

PREACHING CHRIST
INTO, IN, AND OUT OF EGYPT
HOSEA 11:1

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 65 formal citations of the Old Testament in Matthew. Eleven of these are called “formula-citations” or “fulfilment citations”. Four of the eleven take place in Matthew 2. These formula citations indicate that a New Testament event took place in order to fulfil an Old Testament prophecy.

Balaam prophesied that the Messiah’s birth would be associated with a star and a sceptre (Num.24:17), and it was (Matt.2:2). Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, (Micah 5:2) and He was (Matt.2:5). So far, so straightforward. Micah and Balaam, under Divine inspiration, looked forward and predicted specific events many years later. And, after the passage of many years, these events took place as predicted.

Let us now consider a different type of Messianic prophecy. Matthew’s Gospel (2:15) tells us that the infant Messiah’s flight to, sojourn in, and return from Egypt was a fulfilment of a prophecy made 800 years before by Hosea. However, Hosea’s “prophecy” does not predict events hundreds of years into the future but refers to events which happened hundreds of years before. So, how can Matthew claim that Hosea’s backward-looking words were fulfilled many years into the future?

Discussion: “Fulfilment Citations”

1. Personal reflections

In 1889 H J Holtzmann used the term *reflexionszitate* to argue that these quotations were simply personal reflections added to the Gospels.

2. Peshet interpretation

On the basis that most of these formula-citations reflect an underlying Hebrew text from the OT rather than the LXX, which is usually reflected in most of the synoptics’ citations, some scholars have alleged a similarity between many of these citations and the Qumran *peshet* method of interpretation. Kaiser summarizes the *peshet* method as follows

1. Merge pertinent OT texts into one grand “proof-text”
2. Adapt the OT texts into the grammar of the NT context and application
3. Choose more suitable renderings of known OT texts or targums
4. Create *ad hoc interpretations*

3. Fabrication

Many have concluded that Matthew tried to elevate the Messiah by fabricating and embellishing the birth narratives. However, the chances of Matthew successfully persuading hostile Jewish critics of the Messiah’s claims based on faulty exegesis and embellishments are virtually nil. Such a strategy would be unconvincing and worthless.

4. Distortion

These questions and the difficulty of finding answers have led some scholars to conclude that Matthew abused both the context and meaning of Hosea’s prophecy. For example:

The sense of the passage and the intention of the prophet point backward, not forward. There is not the slightest hint that the statement was intended as a prophecy...there was apparently a definite cause-and-effect relationship in the mind of Matthew, and so he quoted the passage as being authoritative proof from the Old Testament for an event in the life of Jesus. Although unintentional, is not his use of Hosea 11:1 in a sense a distortion of the context? Is Matthew's appeal to Hosea actually true to the sense of the passage when he picks words out of context and uses them for another purpose in the New Testament?¹

5. Sensus Plenior

Some commentators simply argue that the words have a "fuller meaning" (*sensus plenior*). This view takes two forms. Firstly, there are those who say that the original prophet had no concern with the Messiah and only with Old Testament events.

It has its own meaning in Hos 11:1, in a context which does not concern itself with the Messiah. It has as well a *sensus plenior*, deriving from the double potential of the specific wording chosen. Events in Jesus' life thus fulfil (i.e. complete the potential meanings of) the wording of v 1b, while not constituting its sole referent.²

Others take the view that the original prophet while referring to the Old Testament events initially, also had the New Testament fulfilment (or "heightening") in mind in a measure.

The words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt and prophetically of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel.³

6. Analogy-Fulfilment

Below we shall propose that "analogy-fulfilment," rather than "prediction-fulfilment," is the best way to honour the writings of the inspired evangelist. In doing so we shall discover a vital principle of Old Testament interpretation.

We shall look at this prophecy under three headings: (1) Into Egypt, (2) In Egypt, and (3) Out of Egypt.

I. INTO EGYPT

ANTICIPATION

Hosea's prophecies were addressed to the disobedient and rebellious nation of Israel. In chapters 1-10 he used many strategies, including judicial indictment, to persuade them to return to Jehovah. Then, in chapter 11, he reminded them of God's great kindness to them in the past in order to move them to repentance for their ungrateful response. In v.1 he highlighted God's electing of them to be a special nation, caring for them while in Egypt, and eventually rescuing them from Egypt. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

We shall look at God's calling of Israel out of Egypt later. But first we must remind ourselves why Israel ended up in Egypt. As the first part of the verse puts it, it was because Israel was God's special "child" and "son" and so specially "loved" by Him.

