Hosea's Use of Nuptial Imagery

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Because of
   a Gracious God
By the prayers of
   faithful families
Through the guidance of
   peerless professors
With the help of
   a wonderful wife--
   through whose love,
   companionship, encouragement,
   and selflessness--
I have experienced the
beauty of marriage.
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The suggestion for a study of nuptial imagery in the Old Testament was first entertained during an indagation of the eighth-century prophets in a seminar setting. An abiding interest for the subject continued with this student through the duration of his seminar work. At that time, the interest for a dissertation in this area was communicated to the departmental professors who responded positively with regard to this basic intent. After formal approval was obtained, an extensive period of research was commenced that has culminated in this dissertation, which is an investigation of a selected area within the bounds of nuptial imagery.

Appraisal of the Study

Gerhard von Rad testified to the importance of the marriage symbolism which emerged from Hosea's domestic experience. He wrote that

it gives the keynote for practically all the topics characteristic of Hosea--his passionate indignation at Israel's disloyalty, her approaching punishment, and also what lay beyond these, and about which it was difficult to be precise--the hint of a fresh saving activity, and indeed of an entirely fresh start with Israel, to which God's love impels him.

Although the marital scenes are contained in chapters one and
three, the resultant imagery is reflected in the preponderance
of the book, making this figuration the crux interpretum.\(^1\) Hosea used the marriage motif as a very effective hermeneuti-
cal device, and to understand his message properly one must
grapple with his figure.\(^2\)

An analysis of Hosea's nuptial imagery also intensi-
fies, extends, and deepens understanding of the covenant and
those factors connected with it.\(^3\) Bernhard W. Anderson
stated that Hosea was the first to interpret the covenant by
comparing it with marriage.\(^4\) Such an analogy not only brought

\(^1\)See Albert C. Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy
(New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1914), p. 104; Bernhard
295; Peter R. Ackroyd, "Hosea," in Peake's Commentary on the
Bible, ed. by Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas
Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 603; Roy L. Honeycutt, "Ho-
sea," in The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. by Clifton J. Al-
len (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), VII, 2; Leroy Water-
man, "The Marriage of Hosea," Journal of Biblical Literature,
XXXVII (1918), 193; and O. R. Sellers, "Hosea's Motives,"
The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures,
XLI (July, 1925), 244.

\(^2\)H. Wheeler Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, ed. by Ernest
stated, "In regard to exegesis, a careful study of The Book
of Hosea would show how deeply the oracles which it contains
are colored by the experience of his marriage; how frequently
the figure of marital infidelity enters into them; how warm
is the feeling with which the relation of Yahweh to Israel is
described; how passionate is the longing of God portrayed in
them to betroth a faithful people to himself."

\(^3\)A. B. Davidson, "The Prophet Hosea," The Expositor,
IX (1879), 259.

\(^4\)Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament
p. 247.
fresh insight to the love of God\(^1\) and the covenant but delivered a caustic rebuke against Israel's unfaithfulness. Indeed, the prophetic enunciation of weal and woe became most meaningful as it was placed against the foil of the marital figure.

The prophetic message was communicated facilely as Hosea used concepts and ways of thought natural to his hearers.\(^2\) He employed a descriptive imagery that could express truth from all possible angles.\(^3\) Through Hosea's imagery both the religion and the history of Israel were personalized.\(^4\) The powerful imagery thus described is worthy of an in-depth study.

The Prophet Hosea has been selected as the focal point of investigation, for he was apparently the initiator of the prevailing line of thought concerning nuptial imagery.\(^5\) From

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1. With Hosea, love received a clearness unknown before him; Knudson, Beacon Lights, p. 92. Knight contended that this was the first time, chronologically speaking, that we hear of the love of God; George A. F. Knight, Hosea: Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries, ed. by John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1960), p. 62.


his insights later writers borrowed and built. His influence is reflected in the later prophets (e.g., Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Ezekiel), in the Jewish interpretation of the Song of Songs, and in the use of the figure by the Apostle Paul and other Christian writers. Pfeiffer wrote:

The Apostle Paul (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32) and many other Christians spoke of the Church as the bride of Christ (Matt. 9:15; Jn. 3:29; Rev. 17:1-6; 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17), thus testifying to the lasting significance of Hosea's new conception of religion, . . .

Hence, to fathom the topic of nuptial imagery, the point of beginning seemingly lies with the eighth-century prophet Hosea.

Aim of the Study

Concerning the Book of Hosea, much of the efforts of Old Testament scholars has involved an unceasing attempt to set forth the proper interpretation of chapters one and three with regard to Hosea's marriage. Consequently, the marital hermeneutic has not been explored as fully as possible. There is a need to push beyond Hosea's marriage to see that to which it points. In comparison to the works on the bride-bridegroom imagery in the New Testament, there has been little probing of the Old Testament emphasis upon which the

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New Testament writers built.\(^1\)

Therefore, this dissertation is a beginning effort in examining the background of nuptial imagery and the incisive message that it carries. Specifically, it determines what stimulated and allowed Hosea to use the figure and then shows how he used it as a poignant prophetic message. The investigation should lead not only to a better understanding of Hosea's total message but could bring fresh insights to points of the text, clarify Hosea's role as originator or developer of nuptial imagery, and provide a basis for better apprehending the message of other biblical writers who utilized this same imagery.

**Approach to the Study**

**Delineation**

At the outset of the study, there is a need to gain appreciation for the nuptial picture. This is accomplished in

\(^1\)According to Clifford Edwards even extensive research on nuptial imagery in the New Testament is lacking. He could cite only three works devoted directly to his study; Clifford Walter Edwards, "Bridegroom-Bride Imagery for Christ and the Church in the New Testament against Its Biblical Background" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1964), pp. 9-11. Likewise he acknowledged the importance of beginning with the Old Testament to understand the New Testament imagery and declared that he would not exclude this area from his investigation. He reinforced his conviction by quoting from Cerfau, The Church in the Theology of St. Paul, p. 351: "The Church-bride of Christ and the betrothed or the spouse of God of the Old Testament are figures which are too much alike not to be identified." Nevertheless, Edwards still handled the Old Testament materials on nuptial imagery very generally and devoted only five pages to Hosea specifically; Edwards, "Bridegroom-Bride Imagery," pp. 15, 20-24.
recognizing that Hosea's imagery was born in the cradle of tender human emotion. The power of his figure lay in its historicity--the product of a real event in the life of the prophet-man. Through his experience and out of his prophetic consciousness came a revelation that enabled him to apply the marital figure to the Yahweh-Israel situation. Chapter one then sets forth those tenets which when accepted can increase appreciation of the picture that the nuptial vocabulary paints.

In chapter two, those factors are focused upon which may have stimulated Hosea to appropriate the marital imagery. This requires a survey of the prophetic situation.¹ The "prophetic situation" involves past and present concepts, traditions, and circumstances which could have suggested, in part or in toto, the imagery to Hosea's mind. The discussion attempts to contribute to a determination of the background of the prophet's nuptial imagery. The chapter is concluded with an assaying of the question concerning Hosea's originality with regard to the nuptial figure and its corollaries.

Continuing, the third chapter investigates the common elements of the covenant and marriage and those marital customs that could illumine the covenant-based message of Hosea. The prophet associated the covenant with marriage. Similarities, therefore, must have been present in order to allow

¹Webster defines "situation" as "the sum total of internal and external stimuli that act upon an organism within a given time interval"; Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 8th ed., s.v. "situation."
such an identification. Furthermore, the prophet operated in a milieu which had particular marital customs and concepts. Consequently, it appears valid to explore his imagery to see if any of these marital customs and concepts were incorporated into the higher imagery. If such is the case, a consideration of these elements should enhance understanding of the Yahweh-Israel marriage.

In the concluding chapter, an analysis of the status of the nuptial relationship as reflected in the Hosean materials is pursued. The Yahweh-Israel relationship is described as to its past, present, and future condition. The discussion is based largely upon exegesis.

Delimitation

The topic isolated for serious study is Hosea's use of nuptial imagery. Although the imagery was based upon an actual marriage, neither a full treatment of Israelite marriage nor of marriage in the ancient Near East is made. Only where features in these areas appear apposite for this study are they delineated and incorporated. Again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with nuptial imagery as it is used in the Book of Jeremiah, the Book of Ezekiel, and the New Testament writings. Likewise, as key Hebrew words and concepts are encountered, germane materials and conclusions are utilized from already existing studies rather than presenting a full discussion of these areas.
The Book of Hosea is replete with problem areas, and critical positions on each problem are very diversified. Because of this, it is necessary to proceed with basic assumptions, acknowledging differing positions only briefly.

Apparatus for the Study

This investigation involves both a survey of available relevant data and an intensive exegetical inquiry into the Book of Hosea. Concerning the latter, the primary source for the textual study is *Biblia Hebraica*, edited by Rudolf Kittel. The biblical references throughout the paper follow the chapter and verse divisions of this basic text. Where translations are given they are the writer's.

The additional material researched is comprised of theologies of the Old Testament, histories of Israel's religion, Old Testament introductions, general works in the area of Old Testament, journal and encyclopedia articles, essays, commentaries, and unpublished theses. These writings have stimulated this student's thinking, contributed information on points of inquiry, and confirmed working theories.

Because Israel did not exist in a vacuum but had contact with kindred peoples and contiguous nations, it is necessary to ascertain if and how these influenced Hosea's use of the nuptial imagery. Translations and commentary on extra biblical literature and general information in ancient Near

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Eastern studies are drawn from recognized works in the field. Extensive research has been done in order to present in this paper a fine assimilation of materials on the topic and guard against incorporating or presenting any unfounded theories or interpretations.
CHAPTER I

APPRECIATION OF THE NUPTIAL PICTURE:
HOSEA'S PROPHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

In the first three chapters of the Book of Hosea, there is direct reference to various marital experiences in two spheres of actuality—the human-physical and the divine-spiritual. From a perusing of the book, it appears that the two stories are interrelated, the full extent of which can not be determined. Because the Hosea-Gomer situation is identified with that of Yahweh-Israel, an appreciation of the form and substance of the prophet's story must precede an understanding of the "deeper story" with which the book is occupied.  

Events had transpired in the prophet's life which capacitated him for keen, spiritual insight and enabled him to recognize in his position a mutuality with that of his Ma-

1 Cf. 1:2 and 3:1.

A life experience that potent demanded a piercing of the personality and involved the mysterious workings of the prophetic consciousness. This first chapter sets forth the realness of the marriages and surveys the functioning of prophetic consciousness in and through that reality. To begin to appreciate the nuptial picture described and developed by Hosea, these factors must be reviewed.

Historicity of the Nuptial Story

The approach taken in this dissertation is that the nuptial story concerning the Prophet Hosea, both in its autobiographical and biographical form, was based upon real experiences in the prophet's life. Indeed, the marriage of Hosea as a literal happening has the overwhelming support of modern scholarship.¹

Descriptive Nomenclature

Various phraseology is employed to explain the Hosean account. A prophet's symbolic act,² a memorabile of a sym-


bolic act, a vision, a dream or inward experience, a parable, an allegory, and a metaphor have been or are among the basic suggested possibilities. Several of these terms have been connected with the nonliteral approach to Hosea's marriage, e.g., a dream, a vision, a parable, and an allegory. With the exception of the dream and vision, however, the listed nomenclature also may be involved in a discussion of the literal approach. In that case the assumption is made that Hosea's marriage was real, and the words metaphor, parable, and allegory are used to define the passage's literary genre. They are labels indicating the literary device, the


attention-getting, instructive means of speech utilized by Hosea in presenting the prophetic message. Thus Östborn spoke of the marriage employed as a metaphor to illustrate the intimate relationship that ought to exist between Yahweh and Israel.¹ Eichrodt called the story a parable which Hosea earned the right to use at his own heart's blood.² H. Wheeler Robinson claimed that chapters one and three described an event allegorically interpreted and not an invented allegory.³

The denotations and connotations of allegory, parable, and metaphor vary with the individual, and in some cases the terms are used synonymously.⁴ However, the emphasis of this

¹Östborn, Yahweh and Baal, p. 80. See also Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 294; and Frederick Carl Eiselen, The Minor Prophets (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1907), p. 13.


discussion does not lie with the nuances of language but the actuality of Hosea's experience. Because of the variation in definitions these terms may all be applicable when viewed as poignant, literary devices expressing the message springing from Hosea's eventful life. A caution needs to be voiced at this point. These techniques were used to convey the message, a message that primarily involved God's relationship with Israel. At no point did Hosea through the use of figurative language subtract from the concreteness of that relationship but only enhanced communication of it. Indeed, if God's love and bond with Israel were no more than metaphor, parable, or allegory, exempt of true feeling and encounter, the grip of the Hosean material is lost.

The symbolic act is also applied to the literal approach. Here Hosea is believed actually to have married a woman but did so to visualize God's message to Israel. However, the depth of feeling displayed in the book and the insight of the prophet rule against a merely demonstrable act. Even if to offset this criticism it is held that Hosea became involved emotionally with the woman while carrying out the symbolic act, the symbolic theory still faces difficulty. There is nothing in the narratives of chapters one or three that requires or clearly indicates a symbolic act. That the action of a prophet marrying and having children which subsequently were assigned divinely appointed names had to be a
symbolic act is disproved by Isaiah 8:3. Hosea's children were given indicant names, but that does not demand a completely symbolic act. The two verses 1:2 and 3:1, which may be claimed as references to the carrying out of a pictorial act, are fraught with difficulties and foster sundry interpretations. Also, if the actions of Hosea are to be viewed symbolically, they correspond only in part to the actions of God with Israel which they were to reflect. For example, in 3:5a the conversion following chastening (cf. 2:9b) does not appear to be symbolized. Again, in 3:5b (cf. 2:18ff.) the eschatological age that is to follow does not find expression in the human marriage. Indeed, how would it be demonstrated? Moreover, from the text there is no indication that Gomer responded to Hosea and reentered the bonds of a then harmonious marriage. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the purchase of the woman in 3:2 can be viewed as a representative act, for it is comparable to nothing in the God-Israel relationship. The buying simply became the means by which Hosea gained control over the woman.


2Ibid., pp. 57-58.

3Ibid.
Students of the Old Testament have pointed out the significance of the symbolic act. A future event is depicted, and the present act helps to bring about that event. That being the case, Hosea was commanded to perform "signs" of coming sin and in essence contributed to its realization.

This writer does not agree with those who make the events of chapters one and three an inward awareness only, an invented literary technique, or a symbolic act. It is contended in this dissertation that Hosea's experience was first private and personal, not an outward display, and the enunciation of his story ex post facto reflects a prophetic reinteretation of events.

Experiential Revelation

In the quarry of human experience, Hosea met with a domestic plight out of which emerged his penetrating, prophetic message. The de facto event coupled with the inner

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3Ginsberg, "Studies in Hosea 1-3," p. 64.

4Lindblom explained that the marriage was not a symbolic action. The prophet did not intentionally marry the woman to provide a symbol, but rather the marriage revealed the symbol to him; Johannes Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 168.

5The "proleptic" view is dealt with in chapter two.
workings of the prophetic consciousness provided the capacity for lucrative revelation. The experience was private—in the confines of heart and home. His marriage was firstly a lesson. Hosea had to fully live the message before proclaiming it to others. Interpreters labor under the difficulty of a paucity of biographical data concerning the prophet. This is because the book is not chiefly concerned with Hosea but with the God who chose and loved Israel. Hosea, therefore, shared little glimpse into his crucible of discovery but rather emphasized the lessons learned.

The book reverberates human feelings and emotions—love, anger, rejection, shame, and disappointment. Eichrodt ob-

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served that

Not only Chapters 2 and 3, . . ., but also the following chapters, with their description of the tender love and passionate anger which struggle in the breast of the disillusioned and deeply hurt husband and make him a riddle to himself, witness to an author who has himself experienced this inner struggle and can therefore express it intensely and ardently out of all the passion of a deeply stirred heart.¹

Also, according to scholars, the broken nature of the materials points to the emotional revulsions and depth of feelings of its author.²

Hence, out of a life situation Hosea was instructed, and once schooled, delivered the inimitable message to his countrymen. Through experiential revelation prophecy was made of a "human document."³ Hosea now was equipped to peer into the "tragic similitude."⁴

**Passibility of the Divine Being**

Hosea was able to take his human situation with its trauma and emotion and link it to the relationship of God with


⁴Ibid.
Israel, mutatis mutandis, because of his awareness of the passibility of God and of the fundamental kinship between God and His highest creation.

Divine Pathos

The Hebrew Prophets believed that God could "feel" because He was a person. Their God was at once transcendent and "implicitly immanent, somehow joined personally and directly to Israel."\(^1\) Israel's history reflected a God involved and affected by events. Eichrodt said:

> It is not the God untouched by human perversity and throned in unapproachable majesty with whom Israel has to do, but the suffering, anxious, and hopeful lover who is infinitely interested in the object of his election.\(^2\)

Heschel referred to Yahweh as a God of pathos. Pathos is the personal implication in God's acts, His involvement in Israel's life, and the basis of the relationship between man and God and their dialogue.\(^3\)

The key truth of the theology implicit in the prophetic consciousness was this Erlebbarkeit for God of human life and experience.\(^4\) Passages in the Book of Hosea manifest the inner

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\(^1\) Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 300.


\(^3\) Heschel, The Prophets, II, 11.

conflicts, hurt, and joy in the heart of Yahweh. Elimination of such pathos would stifle the message of Hosea and cast aside such beautiful passages as the loving betrothal of God to Israel (2:16ff.).

Higher Anthropomorphism

Divine pathos is not a personification of God but an illumination of His concern. Likewise, anthropomorphic terminology does not distort the "divineness" of God but enables descriptive and meaningful communication of His actions and personality. Such language is not an accommodation of higher things to the lower level of human understanding but the reverse. Therefore, anthropomorphic terminology should not be viewed as a threat or a danger. Through Hosea's vision deep into the divine nature, a meaningful anthropomorphic term was adopted that corresponded to the realm of intimate, personal relations. Hosea pictured his God as the Husband of Israel. Although the term must fade when applied to God, it still worked to reveal depths of dimension hitherto hidden.

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1 2:4; 6:4; 11:8; 13:4-8, etc. In 2:10 it is described how God lavished (RSV) and multiplied (ASV), i.e., the generous Lover; Knight, Hosea, p. 54. Wolff remarked that 2:15b and other verses express the fact that God suffers under Israel's unfaithfulness; Wolff, Hosea, p. 41. Pain and passion are reflected in the names יְהִי and יִצְחָק; Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness, p. 146.

2 Heschel, The Prophets, II, 53.

3 The anthropomorphic language was needed to convey His nonanthropomorphic being; Heschel, The Prophets, II, 56.

4 Ibid., p. 51.
Wheeler Robinson called Hosea's designation of Yahweh as Husband "the higher anthropomorphism."\(^1\)

**Receptivity of the Prophetic Insight**

**Fundamental Kinship**

There exists between man and God a fundamental kinship that can result in a dynamic relationship. Because of this, man can receive the Word of God and then express it in human terminology. The kinship is actualized as the man responds to God.\(^3\) Melville Scott referred to Hosea as the St. John of the Old Testament--the preacher not of law but of a divine kinship.\(^4\) Such an awareness of kinship is imperative for understanding the aspects of revelation and the prophetic consciousness. This apperception of an identity with Yahweh enabled Hosea to interpret God's ways and thoughts in moral and spiritual terms.

**Prophetic Sympathy**

Prophetic sympathy is the reception of and response to divine pathos--a process predicated upon the idea of kinship. It was the prophet open to the presence and emotion of the

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\(^1\) Robinson, *The Cross of Hosea*, p. 22.

\(^2\) Knight, *The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness*, pp. 121, 126.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 126.

transcendent Subject. He carried within himself a vivid awareness of what was happening to God.

Heschel averred:

Only by living through in his own life what the divine Consort of Israel experienced, was the prophet able to attain sympathy for the divine situation.

The sorrowful experience of Hosea as a man might have had no such significance. The new fact, however, was made when the prophet-man reinterpreted his experience and made the prophetic "venture of faith" in saying that this was in some sense how God sorrowed and loved.

The emotional solidarity of Hosea and God is apparent throughout the book. This oneness is reflected in the multiple use of the divine 'I'.

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1 Heschel, The Prophets, II, 89. See here also his discussion on the dialogical structure of sympathy.

2 Heschel, The Prophets, I, 56.

3 Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, p. 21. Knight provided an appropriate warning when he said that the emotional consciousness of the prophet was only a dim earthly reflection of heavenly ones; Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness, p. 139. However dim it may have been, Hosea's ability to convey the anguish within the heart of a God rejected by His people was unparalleled in the Old Testament; David Allan Hubbard, With Bands of Love: Lessons from the Book of Hosea (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 20.

Prophetic Intuition

When revelation had been received, the intuitive work of the prophet could draw conclusions from and make judgments on the basis of revealed truth. An intuitional judgment of this kind involved a response of the whole personality of the prophet, and the result bore his personal stamp.¹ Thus it will be seen that Hosea through the tragedy of an earthly and heavenly marriage failure drew points of theology and prophetic force from logical analysis of truth.²

²Knight, *The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness*, p. 103.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE NUPTIAL IMAGERY:
HOSEA'S PROPHETIC SITUATION

The perception Hosea obtained when he was afforded a glimpse into the "heart" of God contributed consequently to his realization of the divine Subject's feeling and identity with man. Such an "emotional" Deity who could interact and be touched by that interaction also could be described in language corresponding to human relations entailing emotion and reciprocity. Thus Hosea was able to call God "Husband," which denotes one of the most intimate positions of life. The question raised at this point is why Hosea chose and manipulated this particular role for God, making it the dominant figure of his message.

David Hubbard pointed out that the prophets' phrasings, figures of speech, and emphases were their own, and their personalities, cultural background, and talents all operated in the revelatory process. Consequently, to understand the background of the nuptial imagery it is necessary to review Hosea's prophetic "situation" and determine what stimulating

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1 Hubbard, Bands of Love, p. 12.
2 Supra, p. 6, n. 1.
factors were used in his revelatory process and were present in his prophetic consciousness.

**Nuptial Imagery Encouraged by Hosea's Patrimony**

Various facets of Hosea's heritage could have encouraged the use of nuptial imagery and increased the acceptability and applicability of it among his constituents.

**Interpreted Biblical Background**

With the hope of discovering the seed of Hosea's nuptial imagery, researchers have scrutinized the Old Testament text. The effort has taken some to the creation narrative where they have found the idea implicit.

David Hubbard contended that Gen. 1:27b provided commentary on 1:27a, illustrating the definite connection between the image of God and the relationship of man and woman. He stated:

> The man-female relationship was designed by God from the beginning not merely to perpetuate the race but to mirror God's relationship with man.¹

Hosea, then, who used his marriage to elucidate the union between God and Israel drew light from this narrative and made the implicit idea explicit.² This interpretation of 1:27 has not commanded respect among most scholars,³ and the text it-

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² Hubbard, Bands of Love, p. 63.

self, by critical consent, has been assigned to the Priestly
source and dated later than Hosea.

Gen. 2:23f. also has caught the attention of the inda-
gators of the nuptial figure. They theorized that the pro-
phet built upon the foundation of this passage which gives
hints on the purposes in marriage. It would not be unusual
for this high concept of marriage to find identity with that
of Hosea's, but that this single passage played a significant
role in stimulating Hosea's figurative usage is highly doubt-
ful. To find the conjugal relationship of Yahweh and Israel
here would be a bit remote and actually quite unnecessary
when the other possibilities are recognized.

Invoked Covenant Tradition

The hypothesis also has been maintained that Hosea,
standing in the stream of the covenant tradition, discovered
antecedents there which occasioned the use of the Yahweh-
Israel wedlock.

Before broaching this subject, it should be pointed
out that the covenant as an integral part of Israel's history
stemming from the Mosaic period has been proved sufficiently

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1 See Hubbard, Bands of Love, pp. 62-63. See also André
Neher, The Prophetic Existence, trans. by William Wolf (South

2 In complete fairness, however, it should be noted that
this section of Genesis is customarily assigned to the Yahwist
source which may have been extant in Hosea's day. The usual
dating of Hosea's ministry--from the middle of the eighth cen-
tury B.C. to a time before the fall of Israel--is followed in
this dissertation.
by G. E. Mendenhall. Therefore, the pertinent question here is the relationship of the covenant tradition to Hosea. The eighth-century prophets can be understood only in terms of the covenant with its accompanying historical and legal traditions. It was by this that they determined the present status of Israel, judged and pronounced judgment, and promulgated the message of hope for the future.

In the Book of Hosea the term "covenant" (םַעְבָּד) is infrequently used. Hos. 2:20, 6:7, 8:1, 10:4, and 12:2 are the verses where the term does appear. Of these references only 6:7 and 8:1 seem to refer to the Sinai covenant, although Hosea repeatedly said that the Yahweh-Israel relation began in the Exodus time (9:10; 11:1; 12:9; 13:4). The relative absence of the word, however, does not negate the pres-

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ence of the covenant idea. Various proposals have emerged to explain the scarcity of the word "covenant." G. Ernest Wright said that it was avoided due to the great potential for misuse of the term in the eighth century.\footnote{G. Ernest Wright, "The Faith of Israel," in The Interpreter's Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (12 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), I, 357.} Similarly, Lindblom and Clements spoke of the false connotations of national security\footnote{Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, p. 55.} and an inevitable glorious future\footnote{Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, p. 329.} attached to יִהְיֶה. A surveying of the pages of the Book of Hosea produces ample evidence that its author was knowledgeable of covenant tradition and infused it into his message.\footnote{See James Muilenburg, "The 'Office' of the Prophet in Ancient Israel," in The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. by J. Philip Hyatt (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1965), pp. 93ff.} Reference to the sojourn tradition is found in 2:17, 5:1-2, 9:10, and 13:5, and in chapter eleven the Exodus motif is followed by the Wilderness motif.\footnote{Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, pp. 31, 33.} Mention has been made already that Hosea connected the Yahweh-Israel relation with the Exodus time. The Decalogue as a fixed quantum apparently was known by the time of Hosea.\footnote{There appears to be universal agreement on the fact that Hosea was acquainted with the Elohist narratives; Muilenburg, "'Office' of the Prophet," p. 93, n. 64.} Brueggemann has isolated successfully these
apodictic laws in the Hosean text.\(^1\) In addition, the prophet castigated and condemned Israel specifically according to covenant stipulations.\(^2\) Phrases such as "my people"\(^3\) (1:9; 2:3), "not my people"\(^4\) (1:8-9), "not pitied"\(^5\) (1:6), and "you shall be my people"\(^6\) (2:25) obviously are based upon the covenant with Israel (cf. Exod. 6:7). Honeycutt stated that with the phrase "I am" not for you, the "your God" is absent in the text.\(^7\) The "I am," reminiscent of הוהי יְהֹוָה (Exod. 3:14), is an avowal of renunciation strongly contrasted with the former covenant promise of His presence.\(^8\)

God as a deity of covenant and relationship is ubiquitous in the book. "Yahweh" is used forty-five times compared to twenty-six for "God," but the usages of "God" usually have a suffix personalizing it.\(^9\) Wolff observed:

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2. Cf. 4:6; 6:7; 7:13; 8:1; 8:12; 8:14; etc. Cf. 12:9b where the threat follows and is based upon the reference to the past in 12:9a; *ibid.*, pp. 37, 28.


