

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Amos, Hosea, Micah

Hebrew Poetry

--Hebrew Poetry is marked by parallelism. When a person reads Hebrew poetry, he or she will notice that each pair of lines consists of two parallel lines.

--Synonymous parallelism repeats the thought of the 1st line in the 2nd.

--Antithetical parallelism contrasts the 1st line with the 2nd line.

--Parallelism of Specification gives further information or specifics of the 1st line in the 2nd line.

--Other poetic devices:

--Word pairs (like justice/righteousness)

--Chiasm A B (1st line) B' A' (2nd line)

“You shall break them with a rod of iron,

“Like a vessel of the potter you shall crush them” (Ps. 2:9).

LATTER PROPHETS

Amos

I. Who was Amos?

1. Amos' hometown was Tekoa, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem.

2. His occupation:

a. Not an official trained prophet (7:14). This is the apparent connotation of the phrase “I was/am not a prophet” and “I am/was not the son of a prophet.”

b. Rather, he was a “sheep-breeder,” (1:1) “herdsman,” & cultivator of sycamore-fig trees (7:14), who may well have traveled in other parts of the country as a consultant and/or merchant of sheep. At least, he was a sheep and/or cattle owner, possibly a rancher, not just a shepherd. Thus Amos was an agriculturist from rural Judah.

II. When did he preach?

1. During the reigns of Uzziah & Jeroboam II, the same as the early prophecies of Hosea. The fact that the later kings of Judah were not added to Amos' prophecies would suggest that he preached earlier, before the death of Uzziah. Probably preached approximately 760-750, overlapping the early ministry of Hosea & just preceding that of Isaiah and Micah. An earthquake mentioned in 1:1 is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5, also placed during the reign of Uzziah.

2. What were the times like?

a. Peace & Prosperity—Probably the most prosperous time Israel (& Judah to the south) ever knew before or after. The borders were also expanded.

b. Luxury & Laziness—The rich lived in luxury while the poor were dying. The rich exploited the poor. The rich charged huge interest to those less fortunate.

They took advantage of the poor by taking their land, i.e. foreclosure. This living in luxury included sins of sexual immorality & gluttony.

c. Corruption, False Worship, & Idolatry—The prophet, priest, judge, & king were corrupt. Power made them ignore the law. They pretended to worship Yahweh, but it was only empty ritual designed to keep up appearances while covering up their sin and rebellion. Their worship did not produce justice/righteousness. Idolatry existed alongside the “official” worship of Yahweh.

III. Where did he preach?

--Though Amos was from Judah, the southern kingdom, he preached in Israel, the northern kingdom. At least on one occasion he preached at Bethel, which was an official place of worship. The multiple references to Samaria would suggest that he preached there as well. This was the capital city, a large & wealthy city.

IV. The Book of Amos—

A. 1:1-2—Introduction

B. 1:3-2:16—Judgment on the nations (including Israel)

C. 3:1-6:14—Miscellaneous Prophecies

D. 7:1-8:3—Visions & Narrative

E. 8:4-9:15—Miscellaneous Prophecies

IV. What was his message?

--1. Yahweh alone was God. He had called them, “known them” (3:1), and they were in covenant to obey Him. He made demands that Baal did not make.

--2. Ethical requirements of religion. God’s call & their covenant with Him required a certain lifestyle from them, characterized by *justice & righteousness*. These two words are the basic prophetic description of God’s expectations of His people—to do what is right & to treat everyone fairly & with equity.

--3. Though times were peaceful & prosperous, judgment was coming, because of their sins, including violence, warfare, ignoring God’s laws, exploiting the poor, greed, empty ritual, and idolatry.

V. Selected Texts

1. Amos 3:1-2—Responsibility of Election

--The LORD chose Israel, as especially seen in the exodus from Egypt & the Sinai covenant. God could have chosen anyone to be His people, but He chose Israel. This was a great privilege.

--But because of this choice, Israel has responsibilities. Since they have ignored their covenant obligations, Yahweh tells them that He will judge them (i.e. blessings/curses).

