

Counterpoint: Comparative Views on Whether Hosea 6:7 Teaches a Covenant of Works Relative to Genesis 2

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The Westminster Confession of Faith notes that “the first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”¹ This statement codified a belief in a covenant of works between God and Adam in Genesis 2 which was broken in Genesis 3 thereby entailing the necessity of a covenant of grace for individual redemption. These two covenants, especially the latter, form the heart and soul of covenant theology. The defense of this theological view has many facets to it. However, this presentation will focus on only one passage that is used as a proof-text by some exegetes and theologians to defend the idea of a covenant with Adam in Genesis 2. That passage is Hosea 6:7. The significance of this study flows from the possibility that this verse states a covenant between God and Adam when Genesis 2 itself does not mention a covenant. The view that emerges from the study is that a covenant between God and Adam is not stated in Hosea 6:7. It must be admitted, as will be shown, that some dispensationalists affirm that a covenant was made in Genesis 2 and that Hosea 6:7 alludes to this covenant. After a brief review of how various translations, theologies, and commentaries have handled Hosea 6:7, an exegetical and theological analysis will be undertaken.

Translations of Hosea 6:7

To understand the passage as speaking of the personal *Adam, men, land, or a specific place* would naturally be expressed at the translation level. However, the identification of the covenant in view depends upon a study of the context and is not surfaced entirely through the translation. Below are several translations to show the similarities and contrasts.

ASV (American Standard Version—1901)	But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
Berkeley (Modern Language Bible)	But they, like Adam, transgressed the covenant; there they broke faith with Me.
CEV (Contemporary English Version_	At a place named Adam, you betrayed me by breaking our agreement.

¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, VII. 2. To read the WCF, I like to use G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*, 2nd edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004). This study tool was first published in 1964. Essentially, Williamson gives his running commentary on each section of the WCF with study questions provided.

CSB (Christian Standard Bible)	But they, like Adam, have violated the covenant; there they have betrayed Me.
Darby	But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
Die Heilige Schrift (Luther)	Sie haben den Bund ubertreten bei Adam; dort wurden sie mir untreu (they transgressed the covenant with Adam; there they were unfaithful to me).
ESV	But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.
Israel Bible	But they, to a man, have transgressed the Covenant. This is where they have been false to me.
KJV	But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
La Sainte Bible (French)	A la façon des hommes [men] ils ont enfreint l'alliance. C'est là qu'ils m'ont trahi (In the manner [or fashion] of men they have broken the covenant. That's where they betrayed me).
Latin Vulgate	Ipsi autem sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum: ibi praevaricati sunt in me (but they like Adam have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against me).
Living Bible	But like Adam, you broke my covenant; you refused my love.
LXX (Septuagint)	αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰσιν ὡς ἄνθρωπος παραβαίνων διαθήκην, ἐκεῖ κατεφρόνησέν μου (but they are like a man transgressing a covenant, there they despised me).
NAB (New American Bible – Roman Catholic)	But they, in their land, violated the covenant; there they were untrue to me.
NASB95	But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me. (marginal note for <i>Adam</i> : <i>men</i>)
NEB (New English Bible)	At Admah they have broken my covenant, there they have played me false. (footnote >> At Admah: <i>prob. rdg.; Heb.</i> Like Adam)
NIV	Like Adam, they have broken the covenant – they were unfaithful to me there. (marginal note for <i>Adam</i> : Or <i>As at Adam</i> ; or <i>Like men</i>)
NKJV	But like men they transgressed the covenant; There they dealt treacherously with Me. (marginal note for <i>men</i> : Or <i>Adam</i>)
NLT (New Living Translation)	But like Adam, you broke my covenant and rebelled against me.
RSV	But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. (footnote >> Heb <i>like</i> (in place of “at”))

Among these selected twenty translations, the personal *Adam* is the chosen wording in Luther, the Vulgate, Living Bible, Darby, Berkeley, NLT, NIV, ASV, CSB, ESV, and NASB. The translations that favored the meaning of *men* in some way are NKJV, La Sainte Bible, the Israel Bible, LXX, and the KJV. Those translations seeing the word *Adam* as a place name are NEB, RSV, and CEV.

Only one translation, the NAB, could be taken to translate Adam as a general reference to the *land*, although this could perhaps be a way of referencing a place name.

