Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery (Isaiah 50:1-3 and 54:1-10, Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2-3)

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CHAPTER 5

Marriage Imagery in Hosea 1-3

‘Prophecy is a reminder that what obtains between God and man is not a contract, but a covenant. [...] and what obtains between God and Israel must be understood, not as a legal, but as a personal relationship, as participation, involvement, tension’. 1

1 The book of Hosea in contemporary research

1.1 Introduction

Within the Old Testament, Hosea 1-3 is the text with the most classical marriage imagery. In these chapters one finds a sustained focus on terms and images related to the notion that the covenant relationship between Yhwh and Israel is equal to a marriage relationship. Different stages in this relationship are highlighted: alienation and divorce, reconciliation and renewal of the partnership.

A discussion of the marriage imagery in these chapters must be preceded by a brief introduction to the book of Hosea and to issues in contemporary research related to the book.

In general two sorts of approaches to the book of Hosea are recognizable, some more historically oriented and others more literarily oriented. Examples of both sorts of approaches will be reviewed here, although it may be noted in advance that the overwhelming majority of research is historically oriented. Synchronic approaches to the book and its composition have only emerged in the last decades and are still in the process of development.

The major commentaries on the book are all historically oriented to some extent. 2 A major portion of the treatment of the text consists of a reconstruction of the text’s historical background. Thus the commentaries of Harper (1905), Wolff (1961), Rudolph (1966), Andersen and Freedman (1980) and Davies (1992) have in common that they devote extensive attention to the life and historical situation of the prophet and to the process of formation of the book. Points of consensus in these commentaries are the following:

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The prophet Hosea was a historical person living and working in the kingdom of Israel before the downfall of Samaria, roughly in the period 752-725 BCE. The book of Hosea partly consists of *verba ipsissima* of the prophet and in that sense reflects events from general history in the eighth century BCE. The narrative description of this period in the book of Kings (2 Kgs. 14-18) is therefore an important aid in the interpretation of Hosea.

The book also contains ‘words of salvation’ from exilic times and a number of references to Judah. This points to considerable editorial activity which must have taken place in Judah during or after the Babylonian exile. Characteristic themes in the book are the critique of the confusion between Yhwh and Baal worship, the radical judgement on kingship and state politics, the notion of Yhwh’s love for Israel and the call to repentance towards Yhwh.

The book contains manifold references to Israel’s past, spanning a broad scope from the story of Jacob (Hos. 12) and the exodus from Egypt to the wilderness period and the kingship of Saul. In this sense the book makes an almost encyclopedic impression.

Hosea has had considerable influence on Jeremiah and on the book of Deuteronomy. The correspondence between Hosea and Deuteronomy is evidenced in vocabulary, thought patterns and themes, such as (a) the emphasis on the land as a gift and on keeping *torah* in the land; (b) the danger of being attracted to gods other than Yhwh and the subsequent forfeit of the land; (c) word combinations such as ‘to remember’ and ‘to forget’.

The book of Hosea is the only prophetic book that is situated exclusively in the northern kingdom and is distinctively Israelite in character and scope.

After these general considerations, a few issues must be further explored: the relationship between Hosea and Deuteronomy, the contribution of Hosea to the history of Israelite religion, the function of Hosea 1-3 within the Book of the Twelve Prophets and, finally, the date of origin of the book. All of these issues pertain to how the book of Hosea has been read and may be read, and thus provide the reader with a sense of orientation when opening the book.

3. This period is supposed by Wolff, *Hosea*, p. xii. Other commentaries only show slight variation.
4. For connections between passages in Hosea and general history, see Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. xi-xii. A well-known example is the reading of Hos. 5:8-11 against the background of the Syro-Ephraimitic war in 733 BCE.
5. The salvation-words and references to Judah are basically two distinct categories, although many of the salvation-words contain references to Judah. It is a moot point whether all references to Judah are the result of editorial activity. On this issue see G. I. Emmerson, *Hosea: An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective* (JSOTS 28), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1984.
8. The book of Amos is situated in the northern kingdom (Amos 1:1) but also contains references to Zion-Jerusalem (2:5; 6:1). In that sense it is not exclusively Israelite in scope.
1.2 The relationship between Hosea and Deuteronomy

A particular theme in the study of Hosea has been its relationship with Deuteronomy. The prevailing view since Wellhausen has been that Hosea is prior to Deuteronomy. Contrary to this idea, D. Stuart (1987) formulated the view that elements in Hosea are dependent on Deuteronomy. In his view the prophetic writings are only understandable in light of an existing covenant tradition with its concomitant blessing-and-curse texts. Prophetic texts utilize such blessing-and-curse texts as material for their oracles of judgement or salvation. The prophets do not 'invent' forms of punishment or blessing but simply 'make reference' to what 'is already incorporated in the Sinai covenant'.

Especially texts such as Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-32 provide the prophets with material for their curses and blessings. These texts formulate in a concentrated manner the consequences of keeping or forsaking the covenant. By using this material the prophets are able to confront the people with the results of their covenant disloyalty and with the life-or-death alternative that the covenant poses. The prophetic books thus consist for one part of references to the contemporary behaviour of the people, the so-called 'local evidence', and for the other part of the announcement of curses or blessings as a consequence of this evidence.

Stuart categorizes the curses and blessings of the Pentateuch into various types, in order to register as precisely as possible the parallels between the Pentateuchal material and the prophetic texts. Depending on where the accent lies, e.g., in the field of agriculture, cult, politics or war, he establishes several different types of curses and blessings. Hosea 2:13, for example, may be interpreted as an example of the curse type 'rejection of the cult', and 2:14 as an example of the curse type 'agricultural disaster'.

Apart from the fact that Stuart reverses the relation of dependence between Hosea and Deuteronomy, his approach is different from the majority position in two respects. First, Stuart does not approach the correspondence between Hosea and Deuteronomy as a unique phenomenon but as a characteristic of all prophetic books. In his view all prophetic writings refer back to the Deuteronomic covenant tradition and to the blessings and curses related to this tradition. Second, Stuart does not focus upon isolated instances of corresponding vocabulary between Hosea and Deuteronomy (terms such as 'to forget', 'other gods', 'to forsake') but on specific texts in the book of Deuteronomy (chapters 28-32) and the way in which the prophetic texts reuse this material. He further moves beyond the mere observation of correspondences and offers an explanation for the similarities be-

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11. Cf. Stuart, Hosea, p. XXXII.
13. The reference list with 27 types of curses and 10 types of blessings is found on pp. XXXII-XLII.
14. See Stuart, Hosea, pp. 51-52. These curse types are found in Lev. 26:31; Lev. 26:20 and Deut. 28:39. Stuart relates the following verses in Hosea 1-3 to Pentateuchal curse and blessing texts: 1:6; 9: 2:1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12-14, 17, 20, 23-24; 3:4-5 (Stuart, Hosea, pp. 31-38, 52, 58-61, 67-68).
tween Hosea and Deuteronomy, by suggesting that these may be understood in view of the common focus on the covenant between God and Israel.

As a consequence of his views, Stuart has to face the issue of how Hosea and Deuteronomy relate precisely in chronological terms. For if Deuteronomy – and not only the thoughts but the book in its final form – is prior to Hosea, as Stuart assumes, two possibilities are left: one must reconsider either the widely accepted time of origin of the book of Hosea (8th century) or that of the book of Deuteronomy (6th century). Stuart solves this dilemma by dating the book of Deuteronomy much earlier than usual and holding it to be ‘of Mosaic origin’. In his view Deuteronomy in its written form originates in the second millennium BCE.\(^\text{15}\)

While such an early date for the book of Deuteronomy is highly unlikely and out of touch with scholarly consensus, other elements in Stuart’s approach merit appreciation. Particularly the idea that the notion of an existing covenant relation between Yhwh and Israel, together with its blessing-and-curse implications, serves as background for much that is found in the book of Hosea, is worth contemplating. How else can the confrontational atmosphere in the book be understood if not in the light of an existing and endangered relationship between Yhwh and Israel? At least in the conceptual sphere such a connection between Hosea and the notion of covenant must be assumed. The views of Stuart thus bring a significant hermeneutical insight to the fore, which, slightly reformulated, is that the book of Hosea is not a book ‘on its own’ but may be understood as a recapitulation of concerns and promises from the covenant tradition in view of the contemporary situation.\(^\text{16}\)

1.3 Hosea and the history of Israelite religion

B. Lang (1983) has investigated the relation of Hosea and Deuteronomy from a perspective of the history of religion. In Lang’s view, the book of Hosea is the ‘oldest, classical document’ of the ‘Yhwh-alone’ movement. It is an important witness to the opposition to polytheism and represents an early stage within the gradual development of the Israelite religion from polytheism to monotheism. Two characteristic elements in the book bring this out.\(^\text{17}\)

The first element is Hosea’s criticism of other gods besides Yhwh. Lang argues that Hosea extends the opposition against Baal, that originates with Elijah in the ninth century, to a rejection of all other deities. Hosea is the first to use the plural ‘baals’ and to refer with this term not only to various local manifestations of Baal but to other deities as such.\(^\text{18}\) By denouncing the combined worship of

\(^{15}\) Stuart, *Hosea*, p. 15.


\(^{18}\) On the basis of a comparative analysis of texts such as Hos. 3:1; 4:7; 11:2; 13:4 and Hos. 2:15; 2:19, Lang (Monotheism, p. 31) interprets the term ‘baalim’ as an inclusive term for all other gods that are rivals of Yhwh. The major argument for this view is the plural form of the word **בּלִים**.
Yhwh and other deities, the book of Hosea makes a significant contribution to the development of exclusive Yhwh worship.

The second contribution of Hosea to the shaping of the Yhwh-alone ideal lies in his criticism of temple prostitution. Lang bases this idea on a particular text-interpretation. He assumes that some references to prostitution in the book (Hos. 4:13-14; 6:10) must be understood as indications of literal prostitution within a cultic setting. Hosea attacks such prostitution that takes place in connection to worship and the temple (1:2-3; 4:13-14; 6:10). Lang explains these attacks as an effort of Hosea to free the cult of Yhwh from sexual connotations and elements that may obscure the concentration upon Yhwh alone.¹⁹

Lang's approach raises several questions. A first question pertains to the idea that the book of Hosea and its themes faithfully reflect the historical situation in Israel in the eighth century BCE. It does not necessarily seem to be the case that if a book is situated in a particular time, it also stems from that time and reflects the concerns of that time. If such an identification is to be made, I think it should be argued. Another question is to which extent Hosea's ideas concerning exclusive Yhwh worship seem to be new for his audience, judged from a literary point of view. Would it make sense that the prophet refers to the harlotry of the land in his opening words (1:2), if the people do not share his understanding that the covenant with Yhwh is exclusive? Would it make sense to make use of the imagery of a divorce between Yhwh and Israel (2:4) when the idea of an exclusive relation is new in itself? In this light the idea that the prophet introduces these themes to his audience needs more elaboration. A final question is whether it is not possible - and equally justified - to interpret the opposition Yhwh-Baal in the book of Hosea in terms of an opposition between genuine and perverted Yhwh worship, and to understand this opposition as an ongoing point of concern during the exile and the Second Temple Period.²⁰

In view of these points, and in view of the present variety of opinions concerning the interpretation of the religious polemics in Hosea 2, it seems that the contribution of the book of Hosea to the history of Israelite religion is not so easily established as Lang suggests.