5. *Ibid*.


7. The MT does omit "your God" which is included in the footnote as a possibility.

8. Honeycutt, "Hosea," pp. 11-12. See the fine discussion of Wolff who stated that the "I am not" is a predicate noun standing for the name of Yahweh; Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 21.

In those few instances in which "God" appears without a possessive pronoun (3:1; 8:6; 13:4b), the word also serves to elucidate Israel's right relationship to Yahweh alone; otherwise, simply the word "God" appropriately stands only in the pre-Mosaic Jacob tradition (12:4[3]; cf. v7[6]) and in formulaic expressions (4:1; 6:6).

Hosea could not speak of a general God but only of Yahweh who revealed Himself and acted within the bounds of history. Because sufficient evidence exists for claiming that Hosea invoked the covenant tradition, it may be possible that contained in this framework was the origin of Hosea's nuptial imagery. Perhaps here where God bound Himself to His people in a covenant of protection and obedience was the germ for Hosea's usage. The covenant established a community with characteristics of a great family with common life and will. It was a bond of communion, a circle enclosing partners—not so much limiting as bringing together in intimate relationship. The concept of covenant was indeed "marriage-like." That the doctrine of the covenant stood behind Hosea's parable of marriage was entirely plausible according to Heschel.

1 Ibid.


5 Heschel, The Prophets, I, 57.
nuptial imagery were here because of the presence of the con-
jugal jealousy of Yahweh in the Decalogue.¹ R. B. Coote be-
lieved that the basic Leitmotif of the Exodus narratives was
the bride-rescue story. For him the Jacob narrative in chap-
ter twelve provided a parallel to the God-Israel relation-
ship. Yahweh in fetching Israel from Egypt was like unto Ja-
cob journeying to a foreign country to take a wife. He con-
tinued:

The Exodus narrative as a whole may be described as a
bride-rescue story, with Israel as Yhwh's bride. There
is no indication that this was not the basic thematic
framework of the Exodus narrative even at its earliest
level. Hosea is the prophet who par excellence takes up
the images of this old pattern and develops within a
covenant context the metaphor of marriage and divorce--
and remarriage--between Yhwh and Israel.... It is im-
portant to note that the image of Yhwh as husband was an
old one in Israel by the time of Hosea, and that it origi-
inated in the thematic framework of Israel's historical
traditions.²

Thus Hosea, according to these views, either could have uti-
lized a theme already present in the tradition or have taken
an idea implicit in the covenant and effectively developed it.

However, G. Ernest Wright effectively showed in a study
of Old Testament terminology that the ruler-servant figure
was dominant in these Pentateuchal materials and that the two
figures, husband and father, had intruded into the otherwise

¹ Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology: Old and New Testa-
ments (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Com-
pany, 1948), p. 278.

² R. B. Coote, "Hosea XII," Vetus Testamentum, XXI (Oc-
tober, 1971), 401.
harmonious picture. Mendenhall's study, which demonstrated that the covenant was based on the suzerain-vassal framework, would tend to confirm Wright's conclusion. Edward Campbell, who followed Mendenhall's supposition, declared that Israel's early theological affirmations were expressed in treaty language. In accordance with this, Herbert Huffmon, after studying the verb "to know," concluded that its Sitz im Leben was the treaty structure in which it described the sovereign's recognition of a participating treaty member. Likewise, W. L. Moran investigated the verb "to love" in its ancient Near Eastern setting in hopes of finding relevance for biblical material. He decided that, especially in Deuteronomy, it expressed faithfulness, obedience, and due loyalty in treaty language. This was a love that could be commanded. The import of these words in the Book of Hosea is discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, but with regard to many passages in the covenant tradition where these terms are


used, it is evident that Moran and Huffmon have contributed to the understanding of the text.

The aspect of jealousy also has spawned speculation of a conjugal emphasis in the old tradition.\(^1\) Yet study of Exod. 20:5 establishes an emphasis on God's prerogative to maintain and enforce the treaty. Here the Suzerain assumes a role of faithfulness and requires the same in return.\(^2\) The phrase נִעֲשַׁה should be interpreted to mean that God does not tolerate the reverence due to Him being given to another.\(^3\) Its characteristic usage with God denotes exclusiveness and is found with reference to the worship of other gods.\(^4\) The emphasis rests on His zealousness, a word which stands very near His holiness. It is true that such demands on one covenant partner and the concomitant jealousy of the other partner could easily be adapted to marriage language. However, the basic pith of God's jealousy is to connote the Sovereign's demand on His people's show of reverence and worship.

\(^1\)Supra, pp. 30-31.


Even Brueggemann, who fully illustrated Hosea's dependence on the covenant tradition, was convinced that there was not a clear enough antecedent of the nuptial figure in these materials to warrant the theory that this was Hosea's source. He wrote:

It is one thing to announce that covenant is broken. It is quite another to speak in terms of sex and broken marriage vows, and to see political involvement as gifts from lovers. This subtle use of image cannot be explained by reference to the tradition . . . . We can only conclude that it was the person of the prophet who made a particular use of the tradition and thereby made it relevant and urgent for his time and circumstance.

Thus it seems accurate to say that Hosea did not get the marriage imagery from the covenant tradition but that the expression of marriage became his distinctive way of handling the tradition.

Inherited Kindred Thought

Tracing the font of the conjugal imagery has involved characteristic Hebraic concepts with which Hosea would have been familiar.

Familial concept

A ferreting out of the fountainhead of Hosea's imagery occasions a look into the areas of family and kinship. Lindblom deemed this area the most likely for Hosea to have utilized. He remarked:

It is true that his own marriage played a great role in his understanding of the relation between Yahweh and His

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1 Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 119.
people. But he would surely not have taken his tragic marriage as a type of religious relationship if the idea of religion as a marriage had previously been unknown to him. It is a well-known fact that the ancient Semites, particularly at the stage of tribal culture, took many of their religious symbols from the family and kinship. 

... The symbol in question lay close at hand. ¹

A. F. Albright commented on the keen sense of relationship existent among the early Hebrews and added that they even viewed the deity as an actual member of the group. This close association allowed a mortal kinsman to address the divine figure as father, brother, and kindred. "All the members of the clan were, accordingly, children, brethren, or kinsmen of the god, who was the head of the house (family)."²

That the early Hebrews used family relational terms to denote close dependence and association appears apposite for the investigation of Hosea's familial language.

After the nationhood of Israel came about, the family idea was still present. The word for people (נָכָה) originally indicated the connection between kinfolk and then was applied to the people of Israel as one great whole.³ The family was directly confronted in the term נָכָה.

¹Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, p. 328.


Such a legacy would have caused Hosea to visualize Israel as a family rather than a state, an individual, not a government. Some have found the kinship factor responsible for such Hosean phraseology as: "not my people" (1:9; 2:1, 25); "my people" (4:6, 8, 12; 6:11; 11:7); and "house of Israel" (5:1). Various individuals who are exponents of this line of thought emphasize kinship as the basic binding element of Israel in lieu of the covenant. This thesis, however, disregards the evidence of a strong covenantal influence in the book.

That the kinship factor existed and functioned in Hosea's day should not be denied. The problem lies in trying to assess its significance as a possible impetus behind Hosea's usage of nuptial imagery.

The "familial philosophy" would not have been anything but consonant with Hosea's intimate figure. To say, however, that this was the immediate background of his imagery is to do so without qualifying data. Even Lindblom, who believed that Hosea would not have used his marriage as a type of religious relationship if religion as marriage had not been previously known, offered no corroborating proof. Indeed what he made was an assumption, but he still had to admit

1 Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. cli.

that the first actual appearance of this type of religious expression was with Hosea.¹

Moreover, from a study of the book, it is evident that the familial idea had not taken precedent over that of the covenant in the mind of Hosea. The latter which stood only to enhance, strengthen, and even create kinship—one family, one people—would be the more apt source of the relational terms as "my people" and "not my people."²

This area of kindred thought, then, which Hosea would have inherited, probably functioned to increase the acceptability of Hosea's imagery among his people, yet its role as the direct causal agent behind the imagery stands in need of substantiation.

Corporate personality

Standing in close conjunction with the former delineation is the Hebrew concept of corporate personality.³ Here is another belief adding an aura of positiveness to the foremost figure of the prophet.

The Hebrews maintained a strong sense of group-consciousness and collectivity. The group was the unit for morality and religion more so than the individual who belonged

¹Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, p. 328.
²Indeed the negation of relationship is clearly tied to the disobedience of covenant stipulations.
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to the group. Thus Hosea was able to argue from the moral relations between him and his faithless wife to the relationship of Yahweh and Israel.

The idea of corporate personality afforded the basis for fluidity of thought between the one and the many. Hosea addressed the individuals of Israel as offspring and the corporate group as wife and mother. Likewise, the corporate personality was a living whole—groups of the past, present, and future functioning as a single individual. Consequently, Hosea regarded not only the nation of the present as the wife but also that part of the nation which had existed in the past and that part which would exist in the future.

Motherland belief

W. R. Smith noted that according to a common Hebrew figure a land or city was the mother of its inhabitants or by a slight variation of the symbolism, the stock of a family was personified as the mother of the members of the group. The ideal unity of land and nation was the mother who had as her children the individual members of the nation. Yahweh was, therefore, at once father of the people and also the husband of their ideal mother. Smith was convinced that Hosea's imagery was suggested by these prevailing ideas.  

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2Cf. 2:4ff.
3Smith, Prophets of Israel, pp. 168, 170.
Brown and W. R. Harper likewise believed that the prophet's figure was not in itself an original idea but was based on this common Semitic conception that the deity was the ſ̱y̱h, i.e., the husband of the "motherland."\(^1\)

A review of this common Semitic belief in the Old Testament proves interesting. With regard to a city as the mother of its inhabitants the lone example Smith could summon was 2 Sam. 20:19.\(^2\) The import here, no doubt, is that the honor due to the city or the protecting, caring role it sustains to the inhabitants is like that ascribed to a real mother. The connection of a mother and a city, however, strikes only a slight similarity to Hosea's spiritual marriage figure.

Again, concerning the personification of the nation or the land as mother, the only places in the Hebrew text where this appears are the Books of Hosea and Ezekiel.\(^3\) If Smith's view were valid, it would seem that the expression of this common Hebrew concept would be found in the text in greater frequency and that it would have prompted the nuptial imagery characteristic of Hosea long before the eighth century B.C.

The deity-land relationship as a corollary of the above concept also demands examination. This situation arose in part because the god was considered the ſ̱y̱h of the land.

\(^1\)Brown, The Book of Hosea, p. 35; and Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. cxlv.

\(^2\)Smith, Prophets of Israel, p. 168.

Appropriation of the idea and the vocabulary came from the domestic-household sphere where the רבי was the master and husband of the wife. Pagan religions, consequently, emphasizing the husband aspect, spoke of a marriage relationship between the deity and the land which resulted in fecundation of the latter. However, Yahwism was devoid of the sexual emphasis of the nature religions. If a tie existed between Yahweh and the land, it rested primarily on the idea of lordship not "husband." He was master of the land, and it responded to His will. The Lord of the land concept enabled the abundant blessings of civilized life to be brought within the domain of the national God. For Hosea the husbandship of Yahweh with the land was spiritual and moral. The land responded to His call to give or withhold depending on the character of the spiritual relationship that Israel sustained with Him. For Hosea also, the marriage partner of Yahweh was not the land but the people. Hosea did infrequently interrelate the land and the people (2:5), but the shift to the land in this way was an attack on Baalism. Hosea never alluded to the land as a divine power, i.e., some goddess to which Yahweh was mated. It is clear that the prophet saw

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1 Cf. Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 11, who said that God possessed the land as its creator not as its husband.


3 Also, the covenant people and their promised land had been closely related aspects since the promise to Abraham.

4 Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 11.
Israel as the bride of Yahweh, not the land.¹ Indeed, the relationship could exist independently of her homeland—even in a nomadic or seminomadic state.²

A careful distinction has been maintained between true Yahwism and Canaanite religion to facilitate the attempt of getting to the true root of Hosea's imagery. If Hosea had found the source of his imagery in the concepts discussed in this section according to their interpretation within Yahwism, it would have required a distinctive reworking of the figures and an infusion of compatible but bold material. Finding the source here, though, would leave unexplained the prophet's intense emotion and deep insight. The question could still be raised, what caused him to rework the figure into a profound prophetic message, and whence the source of the new perception. Here again is found a Hebraic element which would have worked to aid the apprehension of Hosea's imagery but does not qualify as the direct source.

The possibility still exists that Hosea found the form of his figure in the Canaanite cult. This discussion is taken up in a later section.³

Nuptial Imagery Evinced by Hosea's Present

As there existed interesting factors in Hosea's past concerning a consideration of nuptial imagery, there were also

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¹ Cf. 2:25; 3:1; etc.
² Cf. 2:16ff.; 12:9; 13:5.
³ Infra, p. 43.
stimulants in the prophet's present situation that must be analyzed for their contributory role to the imagery's background. In this division the prophetic encounter, the cultic situation of Hosea's day, and the prophet-man's domestic posture are surveyed.

Assimilated Prophetic Encounter

Various prophetic materials give insight into the intimate association that the prophets had with God. This closeness has become a matter of interest for some, and their discussions at this juncture could prove relevant to the subject of nuptial imagery. André Neher saw the prophetic personalities living through something comparable to marriage in their own private sphere. To them revelation was a discovery of love. "The encounter with a living and feeling God revealed to the prophets neither a spirit nor an idea, but a Partner." Prophecy was an experience for two and could be pictured by Amos as a walk together, by Hosea as two struggling wrestlers, and as two lovers by Jeremiah. Neher contended that Hosea's wrestlers, although alluding to God and Israel, could also apply to the prophetic encounter. He believed that these symbols were descriptive of the prophetic knowledge—an intimate, penetrating, knowledge like that received through the

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1 Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 166.
3 Cf. Jeremiah's use of "seduce" and "force" in Jer. 20:7.
love of partners.

Another writer remarked:

The symbol of communication to the prophet was sexual intercourse. In Hebrew all the expressions used by the prophets for their call may have a sexual meaning.

Because Hosea was not exempt from such essential prophetic experiences as call and communion, perhaps the sexual overtones in these areas influenced his manner of speaking about Yahweh and Israel. However, even though Hosea's experience with God was very personal and intimate, there is no reference of a sexual nature in the text concerning his encounter with God and consequent reception of revelation. Neher's application of the wrestling episode to the prophetic encounter is too strained. Thus the lack of textual evidence would prohibit an overemphasis of this concept on Hosean thought and vocabulary. It is possible, nevertheless, to see how Hosea because of the idea of corporate personality could have reasoned from his intimate state with God (if indeed he saw it sexually) to that of corporate Israel and God. This is, in truth, tenuous and speculative and in light of stronger probabilities would have to be considered as remote.

Appropriated Cultic Structure

Gerhard von Rad concluded that Hosea had absolutely no need to look to his own private life to find a symbol for the

1 Neher, The Prophetic Existence, pp. 104-06. See also Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness, p. 140, n. 2.

Yahweh-Israel relationship, for the idea of a marriage between the deity and earthly partner had long been familiar because of Canaanite religion. That this would have been a fertile field from which Hosea could have appropriated his imagery cannot be doubted.

The influence of Baalism was very extensive in the Northern Kingdom. Hosea's addressees were Baal-enamored. Since the early days when the Israelites arrived in the land, the need of obeisance to the Canaanite deity Baal was thought to be requisite for procurement of productivity. The stance of Yahwism and Baalism side by side inevitably led to a process of syncretism in which Yahwism absorbed aspects of the Canaanite cult. The Hebrew Deity fell prey to the only god that could have displaced Him—His own distorted image. In this mixed religious atmosphere Hosea could have appropriated a tenet of the pagan cult, and the use of it would have been readily understood in the popular mind.

1G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 141.
The particular Canaanite feature pertinent for a discussion of nuptial imagery is the sacred marriage, _hieros gamos_. The god Baal was believed to have lived in matrimony with a goddess, the name of which differed according to cultures.\(^1\) In the pagan religions a consort for the male deity and a pantheon-family were characteristic traits. The goddess or Mother-goddess in Canaanite mythology evidently represented the land which was the "wife" fertilized by the god's rain.\(^2\)

Scholars have appealed to the numerous finds of Astarte figurines in Israel, the frequent mention of the asherim (wooden posts) in the Old Testament,\(^3\) and the presence of sacral marriage in the myth and ritual cult of contiguous areas to confirm their belief that a ritual involving sacred marriage existed in Canaan. T. H. Robinson stated that this was a generally, though not universally, agreed upon supposition.\(^4\)

Not only have the goddess and sacred marriage features been identified with the Canaanite cult, but they also have


\(^2\) Mays, _Hosea: A Commentary_, p. 25. Heschel averred that the idea of marriage between Baal and the soil has not been shown conclusively in Canaanite thought; Heschel, _The Prophets_, I, 56.


been linked to Yahwism per se. S. H. Hooke was convinced that the "booth" associated with the celebration of an autumnal festival was a heldover aspect of the hieros gamos. ¹ Also cited, is the evidence from a Jewish colony at Elephantine in the sixth century B.C. where the goddess Anat-Yahu appeared to have been worshiped alongside Yahweh. Mentioned as comparable to the latter was the presence of Yo-Elat in the Ras Shamra texts. Elat probably meant "goddess" which would produce the resultant translation, "Yahweh, consort of the goddess," or "the goddess, consort of Yahweh."²

Patai stated that the Hebrews, who needed the female touch, clung tenaciously to Asherah, Astarte, etc., who were not foreign abominations but also Hebrew goddesses. He traced the feminine feature of Yahwism on into its later development.⁴

Vriezen, however, remarked that in Israel there was a crucial absence of sex and that when Yahweh was assigned a


²See Ringgren, Israelite Religion, pp. 96-97; and Wolff, Hosea, p. 50.


consort it was only a fleeting instance of syncretism.\textsuperscript{1} This statement more accurately reflects the preponderance of evidence. In fact, so remote was this idea to Yahwism that there is not even a Hebrew word for "goddess." Eichrodt pointed out that any attempt to introduce a Mother-goddess alongside Yahweh was met with strong protests.\textsuperscript{2} He believed that the Elephantine situation was best explained as what could happen when a Yahweh-worshiping community was severed from the parent congregation.\textsuperscript{3}

Yahwism was so devoid of the sexual emphasis that Hosea was at liberty to represent Yahweh and Israel as husband and wife without its being misconstrued as of some mythical significance.\textsuperscript{4} The sex element appeared not to have been absorbed by Yahwism from the Canaanite cult. That individuals of Hosea's day might consider this a part of Yahwism would arise out of the syncretistic state of religion and the confusion in the popular mind of just what was Yahwism.\textsuperscript{5}

If Hosea's nuptial imagery had as its source the marriage idea from Canaanite religion, with uncanny brilliance

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\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 28.

\textsuperscript{5}Similar titles for Yahweh and the Canaanite god (cf. 2:18) increased the possibility of confusion.
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he took its form demythologized and recreated it into an effective vehical of communication. The assessment of this possible source of his imagery is withheld until the familial drama of the prophet has been reviewed.

Applied Domestic Posture

Symbolized natural environment

A full delineation of the background of Hosea's nuptial imagery would be incomplete without recognizing the abundant use the prophet made of similes and metaphors. This spokesman for God had an unusually metaphorically-bent mind. Through the use of his talent he projected thoughts lucidly as he captured the spiritual and physical in figurative language. Rolland Wolfe observed that Hosea was more proficient in this area than any other Old Testament writer. It is totally understandable how the rich marital image so impressively used could have flowed from a mind so inclined.

Utilized familial drama

An integral and inseparable part of Hosea's message was the discovery of divine purpose through human experi-

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2 See Wolff, Hosea, p. xxiv, for a comprehensive listing.

3 Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 152.
ence. His domicile posture gave him the focus with which to study the divine Subject, and this coupled with the prophetic review of his own life's events enabled a grasp of true meaning and message. H. Wheeler Robinson believed that the chief psychological explanation for the oracles of the book derived from Hosea's relationship with Gomer. According to Brown, Hosea loved and subsequently felt the pangs from his mate's show of faithlessness, and in and through these experiences he conceived of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as a marriage. Welch wrote that as Hosea experienced and worked through this heart-shaking event, he realized what was meant as to the relationship of Yahweh and Israel. Here, perhaps more so than any other area, was a highly fertile field from which the marital imagery could have emanated--the familial drama of Hosea and Gomer.

To fully expand the multifarious interpretations and approaches to the marital scenes of chapters one and three is not the intent in this section. Works whose contents provide a basic review of these can be checked readily.

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1 Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 167.
3 Brown, The Book of Hosea, p. 35.
4 Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 152.
The purpose at this point is to set forth this writer's specific suppositions concerning Hosea's domestic scene and show that the points of similarity between his situation and that of Yahweh with Israel provided sufficient grounds for an identification of the two. Having concluded in chapter one that Hosea's marriage was an actual event experienced in heart and home, further conclusions must be established now about that marriage. The exegesis of this dissertation proceeds in light of these determined bounds—the exegesis which in large part has contributed to the adoption of these interpretations. Space allows only for the enumeration of the major criteria behind the choice of the suppositions and a notation of representative scholars who share the view and can provide additional substantiation.

The working postulates are: that Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, a chaste young girl still under the authority of her father, became the wife of Hosea the prophet; that in the course of the marriage Gomer became faithless, and her apostasy was in relation to her own husband; and that Gomer was the unnamed woman in chapter three, which is the logical sequel to chapter one.

Concerning the first proposition—that Gomer was chaste at the time of marriage—Wolfe declared that to see Hosea marrying a prostitute was to ignore all else in the book and base the case on 1:2 which is highly problematic. He translated "wife of harlotry" as "a woman who was to develop ten-
dencies toward harlotry."¹ A harlot she was, Wolfe stated, yet not at the outset but only in looking back.²

W. Robertson Smith wrote that

the struggle of Hosea's affection with the burning sense of shame and grief when he found his wife unfaithful is altogether inconceivable unless his first love had been pure, and full of trust in the purity of its object.³

Veritably, if Hosea had married a woman of known loose character, he had no right to anticipate from her any sudden show of faithfulness.⁴

In chapter one of this dissertation reference was made to the proleptic view of Hosea's marriage. Mauchline called this the most common approach to the marriage.⁵ Prolepis involved the Hebrew manner of declaring an initial action in a line of events as having been intended to produce the result which was its ultimate outcome. In such cases, a literal rendering is misleading and a mistake.⁶ The narratives reporting the calls of Isaiah and Jeremiah provide exemplary material.⁷ H. Wheeler Robinson referred to the act of Jer-

¹Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 82. See Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 111.
²Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 82.
³Smith, Prophets of Israel, p. 181.
⁴Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 150.
⁷Cf. Isa. 6 and Jer. 1.
miah's purchase of the estate at Anathoth to elucidate how the objective deed and the subjective interpretation of it must have blended within the prophetic consciousness. This showed, Robinson continued, that Hosea might regard his wife's infidelity subsequent to marriage as part of the providential order of his life, but also that he might identify his own subsequent interpretation of the infidelity with the marriage-consciousness itself.¹

The proleptic view provides a logical explanation for Hos. 1:2.

If the proleptic view is to be propounded, it should be applied. In 1:2 there is found the recurring qualifier "harlotries" which reflects the subsequent knowledge of an experience "lived" and is not to be identified with the initial stages of action.² When the command "go take (marry)" (1:2a) is retained (which must be unless the command is reduced to a literarily dressed self-confirmation of the prophet)³ minus the qualifying phrases, the original directive of Yahweh (1:2, 3) was probably:

Beginning, the Word of Yahweh to Hosea--Yahweh said unto Hosea, go marry a wife and have children. And he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim and she conceived

²The first three chapters are among the later materials of the book and consequently reflect prophetic reinterpretation. Cf. Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 78; and Paul Haupt, "Hosea's Erring Spouse," Journal of Biblical Literature, XXXIV (1915), 42.
and bore him a son.¹

Therefore, when the Word came to Hosea, he was instructed to marry and have children,² the names of whom would bear messages of rebuke and renunciation to Israel.

Julius Bewer concluded that 1:2b was a late addition to the text, an explanation from the hand of an editor. He contended that this was evident from the difference of person found in 1:2b and the subsequent verses. The Lord spoke in the first person in 1:4, 5, 6, and 9, and the expected statement of 1:2b would be: "For the land commits great harlotry against me." For Bewer, the presence of the third person was foreign to the rest of the passage and indicated a later addition.³ A removal from 1:2 of the problem phrases regarding harlotry allows the verse to become consonant with what appears to be an auspicious beginning of marriage in 1:3ff.⁴

Hosea mentioned his marital story only to provide basis and insight for the analogy with the Yahweh-Israel marriage. If close analogy is to be maintained, there is argument for

¹These remarks and this translation reflect the independently formed supposition of this writer, although this position was found also in Julius A. Bewer, "The Story of Hosea's Marriage," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XXII (January, 1906), 120.

²Cf. Jer. 16:1-2 where the Lord commanded Jeremiah not to marry and have children.

³Bewer, "The Story of Hosea's Marriage," p. 120.

the fact of a pure bride. Hosea referred to the unadulterated, unsyncretistic days of Israel, when her loyalty was real (2:17). Like a delicious, untouched fruit she was found in the wilderness (9:10). Jeremiah, who also made use of the marital figure, had the same testimony (cf. Jer. 2:2, 3).

The word translated "devotion" (RSV) in Jer. 2:2 is יְָהָקְמ, which denoted faithfulness to a relationship. Hosea's phrase, "as the day of her coming out of the land of Egypt" (2:17), seems to refer not only to time but also to state. The statement, "and she shall answer there as in the days of her youth," reflects commitment and response in a day of innocence and stands in utter contrast to the faithlessness of the present.