Commentaries and Theologies on Hosea 6:7

The comments of theologians and exegetes are as varied in their views as the translation options. In table format, several examples will be given below:

Berkhof, <i>Systematic Theology</i>	One of the arguments that Berkhof gives in favor of a covenant of works in Genesis 2 is Hosea 6:7. He rejects the translations of “at Adam” or “like men.” He appeals to a similar passage in Job 31:33 as support. ²
Calvin, <i>Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets</i>	To my knowledge, Calvin does not reference Hosea 6:7 in <i>The Institutes</i> , but he did leave us a commentary on the Minor Prophets. Calvin prefers the translation “like men” and focuses on what appears to be sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant. Calvin takes the general gist of the verse to be that “they showed themselves to be men in violating the covenant.” He clearly rejects the mention of the personal Adam in the verse. ³
Chafer, <i>Systematic Theology</i>	Chafer, true to his Presbyterian roots, affirms a covenant of works between Adam and God in Genesis 2. However, he also asserts that all unsaved men are under a covenant of works until they come to Christ. ⁴ However, I was unable to find any reference to Hosea 6:7.
Darby, <i>Synopsis of the Books of the Bible</i>	Darby, consistent with his Bible translation, notes “But, as Adam did in the garden of Eden, they had broken the covenant on which the enjoyment of the blessings God had heaped upon them depended.” ⁵
Erickson, <i>Christian Theology</i>	Erickson mentions Hosea 6:7 in the context of transgression of God’s commandments under the Mosaic Covenant. It is not discussed relative to Genesis 2. ⁶

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1938), 214-15.

³ John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1 (Wellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 233-35.

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 42. See also 4:211-12; 228-33.

⁵ J. N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, reprint ed. (Addison, IL: Bible Truth Publishers, 1979), 2:472. In a footnote, Darby suggests that the word *Adam* can have a generic meaning (men or mankind), but in that case the word would have an article attached. In Hosea 6:7 it does not. Instead, it is prefixed with the preposition *ḵ* (*like*), which may or may not affect Darby’s conclusion. The scholars are divided on the translation.

⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 589-90.

Gaebelein, <i>Annotated Bible</i>	Gaebelein holds that Hosea 6:7 is comparing the covenant-breaking of Adam in Genesis 2-3 with the covenant-breaking of men in Hosea's day (under the Mosaic Covenant). ⁷
Gentry, <i>Kingdom Through Covenant</i>	Gentry and Wellum do not really address the view that Adam = men. Instead, they address the interpretation that "Adam" is a place, or it is the personal Adam. They opt for the latter. In the analogy with Adam, Gentry asserts that "Israel's covenant violation was in her role as king-priest." However, in the analogy a covenant of creation with Adam in Genesis 2 is affirmed. The covenant that is violated by those in Hosea's day is the Mosaic Covenant. ⁸
Garrett, <i>Hosea, Joel</i> (NAC)	Garrett gives one of the best surveys of positions on Hosea 6:7. His conclusion is one of the most unusual: "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).'" ⁹
Grudem, <i>Systematic Theology</i>	Grudem sees Hosea 6:7 as confirming the idea that there is a covenant of works between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2 that was broken by Adam in Genesis 3. ¹⁰
Henry, <i>Commentary on the Whole Bible</i>	Matthew Henry prefers the translation of Adam as men – "they, like men, have transgressed the covenant." Men are naturally false in their dealings with God and each other. Men are by nature covenant-breakers. ¹¹
Hodge, <i>Systematic Theology</i>	Charles Hodge admits that the idea that God entered into a covenant with Adam in the Garden "does not rest upon any express declaration of the Scriptures." However, Hodge gives the general thrust of an argument for the covenant of works in Genesis 2 nonetheless: "It is, however, a concise and correct mode of asserting a plain Scriptural fact, namely, that God made Adam a promise suspended upon a condition, and attached to disobedience a certain penalty. This is what in Scriptural language is meant by a covenant..." ¹² Unfortunately, I could not find any use of Hosea 6:7.

⁷ Arno C. Gaebelein, *Annotated Bible*, Vol 5: Daniel to Malachi (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope"), 66. Gaebelein's initial background was Methodist and postmillennialist.

