

Hosea Notes

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Introduction:

Hosea means “salvation.”

- He prophesied from 760-722 BC. (Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 BC.)
- Hosea was Joshua’s original name before Moses tagged the prefix Ja- to it. (Num. 13)

Hosea was contemporary with Isaiah, Amos, and Micah.

- He largely prophesied to the northern nation of Israel.
- He prophesied at a time of great economic strength and growth, while at the same time, the nation is deteriorating morally.

Hosea is quoted from in Matt. 2:15; 9:13; 12:7; Rom. 9:25, 26; and 1 Pet. 2:10.

Chapter 1:

Hosea 1-3 details Hosea’s relationship with Gomer, giving a picture of God’s relationship with Israel.

1:1 – “Uzziah” – 2 Kings 15:1-7

- “Jotham” – 2 Kings 15:32-38
- “Ahaz” – 2 Kings 16
- “Hezekiah” – 1 Kings 18
- “Jeroboam” – That is Jeroboam II. (2 Kings 14:23-29)
 - The account of Israel being taken by the Assyrians is recorded in 2 Kings 17.
 - There are 6 other kings in Israel during this time of Hosea’s ministry, but he only lists Jeroboam.

1:2 – “take yourself a wife” – God is going to deepen Hosea’s ministry by allowing him to experience the heartbreak God is going through. (2 Cor. 1:4)

- God reveals His brokenness to us and makes Himself vulnerable to us.
- You can only love to the extent that you’re willing to make yourself vulnerable.
- “wife of harlotry” – Hosea is to marry a prostitute.
 - Some speculate that Gomer only became a prostitute after marrying Hosea, but that doesn’t seem to be a more accurate picture of Israel and its faithfulness to God.
- “harlotry” – This is simply having a price at which one can be bought and used by another.
 - Gomer has the nature of a prostitute. It is who she is.

1:4 – “Jezreel” – means “sown, scattered.”

- “Jehu” – He was God’s chosen instrument to bring judgment to the house of Ahab, but he was bitter and excessive. He killed the 70 sons of Ahab, and then went after Ahaziah in Judah and killed over 40 of his brothers. (2 Kings 9-10)

1:5 – “the Valley of Jezreel” – Armageddon.

1:6 – “Lo-Ruhamah” – means “no mercy.”

- The Assyrians will show no mercy to Israel.
- Hosea may not be the father of Gomer’s 2nd and 3rd children.

- 1:7 – “mercy on the house of Judah” – The same Assyrians who took Israel will be defeated outside Jerusalem by one angel in one night. (2 Kings 19:35-37)
- 1:9 – “Lo-Ammi” – means “not my people.”
- If he is born of Gomer’s prostitution, this name would imply “not mine.”
- 1:10-2:1 – On the heels of one of the darkest prophecies against Israel, God gives a promise of mercy and the restoration of Israel.
- 1:10 – Quoted in Rom. 9:26; 1 Pet. 2:10.
- 1:11 – “gathered together” – The re-gathering of Israel and Judah as one people.
- This time period began in 1948 when Israel returned to it’s land as one people and it will culminate when Jesus rules the world from Jerusalem in the Kingdom Age.
 - “the day of Jezreel” – This may be referencing the Battle of Armageddon.

Chapter 2:

- 2:1 – “My people” – Heb. “Ammi.” (Hosea 1:9)
- “Mercy is shown” – Heb. “Ruhamah.” (Hosea 1:6)
- 2:2 – “Bring charges against your mother” – God is using Hosea to testify against Israel.
- 2:4 – “not have mercy on her children” – The children pay a terrible price for the backsliding of the parents.
- 2:5 – “my lovers” – The idols they think that provided the abundance of blessings.
- “my drink” – Possibly “liquors.”
- 2:6 – “hedge up your way” – God will frustrate her desires to run from Him.
- God may not violate our will, but He may obliterate all our choices.
 - Nothing apart from God really satisfies.
- 2:8 – “I gave her grain” – They are using the gifts that God has given them to serve other gods.
- 2:9 – “I will return and take away” – God is going to remove all the things Israel is seeking idols for.
- God’s discipline is always to drive us back to Him.
- 2:11 – “her appointed feasts” – It’s not that they didn’t keep up their religious duty. But it was hypocritical and God sees right through it.
- 2:14-23 – “I will” – 10 times. (v. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 - 2 times, 20, 21, 23 – 2 times.)
- 2:14 – “allure her” – Lit. “tenderly to the heart.”
- “comfortably” – Lit. “unto her heart.”
- 2:15 – “the Valley of Achor” – Referring to Achan of Josh. 7:26. (Isa. 65:10)
- “Achor” – means “trouble.”
 - “a door of hope” – The backslider who returns to God must truly depend on the love and mercy of God.