2. Amos 5:18-27—The Day of the Lord

--The Day of the Lord—When the Lord visits His people, either for blessing or judgment.

--The people were expecting this to be the time when God would bless His people & set up the eschatological, i.e. messianic, kingdom.

--Amos says that it will be a time of judgment & darkness, like running from a lion & finding a bear or from safety to find a snake.

--Rejection of Religion—God rejects their feasts, assemblies, offerings, and songs. Why?
--Because there is no justice & righteousness. The religion makes no difference in their lives. They go through the motions. God desires a people that obey Him. (see Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 355) Canaanite religion did not require this, but God's covenant does. Justice & Righteousness must be an ever-flowing stream & mighty river rather than an intermittent wadi that only flows when it rains.

3. 9:11-15—Eventually a day will come when:

--David's tent will be restored. The broken wall will be rebuilt.
--Harvest will be great. Plowman overtakes the harvester. Judgment on the land is removed. Vineyards will be replanted. They will never be uprooted again.
--These promises are ultimately messianic!

Hosea

I. When did he preach?—His Background

A. **Hosea 1:1** places the prophet's ministry during the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, & Hezekiah. Hezekiah's reign did not begin until 715 BC by virtually all chronologies, although a co-regency with Ahaz may have begun in the 720s.
B. **Hosea preached between 760-725**, i.e. from near the end of Jeroboam II's reign and before the siege/fall of Samaria, although some argue that his ministry extended beyond 722. His preaching seems to reflect the chaotic events following Jeroboam's death.

II. Where did he preach?—His world

--He preached in **Israel, the northern kingdom**. Likely he would have preached in Bethel, Samaria, Jezreel. However, as the kingdom shrunk, his places of preaching would have as well, to the area around Samaria. This would depend upon how long he preached.

III. His Marriage—

A. Hosea's marriage has been the key point of debate surrounding the book of Hosea. He is told to marry a prostitute. Questions include:

1. **Was Gomer a prostitute when they married?**
2. **Did she only later become adulterous and a prostitute?**
3. **Is the woman in Hosea 3 also Gomer?** What appears obvious is that **Gomer deserted him to be with other men, & likely serve as a prostitute**, which was normal in Canaanite worship. This was the same action Israel had taken in her relationship with Yahweh.

B. Hosea and Gomer had three children, which are essential to the meaning of Hosea's prophecy:

1. Jezreel—Meaning "God sows," this son's name shows that God will "sow" judgment, i.e. bring judgment to Israel.

2. *Lo-Ruhamah*—This daughter’s name means “No compassion,” & signifies that God will no longer show mercy & compassion to His people, rather He will judge them.

3. *Lo-Ammi*—Meaning “Not my people,” this son’s name shows that Israel has been rejected as God’s people. They have rejected Him, & because of their rebellion He is rejected them.

IV. Hosea’s Message?

--See above under marriage & children—

A. **Israel has committed adultery and will be punished for their sins.** They have committed prostitution by selling themselves to idols/false gods. They have ceased to “know” Him or follow Him, in spite of His love for them. This is an obvious parallel to Hosea’s marriage to Gomer. God’s relationship with His people is a personal & intimate one, as well as a loyal and monogamous one.

B. **God will ultimately restore them as His people.** Thus, the ultimate message is that God is able (& desires to!) restore them to their original relationship. This is also a parallel to Hosea’s marriage, specifically to Hosea’s redemption of his wife in Hosea 3.

V. The Book of Hosea

Hosea 1-3	Hosea’s Family and God’s Family, Israel
Hosea 4-13	Words of Judgment against Israel
Hosea 14	Promise of Future Repentance & Blessing

VI. Selected Passages

1. **Hosea 4—This chapter is a *rib* (רִיב) passage, or lawsuit.** The Lord is presenting his charges against His people, Israel, & calling for justice.

4:1-3—The case against the people

--**Accusation**—

--They have no Faithfulness (to covenant)

--They have no Love/loyalty (*chesed*--חֶסֶד)—This word can mean "mercy" or "love," or it may mean "loyalty." It is highly debated.