⁸ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 217-220, 613n31.

⁹ Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, vol. 19A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 163.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 516.

¹¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1476–1477.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 117.

Horton, <i>Introducing Covenant Theology (ICT) and Pilgrim Theology (PT)</i>	Michael Horton in ICT appeals to Hosea 6:7 as proof for the covenant arrangement found in Genesis 1-3 between God and the personal Adam. He also appeals to Job 31:33 as translation support for his view. ¹³ Horton in PT teaches a covenant of works relationship established at Mount Sinai with the Israelites that can be compared to the covenant relationship in Genesis 2. ¹⁴
Fausset, <i>Commentary on the Old and New Testaments</i> (along with Jamieson and Brown)	For Fausset, Hosea 6:7 means the following: "Israel 'transgressed the covenant' of God as lightly as <i>men</i> break everyday compacts with their fellow-men." ¹⁵ Presumably, the covenant that Israel transgressed is the Mosaic Covenant.
Keil, <i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i>	Keil holds the view that the word <i>Adam</i> in Hosea 6:7 refers to the personal Adam of Genesis 2. The command that Adam broke was "actually a covenant, which God made with him, since the object of it was the preservation of Adam in vital fellowship with the Lord, as was the case with the covenant that God made with Israel (see Job xxxi. 33)." The expression "there" probably refers to Bethel as the place of idolatrous worship that is in view. ¹⁶
Robertson, <i>Christ of the Covenants</i>	Robertson notes that Hosea 6:7 gives "God's original creational relationship in covenantal terms." This becomes the basis for the comparison to Hosea's generation that had broken the commands of God in its day. ¹⁷
Ryrie, <i>Ryrie Study Bible</i>	Ryrie gives a nondogmatic note: " <i>Adam</i> . May refer to men in general, transgressing God's commandments, or specifically to Adam's original sin." In his options, Ryrie does not list the view of Adam or Admah as a place nor as land. ¹⁸
Schmoller (<i>Lange's Commentary</i>)	Schmoller argues that there is an analogy between the breaking of a covenant by Adam in Genesis 3 and later men in Ephraim and Judah: "Adam's sin was a violation of a covenant: for with the command laid upon Adam, God entered into a relation with him, which, in accordance with the analogies of later agreements made with mankind, might be called a covenant." ¹⁹
Strong, <i>Systematic Theology</i>	Strong rejects the idea of a covenant of works in Genesis 2. He prefers the translation: "But they, like men that break a covenant, there they proved false to me." Strong focuses on the nature of

¹³ Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 90.

¹⁴ Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 135-36.

¹⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Vol 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1977), 479. Volume 2 was written by A. R. Fausset.

¹⁶ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol 10, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 100. The commentary on Hosea was written by Keil.

¹⁷ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1980), 24.

¹⁸ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: Expanded Edition NASB95* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 1382.

¹⁹ Otto Schmoller, "The Book of Hosea" translated by James Frederick McCurdy in *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 14 (reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 62.

	men to be covenant-breakers. So, in the passage, they are violating the Mosaic Covenant since they are by nature law breakers. ²⁰
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Exegetical and Theological Analysis

The analysis of Hosea 6:7 revolves around the identification of the word *Adam* in the immediate context and consistent with the framework of the whole book of Hosea. An exploration of the various views of Adam will surface most of the needed information for the debate.

Adam as the Personal Adam of Genesis

The Hebrew in Hosea 6:7 following BHS²¹ (וְהָיָה כְּאָדָם עֲבָרוֹ בְּרִית נָשָׁם בְּגִדּוֹ כִּי) leads to several interpretive issues. One must explain some of the elements in the verse in context even to finalize a translation. Most of the issues, however, revolve around the meaning of אָדָם (Adam). There are four major interpretations of this word found in the translations and commentaries. The first and most prevalent view is that the term is a proper name for the personal Adam of Genesis 2-3. This interpretation lends itself to the idea of a covenant arrangement between God and Adam in Genesis 2. Nothing in the context would make this option unworthy of consideration, although other choices may do as well. The verse, following this understanding, yields an analogy between the covenant-breaking of Adam in the Garden and the covenant-breaking of certain Israelites in Hosea's day.

