

## UNIT 2A: OLD TESTAMENT

### 36: Prophets in the North

The origins of prophecy in Israel are obscure. The earliest and clearest incidence of prophecy concerns Moses as the spokesman of Yahweh to the Hebrews and Pharaoh alike. This is the essential meaning of Biblical prophecy: it is the speaking of God's living and present Word by His messengers. Each of these messengers, each prophet "is a person not a microphone."<sup>1</sup> The delivery of this Word is invariably in an instantly recognizable stylized form: "Hear what the Lord says ... Thus says the Lord." The prophet then may warn about what God is about to do, but prophecy is not essentially a prediction but rather a proclamation. "Man does not always know what to do with this Living God, so supremely divine and, at the same time, so disconcertingly human."<sup>2</sup> When we are confronted with "God's living and present Word" for our lives or for our society, perhaps in reading the Bible, in prayer or in an insightful conversation with a friend, we have a choice—obedience or disobedience—and that choice is as present today for each of us and our societies as it was for each person in Ancient Israel and their society.

#### The Patterns of Prophecy: Ancient and Modern

The Mosaic origins of prophecy seem clear enough, yet its characteristics have been informed and shaped by the theological concerns of a later age when covenant renewal was uppermost in peoples' minds. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses tells the People of Israel, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; you shall hear him." A modern Biblical commentary on that verse indicates that "a series of prophets is meant," as Moses tells the people "that another spokesman will take his place, and then another will be necessary for the next generation." This verse from Deuteronomy is quoted in full in the Acts of the Apostles 3:22, and is linked by the Apostles to Jesus Christ. As the Orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel, quoted by the Orthodox Christian theologian, Benedict Englezakis, *New and Old in God's Revelation* (Cambridge: James Clarke/Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Englezakis, p. 13.

theologian Peter Bouteneff has pointed out, "The 'Christ as prophet' paradigm shows how salvation is linked with knowledge and understanding about God and about created reality. Jesus Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth [John 15:26], shows us who God is and how God acts."<sup>3</sup> That perennial searching for "knowledge and understanding about God and about created reality" is evident in the Mosaic origins of prophecy, as well as in the need for prophetic spokesmen to arise in each generation who understand enough about both God and created reality to guide their families, communities, nations and the world into God's will for each particular challenge that arises.

More archaic and primitive forms of prophecy are related from a much later period when prophets roamed the countryside in bands. These prophets would dance and sing ecstatically and then become possessed by the Divine Spirit uttering the oracles of God and His inspiring Word to whoever chose to hear. This pattern of prophecy is to be found in 1 Samuel (1 Kingdoms) 10:5-6, when Samuel tells Saul of the sign that he will experience of his imminent anointing as king. "Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily," will overpower Saul and make of him a new man, simply when he meets a prophetic band of wandering, singing and instrument-playing prophets.

There is nothing exclusive to Yahwism in this form of prophecy. It is endemic within human cultures in antiquity from the shamans of Siberia to the cultic oracles of Greece. What is distinctive about Yahwist prophecy is its purpose, which is not primarily to provide insight to individuals concerning their problems or futures, but to be God's spokesmen and women to society as a whole, interpreting political and national events in the context of God's judging and saving activity. "Even when God is the deliverer, freedom cannot simply be bestowed. People must participate in their own emancipation."<sup>4</sup> The oracular and predictive elements of prophecy do exist, but they are subordinated to Israel's covenant relationship with God and its

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Bouteneff, "Christ and Salvation" in Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds.), *Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 40.

demands. In a similar manner, in contemporary life the purposes of prophecy should be lived out within the New Covenant with Christ that completes, but does not invalidate, the Old Covenant with the People of Israel, even if Jews today may at times be challenged to work out their relationship to the New Covenant.