1.4 Literary and communication-oriented approaches

Besides the predominant historical-biographical approach to the book of Hosea, there has been gradually more attention for features of literary composition in the text. Rudolph (1966) in the preface to his commentary pointed to the many

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¹⁹. Lang presents an ambivalent view with respect to the issue of sacred prostitution. On the one hand, texts as Hos. 4:13-14; 6:10; 9:1 in his view unambiguously point to prostitution that is related to the cult. On the other hand Lang asserts (Monotheism, p. 24) that: 'Contrary to widespread assertion, there is no evidence for a religious or magical meaning of copulation, such as the [...] experience of the divine in orgasm or the promotion of fertility. According to biblical texts, the brothel is one of the temple's sources of income, perhaps an important one'. The work in such brothels is business of a profane sort.

instances of wordplay in the book. Andersen and Freedman (1980) pay considerable attention to the poetic and literary arrangement of the text on the micro-level of lines and pairs of lines. In course of time detailed investigations of the literary structure of one chapter have appeared, such as the studies of Hosea 2 by Cassuto (1927), Krzyna (1969) and Clines (1978) evidence.

Of particular interest in this connection are the studies of Buss (1969) and Van Wieringen (1996). These authors focus on aspects of communication within the book Hosea and on the possible relations between the speakers in the text and the audiences in the extra-textual reality. The approach of M.J. Buss is inspired by form criticism and shows a shift in the direction of a more synchronic study and attention for the sociological and communicative aspects of the text. His point of departure is that the prophetic words of Hosea are not only to be studied as literature, but also as a word that ‘functions’ as a means of communication from one person to another.

Buss discusses the roles of speakers and addressees in the prophecies of Hosea and the sudden changes in these roles such as in Hosea 1:9 and 2:21-22. His main interest is to investigate the correlations between a particular mode of speech and a particular content. What does the form say about the content? In this manner, Buss investigates the differences between divine and prophetic formulations of accusations, or between salvation statements that employ second person and those that employ third person forms. Special notice is taken of the first person speeches in which the people of Israel are represented as speaking (6:1-3; 14:2-4). Buss qualifies these speeches as ‘words suggested by Hosea to the people’ in the setting of a liturgy of repentance.

On the whole, it appears that though Buss starts with the idea that the different speech forms in Hosea need to be seen as a mode of communication, his analysis of the speaker and addressee roles comes close to classical form criticism. His particular interest lies in the cultic setting and the comparative analysis of the speech forms that are present in the book of Hosea. The way in which the text and the contemporary reader communicate is not focused on. In Buss’ view speaker and addressee remain historical categories.

This is different in the communication analysis of Hosea offered by A. van Wieringen. In an exploratory article, Van Wieringen argues that a synchronic study of the composition of the book of Hosea must not only consist of a study of semantic connections within the book, but also take the audience or readers of the

23. See the section on communication in Buss, *Prophetic Word*, pp. 59-80. With this emphasis on the communication aspect of a prophetic text, Buss develops and modifies Günkel’s concept of the Sitz im Leben of a text (pp. 1-2).
book into account as a necessary category for the interpretation. This audience is understood to include the second person addressees in the book as well as ancient and modern readers of the book.

In the communication-oriented analysis that the author subsequently presents, two criteria are utilized for the distinction of separate text units. The first is the type of speech, which may be either narrative or discourse, and the second is the communication situation and the contours of the roles of speaker and addressee. Van Wieringen is particularly interested in the latter and in the way in which changes in the communication situation in the text affect the communication of readers with the text. A significant assumption in this respect is that speeches with a second person addressee and with a first person plural speaker involve the audience more directly than do third person speeches.

In the outline of the book of Hosea, the author discerns a gradually intensifying involvement of the reader with the text. This development is connected to the succession of narrative in the first part of the book (Hosea 1-3) and discourse in the second part (Hosea 4-14). Narrative generally presupposes distance between text and reader. This distance is greatest in third person narratives, whereas in the first person narrative in Hosea 3 this distance is diminished. In discursive speech the reader is by definition more engaged by the text than in narrative speech. This involvement can take different forms, but especially the switches from speaking-about to speaking-to and the occurrence of first person plural speeches mark a heightened involvement of the reader with the text. Such passages are likely to have a special significance from the viewpoint of content as well.

Van Wieringen is thus concerned to mark out particular sections in the book with a special communicational effect and to investigate how these sections contribute to the composition of the book. The author sees the study of the interaction between text and audience as a complementary perspective to the study of literary aspects of the book, a view that I basically share. My impression is, however, that in the model of Van Wieringen two concepts of communication are bundled in a manner which is not completely thought through. When taking up the categories of narrative and discourse and the distinct communication situations connected to these speech types, the author builds on the linguistic theory of Schneider and Weinrich. When on the other hand the categories of speaker and addressee are utilized and brought in relation to the extra-textual reader, the author comes close to the terminology of reader-response criticism and the communication model of Jakobson. The combination of these two sorts of theories, however, requires more methodological reflection.

A problematic aspect is that the two theories do not use the terms 'communication', 'text' and 'reader' in the same way. The linguistic theory points to the sort of communication that is present within the text as indicated by the type of speech: this type of communication cannot simply be identified with the sort of communication between text and reader. The distinction between narrative and discourse belongs to the theory of Schneider and Weinrich, but the distinction between first and third person narrative belongs to a model of communication.

like that of Jakobson, in which speaker and hearer are conceived of as standing beside the text while they are communicating with the text as message, rather than that they communicate within the text. Put differently, it seems that the theory of Schneider and Weinrich works with the category of an hypothetical audience, as a construction that helps us to understand the force of the narrative and discursive speech forms, while Jakobson’s model works with an audience that is the real rather than the hypothetical recipient of the message. In the latter case the audience is a category that is text external, although it may have a basis within the text, while in the former case the audience is somehow text internal, although it cannot be strictly identified with the person addressed in second person speech. One of the points of Schneider’s theory is after all that the verbal forms in two sequences of direct speech can involve the audience in different ways, depending on whether the address is formulated in yiqtol or qatal forms. Schneider’s category of audience is, thus, principally distinct from the category of audience that is found through the instances of second person speech in a text. The former is a theoretical and dynamic category that moves to and from what is spoken within the text, the latter is a more substantial and static category that is related to the second and first person speeches in the text.

In conclusion, two questions illustrate the problems of this approach: on what account is the contemporary reader necessarily more involved in a first person narrative than in a third person narrative? In which sense is the narrative in Hosea 1 less engaging for the contemporary reader than the discourse speech in Hosea 2:4-25, given that the type of speech in both sections is different? Aspects of content or reflections about the nature of prophetic speech – even when it is narrative – may play a role here as well. I can only conclude that the transferral of linguistic categories to the level of the communication between text and reader is hazardous and requires more reflection and explanation.

1.5 Hosea and the Book of the Twelve

A different light has been cast on Hosea 1-3 by P.R. House (1990), who examines the book of Hosea as part of the Book of the Twelve. In his view the books from Hosea to Malachi may be seen as an unity. As such the collection displays a threefold structure, in which a gradual shift in emphasis is visible from the sins of Israel and the nations (in Hosea to Micah) and the punishment of these sins (in Nahum to Zephaniah) to the restoration of the people and the cosmos (Haggai to Malachi).

The first three chapters of Hosea have a special significance in this respect. They function as opening section not only of the book of Hosea but also of the

29. For an alternative approach see chapter 3 in this book. I have utilized the insights of Schneider there for a better understanding of the verbal forms and the syntactic structure of the text. On the other hand I have proposed to analyze the communicative character of the text in terms of a threefold distinction between the categories of the primary audience, implied audience and contemporary readers (see § 3.3 above).
The major themes of the Book of the Twelve come here to the fore in a surprisingly compact manner: the broken covenant relationship depicted as a broken marriage relationship, the sins of Israel (Hos. 1), the judgement of Yhwh (Hos. 2:4-25) and the future after judgement (Hos. 3). In the marriage gifts (Hos. 2:21-22) the criteria for the relation between God and Israel are provided and these elements fulfill a key role in the other eleven books as well. Hosea 1-3 may therefore be regarded as a prologue to the entire Book of the Twelve.

Without discussing the work of House in detail, it seems that his theory that the Book of the Twelve forms an unified prophecy is flawed. The idea that the books Hosea-Malachi have one plot seems to be an oversimplification and an underestimation of the individual dynamics of each book. At the same time, the way in which House points to the general and almost paradigmatic character of the first three chapters of Hosea and their significant contribution to the book of Hosea, and perhaps to the Book of the Twelve as well, is insightful.

1.6 The provenance of the book

A final issue that must be discussed here is the provenance of the book Hosea. Although my own approach to Hosea 1-3 is synchronic in design, the discussion with other interpreters inevitably involves a confrontation with diachronic views and therefore some reflection on diachronic matters is required.

Scholars have generally adopted the view that the book of Hosea consists of a mixture of original material related to the eighth-century prophet Hosea and secondary insertions by Judean editors. Hosea 1-3 would thus consist of two layers of material, an original and a secondary layer. The additional material within Hosea 1-3 would roughly consist of Hosea 1:1, 7; 2:1-3, 23-25; 3:5.33

My point of departure will be to explain the text as it presently is. I will deal with the text as a presentation of a particular world of meaning, rather than approach it as a representation of the words of a prophet, historical events or certain concerns of authors or editors. If it turns out that parts of the text presuppose certain other texts or specific historical events, I tend to assume that in such a case the whole text requires a date that corresponds to such observations. The references to the exile of Judah (Hos. 2:1-3) and the renewed presence of a Davidic king (3:5) suggest that these passages postdate the year 586 BCE. The book of Hosea as a whole would then have to be a creation of the Babylonian or early Persian period.

In this connection I find a point of orientation in the reflections submitted by E. Day in the first decade of this century.34 With great foresight Day wrote:

32. See House, Unity, p. 74-76.
33. There are minimalist and maximalist positions with respect to what is to be regarded as secondary. Harper (Hosea, pp. CLX-CLXI) argues for the secondary nature of Hos. 1:1, 7; 2:1-3, 8-9, 16-17, 20-25; 3:5. Tending to a more minimalist view are Jeremias ('Hoseabuch', p. 392); Wolff (Hosea, passim) and Emmerson, Israelite Prophet, pp. 39-40, 88-104.
My study of this prophetic piece of less than three thousand words, the length of an average sermon, forbids my accepting it as made up of outlines of public addresses covering many years of labor, and years, too, when a public speaker out of sympathy with the authorities might easily have incurred their disfavor. I believe it to be a sort of tractate, written perhaps at a sitting, in white heat by an intense Israelitish patriot, reformer and spiritual guide of his people. It is a piece of literature that was lighted up by rare imaginative touches, despite some gross and revolting simile, and warmed with intensest feeling.35

A study of the themes in the book led Day to the conclusion that the book of Hosea is best understood as a creation from the Persian times. As a working hypothesis this view underlies the following study of Hosea 1-3.