Perhaps the most important argument favoring the personal Adam view is the obvious one: "Viewing the passage without prejudice, the usual explanation is seen to be the most natural."²² In an understatement, it could be noted that Adam is an extremely important person throughout the entire Bible. His example of disobedience and failure could easily be used in any situation comparing the sin of later men.

Support for the personal Adam view also comes from consideration of parallel wording in Job 31:33 – "Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom...?"²³ The phrase "like Adam" (כְּאָדָם) is identical to Hosea 6:7. This section of Job is part of Job's sequence of last responses to the three friends prior to the Elihu speeches. In Berkhof's understanding, Job, using his questioning style, asks his persecutors if he had hidden his sin like the personal Adam did in the Garden. Such an interpretation makes sense in the context of Job.

²⁰ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, reprint ed. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1979). This is a reprint of the 1907 edition of Strong's book.

²¹ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1977).

²² Schmoller, "Hosea," 62.

²³ Berkhof, Horton, and Keil are examples of expositors who appeal to Job 31:33 as a parallel supporting their interpretation of Hosea 6:7. See the earlier notes for references.

If the analogy holds true, then Hosea 6:7 would likely say the same thing. Unfortunately, the interpretation is not so tidy. Alden comments on the Job passage this way:

The NIV footnote gives the option of reading *'ādām* as the name of the first man, Adam, rather than the generic term “men” in the text. A case can be made for either because Adam did “conceal” his sin (Gen 3:8–12), but people in general are also loath to confess their transgressions (Ps 32:3–5; Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:8–10).²⁴

In other words, both translations – *Adam* and *men* – fit the context of the discourse of Job. Thus, the interpretive option of *men* in Hosea 6:7 also exists in Job 31:33. The analogy does not solve the problem. In other words, the analogy of Scripture at this point is inconclusive. However, the parallel could possibly speak against the other interpretive options that are available.

Another argument used to establish the personal Adam view in Hosea 6:7 is the cross-reference appeal to Romans 5:12–21. Grudem notes, “in Romans 5:12–21 Paul sees both Adam and Christ as heads of a people whom they represent, something that would be entirely consistent with the idea of Adam being in a covenant before the fall.”²⁵ Grudem uses such a conclusion to bolster the notion of a personal Adam for Hosea 6:7. The argument is based upon compatibility between the two passages (Rom. 5 and Hosea 6). The word *covenant* does not occur in either Romans 5 or Genesis 2, although the concept of *likeness* is used (Rom. 5:14) in a context where comparison between Adam and other men abounds. This could easily be coordinated with “like Adam” in Hosea 6:7. On the other hand, the theology of Romans 5, while fitting the context of the personal Adam in Genesis, may not be what the prophet had in mind when he wrote Hosea 6:7. Other considerations must be taken into account.

There are several problems with the personal Adam view according to detractors. First, it does not seem to handle the locative nature of the word “there” in the verse.²⁶ Such language could point to the word *Adam* as a place name. Second, the personal Adam, while theologically significant throughout the entire Bible, including the New Testament, is not the primary use of the term *Adam*. Third, there exist cross references to support the Adam-as-men view in the same way that such references are used to support the personal Adam view. Fourth, the Adam-as-men view has much going for it in terms of the context of the entire book of Hosea. Each of these issues will be surfaced in the discussions below.

Before leaving this discussion of the personal Adam view, however, it is perhaps surprising to find Calvin to be quite dismissive of this understanding:

²⁴ Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 308.

²⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 516.

²⁶ Garrett, *Hosea*, 162.

Others explain the words thus, “They have transgressed as Adam the covenant.” But the word, Adam, we know, is taken indefinitely for men. This exposition [the personal Adam view] is frigid and diluted, “They have transgressed as Adam the covenant;” that is, they have followed or imitated the example of their father Adam, who had immediately at the beginning transgressed God’s commandment. I do not stop to refute this comment; for we see that it is in itself vapid.²⁷

Notice that Calvin calls the personal Adam view frigid and diluted. I take this to mean that he prefers an understanding that was more expansive about who was being described. Then, he also calls the view vapid which means unstimulating, unchallenging, and apparently unworthy of response. Even though this writer accepts Calvin’s translation of Hosea 6:7, dismissiveness toward the personal Adam view in this way is not helpful.