2:16 – “My Husband” – Heb. “ishi.”

- “My Master” – Heb. “baali.”
- God is taking the name of Baal out of the mouths of His people.

2:18 – “sword of battle I will shatter from the earth” – There have been 13 years of war to 1 year of peace through recorded human history.

- “They shall beat their swords into plowshares.” (Isa. 2:4)

2:19 – “betroth you to Me forever” – God’s stubborn love.

- “betroth” – Lit. “to woo a virgin.”
- That God still sees Israel as a pure virgin is only His mercy.

2:23 – “not obtained mercy” – Heb. “lo-ruhamah.”

- “not Me people” – Heb. “lo-ammi.”
- “You are My people” – This extends to the Gentiles in the Church. (Rom. 9:25; 1 Pet. 2:10)

Chapter 3:

3:1 – “lover” – This is referring to Hosea’s love for Gomer.

- He still loves her as she is prostituting herself against him.
- This love has more obedience than feeling to it.

3:2 – “bought her for myself” – He is paying for his own wife as a prostitute.

- Gomer has become less than a prostitute. Now she is a slave.
- Hosea is serving the role of the kinsman-redeemer.
- “fifteen shekels of silver” – Half the price of a slave. (Exod. 21:32)
- “barley” – Animal food.

3:4 – “Israel shall abide many days without king...sacrifice” – This is the time we are living in.

- “without sacrifice” – The major problem with Judaism today is that they do not have a sacrifice.
- “teraphim” – These were small idols. Babylon will cure Israel of its idolatry.

3:5 – “David their king” – Looking to the future Messianic Age. (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23; 37:25)

- “fear the Lord and His goodness” – God made all His goodness pass before Moses. (Exod. 33:19)
- “Your gentleness has made me great.” (Ps. 18:35)

Chapter 4:

4:1 – “Hear” – God is beckoning. It is His mercy to call an unfaithful wife.

- “a charge” – This will be the tone of the rest of Hosea.
- “no truth or mercy of knowledge of God” – They have turned from God and His ways.
- “truth” – or “faithfulness.” (NIV)
 - The subjective philosophies have relegated truth to something relative in nearly all areas of life and culture.
- “mercy” – or “love.” (NIV)
 - We are living in a brutal culture willing to kill or destroy innocent human life in an effort to get ahead.

- 4:3 – “Therefore” – All sin has a “therefore.” Sin has consequences.
- “mourn” – or “waste away.”
 - “fish of the sea will be taken away” – The Creation groans because of the sin of the people, not because we have not properly cared for the ecology.
- 4:4 – “let no man contend” – There is no use in arguing, as they do not have a case against God.
- The problem is of the heart and cannot be argued out of.
- 4:5 – “your mother” – Israel, their nation.
- 4:6 – “destroyed for lack of knowledge” – They have turned from God and His Word.
- “rejected knowledge” – They haven’t rejected all knowledge. They are learning how to prosper in their sin.
 - “priest for Me” – Israel was to be God’s representative to the nations.
 - “forgotten the law” – They “willfully forget” (2 Pet. 3:5). (See also Amos 8:11 and 2 Tim. 4:3.)
 - “rejected...forgotten” – The Word can either be rejected outright or more subtly pushed aside because other things are crowding it out. Either one is a travesty.
- 4:7 – “glory into shame” – The course of nations through history.
- 4:8 – “eat up the sin of My people” – The priests would eat from the sin and fellowship offerings of the people, so they refused to speak against the sin of the people in hopes of getting more and better sacrifices.
- Never prosper from the sin of another!
- 4:9 – “like people, like priest” – The leaders’ unwillingness to yield to the Scriptures rubs off on the people – despite what either of them say.
- All will be punished for their role in this falling away.
- 4:10 – “not have enough” – They will never be satisfied by the things they chase.
- 4:11 – “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart” – “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)
- 4:12 – “wooden idols...their staff” – They are practicing divination.
- 4:13 – “adultery” – The immorality connected with idolatry.
- 4:14 – “not punish your daughters” – The women will not be restrained from sinning.
- The daughters have followed in the footsteps of their fathers.
 - “people who do not understand will be trampled” – Sin makes us vulnerable to destruction.
- 4:15 – “Let not Judah offend” – Hosea is warning Judah not to follow Israel into sin.
- “Beth Aven” – means “house of evil or deceit.”
 - Beth Aven is another name for Bethel, one of the cities established by Jeroboam I to be a center for his idolatrous practice. (1 Kings 12:29)