The main arguments for Day to seek the origins of Hosea in the Persian period are (1) the correspondences between Hosea and Deuteronomy, which Day explains in terms of the influence of Deuteronomic thought on Hosea (Day, pp. 121-125); (2) the frequent references to contacts with Assur and Egypt (Hos. 7:8-11; 8:9; 10:6; 12:2), which Day interprets as a reaction to strong migration tendencies away from Judah in Persian times; (3) the Zionistic salvation passages which may then be regarded as an integral part of the book (pp. 125-126). In the view of Day, the prophet Hosea is motivated by a concern for the restoration of Zion and the creation of a national identity in Judah inspired by Deuteronomy and for this reason opposes the migration of Judeans to foreign countries (espec. pp. 106-107, 117-121). In many respects, the views of Day exhibit correspondences with the views laid down by P.R. Davies in his In Search of 'Ancient Israel' (JSOTS 148), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 19952 (pp. 117-120 and 90-107).

2 Preliminary remarks on Hosea 1-3

My endeavour to present here a fresh interpretation of Hosea 1-3 is done with the following considerations in mind.

In the first place I will not approach Hosea 1-3 as a commentary on historical reality or as an account of events that previously took place in historical reality. It is particularly essential to state this in view of the marriage fortunes of Hosea and Gomer described in Hosea 1. The measure of reality that should be attributed to this marriage has been a perennial topic of interest and dissent among scholars. Generations of scholars have devoted themselves to a reconstruction of the events, which could on the one hand save the historical reality of the events and on the other hand excuse Yhwh and the prophet from unethical behaviour as much as possible. This issue will here be further left aside. The text presents certain events as real and it is this perspective – or presentation – of the text that is our main point of concern.

In the second place, Hosea 1-3 portrays a marriage relationship on two levels. The ins and outs of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel are illustrated by the human marriage of Hosea and Gomer, the prophet and the pros-

tute, who function as prototype for Yhwh and Israel. At the same time, the stories of Hosea and Gomer and of Yhwh and Israel almost blend into one, so that the two levels of speech are often hardly distinguishable. In this connection it is appropriate to emphasize that I will read the text primarily as dealing with Yhwh and Israel. This relationship is the tenor of the metaphor and I assume it to be the principal theme of the text. Though it is not necessary to repeat this here in full, it remains important to be explicit at the same time about the elements in the text which are unacceptable from a feminist point of view. It is vital for every interpreter to call attention to this aspect of the text in order to avoid that such images are reproduced uncritically and without reflection in the interpretation.

In the third place, I take into account that the marriage imagery in Hosea 1-3 functions predominantly in a context of judgement. This consideration alerts one to the observation that the language in these chapters is neither descriptive nor moderate, but passionate, polemic, provocative, prophetic and nonconformist.

Finally I will approach Hosea 1-3 with two special questions in mind. First, I will approach it as a literary composition and examine the compositional features of this text. Such a synchronic text study will be revealing in itself. Second, I wish to reflect upon the function and implications of the marriage imagery in this text. If marital partnership is the paradigm within which the disloyalty of Israel is treated and judgement is announced, what does this imply for the interpretation of such judgement? How should the use of such emotional and intimate images in order to tell the story of Israel’s disloyalty and Yhwh’s loyalty be interpreted? In relation to these two issues the text will be followed and interpreted. The interpretation of the text offered here is thus no full commentary but rather a thematic and selective discussion of the text.

3 The literary structure of Hosea 1-3

The first three chapters of Hosea present two stories of a marriage relationship that has significance on two levels. The events in the marriage relationship on one level have to do with the prophet and his wife and on the other level relate to Yhwh and his partner Israel.

Within Hosea 1-3 one can recognize an alternation of narrative and discursive speech.

Hosea 1 narrative
Hosea 2 discourse
Hosea 3 narrative

In this respect the variation between the third person narrative in chapter 1 and the first person narrative in chapter 3 also attracts attention:

Hosea 1 third person narrative and Yhwh said to Hosea
Hosea 3 first person narrative and Yhwh said to me

This could suggest that a concentric structure is present in which the discourse in Hosea 2 is situated between two narrative sections in Hosea 1 and 3. It is
important, however, to note that these chapters primarily have a twofold struc-
ture. Twice the prophet receives the command to 'take' or 'love' a woman in
order to represent the marriage relation between Yhwh and Israel. On that account
Hosea 1-2 and Hosea 3 constitute the two major units within these chapters.

Hosea 1-2 Go and take a woman (Hos. 1:2)
Hosea 3 Go again and love a woman (Hos. 3:1)

Within Hosea 1-2 three major sections may be distinguished. A key aspect
binding these sections together are the names of the three children, Jezreel, Lo-
Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi. While the negative aspect of these names dominates in
Hosea 1, the reversal of the negative aspect in these names is envisioned both in
Hosea 2:2-3 and in Hosea 2:4-25.

Hosea 1 judgement
Hosea 2:1-3 anticipation of future rehabilitation
Hosea 2:4-25 from judgement to future rehabilitation

Further features of structure and composition will be brought to the fore in the
treatment of the specific chapters.

4 Translation and Notes to Hosea 1-2

1:1. The word of Yhwh
    that came to Hosea son of Beeri
    in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Jehizkiah
    kings of Judah
    and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash
    king of Israel.
2. The beginning of what Yhwh has spoken through Hosea:
    Yhwh said to Hosea:
        Go and take for yourself a woman of harlotry
        and children of harlotry
        for the land commits harlotry, yes harlotry
        away from Yhwh.
3. So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim
    and she became pregnant and bore him a son.
4. And Yhwh said to him:
    Call his name Jezreel, God-sows
    for yet a little while
    and I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel
    upon the house of Jehu
    and I will cause to cease the kingship
    of the house of Israel.
5. And on that day
    that I will break the bow of Israel
    in the valley of Jezreel.
6. And she became pregnant again and bore a daughter
and he said to him:
   Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, Not-will-she-be-given-compassion
   for no longer
   will I have compassion on the house of Israel,
   let alone that I would forgive, yes forgive them!

7. But on the house of Judah I will have compassion
   and I will set them free by Yhwh their god
   but I will not set them free
   by bow nor by sword nor by war
   by horses nor by horsemen.

8. And after she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah
   she became pregnant and bore a son.

9. And he said:
   Call his name Lo-Ammi, Not-my-people
   for you are not my people
   and I am Not-the-Present-one for you.

2:1. But once the number of the children of Israel shall be
   like the sand of the sea
   which can neither be measured nor numbered
   and instead of that it was said to them:
      You are not my people
   it will be said to them:
      Children of the living god.

2. And the children of Judah shall gather together with the children of Israel
   and they shall appoint themselves one head
   and go up out of the land:
   for great is the day of Jezreel.

3. Say then to your brothers: Ammi, My-people
   and to your sisters: Ruhamah, Compassion-will-come-to-you.

4. Contend with your mother, contend
   for she is not my wife
   and I am not her husband
   let she remove her harlotry from her face
   and her adultery from between her breasts

5. lest I will strip her naked
   and position her as on the day that she was born
   and make her like a wilderness
   and set her like a parched land
   and let her die of thirst.

6. On her children I will not have compassion
   for they are children of harlotry.
7. For their mother has committed harlotry
   she that was pregnant with them has acted shamefully
   for she said:
   I will go after my lovers
   that give me my bread and my water
   my wool and my flax
   my oil and my drinks.

8. Therefore, look I will hedge up your way with thornbushes
   and raise up a stone wall for her
   so that she will not find her paths.

9. And she shall pursue her lovers
   but not overtake them
   she shall seek but not find them
   then she shall say:
   I will go and return to my first husband
   for it was better for me then than now.

10. Yet she does not seem to know
    that it was I who gave her
    the grain, the must and the fresh oil
    who lavished silver upon her and gold
    but they used it for the Baal!

11. Therefore I will return and take my grain in its time
    my must in its season
    I will rescue my wool and my flax
    which are to cover her nakedness.

12. Now I will uncover her shame
    before the eyes of her lovers
    and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

13. I will cause to cease all her joy
    her festival, her new month and her sabbath
    yes all her seasons of feast.

14. And I will lay waste her vine and her fig tree
    of which she said:
    These are my payment
    that my lovers gave to me.
    I will make them into a bush
    and the beasts of the field shall eat them away.

15. And I will visit upon her the days of the baals
    for which she burns incense offerings
    and decks herself with her rings and her jewellery
    and goes after her lovers:
    but me she has forgotten!
    – speech of Yhwh –.

16. Therefore, look I will try to persuade her
    make her go to the wilderness
    and speak to her heart.
17. And I will give her her vineyards from there
and turn the valley of Achor into a gate of hope
and she shall respond there as in the days of her youth
as on the day of her going up out of the land of Egypt.

18. And on that day
- speech of Yhwh -
you will call: My husband!
and no longer will you call me: My Baal!

19. And I will remove the names of the baals from her mouth
and they will no longer be remembered by their name.

20. I will make a covenant for them on that day
with the beasts of the field
with the birds of heaven
and the creeping creatures of the ground;
and bow and sword and war
I will break out of the land
and I will enable them to lie down in safety.

21. And I will take you as my bride forever
I will take you as my bride with righteousness and justice
with loving-kindness and compassion.

22. I will take you as my bride with faithfulness
and you will know Yhwh.

23. And on that day
I shall respond - speech of Yhwh -
I shall respond to the heavens
and they shall respond to the land.

24. And the land responds
to the grain, to the must and to the fresh oil;
and they respond to Jezreel.

25. And I will sow her for me in the land
and I will have compassion upon Lo-Ruhamah
and I will say to Lo-Ammi: You are my people!
and he will say: My god!

Textcritical, grammatical and syntactical notes on the translation

Hosea 1:2a
- The formulation in Hos. 1:2a raises questions for three reasons: (a) the combination of the noun נְבִיָּה in the construct state with a verbal clause as second part of the construction is unusual from a grammatical point of view; (b) the preposition ב may either be translated as 'with Hosea' or 'through Hosea'; (c) vs. 2a is marked as a separate unit in the Masoretic text and this raises the question of its syntactical relation to vs. 2b. These aspects are reflected in the variety of translations of this verse: ‘When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea...’ (RSV, NRSV); ‘At the beginning, when Yahweh spoke with Hosea, then Yahweh said to Hosea’
HOSEA 1:2

(Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 3); ‘The beginning of Yahweh’s speaking through Hosea’ (Stuart, Hosea, p. 22).

- Ad (a): It is not necessary to change the verb in vs. 2a to a noun (cf. LXX and BHS app.). JM § 129p3 lists other examples of verbal clauses that function as the second part (‘nomen rectum’) in a construct state (including the example of Hosea 1:2). It is thus not impossible that verbal clauses function as a ‘nominal block’ within a construct state.

- Ad (b): The preposition ב has occasioned discussion concerning the text’s presentation of the prophetic office. Is Yhwh speaking with the prophet in the intimacy of the divine council (so Harper, Hosea, p. 207, and Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, p. 155), into or at the prophet, or through the prophet as his agent and representative (cf. NRSV, RSV)? The instrumental meaning of ב and the translation ‘through the prophet’ appear to be the most likely. The first reason is that ב in other texts also reflects the idea that the prophet functions as an agent of God (cf. Num. 12:2; 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kgs. 22:28). The second argument is that parallel to the use of ב the combination תִּרְצוּ מ is found in the context of prophecy, and this latter phrase clearly refers to instrumentality (cf. Mal. 1:1; Hos. 12:11; Dan. 9:10). The opposite idea that the expression ב refers to ‘intimate conversation between God and the prophet in the divine council’ (so Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, pp. 154-155, with reference to, e.g., Hab. 2:1; Zech. 1:9, 13-14) holds only for a select number of cases in which the prophet is taken up in the hidden sphere of God in a ‘dream’ or ‘night-vision’. This does not apply to Hosea 1:2 nor to a great many other texts in which the emphasis is on the public sphere in which the prophet speaks as an agent of Yhwh. In Hosea 1:2, therefore, I assume that Yhwh speaks ‘through’ the prophet.