--They have no Knowledge of God (relationship/intimacy=obedience).

--Instead, they have cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery, & bloodshed.

--**Judgment**

--The land will mourn/dry up. It will be fruitless.

--The people will waste away.

--Everything will die. This is a serious judgement based upon curses like those found in Deuteronomy.

2. **6:4-10—God and His People**

I. Their “loyalty” (אֱמוּנָה) is like the dew. It appears briefly at times, but soon disappears like the dew disappears after the sun rises. Cf. 13:3 & 14:5, where “dew” is also used as a metaphor, 1st to describe Israel after judgment & the 2nd to describe God’s return to His people.

II. He sent His prophets. They “cut [Israel] to pieces” w/God’s message of judgment. The prophets delivered God’s word to Israel to call them back to faithfulness to their covenant.

III. The message:

1. Yahweh desires “loyalty” (אֱמוּנָה) not sacrifice. (Jesus quotes this verse in Mt 9:13, 12:7) This is a repeated sentiment in the prophets: Hosea, Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, etc.

2. Yahweh desires “knowledge of God” more than burnt offerings. God desires that His people “know” him, suggesting intimacy. They must be committed to only Him, just like He “knew” (i.e. “chose” in 3:1) them.

Micah

I. Who was Micah?

1. His name (מִיכָה) =Micah) means, “Who is like Yahweh?” (Probably short for Micaiah.) Part of his message is that only Yahweh is God. He alone is sovereign.

2. He is from Moresheth, a small town about 25 miles SW of Jerusalem.

II. When did he preach?

1. He preached during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, & Hezekiah—742-686.

2. He probably preached from about 725 until 700, but maybe a little before or after that. Micah 1:2-7 contains reference to Samaria, which fell in 722. 1:10-16 contains what appears to be a description of military action, probably by Sennacherib in 701. Jeremiah 26:18 tells us that Micah announced the judgment against Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, i.e. probably 701.

III. What was his message?

--Judgment is coming. Why?

--Because of sin, rebellion, iniquity. They rob and steal from the poor without remorse. The people have forgotten their responsibility before God as a partner in covenant. Micah says that God will hold His people accountable to the covenant.

--A remnant will survive—Hope for the future

IV. The Book of Micah:

- I. 1:1— Superscription, followed by three sets of prophetic sayings on judgment & hope.
- II. 1:2-2:13 Judgment & Hope
- III. 3:1-5:15 Judgment & Hope
- IV. 6:1-7:20 Judgment & Hope

V. Selected Passages

1. Micah 5:2—Promises Ruler

--Bethlehem is promised a future ruler. This is a cryptic and obscure prophecy. Its fulfillment in Jesus' birth is fairly extraordinary, & shows God's providence and planning.

2. Micah 6:6-8—What the LORD Requires

--What is a proper response to what Yahweh has done? Burnt offerings? Rivers of oil? My firstborn? NO! He has shown His people what he requires:

--"Do justice"—Live with justice to all people. Treat everyone properly, i.e. according to covenantal law & expectations.

--"Love mercy/kindness/devotion"—They are to love *chesed* (חֶסֶד), i.e. be completely devoted to Yahweh & to each other.

--"Walk humbly/wisely with your God"—This is true worship, letting God lead in His wisdom. This is what God requires!

"To say that God requires ultimately nothing that man can bring does not mean that men ought not to worship Him. Worship is necessary for man, because it is the outward expression of true humility before God, of that humble trust which is essential. It is when worship ceases to be this that it is a hindrance and not a help; so long as it is the outcome of true and humble conscious devotion to God, it can and does strengthen those bonds which bind God and man together through Christ. Worship is also necessary because a man should be full of praise and thankfulness to God; but as soon as the aim of hymns and songs and music generally becomes aesthetic, it is the time to beware" (N. Snaith, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, Epworth Preacher's Commentary [London: Epworth, 1956], p. 104).