Thus Eichrodt could say concerning the analogy:

Now the decisive point of this comparison would be lost if Hosea had married a woman already known for her harlotry, whose incapability for a true marriage was clear from the very beginning. In that case it could not be a question of a culpable breach of faith at all. The passionate lament and the burning disappointment, which fill not only Chapters 1-3 but also all the following chapters, would then even seem insincere.¹

The full Hosean story, all of which no doubt contributed to the prophet's thoughts and feelings, is not recounted for the reader.² Therefore, it is impossible to show how closely Gomer and Israel correlated. The establishment of complete correspondence between Gomer and Israel is not necessary. However, it would seem that unless there was mutuality on major points, Hosea would not have used his marriage

¹Ibid. ²Ibid.
as a basis. When the materials of chapters 1-3 are analyzed, common pivotal factors do emerge. Chapters one and three which describe Hosea's conjugal experience indicate a propitious beginning (1:3), later unfaithfulness (3:1), and chastisement from the loving partner with the hope of restoration (3:3). Chapter two which relates the story of the Yahweh-Israel relationship evidences the same major factors as chapters one and three--an auspicious beginning (2:17), later defection (2:2ff.), and chastisement from a partner who loved (2:3, 8, 11, 12-15; and cf. 3:1) with the hope of future restoration (2:16ff.). Instead of maintaining that Gomer only represented the present situation of Israel's unfaithfulness, Hosea, who was interested in the whole history of Israel from past to future, recognized in Gomer all the basic points of identification.

Due to this correlation on significant details, one wonders just how much of the unwritten story of Gomer and Hosea might be embedded in the Yahweh-Israel narrative. Is an indirect reconstruction of the human marriage possible from the "deeper story"? Eichrodt believed that factors of chapter two did instruct concerning the Hosean marriage. He indicated that a marriage broken through unfaithfulness by the wife (2:5, 7), dissolved by divorce (2:2ff., 4, 7; 3:1), a divorced woman made again a wife by the payment of a dower,

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1Hosea spoke of the return of Israel but did not specifically make reference to Gomer's. See infra, p. 186 and n. 5 on that page.
etc., not only told of the divine marriage but also the human one. Similarly, Gottwald maintained that sections of chapter two help indirectly to reason backwards from Hosea's religious analogy to the domestic experience. That Hosea's nuptial imagery functioned in a role of dual portrayal is entirely plausible.

Moving to the second supposition concerning Gomer's apostasy, the text indicates her involvement in literal prostitution which disrupted her marriage with Hosea. If Hosea and Gomer in their relationship reflected Israel's breach of faith with Yahweh, then the wife had to act toward Hosea—not toward Yahweh—as Israel acted toward Yahweh. In chapter three, to represent Israel's turning toward gods other than Yahweh, the woman did not do likewise but manifested faithlessness by turning to other men. Again, corresponding to Israel's period of restriction when the instruments of defection and pagan worship were banned, the woman was barred from intercourse with other men. To view Gomer as a sacred harlot attached to a shrine would be to ignore this clear parallelism. Her unfaithfulness would have been consequently to Yahweh, not her husband. If that were the case, it would

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1 Eichrodt, "The Holy One," p. 260. Cf. Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, pp. 79, 85, who believed that chapter two also reflected the final appeal to Gomer and 9:15 her expulsion from the home.

2 Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 294.


4 Ibid.
be difficult to understand how idolatry could be a symbol of idolatry or the marriage with an idolatress reflective of a like marriage.\(^1\)

The descriptive language found with Gomer also indicates actual prostitution. In 3:3 she was not allowed to "play the harlot," a phrase linked with the statement, "or belong to another man." The root ณלת found here signified fornication generally and adultery in the strict sense.\(^2\)

The root was also employed figuratively to designate idolatry, but this was used basically with the people worshiping strange gods. The term in 3:1 denoting Gomer's character is ณהתל, translated "an adulteress"--a term indicating fornication when applied to the individual.\(^3\) Apart from the plural abstraction in 1:2 the text is clear as to the nature and sin of Gomer.

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\(^3\) Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 525a; and Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 610b. Smith made a distinction between the normal word for sacred harlot and the word for harlot which appears in Hos. 1-3. Since Hosea knew the former (4:14), Smith believed that Hosea would have used it in 1-3 if he had intended to describe Gomer as a sacred harlot; Billy P. Smith, "Relation of Gomer in Hosea 1 to the Woman in Hosea 3" (unpublished Th.D dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1955), pp. 52ff.
To be reckoned with also was the position of the sacred harlots in ancient societies. From the days of Hammurabi to the Romans, this type of individual was a bona fide citizen to which no stigma was attached. That a sacred prostitute, respected by the religious community, could bring the impact of sin home to a majority of the Israelite populace is to be questioned.

Finally, regarding the postulates that Gomer was the woman of chapter three and that chapter was the proper sequel to chapter one, it is necessary only to say that these theses are sufficiently supported by a host of scholars. Not to hold these views would distort the analogy beyond recognition.

The preceding exposition has set forth tenets reflected in the further exegetical work of this paper. It also has manifested the congruity of the divine and human marriages of chapters 1-3. It would not have been difficult for Hosea to have come to a realization of the true parallelism of these situations. Through the prophetic exploration of the meaning

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of his conjugal predicament coupled with the workings of the prophetic consciousness, he would have found it appropriate and convenient to transfer the features of the earthly marriage to that of the divine one. Here lies a most credible source for the prophet's marriage imagery.

Summary and Conclusion

Thus far in chapter two multiple areas have been isolated which could have contributed to the total background of nuptial imagery. Among the array are factors, events, and concepts which either furnished the source of the imagery, contained aspects which enabled or facilitated the imagery's use, or provided content material to the nuptial framework. After the discussion of subjects like kindred thought and religious situation, it becomes evident how Hosea's hearers could respond favorably to the figure and why its appropriation was so relevant. That a splendid backdrop existed for Hosea's usage is certain. In his "situation," more so than at any time before or after him, a host of factors existed that created the atmosphere for nuptial imagery.

Any attempt to extract one of these various elements and label it as the source or catalyst of the nuptial figure is difficult. To determine the source unequivocally is impossible. However, it does appear that in light of the investigation, one area appears more creditable than the others. From the prior discussion, the cultic structure and the familial drama emerged as the most likely sources. The con-
including remarks that follow are made with regard to these two points.

It is possible that Hosea adopted the Canaanite conception of the sacred marriage, purging it of materialistic and sensual associations and refilling it with his view of the nature of religion. If he had done so, however, he would have ignored the most impressional and most conspicuous source at hand. Indeed it would have been illogical for Hosea in light of his powerful experience and prophetic insight to adopt from the Baal cult, which he so greatly abhorred, a form needing radical reworking. Eichrodt declared that such a transfer of the Canaanite hieros gamos to the covenant would explain God's relationship to Israel from a rational construction, through which the prophet by an ingenious trick embodied the opposing cult in Yahwism in order to break the power of the nature religion. This, he concluded, was contrary to the prophetic role, for these men were not thinkers of genius but visionaries experiencing divine reality—an irrational origin.  

Even if Hosea utilized the Canaanite vessel, whence came the spiritual insights that infused it? The prophet could not have gotten the form and spiritual insights from the Canaanite cultus alone, but he could have found both


through his marriage!

Cognizance should be taken also of the fact that Hosea attributed the source of the nuptial imagery to Yahweh with whom he had communion during the marital experience. The prophet testified in 3:1: "Yahweh said unto me, yet go love a woman . . . as Yahweh loves the children of Israel." The connection is made again in 3:3, 4: "Many days you will dwell to me . . . . For many days the children of Israel will dwell . . . ."

It is therefore concluded that the primary source behind the nuptial figure was Hosea's personal experience with Gomer and God. G. E. Wright was inclined in this same direction. He wrote:

In spite of attempts to the contrary no definite Canaanite background can be found for this unusual conception, and its introduction may still best be explained as due to some peculiar marital . . . . experience of Hosea.¹

The relationship, moreover, of the prophet's message to the Canaanite cultus was not accommodative but polemical. A spiritual message which declared that God would cut off a morally unfaithful people, i.e., dissolve the marriage;² which spoke of a love that continued after the people were


cut off, i.e., a love that could exist without reciprocity; which characterized the wife as a mundane prostitute; which described an ethical love purged of all physical passion that would hold its object to the strictest accountability; and which referred to a marriage in history rather than myth, in linear time and not cyclical time, to a people and not a goddess, abrogated the theology of Baalism and left it debilitated.

Nuptial Imagery Engendered by Hosea's Perspicacity

An investigation of nuptial imagery in the Old Testament establishes the unique contribution Hosea made and clarifies his relationship with other Old Testament writers and vocabulary. Research evinces that prior to this prophet the concept he employed was absent in the Old Testament. Hosea was not the first to speak of a divine marriage for its presence had been manifested in pagan cultures earlier than the eighth century B.C. Nevertheless, he was the first to use the marriage symbol to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The marital interpretation of the covenant with its spiritualized and ethical form initiates

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2 Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 11.
4 Cf. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 299.
with him.  

Robinson called Hosea the begetter of this whole line of thought.  

Influenced Biblical Material

Prophetic writings

Marital imagery was utilized by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah who clearly date later than Hosea. The eighth-century prophet's influence was exhibited in these books of his successors who obviously borrowed from him. With Hosea there was the inception of a line of discovery reaching down through Jeremiah and Ezekiel and extending to the New Testament.

Poetic writings

Due to the character of material in the Song of Songs an inquiry is necessitated to see if that book sustains any significant relationship to the Book of Hosea. Although attempts in specifically dating the Song of Songs have proved unsuccessful, the majority of scholarship regards the book in its extant form as late. There is a possibility that

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2 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
4 Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 52.
two of the songs (3:6-11; 6:4) may date much earlier. However, if any of the book's content dated before Hosea, its influence on him would have been no more than that of a love song or some selection from pagan mythology.\(^1\) The book has a complete absence of God, and its subject matter does not approach the nuptial thought found in the Book of Hosea. If influence were exerted, it was Hosea on the Song of Songs. The allegorical interpretation applied to the latter after the first century A.D. clearly smacked of Hosea and his imagery.

Concerning the similarity of Hos. 14:6-9\(^2\) and Song. 2:1, 3; 4:11; 6:11, Harper was probably correct when he said:

But a careful comparison of the passages will shew that more probably there is no nearer resemblance between them than would naturally arise where the same things are described, and where there may easily have been a traditional mode of describing such things, upon which the authors of both books may have formed their style.\(^3\)

\section*{Induced Nuptial Corollaries}

\textbf{Harlotry}\(^4\)

The words "harlotry," "harlotries," "to go a whoring," "play the harlot," etc., used in a spiritual sense do not clearly describe nuptial imagery but presuppose it. As spiri-

\(^1\) Cf. Theophile James Meek, "Canticles and the Tammuz Cult," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XXXIX (October, 1922), 2ff.

\(^2\) This passage itself presents a dating problem.

\(^3\) Harper, The Song of Solomon, p. xxiv.

\(^4\) This category is comprised of verbs, verbals, and plural nouns.
tual metaphors deduced from the nuptial imagery describing the Yahweh-Israel relationship, it must be determined if they are an original part of the old covenant tradition or find dependence on Hosea.

In the Pentateuchal materials the use of words with the root נַעֲרָה most often apply to specific violations of persons. By contrast with Hosea the terms have become a general figure descriptive of the whole covenant people. Brueggemann believed that the spiritual usage of harlotry was grounded in the old tradition, although he stated that it certainly was not the primary imagery. However, it is gleaned from an examination of the Hebrew text that this corollary of nuptial imagery was original with the Prophet Hosea.

As a spiritual metaphor indicating defection from Yahweh for other gods, there are sixteen usages by Hosea and some forty-five after him. There are, in addition, fifteen usages in the Pentateuch, three in the Former Prophets, and two in the Psalter which must be examined to see if any precede Hosea. The biblical references are handled in canonical order: Exod. 34:15, 16; Lev. 17:7; 19:29; 20:5, 6; Num.

1Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 51.
2He believed Exod. 34:14-16 to be the oldest of the legal formulations with the term "harlot"; ibid.
Exod. 34:15, 16 has been dated later than Hosea by many critical scholars. J. Philip Hyatt ascribed this passage to $R^D$ which was his symbol for a Deuteronomistic redactor living in the middle of the sixth century B.C. prior to $P$. The verses were assigned by Driver to $R^JE$ living in the early part of the seventh century B.C. who made slight additions of his own of a hortatory or didactic character. McNeile accredited the authorship of these additions to $R^D$ (600-550 B.C.). Brevard Childs summarized:

> Literary critics have long observed that vv. 11-16 appear to reflect a later literary expansion which has been strongly influenced by Deuteronomy.

The Levitical selections are all found within the Holiness Code and are usually dated later than Hosea. Noth fixed the date of the Code to the period between the later

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days and end of the pre-exilic cultus and its new development in the post-exilic Jerusalem sanctuary.¹

Attempts at dating the passages in the Book of Numbers have created a mixture of opinions. Verses 14:33; 15:39; and 25:1 were assigned by Elliott Binns to P, H, and JE respectively,² while Driver attributed the same to JE, P, and JE.³ Eissfeldt listed chapter fourteen under the materials of P (with later additions), chapter fifteen also under P, and 25:1-5 under L's material (with later additions).⁴ Of these possibilities only L would be considered earlier than Hosea, but Eissfeldt allowed for later additions within these five verses.⁵

Concerning the phrase "playing the harlot" in Deut. 31:16, G. E. Wright said:

In vs. 16 the allusion to idolatry as playing the harlot certainly suggests a date after the time of Hosea, who seems to have been the first to introduce the marriage

⁵It is difficult to understand why Eissfeldt, who assigned the harlotry passages in chapters fourteen and fifteen to a post-exilic date and found later additions in 25:1-5, stated with regard to L that it appeared before Hosea and reflected no trace of that prophet's work; ibid., p. 198.
terminology into Israel's vocabulary as a means of depicting the covenant relation. ¹

John Gray believed the Book of Judges to be part of the Deuteronomistic compilation from the end of the monarchy with a post-exilic redaction from the same circles. He assigned Judg. 2:17 to the later redactor and 8:27b and 8:33 to the Deuteronomistic editor.² Moore saw a Hosean influence reflected in these verses and remarked:

It is very common in the literature of the 7th century, and probably originated with Hosea, whose own bitter experience with his adulterous wife became for him the type of the relations of Yahweh and Israel.³

An analysis of the verses in the Psalter produces a like conclusion. Psalm 73 presents difficulty in an exact dating, but most scholars favor a post-exilic origin.⁴ The composition of Psalm 106 was obviously later than Hosea, for the psalm presupposes the Babylonian captivity and the res-


Although some of these fifteen verses pertain to events that occurred prior to Hosea's ministry, they have been expressed in terms of a later vocabulary. It is significant that sixty-one references to spiritual harlotry clearly dated from the time of Hosea and after, and the few instances that could have antedated him do not according to critical analysis. Hence, it must be concluded that no certain use of harlotry as false worship is attested before Hosea. From his time, no doubt, this particular use of harlotry was introduced into religious language and became a customary manner of expressing defection from Yahweh.  

Lovers

Not only did this specific usage of harlotry become coined with Hosea but likewise the word "lovers." It appears as a Piel participle in the text and is used only in the Books of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.  


3Hos. 2:7, 9, 12, 14, 15; Jer. 22:20, 22; 30:14; Ezek. 16:33, 36, 37; 23:5, 9, 22. These references were found through the use of Lisowsky, Konkordanz, p. 742. See Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 16a, who described this term as a lover in the bad sense which is always used metaphorically of idolaters.
Adultery

The term "adultery" applied predominantly to the sinful physical act committed by an individual. However, those limited references where it stands in conjunction with the covenant people as a spiritual failure again are found in the Books of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.¹

Virgin, daughter, and harlot

It is noteworthy that the appellations of "virgin"² and "daughter"³ for corporate Israel and Judah come after Hosea.⁴ Similarly, the expressions of "harlot" applied collectively to a city are found in passages that probably in all cases would postdate Hosea's prophetic ministry.⁵

¹Hos. 2:4; Jer. 13:27; Ezek. 23:43. These references were located through the use of Lisowsky, Konkordanz, p. 888.
²See Lisowsky, Konkordanz, p. 297.
³Ibid., pp. 292-96.
⁴The exception is Amos 5:2. Because of Israel's condition of being unspoiled by total foreign domination prior to this time and because of the treatment of captured virgins in war, this statement came very naturally. It does not take away from Hosea's definite influence.
⁵Is. 1:21; 23:15, 16; Ezek. 16:31, 35; Mic. 1:7; Nah. 3:4. Dates ranging from 701 B.C. to a time after Alexander the Great have been assigned to Isa. 23:15, 16; cf. Weiser, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 191; and Driver, Introduction, p. 218. Because of the absence of any concrete historical allusions, the date of Isa. 1:21 cannot be exactly pinpointed; cf. Weiser, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 187; and Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, p. 309. However, in view of the evidence, it would be more likely that it followed rather than preceded Hosea.
Hosea's impact on the biblical vocabulary and manner of speaking can hardly be questioned. His distinctive way of addressing the sin of his day and representing Israel as a feminine individual was borrowed and utilized by later individuals.
III. BASIS OF THE NUPTIAL EXPERIENCE:
HOSEA'S PROPHETIC PERCEPTION

Behind the Hosean oracles of both weal and woe stands the Divine-nation relationship solemnized after the Exodus event. It was within that context that sin was denounced, that the prerogative of God's judgment was announced, and that any picture of futuristic hope was credible. It was the covenant that Hosea likened to and interpreted as marriage, for he recognized that the structure, basis, and demands of each were identifiable. Their contractual nature made transition from one to the other easier,

but it needed the shattering experience of the prophet, whose whole being was committed to Yahweh's service, to make the marriage-bond the supreme demonstration of God's attitude to Israel.¹

As the nature of the Yahweh-Israel relationship dawned in the prophet's spiritual perception, Hosea, for his illustrative material, reached into the stream of covenant history, which now reflected for him a continuing marriage relationship. Functioning as the last prophetic spokesman to Israel before her demise, he utilized his insights to portray Israel's situation as vividly as possible. He preached in a way that could have caused Israel to come to grips with what she was,


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rediscover her special role that had passed out of her soul, and recognize the atrocity of her sin and the shame of her eroded faithfulness. The Sinai covenant and the ensuing relationship for him became a marriage significantly paralleling his domestic experience. With that revelation he delivered his distinctive message, and on the basis of this received truth his prophetic intuitional functioning determined matters of the Yahweh-Israel marriage in large part according to the highest of the God-given human institution. Neher averred:

If the prophets see a marriage in the union of God and Israel, no false shame can prevent them from describing that union through whatever constitutes a marriage.¹ The basis of the covenant was comparable to that of a marriage with all that it entailed. The Yahweh-Israel bond could be more than adequately expressed maritally.

Accommodation of Covenant Tradition to Marriage

In Yahwism the covenant was connected with an intervention by Yahweh, and for Hosea that intervention resulted in a marriage.² Viewing Sinai and after as a wedlock, he packaged his message in marital verbiage which could come across in true relevance and comprehensibility. Through this imagery there was palpably suggested to the Hebrew mind the otherwise veiled relation of Yahweh-Israel.

¹ Neher, The Prophetic Existence, p. 278, n. 2.  
² Ostborn, Yahweh and Baal, p. 92.
Hosea's concept of נַעַר as a marriage is evidenced from his prophetic materials as a whole.\(^1\) Specific instances, however, from the text clarify this interplay of ideas.

It is evident that the prophet considered the covenant\(^2\) a conjugal relationship, because the remarriage of Yahweh and Israel would be the restoration of the covenant (2:18ff.)--a bond similar but superior to the one commenced in the "days of youth" (2:17). In that new day Yahweh would betroth Israel (2:21, 22), and His clarified appellative would be נִשְׂפָּת ("my Husband") (2:18). This new alliance would cause a reversal of the negatively expressed covenant-based phrase, "not my people" (1:9; 2:25) to the positive statement, "you are my people" (2:25). Hosea repeatedly described the fracture of the first relationship in nuptial terms. When Israel broke the covenant (6:7; 8:1) and its law (4:1ff.), she ruptured a marriage, committing adultery\(^3\) (2:4) and harlotry (2:7, etc.). Her apostasy was manifested in the pursuing of false lovers (2:7, 9, 14, 15; 8:9). Such indecent behavior eventually led to the pronouncement of the terminating statement, "She is not


\(^2\)G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 129, noted that covenant may designate the agreement itself and the resulting relationship between the partners. Hosea seemed to have both in mind but stressed the latter.

\(^3\)Adultery could occur only in the case of a married individual.
my wife" (2:4). Following the disciplining of her ways, Is­
rael perceived that her situation had been far better with 
her "first husband" (2:9).

The marital terms and concepts are used interchangeably 
with those of covenant. Since the covenant could be accommo­
dated facilely to the nature of marriage, Hosea found in con­
nubialism that which communicated appropriately and was poi­
gantly applicable.

Appropriateness of the Imagery

Fensham believed that of all the terminology used for 
covenant the concepts "which give expression to relationship 
between the partners, are to be regarded as the most impor­
tant."¹ Hosea found a more appropriate figure in marriage 
than normal covenantal language because of the limited nature 
of the latter and the possibilities for misconception that it 
carried in his day.

Eichrodt opined:

The concept of covenant never proved adequate to the 
outpouring of the riches of their vision of God. In a 
one-sided portrayal of Yahweh as the founder of the 
covenant the idea of God could easily become inflexible. 
To this tendency the naturalistic ideas of God's rela­
tionship to men provide an indispensable corrective, 
without which the picture of God would become impov­
erished. . . . If the idea of the establishing of the 
covenant especially illuminates God's truth and faith­
fulness, yet the imagery of the Father, the Husband, 
. . . . enable us to understand a little better his good-

¹F. Charles Fensham, "Father and Son as Terminology 
of William Foxwell Albright, ed. by Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: 
ness, long-suffering and love.¹

For Eichrodt the image of Husband correctly characterized the essential disposition of Yahweh.² Connoted was a warmth, a fellowship of personal love, and the fidelity of Yahweh which elicited heart response.³

The term נִיחָל failed to communicate the primacy of Yahweh's graciousness and salvatory acts and had become instead something legal and external.⁴ It suggested a fixed once-for-all relationship rather than the vitally personal quality of the union.⁵ Attention had shifted from the Giver to the ordinances,⁶ and the essence of covenant had become a commercial arrangement⁷ no longer prompting intimate communion with Yahweh. Eichrodt contended that a fellowship which would continue to be upheld by God though the object was a harlot, clearly demonstrated the inadequacy of all legal categories to express the relationship.⁸ The nuptial figure intimated a deep, ingrained bond maintained by

²Ibid., p. 68.
⁴Ibid.
⁷Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I, 47.
⁸Ibid., p. 252.
all the intensity, all the passion, all the delicacy, and all the refinement of feeling that manifests itself in the marriage relation in its highest and purest form.1

Here was the concept of an ethical union based on love and moral obligation that was not abrogated at the first violation as a legal contract.2

For Hosea to have appropriated such a figure for the covenant, presupposed some awareness of the intent and concept of true marriage.3 His manner of picturing the "deeper story" testified to the high value he placed on the marriage institution.4 Not only could the highest of human matrimony illuminate Yahweh's relationship with Israel, but because of the association of marriage with Yahweh, the human institution itself was enhanced. Instead of a legalistic, carnal relationship where the wife was dominated by her as a possession, a tenderness, a sacredness, and an atmosphere of fidelity and righteousness was lifted up for the homes of Israel.5

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1Knudson, Religious Teaching, p. 181.
3A grim picture of marriage existed in Hosea's day (cf. 4:13ff.), but the flagrant abuse did not negate the knowledge of what was proper. Because the enunciation of this textual passage indicates what was contrary to the proper marital scene, evidently a true concept existed.
4Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I, 82.
Besides the nuptial figure, Hosea employed other descriptive language, but none challenged the former in its ability to plumb emotional depth, in its frequency of appearance, nor in its capability of multifarious extension. The ruler-servant motif which G. E. Wright found dominant in the Old Testament was passed over by Hosea in light of a more expressive and timely image. The ruler-servant imagery did not contribute the warm, intimate, and personal quality of relationship as did marriage. An inward belonging that evoked willing obedience went beyond the mere demand of a ruler's requirements. Yahweh was not a detached Sovereign but a sensitive Consort. The ruler-servant idea emphasized the justice of God, but Hosea needed a figure that would focus upon the forgiving and loving spirit, which he had detected in Yahweh's person.

In comparison to the Husband image the next most important figure in the Book of Hosea is that of Father (11:1 ff.). Although this familial term carried the idea of tenderness, affection, and love, the possibilities inherent within it were not as great as with the husband-wife imagery. This fact is readily recognized by the disproportionate use Hosea made of the two. Davidson correctly called the Husband idea more fertile.

1Cf. Smith, Prophets of Israel, p. 167.
While the father-son analogy suggested respect and
dependence, the husband-wife analogy better purported the
idea of self-surrender—the spiritual and moral homage Is­
rael owed to her gracious, Divine benefactor. The idea of
ture reciprocity also was communicated more effectively in
marriage terminology. Israel had come of age, and now as a
young maiden was awakened to love and its response. She
was confronted by One ready to love her and give her "status,
home, comfort and care." The father-son image sufficed un­
til the commitment at Sinai and the fuller revelation of
Yahweh's love—the fullness of which would be revealed even
more so in the subsequent display of His faithfulness con­
trasted with Israel's unfaithfulness. The free choice she
made in the desert could only be expressed through the nup­
tial figure, for a son has no option as to his father. Fur­
ther, a son has only one father. Though he rebels and for­
sakes his father, a son still has the one and same father.
However, Israel could have more than one husband. She could
forsake Yahweh and their marriage and willfully vow her al­
legiance to another. These and many other reasons vouch for
the expressiveness and multiple possibilities that Hosea
would have found in nuptial imagery more than his other fa­

1Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 154. The word
יִנָּה ("child") in chapter eleven denotes the time of Israel's
beginnings and her helplessness at that stage; Wolff, Hosea,
p. 197.

2Elmslie, How Came Our Faith, p. 272.

3Knight, A Christian Theology, p. 183.
milial representation.