¹ Dewey M Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p237.

² D Stuart, *Vol. 31: Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), Electronic Edition.

³ M Henry, *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* (Hendrickson: Peabody, 1996), Electronic Edition.

11v. כִּי נָעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְבֵּהוּ *kî nā^car yisrā^ʿēl wā^ʾōhābēhū* When Israel was a child,
 1 then I loved him

By these few words, Hosea reminded Israel that God's love for them began long before their Exodus from Egypt. In this brief phrase, he traverses hundreds of years back to Jacob, the first to be given the name "Israel," "Prince with God." When famine threatened his family's existence, God arranged for Jacob's youngest son, Joseph, to be driven into Egypt in order to later protect and nourish Israel – not only his Father who bore that name, but also the family which accompanied him, and so all who would eventually descend from him.

So, the infant nation of Israel was set apart in Egypt for its own protection. But this was also done with a view to the world's ultimate blessing. Abraham had been told that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. These promises were repeated to Abraham's descendents, Isaac and Jacob, and later to the nation of Israel which descended from them. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (Ex.19:6), a nation with a religious purpose – the purpose of mediating God's mind and message to the nations. This special and unique status was why, even when the children of Israel were still in Egypt, they were called God's Son (Ex.4:22-23).

The concept of God as a father appears elsewhere in the Old Testament (Dt.14:1; 32:6; Is.1:2–20; 3:9; Jer.3:19, 22; 4:22; 31:9, 20). In some ancient texts, kings are sometimes referred to as the children of the gods. However, apart from a nominal similarity, there are no other meaningful parallels with the biblical metaphor of Israel as a son of God.

Israel is called a נָעַר "child," "young man," "lad," whom God "loved" אֶהְבֵּהוּ. The use of אֶהְבֵּהוּ is closely connected with covenantal fidelity in Deuteronomy (6:5; 7:8, 13; 10:15; 23:6 [5]). It means to have deep affection for, but also to be "loyal to."

Hosea, then, used this look at the past to show Israel God's covenant love and faithfulness to His chosen "Son", and so encourage them to return to the God who had been so good to them in the past.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

We now fast forward and find Matthew telling us that Hosea's backward-looking words were fulfilled 700 or so years after Hosea, when God's Son, Jesus Christ, was taken to Egypt by Joseph to escape the murderous wrath of Herod (Matt.2:13-15).

<p>Matthew 2:15 καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ ἕως τῆς τελευτῆς Ἡρώδου· ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, Ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου.</p>	<p>And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.</p>
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As this is not a "classic" prediction-fulfilment prophecy, what relationship is there between these two events? What is the meaning, in this instance, of ἵνα πληρωθῆ "that it might be fulfilled?" Kaiser says:

It would appear that plēroō, in this context, signifies the completion or consummation of what was only partially realised at the time of Genesis 46:4 ("I will go down to Egypt with you and I will also certainly bring you up again") or the time of the Exodus (Ex.4:22-23).⁴

Some have called this "analogy-fulfilment."

⁴ W C Kaiser, Jr. *The Use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 52.

Discussion: Analogy-Fulfilment

There are three main views of what analogy is being “fulfilled here.

1. Temporal Analogy

Robert Gundry proposed that the Greek preposition VEx “out of” is not geographical (“from Egypt”) but temporal (“since Egypt”). He pointed to the fact that the actual geographical departure of Joseph, Mary and Jesus from Egypt is not taken up until later in the chapter (v.20). His conclusion was that a temporal meaning fits v.15 best and so the points towards God’s constant and patient calling of Israel since the days of the Egyptian sojourn. However, this is not as strong a basis for Hosea and Matthew’s argument. God has done much more than simply “call” Israel since the days of Egypt.

There are other possible reasons why Matthew delayed reference to the family’s actual departure from Egypt until a few verses on. For example, K Stendahl argued that Matthew did not wait until 2:21 to insert this citation because he wanted to give a different geographic emphasis to the return journey – not a journey from Egypt but a journey to Nazereth.⁵

Raymond E Brown pointed out that Matthew may also have wanted this reference to the exodus in v.15 to precede his reference to the exile in v.17-18.

