

## THE DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVES OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the knowledge of God is a central concept with a complex dimension embracing theological, moral and cultic aspects. It is in this context that the prophet Hosea, one of the small but theologically important prophets, uses the expressions “da’at Elohim” and “da’at YHWH” to describe the relationship between God and his people. These rare and deeply significant expressions reveal a unique perspective on divine knowledge within Old Testament religion.

First, the expression “da’at Elohim”, which occurs twice in the Book of Hosea (4:1-6 and 6:6) and the Proverbs of Solomon 2:5, is particularly rare in the Old Testament. This rarity raises questions about the specificity of the divine names used and their associated meanings. The term “Elohim”, generally used to designate “God” in a broader sense, occurs in various contexts but is rarely used as a direct object of the verb *yad* („to know”). In most cases where “Elohim” is used in this structure, it refers to the foreign deities of the pagan peoples. On the other hand, the expression “da’at YHWH” is even less common, occurring only three times in the book of Hosea (2:22; 5:4; 6:3). This rarity raises the question of whether the difference in the use of the divine names – “Elohim” and “YHWH” – indicates a difference in the meanings attributed to divine knowledge or whether these expressions, although similar, may have distinct connotations.

To understand this subtlety, it is essential to consider the concept of “knowledge” in the context of Old Testament religion. Knowledge of God is not merely an accumulation of theoretical or intellectual information but involves a deep and personal relationship with the Divine. W. Eichordt, a leading biblical scholar, offers a definition which captures the essence of this concept: knowledge of God is the acceptance of the revealed divine essence and the assumption of the divine will in a proper spiritual



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existence, a life which is permeated and determined by the epiphanic divine reality (*Theologie des Alten Testament* 1948, 178). This perspective emphasises that the knowledge of God in the Old Testament is inseparable from divine revelation and the covenant relationship between God and his people. It is not mere intellectual knowledge, but one that transforms the life of the believer, determining his behaviour and guiding his existence.

As far as theological debates about the nature of this knowledge are concerned, there are two main perspectives. One group of theologians, represented by J. Wellhausen, K. Marti, J. Pedersen, G. Ostborn and A. Weiser, holds that the knowledge of YHWH is primarily a priestly knowledge of the Torah, which belongs to priests and religious leaders. They are responsible for teaching the people this knowledge, preserving and transmitting the sum of cultic-ritual processes. In this view, the knowledge of God is closely linked to the observance of the law and the fulfilment of religious rituals, which maintain the covenant between God and Israel.

Theologians such as W. Reis, M. Novack and R. Bultmann, on the other hand, argue that knowledge of Elohim has a universal moral dimension, being associated with virtues such as *emet* (“truth”) and *hesed* (“loyalty”). In this sense, knowledge of Elohim is not only a recognition of divine authority but also implies a deep moral commitment, which includes respect for truth and loyalty. The prophet Hosea emphasises that these virtues are fundamental to covenant-keeping, while their absence leads to a serious breach of covenant obligations.

It is important to note that, in the moral context of the virtues, the knowledge of Elohim is to be understood dynamically, not as an objective and theoretical knowledge, but as a unification with the object to be known. Hosea thus suggests that this knowledge is more than mere intellectual understanding; it is a transformative experience that unites man with God through creation. Thus knowledge of Elohim becomes a comprehensive process that goes beyond knowledge of YHWH to include a cosmological dimension – recognising and uniting with God through his creation. In this framework, knowledge of YHWH is often described as a comprehensive religious concept, which also includes “da’at Elohim” – knowledge of divine works and sacred knowledge. The two expressions, “da’at Elohim” and “da’at YHWH”, are complementary, each bringing a distinct nuance to the relationship between God and the believer. They also reflect a deep theological thought that is close to that of patristic thought, which emphasises the incarnation of the law and its integration into the life of the

believer. In essence, Hosea promotes the idea that knowledge of God is not simply a matter of intellectual understanding or formal observance of the law, but a life lived in communion with God. Divine knowledge, defined by *emet* and *hesed*, becomes a means of access to eternal life, protecting the believer from sin and death. This knowledge is not merely an accumulation of knowledge, but a profound transformation of the being, which is achieved through a living relationship with God.

Thus, the knowledge of God in the Old Testament cannot be reduced to a simple set of beliefs or rules but is a dynamic, living reality that involves the whole existence of the believer. It is a call to a deep and personal relationship with God, a relationship that is characterised by truth, loyalty and love – essential virtues of the covenant between God and Israel. This knowledge is ultimately a path to eternal life, a life in communion with the Creator, lived in the revealed light of the divine will.

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