It is beyond the bounds of this dissertation to trace the origin of the father-son imagery or expand upon its usage in the Book of Hosea. It is sufficient to say that it supplemented the marriage imagery by effectively communicating the care of God prior to the nation's nuptial event.

The marital figure and its ramifications mark the pages of the Book of Hosea for nine chapters. Therefore, their conspicuous absence in chapters 10-14 is readily detected. Because Hosea found the figure so appropriate in 1-9, one wonders why it has been omitted in 10-14. A check of this last material may provide explication.

In contrast to the final unit of chapter nine, Hos. 10:1-8 begins a new unit with a new subject--"Israel." In the first verse Hosea has shifted to the symbol of the vine, for it was a very natural means by which to emphasize Israel's prosperity in the days of Jeroboam II. Also, the marital imagery, so often employed, was basically the mode of addressing corporate Israel. In this first section of chapter ten the audience might have been more restricted, making the nuptial imagery not as fitting. Wolff noted that Yahweh did not speak here in the first person as in the immediately preceding material, and the familiar audience, Israel, was referred to in the third person. He concluded that this speech was delivered before the prophet's inner circle

\[1\text{Wolff, Hosea, p. 171.}\]
rather than Israel.¹

The next section (vss. 9-13a) is one of the prophet's historical retrospections. Although verses 9-10 have been separated from verses 11-13a,² the ג attached to כַּלְכֵלֶךָ (vs. 11) in the Masoretic text implies their connection. The figure of the heifer in this unit painted in self-evident, agricultural terms what Israel's service was to have been in the land of settlement. As above, the marital imagery has not been forgotten necessarily; but in depicting such things as the nation's prosperity and task, Hosea simply utilized the very obvious and apt figures for these features. In the concluding section (vss. 13b-15), again an audience other than Israel is suggested. From its content of confrontation, fortresses, warfare, etc., Hosea more than likely was ac-costing the political leaders.³

Chapters eleven and twelve both are devoid of the nuptial trope, for they in the most part reflect a period of history prior to the post-Exodus wedlock. Chapter eleven is concerned with the יִמְנָו days of the people⁴ and chapter twelve

¹Ibid., p. 172.
³Wolff, Hosea, pp. 138-183.
⁴Although some of the verses deal with future destruction, the chapter's contents revolve around the father-son theme. Hos. 11:10-12:1 may be oracular material later than the eighth-century prophet; Henry McKeating, The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible, ed. by Peter Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, and J. W. Packer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 140.
with various epochs in the life of the Patriarch Jacob.

Chapter thirteen, a recitation covering the days of Ephraim from its tribal past to the present situation, was a late oration by the prophet. G. A. Smith called it Hosea's latest, and entitled it, "The Last Judgment." The declaration probably came around 725 B.C. when the fate of King Hoshea was sealed. Wolff commented that verses ten and eleven were understandable only if Hoshea had been imprisoned by the forces of Assyria. In this chapter the certain and imminent doom of the Northern Kingdom is asserted. Hosea has suspended use of the marital terminology in presenting the grim, dark realism which was ahead for Israel. His nuptial figure had been employed in an attempt to ultimately convict. However, the period of respite was over, and Hosea announced the coming pangs of judgment. The prophet used appropriate language to stress two things--the ephemeral, soon-to-pass Israel[mist, dew, chaff, smoke (vs. 3), and reed (vs. 15)]; and the rapacious, rending God [a lion, leopard,

1 Hos. 13:16 is 14:1 in the MT.
4 Wolff, Hosea, p. 224.
5 "You know no God but me" or "You will know no God but me" (13:4) indicates that the fact of the marriage was still in the mind of Hosea.
bear (vs. 7)].

Finally, chapter fourteen basically is free of marital language. The absence may be explained by a change of authors. The Hosean authorship of the entire chapter or passages in it has been highly contested. Knight wrote:

The present form in which this whole chapter has survived may be that of a liturgy used in later years to teach Israel the truths of God which Hosea had proclaimed.  

Whether original with Hosea or not, the purport of this section is to forecast healing and rejuvenation for a razed land and bruised people—a situation directly contrasted to chapter thirteen. Thus, the expressions here are quite befitting.

An abundant sprinkling of figurative language is found in the Book of Hosea. However, for the prophet's message as a whole, the nuptial figure was most frequently employed and most often suitable. The imagery was not ubiquitous; however, where it was omitted the reasons are fairly obvious. Hosea never forced his message into a marital mold but used it where appropriate as a natural vehicle to enlighten and enrich.

Applicability of the Imagery

Nuptial imagery was strikingly applicable to the covenantal concept. The enumeration here whether emphasizing an aspect of covenant or a feature of marriage is to be understood...

1The statement, "I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely" (14:5), may be reminiscent of the marriage experience.

2Knight, Hosea, p. 123.
stood as presenting the interchangeableness of the factors.

It was in man's most profound and revealing relations that Hosea found his covenantal analogy. The religious bond in which Israel was involved maintained identity with the conjugal relationship even in its basic structure--the suzerain-vassal pattern. That form of treaty-making left the sovereign free to enter the covenant, and when his committal was given, the subsequent relation provided opportunity for demonstration of his faithfulness. Yahweh in absolute freedom took the initiating step toward Israel, rendering her the same atmosphere of freedom in which to respond. The woman (Israel) was acted upon rather than inaugurating the action. As in marriage the impulse came from one party, resolve from the other. The recipient, however, did not remain passive. As Rebekah said, "I will go" (Gen. 24:59), Israel replied, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exod. 19:8). Hosea had the latter in mind when he re-

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3O[tto] J. Baab, "Marriage," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 1st ed., III, 280. Yahweh's initiating action stood in strong contrast to the passive gods that Israel "went after." Contrary to the feminine role in nuptial relations, she made the first move toward the lovers.


5Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, p. 69, n. 1.
marked, "And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth" (Hos. 2:17). The relationship did not consist of equal partners, but it still was two-sided.¹

Snaith in pointing out important ideas that rose out of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel mentioned one which would parallel a factor of Hebrew marriage. The covenant clearly demonstrated that Yahweh, the Groom, had existed without the bride. Since that was the case, He could do so again, for if He had chosen her He could also reject her.² Its identity with Hebrew conjugality was as strong as its dissimilarity with pagan, mythical marriage.

Marriage at its deepest level was a covenant, a tie based on commitment, trust, and loyalty.³ Israel was enheartened to enter such a bond because of the preliminary exhibition of the trust-evoking action of Yahweh. As George Mendenhall set forth: "The vassal is exchanging future obedience to specific commands for past benefits which he received without any real right."⁴ This was the case with Israel in her marriageable entrustment to Yahweh. The act of salvation and the demonstration of love preluded the conjoining step.

¹Ibid., p. 69.
⁴Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," p. 33.
The covenant attempted to stabilize and guarantee the gracious relationship Yahweh offered Israel. It was inclusive, ideal, and as binding as any conjugal tie between a man and a woman. It was a lover's troth wherein each had taken the other to itself. The potential for total union of the pair in every dimension of life strengthened Hosea's analogy. Eichrodt thus opined that Hosea could describe the right relationship with God from the human side as the manifestation in practice of the direct sense of inward mutual belonging, an awareness which dominates the whole being, and drives it far beyond all those requirements of duty which arise from rational reflection, into unreserved surrender.

Here was a genuine sharing of life which demanded a constant and conscious condition of the parties' life if the relationship were to remain in force.

The Hosean analogy granted the fullest significance to love. Yahweh's love was strong and intimate like a husband's. As a man He had wanted a partner with whom to share

1Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 19.
5Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 299.
7Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, p. 121.
His deepest and best. By baring His soul in condescending disclosure, He led His wife into the secrets of His nature and will. The Israel who had heard the revelatory "I am Yahweh" now had open access to the "knowledge of God." The prophet was able to accomplish through his message a tempering of the harsher features of Yahwism without compromising at any point the moral demands of God.

Marriage was a divinely planned relationship that was to be pure, personal, and permanent. Not one of these criteria would be contrary to the nature of the covenant. Again, the felicitousness, harmoniousness, and productiveness of marriage were to be equally present in the covenant. Neither bond was concluded in a ceremony but from that point unrolled into a continuing relation.

Within the relationship the wife was a recipient of protection, security, and fertility from her husband. The divine power and care manifested around the Exodus were proffered to Israel on a permanent basis. The protection itself was occasional, for it was not always needed; the property, growth, and prosperity were to be constant. The land of

2 Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 305.
4 Ibid., p. 36.
5 " Kohler, Old Testament Theology, p. 72.
Canaan became the bower of the bride where Yahweh lived and cared for His chosen. To her He had given various institutions through which the divine ends were to be achieved. From these came her solidarity and continuity of life. As the continuance and health of society depended upon the protected institution of marriage, Israel existed and continued to live only in the context of the covenant.

The wife, in return, rendered undivided loyalty, service, and obedience. It was through her obedience that basically her love was shown. Thus, Hosea could weave together themes of love and judgment and convey both via the marital analogy. With the vows of Sinai Yahweh had laid claim to Israel's service. She had been chosen to be instructed and once taught to school the nations in the ways of Yahweh. Like a good wife she was to build up the family of her husband. She was to maintain and enlarge the people of Yahweh.

Surrounding the sacred union of marriage and covenant was a protective fence of law. Demands and graciousness existed in these forms of communion side by side. Israel was entitled to claim the promises of her God and enjoy all the positives of wedlock, but adjunct demands were addressed to

3Welch, *Kings and Prophets of Israel*, p. 155.

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her. The behests protected the bond and functioned to insure the exclusive nature of the relationship. Östborn wrote that a state of good order resulted from the covenant and its accompanying law. He continued:

Between such an order and that of the marriage between Yahweh and Israel there is yet no real difference. For this reason, Hosea had no difficulty in describing the relationship between Yahweh and His people as a marriage.

Hosea not only deepened and intensified religion but also narrowed it. Both the covenant and marriage ruled out the third party. Each mate was to view their opposite as special and different from all others. Israel was the only maiden for Yahweh; she was His "peculiar possession." Correspondingly, she was the only wife, returning loyalty to her one Husband. Monogamy and monotheism interplay here—both indicating restrictedness. Israel's self-surrender to one God approached monotheism, while the marriage-covenant gave "unconditional and compelling character to the requirement of monogamy."

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2 Östborn, *Yahweh and Baal*, p. 92.


affirmation of the covenant, of the free electing grace of God, it is impossible to accept a fickle eroticism or polygam- 1

ity. Israel was to call only upon Yahweh to whom she be-

longed and confine herself exclusively to His service. 2

Associated with this exclusiveness was divine jealousy. Yahweh's zealousness for the loyalty of Israel's worship in the Book of Exodus was in the Book of Hosea a refusal to share His wife with another. 3

3 No rival or act of infidelity was tolerated. Yahweh's jealousy was an expression of His desire to preserve the marriage 4 and maintain the well-being of His wife. 5 Neher described divine jealousy as

the zeal by which God is animated when Israel becomes unfaithful to Him. Like a husband who is alerted by the first signs of infidelity, God watches jealously over his wife and tries to prevent future acts of betrayal. 6

Israel's election and position could continue as long as she desired, for she had been free to enter the covenant and was free to exit. No right of termination was included in the relationship, but Israel from her side could end it. As in

1Ibid., p. 21.

2Köhler, Old Testament Theology, p. 66.

3R. Alan Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. by D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 153, believed that "before me" in Exod. 20:3 also was used for taking another mate while the first was still alive.

4Ostborn, Yahweh and Baal, pp. 31-32.

5See Ringgren, Israelite Religion, p. 76.

any marriage, the covenant could be disrupted by the actions of the wife. In that case, Yahweh would not hold her, for loyalty could not be compelled. The marriage analogy beautifully revealed the strength of the covenant, because Yahweh's longsuffering, Husband love had been at work for years in the face of infidelity. Yet, blatant and continuous unfaithfulness forced the couple into a courtroom encounter where Yahweh declared His "" and pronounced the relationship ended.

Appearance of Marital Customs in the Covenant

It is valid to assume that Hosea in depicting the Yahweh-Israel relationship as marriage would invest it with nuptial concepts and customs present in his day. It would be only natural for the prophet in his description to be guided in part by what he knew about marriage. The previous section has surveyed the parallelism between covenant and marriage—a parallelism that Hosea recognized due to his keen insight into the nature of each. In the following discussion various marital customs, which can be isolated in the Hosean material, are reviewed.

Admonition about the Procedure

Although the Bible is preoccupied with the theological-religious rather than the sociological phenomena of mar-

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riage, the latter is woven into the material; and through proper study and with the aid of extra-biblical literature, a fair picture of marital criteria can be gleaned. The objective is to identify rather than to force marital customs upon the text. This approach could produce an illuminating effect upon the passages dealing with the "deeper story."

It is obvious that some deviations from the norm might exist when one partner is God. Therefore, where a custom is noted in connection with the Divine-human bond, it does not follow necessarily that every aspect completely corresponds to the regular nuptial situation.

Appreciation for the Procedure

Van Selms in his book concerning Ugaritic marriage employed the method of drawing conclusions from epic stories to instruct about human relationships. He remarked that a parallel would be "a comparison between Israel's marriage laws and the similes used by Hosea and Jeremiah in describing JHWH's marriage with Israel." He noted further: "Such a comparison might even influence the translation of certain Biblical passages." With the proper caution, this type of approach can be beneficial and contributory. Ackroyd believed that to see the events as a basic marriage according to customs of the

1Baab, "Marriage," p. 279.
3Ibid., p. 11, n. 18.
time has more to commend it than some far-fetched symbolism. If Hosea in his delineation of the spiritual marriage had not remained fairly aligned with marriage in general, the communicability of his message would have been eclipsed.

After an intense examination of Hebrew marriage, Burrows made this observation:

On the whole the picture presented in all the sources, with due allowance for local and national peculiarities, is that of a fairly homogeneous social order throughout the Semitic world. Because of this fundamental uniformity, appropriation from contiguous nations of extra-biblical materials dealing with marriage is profitable. Marital customs changed very slowly, and the noted similarities existent across a span of centuries minimizes the issue of the dating factor.

Beginning with the preliminary formalities of marriage, the term betrothal is encountered. Betrothal (יָרָק) was the final antenuptial step, leaving only consummation or cohabitation. The period of time existing between betrothal and the conclusion of the marriage varied from an indefinite interval to no apparent interruption. Indeed, in some cases the betrothal appeared to be equivalent to marrying the girl (cf. Deut. 28:30; 2 Sam. 3:14). The bride did not betroth

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1Ackroyd, "Hosea," p. 603.


herself, but the husband-to-be dealt with her father or the head of the house in the betrothal arrangements.\(^1\) The affianceing actually gave the woman the status of wife, and any subsequent violation of her virtue was considered infidelity and severely handled (cf. Deut. 22:23-24).

Hosea was familiar with this nuptial factor, since he used \(בְּהֶלְבֶּשׁ\) three times (2:21, 22). Although the term is found only in the context of the future espousal, for Hosea the act of betrothal would have been understood in the former relationship. The events of the anticipated day were declared in reference to the past marriage (cf. 2:17). The betrothal "forever" (2:21) stood in contrast to the impermanent relationship commenced in the wilderness. Hosea did not deal with the Pre-Mosaic days as such, but his reference to and knowledge of the Jacob tradition (12:1ff.) made it very probable that he would be conscious of the covenant promise handed down through that patriarch. If so, he would have viewed the marriage compact of the wilderness as the fulfillment of a promise of special relationship made to the ancestors of Israel. Yahweh originally had dealt with the fathers of the bride, who later in the days of her youth gave answer to the actual proposal (2:17). In this case the promise of marriage was separated from the marriage itself.

\(^{1}\)Arthur J. Crosmer, "Marriage, a Type of God's Relationship to His People," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVII (May, 1956), 380-81.
The relationship to be initiated "in that day" (2:18) also was anteceded by a betrothal, but one considerably different from the first. From 2:18ff. it is seen that Yahweh negotiates directly with Israel. The head of her house would have been Yahweh to whom she had returned in repentance. Rather than the Groom-God addressing God, He made His proposal to the bride. Baab viewed the betrothal here equivalent to marriage,\(^1\) while de Vaux spoke of a promise of marriage.\(^2\) According to the testimony of the text it appears that Yahweh and Israel entered the marriage itself. The betrothal was made in terms of permanency—righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness—as the term שֵׁדֶד following יִשְׂרָאֵל also indicates. Surely, it was not the antenuptial stage which would last forever but the marriage. The passage ends with the note of consummation—"And you shall know the Lord" (2:22). Marriage and betrothal in this case are merged without hiatus.

Adjoined with the betrothal was the payment of a טָנוּב which was most likely the oldest element of the nuptial institution.\(^3\) That שֵׁדֶד suggested payment is seen in its cog-

\(^1\) Baab, "Marriage," p. 284.


nates—Arabic 'ars, "a fine," and the Assyrian mirsu, "tribute."¹ Opinions vary as to the exact significance of 'Ob. Epstein and Neufeld called it the purchase price of the bride,² and van Selms and Burrows spoke of a compensation price.³ Burrows wrote:

The mohar thus establishes the prestige of the husband and his family, gives him authority over his wife, makes the contract binding on both parties, and creates an alliance between the two families.⁴

Burrows found it difficult to distinguish between purchase and compensation, for they are closely related. However, he preferred to say that the bride was the object for which compensation was required, instead of the object of value to be bought.⁵ Driver and Miles called 'Ob the value of the husband's ius mariti over the woman and not the price of her person.⁶ The compensation amount or ius mariti is probably the more accurate meaning to be assigned to 'Ob. The purchase-marriage would not properly represent the covenant,

¹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Lexicon, p. 77a.
²Epstein, Marriage Contract, p. 58; and E. Neufeld, Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1944), p. 95. Neufeld was aware of the very close similarity between purchase price and compensation; ibid., p. 98.
⁵Ibid., p. 14.
which implied a free agreement between the parties.\(^1\)

The payment of נֶבֶר was a decisive moment of trans-
action, sealing the marriage covenant and establishing the
right of the bridegroom to marry the girl.\(^2\) The נֶבֶר originally was given to the father of the bride, but because it
usually was passed on to the bride as a dowry, it came to be
presented to the bride herself.\(^3\)

In 1 Sam. 18:25 the monetary נֶבֶר has been substituted
by a mighty feat and deed of valor.\(^4\) This concurred with
Yahweh's first נֶבֶר payment for Israel. The redemption from
Egypt, a crucial historical moment, gave Him the right to
ask her hand in marriage.\(^5\) Election was for a purpose and
had a true objective. Israel's ancestors identified in the
Exodus event for they had its promise, but the bride Israel
was the principal receiver. In Hos. 12:13 the prophet con-
trasted Yahweh's act of emancipation through the instrumental
hands of Moses with Jacob's service for a wife, both of which
can be understood as a נֶבֶר.\(^6\) If the deeper meaning here is
that as Jacob of old served for a wife, Jacob of the present

\(^1\)Burrows, The Basis of Israelite Marriage, p. 1.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 21.
\(^3\)Cf. ibid., p. 41. See Epstein, Marriage Contract, p.
58.

\(^4\)Neufeld, Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws, p. 95.
\(^5\)Cf. Hos. 13:4: "Besides me there is no savior."
\(^6\)See R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 29.
served the fertility cult faithfully for Baal, a nuptial custom is reversed, for Hosea pictured Israel paying the רֵם to Baal rather than receiving from Yahweh.

After years of settlement in the land with the concomitant, chronic faithlessness of Israel, Hosea looked to the future for a new nuptial alliance. The betrothal of Hos. 2:21ff. is followed by the תִּירָחָתָם, which has been claimed to introduce the elements of the רֵם. Wolff penned:

The five nouns prefixed with י denote the "bridal price" Yahweh "pays" for Israel. In the language of marital law, י (pretii) introduces the רֵם (2 Sam 3:14), which generally amounted to 50 silver shekels (Dtn 22:29).2

As always when Israel bound herself to Yahweh she was the beneficiary of the רֵם.

In Hos. 3:2 where the prophet's purchase of Gomer is recounted, there may be another reference to רֵם. This matter is taken up in chapter four of this dissertation.

The Assyrian equivalence of רֵם is tirhātum whose root denotes sexual intercourse, since originally after the payment of the רֵם the marriage was consummated immediately.3 Hosea himself linked the two, for following the future betrothal and רֵם payment (2:21f.) is "spiritual intimacy"--"and you shall know Yahweh" (2:22).


2 Wolff, Hosea, p. 52.

3 Driver and Miles, The Assyrian Laws, p. 142.
In addition to the רַבּ remittance, which was more of a legality, gifts might be bestowed upon the bride. These boons were the סֵפַר, gratuities prompted by a husband's love. At the first marriage Yahweh in His love had presented Israel the land of Canaan (cf. Exod. 6:4) -- a gift to be forfeited (9:3) at the dissolution of their relationship. Also, vouchsafed upon the object of divine affection were the law (cf. 4:1ff.), the prophets (12:10), sacrifice and the priesthood (cf. 3:4).

The Assyrian word dumaqi was a term for "ornaments." This was something that could be placed "upon" a wife by her husband, thus denoting some type of jewelry or personal garnish. Indeed a girl's jewelry was a bridegroom's present. Perhaps this bespeaks the basis of Hos. 2:15. Hosea possibly was describing the Israel who decked herself with the jewelry received from Yahweh and then wore it boldly as she forgot Yahweh and chased lovers. No doubt this also is reminiscent of a cult scene but as Mays wrote: "The cultic and allegorical blend as the harlot dresses up to follow her lovers."  

1See Epstein, Marriage Contract, p. 78.  
4Mays, Hosea: An Introduction, p. 43.
As with the case of the Ḥĕḇ, Hosea again depicted Israel as a bride who inverted the natural order of nuptial custom. In Hos. 8:9 the RSV translation is: "Ephraim has hired lovers." A more probable rendering is: "Ephraim to Egypt has given love gifts."¹ Israel, who in the eyes of Yahweh was a special delight, was so worthless to the nations (8:8) that she had to present the Ḥĕḇ in an attempt to buy affection and protection. For Israel to forsake her position with Yahweh and act in such a manner was abnormal to the ancient Near Eastern marriage setting and completely destitute of reason.

In the allurement passage of 2:16ff., Hosea described in figurative language the Ḥĕḇ that Yahweh would present to Israel. It would be vineyards for the bride-elect in the midst of a wilderness. The prophet also believed that the land would be regiven to Israel. In 2:20 and 2:25 Hosea spoke of Ḥĕḇ. Out of nineteen occurrences of Ḥĕḇ in the Book of Hosea, ten indicate the dwelling place for a single person.² Here the references are undoubtedly to the land of Canaan (cf. 4:1; 9:3). Once again Israel gains the gift of the land in conjunction with her betrothal.

¹Reading here the MT footnote. See L. M. Muntingh, "Married Life in Israel according to the Book of Hosea," in Studies on the Books of Hosea and Amos, papers read at the 7th and 8th meetings of Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap (Suid-Afrika, Potschefstroom: Pro Regepers Beperk, 1964-65), pp. 82-83.

²Wolff, Hosea, p. 51.
Similar to the מגדות were the migdanoth (מגדות), which were complimentary gifts given to strengthen the bonds of affection and impart to the wife a certain assurance of her future welfare. In Deut. 33:13ff. this term denotes dew, rain, products of the sun, fruit, and fullness of the earth. In other places the מגדות were comprised of gold and silver. Yahweh had bestowed comparable gifts upon His wife (2:10), although she was confused as to their true source.

From all biblical indications marriage was a joyous, festive occasion. At Sinai Israel sat down, ate, and drank (Exod. 24:11; 32:6), for the union was a happy event. In four places Jeremiah mentioned the nuptial rejoicing that would come to an end (7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11). Hosea did not refer directly to Israel's nuptial mirth, but it is often implicit and sometimes gleaned from the negative picture. Yahweh would put an end to all Israel's gaiety, feasts, and appointed festivals (2:13). Vines and fig trees would be laid waste (2:14). All the gracious provisions the Husband doled out to His wife would be suspended. Most apropos to the topic under discussion was the celebration of the feast of Yahweh (i.e., the autumnal festival of booths) which would desist (9:5f.). This festival which marked the vintage harvest and the renewal of the covenant had always been a joy-

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1 Neufeld, Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws, p. 115.
3 Cf. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 32.
ous time. Because Hosea viewed the covenant as a marriage, this celebration would have occasioned recommitment to the marriage. It was not an annual remarriage but an "anniversary" when Israel recalled the early nuptial vow. The rejoicing of the conjugal days would end (9:1), and Israel would no longer be able to celebrate her nuptial anniversary (9:5).

A Hebrew groom was to make adequate preparations before the arrival of the wife (cf. Prov. 24:27). Yahweh had been involved in preparation for 430 years prior to Sinai (Exod. 12:40). Connected with the marriage was the groom's reception of the wife into his tent or house, which was a principal act of the wedding proper.¹ In like manner, Yahweh who entered wedlock with His divine choice in the Wilderness, accompanied her to His home (cf. 8:21; 9:15).² Israel who had been a נָּֽאִים now had a Husband, a home, and a name.³

Yahweh, also, in the true tradition of Hebrew marriage, took upon Himself the responsibility of providing education for the wife.⁴ Israel's present lack of knowledge was no

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¹ Cf. Gen. 24:67. This was practiced also in Ugarit; A. van Selms, Marriage, p. 35.


³ Knight, A Christian Theology, pp. 220-21; See Welch, Religion of Israel, p. 109.

reflection on Yahweh's failure to teach. The husband was only required to provide instruction; he could not coerce the wife to learn. Through the law, the prophets, and the priests, Israel was exposed to ample and adequate schooling facilities.

Again, the husband was to furnish the wife with certain amounts of food, clothing, and personal supplies. Yahweh had supplied Israel with wool and flax to cover her nakedness (2:11; cf. Exod. 21:10); grain, wine, and oil for her dietary needs; and lavished upon her precious metals (2:10). However, Israel would be destitute when Yahweh terminated the marriage. His "taking back" (2:11) and "uncovering" (2:12) were direct reversals of marital custom and ceremony.

In the ינ passage of chapter two, Hosea's phrase, "She is not my wife and I am not her husband" (vs. 4), raises a question concerning the presence of a marriage contract and the procedure of divorce. First, the consideration of the marriage contract is presented.