4:16 – “in open country” – Their breaking down the fences into freedom has made them vulnerable to attack from other animals.

4:17 – “Let him alone” – Hosea is speaking to Judah and encouraging them to stay away from Israel.
- God has not abandoned Israel, but He is also trying to protect Judah.

Chapter 5:

5:1 – “priests” – The priests of Israel were set up by Jeroboam I to conduct the false worship of his golden calves.
- “Mizpah” – On the east side of Israel, with Tabor on the west. They will be hit by the invading Assyrians first.

5:2 – “slaughter” – Sacrifices to pagan gods.
- The Assyrians will slaughter Israel.

5:3 – “I know Ephraim” – It is important to remember that God knows.

5:5 – “Judah also stumbles with them” – This is prophesied over 100 years before Judah fell.

5:7 – “treacherously” – The Hebrew speaks of an unfaithful wife.
- “a New Moon shall devour them” – The idea is “in a short amount of time.”

5:10 – “princes of Judah” – The political rulers.
- “a landmark” – The property boundaries.
- The political rules are stealing land from the people and from each other.

5:12 – “moth” – Ruins fabrics.
- “rotteness” – Dry rot ruins wooden homes.

5:13 – “Ephraim went to Assyria” – They are trying to alleviate the consequences of their sin by making deals with the powers of the world rather than repenting and turning to God.

5:15 – “return again to My place” – This is speaking of God moving into authority in the religious, political, and personal life of Israel.
- “they will seek My face” – The nation will see Him again. (Zech. 12:9-10; Matt. 23:37-39)

Chapter 6:

6:1-3 – In context, these verses seem to fit better with 5:15.

6:1 – “let us return to the Lord” – Hosea is encouraging repentance.
- “He will heal us” – This is God’s heart for His people.

6:2 – “two days...third day” – Is this a reference to the time of Israel’s restoration? (2 Pet. 3:8)
- “He will revive us” – In Ezekiel, God spoke of Israel as breathing life into dry bones. (Ezek. 37)
- “live in His sight” – This may be speaking of the Millennium.

6:3 – “He will come to us” – God is prepared to run to Israel.

- 6:4 – “what shall I do to you?” – This is God’s brokenness. He knows that in the end the nation will be restored to Him, but in the meantime there is pain and suffering.
- “faithfulness” – Lit. “to bend the neck.” This speaks of their submission to the Lord.
 - “like the early dew it goes away” – It shows promise, but burns off quickly.
 - God’s complaint against the nation is not their sin, but that their goodness is so transient and temporary. God’s heart breaks as a lover who remembers the good and precious days of the beginning of the relationship, but now has the lover run away.
- 6:5 – “your judgments are like light that goes forth” – God has been forced to pronounce judgment on His people.
- 6:6 – “I desire” – This is what God wants.
- “mercy” – (Heb. “hesed.”) Lit. “loving-kindness.”
 - “not sacrifice” – Religious duty without true heart.
 - The sacrifice of an animal for the sin or consecration of the worshipper was at the heart of the OT worship. It was to be a picture of Jesus...but they turned it into an empty, meaningless form of religious practice.
 - “To obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Sam. 15:22)
 - “knowledge of God” – This is to know personally and relationally.
- 6:7 – “treacherously” – Speaking of the unfaithful wife.
- 6:9 – “priests murder” – The people are following the sinfulness of its religious leadership.
- Assyria, after they carried Samaria away, put Gentiles in the land of Israel. But the Gentiles struggled to control the dangerous territory, so they sent back to Assyria for Jewish priests to teach them how to worship the God of this land.
 - “lewdness” – Sexual promiscuity.
- 6:11 – “Judah, a harvest is appointed for you” – God warned Judah not to follow Samaria, but He knows they will rebel.