- Ad (c): Verse 2a is in the Masoretic text marked as a separate unit by a so-called pisqah be’emtsa pasuq, a section division in the middle of a verse (see E. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Minneapolis: Fortress Press/Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992, p. 53). This suggests that the Masoretes interpreted the first line of vs. 2 as a separate element, regarding it as an additional element belonging to the superscription or as a subheading marking a certain portion of the book as the ‘beginning’. Many commentaries and translations disregard this sign and connect verse 2a syntactically to verse 2b (NRSV, see above). Following the Masoretic reading instruction, however, one must regard verse 2a as a separate line and interpret it as a subheading. How much text falls under this heading? Should one presume that this superscription qualifies Hos. 1:2b-9 (so Wolff, Hosea, p. 12) or the whole of Hos. 1-3 as the beginning? Since Hos. 4:1 marks the start of a new unit (cf. the expression ‘word of Yhwh’ in 1:1 and 4:1), it seems likely that chapters 1-3 are marked as the beginning of the words spoken through Hosea. The word ‘beginning’ should further presumably not be taken only in a temporal sense, but also in a qualitative sense (‘principle’).

Hosea 1:4

The noun מָלָכָה מְלָכָה (HAL 2, p. 563). The word is rare, occurring only in Jos. 13:12, 21-31; 1 Sam. 15:28; 2 Sam. 16:3; Jer. 26:1; Hos. 1:4 (9 times). In Hos. 13 it refers to the
area of dominion of a certain king. In 1 Sam. 15 and 2 Sam. 16 it refers to the
dignity that belongs to a person in a royal function (probably also in Jer.). The
word conveys a sense of solemnity (cf. 1 Sam. 15:3) and points not only to
‘kingdom’ but also to the royal function and ‘kingship’ as such.

Hosea 1:6

- The last clause of vs. 6 forms a notorious problem. This is reflected by the
variety of translations: ‘for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or
forgive them’ (NRSV); ‘I will no longer have compassion on the family of
Israel since I have been utterly betrayed by them’ (Stuart, Hosea, p. 23);
‘Denn nicht mehr schenke ich Israels Haus mein Erbarmen, entzieh’s ihnen
vielmehr’ (Wolff, Hosea, pp. 6-7). The main problem is that while one would
expect a negation in the clause, such a negation (‘I will surely not forgive
them’) does not seem to be present. For these reasons people have turned to
other meanings than are usual for the verb יָשָׁנָא or have resorted to text-critical
variations. Generally speaking, the verb יָשָׁנָא would carry in the present
context the meaning ‘to forgive’. In terms of text-criticism, a number of
emendations have been suggested. The rendering of the LXX, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀντι-
τάσσομενος αὐτοπαξομαί αὐτοὺς (‘but I will be hostile to them, yes
hostile’), gave rise to a reconstruction of the Hebrew Vorlage as יָשָׁנ (‘to
hate’, so BHS) or יָשָׁנ (‘to trick, to deceive’, so Stuart, Hosea, p. 23, who reads
a Hophal form but admits that the link between the LXX and this Hebrew verb is
not strong). The rendering of the Vulgate, ‘quia non addam ultra misereri
domui Israhel sed obliviscam eorum’, reflects yet another interpreta-
tion of the Hebrew text (the verb יָשָׁנ, ‘to forget’). The diversity of the
old translations, however, does not find support in the Hebrew manuscripts
and therefore may reflect a wrestling with the same Hebrew text as found in
the MT. In terms of solutions to the present text, Wolff has submitted the
proposal that the object ‘compassion’ should be supplemented as object to the
verb יָשָׁנ. Wolff assumes that the verb carries the meaning ‘to take away’ and
translates vs. 6e-f as ‘Denn nicht mehr schenke ich Israels Haus mein
Erbarmen, entzieh’s ihnen vielmehr’ (Wolff, Hosea, p. 7). The problems with
this proposal are that the verb יָשָׁנ + יָהֳウェ as subject almost always has
the meaning ‘to forgive’ rather than ‘to take away’ (HAL 3, p. 685, cf. Ex.
34:7; Hos. 14:3; Ps. 99:8) and that the noun ‘compassion’ does not occur in
the immediate context. Another proposal has been offered by Andersen and
Freedman (Hosea, pp. 189-190). These scholars assume a double-duty
function of the particle יָכ in vs. 6d, arguing that the negative force of this
phrase extends to vs. 6f and vs. 7a-b. Such a double-duty function of יָכ is not
uncommon in Hebrew (cf. Jer. 22:10; Isa. 38:18; Num. 23:19), but there is
little evidence for such within a series of clauses of which one starts with יָכ.
A more solid solution to the problem may be found by examining the function of
the particle יָכ. This particle originally has a demonstrative or emphatic
function (BDB, p. 471; Schneider § 53.3.4) but in actual usage may fulfill
several functions. On the basis of the consecutive force of יָכ and its demon-
strative character, I suggest the interpretation ‘let alone that... I would forgive
them’ for Hosea 1:6. This suggestion is based on BDB (p. 472) which lists a
number of texts with consecutive יָכ after a preceding negative clause or a
preceding question, and treats these constructions as a special sub-category. It appears that clauses starting with ה in such a context require the translation ‘that + modal verb’. As an example, Isa. 43:22 may be quoted ‘Not me have you called on, Jacob, that you should have wearied yourself with me, Israel’ (other comparable examples are Gen. 40:15; Ps. 44:19-20; Job 41:2, Ruth 1:12). It emerges from these examples that clauses after a negative clause may give expression to an unrealised or unrealisable event, resembling an *irrealis* construction. The modal translation captures this counterfactual aspect. Characteristic of such constructions is that although there is no negation in the clause itself, the clause has a negative thrust thanks to its syntactical position and a continued negative effect from the preceding clause. Within these constructions, the particle ה not only has a consecutive dimension but also seems to retain its emphatic or ‘demonstrative’ dimension, which can be rendered by terms such as ‘surely’ or ‘mark my words’. The consecutive and the emphatic element together with the preceding negative clause give the ה clause in vs. 6f the sense of an impossibility that is emphatically brought to the attention of the hearer.

**Hosea 1:7 and 2:20**

- Because of the inclusion of הדרמה in an enumeration of weapons, it has been proposed that the term ‘war’ is used here as the designation of a specific weapon (HAL 2, pp. 557-558) or as a metonym for ‘weapons of war’ (Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 56). Though that is possible, the word also may simply have the general meaning of ‘war’ (so NRSV, RSV).

**Hosea 1:4,6,9**

- The names of the children, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi are symbolic and subject to word play in the text (see the explanation). The name Lo-Ruhamah (vs. 6) consists of a 3.sing.fem.perf. Pual of the verb דם and literally means ‘she is not given compassion’. The form הדרה (vs. 9) is a 1.sing.impf. Qal but does not function in this verse as finite verb but rather as part of the name adopted by Yhwh (‘Not-Present-One’). There is an allusion to the divine name in this reversed name (cf. Ex. 3:12-14), hence the translation ‘and I am Not-the-Present-One for you’. The emendation of the text with the addition of הדרמה is unwarranted by textual evidence: LXX and Vulgate both support the Masoretic text.

**Hosea 2:1**

- The opening phrase הדרה is translated here with the words ‘but once’ followed by a future tense (‘shall be’). This translation is motivated by the following reflections. Schneider (§ 48.3.4.5) has characterized הדרה as a ‘Tempus-zeichen’ and ‘Gliederungssignal’ functioning to indicate the future perspective of what follows. In his view the verbal dimension of the phrase has receded into the background so that the phrase primarily has the function of a syntactic sign to instruct the reader how to understand what follows. The phrase thus adopts the function of an introductory formula. This leaves open what the relation is between the phrase and the preceding information. Is the
consecutive dimension, which usually inhibits the weqatal forms, still present even though the phrase has been fossilized into a formula? Or does the phrase point to an ‘absolute beginning’, as Jouon-Muraoka (§ 119c) suggest for Hosea 2:1? Such questions presumably require a separate decision in every case. In general it seems that הָיוֹדֶה retains an element of consecution and syntactical dependence. This concurs with the assessment of Schneider that the formula הָיוֹדֶה usually does not have a macro-syntactic function (§ 54.1.2). In the case of Hosea 2:1, indeed an element of consecution is present (speaker and themes of the preceding verses continue to be present). At the same time, it is clear from the content that הָיוֹדֶה here includes an adversative aspect. The text suddenly shifts from a negative to a positive message. This nuance of opposition can be explained as an effect of the waw preceding the verb, since among other meanings such an energetic waw can carry adversative force (JM § 172a). Parallels for this usage of הָיוֹדֶה can be found in Gen. 48:21; Jer. 12:15; Gen. 17:5; Isa. 60:19. In all of these cases the phrase has a contrastive dimension. Hos. 2:1 especially resembles Gen. 17:5 and Isa. 60:19 since in these cases הָיוֹדֶה follows a negative clause. In sum, the meaning of the phrase הָיוֹדֶה has two aspects here: it functions as a temporal indication of the future, which is expressed in the rendering ‘once’, and it expresses a contrast, which is reflected in the rendering ‘but’. Cf. for this adversative aspect the renderings of the NRSV (‘Yet the number shall be’) and Buber-Rosenzweig (‘Aber einst wird die Zahl... sein’).

Hosea 2:2

• The phrase הבָּמָפהּ literally means ‘on the place where’, but according to HAL (2, p. 592) it can also mean ‘instead’, with 1 Kgs. 21:19 and Isa. 33:21 as supportive evidence. Rudolph (Hosea, p. 55) and Van Gelderen (Hosea, p. 35) have criticized the latter interpretation, arguing that the meaning ‘instead’ is not supported by the mentioned evidence nor by any of the old translations. It is true that 1 Kgs. 21:19 and Isa. 33:21 are not convincing parallels, but nonetheless it seems that the term can here hardly mean anything else than ‘instead’ (with Kimchi and NJPS, cf. Davies, Hosea, p. 60). The alternative view that a specific location must be meant fails to be convincing. The various proposals in this regard speak for themselves (Jezreel, land of exile, land of Israel, for references see Davies, Hosea, p. 60). A tentative argument for the present interpretation may be found in 2 Sam. 15:21 where the same phrase has a rather general and abstract sense (‘wherever my lord the king will go, your servant will go’). The intention of the expression is nonetheless clear: the new names will literally and completely replace the old ones.

• The verbal form לאֵלָּל (Nifal) can be translated with a passive or a reflexive form (to be gathered c.q. gather themselves) (HAL 4, p. 994). The former option is preferred by RSV and NRSV, while in the present translation the reflexive rendering is preferred (so Wolff and Andersen & Freedman).
Hosea 2:3

- The plural of the word ‘sister’ can either be נִשָּׁה (similar to the singular, cf. Ezek. 16:52, 55, 61) or נְזִית (Ezek. 16:52; Job 1:4; 42:11; 1 Chron. 2:16). The form found here is unique and differs from both existing forms on account of the נ in נְזִית. A double plural marker is present here (cf. JM § 94f).