Written marriage contracts have been found containing the expression, "She is my wife," which is the exact positive counterpart of Hos. 2:4. If the negative statement


2 In Ezek. 16:8 there is reference to the marriage ceremony of spreading the skirt over the betrothed and covering her nakedness. Here in Hos. 2:12 is the reversal of that practice.
existed, it would seem to indicate logically the presence of the positive contractual utterance in Israel. Bertholet assumed written contractual marriage existed in Israel, because extra-biblical references early and late substantiate its presence in the ancient Near East. The Code of Hammurabi indicates that a marriage was invalid unless concluded with a legalizing, formal contract (ketubah). In the Babylonian and Assyrian law, the riksatum and riksu proved that the marriage had taken place. It was likewise required in Nuzi where the term was tuppi riksi. Much later references have been found in P. Brooklyn 2 (449 B.C.), A.P. 15 (ca. 441 B.C.), and P. Brooklyn 7 (420 B.C.) which are fifth century Aramaic marriage contracts. In P. Brooklyn 2:3, 4 and A.P. 15:4 this sentence is found: "She is my wife and I am her husband from this day and forever." In these instances


the bridegroom was always speaking. Yaron concluded that these documents reflected a mixture of practices and law from Judaea (and the East in general) and Egypt and that the formulas noted were very ancient. He explained that the phrase, "from this day and forever," was not peculiar to the marriage contracts but was present in any legal relationship or position which was not a priori limited in time.¹

Contracts from Elephantine in the fifth century B.C. correspond closely to those already mentioned.² Again, the formulaic expressions in these cases probably reflect earlier, customary speech whose point of origin is difficult to determine.

Attestation from the Old Testament regarding marriage contracts is lacking. Prov. 2:17 and Ezek. 16:8 may be exceptions, but the evidence is not conclusive.³ Neufeld did not think that the silence of the text necessarily negated the existence of the contracts, for not all of Israel's legal institutions are found in the Bible.⁴ However, because of the dearth of material, to say that written marriage contracts existed in early Israel would be an assumption based

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4, 36.
³Cf. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 33.
on information from excavational materials of the ancient Near East.

Based upon the writ of divorce referred to in Deut. 24:1-3, Epstein dated Israel's first written marriage contract in the seventh century B.C. He considered it doubtful that the Hebrews would have adopted one and not the other.\(^1\) Burrows agreed.\(^2\)

However, there were other solemnities to seal an agreement or a relationship besides a written contract. These were oral vows probably of the simplest nature.\(^3\) The oral stage would be the usual forerunner in all situations before the inclusion of such a statement into written documents.

In Hos. 2:4 the phrase, "She is not my wife and I am not her husband," would have been the traditional oral manner of terminating a marriage. This pronouncement would tend to confirm an extant positive vow with which a marriage was commenced. The negative here would have a positive just as shown in the reversal of the children's names (1:4, 6, 8; cf. 2:25). The "answering" (2:17) of past and future alludes to the oral oath. For Hosea, then, the covenant vow had become an oral marriage vow.

The prophet made direct reference to the negative counterpart because of the thrust of chapter two. The nega-


tive phraseology definitely corresponds to the divorce state-
ments in available, ancient documents relevant to marriage.
A husband could put an end to a marriage through the proper
assertion or submission of a writ of divorce to his wife. A
marriage contract of the middle Mesopotamian region, which
possibly dates to the Kassite period (ca. sixteenth-twelfth
centuries B.C.), contains the declaration:

If Kikkinu, her husband,
to Bitti-Dagan, his wife,
shall say: "thou art not my wife,"
empty handed she shall leave his house;¹

In the Aramaic documents P. Brooklyn 2 and A.P. 15, divorce
was effected by the use of the phrase, "I divorce X my wife."
P. Brooklyn 7 contained this addition: "She shall not be to
me a wife."² Hence, the formal divorce was achieved by ut-
tering this formula. In P. Brooklyn 7, provision was made
also for divorce by certain acts or omissions ("divorce by
conduct").³ Yaron determined that this conduct was not
grounds for divorce but constituted the act of divorce it-
self and dissolved the marriage.⁴ The most striking example
was the wife's adultery.⁵

¹Albert T. Clay, ed., Babylonian Records in the Library
of J. Pierpont Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press,
1923), p. 51.


³Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁴Reuven Yaron, "Aramaic Marriage Contracts: Corrigenda
and Addenda," Journal of Semitic Studies, V (January, 1960),
70.

In A.P. 15:22 the phrase qwm b'dh, whose meaning is uncertain, was translated by Cowley and Yaron as "stand up in the congregation." If the divorce formulary were announced in the congregation, it would satisfy the requirements of publicity for divorce.¹

According to the laws of Middle Assyria, unearthed at Qal'at Sarqat (ancient Assur) in 1903-14, if the wife committed an offense against her husband, he functioned as her judge and executioner.² He determined the nature and extent of punishment while retaining the right of pardon. The laws required that the husband "charge" his wife. Driver and Miles interpreted this to mean that someone had to be informed of the charges--interested parties, especially family members.³

These materials regarding divorce are highly pertinent for an interpretation of Hos. 2:4ff. The discussion incorporating these features is given in chapter four of this dissertation. At this point it appears reasonable to say that this Hosean passage reflects a divorce proceeding between Yahweh and Israel and that the statement, "She is not my wife," corresponds to the brief, characteristic divorce formula of all periods in the ancient Near East.

That Hosea incorporated various marital customs of his day into his spiritual message is evident. An understanding

¹Ibid., p. 16.
²Driver and Miles, The Assyrian Laws, p. 135.
³Ibid., pp. 23-24.
of these factors contributes understanding to the message of the prophet; consequently, some of this data is utilized in the exegesis of the following chapter.

Application of Marital Vocabulary to the Covenant

It is to be expected that the covenant treated as a nuptial arrangement would in its exposition involve and profit from the use of nuptial vocabulary. Consequently, it is no surprise that Hosea took phraseology characteristic of and familiar to the conjugal relation and meaningfully applied it to the covenant. Through it he opened further the door of covenantal understanding to every mind cognizant of personal and intimate human relations.

Espoused in הָנָק

The stem הָנָק was common to any delineation of marital and family relations and hence found its way into the Hosean materials. The root הָנָק imports

the overwhelming force of passion between men and women, but the stem is used also to denote the attachment that unites blood-relations, the selfless loyalty of friends, and the ties of social life. Nevertheless, it always

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1 The root is used of the love between man and woman, married and unmarried; cf. Gen. 24:67; 25:48; 29:18, 30, 32; 34:3; Judg. 14:16; 16:4, 15; 1 Sam. 1:5; 18:20; 18:28 (MT); 2 Sam. 13:1, 4; 1 Kings 11:1; 2 Chron. 11:21; Esther 2:17; Prov. 5:19; Song. 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4.
2 Hos. 3:1; 4:18; 8:9; 9:1, 10, 15; 10:11; 11:1, 4; 12:8; 14:5.
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retains the passionate overtones of complete engagement of the will accompanied by strong emotion.\(^1\)

Jacob attributed to לְבָנָה the idea of ardent, voluntary desire.\(^2\) Wallis contended that the emotional experience was the germ cell for the development of לְבָנָה. For him, this love was a passionate longing to be "intimately united with a person ... with whom one feels himself united in his affections."\(^3\)

McKeating equated לְבָנָה with tenderness.\(^4\) Knight called it suffering, creative love.\(^5\) Various shades of meaning of לְבָנָה determined from the study of parallel expressions are: a clinging to one loved, a going after, and continued faithfulness.\(^6\) Thus the root connotes a warmth, a fullness of feeling, a conscious impulse toward, and a "want to" with regard to its object.

Hosea took this word for love between husband and wife, which had associated with it the idea of emotion, desire, and sexual intimacy,\(^7\) and lifted it to sublime heights and made it a part of a high, ethical union. The Baal worshipers were

\(^{1}\)Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I, 250.


\(^{4}\)McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, p. 88.

\(^{5}\)Knight, Hosea, p. 62.

\(^{6}\)Wallis, "לְבָנָה," p. 102.

\(^{7}\)See Buss, Hosea, p. 109.
acquainted with a god who loved, but they equated love with sex.\(^1\) Hosea did not derive his figure from the Canaanite understanding of cult and god, but appropriated it from the true domestic setting manifesting fealty and love. Indeed, he spoke apologetically against Canaanite practices, for he strongly opposed the mere "gratification of sexual lust."\(^2\) He exhibited prophetic daring in taking a conception that was associated with immorality by the Baal-infatuated and endowing it with ethicality.

Various scholars have considered Hosea the first to speak of this love of God.\(^3\) Eichrodt propounded this and pointed out that prior to Hosea Israel had only spoken of God's goodness, justice, and faithfulness.\(^4\) This scholar averred that Israel had been well aware of Yahweh's affection for them, which was clearly discerned in His saving acts.\(^5\) However, he continued:

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\(^1\) See John Gray, The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament (2d, rev. ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 45, n. 11, who indicated that dd in the Ras Shamra text, 'nt, means "sexual love and not amity or affection." The purpose of the hieros gamos was to "Diffuse love in the earth" ('nt, III, 12), and "Increase love amidst the fields" ('nt, III, 14); ibid., pp. 45f.

\(^2\) Wallis, "יָּהְוָה," p. 113.


\(^4\) Eichrodt, "The Holy One," p. 263.

Even in joyful enthusiasm and devotion, Israel's reverence for the great covenant partner made it shy of bringing him in connection with the spontaneous emotions which came to light in passionate surrender to the beloved. But Hosea breaks through this sober reticence and dares to speak of Yahweh's affection for Israel using the chief expression for the powerful passion which joins man and wife: 'hb. ¹

Hosea was qualified to take such a step because of his understanding of the idea of love. Muilenburg deemed it a love that only love could understand; ² therefore, Hosea was an interpretive authority. Out of his own reservoir of feeling and love for Gomer, coupled with his spiritual scrutiny of the heart of the passible God, came his license to use the emotionally-filled ² with the divine Husband.

The prophet used the root ² twelve times in the book that bears his name, ³ and five of those references are connected with the covenant God. ⁴ In three places he spoke of God's love for Israel as a mate (3:1; 9:15; 14:5), and in two His love for her in the ³ days (11:1, 4). All five cases, however, help to determine further the import of this root when it is used to signify affection between God and the object of that affection.

Firstly, the root expressed election. Before the time of Hosea, there had been no in-depth reflection on "what mo-

¹Eichrodt, "The Holy One," p. 263.
³Supra, p. 109.
⁴3:1 (a verb--following MT footnote); 9:15 (a verb); 11:1 (a verb), 4 (a noun); 14:5 (a verb).
tive might underlie the divine act of election."¹ Hosea did not use הָנָּה ("to choose") the usual word for "election," but with מָמַת got behind election to its motive and origin in the being of God.² Here was that desirous, reaching-out love so clearly demonstrated when a man in freedom but strong emotion took to himself that mate toward which he had been compelled inwardly. Similarly, the Bridegroom-God had loved Israel on His own initiative and will.³ His love belonged to "spontaneous emotional forces which are their own justification, and which establish a personal relation of immediate authority."⁴ It was "unfathomable" love, for it was rooted in Yahweh and not based on any quality in Israel.⁵ Eichrodt added:

The impulsive and compulsive character of merely natural love is replaced by deliberate direction of the will and readiness for action, evinced in God's choice of one particular people before all others and his faithfulness to the task of training them.⁶

The idea of election in מָמַת is confirmed by the contrasting term "hate" (non-election) in 9:15.⁷ The "hate" and "drive

out" in verse fifteen were the direct reversal of ἐλεἰτεροποιημένος action. Unlike pagan mythology where the bride was the lover who longingly searched out her beloved bridegroom, in Yahwism it was the Bridegroom who loved and sought out the bride.¹

For the prophet, then, ἐλεἰτεροποιημένος was "engagement love." Marriage was in effect election before being a covenant. It was a special life-partnership which was proof, confirmation, and expression of ἐλεἰτεροποιημένος.² The first marriage of Yahweh and Israel began with this engagement love. In the future, preceding the new betrothal, that electing love again would be at work. In 14:5, which was a foregleam of the future (cf. 2:16ff.), Yahweh said, "I will love them freely." ἐλεἰτεροποιημένος means "freely," "with a willing mind," "spontaneous."³ In that future day the voluntary, choosing love of Yahweh would prompt His engagement to Israel as it had in the past and would confirm itself in the covenanting of a second marriage (2:21).

ἐλεἰτεροποιημένος was not only emotional, warm, and electing love but also unilateral love.⁴ In the Book of Hosea it is Yahweh who loves Israel; never is Israel said to love Yahweh.

¹ Chavasse, Bride of Christ, p. 30n.
² Barth, On Marriage, pp. 5, 18.
Yahweh's נָשִׁיָּהוּ was freely and unconditionally bestowed (14:5); it was undeserved love (3:1), for Israel loved other things. There was no reciprocity; it was always unilateral. Moran's treaty-love, which was a reciprocal, loyal, and imperative love between suzerain and vassal, is absent from the Book of Hosea.¹

Impregnated with רון

Both נָשִׁיָּהוּ and רון were "fundamental aspects of the relation of God and man, and the marriage bond expressed them admirably for it partook both of the contractual and the voluntaristic aspects of love."² נָשִׁיָּהוּ was "engagement love" that had as its goal the formation of a bond of permanent intercourse. Election love had to come to the point of נָשִׁיָּהוּ³ and of the beginning of a belonging together.⁴ Present where the bond existed was רון.

רון was a familial or relationship term involving the treatment of one to another. It was to be exercised between parties who shared an ethically binding arrangement.⁵ For

¹Moran, "Love of God," pp. 77ff. See Norbert Lohfink, "Hate and Love in Osee 9, 15," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXV (1963), 417, who thought that loyal, treaty love was referred to in 9:15 but recognized that love in all other places of the Hosean text had a new and different accent. See also Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 114.

²Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 299.


⁵Glueck, Ḥesed in the Bible, p. 37.
the covenant members, rules of conduct persisted,\(^1\) the keeping of which was not motivated by merely legal constraint but by the inner loyalty that emanated from the relationship itself.\(^2\) "Hesed characterized the relationship between husband and wife, and both had to comport themselves accordingly."\(^3\) The life of a Hebrew was bound so inseparably to religion that it was impossible to talk of ṭĕlû in the realm of human relationships without also speaking of the same between man and God.\(^4\) Therefore, existent in the bond between Yahweh and Israel was the ṭĕlû that was manifested between a man and his wife (Hos. 2:21; cf. 6:4, 6; Jer. 2:2; 31:2).\(^5\) Jacob affirmed:

Marriage is the realm par excellence for the exercise of chesed and it is not surprising that it is with the prophet Hosea that the term reaches its greatest significance, designating in turn the relation of Yahweh with the people, the obligations of the people towards Yahweh and the reciprocal obligations of the members of the nation between themselves.\(^6\)

Verily, Hosea's own domestic experience enabled him to learn what ṭĕlû meant to Yahweh. Snaith wrote:

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 40.


\(^3\)Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, p. 40.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 56.


\(^6\)Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 105.
Because of his own attitude to his wayward wife, he came to know that the chesed of God meant God's steadfast determination to be true to His share of the Covenant obligation whatever Israel did on her part.\(^1\)

For this eighth-century prophet, ḫōḇ was "marriage love," and his book provides an in-depth exposition of this binding factor.\(^2\)

קדש, which presupposed a covenant, also maintained it and made possible the continuance of election. ḫōḇ—the kernel of which נֶּפֶשׁ was the shell—impregnated the whole idea of covenant. Without this fettering agent, there was no guarantee of the strength and durability of a union.\(^3\)

As ḫōḇ was at the heart of covenant, it established the core of the covenant-based marriage. Since Sinai, there was to have been an operative mutual ḫōḇ between Yahweh and Israel.

Knight expounded:

Since Yahweh had everything to give and Israel could only receive, then Yahweh's ḫesèdh towards Israel was

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\(^1\)Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, p. 111. See John Norman Meadows, "The Wilderness Motif in the Book of Hosea" (unpublished Th.M. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970), p. 83, who asserted that Hosea combined the "marital love" motif—whose source was the prophet's marriage experience—with the wilderness theme to convey the idea of ḫōḇ.


\(^4\)Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 104. See Glueck, ḫesèd in the Bible, p. 68, who declared that ḫōḇ was a distant goal, for the obligations on the partners never ended.
different from Israel's hesedh towards her Lord. Yah­
weh's hesedh entailed indeed the loyalty and the love
that the husband promises to give to his wife, but it
entailed as well the grace and condescending mercy of
one who has all to give. On Israel's part, on the
other hand, her hesedh was regarded as loyalty to the
Covenant, a loyalty that could be expressed most clear­
ly by obedience to God's spoken Word at Sinai, and by
devotion to his cult.¹

In essence, Israel was to be faithful to her marriage.² How­
ever, because her "marriage love" was now lacking (4:1) and
had been as transitory as a morning cloud and dew (6:4), the
marriage was fractured; and Yahweh's divorce contention (J'~)
was lawful (cf. 2:2; 4:1). Only in the future, when Yahweh
would provide for His bride the spiritual capability to love
as a true wife, would another marriage be possible.³

Consummated by ñywał

The marriage-covenant between Yahweh and Israel, which
was commenced in ~i and maintained by ṯy, constituted a
sacred bond in which Israel was entitled to a reverential ex­
posure of the person of Yahweh. Here was intimate revelation—
a private revealing, sharing, and loving of inner selves. It
was in holy wedlock that Israel gained the particularity of

56-57, wrote: "God provides for His people, grants peace and
rest, stands by to help, and is full of benevolence. The peo­
ple, on the other hand, must obey the divine commandments,
heed His demands, and remain faithful in thought and deed.
Their duties toward God are the unceasing preservation of the
true knowledge of God and continuous adherence to a way of
life pleasing to Him."

²See Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, p. 105.

³Hos. 2:21-22: "I will betroth you to me . . . in ṯy."
her knowledge of Yahweh.\(^1\) When \(\text{יְָּרֵאָהּ} \) was present, the covenant was always manifested (2:22).\(^2\) Eichrodt, referring to \(\text{יְָּרֵאָהּ} \), maintained:

No other expression could more strongly recall the covenant established by God, which rests on God's pervenient love, and at the same time remove the concept from any association with juristic thinking and incorporate it into the context of moral trust.\(^3\)

The noun \(\text{יְָּרֵאָהָהּ} \) and the verb \(\text{יְָּרֵאָה} \) carry various denotations and connotations,\(^4\) but the interest in this section lies with the personal knowledge gained in living communion.\(^5\) The term \(\text{יְָּרֵאָה} \) was frequently employed to indicate the most intimate expression of love between husband and wife—sexual intercourse.\(^6\) Gordis believed that "to know" was a universal euphemism for sexual relations.\(^7\) This sense of \(\text{יְָּרֵאָה} \) evinced the depth that "knowledge" could reach in a personal relationship.\(^8\)

\(\text{יְָּרֵאָהָה} \), then, was personal familiarity of the most intimate nature,\(^9\) wherein "intelligence comprehends, emotion is

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\(^1\)Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I, 36.
\(^2\)"Ostborn, Yahweh and Baal, p. 71.
\(^3\)Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, II, 293.
\(^4\)See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Lexicon, pp. 393a–395.
\(^5\)See Schultz, Old Testament Theology, II, 118.
\(^6\)Gen. 4:1, 17, 25; 19:8; 24:16; 38:26; Num. 31:17, 18; etc.
\(^8\)See Honeycutt, "Hosea," p. 17.
stirred, and the will responds."¹ For Heschel it was a "feeling for God" (sympathy),² which implied a reciprocal emotional experience. He wrote:

Just as in sexual reciprocal emotion, where the feeling of one person is in no sense an object to the other, where rather both persons share the same feeling, the structure of the sympathy implied in Hosea's hypothesis is not compassion for one another, but a suffering together, the act of sharing an inner experience.³

According to Scott, it was a responsive knowledge, a coming together with another "for whom one has affection and respect," an intimacy which develops in a continuing experience of "mutual trust and faithful love," "a covenant of hearts in a standing relationship," and "a concord of mind and heart for which the highest levels of spiritual union in marriage provide the closest analogy."⁴

Because of this tenor of the root (נַח), it was powerfully apropos to Hosea's nuptial imagery; consequently, he used it rather frequently.⁵ The pith of נַח, thus far emphasized, is not exhibited in every reference; but in the majority of cases where its object is a person,⁶ it carries a

¹Elmslie, How Came Our Faith, p. 265.
²Supra, pp. 2lf.
³Heschel, The Prophets, I, 59.
⁴Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, p. 200.
⁵2:10, 22; 4:1, 6; 5:3, 4; 6:3, 6; 7:9; 8:2, 4; 9:7; 11:3; 13:4, 5; 14:9.
⁶In those instances, it can mean: "to have sexual relations with," "approve," "have regard for," or "enjoy the deepest and richest personal acquaintance with"; Thomas N.
particularly rich sense (2:22; 5:4; 8:2; 13:4, 5). Naturally because the Hosean materials are steeped in nuptial imagery, the usage of יִֽנָּ֔ר* in these instances reflects the marriage relationship.\(^1\) Along this line of thought, Eichrodt affirmed:

It cannot be overlooked that the highly significant story of his marriage, which stands at the beginning of his message, and was the means by which Yahweh gave him a new understanding of God's relationship with Israel, also gives the word יִֽנָּ֔ר* the warmer tone of inward intimacy, even where the marriage bond is not explicitly mentioned.\(^2\)

The reference to יִֽנָּ֔ר* in 13:4 and 5 is beset with difficulties of translation and interpretation. Verse five may be rendered, "I knew you in the wilderness" or "I shepherded you in the wilderness."\(^3\) The latter translation has the support of the LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, and Targum and fits appropriately into the text.\(^4\) If יִֽנָּ֔ר* is retained in verse five, it

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\(^{2}\) Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, II, 292. In 2:10, 7:9, and 11:3 are indirect references to relationship. In these verses there is the lack of cognizance of the source or cause of grain, healing, and depleting strength. It was Israel's failure to know true Yahwism and what she was to have learned in the bonds of relationship--that her husband was the giver of all good things, that God was the Healer and Savior (Father-son imagery), and that her strength, vitality, and continued existence demanded loyalty to One. See Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, pp. 40-41.

\(^{3}\) Reading יִֽנָּ֔ר* for יִֽנָּ֔ר. Cf. MT footnote.

\(^{4}\) Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 220. The shepherding idea is accordant with "in their pasturing they were filled" (vs. 6).
probably signifies the intimate knowledge of partners which would have stemmed from the earlier Sinai betrothal. When read in conjunction with verse four, the reciprocity of the knowledge within a conjugal relation is clearly manifested.¹ Whether יַעֲדָה is retained or not, the יַעֲדָה of verse four remains. This usage imparts intimacy and suggests reciprocity even without the complementing יַעֲדָה. Verse four bespeaks a God of relationship ("I am Yahweh"), a personal relationship ("your God"), the time of the marriage's beginning for Hosea ("from the land of Egypt"), and the exclusive and intimate nature of the bond between the partners ("that know no God but me"). Since Yahweh was in relationship with Israel, the knowledge emanating from the bond would be commutual. She could know Yahweh only because she had been known by Him.²

In three other places (2:22; 5:4; 8:2) the marital bond, whether actual (2:22) or professed (8:2),³ is signified. As a direct result of betrothal there would follow a concluding or consummating experience (2:22). In 5:4 that knowledge is wanting because Israel had become a whore, and her spiritual

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¹For Huffmon, "Yāḏa'," pp. 31-35, יַעֲדָה in vss. 4 and 5 was a treaty term—the technical use of the recognition of a suzerain for his vassal. He maintained the same for 2:22; 4:1; 5:4; 8:2; ibid., pp. 35f. He has failed, however, to take into account the strong marital thoughts that stand behind Hosea's treaty terms.

²G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 143, n. 27, reflected reciprocity in translating vs. 4: "I, Jahweh, am your God from the land of Egypt; you have no knowledge of God except by me."

intimacy with Yahweh had desisted. With יִּתְנָה the prophet had in mind the contact of partners, a moral fellowship of love and trust, which was at its loveliest in marriage. Hosea was describing the spiritual intercourse of the pair or castigating Israel for its absence. Because of the חַסְדָּי of Yahweh, Israel was induced to make a trusting surrender. As the sex act of a married couple, it was a continuing experiential moment calling for complete yielding, a giving, and an opening of the self. Yahweh was the Lover, and Israel was to come to know her Lover. This knowledge would be as penetrating as sexual knowledge.

From Israel's spiritual intercourse with Yahweh came her ability and obligation to embrace Him in knowledge—i.e., "in a loving affection which results in the permanent demonstration of loyalty and kindness." She became keenly aware of Him and thus what He demanded. The response of Israel was to be shown in her total life—her ethics, cult, and conduct. Her worship and holy celebrations, which brought to mind salvation-history, were to result in deeper intimacy and spiritual intercourse. For Hosea, covenantal history would

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1Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 115.
4Ibid., pp. 292-93.
have been the "marital history" during which Israel experienced her Partner--i.e., the record of their intimacies. When knowledge was being demonstrated by the wife, the marriage was intact; but where it was lacking, there were grounds for divorce, because the wife was unsubmissive and withheld herself from her Husband.

As sexual intercourse consummated human marriage,\(^1\) spiritual intercourse consummated and confirmed the covenant. The covenant's consummation was not a punctiliar action but continual,\(^2\) in an ever reconfirming of the love of the pair and the bond in which they had entered.

Also, as fertility resulted from the sexual contact in marriage, from the spiritual communion within the Yahweh-Israel holy bond came fruitfulness. The fecundity of \(y\text{Y}\) was evidenced in two products: the knowledge of God and the more physical fashion of material abundance.\(^3\) When the marriage was held inviolate and knowledge was present, the land bloomed and yielded the staples of life (cf. 2:10f.). However, in the inexistence of moral and spiritual intercourse, the land mourned (4:3), the threshing floor and winevat no longer fed (9:2), fig trees and vines were destroyed (2:14), and the land became as a parched wilderness (2:5); beasts,

\(^1\) Mace, Hebrew Marriage, p. 172.


\(^3\) Ostborn, Yahweh and Baal, p. 74.
birds, and fish were removed (4:3). Following the dismissal from Yahweh's house, i.e., divorce (9:15), future fecundity would desist (9:16). The alliteration דּוֹרֶדָה דּוֹרֶדָה (Ephraim-fruit) carries the import: "The fruitful land will become fruitless."¹ A reversal would ensue "in that day" when a new, everlasting marriage would be trothed. Then the heavens and earth would "answer" and would cooperate to insure the new flow of fertileness (2:23ff.). Hosea preached to dispel the conception that the potential for abundance and productivity was fostered by the immoral sexual acts of the cult. Productiveness derived from faithfulness to an ethical relationship and was directly related to the act of "knowing," which resulted in the product—knowledge. Yahweh, the Lord of nature, either guaranteed and dispensed tokens of fertility or did not, according to the presence or absence of true spiritual intercourse between Him and His wife.