Chapter 7:

- 7:1 – “I would have healed Israel” – God’s heart is to heal them.
- This implies that they were sick when God spoke with them. There was a time when they could have turned and been made better.
 - “uncovered” – Revealed and flaunted.
 - There should be a shame to sin.
 - “Samaria” – The capital of Israel. (1 Kings 16:24)
 - “committed fraud” – The nation is corrupt.
- 7:2 – “I remember all their wickedness” – The people are trying to put God out of their country and their lives.
- 7:4 – “Like an over heated” – The nation is burning in its lust and anger.
- 7:6 – “baker sleeps all night” – The burning oven is left untended.
- Samaria will be burnt by the Assyrians.
- 7:7 – “their kings have fallen” – In Israel, 4 kings were assassinated at this time.

7:8 – “Ephraim has mixed himself” – Israel has lost its separate position.
- “cake unturned” – Half-baked. The cake would be burned on one side and uncooked on the other.

7:9 – “he does not know it” – Sin works gradually and leaves the people unaware of the dilemma they are in.
- If God removes His Spirit and nothing changes, it is evidence that you’ve been functioning in the flesh all the while.
- Samson came to a place when “he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.” (Judges 16:20)
- “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.” (Isa. 40:31)
- “gray hairs” – His sin has prematurely aged him.

7:11 – “silly dove” – Simple-minded.
- They never get good direction because they keep running to the pagan nations for help.

7:15 – “strengthened their arms” – God initially gave them their military might.

7:16 – “treacherous bow” – It cannot shoot straight. (Ps. 78:57)

Chapter 8:

In Hosea 8-10, Israel is being sentenced by God.

8:1 – “Set the trumpet to your mouth!” – Hosea is sounding a warning.
- “an eagle” – The Assyrians.
- “transgressed” – They have deliberately crossed the line.

8:2 – “My God, we know you” – They claim to know God, but have been living their lives in willful disobedience to God and His Word. Their disobedience is evidence that they don’t really know God.

8:4 – “They set up kings, but not by Me” – The leaders that arise in a leadership vacuum are almost never good leaders.

8:5 – “Your calf” – Which Jeroboam I set up in 1 Kings 12:28-33. These calves were supposed to be representations of the true and living God.

8:7 – “sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind” – The NT teaches the same. (Gal. 6:7)
1. We reap of the same kind which we sowed.
2. We always reap later. The harvest comes some time after the sowing.
3. We always reap more than we sowed.
- “sow the wind” – Instead, they are to “Sow for yourselves righteousness.” (Hosea 10:12)

8:8 – “they are among the Gentiles” – Israel will be dispersed among Assyria and Babylon.

8:9 – “they have gone up to Assyria” – They are looking to political alliances for help.
- “hired lovers” – Like Gomer, the prostitute.

8:13 – “They shall return to Egypt” – Returning to bondage.

8:14 – “Israel has forgotten his Maker” – The reason for these consequences.

- “forgotten” – Lit. “to set aside, to mislay.”
 - Deut. 4, 7, 9, and 10 all warn against forgetting God.
- “temples” – Large public buildings.
- “multiplied fortified cities” – They thought their ingenuity and planning could protect and prosper themselves.

Chapter 9:

9:1 – “made love for hire” – Prostitution.

- They are looking for prosperity.

9:3 – “eat unclean things in Assyria” – They are eating unclean things in Israel, so God will send them to the land of unclean things.

- “Ephraim shall return to Egypt” – Some will flee to Egypt to escape Assyria, only to die in Egypt. (v. 6)

9:4 – “not come into the house of the Lord” – They will be in exile.