Adam as Mankind

The second interpretation of *Adam* is that it refers to mankind or men in a general sense. A quick review of all the major Hebrew lexicons shows that this meaning for *Adam* is quite prevalent throughout the Old Testament.²⁸ This means that the reading of “like men” in Hosea 6:7 is not a remote possibility but must be seriously considered. The context does not rule out this interpretation easily as will be shown below. The sense of the verse would be similar to the KJV: “But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.”

One argument supporting the Adam as men view is that the Hebrew word for *Adam* occurs around 560 times in the Old Testament when the term refers to men or mankind. This is far more often than the personal name.²⁹ Furthermore, outside of Genesis chapters 1-5, the only clear instance of the word being used as the personal Adam is found in 1 Chron. 1:1 where the genealogy from Adam to David is listed. Farr lists Deut. 32:8, Job 31:33, and Hosea 6:7 as ambiguous in their usage, meaning it could go either way.³⁰

Grudem argues against the Adam-as-men understanding using two reasons. First, he notes that “the statement would make little sense: there is no single well-known transgression of a covenant by *man* to which it could refer.”³¹ There exist two problems with this deduction. Most of the translations and commentaries which favor this view do not have in mind some

²⁷ Calvin, *Minor Prophets*, 1:235.

²⁸ Schmoller is surely wrong when he asserts that the translation of Adam as “men” is only a paraphrase; “Hosea,” 62.

²⁹ This statistic and the comments that follow are based on F. K. Farr, “Adam in OT and Apoc” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), 1:48-49. The online version of this ISBE article can be found at <https://www.internationalstandardbible.com/A/adam-in-the-old-testament-and-the-apocrypha.html>.

³⁰ Ibid. Deut. 32:8 reads “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel” (NASB95).

³¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 516n1.

singular transgression but the general character of the Israelites as covenant-breakers. In the background would be the Mosaic Covenant which they were under at the time of Hosea. Consequently, the general thrust of the verse would be “they, like men who are covenant breakers by nature, have violated the [Mosaic] covenant.” Grudem adds that the idea of Adam as men should be rejected because, “it would do little good to compare the Israelites to what they already are (that is, men) and say that they ‘like man’ broke the covenant. Such a sentence would almost imply that the Israelites were not men, but some other kind of creature.”³² Those who hold the Adam-as-men view would likely consider Grudem’s argument to miss the point. The text in their view would be using comparative language (like men) to emphasize the Israelite’s share in the general depravity of man that is being described by the complaints of the prophet. Such would be consistent with the context. The nation as a whole stands guilty before God.

Interestingly, while those who hold the personal Adam view go to Job 31:33 as a cross reference to handle אָדָם (like Adam/men), those who adopt the Adam-as-men view go to another passage in Psalm 82:7 – “Nevertheless you will die *like men* and fall like any one of the princes.” In light of the parallelism with the second half of the verse (*any one* of the princes), the translation “like men” fits the psalm’s context better than the personal Adam view. This would also be the way the expression is understood in Hosea 6:7. It must be noted that the Hebrew phrase for “like Adam” only occurs in Hosea 6:7 and the two cross-references used in the debate (Job 31:33, Psalm 82:7). When it comes to the analogy of Scripture, perhaps the umpire can pronounce a tie and leave everyone unsatisfied.

Adam as a Place

The third interpretation of *Adam* is that it refers to a place. The fact that Hosea 6:7 uses the term *there* supports this conclusion: “But they, like Adam, transgressed the covenant; **there** they broke faith with Me” (Berkely, emphasis added). In the minds of some exegetes, this wording is enough to suggest that Adam should be taken as a name place rather than a personal name of the first man or as men in general. The preposition would be forced (perhaps awkwardly) to take on the meaning of *at* instead of *like*.³³ The translation would read something similar to the following: “At Adam, you betrayed me by breaking the covenant.” This is not a far-fetched idea. If a city can be named after the first president of the United States, it would not be surprising to see the Israelites name a town after the first human being in the universe. In Joshua 3:16, a town called Adam is noted as the place where God gathered the waters together to allow Joshua and the Israelites to cross the Jordan on dry ground.³⁴

³² Ibid.

³³ Grudem suggests that the translation “at” is impossible (*Systematic Theology*, 516n1).

