

Hosea 6:7 – “But they themselves transgressed the covenant like Adam” (my translation).

- **Theological implications:** This verse could refer merely to what is likely the Mosaic Covenant or additionally refer to a pre-fall covenant (e.g., Covenant of Works, Adamic Covenant, Covenant with Creation, etc.) If the latter is true, this verse would validate seeing the concept of covenant as a fundamental framework for God’s relationship with mankind and thus God’s work of redemption (as Covenant Theology argues).
- **A ׀ (kaph, “like”) or ׀ (bet, “at”) preposition attached to אָדָם (Adam)?**
 - **The MT’s ׀ (kaph, “like”) preposition.**
 - The MT.
 - The LXX supports the ׀ (kaph, “like”) preposition. See “LXX” below.
 - **An emendation to a ׀ (bet, “at”) preposition.**
 - One can easily see how a ׀ could be mistaken for a ׀ in the transmission process.
 - Wolff (105) argues that the ׀ (bet) preposition is required by the subsequent use of שָׁם (there). Cf. Mays, 100; Davies, 171.
 - This emendation is further supported by the geographical references that follow (Mays, 100; cf. McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 95).
 - The BHS does not provide any manuscript evidence supporting this reading.
 - However, the LXX clearly supports the ׀ (kaph, “like”) preposition.
 - **Implications:**
 - The ׀ (kaph; correspondence, “like”) preposition seems to support “as Adam (person).” –Implies a pre-fall covenant with Adam.
Note: However, Williamson (*Sealed with an Oath*, 55; cf. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, 215) argues that an emendation is not necessary for a geographical understanding (cf. a possibly parallel use of the ׀ preposition in Hos 2:5 [Eng 2:3], i.e., “as in the wilderness”). In such case, one would translate this verse something like, “as [at] Adam.” Dearman (197) also notes, “Given Hosea’s propensity for similes and comparisons employing a *ke*, the use of the *ke* to compare an action at a place is not unexpected.”
 - The ׀ (bet; locative/spatial, “at”) would coincide with a geographical understanding of אָדָם (Adam, location). E.g., “At Adam they transgressed the covenant.” As such, this text would not affirm a pre-fall covenant with Adam, but would simply be referring to what is most likely the Mosaic Covenant.

Aside: English translations – “as” or “like” (ASV, KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, HCSB, NLT) v. “at” (RSV, NRSV, NET, NIV).

- **אָדָם (Adam).**
 - **אָדָם (Adam, person, first man).** Achtemeier, 53.
 - If *כְּ* (*kaph*, “like”) preposition, Adam (person) is seemingly necessary.
 - Many argue against this option because they do not see evidence for a covenant in the creation account.
 - “The strictures placed on the man Adam fall into the category of *berit* (covenant), even though the term *berit* (covenant) does not appear in the context that describes that nature of Adam’s probation (Gen. 2:17). The basic concept of covenant is that of a relationship that involves obligation.... Both are present in the account of Genesis 2:17” (McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 95). See also Andersen and Freedman (439): “The pattern of obligations followed by curses for rebellion found in Genesis 2-3 suggest covenant without using the word.”
 - Andersen and Freedman (439) note that, if referring to Adam, Hosea’s “reference to Adam without the article differs from the terminology of Genesis, which mentions ‘the man’ when the primordial individual is meant.”
 - **אָדָם (generic man, mankind),** e.g., “After the manner of *mankind*.” Calvin, 235. Supported by the LXX.
 - **אָדָם (Adam, location),** cf. Josh 3:16.
 - If *בְּ* (*bet*, “at”) preposition, Adam (person) is seemingly necessary.
 - Various commentators point out that taking אָדָם as a geographical reference is problematic since no covenant breaking, let alone national sin, at Adam is known.¹
 - However, Hosea could be referring to some incident not immediately obvious or not recorded in Biblical history, such as a contemporary event.