9:6 – “Memphis” – The burial city of Egypt.

- They will flee to Egypt...and die there. (Jer. 42-44)
- “Nettles shall possess their valuables” – The Assyrians will put Gentiles in the land of Samaria to displace the Jews.

9:7 – “prophet...spiritual man” – These are the servants God has sent to speak to the nation.

- “fool” – Lit. “simple, not able to learn.”
 - Even in our day, a common Christian is routinely considered an ignorant simpleton.
- “Because of the greatness of your iniquity” – Their sin kept them from hearing the truth.

9:9 – “the days of Gibeah” – Referring to the events of Judges 19.

9:10 – “Baal Peor” – The sexual immorality and idolatry of Numbers 25.

9:13 – “Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer” – Speaking of the cruelty of the Assyrians.

9:14 – “a miscarrying womb” – They will become unfruitful.

9:15 – “Gilgal” – Where the nation originally dedicated themselves to God. (Josh. 5:2,10; 1 Sam. 10:8; 11:15.)

9:16 – “Ephraim” – means “fruitfulness.”

9:17 – “wanderers among the nations” – Israel has wandered from God, so he will cause them to wander apart from their homeland.

Chapter 10:

10:1 – “Israel empties his vine” – Originally, Israel was like grapes in the desert (Hosea 9:10). Now they are barren and unfruitful.

- “vine” – An idiom of Israel throughout the Bible. (Ps. 80; Isa. 5; Jer. 2; Ezek. 19; John 15)
- “altars...sacred pillars” – This has become the fruit of the nation.
- “According to the bounty of his land” – As God blesses and they prosper, they then turn from God and use those things to worship idols.

10:2 – “divided” – Lit. “smooth, shiny.” They would smooth the stones used in casting lots. God is saying that they are gambling with the truth.

10:3 – “no king” – They have no protection and no leadership.

10:4 – “hemlock” – A poison.

10:5 – “the calf of Beth Aven” – Idolatry has turned Bethel (“the house of God”) into Beth Aven (“the house of wickedness”).

10:6 – “The idol also shall be carried to Assyria” – It seems the calf of Bethel was taken to Assyria.
- “King Jareb” – Seems to be another name for Shalmanezar, the king of Assyria.

10:8 – “the high places” – The idolatrous shrines.

- “say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’” – Quoted by Jesus in Luke 23:30. (See also Rev. 6:16.)

10:9 – “battle of Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them” – The battle of Gibeah didn’t help to produce righteousness in Israel. (Judges 19)

10:10 – “two transgressions” – Possibly speaking of the idols at Dan and Bethel.

10:11 – “make Ephraim pull a plow” – Harder work than threshing out the grain. At least the heifer threshing out the grain got to eat of the grain while working.

10:12 – “mercy” – (Heb. “hesed”) Lit. “loving-kindness.” (Also in Hosea 6:6.)

- “seek the Lord” – The opposite of forgetting. (Hosea 8:14)
- “rains righteousness on you” – The Lord will set things right.

10:14 – “Shalman” – Shalmanezar, king of the Assyrians.

- “Beth Arbel” – Located near the Sea of Galilee, it seems that the Assyrians killed some in Israel by throwing them off the cliffs near Beth Arbel.

10:15 – “Bethel” – The idolatry of Bethel, not primarily the Assyrians, is the cause of their destruction.

Chapter 11:

11:1 – “I loved him” – God is speaking to the nation from the first person.

- “out of Egypt I called My son” – Quoted in Matt. 2:15 and speaking of Jesus.

11:3 – “Taking them by their arms” – As a parent allows a child to hold onto them while the child is learning to walk.

11:4 – “drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love” – “The love of Christ compels us.”
(2 Cor. 5:12)

- “the yoke” – The yoke of bondage.

11:6 – “because of their own counsels” – God is not the one to blame.

- God allows humans the freedom to choose and then honors those choices with consequences.

11:8 – “give you up” – God is lamenting.

- “Admah...Zeboiim” – 2 additional cities destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. (Deut. 29:23)
- “churns” – Lit. “overthrown, in upheaval.” This is the same word that is used in Genesis for the overthrow of Sodom.
 - God is admitting His heartbreak and turmoil over His people.
- “sympathy” – The Hebrew root means “to sigh.”
- “stirred” – Lit. “contractions or spasms.” The word refers to a woman in labor.