### Prophecy in Action in Ancient Israel

Precisely because the ancient , prophets were determined to see the Word of God implemented in practice—lived-out within the society—they inevitably gravitated to religious and political centres of power. In the tribal confederacy this was, for example, mainly to Shiloh where the boy Samuel trained under Eli the priest. Whereas priesthood was concerned with sacrifices, worship and teaching of the Law, prophecy complemented that aspect of understanding about God. However, it has been pointed out that “too often” the priest focused solely on “man’s religious life” while the prophet was consistently concerned with “man’s whole life.”<sup>5</sup>

With the institution of the monarchy, cultic prophets became court prophets, centred in Jerusalem or more loosely organised in the North. Whatever the home location of the prophet, these men were no mouthpieces of the establishment; and they were fearless in their condemnation of the king if Yahweh found him wanting. Thus at this time, prophets were “a tremendous power” and “a formidable threat not only to Israel’s enemies, but to Israel herself,” if particular kings ignored the Word of God.<sup>6</sup> Because prophets consistently exposed “the dealings of the Eternal with this world of space and time” making “insistent demands [of] obedience [to the Will of God], [prophets] were extremely uncomfortable,<sup>7</sup> especially for kings who were governing outside of God’s will. Since prophecy followed and interpreted God’s activity in and through national and international events, it is appropriate to summarise these events from the death of Solomon followed by the division of the Israelite kingdom in 930 B.C. to the expansion of Assyria and the death of Ahab in 853 B.C., and from thence to the fall of Samaria in 722-721 B.C. when the Northern

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<sup>5</sup> Englezakis, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Englezakis, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> R. C. Zaehner, as quoted by Englezakis, pp. 13-14

Kingdom ended. This lecture focuses on the Northern Kingdom, with its 20 rulers over a period of approximately 210 years. As one Biblical commentator noted, "Kingship in the Northern Kingdom was plagued with instability and violence." However, it was also during this period that the great prophetic movement achieved a prominence and significance unmatched in Israel's subsequent history. We are only able to reconstruct these events (since the original archives are now lost) through the theological critique of the Deuteronomist who can be seen in 2 Kings (4 Kingdoms) 17:7-41 in characteristic style assessing the merits and demerits of the Northern and the Southern kings according to the prophetic standards and obligations of the Mosaic covenant.

### **Governance in the North: Kings and Prophets in Conflict**

The story of the different prophets and kings of the North is best understood as a kaleidoscope in which the long mirrors of prophecy and kingship are fixed at different angles within a confined geographical territory that must be governed, leading to what a dictionary defines as "a colourful and constantly changing scene or succession of events." The division of the kingdom between Judah and Benjamin in the South centred in Jerusalem and the ten tribes of the North centred on Shechem—the old and venerable tribal confederacy centre—was triggered by an attempt by Solomon's son, Rehoboam after his father's death, to have himself installed as king of the Northern tribes (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 12). Not at all conciliatory, Rehoboam refused to lighten the load of forced labour which his father had imposed; and his emissary, the task master Adoniram, was stoned to death. Rehoboam barely escaped with his life. Only the intervention of the prophet Shemaiah averted all-out civil war, as Shemaiah heard the Word of the Lord and gave it to Rehoboam, convincing him to disband an army of 180,000 men and not to fight against the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 12:22-24).

Jeroboam, who had led the first Northern revolt under Solomon, fled to Egypt for asylum only to be returned to the North under a "divide and rule" policy of the newly expansionist Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak. He was crowned king in 922 BC. This

division of the kingdom, Ephraim (or, simply, Israel) in the North, and Judah with Benjamin in the South formalised a schism in the old confederacy that was to endure to the time of our Lord.

Jeroboam I gets a very bad press from the Deuteronomist historian. He is castigated for restoring shrines at Dan and Bethel and installing a priesthood and festivals alternate to those observed in Jerusalem. He is even accused of syncretism and faithlessness to Yahweh by setting up golden bulls in his high places. It is difficult to determine the truth of the matter now, but in Jeroboam's defence it had been a Northern custom to suppose that God, "El," was enthroned not on the cherubim but on the back of a young bull. Nonetheless, it was a foolish move in the context of a culture that still expressed sympathy with elements of the "old religion" of Canaan and later it was a Northern prophet, Hosea who was to lash out at the "calf of Samaria," (Hosea 8:5-6, 10:5-6). Jeroboam had been told by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite on the road out of Jerusalem that as king he was to rule over the 10 tribes of the North; however, as often happened with the promises in prophecy to future kings, God promised to be with Jeroboam only as long as he kept "my commandments and my ordinances" (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 11:31-40).

