the light.*
כי חסד חפצתי ולא־זבח	6:6	*Indeed, **ḥeseḏ** I desired, and not sacrifice;*
ודעת אלהים מעלות׃		*Knowledge of the Lord, rather than burnt offerings.*

The last block of materials in our pericope (Hos. 6:4–6) has another time frame. It deals with the warring nations, the contemporaries of the prophet, and not with the imagined people of the future penitential liturgy. The names Ephraim and Judah reappear in the opening lines, signaling a return to the concerns of 5:8–14. God laments the present generation by means of an emphatic reiteration of a self-searching question: "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?"

At the same time, however, the theme of God's faithfulness in the penitential song (6:1–3) still provides a contrastive backdrop against which to view the infidelity of the two nations. This is achieved by the use here of similes drawn from meteorological phenomena, comparable with those of 6:3.

Object Described	**Similes**
Your ***ḥeseḏ*** is	like a morning mist.
	like the dew that goes early away.

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In v. 3, the meteorological phenomena describing God's מוצא ("dawn, rain, seasonal rains") are beneficial, substantial, and reliable. But here in v. 4 the elements characterizing the people's ***ḥeseḏ*** are thin, evanescent, and flighty: the "morning fog" (ענן־בקר // טל)[44] holds out some promise of rain, only to be quickly dissipated by the coming of day (משכים הלך).[45] Incidentally, the contrast can only be made if we assume that 6:3 is an orthodox, not a "Baalized," statement about Yhwh![46] Hosea's diatribe is not aimed at the idealized liturgy in 6:1–3. ***Ḥeseḏ*** is never used in the Bible for cultic devotion.[47] Most likely, the people's lack of genuine ***ḥeseḏ*** portrays the situation of enmity between the two brother nations Ephraim and Judah (5:8–14).

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[44]The same similes are used in Hos. 13:3. There is no justification in supposing one of the doublets as the work of a redactor. Hosea himself could have used the same similes on two different occasions.

[45]The verbal combination הלך חשכים represents a single action: "to go early in the morning." On the meaning of the metaphor, see Thurman Wisdom, "'Goodness … as a Morning Cloud' (Hosea 6:4–7:16)," *Biblical Viewpoint* 30/2 (1996): 17–22.

[46]M. G. Swanepoel ("Solutions to the *Crux Interpretum* of Hos 6:2," *OTE* 7/1 [1994]: 49–53) and Elizabeth Achtemeier (*Minor Prophets I*, NIBC [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996], 50–51) take the poem of Hos. 6:1–3 as a Baalized statement about Yhwh, and thus fail to see the real contrast being made by the prophet between God's faithfulness eulogized in Hos. 6:1–3 and the people's unreliable חסד deplored in Hos. 6:4. The attribution of the death-resurrection motif in 6:2 (even if such interpretation were correct) and the meteorological similes in 6:3 to Baal or to a Baalized form of Yahwism is simplistic. Hosea himself depicts Yhwh as the God of nature "who gave (Israel) the grain, the wine, and the oil" (2:10; cf. 14:6–9), then as a punishment "will lay waste her vines, her fig trees" (2:14), make "the land mourn" (4:3), and cause women to be infertile (9:14). He has power over life and death (4:5; 6:5; 8:14; 9:12, 16; 11:9; 12:15; 13:9, 14). Cf. Dirk Kinet, *Ba'al und Jahwe* (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1977), 154–160.

[47]חסיד is later used to designate a cultic community (Ps. 30:4; 50:5; 79:2; 89:20; 132:9; 148:14; 2 Ch. 6:41), but that is a development confined to this word. See Helmer Ringgren, "חסיד ḥasîḏ," *TDOT* 5, 75–79.

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The next verse (6:4) explains the rationale behind God's past and present punitive action against his people. The first two lines are parallel:

	God's Action	God's Instrument
Therefore	I have hewn (them)[48]	by the prophets,
	I have slain them	by the words of my mouth.[49]

The verbs חצבתי and הרגתי, both in the perfect tense, speak of chastisement that has already been given but is still continuing in the present.[50] This time frame fits the description of Ephraim and Judah in 5:13 as already "sick" and "wounded," and of God as the cause of the illness. This time frame does not, of course, prevent God from announcing further punishment in the future (5:9–10, 14), but for the

[48]The object of חצב may be implied by the parallelism, or else the verb may be translated without an object "to hew in pieces" as *BDB*, 345, proposes. Either one makes good sense.