¹ Various comments:

- Adam (location) is mentioned in Joshua 3:16 only and simply “as a place where the waters of the Jordan heaped up prior to Israel’s invasion of Canaan. Otherwise, it seems to have no significance.” (Garrett, 162).
- Davies (*Royal Priesthood*, 202-203) notes, “Why the notion of ‘covenant’ should be introduced in connection with the place Adam (RSV, JB, NRSV) or Admah (NEB) is unclear.” In other words, if Hosea is referring to disobedience, the mention of the covenant is unneeded and therefore peculiar.
- Gentry (220) notes, “Nowhere does the Old Testament clearly speak of covenant breaking at the location known as Adam (Jos. 3:16). Such a reference would be more than obscurantist.”
- “There is no record of a specific transgression committed at Adam, unless that site is understood to represent the whole wilderness experience” (McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, 215).
- “Only pure supposition can provide a concrete occasion of national sin at Adam.... The account of the rolling back of the Jordan to Adam makes no mention of a sin on Israel’s part (cf. Josh. 3:16).” (Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 22).
- “If Adam is understood as a geographical site, we should expect that some act of corporate disobedience took place there that had tainted the people’s relationship to God and which lived on in their national memory” (McComiskey, 95).

- Wolff states, “v.7 probably refers to some recent action by the cultic community which demonstrated its unfaithfulness to the covenant” (121).
- As Garrett (162) notes, “Inasmuch as there were shrines throughout Israel at the time of Hosea, we need not be surprised that the town of Adam would have had a shrine, we need not suppose that the shrine there was in any respects unusual.”
- “There are, furthermore, indications elsewhere in the broader historical context for political intrigue in Gilead [near Adam] that this obscure reference [to Adam] may reflect, such as the murder in Samaria of Pekahiah, king of Israel, by Pekah, who was accompanied by fifty men from Gilead (2 Kgs. 15:25). This event took place ca. 738, during the public activity of Hosea” (Dearman, 198).
- See Andersen and Freedman’s interpretation under “Unique interpretations” below.
- **אָדָם (the residents of Adam, location)**, e.g., “as [the inhabitants of] Adam.” Wolff mentions this possibility (105).
- **An emendation to אֲדָמָה (ground, soil, dirt)**; see Stuart below.
- **An emendation to אֲדָמָה (Admah)**, e.g., NEB.
 - Note the reference to Admah in Hos 11:8.
 - We do not know of Admah breaking a covenant (Garrett, 162).
 - The residents at Admah were not Israelites, however, making this unlikely (Davies, 171).
- **An emendation to אֲרָם (Aram)**.
 - However, “It is not clear how Aram would serve as the model for covenant-breaking” (Garrett, 162).

Implications:

- If Adam (person) is in view, this implies a pre-fall covenant with Adam.
- If one of these geographical locations is in view, this text would not affirm a pre-fall covenant with Adam, but would simply be referring to what is most likely the Mosaic Covenant.
- **The LXX** – Reads αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰσιν ὡς ἄνθρωπος παραβαίνων διαθήκην (lit. “But they are like/as a man transgressing a covenant”).
 - Supports the כִּי (*kaph*, “like”) preposition.
 - Interestingly, does not support a geographical understanding of אָדָם (Adam); but likewise does not translate אָדָם as Ἀδάμ (Adam), but rather as ἄνθρωπος (a man or mankind).
- **The geographical references (e.g., Gilead, Shechem, Israel, Ephraim; vv.7-9).**
 - The subsequent references to Gilead and Shechem (vv.8-9) seem to support a geographical understanding of אָדָם (Adam).
 - On the other hand, “Two names hardly establish a dominant sequence. Indeed, Hosea’s use of place-names is so varied as to render such a

conclusion tenuous. ... The occurrence of Gilead and Shechem (6:8-9) does not require us to view Adam as a geographical site. The verb tenses (v. 7) point to the past, while the grammatical structures (vv. 8-9) point to contemporary situations.” (McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 95).