Annulled by דּוֹרֶדָה

Hosea expected from the wife of Yahweh the imperative commitment to faithfulness (דּוֹרֶדָה). This would have been intuited readily from a maritally interpreted covenant. Presently, however, the requirement went unobserved, and in its stead was the antithesis—unfaithfulness. Hosea was mindful of the situation and in 4:1 made this vocalization: "There is no faithfulness . . . in the land." Hence, to portray the current disposition and activities of the wife, unfortunately,

¹Wolff, Hosea, p. 168.
a shameful nuptially related term was necessitated. The disintegrating infidelity, which had dislodged the covenant's primary foundation of fealty, was described with nomenclature apposite to any nuptial situation in similar straits.

The awakening to the realization of how deeply the disease of unfaithfulness had eaten into the Divine-human relationship came, when that canker gnawed its way into the prophet's own marital relationship.\(^1\) For Hosea, Gomer became the epitome of Israel, and out of his domiciliary experience, he realized what had happened with the nation.\(^2\) His wife's spirit and wantonness bore a tragic similarity to Israel's. The wives' atrophy of will, absence of heart (4:11), and sin were disgracefully silhouetted against the background of the husbands' fidelity and love.\(^3\) "The sin of Gomer and the sin of Israel were one and the same, the preference of the lower to the higher."\(^4\) Gomer's concept of relationship never rose above the physical, and Israel's religion remained with the purely external. The brides who bore their husbands' name before men\(^5\) had become unworthy of their titles and the pro-

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\(^1\)See Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 149.


\(^3\)Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, pp. 41-45.


\(^5\)Welch, Religion of Israel, p. 112.
Concerned over the nation, Hosea unhesitatingly drew upon his own personal misfortune in an effort to oppose the evils of his day.

**Prostituted religious distinctiveness**

Election implied that Israel should have belonged only to Yahweh. She held the position of being His sole wife. When she desiderated to become like the nations, she forfeited her distinctiveness and lost the true meaning of her existence. Duff asserted:

> If the loved people become in any way like mere men in general, and lose the particular, national something that is so loved of Jehovah, and that yearns so toward Him, then the plighted troth shall vanish though it were plighted or engraved on tablets a thousand times.

Again, Israel's defection to Baalism left her defiled (5:3; 6:10) and ended her state of separateness. Her behavior was described by the prophet as dealing faithlessly ( גֵּשִׁית) with her Mate (5:7). גֵּשִׁית is used in Jer. 3:20 to depict the unfaithful wife who leaves her husband. According to Hos. 5:7, the prophet is convinced of Israel's extramarital activity, because she has given birth to illegitimate children. She had repudiated the attention which Yahweh had bestowed upon her and looked for affection among the Ca-

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1 Leslie, *Prophets*, p. 43.
5 Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, p. 29.
naanite deities. In the active pursuance of the Baalim she "forgot" her Husband. The Hebrew in 2:15 is emphatically arranged: "and me, they forgot". The term ṭ[w] in this verse does not signify a mental lapse but the jettisoning of a well-known fact and the abandonment of a life-relationship. Mays called ṭ[w] a betrayal of Yahweh's relation to Israel, which was established in His saving history.

The final two lines of 2:15 express abandonment: "and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says Yahweh." The reference here is not to an overt act and a failure of memory but an illicit affair which resulted in defection from Yahweh.

The use of ṭ[w] in 13:6 (cf. vs. 4) shows that it is the direct opposite of ḟ[w]. Since ḟ[w] could designate the intimate contact of partners, ṭ[w] was the antithesis and resulted in the absence of knowledge. Israel surely did not know Yahweh, for if she had, she would not have left Him.

The reason for any mate being unfaithful to his partner is that for the moment he loves something better; hence, the situation is not remedied until the mate comes to love his partner more than the other thing. When his love is proper,

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1Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, II, 293.
2Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, pp. 43-44.
3See Wolff, Hosea, p. 40.
4Scott, The Message of Hosea, p. 15.
so is his conduct.\(^1\) Israel spent her love\(^2\) on raisin cakes (3:1),\(^3\) shame (4:18; 9:10),\(^4\) sacrifice (8:13), a harlot's hire (9:1), and oppression (12:8). Nowhere does Hosea declare that Israel loved Yahweh. The objects of her affection related predominantly to the syncretistic cult. The repetitive use of the possessive "her" in 2:13 emphasizes that the mirth, feasts, new moons, sabbaths, and appointed feasts did not belong to Yahweh but to Israel in her mad pursuits.\(^5\) Israel had gone after the Baalim and resultantly violated her marriage. Her desertion had been blatant, bold, and willful.\(^6\) The "I will go" (יִוָּא) in 2:7 is a cohortative of determination.

Watts, commenting on this syntactical form, wrote:

> Cohortatives express the author's desire, urge, or feeling concerning himself and do so by direct reference to himself, using pronouns in the first person. When the speaker refers to himself alone, the cohortative may express determination.\(^7\)

As in the case of Gomer and Hosea, a third party had come be-

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\(^1\)Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 67.

\(^2\)Love is used here in the more sensual sense.

\(^3\)These were cakes of pressed grapes distributed at cultic feasts (2 Sam. 6:19); Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 57. They were connected with the fertility cult (cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:19).

\(^4\)Reading here נָשָׁת. This is not a secondary substitute for יִנָּשׁ; Wolff, Hosea, p. 165.

\(^5\)Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 42. During the festivals much of Israel's adulterous activity would have taken place; Wolff, Hosea, p. 38.


\(^7\)Watts, Survey of Syntax, p. 78.
tween the other bonded twosome. Repeatedly, the prophet spoke of Israel's lovers (2:7, 9, 12, 14) and identified the third party as the Baalim (vs. 15). The word "lovers" (םָּ֣בֶּ֖ל) is a Piel participle, which is used only in the sense of adulterous lovers. The intensive stem brings out the idea of "breathe heavily" and "pant" in the sense of desire. "This explains the exclusive use of the pi'el stem for passionate, extramarital love in the book of Hosea."3

When Israel left Yahweh, it was a display of utter ingratitude to her benevolent Husband, and this thanklessness permeates the entire book. In ascribing the source of her bounty to the Baal, she was bestowing her affection on another.4

Before Gomer openly deserted Hosea, inwardly she had left him. He diagnosed within her a "spirit of harlotry," an infectious, inner impetus which motivated the outward display of adultery.5 Having witnessed this spirit at close

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1McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, p. 84, believed that the plurality of "lovers" corresponded to the numerous shrines and varied nature of the Baal at those shrines.

2Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 16a.

3Wolff, Hosea, p. 35.

4James Robertson, "Hosea," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, III, 1428.

5Concerning the "spirit of harlotry," Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, p. 38, wrote: "It is obviously drawn from his own experience of Gomer's conduct, and denotes the actual impulse to sexual immorality which was at the root of her infidelity."
quarters, the prophet, thereupon, recognized it on a larger scale (2:12; 5:4).\textsuperscript{1} Clements described Israel's state as

a woman who felt nothing of the normal human emotions of love to her family and husband, and who chose instead to follow her own lustful desires.\textsuperscript{2}

The corporate wife's modus vivendi is identifiable with that of the harlot in Prov. 7:11ff. Exhibiting contemptuousness for her marriage vow, she takes to the street to seek out a lover at the first opportunity. Turning her back on a husband who had provided amply for her (cf. Prov. 7:16f.), as a heifer casting off all restraint, she wandered in the streets impelled by a craving force from within. This personality from the pages of the Wisdom material, displayed the same disposition and apostatizing bent of Gomer and Israel.\textsuperscript{3} In reference to the nation, Davidson stated:

The Prophet, . . . , seizes the condition of mind of the community and the direction of the heart, which indicated profound alienation of feeling and dissatisfaction with the whole range of affections and duties that her relation to Jehovah imposed.\textsuperscript{4}

Snaith believed that the "spirit of harlotry" was used in a semi-psychological sense and expressed that which dominated a man to the exclusion of everything else.\textsuperscript{5} Wolff called it

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1}] Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, p. 31.
\item[\textsuperscript{3}] See Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 300.
\item[\textsuperscript{4}] Davidson, "The Prophet Hosea," p. 261.
\item[\textsuperscript{5}] Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 84.
\end{itemize}
an insatiable lust for sensual pleasure.\textsuperscript{1} Formerly, love for and loyalty to the covenant-marriage stood behind Israel's action, but now the impetus was a selfish, whoring spirit.

Previously, the fact was mentioned that the Prophet Hosea never stated that Israel loved (יָוהֵה) Yahweh. Moreover, neither did he say that she loved the Baalim. Both sociologists and sexologists say that prostitutes do not love their customers. They only lie with them; they need not love them.\textsuperscript{2} Though the Baalim were Israel's illicit "lovers," she did not love them but only those boons she thought they gave. Israel determined in selfishness to go after the Baalim, for she believed that their relationship reciprocated bread, water, wool, etc. (2:7). Like the harlot of the Book of Proverbs (cf. 6:6), she sought the man of substance who could take care of her.\textsuperscript{3} Israel's cultic observance was no more than a selfish operation in which her feminine vanity and desire for jewels and materialism were manifested.\textsuperscript{4} The supposed by-products from her love affair were tagged "harlot's hire" (םָּלֹא) by the nuptially minded prophet. That payment was what she loved and for which she served (9:1).\textsuperscript{5} In Hos. 2:14

\textsuperscript{1}Wolff, Hosea, p. 61.


\textsuperscript{3}Anderson, Rediscovering the Bible, p. 103, noted that all Baalism was man's bid for security, well-being, and prosperity.

\textsuperscript{4}Davidson, "The Prophet Hosea," p. 262.

\textsuperscript{5}See Deut. 23:19; Isa. 23:17, 18; Ezek. 16:31, 34; Mic. 1:7.
the term for hire has been slightly altered (נָּ֔שָׁד)¹ for an effective play on words (cf. נָּשָׁד, "fig tree"). Israel viewed the vines, the fig trees, and the products of the ground as the remuneration for her services. The pitiable ridiculousness of this was that Israel did not have to hire herself out to procure these materials. They would have been given gladly by her Husband.

Because the prophet viewed Israel's sin from the perspective of God and from his own personal stance with Gomer, he labeled the whole picture of infidelity as "harlotry," "playing the harlot," and "adultery."² Such nomenclature was fitting not only because he interpreted the covenant as a marriage but also because of the sexual rites characteristic of Baalism. "He prefers the terms and metaphors which interpret the disobedience as personal betrayal and estrangement."³

In Hos. 2:4 Yahweh called upon His wife to

    put away her harlotries from her face
    and her adulteries from between her breasts.

Honeycutt thought that these words depicting Israel referred to the apparel or jewelry which identified a prostitute.⁴

¹Cf. נָּשָׁד in footnote of MT.
²1:2; 2:4-5, 6, 7; 3:3; 4:10-18; 5:3-4; 6:10; 9:1.
Mauchline proposed the idea of a painted face and ornamented breasts, even though he believed that Jer. 3:3 and Prov. 7:13 support a brazen face and exposed breasts.¹ The verse, for Haupt, referred to the effects of habitual lewdness on the complexion and breasts. "An old prostitute paints her face in order to cover up her faded countenance; her breasts tend to be pendulous."² Mays interpreted the harlot-marks as "probably pejorative names for jewelry worn in the Baal cult (cf. v. 13)."³ Hosea pictured Israel as a typical harlot seductively adorned for men and mentioned her markings and attire because they were the signs of her outward, unashamed, and blatant dereliction.

Israel's offspring confirmed her habitual sin.⁴ Hos. 5:7 reads:

They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord;
for they have born alien children.

Koehler, in his lexicon, translated the word for alien children, δοῦλος, as "bastards," i.e., the offspring of a foreign cult.⁵ Hosea, more than likely, considered the aliens the

⁴Theo. Laetsch, Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 27, stated that the perfect verb ἀπολύεσθαι (2:7) denotes that the act of apostasy had become a habit.
generation who were strangers to Yahweh due to the breach of union between Him and Israel. As Gomer had tendencies to adultery, so did the children she bore; likewise, Israel had given birth to alien offspring who knew not Yahweh and naturally would follow in the apostate path. The children, which were to be the extension of love in time and testify to its reality, were instead the attestations of a broken marriage. Hosea declared that the whorish nation would become sterile because of her sin (4:10; 9:11). Indeed, sterility could be caused by her sin in general and adultery in particular.

For this eighth-century prophet the sin of Israel was infidelity and the breaking of a marriage vow; and in characterizing it in his prophetic messages, he coined a new word—"harlotry." Vos described Hosea's concept of sin as the lack of conformity to the ideal of marriage. Welch called it the failure to offer self-surrender. Even the familiar Hebrew words for "sin" approximate similar meanings in the book. not only denoted "transgression" or "rebellion" for Hosea but also the violation of a personal relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The accusations—"For they have rebelled

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4Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 297.
5Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 162.
against me" (7:13) and "rebelled against my law" (8:1)--which emphasize the personal first person suffix, are exemplary. Also, Hosea used וָני continually in reference to the harlotrous cult (4:7, 8; 8:11, 13; 9:9; 10:8, 9; 13:2, 12), and on one occasion again in a denunciation containing the first person suffix--"They sinned against me" (4:7).

However, Hosea did not view sin as completely overt. Unlike anyone before him, he probed for its motive. As he had uncovered the spirit of election, with his "spirit of harlotry" he penetrated to the inner attitude of disloyalty. According to Ward, the handling of the interior dimension of the moral life was Hosea's greatest contribution to biblical ethics.

The unfaithfulness of Israel clearly was demonstrated in her cultic life (cf. 4:1-9, 11-14, 15-19; 5:1-7). A legitimate and proper marriage required exclusive worship, but the plenteous Baal shrines (8:11; 10:1) bespoke her duplicity and obvious ignorance of what her Husband wanted. The encounter of worship, which was sacred communion in the spiritual confines, was to have deepened and strengthened the re-

1Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, p. 39, said that the idea of sin as an essentially inward spirit manifested outwardly was new.


3Israel also became wedded to idols (4:17). מָה (MT footnote) means "one allied," "associated with"; Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 258b.
relationship of the pair. On the contrary, Israel had turned worship into a "defiled bedroom" where she willingly bared her heart before other gods.

The prophet did not condemn worship and sacrifice in principle but only the do ut des cultus of his day. In Hos. 6:6b, the Masoretic text indicates a comparative: "The knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Because of the parallelism of verse six and since a burnt offering was a type of sacrifice, it would appear that the comparative is also to be understood in the first line (6:6a). It was not that sacrifice per se was condemned but that "marriage love" was desired more (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22f.). Truly, proper sacrifice and burnt offerings would result from a faithful relationship, but the propriety of the former was impossible without the marriage.

Adulterated social relationships

The broken marriage also was revealed in and responsible for the distorted social relationships of Hosea's time.¹ In Hosea 4:1-3, there is enunciated a series of logical consequences:

For there is no marriage fidelity and no marriage love
and there is no knowledge of the Husband in the land;
(Consequently) swearing, lying, killing, stealing
and adultery breaking out;
and bloods touch bloods.

¹Cf. 4:1-2; 5:8-10; 6:7-9; 7:1-7; 8:1-3.
Therefore the land mourns, . . .
and even the fish of the sea are
taken away.

In 7:4 the image of adultery can be taken literally, but that
image is expanded so that adultery refers not only to the
sexual act but also to corruption, wicked deeds (7:1), treach­
ery (7:3), intrigue (7:6), and murder (7:7).

The marriage which established the atmosphere of har­
mony and peace for the whole community had been repudiated. 2
Israel was a covenant family; wherefore, real love between
the Husband and the wife would have brought love to the whole
house and would have laid the foundation for the relationships
among family members. Cheyne correctly opined that without
love to Yahweh, there was no persistent obedience which was
morality. 3 Because Israel did not know her Husband, she was
unaware of what He expected. Her estrangement led to a weak­
ening of the nation's moral fiber. There was drunkenness
(4:11, 18), civil war (5:8-11), swearing empty oaths (10:4),
dishonesty (12:8), and avarice (12:9). 4 Since the religious
union with Yahweh was not sacred, neither was human marriage,
for religious whoredom issued into physical whoredom. 5 There­

1Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 42.
2Supra, p. 89.
3T. K. Cheyne, The Two Religions of Israel (London:
5Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 298.
fore, women were having their first intercourse in prostitution rather than with their lawful husbands (4:13, 14).\(^1\)

Anderson called all of the preceding factors symptoms of a betrayed trust.\(^2\)

Courted political protection

Finally, ramifications of the shattered marriage were evidenced in the political sphere. A discussion of Israel's foreign relations inevitably involves remarks concerning her domestic political head. The latter is considered first.

Conflicting opinions exist over the question of Hosea's attitude toward kingship. Some scholars have maintained that he was repulsed by its present state;\(^3\) others have contended that he condemned kingship from its inception as an institution alien to Yahwism.\(^4\) The purpose in this section is not to debate this issue but to show that Hosea regarded the domestic political structure with its foreign policies as

\(^1\)See Muntingh, "Married Life," p. 82.

\(^2\)Anderson, Rediscovering the Bible, p. 102.

\(^3\)Welch, Religion of Israel, p. 118, wrote that Hosea spoke against kingship as it had become. C. Ross Milley, The Prophets of Israel (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 47, asserted that the prophet condemned kingship in practice, not principle.

harlotry.

Next to the family, the cultus and the kingship were the two major institutions of Israel's corporate life. The cultic and political were inseparable. As Israel's worship evinced distrust and lack of knowledge, so did their politics. The activities and policies of the kings displayed a rapacious and shortsighted leadership with little commitment to the welfare of the people as defined by the long-established ethic of the Yahwistic covenant.

The king, who was a charismatic figure, was the representative of the corporate wife. He should have been the paradigm of faithfulness, trust, and submissiveness to Yahweh. Instead, Israel's monarchs failed to depend upon Yahweh (7:11; 8:9), put their confidence in armaments (10:13), plowed iniquity (10:13), were gladdened by wickedness (7:3), and were adulterers (7:4). When the king was corrupt, he spread the disease to the people. He became a snare (5:1); in 8:4 an erroneous appointment is connected with the setting up of idols. In Hosea's day the character and the spirit of the regal office were simply the epitome of the harlotrous wife.

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4 It appears that Hosea included the kings in the "all" (7:4). See Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 105; and Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 295.
If perchance Hosea condemned kingship from its beginning, he
did so because it manifested then what it did in the eighth
century.

Israel was led by her heads of state in the distrust-
ful course of soliciting foreign aid. Because the relation-
ship of Yahweh with the nation was espousal, their coquetting
with other nations was unfaithfulness.¹ Seeking protection
and help communicated untruly that the Husband had not satis-
fied and was incapable of fulfilling His responsibilities.
Ironically, Yahweh had given to Israel the as a bridal
gift and maintained her in it, but to hold it she thought she
had to vamp. In Hos. 7:13 the verb stands parallel to
means "to stray," "to wander," "to flutter,"² and
is used in Prov. 27:8 to describe the straying mate negligent
in his duties. Israel, who had strayed rebelliously from
Yahweh, was like a senseless bird calling the wrong mate and
flying to the wrong nest. She went to Assyria (5:13), sum-
moned Egypt (7:11), and made covenants with each (12:2).
McCarthy understood the "oil" in 12:2 to be the means of
covention making and was convinced that the synonymous paral-
lelism of the last two lines substantiated this.³ For Is-
rael to bind herself to others was to cease being the loyal

¹Duff, Old Testament Theology, p. 129.
²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Lexicon, p. 622a.
³Dennis J. McCarthy, "Hosea XII 2: Covenant by Oil," Vetus Testamentum, XIV (April, 1964), 221.
wife. Heschel called such involvement political promiscuity (5:3). Hosea was not concerned to which lover (country) they turned, but that they turned. Israel elected to hire lovers rather than trust her Husband. She found a lover whom she thought could satisfy her immediate needs. In 8:9 it is recorded that she approached her paramour with love gifts (not tribute), which were customarily brought to a wedding-feast. Wolff wrote:

The whore Ephraim who surrenders herself is not even worth enough to her political "lovers" to receive a harlot's wages from them. She has to pay them.

This political courting also was considered harlotry, because foreign alliances enabled more paganism to flood the country. Israel continually had mixed herself and had been so engulfed (7:8; 8:8) until she ceased to exhibit any of her earlier distinctives. Her air of independence was something that she could not preserve and remain Yahweh's wife. When she turned from the covenant obligations in an attempt to find freedom, she only became enslaved as her counterpart Gomer.

1Heschel, The Prophets, I, 41.
3Reading בִּקְרֵי הָעֵדִּים in the MT footnote.
4Muntingh, "Married Life," p. 82.
5Wolff, Hosea, p. 143.
CHAPTER IV

STATUS OF THE NUPTIAL RELATIONSHIP:
HOSEA'S PROPHETIC MESSAGE

The Prophet Hosea, by envisioning Israel as the morally responsible mate of Yahweh, personalized Israel's entire history. Her past, present, and future were characterized according to the marriage's state of affairs. Although the marital imagery is not manifested ubiquitously in the prophetic book, all of its contents correspond to and reflect some phase of the nation's connubial experience. The vicissitudes of the conjugal state pass in review in chapter two (incipient faithfulness, ungrateful infidelity, divorce and punishment, a new nuptial arrangement) in a succinct, unfolding drama. With the exception of the new betrothal in the eschatological scene of this chapter, the remaining elements of the scenario have complementing material in other sections of the book.

Conjugal Happiness in the Past

The Hosean material describes the beginning of the Yahweh-Israel bond as a felicitous and positive relationship.  

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1See Smith, Prophets of Israel, p. 166. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I, 252, indicated that the inseparable association of history and love negated the possibility of misunderstanding the love as erotic.
Reflection on those early days not only stirred fond memories but the earlier experience itself furnished the matrix for the future betrothal. The period had been a marital moment, however short, during which the potential for a proper marriage had been exhibited.

Engagement Joy

A discussion of engagement love already has been presented in chapter three of this dissertation;¹ therefore, the purpose here is to note briefly the elated, halcyon atmosphere which girdled the wilderness-encounter of Yahweh and the people. Behind their coming together was the engagement love of the Divine party. This desert love motif, which possibly has been inserted into the wilderness tradition by this eighth-century prophet,² is found in Hos. 2:16ff. and 9:10. Intimated in the former reference is the delightful experience of courtship and youthful love,³ and the positive, willful response to Yahweh's advances. The thrill of that moment for the Divine being was comparable to the delight of the famished wanderer who happened upon a bunch of delicious grapes in the wilderness (9:10). How inviting to the beholder would be the sight of grapes and figs in the desert! A similar joy would be felt by the lover whose rapidly pul-

¹Supra, pp. 109ff.
²Supra, p. 117, n. 1.
³Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, p. 111.
sating heart and titillation testify that finally he has set his sights on the embodiment of his hopeful quest. God recalls His tender memories like a man reflecting upon the best of a life that is past and gone: "its sweetness is reinforced by the contrast of the present."¹ The "old Israel of the desert was best and dearest of all to God."² Hosea, no doubt, recognized in the pleasant experience of Yahweh, the approximation of what he felt when first finding Gomer.

Virgin Status

After the Exodus when Israel stood vis-à-vis with Yahweh, she was considered a maiden, ripe for marriage. According to Hosea, this beginning point was marked by youth, virginity, and betrothal,³ with the tainting of the bride's life coming with the entrance into Canaan. The latter is evident from the following textual examples: "They at Adam crossed over the covenant" (6:7); "But they came to Baal-peor, . . . , and became detestable like the thing they loved" (9:10); "In Gilgal, there I began to hate them" (9:15); "From the days of Gibeah you have sinned, Israel," (10:9); etc. Hos. 9:10 states that what was once a delight to Yahweh now has "become" an abhorrence. ² 'גֶּבַע (9:10b) is probably an incipient imperfect depicting the starting point

¹Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 132.
²Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 42.
of Israel's change. Also, the heifer figure in 10:11 implies the willing work of an obedient animal in the wilderness days,\(^1\) which is contrasted to the heifer's present stubborn and rebellious nature (4:16).

Ward noted that Hosea seemed to speak of the wilderness as a time of leading and nurturing (11:1, 3-4), but also a time of apostasy (11:2). This appears to place infidelity at the outset, contradicting the "unsullied 'bridal' devotion" (2:15) of that period. Although the initial calling and the initial apostasy appear simultaneous, in actuality they are not. Ward's interpretation of 11:2 as a "historical foreshortening" provides a plausible explanation for the apparent difficulty. He contended that the point of infidelity's beginning had to be fixed from other statements in the book.\(^2\)

The grape and fig imagery (9:10) indicates an auspicious inception and an unblemished bride. Israel is described as precious grapes which were especially holy to Yahweh.\(^3\) Deut. 20:6; 28:30; and Jer. 31:5 signify that a vineyard is made Ḥn (common) after men have used, enjoyed, and eaten from it. "The theory is that all the fruit belongs to Jehovah. It is therefore qodesh, and no man may eat any of it."\(^4\)

\(^{1}\)Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 145.
\(^{3}\)Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, p. 137, and n. 1 on that page.
\(^{4}\)Ibid., p. 35.
ence to the grapes (9:10), Harper suggested that יִּקְלָדָל was closely connected with מַיִּקְלָדָל, and consequently translated 9:10 as: "I found Israel in the wilderness like wild grapes belonging to no one."1 Also, הבֵּית (the early fig) was particularly tender and a great delicacy (cf. Isa. 28:4; Mic. 1:7)2 in comparison to the יִּקְלָדָל which ripened in August. When one discovered the former, he gladly and immediately devoured it.3 The import is that no one had claimed Israel; Yahweh was the first to make the advance. Additional and obvious emphasis on the untouched state comes in the words הבֵּית ("first fruit") and יִּקְלָדָל ("at its first season"). Indeed, the root of the former term can denote a "virgin."4

Grapes and figs were two of the most valuable fruits in Israel. In Jer. 24:2, 5, the better class of people are compared to these first ripe figs.5 It is highly doubtful that an immoral bride would have been pictured thusly.6 Commenting on Hos. 9:10, G. A. Smith wrote:

So had the lusty nation appeared to God in its youth; in that dry wilderness all the sap and promise of spring were in its eyes, because it was still pure.7

1Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 336.
2Ibid.
3Wolff, Hosea, pp. 163-64.
4Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Lexicon, p. 114a; and Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 120a.
7Smith, The Twelve Prophets, I, 282.
A marriageable Hebrew maiden (cf. "in the days of her youth"—2:17) was expected to be a virgin. Hebrew law demanded this. Was any less to be required from God's marital choice? The Israel Gomer represented on her wedding day was a pure girl with perhaps potentiality for waywardness. Virginity in the covenant context is to be understood as singleness of mind with pledged loyalty to one mate. This stands in strong contrast to the harlotrous duplicity in the land of Canaan. At Sinai there had been no false lovers in Israel's life; she had known only Yahweh (13:4f.). Israel's "virginity" comports best with the Hosean material and the book's analogy. Welch averred:

The point of the analogy surely lies in the idea of the virgin simplicity of girl and nation, which has been crowned by the gift of trust and love by man and by God, but girl and nation have been too frivolous to understand how great a gift has come into their hands.