2. General Analogy

Kaiser argued that the fact that Matthew introduced this quote at verse 15 and not after verse 20 or 22, shows that the exodus/departure of the holy family from Egypt is *not* his reason for introducing the quotation at this point. So, it was not the individual words of Hosea 11v1 which were being fulfilled but the whole general context of Hosea 11, the context of God’s numerous acts of preserving love for His “son” Israel.

There is indeed a contextual and thematic similarity between Hosea 11 and Matthew 2. Both stress God’s preservation of His son – His national son in Hosea, and His only-begotten son in Matthew. By highlighting this similarity or analogy, Matthew was claiming that God works in repeating patterns, that God’s past actions provide a prophetic framework for His future actions. In other words, God organised Old Testament events and the recording of them in order to provide paradigms and models for predicting, understanding, and interpreting later events.

To support his thesis, Kaiser argued that the most direct correlation between Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 was not to be found in the “Egypt” connection but in the title “My Son,” which was first used of Israel in Exodus 4:22-23, “Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” Kaiser commented on the use of the singular “Son” to describe the nation:

The whole community was pointedly designated by a singular noun, thereby allowing for the many to be represented in the One and the One to stand for the many in the same way the term “Seed” had already functioned and the parallel term “Firstborn” would come to function in both the OT and NT....This designation “My Son,” became a technical term and an appellation that could be applied either collectively to the nation as the object of God’s love and election or specifically to that final representative person who was to come in Christ..⁶

⁵ (Quis et Unde?” p 97).

⁶ W C Kaiser, Jr. *The Use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 49.

In this connection, it is significant that Matthew described Christ as “the Son” three times (Mat.1:21, 23), and as “the Son of God” twelve times. Kaiser concludes:

This is biblical typology at its best, for it begins with a clear divine designation, is limited in its sphere of operation to the act of preservation and deliverance, and is circumscribed in its effects: the redemptive action of God in history.⁷

3. Specific Analogy

Kaiser’s view requires us to view the Egypt connection and “exodus” connotations as coincidental or, at least, incidental. However, if this was so then why did Matthew pick Hosea 11:1 and not any number of other Old Testament verses which showed God’s care for his “son” Israel. Can we not go further, then, and see more specific analogy-fulfilment in these verses. Hosea used Old Testament history to highlight God’s goodness to His national “Son” Israel, in protecting and providing for him through an Egyptian sojourn, supervised by a divinely sent Joseph. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew sees this as a prophetic paradigm which predicts God’s goodness to His only-begotten “Son” Israel in protecting and providing for him through an Egyptian sojourn, supervised by a divinely sent Joseph.

...even if our Evangelist had not applied them [these words] to the recall from Egypt of God’s own beloved, Only-begotten Son, the application would have been irresistibly made by all who have learnt to pierce beneath the surface to the deeper relations which Christ bears to His people, and both to God; and who are accustomed to trace the analogy of God’s treatment of each respectively.⁸

In these verses, then, Matthew is not so much presenting Christ as one who fulfilled a distinct and specific prediction, but as One who repeated, recapitulated, epitomised, summed up, and so fulfilled specific events in Israel’s history.

Conclusion: Matthew and Hosea saw God’s wise ordering of specific Old Testament events concerning His national son Israel, as predictive of specific New Testament events concerning His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Principles of Interpretation

- Matthew here gives us a warrant to see Israel’s history as a predictive type of Christ’s experience. When there is a substantial similarity between two moments of redemptive history, “the two are regarded as interconnected, forming one larger continuity; the earlier is thus seen to foreshadow or anticipate the latter, which then becomes a kind of realization or fulfilment of the former.⁹
- A New Testament quotation of an Old Testament text may point not just to the individual text but to the larger context of the original passage. The quotation then serves not as a “proof text” but as a pointer or introduction to the source’s larger context.

APPLICATION

1. Just as the reminder of God’s provision and goodness to infant Israel in using Egypt to protect it, was used by Hosea to move Israel to repentance and worship, so God’s provision and goodness to us in the preservation of His infant son in Egypt should move us to repentance and worship.

⁷ W C Kaiser, Jr. *The Use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 53.

⁸ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D., *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbour, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Electronic Edition.

⁹ D A Hagner, Vol. 33A: *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Logos Library System; 1998), Electronic Edition.

