

The Minor Prophets

Hosea and Amos

Bet Shalom Congregation • March 26, 2020

1.) As God's mouthpiece, the prophet speaks out on social/moral injustice.

a.) "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy.... The Lord God has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks." (Amos 4:1-2)

b.) "Because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain... you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them. You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you will not drink their wine.... Seek good, and not evil, so that you may live... hate evil, and love good, and establish justice... it may be that the Lord... will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.... Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:11, 14-15, 24)

c.) "Hear the word of the Lord, Israelites, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no truth, there is no covenant faithfulness, there is no knowledge of God in the land; there *is* cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery." (Hosea 4:1-2)

2.) In Hosea, God is a faithful husband to Israel, the unfaithful wife. Hosea performs a prophetic speech-act to concretize this divine-human relationship.

a.) "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea... in the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah.... When the Lord first spoke to Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, 'Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land will whore away from following the Lord.' He went and married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim.... She conceived and bore a son [and God] said, 'Name him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people and I will not be your [God].'" (Hosea 1:1-3, 8)

b.) "The number of the people of Israel shall be like that of the sands of the sea, which cannot be measured... and instead of being told, 'You are 'Not-My-People,' they shall be called Children of the Living God. The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall rise from the ground.... Call your brothers, 'My People,' and your sisters, 'Lovingly Accepted!'" (Hosea 2:1-3)

3.) Hosea reminds the people of God's love for them, despite their current rebellion.

a.) "I will speak coaxingly to [Israel] and lead her through the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.... There she will respond as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt. And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband' (אִשִּׁי; *ishi*), and no more will you call me 'My Master' (בַּעְלִי; *baali*). For I will remove the names of the Baals from [Israel's] mouth, and they shall nevermore be mentioned by name." (Hosea 2:16-19)

b.) “When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of humanity, with bonds of love... and I bent down and fed them.” (11:1-4)

c.) “They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king because they have refused to return to me.... How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? [...] My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm.... [The Northern Kingdom of Israel] shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord.” (11:5, 8, 11)

4.) Amos comments on other nations, which underscores the Israelites’ belief that the God of Israel holds sway over the whole world.

a.) “For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he burned... the bones of the king of Edom.” (Amos 2:1)

b.) ““Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel? ... Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it... except I will not completely destroy the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord.” (9:7-8)

5.) In later Jewish tradition, Amos and Hosea become even more universal.

a.) TANAKH: “Let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.” (Hosea 6:1-2)

b.) TARGUM: “Let us return to the worship of the Lord; for he who struck us will heal us; he who brought destruction upon us will relieve us. He will give us life in the days... that will come; on *the day of the resurrection of the dead* he will raise us up that we may live before him.” (c. 2nd century CE; cf. *Esther Rabbah* 9:2 [6th century])

c.) ““In that day I will raise up the booth of David that has fallen... and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,’ declares the Lord.” (Amos 9:11-12)

d.) ““In that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen... and rebuild it as in the days of old, so that the remnant of humankind and all the nations who are called by my name may seek the Lord.” (Amos 9:11-12 LXX; c. 200 BCE)

e.) “Who would have expected [God]... to raise up the fallen booth of David? As it says, ‘In that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen’... and who would expect the whole world to become one united group, as it says, ‘For then I make the peoples of pure speech, so that they all invoke the name of the Lord by name and serve him with one accord’ [Zephaniah 3:9].” (*Genesis Rabbah* 88:7; c. 5th century BCE)