³⁴ The city of Adam was located where the Jabbok River empties into the Jordan River. The city is mentioned on the inscription of Pharaoh Shishak describing his invasion of the area. The modern name of the site is Tell ed-Damiyeh. See W. C. Kaiser, “Adam, City Of” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 1:56.

One problem with the identification of Adam in Hosea 6:7 as a city is that there is silence in Scripture about any major rebellion against God at that place that might provide understanding for Hosea's day.³⁵ Thus, some scholars have proposed a textual emendation to correct an alleged copyist error. Instead of Adam as the city, the reference should be to Admah. The town of Admah is mentioned in Hosea 11:8 as God mentions his compassion for Israel over against his judgment against Admah and Zeboiim. These two towns were part of the coalition of kings who fought during the battle in which Lot was captured forcing Abraham's rescue operation in Genesis 14. The king of Admah is mentioned in Genesis 14:2-8. Presumably Admah is destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah are eliminated later in chapters 18 and 19. If this is the comparison intended in Hosea 6:7, then the meaning would be something along the lines of "You have rebelled against me as they did at Admah (which did not end well for them)." This is a more obscure view since it supposes a text for which there is no external evidence, although a narrative is attempted that provides plausibility.

However, another solution to the awkwardness of the word *there* in the translation ("*there* they have dealt treacherously against Me") exists without appealing to the use of the word *Adam* as a place name. Keil contends that the use of the word *there* (אֵינָם) does point to a place, but that the location is neither the villages of Adam nor Admah. The indicated site should be understood as Bethel which is mentioned in Hosea 10:14-15.

Therefore a tumult will arise among your people,
And all your fortresses will be destroyed,
As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,
When mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.
Thus it will be done to you at **Bethel** because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.

The significance of Bethel should not be minimized for the argument of the book of Hosea. The verses above from chapter ten close out a section of evaluation and judgment which begins in chapter four. In 4:15, the prophet tells the people not to go to Gilgal or Beth-aven (house of wickedness). The reason for this exhortation is these were the sites that had become bases of false worship under Jeroboam I (930-910 BC), who had reinstituted the worship of golden calves to prevent the northern tribes from returning to the house of David at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-28). These locations were still involved in false worship even in the time of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) at the time of Hosea's prophetic ministry (Hosea 4:13; 9:15; 10:2-8; 12:11).³⁶ Most scholars believe that Beth-aven (house of wickedness) in Hosea (4:15, 5:8, 10:5, 8) is a contemptuous or sarcastic name for Bethel (house of God).³⁷ The mention of Bethel in the book would highlight

³⁵ Garrett, *Hosea*, 162; Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 22.

³⁶ I am using the dates for the kings given in Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 496.

³⁷ R. L. Alden, "Gilgal" in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* edited by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 2:726; *Ryrie Study Bible*, 1386.

the sins of the entire nation and would be an appropriate “at-large” referent for the word *there* in Hosea 6:7. Consequently, the need to establish the term *Adam* as a place is not necessary to handle the use in Hosea 6:7 of the word *there* in the context of the entire book.³⁸

Adam as Land or Dirt

The fourth view of the meaning of *Adam* is that it is a reference to land, ground, or dirt. *Adamah* is used in Gen. 2:7 (and elsewhere in the Old Testament) to refer to the ground: “Then the LORD God formed man [Adam] of dust from the ground [Adamah], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man [Adam] became a living being.” One can see the close connection between Adam and the ground or dirt from which he was made. If *Adamah* is the intended term in Hosea 6:7, the translation would be much like that used in the NAB: “But they, in their land, violated the covenant; there they were untrue to me.” Here it would probably be the entire land of Israel that is in view since both Ephraim and Judah are mentioned in 6:4. So the Israelites are unfaithful as they live in the land God gave them. One advantage of this view is that it clears up the awkwardness with the word *there* in the second part of the verse. Another interpretation using the idea of Adam as the ground or dirt is stated this way: “They have walked on my covenant like dirt.”³⁹ Garrett is most likely correct when he asserts that this view “involves several unusual interpretations of the Hebrew, so that it cannot be considered probable.”⁴⁰

The Mosaic Covenant in Hosea

Although the interpretation of *Adam* in Hosea 6:7 drives most of the discussion, a few words are necessary about the other side of any analogy in the text. It is clear that Hosea’s exhortation is aimed at the Israelites and their sinful ways. The covenant-breaking (they have transgressed the covenant) that must be in view at that time in history naturally correlates to disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant, the Law that God had given to all the tribes of Israel. The northern tribes had for many years practiced a false worship that violated the First and Second Commands (and no doubt many of the other commands). The book of Hosea as a whole highlights many of the details of the cities and villages that had become places of wickedness in Israel. During Hosea’s time, they were about three decades away from the Assyrian judgment that God was planning for them due to their apostasy.