Desert Honeymoon

From the moment of happy encounter there ensued a harmonious and pleasurable honeymoon experience anterior to the first incident of unchastity. Jeremiah (2:2) agreed with


3Knight, Hosea, p. 55.

4Supra, pp. 53f.

5Welch, Kings and Prophets of Israel, p. 150.
Hosea on this matter:

I remember the devotion of your youth
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.

"In fact, he probably derived his view from reading Hosea."¹

The period was not necessarily ideal because they were in
the desert (i.e., a nomadic ideal),² but because it was here
that Israel's faith, sincerity, and willingness to follow
had been demonstrated. Hosea was not referring so much to
a place as to the days of an untarnished relationship.³ It
was not an ideal area but an ideal historical time.

The wilderness, however, did serve as an effective back-
drop for the Bridegroom's sustaining ability. The bride's
dependence upon her Husband was an essentiality in the land
of drought and danger. In that setting, Israel had eyes on-
ly for Yahweh and found Him all-sufficient. Perhaps the mo-
bility of desert life, which obviated economic and material-
istic complexity, was conducive to the potential for faith-
fulness. In this environment where cultic paraphernalia were
a burden to the traveler, mental and spiritual concepts were
more functional.⁴ There were no Baal shrines and distracting

¹J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abing-
don-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 82.

²See John W. Flight, "The Nomadic Idea and Ideal in the
Old Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLII (1923),
158ff.; and Karl Budde, "The Nomadic Ideal in the Old Testa-
ment," The New World, IV (1895), 726ff.

³Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 44.

temptations for the newly wedded wife.

Apparently, Hosea was not familiar with the tradition that spoke of the murmurings and ingratitude of the tribes in the wilderness. Coats maintained that the murmurings were imposed secondarily on Israel's affirmation about Yahweh's leadership in the wilderness, for they have a pro-Judean flavor.¹ The Book of Hosea may reflect the oldest and purest wilderness tradition.

Even Israel viewed the early days nostalgically. In Hos. 2:9 she remarked: "For it was better for me then than now." The is referred to the better days at the beginning of her history, including the wilderness wandering.² In contrast to the present, those were the days of no lovers, no abundant materialism, but adequate provision.

Marital Disharmony in the Present

The greater part of the Hosean material reflects the shameless ingratitude and unfaithfulness of Yahweh's wife. To a considerable degree, then, the prophet utilized the nuptial figure to portray the marital disharmony of his present day.


²Wolff, Hosea, p. 36.
Spurned Love

The helpmate of Hosea, in deserting her husband and contemning his love, epitomized the course of Israel. Yahweh was the Husband whom Israel had forgotten (2:15), had abnegated (2:7; 2:15; etc.), and to whom her deeds prohibited a return (5:4). She had defected to other gods (2:7), loved cakes of raisins (3:1), and cherished harlotry (4:10). Inducement for apostasy was not quickened by any negligence or irresponsibility of the Husband, but the wife left on her own accord (2:7). In fact, her harlotry coexisted with Yahweh's benevolence (2:10), His tenacious love (3:1), increase (4:7), and prosperity (10:1).

A wife's adulterous action against her spouse was arrant exhibition of spurned love. It brought to the husband deep humiliation, great loss of pride,¹ and the pain of a wounded love. Hosea, who was aggrieved over Gomer, was able to convey to Israel the hurt of her Husband's heart.

Love, which reaches out even in the face of repudiation, even when the affection for which one longs is bestowed upon objects of the greatest repugnance to that one, is a suffering, aching love (3:1). Yahweh loved Israel despite her turning (בָּדַת) to other gods, which resultantly desecrated her previously uttered sacred vows. In Hos. 3:1, בָּדַת suggests a turning the face toward and looking upon in adoration

¹Mace, Hebrew Marriage, p. 244.
and with gracious regard.¹ Israel, who in the desert had eyes only for Yahweh, now habitually gazed amorously into the faces of her lovers.

The agony of the Divine heart is also revealed in the names of the prophet's children. The merciful God, who was prevented from showing גְּדִלי, winced from the contradiction, and the God who elected in love (יְהוָה) inevitably felt a twinge as He rejected (יְהוָה כָּלָה).

Again, in Hos. 6:4, the dialogue between the Husband and the fickle wife² exudes frustration and despair. Every effort of the Husband to maintain the marriage had failed.³ The wife simply did not love Him as He loved her. Consequently, the relationship had deteriorated, and for the wife, the faithful Husband had become an occasional utilitarian object of her convenience. In the midst of the irrefutable evidence of betrayal (6:7ff.; 7:2ff.), Yahweh yet longed to reverse the coming misfortune of His wife and heal her wounded body (6:11). Mays called 6:11b a divine lament.⁴

The revulsions of feeling in Hos. 11:8ff. go back to the marriage of chapters one and two.⁵ What springs forth here

¹The turning is basically a turning of the face (cf. פָנים, פָנָי, "face," "faces"). Cf. Lev. 26:9; 2 Kings 13:23; Ps. 40:5; Ezek. 36:9; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Lexicon, p. 815b.


³Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 284.


⁵McKenzie, "Divine Passion in Osee," p. 169.
is hardly a painful quandary but brokenheartedness over the suffering that sin must bring. At this point, Yahweh was "in conflict with himself over Israel." Hos. 11:8b in the RSV reads:

My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender.

in the Niphal stem is rendered "to be warm," "to glow," "to be moved." It may be used of love or pity toward one, suggesting the translation for 11:8b: "My compassion or my consolation glows warm or is moved." In the place of דלח, Koehler-Baumgartner conjectured that דלח should be read, since דלח in the Niphal occurs elsewhere only with מָדֵה (Gen. 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26). Harper observed that מָדֵה is found elsewhere (Isa. 57:18; Zech. 1:13) only in the sense of comfort; therefore, the suggested דלח, "my compassion," is a viable alternative. Substitution of the latter term would produce the sense of the מָדֵה, דלח combination in Gen. 43:30 and 1 Kings 3:26. In both places in the RSV the phrase is rendered: "my heart yearns." In their context, the terms signify a heartfelt longing for someone but also connote a

1Boling, "Prodigal Sons," p. 25.

2Wolff, Hosea, p. 201.


4See Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexicon in Veteris Testament Libros, p. 442a. The exception is its use with בַּדֵּק ("skin"—Lam. 5:10).

5Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 369.
temporary restraint (Gen. 43:30) or releasing (1 Kings 3:26) because of earnest love. In the former, Joseph restrained himself from embracing Benjamin, for whom he had deep affection, because it was not the appropriate time. In the second reference, enunciated is the depth of true, maternal love which would surrender a son in order to save him. Correspondingly, Yahweh would have enfolded Israel, but a deferment was demanded due to her sinful condition; He yearned for her but would relinquish her to save her. Each of these cases demonstrates genuine love which required an absorption of hurt for the good of the one loved.

Subsequent to Israel's abandonment of Him, Yahweh withdrew to await a possible, future repenting by His former wife. Hos. 5:6 reads: "He has withdrawn from them." The verb יָנָּה ("to withdraw") in the sense of remove, is customarily used in the transitive to denote the removal of clothing (Deut. 25:9f.; Isa. 20:2). Hosea used this verb uniquely to express the withdrawal of a person.¹ A possible inference is that Israel had put off or away from her that which was closest to her being. Resultantly, her Husband departed to His place hopeful that eventually Israel would arrive at a station of sensibility where she would be susceptible to His advances. "My place" could refer to the heavenly temple² or Yahweh's

¹Wolff, Hosea, pp. 100-01.
holy mount\(^1\) and original home in the Sinai desert.\(^2\) Because the wilderness was the locale of the first betrothal and since the "wilderness" again would be the setting for the future nuptial vow, the latter interpretation is most fitting in the Hosean context. Yahweh returned to the point of their early solemnities believing that the future would provide opportunity to recapture and even surpass the joy of the past.

**Divorce Proceeding**

Scholars have identified the יִרְרָא pattern in various sections of the Book of Hosea (cf. 2:4ff.; 4:1ff.; 6:7-10).\(^3\) The term יִרְרָא, which presupposes a relationship, means "to contend forensically"\(^4\) or "to take legal action."\(^5\) The Prophet Hosea appears to have been the first to announce a יִרְרָא between Yahweh and His people. Of special importance to the present discussion is the covenant lawsuit of chapter two, prophetically presented as a divorce proceeding during which the Husband deposits overwhelming evidence against the

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\(^1\)Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 92.

\(^2\)McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, p. 108.

\(^3\)See Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, pp. 57ff.; and Wolff, Hosea, p. xxiii.

\(^4\)Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 767b.

character of the wife.¹ Kuhl demonstrated that 2:4-15 was
from the legal parlance in a divorce affair.² The legal
section is broached by a call to trial, and the opening
charge is prefaced by the strong preposition—"surely."³
The requirement of ancient law for public accusation is suf-
ficed, and the procedure continues with the Husband acting
as plaintiff and judge.⁴ In true legal style, Yahweh refers
to the wife in the third person, for He is addressing the
court.⁵

The Husband's remarks commence not with a "Plead,
plead,"⁶ but an "Accuse, accuse"!⁷ Hopeful regeneration is
absent, and the Plaintiff functions with the conviction that
condemnation is ineludible.⁸ During the public hearing,
which dispels any question concerning the Husband's lawful
action,⁹ there is enunciated the intention to cast off the

¹Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, pp. 87, 107.
²Curt Kuhl, "Neue Dokumente zum Verständnis von Hos
2:4-15," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,
LII (1934), 102-09.
³Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 110. He remarked
that the RSV "for" is "too weak to catch the rhetorical power
of the term"; ibid., p. 159, n. 11.
⁴Supra, p. 108.
⁵Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, pp. 35-36.
⁶T. K. Cheyne, Hosea, The Cambridge Bible for Schools
and Colleges, ed. by J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1892), p. 47.
⁷Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 218.
⁹See ibid., p. 29.
faithless wife. The children served as witnesses,¹ brought forth to confirm the Husband's incriminations.² Hence, the clause (vs. 5) is not an attempt at dissuasion—an incentive for cessation of sinful activity lest punishment should come—but an announcement of the wife's fate. Brueggemann maintained that indicated that the entire unit was based on the premise that Israel would not repent. Therefore, the unit continues in light of the indictment of verse 4ab.³ Ward wrote:

It becomes clear, as one reads the entire indictment against the "mother," that the conditionality is only theoretical. The plaintiff is convinced that the defendant is beyond repentance and that her condemnation is inevitable; but, a fair trial must be held.⁴

Elsewhere in the book, the pronouncements of disaster are unconditional, and 2:4ff. must be read with this in mind.⁵

The statement, "She is not my wife and I am not her husband," stands here unmistakably as a divorce formula which

¹Ibid.
²Wolff, Hosea, p. 32.
³Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 159, n. 13.
⁵See ibid. Bright, A History of Israel, p. 260, said that Hosea saw inevitable disaster for the nation. The following posit contrary views: Honeycutt, "Hosea," p. 13, did not find in 2:4f. a divorce formula but an attempt to get the wife to return; McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, pp. 81, 83, saw 2:4ff. as a threat of legal prosecution and translated 2:4 as: "Is she not my wife and I her Husband?"; Gordis, "Marriage and Message," pp. 20-21, n. 30a, believed that 2:4 did not contain a divorce formula, for if so, it would have been too late for threats.
terminates the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In addition to this terse statement, other factors substantiate the severance of relationship. Certainly, the action of the wife dissolved the marriage. Her forsaking and forgetting the Husband, which were overtly displayed in harlotry, nullified the marital bond. If the wife abandoned the home, and the husband could not get her to return, he had to divorce her. According to the prophet, Israel's "spirit of harlotry" prevented her return. Her own statement, "I shall return to my first husband," presupposed a divorce initiated by the woman. Because of Israel's open affection for and devotion to the Baalim, for all practical purposes she had a second husband. However, Hosea never spoke of the Baalim as being anything more than lovers.

One of the indicant names of Hosea's children also attested to an actual divorce. קָנָה (1:9), which expressed the final stage of Yahweh's action, signified a complete repudiation. The negative nomenclature represented the dissolved covenant, or for Hosea, the dissolved marriage. Clements wrote: "The covenant necessitated its own dissolution by the judgment of the law which it contained."

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1Supra, pp. 106-08.
3Patai, Family, Love and the Bible, p. 105.
4Wolff, Hosea, p. 36.
5Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, p. 79.
negative in this verse is absolute and final, for it is נָשָׁע and not נָשָׁע. Wolff remarked concerning 1:9: "It possesses the cutting abruptness of a 'final word' spoken face to face with one's partner in the discussion."²

The horror of adultery forbade the husband to continue cohabitation with his perfidious wife.³ In Deut. 24:3, where the issuance of a bill of divorce is made mandatory, there is reference likewise to the dismissal of the wife from the house. Hos. 9:15, which describes Israel's banishment from Yahweh's house (יָדִי), makes reference to the latter action. The Piel of יָדִי ("to drive out") is used throughout the Old Testament, almost without exception, to designate an expulsion or exclusion which is intended to be lasting.⁴ In fact, it was appropriate to divorce vocabulary.⁵ The passive participle (literally, "one who has been driven out") always denotes a divorced woman.⁶ Because of the nuptial framework of the Book of Hosea, it is completely plausible that in 9:15 the prophet was referring to Israel's divorce. Ejection from Yahweh's house meant ousting from the land, i.e., exile.

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¹Snith, _Mercy and Sacrifice_, p. 48.
²Wolff, _Hosea_, p. 22.
⁴See _Englishman's Concordance_, pp. 316-17.
⁵Neufeld, _Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws_, p. 180, n. 2.
Roland Wolfe opined that this announcement of the Divine intention for Israel coincided with Hosea's eviction of Gomer.1 Present in 9:15 with מָלֵ֣כָה is the verb מָּלְכֻּה ("to hate"). This root can be used in the technical sense for divorce, although it appears frequently with a nontechnical meaning.2 Yahweh hated Israel as a husband hated an unsatisfactory wife (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 22:13; 24:3; cf. Jer. 12:8).3 The verb מָּלְכֻּה, whose state can be present or perfect, probably is an inchoative verb,4 signifying that at Gilgal He conceived or commenced the hatred of His wife. Mays called hate and love "not only powerful emotions, but also actions in which a person sets himself for or against." He continued:

Loving and hating mean bringing into force all the resources and powers of feeling, will, and thought in devotion to or rejection of a person or value.5

Hence, other materials in the prophetic book lend credence to interpreting Hos. 2:4a as a divorce formula. The continuing verses of chapter two describe the punishment of a divorced wife and not the chastisement of an adulteress. Divorce is not mere punishment; it is an end.

Sequential to the divorce pronouncement, the rejected woman was subjected to the shameful process of public strip-

1Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 79.
2Yaron, "Marriage Contracts," pp. 32-34.
5Mays, Amos: A Commentary, p. 100.
ping. Such exposure was stipulated by ancient oriental law and preceded the victim's inglorious demise. The disparaging and humiliating ordeal left the accused naked (2:5) with exposed genitals (2:12). Gesenius related נִזְרָאָה (2:12) to "obscene parts," and Kraeling called the uncovered lewdness the exposed pudenda (cf. Ezek. 16:37; 23:9f.). Wolff observed that in 2:11 the additional phrase "to cover her nakedness" singles out the particular functions of wool and flax in a woman's life, so that the words have a directly personal effect.

These acts were the direct reversal of the male spouse's responsibility (Exod. 21:10) and of the nuptial ceremony in which feminine nakedness was covered by the spreaded skirt (Ezek. 16:8). The Husband's directive, "I will take back" (2:9), communicated the withdrawal of support to which the marriage had obligated Him. The revocation and inversion of marital custom clearly depict divorce.

Various extra-biblical texts concerning the act of divorce and expulsion of a wife correspond to the scriptural text of Hos. 2:4ff. The earlier reference to a Kassite-
dated cuneiform tablet from Hana in which a divorced wife is sent forth empty-handed is relevant and exemplary.¹ In line fourteen of this text, e-ri-si-sa u-si is rendered in Clay's work as, "She shall leave her bed,"² but is translated by Gordon as, "She shall get out naked."³ Aramaic incantation texts from Nippur also have confirmed that the above custom survived in Nippur until late Sassanian times. These incantations, which were written on bowls, mentioned the casting out of the divorced wife in a naked state. Gordon maintained that these references depict the custom described in Hos. 2:5.⁴ Further evidence was found in various Nuzi tablets, which have appeared in Chiera, Publications of the Baghdad School, 1934. In volume V, text 444, plates CDXXXVI-CDXXVII, lines 19-23, there is the statement:

And if Wishirwi goes to (another) husband and live[s] (with him), my sons shall strip off the clothes of my wife and they shall drive her out of my house.⁵

Gordon received from these words clarification for Hos. 2:4, which summons the children's participation. Involvement of

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¹Supra, p. 107.
⁴Ibid., pp. 278-79.
⁵Ibid., pp. 279-80.
the offspring in the stripping and driving away augmented the woman's disgrace. However, it was the offended husband who was basically responsible for administering the infliction (cf. Yahweh's words in 2:5ff.: "lest I strip," "I will place," "I will set," "I will slay," "I will hedge," "I will build," "I will take back," "I will uncover," etc.). Various scholars have proposed that lying behind this dramatic scene in 2:4ff. is the ignominious treatment of Gomer.

Commingled with the wife's stripping was the denuding of the land (2:5). Hosea's plastic imagery provides dual poignancy in depicting not only a condemned Israel but the harlot's fate for the wife element of Baalism. The land would become like a barren wilderness and a parched land (נמשל) -- exposed, abandoned, and manifesting no vital signs. The jealous wrath of the Husband would strike, and His wife's lovers would stand discredited and impotent.

Because the wife's adultery placed the husband in such an intolerable situation and since, by her acts, she had betrayed her most sacred trust, it was perfectly logical that

1 Ibid., p. 280.
2 Supra, p. 108.
she should be condemned to death.\(^1\) The fatal blow, which was dealt after the stripping, usually came in the act of stoning (cf. Ezek. 16:40).\(^2\) In language polemicizing Baalism, Hosea spoke of slaying with thirst (2:5). With regard to the fate of Gomer and Israel, it is apparent that neither husband exercised his fiercest wrath (cf. 11:9). Obviously, Hosea did not require the ultimate sentence against Gomer, and Yahweh did not annihilate completely His people. However, for the nation, death was still incurred. "Israel" as a political entity had now desisted; the trial scene, which had been transacted in history,\(^3\) ended in exile. Any hope for the future would come through a resurrection (cf. 6:2; 13:14).

**Wedded Bliss in the Future**

Beyond the shambles of divorce and the pain of purgation, Hosea recognized possibilities yet with God because of His great love. The Divine judgmental acts, which had moral purposefulness, sought to create an atmosphere conducive to a new relationship of love. With the nuptial figure, Hosea described a future occurrence similar but inimitable to the honeymoon days of the past, wherein marital harmony and bliss would prevail.

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\(^1\) Mace, *Hebrew Marriage*, p. 243.


The text of chapter two is marked by three "therefore's" (לִּכְזָדְקָה), a term which in prophetic speech usually introduces the announcement of Yahweh's intended action in response to man's deeds.\(^1\) The recorded reaction of Yahweh to Israel's sin was comparable to a dishonored husband's. His punishment was neither unpredictable nor an explosive, destructive force, but a tragic necessity. Divine wrath and chastisement were the corollaries of election and proof of the Divine love.\(^2\) Hence, Israel's punishment was not so much judicial and legal as an assault of Yahweh's love.\(^3\) Without abandoning the necessary judgment of sin, Hosea "proclaims a higher morality of 'loving-kindness.' The result of this is that penalty may be transformed into discipline."\(^4\) The Husband's withdrawal and waiting at the point of the first encounter (5:15) also express the constant Hosean themes that out of Yahweh's wrath comes an invitation to penitence and that His anger seeks reconciliation.\(^5\)

In the passion of indignation, Yahweh had declared that He would cease loving (9:15b), but in more subdued moments

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\(^1\)Wolff, Hosea, p. 35.  
\(^5\)Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 92.
He revealed that His love could not be canceled by human sin (3:1).\(^1\) Indeed, the severed covenant constituted "the tragic matrix for the yet deeper revelation of God's reconciling and redeeming love."\(^2\) It was here, in Israel's total failure and complete helplessness, that Yahweh's love was most evident.\(^3\) Based on the election of the nation in the past and the present display of love despite infidelity, Hosea could envision and proclaim eschatological hope. Brown summed it up this way:

> But it is the fact that the judgement comes from Jahveh which fills the prophet with hope, for he is convinced that, if His earlier intervention in the history of Israel, whereby He called her into being as a nation, revealed His love for her, His next intervention will be a manifestation of the same love, and will result in her final salvation and a closer union with Himself.\(^4\)

A rearrangement of the first sixteen verses of chapter two helps to clarify the progression of action--divorce and judgment, the dawning awareness of the former wife, and the wooing lover. The intention of judgment is communicated better by the following textual order: 2:1-5, 8-13, 6-7, 14-16.\(^5\)

The correcting hand of Yahweh was operative in the historical arena. The stripping and devastation, no doubt, were due to famine, invasion, and war, while the hedged-up path

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5. See Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary*, p. 37. Ward, *Hosea: A Theological Commentary*, p. 25, said that the movement of vss. 6, 7 after vs. 13 was fairly common.
(2:8) and estranged wife denote exile. The change of environment put Israel out of touch with her paramours. The woman of harlotries pursued but could not overcome her lovers; she sought but could not find them. The termination of the cultus (2:13), which would not have resulted merely from famine, also indicates a separation like the exile.\(^1\) Again, the extraction of the word "Baalim" from Israel's vocabulary (2:19), more than likely, came as a consequence of her displacement. The frustrated and destitute prostitute was given ample time in her confinement to consider her better days and to become cognizant of her true benefactor.

The narrative of chapter three, which is interlaced with dual stories, alludes to the strictures of exile. In verse one, Yahweh commanded the prophet to go and love Gomer as He loved the people of Israel. This course of action required that Hosea purchase Gomer, whereupon he gained the authority to temporarily restrain her wanton activity. Although the buying has been interpreted as the payment of a qanah,\(^2\) this theory must be rejected, for neither Hosea nor Yahweh would have ventured to marry prior to the disciplining and repenting of their former mates.\(^3\) The ultimate purpose of the pay-

\(^1\)Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 37.

\(^2\)Supra, pp. 95ff. See McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, p. 90; and Gordis, "Marriage and Message," p. 25, and n. 37 on that page.

\(^3\)A. Douglas Tushingham, "A Reconsideration of Hosea, Chapters 1-3," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XII (July, 1953), 154, said that it was not marriage for that was yet future. Ginsberg, "Studies in Hosea 1-3," p. 56, averred that
ment was to bring Gomer to a disciplinable position. Tushingham pointed out that נָרָא (3:2) is used here in a quasi-legal sense meaning "to gain power over" (cf. I Sam. 23:7--"God has given him into my hand"). Whether the fee was paid to remove her from the services of a pagan temple, which conveniently satisfied her lustful nature, or was a harlot's hire is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. The Arabic root cognate with נָרָא, which means "to hire," and the LXX use of εµπορεύοµαι, "to hire," suggest the latter.

When the disciplinary action commenced, both wives were participating in adulterous activity. Hosea found Gomer "loving another man" (3:1). In the following days this very action, which had destroyed the wife and her marriage, would be prohibited. There would be neither sexual intercourse with nor marriage to another man (3:3). Correspondingly, Israel if the buying alluded to marriage, then it would be unlawful for the man to deny his wife her rights and it would be unnecessary to command her not to fornicate.

1 Tushingham, "Reconsideration," p. 154.
2 See A. van Selms, Marriage, p. 76.
5 See ibid., p. 68.
6 Burrows, The Basis of Israelite Marriage, p. 20, wrote that the idiom שִׁבְתִּי נָרָא (3:3), which denotes loss of virginity in Lev. 21:3, more generally means "to marry." See Rowley, "The Marriage of Hosea," p. 69 and n. 1 on that page.
would be debarred from the means of political and cultic promiscuity as well as spiritual intercourse with Yahweh. Those things, which were removed or denied, were all inherently good, but they had been perverted by the harlotrous wives. Like Israel, Gomer was circumscribed with the kindness and faithfulness of the husband, "and she learns to respond to a spiritual communion of love instead of the desires of the senses (3:3)."¹

Wooing Lover²

Yahweh refused to let divorce be the end of His relationship with the people of Israel. He was a Being impelled by love, whose flame of affection and concern could not be quenched. Even though this attitude existed, He had demurred temporarily from making an overt advance toward His former mate until some awakening in her heart and consciousness promised hope of receptivity. Now as He went courting, Hosea used the nuptial imagery to depict the wooing Lover and His condescending, ardent love.³ The "I will allure," "I will bring," "I will speak," "I will give," and "I will make" show that the future was not based on Israel's status but

¹Eichrodt, "The Holy One," p. 270.
²It should be noted at this point that evidence does not exist to warrant the dismissal of 2:16ff. as secondary material. See Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p. 294; Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 51; Mauchline, "The Book of Hosea," p. 563; et al.
³See Knight, Hosea, p. 34.
The Divine love manifested in the allurement of a wanton is both inexplicable and paradoxical.

Within the romantic passage (2:16ff.), a new import is assigned to יְהֹוָה by the eighth-century prophet. In 2:21f., יְהֹוָה is a love with initiating force; for not only is it a cementing factor of the new covenant, but it is also the source of attitude which has motivated Yahweh toward this second relationship.