Hosea 2:4

- There is no unanimity in translations concerning the meaning of the verb בְּרִית in this verse. Basically the word בְּרִית points to a controversy, either of a general kind or within a specific juridical setting. Within the juridical context the word can refer to various moments within or before the lawsuit and have such diverse meanings as ‘to bring charges against’, ‘to argue a case’, ‘to defend a cause’ or ‘to plead in favour of’. The word may also refer to the integral court procedure (‘to conduct a case’) (so HAL 4, p. 1142). H.J. Boecker (Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament, WMANT 14, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970, p. 54) has argued that the verb in combination with the preposition ב undoubtedly has the meaning ‘to bring charges against’, ‘to accuse’. This does not seem to hold for Gen. 31:36 (Jacob takes issue with Laban, disputes the right of Laban to pursue him). Therefore it seems preferable to render the verb here with a general term such as ‘to contend’ or ‘to dispute’.

Hosea 2:5

- The verb לָשֵׁה (the inflected forms are from the root לָשֵׁה, cf. JM § 77m) in vs. 5b has the meaning ‘to set, to place’ and is a synonym of the words לָשֵׁה and לָשֵׁה which also occur in vs. 5 (HAL 2, p. 408). In combination with ‘as the day of her birth’, the meaning of the verb seems to be ‘to set in a position comparable to the one which she had on the day of her birth’. The thought of the public exposure of the woman’s nakedness does not seem to be present in the Hebrew (contra NRSV ‘expose her’). The withdrawing from the woman of all means of sustenance seems to be the central thought in this verse.

- The preposition ב in verse 5e can be instrumental (‘I kill her with thirst’, so NRSV), local (‘in thirst’) or causal (‘of thirst’) (BDB, pp. 88-90). With Stuart (Hosea, p. 42), I prefer the latter possibility and translate ‘and let her die of thirst’.

Hosea 2:7

- The word יִקָּרֵשׁ (a noun derived from the verb יָכַר meaning ‘to give to drink’) occurs only in Ps. 102:10 (plur); Prov. 3:8 (sg) and Hos. 2:7 (plur). The LXX uses here rather general terminology and translates κατὰ παράσσειν ὁσα μοι κοσμήκει, ‘and all that is due to me’; the Targum has ‘my complete life sustenance’. In the context of Hos. 2:7 most commentators choose the meaning ‘drink’ (NRSV) or ‘refreshment’ (cf. Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 233). Rudolph (Hosea, p. 63) concludes that probably a drink like wine or some other strong drink is understood. The parallel with the word ‘oil’ suggests that something especially enjoyable is intended.
Hosea 2:8
- The 2.sg.fem. suffix in the word דָּרֶךְ ('your way') in vs. 8a is incongruent with the prevailing third person speech in vv. 5-7 and vs. 8bc; however, given the fact that rapid changes from second to third person speech occur more often in this text (cf. vv. 18-19 and 21-22), there is not sufficient reason for an alteration of the text.

Hosea 2:9
- The form נָכוֹת ('and she will seek them') is a 3.sg.fem.perf. Piel form with a 3. plur. suffix; the doubling of the second consonant is omitted (cf. HAL 1, p. 145). The נ is a feature of an older 3.fem.sg. perf. form, which occurs when a suffix is attached, cf. JM § 62ab.

Hosea 2:10
- The second part of vs. 10 poses a number of difficulties. In the first place the poetic and syntactic structure of the verse do not correspond. From a poetic point of view one would split the lines as ‘and silver I have lavished upon her’ and ‘gold they used for the Baal’ (twice three words and parallelism between the opening words ‘silver’ and ‘gold’). The Masoretic accents, on the other hand, suggest that the word ‘gold’ belongs to the former line so that the second line only consists of the phrase ‘they used it for the Baal’ (cf. most modern translations). Read in this way, the syntactic construction in vs. 10de is awkward since the two lines in vs. 10de contain a change of subject and are asyndetically juxtaposed. Especially the interpretation of the two last words give rise to discussion: does the text state that the silver and gold was ‘made into a Baal’ or ‘used for the Baal’? Although the word שָׁנַע allows both possibilities, it seems that the arguments for the interpretation ‘to use it for the Baal’ are stronger. The article preceding the word ‘Baal’ argues in favour of this reading; furthermore, in the context of Hosea 2 the cult of the baals is presupposed rather than created (with NRSV and Rudolph, Hosea, p. 70; for the opposite view see Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, pp. 243-244).

Hosea 2:11
- The verb בָּשׁ functions here as a semi-auxiliary verb to the verb חָלָל and expresses the adverbial notion ‘back’ (JM § 177b). In order to preserve the wordplay between the verb בָּשׁ in Hos. 2:9 and 2:11, I have translated the two verbs separately (‘return and take’) (cf. Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 215).

Hosea 2:16
- The meaning of the verb לִשַּׁשֶּׁ has been discussed by Clines and Gunn (D.J.A. Clines & D.M. Gunn, “‘You tried to persuade me’ and ‘Violence! Outrage!’ in Jeremiah xx 7-8”, VT 28 (1978), pp. 20-27). Following them, the verb is translated here as ‘try to persuade’. Clines and Gunn maintain that the verb has sexual overtones only in Ex. 22:15 and has a more neutral and general meaning in other texts. They further point out that the verb refers to an attempted act rather than to a successful one: it denotes an ‘attempt to persuade’ rather than an act of persuasion that is successfully performed (cf.
Judg. 14:15; 16:5). Following this line of reasoning, a translation as ‘try to persuade’ or ‘try to win over’ fits the present verse better than ‘to allure’ (NRSV) or ‘to entice’ (Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 271).

Hosea 2:17 and 2:23-24

- The root הָעַשׂ is a homonym with four different meanings (HAL 3, pp. 805-808 and Stendebach, הָעַשׂ, TWAT 6, pp. 233-47). The root can mean: 1) to answer or to react positively; 2) to humiliate or to be humiliated; 3) to be worried, to worry; 4) to sing. Stendebach (p. 235) points out that when the verb has the meaning ‘to respond’ it does not necessarily point to a verbal response but may denote the act of responding or reacting as such. Against this background the verb occasionally can have the meaning ‘to give a positive response’ and be an indication of the willingness to communicate in contrast to a previous lack of communication (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:24-29; Ps. 38:16). This appears to be the case in Hosea 2:17. In vv. 23-24 the verb basically has the same meaning, i.e., ‘to give a positive response to’, but in this case no verbal response between human partners is intended but a sort of stimulating response between elements in nature. Here the meaning of the verb approximates the meaning ‘to cooperate with’.

5 Hosea 1

5.1 Patterns of structure in Hosea 1

Five sections

At first sight it is clear that Hosea 1 consists of four direct speeches set within a narrative framework. The phrase ‘and he said’ occurs four times and each time introduces a direct speech of Yhwh. Together with the introduction in vv. 1-2a, this produces a subdivision of the text into five sections.

vv. 1-2a introduction section 1
vv. 2b-3 command to marry section 2
vv. 4-5 name first child section 3
vv. 6-7 name second child section 4
vv. 8-9 name third child section 5

The wayomer clauses preceding the direct speeches show the following variation:

vs. 2b wayomer yhwh el hosea
vs. 4a wayomer yhwh elaw
vs. 6b wayomer lo
vs. 9a wayomer

In the course of the chapter the introductory statement becomes more succinct. This suggests that there is a climactic arrangement within the speeches and that vs. 9 constitutes the culmination of the chapter. Other features confirm that this is the case.


A recurrent pattern

The direct speech portions in Hosea 1 follow a certain pattern. The first direct speech in vs. 2 contains the command to Hosea ‘to take a wife’ and consists of the following elements:

introductory formula Yhwh said to Hosea
imperative clause Go and take for yourself a woman of harlotry

The other direct speeches, in vv. 4-5, 6-7 and 9, exhibit the same pattern. Moreover, the formulation of the imperative clause is identical: in all cases the command is to ‘call the name’ of the just-born child ‘so and so’.

introductory formula and he said
imperative clause Call his/her name

Characteristic for this pattern is that the יכ clauses clarify the imperative clause and repeat some of its elements. The commands to Hosea are elaborated each time by the repetition of an element from the primary command.

vs. 2 Go and take a woman of harlotry for the land commits harlotry
vs. 4 Call his name Jezreel for I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel
vs. 6 Call her name Lo-Ruhamah for no longer will I have compassion
vs. 9 Call his name Lo-Ammi for you are not my people

The separate sections

The key word in the opening command to Hosea is the root רע (to commit harlotry):

Command Go and take for yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry
Motivation for the land commits harlotry, yes harlotry

The third section (vv. 4-5) contains the command to call the first child Jezreel. The motivation for this command is given in three parallel statements:

Command Call his name Jezreel
Motivation for yet a little while and I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel
upon the house of Jehu
and I will cause to cease the kingship of the house of Israel
And on that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel

The three statements in vs. 4de, 4fg and 5abc have Yhwh as subject. They all start with a first-person qatal form which provides rhythm and sound correspondence within the unit. The temporal phrase at the beginning of vs. 5 provides
a variation in the pattern, but the sequence of first-person verbal forms is continued.

The word ‘Jezreel’ is a key word in this section and the strong sound correspondence between this word and the word ‘Israel’ immediately catches the ear. In fact, the words Jezreel and Israel occur in these verses in a chiastic pattern.

vs. 4 I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel
      I will cause to cease the kingship of the house of Israel
vs. 5 I will break the bow of Israel
      in the valley of Jezreel

The implication of the sound similarity between Jezreel and Israel seems to be that the fates of Jezreel – once the second capital of the northern kingdom – and Israel are strongly tied together. Whatever judgement is passed upon Jezreel relates to Israel as well.

The next section (vv. 6-7) contains the command to call the second child, a daughter, Lo-Ruhamah. Within the motivation in vv. 6-7 a number of repetitions occur. In the first place the key word יָדַע appears twice, building upon the name Lo-Ruhamah in which the same verb occurs:

vs. 6e for no longer will I have no compassion on the house of Israel
vs. 7a but on the house of Judah I will have compassion

These lines are precisely parallel and display only a variation in word order (aba) and a switch from the negative (‘no compassion’) to the positive. In the text these lines do not appear side by side but in the following order:

vs. 6e no longer will I have compassion on the house of Israel
    6f let alone that I would forgive, yes forgive them
    7a but on the house of Judah I will have compassion
    7b and I will set them free by Yhwh their god

As can be seen in this layout, vv. 6e and 7a both form a pair with an additional line. These two additional lines each introduce a new verb, ‘to forgive’ and ‘to set free’. The best explanation for this expanded parallelism is that vv. 6f and 7b underline the meaning of the preceding lines. The meaning ‘no compassion’ is strengthened by ‘not to forgive’ and ‘compassion’ is strengthened by ‘to set free’.

The means of the liberation of Judah is indicated in vs. 7b by the phrase ‘by Yhwh their god’. In the remainder of vs. 7 (vs. 7cde) the value of other means of liberation is forcefully denied. As a whole vs. 7cde forms a parallelism with vs. 7b.

vs. 7b I will set them free by Yhwh their god
    7c-e I will not set them free by bow nor by sword nor by war
          by horses nor by horsemen
This means that in vv. 6-7 twice the pattern is found of a repeated verb that switches from the negative to the positive or vice versa.