Meanwhile, back in Judah, King Asa won the praise of the Deuteronomist for purging syncretism and destroying pagan shrines, but his fateful policy of aggression against the North involved a pact with the King of Syria, Benhadad, who invaded and devastated Galilee in 878 BC. There then followed a rapid succession of kings in the North until the army commander Omri (876-869 BC) restored order in a coup d'état and strengthened Israel economically and militarily. Both Omri and his son Ahab, fatefully married to Jezebel in a political marriage, fall under the most severe condemnation of the Deuteronomist for apostasy and evil conduct. During their reign the new capital of Samaria was built, but the kingdom was to prove unequal to the new threat from further East: the Assyrians were stirring out of their Mesopotamian lair and pushing inexorably westward toward the Mediterranean. It is at this point that we see a new chapter in prophecy begin with the prophet Micah.

Ahab was at least an astute commander and politician if not a true son of Yahweh. His military success against the King of Syria allowed him to form a temporary alliance with him against the Assyrian threat. After Shalmaneser III withdrew after the battle of Qarqar north of Damascus in 853, hostilities with Syria resumed. Ahab then made an alliance with Jehoshaphat in Judah, and by all accounts, Ahab was the senior partner. Jehoshaphat hoped that the campaign would not be necessary and suggested to Ahab that he consult the prophets to which end Ahab summoned over 400 of them. These prophesied before both kings what Ahab wanted to hear—victory.

It was the prophet Michaias (Micah who delivered the minority but correct verdict that the campaign would end in disaster for lack of a true shepherd in Israel, and so it did (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 22). Ahab was killed and Micaiah's prophecy struck a new standard against the political conformism of the "sons of the prophets"—the old ecstatic prophetic bands. The Word from Yahweh was often a word spoken against the establishment, a message of judgement against apostasy and injustice, as well as call to obedience and justice, both to the individual Israelite and all the people: "Has it been told to you, O man, what is good or what the Lord seeks from you, but to do judgment and to love mercy and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God?" (Micah 6:8).<sup>8</sup>

The emphasis on the identification and removal of injustice is increasingly evident in Elias (Elijah) and all subsequent prophets, particularly later in the 8th century in both Israel and Judah. Elias the Tishite prophesied during the reign of King Ahab. He had much to prophesy about, especially the malign influence of Jezebel, Ahab's Phoenician wife by political marriage. According to the Deuteronomist she out-sinned Jeroboam (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 16:31). Ahab naively, but nonetheless reprehensibly, implemented the Solomonic policy of providing for the religious

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<sup>8</sup> The Septuagint translation is given above, but this beautiful verse is better known in the West in the Revised Standard Version and NIV translations as: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." The King James translation substitutes "thee" for "you" as well as "doth" for "does" but is otherwise similar to the RSV and NIV.

needs of foreign pagan wives but Jezebel took this much further than a private chapel and a Baalite entourage. She unleashed a vicious persecution against the faith of Israel and its prophets. Those she did not kill were driven underground.

Then Elias, whose name means “The Lord is my God,” appears on the scene—a man of immense strength, asceticism and spiritual vitality. He prophesies a drought and famine as God’s judgement on Jezebel and those who apostasise. He works miracles for the faithful. He faces down Ahab’s taunt of being the “troubler of Israel” and challenges the prophet-priests of Baal and Asherah to a contest on Mount Carmel as to who precisely is the true and providing God of Israel. He challenges the people to make their mind up and stop vacillating. Is it to be Baal or Yahweh? He satirizes with delicious sarcasm the priests of Baal. Then he demonstrates the power of Yahweh by consuming with fire from heaven the waterlogged sacrifice. The priests of Baal are impotent and are placed under a *herem*—a ban that any property or person threatening Israelite religious life should be destroyed. The drought ends. God prevails (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 17:1-18:40).

Jezebel, however, does not give up her campaign; and Elias flees for his life into southern Judah where God provides for him food and from thence 40 days to Horeb (Sinai). He hides in a cave and God “passes him by” and speaks to him, not in the earthquake, the wind or the fire but in the stillness of a gentle breeze (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 19:9-18). And so it happens; God propels Elias out of his hiding place to renew Israel’s faithfulness to her God with the promise of revolution and a sweeping away of the house of Omri leaving a faithful remnant of 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal. Thus Elias’ experience that only he alone remains faithful to the Lord is transformed into a personal awareness of leadership in a nation being governed by rulers who are both weak and evil.