11:9 – “I am God, and not man” – God has no equals.

- All there is separates into 2 categories: Creator and Creation. We are the Creation.
- God’s love is unlike any love we have ever known.

11:12 – “Judah still walks with God” – For a little while longer.

Chapter 12:

12:1 – “feeds on wind” – No substance or sustenance.

- “the east wind” – The Sirocco. The hot, dry desert wind.
- “Assyrians...Egypt” – Israel is trying to play both sides. They are making alliances to try to escape trouble.

12:3 – “by the heel” – Jacob means “heel-catcher.”

12:4 – “He wept” – Jacob “won” his wrestling match with the Angel through brokenness. (Gen. 32:24-28)

- “Bethel” – Jacob eventually got back to Bethel. (Gen. 35)
- “there He spoke to us” – At Bethel, God prophesied of the nation that would come through Jacob.

12:6 – “mercy” – (Heb. “hesed”) Lit. “loving-kindness.” (See also Hosea 6:6; 10:12)

- “wait on your God continually” – Because of who God is.

12:8 – “I have become rich” – They mistake their financial prosperity as God’s blessing.

12:9 – “the appointed feast” – The Feast of Tabernacles.

12:10 – “prophets...visions...symbols” – God is trying every way possible to communicate with His people.

12:12 – “Jacob fled to the country of Syria” – Looking to Jacob’s time with Laban where God both disciplined Jacob and built him into a family at the same time.

Chapter 13:

13:1 – “spoke, trembling” – When Israel was humble.

- God exalts the humble. (James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6)

13:2 – “the calves” – The idols of the golden calves.

13:3 – “like the morning cloud” – They show signs of life and promise, but dissipate quickly.

13:4 – “there is no savior besides Me” – Jesus said, no one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

- “savior” – If God comes to us as a savior, it implies that we need saving.

13:6 – “they forgot Me” – Their prosperity causes them to forget God.

- The sin of Sodom was pride, a full belly, and idleness of time. (Ezek. 16:49-50)
- Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11)

13:7-8 – “lion...leopard...bear” – The same beasts mentioned in Dan. 7 and Rev. 13. This is likely a reference to the Tribulation period.

13:11 – “gave you a king” – King Saul.

13:13 – “not stay long where children are born” – It is a picture of a woman in childbirth who cannot deliver the child and consequently dies.

13:14 – “ransom” – The NT idea is “to buy out of slavery.”

- The ultimate measure of God’s holiness and love for us is not in His daily provision or fulfilling our desires, but in sacrificing Himself to take away our sins.
- “O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction” – Paul quoted this verse in 1 Cor. 15:55 with some slight variation.

Chapter 14:

14:1 – “return to the Lord” – This is the heart of God.

- “stumbled because of your iniquity” – This separation from God is the result of our choices. It is not his desire at all.

14:2 – “Take words with you” – God is asking for our confession and repentance. (1 John 1:9)

- “Take away all iniquity” – Lit. “wipe away all that we are oweing.”
- “sacrifices” – Lit. “bull calves.” These were the most costly sacrifices.

14:3 – “not ride on horses” – They are not looking to political or military solutions to their sin problem.

14:4 – “I will heal their backsliding” – What God promises to do for those who turn back to Him.

- Backsliding leaves wounds that need to be healed.
- God loves the backslider.
- “freely” – Undeservedly. This is the only way to receive Christ’s love.

14:5 – “I will be like the dew” – Watering and refreshing Israel.

- “like the lily” – In beauty.
- “roots like Lebanon” – Deep and strong.
 - God is using all these pictures of beauty, strength, life, and vitality for a nation that at this time is backslidden, in destruction, and wasting away.

14:6 – “like an olive tree” – He will make them fruitful once again.

14:9 – “the ways of the Lord are right” – We don’t debate His ways. Instead we simply choose whether or not to walk in His ways; “the righteous walk in them.”

- “Who gave us the right to debate morality?”
- “stumble” – Lit. “utterly fall.”