- **שָׁם (adverb; “there”).**
 - Likely locative, and therefore seems to support a geographical understanding of אָדָם (Adam). “The Hebrew particle *sam* (‘there’) in the verse ... marks a geographical reference, and Adam is the likely antecedent....” (Dearman, 197). Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 438; Kidner, 69.
 - However, Gentry (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 219) notes that the anaphoric referent of שָׁם “may specify a location more indirectly by referring to *circumstances*” (emphasis added). See Hos 9:9 and 10:9. If this is the case here, “there” could refer back to the *circumstances* of Eden not the *location* of Adam. E.g., “The phrase ‘like Adam’ in Hosea 6:7 indicates sin in a place, the garden of Eden. The ‘there’ can refer back to these circumstances.”
 - Similarly, McComiskey (*Covenants of Promise*, 215-16) argues for a non-geographical use of שָׁם by illustrating such a use in Ps 14:5 where “*there* (*sam*) in verse 5 may be a vague reference to the place of judgment, or a reference to the state of transgression they are in when God judges them. ... If this is how we are to understand Hosea 6:7, then the prophet is saying that the Israelites transgressed the covenant, as did Adam...”
 - Robertson (22) – “The emphatic ‘there’ could represent a dramatic gesture toward the place of Israel’s current idolatry rather than requiring a poetic parallel to the location at which Israel had sinned in the past.”
 - Could refer to Gilead in the next verse (Dearman, 197).
- **Considering arguments for Israel as an Adamic (i.e., “New Adam”) figure.**
 - Gentry argues, “The royal priesthood of Israel is an Adamic role assigned her at the exodus, as indicated by being addressed as the ‘son of God’ (Ex. 4:22), a fact to which Hosea directly refers in 11:1. By violating the Mosaic covenant, Israel has forfeited this role” (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 219).
 - “The objection that traditions do not say that Yahweh made a covenant with Adam is significant. Since, however, it is a commonplace of prophetic thought that Israel kept on acting like their unfaithful ancestors, the covenant-breaking theme could easily have been extended back to the beginnings of humanity” (Andersen and Freedman, 439).
 - Davies argues, “The story of Genesis 2, with Adam as the idyllic priest-king (cf. Ezek. 28:12-15; Jub. 4:23-26), together with the notion that Israel at Sinai was constituted as the new humanity, the true successors of Adam (cf. 4 Ezra 3.3-36; 6.53-59; 2 Bar. 14.17-19), then it makes sense to compare the breach of the Sinai covenant (e.g., Hos. 4.1, 2) with the rebellion in the garden (Gen. 3; cf. Ezek. 28.16-17).

Implications/significance – If Hosea has Israel as an Adamic figure in view here, then a connection between Israel’s covenant breaking and Adam’s (person) is more likely or plausible.

- **Unique interpretations:**

- **Garrett (162-163) – Play on words** – As the reader reads “like Adam,” he naturally assumes the first man (Adam). “But when it says ‘there,’ the reader’s reference point shifts, and he must assume that ‘Adam’ is a place name. ... Hosea singled out the [supposed] shrine at Adam ... because of its namesake. The prophet has made a pun on the name of the town and the name of the original transgressor. His meaning is, ‘Like Adam (the man) they break covenants; they are faithless to me there (in the town of Adam).’”
- **Stuart (111) – Trampling a covenant underfoot** – Stuart understands הִסֵּךְ to mean “look,” אָדָם best emended to אֶדְמָה (“dirt”), עָבַר to mean “walk on,” and שָׁם to mean “see.” Thus he translates, “But look—they have walked on my covenant like it was dirt, see, they have betrayed me!” He argues that “the concern of this statement is ... that by treating the covenant ‘like dirt,’ the nation has betrayed (בָּגַד) Yahweh himself.” Andersen and Freedman respond by arguing that there is no Biblical evidence suggesting that “ground” “was regarded as contemptible. Further, עָבַר does not mean “trample upon” (with scorn) but to cross over (438).
- **Anderson and Freedman (435-440) – A murder near Adam-Gilead on the road to Shechem** – Taking vv.7-9 as collectively referring to one act of wickedness, they understand Hosea to be referring to a murder committed by a gang of priests (the identity of the 3MP, “they” in v.7) against victim(s) on the way to Shechem. *Implication*—If such was the case, אֶדְמָה would certainly be a location. They argue that Gilead is not a city, but a district. “If it were not for the apparent meaning of 6:8, the identification of Gilead as a city would not have appeared in the lexicons. Gilead refers to individual towns only in the double names Jabesh-Gilead and Ramoth-Gilead, where Gilead is ‘attributive’” (436). Adam was a city within the district of Gilead and is understood as the identity of the “city of wickedness” in v.8. Adam-Gilead is therefore seen as the approximate location of the murder. Shechem is merely the destination of the victims on the road.

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