Hosea, then, had recognized that the tenacious, unrelinquishing love of Yahweh partook of the steadfast nature of יְהֹוָה even though an established relationship did not exist. Consequently, the concept of יְהֹוָה was deepened, was extended beyond the covenant, and now has taken on the clothing of grace. Napier remarked that יְהֹוָה escaped the confines of covenant, or better, it transformed the concept of covenant. Continuing, he wrote:

But hesed becomes operative in this now shattered covenant to such a transforming degree that what was covenant-with-hesed now becomes hesed-with-covenant.

1 See Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 114.
3 See Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 106.
4 Ibid., p. 105.
When the experience of punishment and exile had softened the heart of the recalcitrant and perfidious wife (2:9), Yahweh allured her to the wilderness. The מַגְלָה of verse sixteen means to persuade irresistibly, and overcome resistance. "Like a lover who plots to be alone with his beloved, Yahweh will take the woman into the wilderness."¹ The idea of forceful seduction is found with the root נָפָל,² and in most of these instances it carries a bad connotation (cf. Exod. 22:15; Prov. 1:10; 16:29).³ However, the Divine intentions were holy and for the good of the beloved, not evil and self-fulfilling. Mauchline and Scott were correct in interpreting the allurement or seduction in the good sense.⁴ Therefore, the element of force connected with the term can be and should be retained. The wife who had had an apostatizing bent (11:7) and had possessed a "spirit of harlotry" (5:4) would require some compulsion and "overpowering persuasion."⁵ In Hos. 9:10 it is declared that Yahweh had "found" Israel, but this time it is necessary to "bring her" (2:16), i.e., "cause her to go."

¹Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 44.
²See Neher, The Prophetic Existence, p. 278, n. 3.
⁵Wolff, Hosea, p. 41.
Once in the wilderness, Yahweh spoke tenderly to Israel's heart and promised gifts of love. "Speak to the heart" is clearly courtship language,¹ spoken by a man to a woman whose love he seeks (cf. Gen. 34:3; Judg. 19:3; Ruth 2:13).² They were words of comfort and consolation expressed to the one who had been seduced (Gen. 34:3) or after the infliction of some punishment (Isa. 40:2),³ i.e., to the humbled woman. The affectionate words are followed by the pledge of vineyards, a gift which sealed and validated the "love talk."

The Husband, who had taken the vineyards away (2:14), now in a new courtship pledged a return of that which once had belonged to His spouse. The Hebrew text indicates that Yahweh would give to her "her" former vineyards (2:17). Thus, the gift of vineyards would become again the sign of Israel's marriage with Yahweh. However, this time Israel would know the true source of the boons.

According to the translation of 2:17a in the RSV—"And there I will give her her vineyards"—the presentation of the delightful tokens of love would be proffered in the midst of a barren land as part of the Suitor's approach. However, the literal rendering of the verse indicates that the vineyards would be given "from there" (the wilderness) or "apart

¹Ibid., p. 42.
²Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 44.
³Neher, The Prophetic Existence, p. 278, n. 3.
from there" (דָּבֵר). The promised gifts would become realities when the bride-elect came again to her house. Hence, Yahweh, in the declaration of 2:17, clearly communicated to Israel His complete forgiveness as well as offering her a status like unto but higher than the former. What unfathomable love!

The "וַיְנַשֵּׁא" (2:17) has a second object--"the valley of Achor for a door of hope." Yahweh also committed Himself to reverse the earlier experience of despair and defeat connected with this valley and guaranteed hope and victory for the future. The door of hope and the vineyards were the יָם to be bestowed upon the bride by the gracious God. They would be like the נַשֵּׁא, which strengthened the bonds of affection and imparted to the wife a certain assurance of her future welfare.

In witnessing the loyal love of Yahweh, Hosea gradually came to the realization of how he should treat Gomer. Mays wrote:

The astounding persistence of God's love in the face of betrayal creates the possibility and necessity for the prophet to articulate in his own life the way of God. Buber contended that the usage of the third person ("as Yahweh loves"--3:1) indicated that Yahweh put Himself before

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1Supra, pp. 99ff.
2Supra, p. 101.
3Wolff, Hosea, p. 60.
4Mays, Hosea: A Commentary, p. 56.
the prophet "as a model for his drawing."¹ Yahweh is likewise the pattern in the alternate rendering, "as I have loved."² It was in this manner that Hosea's discovery came and not as a revelation from his own response and love.

G. A. Smith correctly opined:

The man learned the God's sorrow out of his own sorrow; but conversely he was taught to forgive and redeem his wife only by seeing God forgive and redeem the people. Through his relationship with God, Hosea became aware of the "again" of love.³

The command, "Go love . . . as I have loved," may have come to a prophet-man with a presently contrary attitude. Hos. 3:1 intimates a dissimilarity of action and disposition between Yahweh and Hosea. The mixed feelings and turmoil which Hosea found in the heart of Yahweh were also part of his own experience. The "I will love them no more" (9:15) surely reflects the prophet's own sentiment. This repudiated husband, who rightfully had rejected his faithless wife, however, discerned from the Exemplar his shortcomings and his need of positive instruction. The prophet continued to discover that God's ways were unlike those of a man (11:9).

¹Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 112.
²See MT footnote.
³Smith, The Twelve Prophets, I, 250.
Difficulty arises with 3:1 in attempting to decide which verb of the verse receives the force of יִ֖שֶׁר. The adverb logically should be read with יִ֖שֶׁר for two reasons: (1) the position of the adverb in the sentence; and (2) the obvious correspondence between chapter three and chapter one, where there is recorded, "When Yahweh first spoke." When Yahweh spoke again, He directed Hosea to go and love Gomer as He was loving Israel. If the prophet had been loving all along, there was no need for the Divine command to go and love or still love. Moreover, if he had not ceased loving, his own action would have revealed the excellencies of love, not Yahweh's, and would have set an example for Yahweh to surpass. This procedure would contradict the order delineated in 3:1. It was the prophet, who, turning from his anger and humiliation, embarked upon a course blazed by his gracious God. The command to love was possible, for it was not in reference to the sentiment of love but love-as-action -- displayed here as the husband's act of reaching out to the rejected spouse. From Yahweh, Hosea learned that love was the power which achieved ultimate victory.

1Concerning יִ֖שֶׁר with יִ֖שֶׁר, see Buss, Hosea, p. 57, and n. 141 on that page; and Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 47. For יִ֖שֶׁר with יִ֖שֶׁר, see Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 216. For יִ֖שֶׁר with יִ֖שֶׁר, see Leslie, Religion, p. 175; and Smith, "Gomer," pp. 115, 118-19.

2Ward, Hosea: A Theological Commentary, p. 56.

3Wolff, Hosea, p. 60.
Wilderness Vow

The punitive experience of the divorcée had begun to create in her a state of mind and heart comparable to that of the first antenuptial days. Resultantly, Yahweh proceeded to take advantage of the viable situation. Because it was Yahweh who "escorted" her to the wilderness, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation encompassing the journey. As the prophet nuptially limned the ensuing events (2:16ff.), he built upon but spiritualized the realities of the former brid days. The wilderness in this idyllic passage does not denote a geographical place as much as a particular time, a specific situation, and a posture of Israel. It signifies a return to a state reminiscent of the beginnings of salvation-history when Israel was ripe for marriage and fully intent on honoring her oaths. The return to the desert was not part of a Baalistic cycle but an "again" with God, which would unroll in linear time. This excursion, like the desert trek of the past, was the transition period between a bitter experience and the solemnizing of vows. It was a wilderness, because materialism had been replaced by austerity, stubbornness by docility, self-sufficiency by surrender, and corrupting sedentary life by wholesome spirituality. It was a wil-

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derness because Yahweh was alone with Israel. In the absence of her discredited lovers, Israel recognized her true Benefactor. The situation was "well suited for proving anew Yahweh's absolute sovereignty and miraculous power." It was to this "wilderness point" that Israel had to journey to be the wife of Yahweh, and it was at this "point" that Yahweh waited for her.

Because of Yahweh's grace and redemptive purgation, Israel came before the wilderness's altar of vows as a pure (cf. 8:5) and innocent damsels. The phrase, "days of her youth" (2:17), relates the time of the former response but also refers to the status of unstained maidenhood. Mays wrote that the present Israel stood as a "fresh, chaste 'girl', the Exodus behind, the land of promise beckoning, and Yahweh by her side." Again she manifested "covenantal virginity"—singleness of mind and loyalty to one God.

With the chorus of her lovers silenced, she was able to hear the voice of Yahweh. Thus, with the channels of communication open, Yahweh made His proposal of marriage to which Israel gave answer (προσφορά—2:17) or made a positive response.

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1 Wolff, Hosea, p. 41; and G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 146.
2 Wolff, Hosea, p. 42.
5 See McKeating, Amos, Hosea and Micah, p. 86.
The answering presupposes an arrangement of responsibility and provision to which the bride-elect agreed and committed herself. "She will answer" was more than an exchange of words; it was the acceptance of the hand of Yahweh in a new marriage\(^1\) and a pledge of obedient submission. Wolff contended:

That נָּחַ֖י implies both an answer and a "following after" is indicated by the next word "there" (לְךָ) which syntactically presupposes a constructio praegnans, . . . , i.e., a verb of motion is implied: "she answers and follows after"="she follows willingly."\(^2\)

Israel finally had realized that her perfect freedom was in surrender to Yahweh.\(^3\)

Eitan believed that it would be better to identify נָּחַי with the Arabic ṭḥana, "to dwell, stay (in a place)." He went on to write:

The other related connotations of the same verb, such as "to marry," or "to be satisfied with husband," or "be free of want," seem to exhibit further harmony with the general atmosphere of the context, as expressed in אִשְׁתָּךְ וָֽאֵֽתְּכָּה וַקֹּֽכֶּרֶה, v. 18, or in שְׁמֹרְתֵּלִי וַתֵּלֶֽלֶת v. 21.\(^4\)

Although "answer" is the best translation of נָּחַי, the meanings of the Arabic root are definitely suggested in and are

\(^{1}\)Wolff, Hosea, p. 43.

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)Anderson, Rediscovering the Bible, p. 117. The complementing vows of Yahweh are heard in the multiple "I will's" that follow (2:19, 20, etc.).

\(^{4}\)Israel Eitan, "Biblical Studies," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIV (1939), 1.
Wisely accompanying the second betrothal was new nomenclature. The word ℓαδγα ("my Lord," "my master") was removed from the nuptial vocabulary and replaced by ℓεπαγαγα ("my Husband"). The latter term was the antithesis of the earlier divorce formula.² It declared that a holy bond had been formed, for the ℓεπαγαγα had an ἀγαγα (cf. Gen. 2:23). These appellatives laid stress on complementing partnership³ and marital exclusiveness. Indeed, the covenant was only possible between two who were like husband and wife--different in each other's eyes from all others.⁴

Various proposals have been made concerning the necessity for the new terminology. The answer involves several suggestions, for no one reason appears complete in itself. Most obvious, of course, was that ℓαδγα needed to be withdrawn from the language because of the danger of confusing it with the name of the marriage-wrecking, pagan god. The undesirable expression was rejected in favor of ℓεπαγαγα, which had no equivocation.⁵ The exclusion of the epithet ℓαδγα for ℓεπαγαγα evinced

¹See Mauchline, "The Book of Hosea," p. 589, who wrote that to render the verb in terms of the Arabic rhana ("stay," "be satisfied with one's husband") is possible, but "answer" is best.


³Knight, Hosea, p. 58.

⁴Duff, Old Testament Theology, p. 130.

⁵Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 58.
that Israel was no longer the mistress of יֹּלְדָה but had entered a new connubial bond with Yahweh.¹

Also, various scholars have claimed that, unlike יֹּלְדָה, ישפוך connoted a tenderness of relationship.² It was a self-designated title through which Yahweh sought to communicate something of Himself. Where one stressed possession (יֹּלְדָה), the other bespoke the personal and intimate. ישפוך points to the full and unqualified way in which Israel will give herself to Yahweh as to a man who loves, and not merely to a husband to whom she is bound by legal commitment.³

Keil wrote that "calling or naming is a designation of the nature or the true relation of a person or thing." Thus, when Israel addressed Yahweh as Husband, it meant that she stood in a right relationship to Him. It purported that she loved, revered, and acknowledged Him.⁴ The phrase, "my Husband," not only communicated a very personal bond ("my") but also showed that now Israel knew who Yahweh was, the role He was to perform, the provisions He contributed, and the obligations He required ("Husband").

Spiritual Betrothal

The voiced vows between the pair bound them to a new marital experience and were not an attempt at revitalizing the

²See Neufeld, Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws, p. 232, n. 4; and Wolff, Hosea, p. 49.
⁴Keil, The Twelve Minor Prophets, p. 62.
old relationship. The betrothing of this new relation, which
was made emphatic and solemn by the threefold occurrence of
(2:21f.), does not betoken prenuptial dealings but
the finalization of the connubial bond. The payment of the
(vss. 21-22) ruled out the last possibility for the
bride's guardian to declare any objection. Yahweh actually
was saying--"'I will do everything to win your complete and
lasting companionship.'" Thus, the "I will betroth you to
me forever," is really "I will marry you forever."

It has been asserted by some that the law of Deut. 24:
1-4 (cf. Jer. 3:1) disallowed the remarriage of the divorced
Israel and Gomer to their husbands. Hence, if God remarried
His divorced wife, He either did what was impossible accord­
ing to the law, or it must be hypothesized that this law was
not in existence in the eighth century. However, the above
supposition proceeds from a misinterpretation of the passage
in Deuteronomy. The word of the text is that a husband is

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1Harper, Amos and Hosea, p. 243. Wolff, Hosea, p. 52,
said that the repetition attested to the "binding, legal act
of marriage."

2 Supra, p. 95.

3 Wolff, Hosea, p. 52.

4 See Rowley, "The Marriage of Hosea," pp. 91-92; and
Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. by
William Heidt (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1950),
p. 192.

5 Wolff, Hosea, p. 63.

permitted to remarry his divorced wife, who even has engaged in carnal relations in the intervening period, as long as she has not remarried.\(^1\) Therefore, this law does not pertain to Yahweh and Hosea, for their ousted wives had not married but only continued with their prostitution.\(^2\)

The new wife of Yahweh was Israel of the future. At no point did the prophet refer to a saved remnant. He viewed Israel as a moral individual whom God had punished, purged, and remarried.\(^3\) Hence, all of Israel would be involved in the new nuptiality, but directly affected would be that extant portion of the corporate whole.

The preposition \(\tilde{\alpha}\) introduces the elements of the נַבְיִים (2:21f.), which were the contributing elements of intimate relationship and fellowship. In order that Israel might become one with Yahweh, He did for her what she could not do for herself.\(^4\) What He graciously presented to His bride and contributed to the marriage itself solidified the bond and precluded the possibility of another severance.\(^5\) This indestructible union is reflected in the word נַבְיִים, which is "legal terminology for a lifelong, final, unalterable com-

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\(^1\)Ginsberg, "Studies in Hosea 1-3," p. 53.

\(^2\)See R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 35.

\(^3\)See Smith, Prophets of Israel, p. 188; and James, Personalities of the Old Testament, p. 241.

\(^4\)Knight, A Christian Theology, p. 331.

\(^5\)See Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 70.
The bridal payment was, in actuality, Yahweh Himself possessed by His people. The wife, who had become one spiritually with her Husband and had, consequently, acquired genuine, undistorted knowledge of Him, exemplified Him in her ways. The manifestation of His ways and nature came in the mutual, marital relationship and in the wider family circle. The element of עַם created a sense of community and togetherness, wherein there were "kindhearted actions," "spontaneous love," and "the faithful meeting of responsibilities."³ The ephemeral love of the past (6:4) was gone, and in its place was the loyal, "marriage love," which, for so long, Yahweh had desired from Israel (cf. 6:6). The presence of נְבָע, which was the constancy and dependability of God,⁴ protected the bond by obviating the possibility of disloyalty or harlotries. Therefore, the wife-Husband tie, which would remain forever holy, ethical, warm, and deep (נְבָע),⁵ insured the same kind of relationship brother-to-

¹ Wolff, Hosea, p. 52.
² Vawter, Conscience of Israel, p. 121.
³ Wolff, Hosea, p. 52.
⁵ Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, p. 76. See Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, pp. 51ff.
brother (חָשֵׂר). A healthy atmosphere, henceforth, would prevail over the house of Israel because of the loving sensitivity, compassion, and forgiving love present in the new union (טוֹפָנָה). The uninterruptible fellowship and spiritual intercourse guaranteed that the statement, "They do not know Yahweh" (5:4b), never would have to be repeated.

The sum total of these factors or the product of this marriage was דִּיבָר. In describing דִּיבָר, von Rad wrote that it designates the unimpairedness, the wholeness, of a relationship of communion, and so a state of harmonious equilibrium, the balancing of all claims and needs between two parties. Thus, the making of a covenant is intended to secure a state of intactness, orderliness, and rightness between two parties, in order to make possible, on the basis of this legal foundation, a relationship in matters affecting their common life.

The text (2:18-20) seems to record the progression of peace—harmony in nature, peace among peoples, and a concordant marital situation. However, the true progression is the reverse order. When Israel found herself at one with Yahweh, she was at one with nature and the world. As unfaithfulness had led to disaster and death, faithfulness to the covenant

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1See Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, pp. 69f. The new behavior would be directly opposite of that related in 4:2, etc.

2Wolff, Hosea, pp. 52-53.

3Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, p. 84.


5Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 77.

produced harmony and peace. True love between Yahweh and His wife "is the most profound force in a moral purpose for the world which encompasses not only Israel but the whole cosmos and leads to a great transformation." Thus, God's plan of cosmic redemption was to happen through union with His bride.

The prophet "skillfully draws together the motifs of covenant and fertility which answered a major temptation of the time and situation." The knowledge of God and material blessings were the natural result of the spiritual intercourse of the wedded couple. The Husband who earlier had "taken back" all provisions was now dispensing them again. The circle of fertility--Yahweh-heaven-earth-soil-Israel (2:23ff.)--did not provide any point of entry for Baalism. The products, which formerly had caused temptation for Israel, were in the new covenant "servants of God's love." What supposedly had been the harlot's hire was now available in a relationship of fidelity.

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3 Knight, Hosea, p. 25.
4 Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 77.
5 G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 146.
7 Brueggemann, Tradition for Crisis, p. 52.
From the textual evidence, the prophet was convinced that Israel would not refuse the future proposal of marriage. He believed that the unfailing love of Yahweh would be victorious in the end. In light of this victory, perhaps Hosea thought that eventually Gomer also would respond to his love and return. Even though not directly indicated in the text, Wolfe maintained that chapter three gives the impression that Gomer, after being bought and chastised, returned to Hosea to become a faithful wife. Elmslie, who warned that it was "precarious to insist on exact correspondence in analogies," went on to say, however, that the story of Israel gives a clue to the outcome of the Hosea-Gomer episode. It is quite plausible that the triumphant power of love in the one instance suggests the result of love in the other. Indeed, it is very likely that when Hosea referred to the illegitimate children becoming legitimate (2:25), he had in mind his own reversed circumstances.

The future marriage of which Hosea spoke was spiritual, everlasting, harmonious, happy, and cosmically revolutionizing. Even though the explicit terminology does not appear,

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23:5, if it is retained as genuine Hosean material, corroborates Israel's return.
3Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, p. 84.
4Elmslie, How Came Our Faith, p. 268.
5However, it should be remembered that God's love surpasses the highest of man's and, therefore, can accomplish more.
the new marriage was a new covenant.\textsuperscript{1} The "new covenant" concept generally is connected with Jeremiah; however, it appears that the prophet who borrowed the nuptial imagery from Hosea also borrowed the sublime idea of the eschatological covenant with which the imagery climaxed.\textsuperscript{2} Chapter thirty-one of the Book of Jeremiah, which contains a delineation of the "new covenant," reflects the major themes found in Hos. 2:16ff. They are, for example: the faithfulness and everlasting love of Yahweh (31:2f.); the bitterness of the past changed to hope for the future (31:2, 7, 8, 10, etc.); the return to the desert (31:2-6); a punished woman who was now considered virginal (31:4, 21); restored fertility (31:5, 12, 14, etc., especially vs. 27--"I will sow the House of Israel"--cf. Hos. 2:24f.); and the peace among peoples (31:1).

Jeremiah, like Hosea, spoke of a covenant which was not only different from the original one, but was also spiritual in nature and everlasting (31:31ff.). Both prophets attributed to God the responsibility for the covenant's permanence and integrity\textsuperscript{3} and saw resulting from this bond a true relationship between Yahweh and people--"I will be their God, and they will be my people" (31:33b; cf. Hos. 2:25b).

\textsuperscript{1}All features of the covenant were new--new entrance into a new land, new and final communion, new conditions in every area of life, etc.; Wolff, Hosea, p. 55.


To say that Jeremiah dealt with the new covenant more fully than Hosea is in error,\(^1\) for it is doubtful that there could be found a more poignant means of description than the nuptial relationship. The most that can be said is that Jeremiah carried the personalization of religion further.\(^2\) However, it should be noted that Jeremiah said that the covenant would be made with the house of Israel and Judah (31:31), with the individual experiencing its definite effects. Hosea also declared that the covenant was made with the house of Israel (and Judah also, if various verses are retained), and in the reversal of the children's names (2:24f.), he indicated that the individual would be affected. In addition, it is very probable that Hosea coined the phrase, "the Lord thy God,"\(^3\) which is the heart of personal religion. Wolff was apparently correct when he wrote concerning Hosea's eschatological covenant:

Jer. 31:31-34 adds little more to this than the appropriate catchword "new covenant." The basic outline of this theme is Hosean. We find in Hosea the origins of that proclamation which reached its culmination in the New Testament's metaphor of Christ as the bridegroom of his bride, the church.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Cf. Scott, *Book of Hosea*, p. 27.


SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The stated purpose of this study was to examine the background of nuptial imagery and the incisive message that it carries. Specifically, the intent was to determine what stimulated and allowed the Prophet Hosea to use the nuptial figure and then show how he used it as a poignant prophetic message.

In the first chapter of the study, attention was given to the historicity of the prophet's personal story. It was because of this real exposure to sorrow and wounded love, coupled with his prophetic consciousness, that Hosea was enabled to see into the Divine heart. His discovery was that Yahweh was a God of pathos and tenderness who in dealing with Israel had manifested husband-love and concern. Herein is found the power of the prophet's imagery and the reason that the concept of a loving spouse could be associated with Yahweh. Indeed, if Yahweh could not love and feel, the message of Hosea was merely profuse words without meaning or grip.

In the next major division of the dissertation, there was an investigation of the "prophetic situation." A delineation was given of past and present concepts, traditions, and circumstances which could have suggested, in part or in
toto, the imagery to Hosea. From the discussion, it was con­cluded that in Hosea's "situation," more so than at any time before or after him, multiple factors existed that provided a favorable atmosphere for the effective use of nuptial imagery. It is difficult to isolate one factor and label it as the source or stimulus of the imagery. However, from the assimilated evidence, Hosea's personal experience with Gomer and God was adjudged to be the primary source for the nuptial figure.

In the concluding pages of the chapter, there was noted Hosea's unique contribution to the depiction of the Divine­human relationship and to biblical language. It was main­tained that he was the first individual to interpret maritally the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Likewise, it was shown that he was the earliest to use various corollaries of nuptial terminology. His distinctive descriptives depicting the sin of Israel and his practice of representing her as a moral, feminine individual were borrowed and utilized by later individuals.

Because Hosea recognized a true similarity in the basis and structure of the covenant and marriage, an analysis of their relatedness was in order. Hence, in chapter three the appropriateness and applicability of marriage imagery to the covenant was presented. In addition, marital customs, which were identifiable in the Hosean material, were expounded in an attempt to illumine the nuptially-steeped message. Final-
ly, a section was devoted to the survey of the marital language which Hosea associated with the covenant. The following words were discussed: נְקַנְיָה ("engagement love"), which was, for Hosea, the spirit of election; נְנוֹע ("marriage love"); נְנֵקָת (the product of "spiritual intercourse"); and פִּיִּים ("whoredoms"), by which the marriage was violated and with which the prophet described the totality of Israel's life.

The fourth chapter was predominantly an exegetical study of the past, present, and future marital status between Yahweh and Israel as exhibited in the Book of Hosea. The exposition included the pure bride and halcyon, honey-moon period of the past, the infidelity and divorce of the present, and the future betrothal which would be maintained by God Himself.

With Hosea, religion was foremost a personal and intimate relationship with God. This fact is easily apprehended, for he presents it in human analogy. Through his personal sorrow and prophetic awareness, he became receptive to revelation that brought unprecedented advance in the knowledge and understanding of God. No one prior to him had discerned such tenderness and strength in the love of God. Truly, he was the prophet of love in the Old Testament. Because of his association of both Yahweh and the covenant with connubialism, he elevated the institution of marriage, set high guidelines for the roles of mates, and exalted monogamy.
It was through nuptial imagery that Hosea took a misused term (נַּחַל) and gave it new depth and new meaning of strength and responsibility. With it he personalized Israel's history, stringing it on a continuing thread of love. He used the imagery to describe Israel's election and the motivation and joy of her Suitor, Israel's original commitment to Yahweh, her illicit love for the Baalim, her unfaithfulness to Him, the hurt and dilemma in the Husband's heart, her divorce (where Hosea turned a prophetic נַתַּן into a divorce proceeding), her banishment and ignominious treatment, their reconciliation, and the institution of an eschatological marriage. Again, using marital expressions, he castigated all forms of the nation's life and reflected the true forms that government, social dealings, and religious experience should take. Moreover, it was through nuptial imagery that he described the hope of the future—a "new covenant," which provided the eschatological theme of later writers. It was through the new betrothal that there came a complete shift of Yahweh as the desert God to the God of the land and that the problematic aspect of fertility was included in a holy and ethical communion. Lastly, the nuptial imagery disclosed much of Hosea's own experience with Gomer, although the extent to which this occurred cannot be determined.

Indeed, nuptial imagery is the crux interpretum of the book. It is to this prophet, who used marital imagery so poignantly, that the line of nuptial imagery can be traced.
An understanding of Hosea's figure is essential in dealing with its usage in other places of the Old Testament text. Further, it is the basis of the New Testament passages where Israel has been replaced by the Church. Indeed, when the New Testament writers wished to extol the love of Christ for the Church, they used the figures of Husband and Bride.
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