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<td>6c</td>
<td>no compassion</td>
<td>(negatively)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7a</td>
<td>compassion</td>
<td>(positively)</td>
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<td>7b</td>
<td>set free</td>
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<td>7c-e</td>
<td>not set free</td>
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Although the authenticity of vs. 7 has frequently been denied, a number of structural connections between vv. 6 and 7 can be noted. The priority in these verses lies in the withdrawal of compassion for Israel (vs. 6) and in the distinction between the fates of Israel and Judah (vs. 7). The emphasis is put on the judgement of Israel.

The last section (vv. 8-9) contains the command to name the third child Lo-Ammi. The direct speech in this case is considerably shorter than the former which serves as an indication that vs. 9 represents a climax. No temporal restriction is present here in the sense of 'yet a little while' or 'no longer' and even a verb is missing. The topic of the final verse is not a future action, but a new situation that becomes bluntly manifest in the present.

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<td>9b</td>
<td>Call his name Lo-Ammi</td>
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<tr>
<td>9c</td>
<td>for you are not my people</td>
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<tr>
<td>9d</td>
<td>and I am Not-the-Present-one for you</td>
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The most striking element in this verse is the sudden switch to direct address. The judgement does not assume the form of a description of what Yhwh will do to Israel, but of a direct address in the second person plural ('you are not... and I am not... for you'). The two clarifying clauses have a parallel and complementary structure (you-my and I-for-you).

You are not my people
I am not the Present one for you

The repetition of the negative particle $\text{x}$ indicates that relationship between Yhwh and Israel is emphatically negated. To sum up, vs. 9 forms a climax to this chapter in several respects. The reduction of the introductory clause to a single wayomer contributes to this effect, but also the brevity of the direct speech, the absence of a temporal indication and a verb and the shift to a direct address heighten the force of this final direct speech of Yhwh.
5.2 Explanation of Hosea 1

**Hosea 1:1**

The superscription of the book Hosea is puzzling. It has often been noted that the chronological periods indicated by the names of the Judean kings and by the name of the Israelite king do not fit well together.\(^{36}\)

1. The word of Yhwh
   that came to Hosea son of Beeri
   in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah
   kings of Judah
   and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash
   king of Israel.

It appears from 2 Kings 14-18 that the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah do not only cover a far longer period than that of the single king Jeroboam, but that they also point to a later period than that of king Jeroboam. In order to overcome this dilemma, commentators usually settle on a compromise between the two time indications and situate the work of Hosea roughly between 752 and 725 BCE.\(^{37}\)

If, however, the superscription does not meet the requirements of a neat chronology, it may not be correct to read it as such. It seems that another way of reading is conceivable. Can the superscription not be viewed as a literary indication of the overall framework in light of which the remainder of the book should be understood? Could it not be that the superscription points to a certain time setting in view of particular qualities of this time? Following this line of thought the elements of the superscription will here be interpreted as literary and qualitative elements, rather than as precise quantitative or chronological indications. The leading question becomes: how does the superscription situate the prophetic words which follow?

**Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah**

Within this set of four Judean kings, the names of Uzziah and Hezekiah are the most significant. Uzziah is elsewhere regarded as a contemporary of Jeroboam (2 Kgs. 15:1; cf. 2 Chron. 26:1-3; Amos 1:1) and his name thus provides a link between the names of the Judean kings and that of the Israelite king in Hosea 1:1. The name Hezekiah is connected to the time of the crucial confrontations between Israel and Judah and the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 18-20). During his rule (approximately 728-697 BCE) the northern kingdom meets its demise. In view of the fact that the book Hosea has its setting in the still functioning northern kingdom,

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as the name Jeroboam in Hosea 1:1 indicates, the name of Hezekiah points in particular to the final days of the northern kingdom.

**Jeroboam ben Joash**

King Jeroboam of Israel is further identified in Hosea 1:1 as Jeroboam ben Joash, distinguishing him from his namesake, the first king of Israel after the split in the monarchy, who is identified as Jeroboam ben Nebat (1 Kgs. 12). According to the book of Kings, the latter had become the prototype for the iniquities of the northern kings. He functions as the standard point of comparison in sentences such as: 'he [king so and so] did what was evil in the sight of Yhwh and he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat'.

King Jeroboam ben Joash reigned approximately from 787-747. The name of Hezekiah in the list of Judean kings, however, suggests that the last days before the downfall of Samaria are included within the scope of the book of Hosea. This raises the question why the six successors of Jeroboam are not mentioned, the rulers who spanned the interval between the death of Jeroboam and the destruction of Samaria in 722 BCE. Or should they be understood to be included somehow in the name of king Jeroboam?

The suggestion may be ventured that Jeroboam ben Joash functions in the superscription of Hosea as virtually the last king of Israel. Both the correspondence in name to the first king of the divided Israel, the prototypical character of this name, and the developments after his death (2 Kings 15) could point in that direction. Jeroboam II may have been looked upon as the summation of kings in the northern kingdom, in the double sense of ‘conclusion’ and ‘summary’. He is the summary of these kings in the sense that he represents the full amount of evil that has characterized, and still characterizes, the kings of Israel, and he is the conclusion to these kings in the sense that the evil of the Israelite monarchs that he represents will inevitably bring the northern kingdom to ruin.

The single mention of Jeroboam within the framework of Hosea 1:1 does, therefore, in my estimation, not convey that the words of the prophet are to be situated exclusively in the time of Jeroboam. The name Jeroboam rather functions as a *pars-pro-toto* appellation for the last kings of Israel. In combination with the four Judean names, the name Jeroboam expresses that the work of the prophet is to be situated in the days of the last kings of Israel. But it is equally important that with the mention of the name Jeroboam the accent falls on a qualitative meaning aspect. The name of this king seems to indicate that the prophetic words are to be heard in a setting in which the measure of Israel’s evil has reached fullness. The wrongs of king and people are extreme – see the accent on sin and judgement further on in the book – and the effect is that the final days of the northern kingdom have come.

38. Cf. 1 Kgs. 15:34; 16:31; 2 Kgs. 3:3; 10:31; 13:2,11; 14:24, 15:9,18,24,28; 17:22.
39. For the names of the six successors of Jeroboam II see 2 Kgs. 15:8-30. The sequence ends with king Hosea, who is said to have reigned nine years until the downfall of Samaria.
40. It is possible that the same idea underlies Amos 7:10-11. In these verses the collapse of the northern kingdom is directly connected to the reign of Jeroboam: ‘For thus Amos has said: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from this land.’
**Hosea ben Beeri**

The name Hosea is a form of the root וָעַל and has as meaning ‘to set free, to save’ or ‘he has set free, he has saved’. The verb is one of the pivotal terms in descriptions of Yhwh’s significance for Israel and points to liberation from oppression, deliverance from distress. The prophet’s name is thus linked to one of the central acts of Yhwh, salvation from distress. It is this divine characteristic that stands as a continuous reminder and, as it were, a motto above the book. In the context of the words of judgement in this book, this name supplies a glimpse of hope.

To sum up, various elements in Hosea 1:1 indicate that the final days of the northern kingdom function as the setting for the prophetic word. Especially the names Hezekiah and Jeroboam point to this setting. In qualitative terms, this time may be described as an hour of final events for Israel and a moment of crucial decisions in the sight of looming destruction. It is a time of danger caused by the threat of the Assyrians and a time of urgent searching for ways to survive. It is a time of crucial decisions and of last options that may avert the impending danger. At the same time, these days are extraordinarily suited for a prophetic message of judgement and repentance and supply the words of judgement and the appeal to repentance with a sense of urgency and ultimacy.

**Hosea 1:2-3**

Hosea receives the command ‘to take a woman of harlotry’ as his wife. The motivation for this strange order lies in the diagnosis that ‘the land commits harlotry away from Yhwh’.

2.b. Yhwh said to Hosea:

- Go and take for yourself a woman of harlotry
- and children of harlotry
- for the land commits harlotry, yes harlotry
- away from Yhwh.

3. So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim
   and she became pregnant and bore him a son.

A burning question with respect to the term ‘harlotry’ is whether or not this accusation implies involvement in any *real* sexual activity. The prevailing thought is...

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41. In terms of grammar the name has the form of an inf.abs. Hifil. Mostly, however, the name is regarded as a shortened form of the name וָעַל with a 3.sg.perf. Hifil form of the same verb: its meaning would be ‘Yhwh has set free’. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 3; Rudolph, *Hosea*, p. 35; M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Persennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 46), Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagbuchhandlung, 1966 (repr.), p. 175.

42. See for this verb, e.g., Ex. 14: 30; Ps. 85:5, 8; 106:8, 10, 47.

that involvement in the cult of deities other than Yhwh often was accompanied by
the participation in sexual rites, given the accent on fertility and sexual rituals in
Canaanite religion. The alternative view is that the ‘harlotry’ or ‘promiscuity’ of
the land purely relates to the sphere of religion and only points to the pursuit of
gods other than Yhwh.

In the first perspective, the acts of prostitution of which Israel is accused in
Hosea 1:2 consist of the participation in the sexual acts of a foreign cult. The
actual form of the ‘cultic prostitution’ may vary from the once-in-a-lifetime pros-
titution of girls before marriage (the idea of Wolff), to the annual intercourse
between king and priestess in imitation of the sacred marriage between king and
fertility goddess or the ritual intercourse between female cult functionaries and
worshippers. Is it possible that the term מנהל implies that the Israelites partook in
such rituals when they ‘committed harlotry away from Yhwh’?

There used to be much support for this theory of real prostitution but recent
studies move in another direction. Scholars such as Adler and Bird have de-
mythologized the assumption that sacred sex or cultic prostitution were a con-
stitutive feature of Canaanite religion. In their view, the classical ideas about the
prominence of sexual intercourse in ‘fertility’ religion are biased and cannot
serve as general qualifications of Canaanite religion. Re-examination of the
extrabiblical texts and rituals reveals that the evidence for the existence of such
sexual rituals is scanty, whether in Mesopotamia, Sumeria or Ugarit. This new
perspective on Canaanite religion has led to another approach to the biblical
prostitution metaphor and the tendency among scholars such as Adler and Ga-
lambush is to interpret the references to the ‘prostitution’ of Israel as signs of
illegitimate cultic activity without any sexual connotations.

A study of the verb מנהל shows that this verb occurs in the Hebrew Bible with
three different meanings:

- To commit prostitution by profession or to engage in extramarital sex. The
  subject is always female. This is the so-called literal usage of the term,
  although, as Galambush observes, there is already a metaphorical element in
  the second meaning just mentioned.48

- To commit prostitution or have questionable intercourse with various nations,
  in the sphere of trade and politics. The subject may be either foreign or
  domestic capital cities, such as Tyre, Nineveh, Jerusalem or Samaria.