Some years later much has been achieved but the poisonous Jezebel is still in place and this time she persuades her husband Ahab to have a certain Naboth murdered in order that the crown might take possession of his land. Naboth had refused the sale on the grounds that the land belonged to Yahweh and he didn’t have the

authority to hand over the land of his ancestors. After the dread deed has been done, Elias appears before the king to denounce the injustice and Ahab repents but only to see the judgement of God deferred upon his sons (1 Kings [3 Kingdoms] 21:1-29). Here then is the crux of the on-going conflict between kings and prophets: Elias rightly holds both Ahab and Jezebel responsible “because you have made Israel sin;” but the proper role of any king and queen is to draw their people closer to God, not to cause them to sin.

Elisha’s career as a prophet, notwithstanding that he was given Elias’ prophetic mantle, was perhaps less distinguished than his predecessor but more characterised by miracle and wonderworking. By these works the people knew that Elisha had the Spirit of God. The healing of the Syrian antagonist and commander Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings [4 Kingdoms] 5:1-14) at the instigation of the prophet revealed something new in Israel’s understanding of God’s providence—namely, that even the enemy could be the object of Yahweh’s care and concern. This was quite a new insight in the Elisha cycle of stories. Elisha is also involved in the prophesied end of the house of Omri by the hand of the new king Hazael of Syria and the accession of Jehu in Israel whom he anoints as king to complete this process (2 Kings [4 Kingdoms] 8:1-15). What Elias started, Elisha finished. That is often the way with prophets over the generations: The Lord calls them to continue His work of transforming a nation from frightened individuals to a purpose-filled community.

When we move on to the history of Israel beyond the demise of the house of Omri we see a new chapter in the history of prophecy in Israel as the threat from expansionist Assyria returns to the Middle East. The Jehu dynasty marks the appearance of the prophets Amos and Hosea who in the finest prophetic tradition call Israel to repentance for her apostasy. Israel then experiences under Jeroboam II a resurgence of power and prosperity it was never to experience again. Finally Samaria falls to the Assyrians in 721 BC. It is now appropriate to consider this history of kingship and the prophetic movement associated with it in the North in the context of what was achieved and lost in the history of the 10 tribes of Israel



## A Reflection: The Lord at Work with the Kings and Prophets of the North

The multiple unstable dynasties in the North reflect the old unreconstructed tension within the original tribal confederacy in that the conditional character of the Mosaic covenant consistently conflicts with the unconditional promise of a royal dynastic covenant theology as in Jerusalem with David and his line. Jehu's bloody purge of all remnants of the Omri dynasty and its sympathizers was unprecedented even by the standards of the herem or ban of holy war. In this Jehu was assisted by Jehonadab, son of Rechab, from a family who had maintained a longstanding opposition to the settled life in Canaan with all its idolatrous temptations. In both men, the political and religious purge became as one. The revolution, however, destabilized the Southern Kingdom as the mother of Ahaziah (a king of Judah Jehu had killed) and a worshipper of Baal herself, exterminated the Davidic line of succession, except for little Joash whom the priests spirited away and then later installed after a purge of the queen mother's faction (2 Kings [4 Kingdoms] 11-12).

Back in the North, Jehu became the victim of his own success. With the former ally Phoenicia alienated and Syria again ascendant in Hazael, he was forced to pay tribute to the Assyrians for the protection of his kingdom. This embarrassing fact is not mentioned in the Biblical account, but it is referred to in an inscription on the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. The Assyrians soon had to shelve their expansion plans, however; and Syria pushed forward into Israel again, even reaching further south into Judah. Once again the Syrians were pushed back, as Assyria encroached upon their own borders. This time Syria was crippled; and Assyria was content to maintain her position without further expansion for some 50 years. With these threats from the east, albeit temporarily, removed, Joash of Israel (not to be confused with Joash of Judah) was even strong enough to call Judah's bluff when her king Amaziah mounted a doomed attack on the North (2 Kings [4 Kingdoms] 14:1-14).

During Jeroboam's II's reign and that of King Azariah in Judah, both kingdoms controlled much the same territory as had Solomon before them. In a time of unparalleled prosperity and political stability it might have been thought that both kingdoms were secure. In Israel (and in the South); however, there was a worm eating away at the nation's life; and the prophets Amos and Hosea (in the North) were not slow to point this out. Indeed, much of what we know about Israel at this time comes from the written record of both these prophets supported by archaeological finds.