[49]Pier G. Borbone ("L'uccisione dei profeti: Osea 6:5," *Hen* 6 [1984]: 271–292) thinks the MT of Hos. 6:5 is another instance of modification of the original text inspired by an ideology favorable to the prophets. He believes that the LXX, which speaks of God killing the prophets (ἀπεθέρισα τοὺς προφήτας ὑμῶν), reflects the original text. Giovanni Rinaldi (*I profeti Minori*, 2º fasc., La Sacra Bibbia [Torino: Marietti, 1959], 72), Rudolph (*Hosea*, 131–133), and the BHS apparatus recommend changing בנביאים to באבנים, and הרגתים to הודעתים. Shalom Spiegel ("A Prophetic Attestation on the Decalogue: Hosea 6:5 with Some Observations on Psalms 15 and 24," *HTR* 27 [1934]: 136–138) suggests changing *'l kn* ("therefore") to *'l kf* ("upon a rock"), and thus reads "upon a rock I inscribed …." Spiegel's suggestion has been revived recently by Simian-Yofre (*El desierto*, 93–94). The word *kf*, however, is poorly attested. Probably an Aramaic loanword in Hebrew, *kf* appears in the Bible only in the plural form (*kefîm*) meaning "a place of refuge (?), rocky mountain (?)" (Jer. 4:29; Job 30:6). See *BDB*, 495.

[50]Simian-Yofre's interpretation also overlooks the syntactic parallelism between 5a and 5b. Both have verbs in the perfect-conjugation, followed by ב-instrumental phrases.

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moment his interest lies in explaining his past and present dealings with his people.

The verb חצב (hew) may be a figure of destruction (// הרג), on the analogy of a rock being split up or a mountain destroyed in the process of quarrying.[51] Perhaps it may have a further nuance of "forming" or "shaping" the people, just as rectangular blocks of stone are neatly hewn from a rocky mountain for use in building city walls and palaces.[52] If so, then the idea of devastation as a way of reforming and educating the people may be hinted at. The use of הרג (kill) as a hyperbole for chastisement is not uncommon in the Bible (see Ps. 78:34 הרג; also Hos. 6:1 נכה).[53]

God's instruments of chastisement are the prophets (נביאים) and the words of his mouth (אמרי־פה). The parallelism here reflects an understanding of the prophets as spokespersons of God, particularly as messengers of his judgment. God's death-dealing word belongs to the common notion of curses in the Bible. אמרי־פה is set in parallel with משפט (judgment) in the next line: "And my judgment goes forth like the light."[54] This line is epexegetical: it explains the nature of

[51]In Ps. 29:7, the *qal* חצב has a figurative meaning of "splitting up" the lightning. In Isa. 51:9, the *hiphil* participle of חצב is used for destroying Rahab. Although the Qumran scroll has here another participle derived from the more common verb מחץ, Edward Y. Kutscher (*The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll 1QIsa.a* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974], 33) points out that both roots appear in parallel three times in the Ugaritic story of Lothan (= Rahab), and since חצב is less common in Hebrew, it is more likely to be the original reading in Isa. 51:9. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion support the MT in this case.

[52]We cannot rule out an original figurative use of חצב by Hosea; after all, he has some very novel and creative imageries in his book, e.g., "the new moon shall devour them" (4:7).

[53]Simian-Yofre's mitigated translation of הרנתים "los he castigado" (*El desierto*, 94, cf. 90) is correct but perhaps unnecessary once the verb is recognized as a hyperbole.

[54]Most scholars today divide the MT ומשפטיך אור יצא to ומשפטי כאור יצא. The imperfect יצא is best understood as an on-going action rather than as a single act in the future.

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God's word spoken through his prophet. Such word is a "judgment" that comes like the "light" (אור). The similarity of the imagery here with line 3c of the penitential song ("His coming forth is as sure as the dawn") is unmistakable. The intent is, again, to make a powerful comparison between God's beneficent coming (מוצא) to restore his people and his coming in judgment to chastise them. Both are sure to come as the sunrise! But note the difference in time frames: the former speaks of reconciliation in the future, the latter of God's judgment in the present.

The last line of our pericope is a motto of what God desired of his people:

	a	*b*	*c*
Indeed	***ḥeseḏ***	I desired	and not sacrifice.
	a'		*c'*
	daʿaṯ ʾĕlohîm		rather than burnt offerings.

The two lines are parallel (חסד // דעת אלהים; זבח // עלות). Placing the word ***ḥeseḏ*** before the verb highlights it. The particle כי is also emphatic. The whole verse structure is built around the contrast between what the Lord wants and does not want. The verb הפצתי in the perfect tense indicates that this verse is part of the explanation of why God has chastised his people.

What the Lord wanted from his people are ***ḥeseḏ*** and ***daʿaṯ ʾĕlohîm***. The two concepts are essentially united in the mind of Hosea (cf. 4:1).[55] ***Ḥeseḏ*** refers to an act of kindness or generosity shown by a superior to his subjects, or "a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render an assistance to the needy party …."[56] Hence, in the

[55]Else Kragelund Holt, *"Daʿaṯ ʾĕlohîm* und ***ḥeseḏ*** im Buche Hosea," *SJOT* 1 (1987): 87–103.