44. See section 3.1 in chapter 2 for a further discussion of these ideas.
   (ed.), Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, pp. 75-94
   (p. 76); Adler, Background, pp. 398-410.
46. Cf. Adler, Background, pp. 399-407, and Lang, Monotheism, p. 24: ‘Contrary to widespread
   assertion, there is no evidence for a religious or magical meaning of copulation’ in the cults of
   Canaan.
47. Cf. Galambush, Jerusalem, pp. 30-31; Adler, Background, pp. 414-417.
48. See Galambush, Jerusalem, pp. 28-29. In texts such as Gen. 38:34; Lev. 21:9; Deut. 22:21, no
   reference is made to professional prostitution in exchange for money but to extramarital sex of
   women who are betrothed or unmarried or otherwise under an obligation. The logic of labelling
   such conduct as prostitution seems to be that these sexual relationships lack the backing of a
   legal relationship and violate male claims of exclusive power about a woman’s sexuality.
HOSEA

• To commit prostitution or have disputable intercourse with deities other than Yhwh. The subject is always Israel or a part of Israel.

The verb can thus have both a literal and metaphorical meaning, and is found in three spheres: in the sphere of concrete sexual relations, in the sphere of politics and in the sphere of the cult or perhaps better, in the sphere of the covenant. On the whole, the metaphorical usage of the verb is predominant. Within this usage only a few references are found to liaisons in the political or economic sphere. In the large majority of cases the reference is to 'harlotry' in a religious sense. The term then points to promiscuous liaisons with deities and cults other than Yhwh. Israel is the subject in such cases and the 'idols' and 'images' with which Israel commits harlotry are frequently introduced by the preposition תִּכְכָּר.

The use of the term טִכְכָּר in the religious sphere is only intelligible in light of the covenant relationship between Yhwh and Israel. This relationship is characteristically one-to-one and exclusive. It is a special relation which elevates Yhwh above the level of the other gods, and Israel above the level of immersion in the everyday facts of life. It entails that Israel and Yhwh are engaged in a unique partnership which demands mutual loyalty. Only in light of this covenant relationship, can Israel's inclinations towards other gods than Yhwh be labelled as 'harlotry'. The use of this term rests on an analogy between the sexually promiscuous acts of a woman violating an existing juridical relationship and the religiously promiscuous acts of Israel violating the existing covenant relationship.

At the same time, the analogy between the literal and the metaphorical level should not be interpreted too strictly. There are significant differences between the occurrences of the verb טִכְכָּר in an ordinary context and in the context of Yhwh and Israel. It should be noted, for example, that the term 'prostitution' in the literal sense occurs predominantly with respect to fathers and daughters and not in the context of a marriage relationship. In the case of Yhwh and Israel, however, the idea of marriage is predominant and the verb טִכְכָּר has the special connotation of 'breaking away from an existing relationship'. Two central texts underline the covenant setting of the term:

Exodus 34:14-16
For you shall worship no other god, because Yhwh, whose name is the jealous one, is a jealous god. You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. And you will take wives from among their daughters for your

49. For the distinction between these three spheres, see BDB, pp. 275-276. Good discussions of the meaning of נִכְכָּר are found in G. B. H. 27-38: Adler, Background, pp. 309-79, and Erlandsson, 7737, p. 612-619, although the latter is considerably influenced by Wolff's ideas concerning 'sacred prostitution'.
50. Cf. Erlandsson, 7737, p. 613. Contrary to expectation, the metaphorical use dominates not only in the prophetic literature but also in the Pentateuch (9-10 times of 15).
51. Cf. Isa. 23:17; Nah. 3:4; Ezek. 16:28; 23: 5, 14, 30.
52. For the combination of נִכְכָּר and רֶכֶב see Ex. 34:15-16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5; Num. 15:39; Deut. 31:16-17; Judg. 2:17; 8:27, 33; Ezek. 6:9:1 Chron. 5:25.
53. Judg. 19:2 is the only exception.
sons, and their daughters who *prostitute themselves* to their gods will make your sons also *prostitute themselves* to their gods.

*Deuteronomy 31:16*

And Yhwh said to Moses: ‘Soon you will lie down with your ancestors. Then this people will begin to *prostitute themselves* to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will leave me (*azab*), breaking my covenant (*parar*) that I have made with them’.

These texts show that the following of other gods is equal to ‘leaving’ Yhwh and ‘breaking’ the covenant with Yhwh, and results in the ‘forgetting’ of Yhwh and his commandments (Num. 15:39; Judg. 2:17). The prostitution of Israel consists of leaving the partner of the existing covenant and of becoming intimately involved with partners outside of it. These partners are not regarded as being of equal value but as inferior, due to the *parti pris* of the biblical texts that Yhwh is a distinct and unique god and that adherence to the covenant is for Israel the optimal way to live. In this light it is not surprising that the term ‘to commit harlotry’ when occurring with respect to Yhwh and Israel becomes almost synonymous with the term ‘to commit adultery’.

At the same time, the word ‘harlotry’ is not just one term among many, but is one the most extreme and radical terms for Israel’s misbehaviour. ‘To commit harlotry away from Yhwh’ may in content be comparable to ‘forgetting’ or ‘leaving’ Yhwh but the effect of this expression is certainly different. By its sexual and scandalous implications, it gives an extreme dimension to the texts in which it occurs. It does not provide a neutral description of a certain behaviour but, with an underlying tone of indignation, qualifies this behaviour as reaching the absolute limit and going beyond all that is acceptable.

Why are harlotry and promiscuity in the religious sphere such a serious matter? The special affair between Yhwh and Israel, as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, has a distinct and incomparable character. When Israel starts to consider the possibility of combining the adherence to Yhwh with the worship of other gods, the awareness of the uniqueness and distinctness of Yhwh and his torah have in fact vanished. The covenant relationship in its special sense is then no longer effective. The ‘harlotry’ after other gods is thus taken so seriously because of the mistaken view of the relationship between Israel and Yhwh that it implies.

The verb *yāḥā* and its derivatives occur especially frequently in the book of Hosea. Jeremias has, therefore, qualified it as a ‘central concept of Hosea’s cult critique’. The term seems to function as a comprehensive term for disorientation in the sphere of the cult, visible in the worship of various idols and gods for the sake of convenience and fertility (Hos. 4:11-14), and for disorientation in the sphere of social conduct and justice (Hos. 4:1-2). Certainly in Hosea

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55. The verb is found in the Qal in Hos. 1:2; 2:7; 3:3; 4:12, 13, 14, 15; 9:1 and in the Hiphil in Hos. 4:10, 18, 18; 5:3. The noun *yāḥā* occurs in Hos. 4:14; the noun *yāḥā* in 1:2, 2:4, 6, 4:12; 5:4 and the noun *yāḥā* in Hos. 4:11 and 6:10.

1-3 no traces are found of any denounced forms of sexual activity. The accent in these chapters entirely lies on the promiscuity of Israel in religion and worship.\(^{57}\)

To recapitulate, the force and emphasis with which the word ‘harlotry’ occurs in the opening verses of the book Hosea provide a sharp diagnosis of the state of Israel. The lack of loyalty to Yhwh and the covenant have gone absolutely beyond the limit and will elicit nothing but judgement.

A few other aspects of Hosea 1:2 deserve comment:

- The ‘land’ functions as the subject of the acts of harlotry. It is here an inclusive term for the inhabitants of the land and functions more or less as a synonym for the nation or people of the land.\(^{58}\) The word הָרְלוֹת may have been chosen because of its grammatically female gender so that it could be easily associated with the ‘woman of harlotry’ representing the land and its harlotry. Yet there is no need to read here an allusion to a mythological concept of the land.\(^{59}\)
- The expression בְּנֵיהֶן הַרְלוֹת (‘woman of harlotry’) occurs only in this text. It is distinct from the expression הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַרְלוֹת (‘harlot’) and on that account does not seem to refer to a prostitute in the common sense. Formally the phrase indicates a woman characterized by harlotry in an intensive and repetitive sense.\(^{60}\) Due to the biographical orientation of many interpretations, scholars have speculated as to the precise content of the expression and the sort of harlotry that may be implied. How did she commit harlotry, when and why? Which tragedy or perversion was there in her personal life? Various proposals concerning the sort of harlotry that could be involved are found in the literature.\(^{61}\) Yet in terms of text interpretation, these efforts are unsatisfactory. The information in the text is confined to the indication that Hosea is to marry a woman of flesh and blood who personifies the people and shares in their quality of harlotry. She is to embody and illustrate the unfaithfulness of Israel to Yhwh. Her harlotry is of little concern in itself but is related to the harlotry of the people.
- Besides a woman of harlotry, Hosea is also consigned to take children of harlotry. This implies that two characters (vehicles) are put on stage in order to embody the harlotry of Israel. Both the woman and the children represent Israel so that Israel can distanciate itself neither from the birth of the three children and the judgement implied in their names in Hosea 1 nor from the polemical tone against the mother in Hosea 2. The expression ‘children of

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57. The interpretation of the verb חַרְלוֹת in Hos. 4:11-14 is a different matter. For a few different opinions on this text, see Lang, Monotheism, p. 32; Bird, ‘Harlot’, pp. 83-86; Galambush, Jerusalem, pp. 50-51.

58. Both in Hos. 1:2 and 4:1 the ‘land’ is more or less a synonym for the people.

59. The mythological connotations which Wolff (Hosea, p. 15) discerns in Hos. 1:2, in connection to the concept that in fertility cults the land is the female partner of a male god, seem forced, particularly since a parallel to Hos. 1:2 – with the land as subject of the verb חַרְלוֹת – is found in Lev. 19:29.

60. The noun חַרְלוֹת is a plural of intensity (IM § 136g).

harlotry’ refers thus to the three children yet to be born: Jezebel, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi. These children are anticipatory called ‘children of harlotry’ in order to indicate their symbolic function.\(^{62}\)

The name Gomer bat Diblaim

The name carried by the woman representing the people is Gomer. In spite of Harper’s assertion that ‘much fruitless effort has been spent in seeking a symbolical meaning for Gomer’, the name, nevertheless, appears to be meaningful. It can be related to the verb רם which means ‘to complete, to come to an end’ or ‘to bring to an end’.\(^{63}\) The name Gomer thus entails that something has reached completion, not so much the process of birth (Noth) or the number of children (Köhler), but, in the context of the present text, presumably the measure of Israel’s iniquity.\(^{64}\) The name Gomer means ‘Completion’ and ‘Enough!’ and so adequately expresses that the harlotry of Israel has reached a ‘full and complete’ measure.\(^{65}\)

The further identification of Gomer as ‘daughter of Diblaim’ defies interpretation. Nothing is more persuasive than the simple interpretation that Diblaim functions here as name of Gomer’s father, although as a personal name Diblaim has an unusual form.\(^{66}\) With respect to the interpretation of this name two suggestions may be voiced, without any claim of definitiveness. The first is that the sound correspondence with the name Ephraim may be significant. The name Ephraim itself does not occur in Hosea 1-3 but is rather frequent in Hosea 4-14 as a designation of the northern kingdom. Perhaps the name Diblaim may be looked upon as an allusion to the name Ephraim, carrying the suggestion that Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, functions as a personification of Ephraim and the entire northern kingdom. In the second place, the name Diblaim cannot be traced to one particular tribe or clan. The family origins of Gomer remain shrouded in obscurity. That may be intentional. The phrase ‘daughter of Diblaim’, on the one hand, introduces Gomer in a conventional manner and, on the other hand, lets her familial and geographical origins not become known. This concealment may relate to the role of Gomer in the text, which is to represent the land and the people as a whole.