As might be anticipated, with prosperity and political power come the dangers of corruption, injustice and syncretistic disloyalty to Yahweh. In the estimation of Hosea and Amos, idolatry and injustice are intimately connected in a deadly embrace. Apostasy means disloyalty to the Mosaic covenant, while disloyalty to the covenant means an abandonment of God's just laws, oppression of the poor and all manners of injustice. The accumulation of wealth is condemned in that it both ignores the plight of the needy and exploits the underprivileged (Amos 4:1; 8 5:11-13; 6:1-8, 12; 8:4-6; Hosea 4:2). At issue is not merely the disregard of the value of human life per se but rather a violation of the social and ethical implications of the covenant. Israel's apostasy is likened unto the breaking of a marriage bond (Hosea 1-3) and the joining of Israel to a harlot, jeopardizing the very covenant itself ("You are not my people, and I am not your God" [Hosea. 1:8 but cf. 2:23; so Amos 8:2]). The implication of Israel's election is, therefore, both a privilege and a responsibility, neglect of which leads to God's judgment (Amos 3:2) and for Amos, the unconditional end of the covenant with his people. The idolatry of all of this is to be found both in the Baalisation of the cult under Canaanite influence (Hosea 2:9, 13,17; 4:13, 17-19; 7:16; 8:4-5, 11; 10:1; 11:2; 13:2) and in purely formal worship by the Israelites (Hosea 8:13; 9:4; Amos 5:21-25). This unwillingness to worship God with integrity and sincerity aggravates Israel's guilt before the God she has rejected (Amos 4:4-5; 8:4-6). "The day of Yahweh," originally seen by self-confident Israel as the day of Yahweh's victory (celebrated liturgically, and projected into the future) becomes, for Amos, a day of Yahweh's vindication in

judgment through the termination of the covenant (Amos 5:18). Yet in Hosea and Amos (9:11-15), both judgment and salvation, consequent upon repentance, are proclaimed together (Hosea 11:1-11), as inescapably central to God's character and purpose. So, as far as these two prophets are concerned, the gathering menace from the Assyrian East was God's coming judgement upon an apostate people. Sacred history proved them correct.

When King Hoshea of Israel refused to pay tribute to the new Assyrian Emperor Shalmaneser V in 724BC, foolishly relying of an alliance with the "weak reed of Egypt", the aggressor moved in for the kill, while his successor Sargon II finished the job. In 721 BC the Northern kingdom, Samaria/---Israel fell. 27,290 Israelites were deported to Persia; and the area was repopulated with pagan foreigners. Amos' dirge was fulfilled: "Fallen is the virgin Israel" (Amos 5:2). Israel then passed out of history with only a religiously compromised group of "Samaritans" remaining. The prophetic tradition, however, continued as preserved and applied in Judah.

Not only in the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, but with all nations at all times, the prophetic tradition is a substantive part of God's wish to empower His people to live with justice and mercy. However, whatever the nation or the time period, there need to be potential prophets waiting to hear the Word of the Lord for their lives and the life of their nations, with those prophets having the courage not only to hear the Lord, but also to confront those responsible for the governance of the nations with the Word of the Lord.

## A Template for the Orthodox Interpretation of Biblical Texts

In accordance with the proposal of Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos that Orthodox biblical interpretation ought to have a 3 level approach, the following template is offered for preachers, teachers, bible study leaders, catechists and students of the Scriptures generally:-<sup>1</sup>