2. God's providence may sometimes lead us into alien and foreign lands and experiences. However, we must not conclude from this that we are less loved by God? Was Israel less loved by God in Egypt? Was Jesus any less loved by God in Egypt?

II. IN EGYPT

ANTICIPATION

Although Israel were brought into Egypt to protect them – and eventually God returned them to Canaan again – in between their entry and departure points circumstances changed. A cruel Pharaoh began to restrict their liberty and to oppress them. The Devil having failed to extinguish Israel through famine, stirred up the enmity of this Egyptian King in order to extinguish the seed through which God would bless the world. Hosea's words, then, would also have reminded Israel of their suffering in Egypt, and of how God heard their painful cries.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown see Hosea's prophecy as primarily fulfilled when Christ is "in Egypt." They base this on the "temporal analogy" view of Hosea 11:1 (see above) and translate it, "From the time that he (Israel) was *in* Egypt, I called him My son." You will notice that they go further than the "temporal" view described above in how they understand "called my son."

Discussion: "In Egypt I called him my son"

In the view of Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, this "calling" was far more than simple Divine appeal to Israel. It also included the privilege of being called God's son even while in Egypt. Their argument is based upon:

1. Parallelism in Hosea 11:1.
2. Hos.12:9 and Hos.13:4 use "from ... Egypt," for "from the time that thou didst sojourn *in* Egypt."
3. Ex 4:22 also shows that Israel was called by God, "My son," from the time of his Egyptian sojourn.
4. God is always said to have *led* or *brought forth*, not to have "called," Israel from Egypt.

Mt 2:15, therefore, in quoting this prophecy (typically and primarily referring to Israel, antotypically and fully to Messiah), applies it to Jesus' sojourn in Egypt, not His return from it. Even from His infancy, partly spent in Egypt, God called Him His son. God included Messiah, and Israel for Messiah's sake, in one common love, and therefore in one common prophecy. Messiah's people and Himself are one, as the Head and the body. Is 49:3 calls Him "Israel." The same general reason, danger of extinction, caused the infant Jesus, and Israel in its national infancy to sojourn in Egypt. So He, and His spiritual Israel, are already called "God's sons" while yet in the Egypt of the world...¹⁰

This view certainly helps to emphasise the fulfilment of the prophecy while in Egypt. However, it is not necessary to narrow the fulfilment down to this, to the exclusion of going "into Egypt" and coming "out of Egypt. The "calling" is more than mere "appeal." But it is also more than simply "naming." The analogy is wider, deeper, and richer.

קרא "call" is used in a variety of senses in the Old Testament. Here the emphasis is only partly upon "election"/"adoption." The context suggests

¹⁰Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D., *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbour, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Electronic Edition.

that “summon” or “gather” is also intended, and the statement must be seen in the light of divine guidance and protection.¹¹

The greatest event in Old Testament history was not God’s naming of Israel “my son” while in Egypt, but his delivering of His son from Egypt, and it was this parallel which Matthew wanted to set before his Jewish readers right at the beginning of his gospel.

Conclusion: Hosea and Matthew are referring not only to God’s gracious appeals to Israel, and not only God’s gracious naming of Israel “my son,” but also God’s gracious deliverance of Israel out of Egypt.

In Matthew’s Gospel, we find the Devil stirring up the enmity of an Edomite king, the result being restrictions on the liberty of God’s Son, the new “Israel.” The same devil which stirred up Pharaoh stirred up Herod with aim again of extinguishing the Messianic “seed of the woman.”

Mary had recently visited the temple with the infant Messiah and had heard Simeon speak of how her newborn son would cause a sword to pierce her soul (Lk.2:34-35). And here the sword begins to penetrate as they flee the enmity of a heathen king and have their liberty restricted in a foreign and idolatrous land, far from the Temple and far from God’s people, perhaps for some weeks or even months.

The painful humiliation of Christ began early. No room in the inn at Bethlehem, and now no room in the land of Judah. Matthew Henry wrote:

Both Christ the head, and the church his body, agree in saying, Many a time have they afflicted me, from my youth up. A great red dragon stands ready to devour the man-child as soon as it should be born (Rev. 12:4).