³⁸ A similar way to handle the locative wording of the verse is found in E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets: A Commentary Explanatory and Practical*, Barnes Notes, Vol. 1 (reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: 1977), 68: “He does not say, *where*. But Israel and every sinner in Israel knew full well, where. There, to Israel, was not only Bethel or Dan, or Gilgal, or Mizpah, or Gilead, or any or all of the high places, which God had hallowed by his mercies, and they had defiled....To the sinners of Israel, it was every spot of the Lord’s land which they had defiled by their sin.”

³⁹ Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Themes: Hosea-Jonah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989) and *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentaries (Dallas, TX: Word, 1987), 99.

⁴⁰ Garrett, *Hosea*, 162.

Conclusion

To give an expanded translation or targum on Hosea 6:7, the following could be advanced: “But like (all) men (who continually demonstrate their sinful predilections), they (the rulers, priests, and entire populace) have transgressed the (Mosaic) covenant; There (at Bethel/Beth-aven – the place where sin has been highlighted) they have dealt treacherously against Me.” This particular approach acknowledges that *Adam* almost never means the personal Adam after Genesis 5 in the Old Testament, that *man, men* or *mankind* is a valid translation of the word, and that the word *there* indicating a place in the background of the verse can be handled within the flow of the entire book.

The back-and-forth above shows the complicated nature of sorting out the views of this verse in an often overlooked Bible book. To close out the discussion, several observations about method should be made. First, one should not reject a certain view based solely on a predetermined covenant theology or dispensational theology. There is no need to posit a theological motivation for an interpretation. Let the text take you to a conclusion through the maze of options. Dispensationalists affirm that exegesis developing a biblical theology leads to proper theological conclusions. We should never let theology enter into the process too soon. However, it must be acknowledged that in the case of Hosea 6:7, one must almost decide their view before they finalize the translation. I am reminded of A. T. Robertson’s famous statement, “When the grammarian has finished, the theologian steps in, and sometimes before the grammarian is through.”⁴¹

Second, a corollary of the above point is that the commentaries point to a mixture of theological viewpoints among the scholars on all sides of the debate about Hosea 6:7 and whether it supports a covenant of works between God and Adam in Genesis 2. For example, covenantalists Horton, Robertson, Grudem, and Berkhof all see Hosea 6:7 affirming a personal Adam with a reference to a covenant of works in Genesis 2. On the other hand, if Calvin can be considered a covenant theologian, he would argue that there is no mention of the personal Adam in Hosea. Matthew Henry, a covenantalist, follows Calvin on this interpretation. On the dispensational side, Chafer affirms a covenant of works in Genesis 2 without invoking Hosea 6:7 for support, while Gaebelein (a Methodist in his early days) affirms a covenant arrangement between God and Adam in Gen. 2 while using Hosea 6:7 as support. However, it is not clear if Gaebelein views the covenant arrangement in Gen. 2 the way that covenant theologians would do so. The main point here is that there are those in both camps who opt for different interpretations of Hosea 6:7.

Third, when I consulted the LXX to see how it handled Hosea 6:7, I was expecting to see, with no good reason, the personal Adam. Yet, the Jewish translators understood the passage as speaking of men instead. Perhaps this is because of the evidence cited above that the

⁴¹ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934), 389.

overwhelming number of uses of Adam refer to men or mankind and not to the personal Adam. Conceivably influencing them is also the fact that only in the early chapters of Genesis does the personal name abound. The LXX is certainly not primary evidence. The Hebrew text is far more important. Nonetheless, the significance of the Septuagint should not be undervalued.

Finally, all views have a measure of respectability. There appears to be an honest attempt to wrestle with the details exegetically. While some interpreters may decide the case theologically, humility in interpretation of this difficult verse is always in style.