### Hosea 11:1-12

Level	Process	In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria)	Applicable Now (Praxis)
<b>Exegetical</b>	<b>Historical / Contextual</b>  <i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i>	<p>Hosea prophesied for at least 38 years in the middle of the eighth century B.C. and is the only one of the writing prophets to come from the Northern Kingdom, although Amos, born in the South, was also sent to the Northern Kingdom. Hosea is the first of those called “Minor Prophets,” not because they were unimportant, but because their writings were shorter than those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.</p> <p>His name means “salvation” or “deliverance;” and the central theme of Hosea is that God wants “mercy and not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than whole burn offerings” (Hosea 6:6). As the <i>Orthodox Study Bible</i> comments, “Hosea saw it as his calling to bring wayward Israel back to its covenant with the Lord.”</p>	<p>This is one of the most powerful chapters in the Bible for anyone who, like Israel was an infant loved by God (Hosea 11:1) but then turned away from God. Yet God still reaches out to that person, “slapping his cheeks” and says: “I will watch him attentively; I will prevail with him” (Hosea 11:4). God still says to each of us as he said to the people of the Northern Kingdom, “Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge. Seek the Lord . . . (Hosea 11:12).</p>
	<b>Allegorical / Typological</b>  <i>(as derived from Tradition)</i>	<p>The Lord had told Hosea to make Gomer his wife even though she was “a wife of harlotry” (Hosea 1:2). Gomer’s behaviour is often viewed as a type for Israel’s unfaithfulness (Hosea 3-5). Chapter 11 traces God’s relationship to Israel back to being called out of Egypt.</p> <p>Hosea concludes in Chapter 14 by continuing to offer each person the choice in their own free will of walking or stumbling in “the ways of the Lord.” This is viewed as the key decision to be</p>	<p>St. Irenaeus is explicit in seeing Gomer as a person from whom “God will build the Church which will be made holy through its union with the Son of God, as this woman was made holy by her union with the prophet.” First Corinthians 7:14 concurs that “the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.” A note on</p>

		made in the eighth century in the Northern Kingdom. Hosea 11:1 is cited by the Gospel of St. Matthew 2:15 in the context that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were called out of Egypt, just as the nation of Israel is called out of its captivity caused by worshipping Baal and the many gods of the Canaanites.	that verse in the <i>Orthodox Study Bible</i> boldly asserts: “The family is a spiritual unit: if one member is a Christian, the whole family is set apart by God’s grace.”
<b>Interpretative</b>	<b>Spiritual / Ethical</b>	A note in <i>The Orthodox Study Bible</i> on Hosea 8:12 states that “the multitude of statutes” available to Israel is considered one of the earliest bits of firm evidence that the Torah—the law and commandments of Exodus 24:12—is being circulated among the Israelites in some kind of written form as a model of ethical behaviour as early as the eighth century B.C.	Hosea’s insistence that rejection of God should be seen as spiritual adultery remains true today. However, like the Israelites, nations that actively reject (or simply ignore) God today are also offered the chance to repent.
	<b>Personal / Social</b>	The Septuagint translation of Hosea 12:7 can be translated as either: (1) “As for you, you shall return by your God. Guard mercy and judgment, and hope continually for your God;” or (2) “You shall return to your God; therefore, observe mercy and judgment, and draw near to your God continually.” Both of these translations with their pleas to “hope continually for your God” or to “draw near to your God continually” indicate how the Lord is still forgiving of Israel throughout Hosea 11. The Lord’s confidence in the ability of a person to forgive is stronger than His rejection of a temporary attitude of unbelief. Hosea 11:4 expresses God’s awareness of both “the ruin of [My] people” and His wish to stretch out to reach them with His love.	It is unclear whether Gomer was the real wife of Hosea or only a metaphor for the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom. With either interpretation, God’s plan to draw all peoples to him—person by person, nation by nation—is clear. The pervasiveness of the Canaanite worship of Baal is similar to the pervasiveness of immorality and rejection of God in many cultures today. The challenge remains for each person to discover God’s love.
<b>Transformative</b>	<b>The Call to Holiness</b>	The transformative dimension of Hosea 11 is captured in the opening line of Psalm 126 (127): “Unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it laboured in vain.” Hosea is insistent	Hosea 11 offers a firm call to holiness, both personal and for the nation. However, it is not easy to work out