APPLICATION

1. Be amazed at the enmity of the devil and of the human heart against God. Without restraining and saving grace we would all be murderous Pharaohs and Herods.
2. Be thankful for the sufferings of Christ. From his earliest days He was humiliated and humbled as part of His great work for sinners. He suffered in Egypt that we might be blessed in “Canaan.”
3. Be prepared for persecution. The servant is not greater than His master. The 15th century BC had its Pharaoh, Christ’s time had its Herod, our time has its own persecutors. The rulers of the world are seldom friendly to the cause of God.

III. OUT OF EGYPT

ANTICIPATION

v.11 וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לְבְנִי: *ûmimmişrâyim qārâ’î libnî* and called my son out of Egypt.

Finally, Hosea’s “prophecy” highlighted how God delivered Israel out of Egyptian isolation and suffering. He called His son out of Egypt. This great demonstration of God’s love was accompanied by the defeat and death of Pharaoh.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

By referring to Hosea’s prophecy, Matthew parallels the first Exodus of Israel (the nation) with the second Exodus of Israel (His Son). This second great demonstration of God’s love was also accompanied by the defeat and death of a persecuting King, this time the Edomite King Herod

¹¹ D Stuart, *Vol. 31: Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), Electronic Edition.

(Mat.2:19-21). The very specific nature of the parallel again argues against Kaiser's more "general" approach.

Some have argued that Matthew was saying that when Israel was called out of Egypt, Christ who was in the loins of Israel and would eventually descend from them, was also called out of Egypt. This is a truth, but it is only a partial explanation of Matthew's use of Hosea. It must be remembered that Matthew's Gospel is addressed primarily to the Israel of his own day and that the Evangelist was endeavouring to show not only that the Messiah descended from them, but also that He was the fulfilment of them. Just as God's adopted Israel was brought out of Egypt to be advanced to the highest honours, so God's only-begotten "Israel" was also.

The early pattern of Israel was re-enacted in its essentials, ending with God's Son restored to God's land to fulfil the task marked out for Him.

Before leaving the study of how this prophecy was fulfilled, the question must arise concerning how much Hosea knew when he wrote his prophecy. Specifically, did Hosea intend to prophecy this time and incident in the Messiah's life? Kaiser states that while it was not a prophecy of the same nature as Micah 5:2, neither was it a mere historical reminiscence either. He goes on:

No doubt Hosea understood the technical nature of "My Son" along with its implications for corporate solidarity. Furthermore, Hosea had a wide range of time before his eyes. He began with the time when Israel was a child, continued through the era of Israel's present distress when God was still loving them because they belonged to that elect "Seed," and ended in the future eschaton when "they shall go after the Lord" (Hos.11:10) and his sons "shall come trembling from the west,...from Egypt,...and...from Assyria" (Hos.11:10-11). Hence, his point about the Son's preservation invited future comparisons with what God would do in subsequent history as He again and again delivered that "Son" until the final and ultimate deliverance in the last Man of Promise came....There is no distortion of abuse of the context of Hosea by Matthew; nor has he added his own interpretation to the text.¹²

APPLICATION

Matthew sets Christ forth as the final destination of God's redemptive purposes.

That the old things were thus so palpably returning again, was God's sign in providence to a slumbering Church, that the great end of the Old was at length passing into fulfilment. It proclaimed that He who of old loved Israel, so as to preserve him for a time in Egypt, and then called him out for the lower service he had to render, was now going to revive His work, and carry it forward to its destined completion by that Child of Hope, to whom all history and the promises of Israel pointed in their common centre (P Fairbarin).

Hosea speaks of the first Exodus. Matthew speaks of a second Exodus. Later on, Christ speaks of a third Exodus for Israel – not the political Exodus of God's adopted Israel, nor the geographical Exodus of God's only-begotten Israel, but the spiritual Exodus of God's spiritual Israel – His elect people.

And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease [ἐξόδου "exodus"] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem (Lk.9:30-31).

Christ here sees Himself as the one who by His suffering and death will lead His chosen people out of spiritual bondage and into spiritual liberty. So, Christ "was called out of Egypt" three times – in Israel's Old Testament Exodus, in His own infant "exodus," and in His suffering the stripes due to His people's sins in order to lead them to freedom.

¹² W C Kaiser, Jr. *The Use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 53

To round out Matthew's perspective, we must add that since Israel's history has now reached its goal, which gathers together all previous threads, the earlier exodus now finds its counterpart and its climax in the eschatological deliverance of God's people from their sins.¹³

¹³D A Hagner, *Vol. 33A: Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Logos Library System; 1998), Electronic Edition.