[56]Gordon R. Clark, *The Word* ***Ḥeseḏ*** *in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOT Sup. Ser. 157 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 267. Similarly, Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (*Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 131)

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Bible it is a quality that is often attributed to God's faithful love for the Israelites in view of his covenant with them.[57] When ***ḥeseḏ*** is demanded of the people, it means both a) loyalty to God and b) kindness and loyalty to others, especially to kin. The religious (vertical) and ethical (horizontal) dimensions of ***ḥeseḏ*** are inextricably linked to one another because faithfulness to God involves a commitment to follow his moral injunctions. Like ***ḥeseḏ***, ***da'aṯ 'ĕlohîm*** involves loyalty to Yhwh as well as the religious observance of the moral precepts that govern one's relationship with others.[58] Note, e.g., 4:1, where the people's ignorance of God is followed immediately by a list of various offenses that recall the Decalogue ("there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery …").

Here in 6:6, ***ḥeseḏ*** and ***da'aṯ 'ĕlohîm*** are set in contrast to sacrifice and burnt offerings. Thus, the stress is on the opposition between ethics and cult. Hos. 6:6 is not, however, a reaction against the idealized future liturgy of 6:1–3, which never speaks of sacrifice and burnt offerings in the first place, but to the contemporary cultic practices of the people (5:6; 8:13).[59] Hosea's point is that while the present

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defines חסד as "a freely undertaken carrying through of an existing commitment to another who is in a situation of need."

[57]Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of* ***Ḥeseḏ*** *in the Bible: A New Inquiry*, HSM 17 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978); Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "חסד ***ḥeseḏ***," *TDOT* 5, 44–64.

[58]Iginio Ambanelli, "Il significato dell'espressione ***da'aṯ 'ĕlohîm*** nel profeta Osea," *RivB* 21 (1973): 119–145; John L. McKenzie, "Knowledge of God in Hosea," *JBL* 74 (1955): 22–27; J. Hänel, *Das Erkennen Gottes bei den Schriftpropheten*, BWANT 4 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1923); Gregory Vall, "Hosea and 'Knowledge of God,'" *BT* 39/6 (Nov.–Dec. 2001): 335–341.

[59]The rejection of ***zebaḥ*** and ***'olāh*** must not be taken as a blanket disapproval of the idea of sacrifice. A more nuanced criticism is indicated by the following points: a) What is rejected is a sacrifice divorced from moral life (5:4, 6; 8:12–13) or tainted with idolatry (4:13; 11:2; 12:12). b) Hosea seems to point to a resumption of cultic activity *in the latter days* (3:5; 5:15; 14:1–3). c) Analogously, Samuel appears to denigrate the Levitical institution (1 Sam. 15:22–23), yet he himself officiated in many sacrifices (1 Sam. 9:13).

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people continue to offer sacrifice (5:6 "with their flocks and herds"), they have totally neglected the weightier matter of fraternal love. The central problem brought forth in 5:8–14 (a war between Ephraim and Judah) points precisely to an utter disregard for kindness and allegiance among God's people.

Our interpretation is best able to explain the essential linkages between the two parts of the pericope (5:8–14 with 5:15–6:6), and with what has been said before it (5:1–7). On the other hand, the view that sees 6:6 as a rebuke of 6:1–3 is short-sighted, and does not sufficiently take account of the wider context.

Summary

Our exegesis of Hos. 5:15–6:6 has the following salient points: a) We take the song of 6:1–3 as an idealized presentation of a future penitential liturgy, in which a contrite and expiated people seek reconciliation with God.[60] The song is a panegyric to Yhwh's constant love for his people. It does not reflect a "Baalized" view of Yhwh, nor does it express a belief in a magical efficacy of the cult. b) Although the theme of the song is typically Hosean, it is possible that some of the motifs may have come from existing materials. c) 6:4–6 is not a rejoinder to the idealized penitential liturgy, but a sad remark on the attitude of the two warring nations Ephraim and Judah, whose superficial and ephemeral ***ḥeseḏ*** makes a stark contrast with God's faithfulness eulogized in the song. d) 6:6 expresses what God wanted from his people: not their sacrificial practices (5:6; 8:13), but ***ḥeseḏ*** and ***daʿaṯ ʾĕlohîm***—values that are sorely missing in the attitude and behavior of Ephraim and Judah (5:8–14).

[60]Recent scholars increasingly tend to support this view, e.g., Ernst R. Wendland (*The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Prophetic Literature: Determining the Larger Textual Units in Hosea and Joel* [Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1995], esp. chap. 5), J. Randolph Jaeggli ("There Is Hope [Hos 6:1–3; 11:1–11; 14:1–9]," *Biblical Viewpoint* 30/2 [1996]: 29–35), and MacIntosh (*Hosea*, 216–219).

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