		<p>that military security, political stability, economic prosperity and personal holiness can be achieved only by following Yahweh, not Canaanite religion and culture.</p>	<p>how this call to holiness is to be lived out today. Origen has reflected in <i>Philokalia 2.3: On Psalm 1</i>, set out below:</p>
	<p><b>The Call to Witness</b></p>	<p>Tertullian, writing in <i>The Prescription against Heretics</i> 36 stressed how the Church unified the Old and New Testaments: “The Law and the Prophets, the Church unities in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith.”</p> <hr/> <p>All three of the quotations about transformative Biblical interpretation are drawn from Eugen J. Pentiu, <i>The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition</i> (Oxford U. Press, 2014), pp. ix, 3, 170. As Theodore G. Stylianopoulos points out in <i>The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective</i> (Holy Cross O. Press, 1997), (quoted in part by Pentiu, p.52): “Christians and Jews can serve in mutual respect as God’s witnesses to one another and to the world according to their own calling. Christians are to be grateful sharers grafted on to the rich ‘olive tree’ of the Jewish heritage that they ‘might glorify God for His mercy’ (Romans 11:16-24; 15:9). If they call the Hebrew Scriptures ‘Old Testament,’ it is not to devalue its revelatory significance. Rather, it is to affirm their own understanding of the gracious acts of the living God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and to bear witness to their own experience of the new covenant in Christ which fulfills the first covenant” (pp. 31-32).</p>	<p>“The whole divinely inspired Scripture may be likened, because of its obscurity, to many locked rooms in one house. By each room is placed a key, but not the one that corresponds to it, so that the keys are scattered about besides the rooms, none of them matching the room by which it is placed. It is a difficult task to find the keys and match them to the rooms that they can open.” However, note that Origen is not a saint of the Church because some of the writings attributed to him (rightly or wrongly) have a doctrinal ambiguity that has been questioned. Linking up which “keys” (i.e. Scriptural passages) apply to which “rooms” (i.e. decisions and attitudes) in one’s personal life and in the society is not easy, but each Christian and Jew can do it.</p>

<sup>1</sup> In “*The New Testament, An Orthodox Perspective, Volume 1: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics*,” (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997, Ch. 7), Fr. Theodore sets out three levels serving a sound Orthodox hermeneutical process. These are: 1. Exegetical - using all critical, contextual, textual and literary methods to determine “the level of understanding of the biblical text in its historical context of literary form and conceptuality ...” (p. 190). 2. Interpretative – evaluating means derived from the exegetical stage as applicable contextually to the reader’s contemporary issues and concerns (p. 197). 3. Transformative – experiencing life changing practical applications of

insights derived from the previous two stages. In ALL of these three levels, the Orthodox context must be the Church as the locus of divine revelation and inspiration.

Here the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth as manifested in the biblical text, the teachings of the Fathers and the liturgical context. In Ch. 4, p.

115f, Fr. Theodore explains the historical and spiritual exegetical approaches which, following the Fathers, must be applied throughout. Classically these have concerned the Antiochian emphasis on the “literal” or historical approach and the Alexandrian emphasis on the allegorical and typological interpretations that reveal the inter-connectedness of all Scripture in Tradition at deeper levels of understanding.

## Hosea 1:1-12 King James Version (KJV)

11 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

<sup>3</sup> I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

<sup>4</sup> I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

<sup>5</sup> He shall not return into the land of Egypt, and the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

<sup>6</sup> And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.

<sup>7</sup> And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

<sup>8</sup> How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

<sup>9</sup> I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

<sup>10</sup> They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

<sup>11</sup> They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

## Septuagint (LXX) Brenton

<sup>1</sup> Early in the morning were they cast off, the king of Israel has been cast off: for Israel is a child, and I loved him, and out of Egypt have I called his children. <sup>2</sup> As I called them, so they departed from my presence: they sacrificed to Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images. <sup>3</sup> Yet I bound the feet of Ephraim, I took him on my arm; but they knew not that I healed them. <sup>4</sup> When men were destroyed, I drew them with the bands of my love: and I will be to them as a man smiting *another* on his cheek: and I will have respect to him, I will prevail with him. <sup>5</sup> Ephraim dwelt in Egypt; and *as for* the Assyrian, he was his king, because he would not return. <sup>6</sup> And in his cities he prevailed not with the sword, and he ceased *to war* with his hands: and they shall eat *of the fruit* of their own devices: <sup>7</sup> and his people *shall* cleave fondly to their habitation; but God shall be angry with his precious things, and shall not at all exalt him. <sup>8</sup> How shall I deal with thee, Ephraim? *how* shall I protect thee, Israel? what shall I do with thee? I will make thee as Adama, and as Seboim; my heart is turned at once, my repentance is powerfully excited. <sup>9</sup> I will not act according to the fury of my wrath, I will not abandon Ephraim to be utterly destroyed: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One within thee: and I will not enter into the city. <sup>10</sup> I will go after the Lord: he shall utter *his voice* as a lion: for he shall roar, and the children of the waters shall be amazed. <sup>11</sup> They shall be amazed *and fly* as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of the Assyrians: and I will restore them to their houses, saith the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Ephraim has compassed me with falsehood, and the house of Israel and Juda with ungodliness: *but* now God knows them, and they shall be called God's holy people.