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62. For a list of other suggestions concerning the identity of the ‘children of harlotry’, such as that these would be children with an inclination to harlotry or preceding children of Gomer, see Harper, Hosea, p. 207.
63. The quotation of Harper is found in Harper, Hosea, p. 211. For the meaning of the verb רם, see HAL I, p. 190. The name would be a Qal participle of this verb.
66. For other explanations of the word דבלימ, see R. Törnkvist, The Use and Abuse of Female Sexual Imagery in the Book of Hosea: A Feminist Critical Approach to Hos 1-3, Uppsala, 1994, pp. 133-135 (place name) and E. Nestle, ‘Miscellen’, ZAW 29 (1909), pp. 230-234. Nestle explains the word דבלימ as a dualis form of the noun דבלם (fig cake). The phrase הבכילים in his view would qualify Gomer as a ‘girl-of-two-fig-cakes’ implying that she is cheap to acquire. The view of Nestle has met with the objection that the regular dual form of debela would be diblatim rather than diblaim (cf. Wolff, Hosea, p. 17; Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 171). That leaves the interpretation of Diblaim as a personal name as best option.
4. And Yhwh said to him: 
Call his name Jezreel, God-sows
for yet a little while
and I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel
upon the house of Jehu
and I will cause to cease the kingship
of the house of Israel.

5. And on that day it shall be
that I will break the bow of Israel
in the valley of Jezreel.

Bloodshed and royalty: a dissonant
The first action that is announced is that the house of Jehu will be held accountable
for the bloodshed of Jezreel. Interpreters have generally attempted to identify this
bloodshed with a particular event in history. Narrowing down the meaning of the
‘house’ of Jehu to the ‘person’ of Jehu, they have concluded that the ‘bloodshed of
Jezreel’ may be identified with the bloody overthrow of the house of Ahab by Jehu.
Hosea 1:4 is thus almost universally regarded ‘as a statement of divine retribution
on the dynasty of Jehu for the murders committed by Jehu at Jezreel’. 68

This referential interpretation, however, is not the only possible one. A closer
look at the text reveals that the phrase ‘bloodshed of Jezreel’ does not necessarily
point to a bloody scene of battle on the plain of Jezreel, but may also point to the
royal residence as a place associated with and responsible for bloodshed (the noun
Jezreel expressing a cause rather than merely a location). The word מ is here
in the plural (‘deeds of blood’) and as such has the special nuance of blood that is
shed in the context of violence. Contrary to the singular, the plural almost consis­tently has the connotation of unnecessary and unreasonable bloodshed. Occasion­ally it may even carry the connotation of murder. 69 Such extensive bloodshed is
regarded as an offence throughout the biblical texts and in view of the high ex­
expectations bound up with the office of kings, bloodshed in the royal sphere strikes one as particularly grave. The phrase ‘bloodshed at Jezreel’ presents bloodshed thus as a characteristic of the government at Jezreel, and while the text does not provide any further details it is clear that the matter as such is reprehensible.70

In the second place, the expression ‘house of Jehu’ has a broader scope than referring only to the person of Jehu. The ‘house of Jehu’ is a designation for the whole dynasty of Jehu and includes Jeroboam and his son Zechariah.71 In other words, this expression also includes the kings presently in charge in Israel. The special effect of the expression ‘house of Jehu’ is that this formulation pictures the dynasty that is presently in charge in light of its beginnings. Jehu is the first representative of this dynasty and the implication of the mention of his name is that the royal house is connected with blood in its totality and from its roots. No king is singled out but the royal house as such is characterized by bloodshed and blamed for it. In the words of Wolff, the attribution of the bloodshed to the house of Jehu signifies, that ‘since its hour of birth the dynasty in charge does not correspond to the will of Yhwh. It is a government founded on bloodshed’.72

The third element to be discussed here is the verb תֶּפֶל. The verb has the general meaning of ‘to pay active attention to’ or ‘to observe closely’. The effect can either be positive or negative (cf. Gen. 21:1; Ex. 3:6; Ex. 32:34; 1 Sam. 15:2). As McComiskey rightly points out, the meaning of תֶּפֶל is not limited to ‘God’s cognizance of a situation, for the word always signals an active and appropriate response on the part of God’.73

In prophetic texts the verb frequently occurs in the context of divine judgement, usually in combination with the preposition בו and a double object. In such cases the meaning of the verb is ‘to call someone to account for something’.74 In the context of judgement the verb תֶּפֶל implies that Yhwh comes back to wrongs that have been committed. This amounts to a form of punishment but in essence it is more than that: it is the whole complex of coming to observe an offence, holding a person or entity accountable for it and bringing about its punishment. For this reason the practice of translating the verb with ‘to punish’ is unfortunate: this rendering reflects only a small part of the complex meaning of the verb. In fact, the Hebrew language has no separate term for the act of punishment: the verb תֶּפֶל always includes a preceding observation of a situation.75

On the whole the verb תֶּפֶל is a typically prophetic term that points to the active involvement of Yhwh with Israel. The term indicates that there is interaction between Yhwh and Israel and that Yhwh comes in action in response to the acts of Israel. The deeds of Israel do not pass unseen and this equally holds for the foreign

70. Study of the meaning of the word דִּיוָּנוּת thus leaves little room for the conclusion that the word ‘bloodshed’ in the present verse may be a neutral term. Contra McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, p. 99.
71. So HAL 1, p. 120. The dynasty of Jehu consists of five kings and includes Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam and Zechariah (2 Kgs. 10:35; 13:1; 15:8-10).
72. See Wolff, Hosea, p. 19.
73. McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, p. 95.
75. McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, p. 94, voices a similar critique and suggests that the best ‘translational equivalent’ for בו תֶּפֶל would be some form of the word ‘attend’ (e.g., ‘to pay attention to’).
nations insofar as they oppress Israel. The interventions of Yhwh in order to ‘visit’ Israel express an intense divine concern for what happens on the ‘other side’ and also express that Yhwh may take things in hands, as they seem to go every which way.\(^76\)

To sum up, the statement ‘I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu’ in my view does not refer exclusively to the bloodshed committed by Jehu in the course of his revolution. It rather portrays the royal residence as a place characterized by bloodshed for which the whole house of Jehu will be held accountable. The general character of the statement serves to encompass the whole of the bloodguilt in Jezreel, to which Yhwh ‘will come back’.

A different proposal has been made by McComiskey. His argument is that Hos. 1:4 does not contain a particular evaluation of the bloodshed of Jezreel but represents a case of ‘supreme irony’. The text predicts that while Jehu’s dynasty came to power by virtue of a bloody coup, it will meet its demise in precisely the same way.\(^77\) This interpretation rests on a particular understanding of the phrase יָּרְדֶּשׁ. According to McComiskey the verb and preposition express here that the ‘bloodshed of Jezreel’ will ‘come back’ to Jehu, in the sense that it will function as the means by which the dynasty of Jehu will come to an end. McComiskey thus suggests that ‘bloodshed at Jezreel’ functions in this text as means of punishment rather than as reason for it.\(^78\)

McComiskey makes this inference from a study of the word combination יָּרְדֶּשׁ. On the basis of an exceptional case in Jer. 15:3, he concludes that the meaning of יָּרְדֶּשׁ occasionally may be ‘to bring the direct object into the experience of the indirect object’.\(^79\) This applies when the direct object is not an expression for wrongdoing, but another sort of object that God ‘will bring upon’ the indirect object. The statement in Hos. 1:4 would thus entail that ‘the blood shed by Jehu at Jezreel was to reappear hauntingly in his dynasty and bring it to an end’.\(^80\)

For several reasons this treatment of Hos. 1:4 is unconvincing. First, the interpretation that יָּרְדֶּשׁ may have the meaning ‘to bring something into the experience of someone or something else’ is founded on an exceptional case in Jer. 15:3, while in the majority of cases in which יָּרְדֶּשׁ occurs with a double object it is constructed with terms such as יָּשָׁם and has the sense of ‘to punish for’ (cf. e.g., Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Hos. 2:15). Second, the suggestion that the word ‘bloodshed’ occurs in Hosea 1:4 without the implication of moral judgement is forced. Since the combination יָּרְדֶּשׁ occurs predominantly with a direct object denoting or connoting wrongdoing, and because of the connotations attached to the word ‘bloodshed’, it is most likely that the term ‘bloodshed’ carries here the connotation of an offence. Third, the way in which McComiskey employs vs. 4fg in order to explain vs. 4de shows it to be a stopgap measure. Does the information that Yhwh will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu indeed tell us something about the manner in which the ‘dynasty of Jehu will come to an end’? The

\(^{76}\) W. Schottroff, יָּרְדֶּשׁ, THAT 2, pp. 466-486 (481), speaks in this connection about the ‘Anteilnahme Jahwes an den Menschen und ihren Taten’ (p. 479).

\(^{77}\) McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, p. 93.

\(^{78}\) The view of Stuart, Hosea, p. 29, is similar to that of McComiskey. Stuart argues that the point of Hos. 1:4 is not that Hosea condemns Jehu, but that Yhwh ‘will turn the tables on the house of Jehu’ and will put an end to the Jehu dynasty in the same way Jehu had annihilated the preceding dynasty.

\(^{79}\) McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, pp 97-98. Jer. 15:3 reads as follows: ‘I will visit upon them (פָּעַדְוַא) four destroyers, says Yhwh: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy’. The direct objects (the sword, dogs, and so on) do not function in this text as object but as means of punishment.

\(^{80}\) McComiskey, ‘Prophetic Irony’, p. 100.
The termination of kingship
As a second measure of judgement the announcement is made that kingship as institution will come to an end in Israel. The verb הָניָּשׁ in the Hiphil literally means 'to bring to rest', but it can also adopt the meaning 'to make an end to, finish'. The Hebrew word for 'kingship' is a special term with the connotation of solemnity. In the setting of the present text, it expresses that not simply 'a' king or 'a' dynasty is brought down but the institution of kingship as such.

The impact of this statement is related to the function of the king in Israel. As the representative of Yhwh, the king functions as administrator, military leader and head of the cultus. The abolishment of kingship thus implies the loss of central leadership in Israel and is more or less synonymous with national disintegration. In this sense the message that Israel is about to lose its king is quite radical. In comparison to the preceding, the judgement is intensified. Not only the royal house, the house of Jezreel, but the national community as such, the house of Israel, is included in the punishment. Kingship as such is brought to a conclusion.

The end of the national state
The third statement in connection with the name Jezreel is marked by the special introductory formula 'and on that day it shall be'. This phrase has been labelled as an 'eschatological formula' but this should not be taken to refer to a moment beyond human time and imagination. The thrust of the expression is that the things announced will happen on 'a final and decisive moment' in the future.

What will happen? The 'bow of Israel' will be broken 'in the valley of Jezreel'. The 'bow' represents the military power of Israel and is the symbol of warfare and confident power. The breaking of the bow designates that Israel will undergo military defeat. The brevity and comprehensiveness of the statement suggests that it will not simply be 'a' defeat but rather 'the' defeat of the power of Israel as such: the nation will stop to exist as an independent state. The setting of this defeat is in 'the valley of Jezreel'. The plain is renown as a scene...
of battle, but occurs here for literary rather than for historical purposes. It forms an inclusion with the word Jezreel in vs. 4d and is another allusion to the name given to the first child. The term, Jezreel does not only point to the residence of the royal family tainted with bloodshed, but also points to the end of the royal family on the plain of Jezreel. The third meaning of the word Jezreel — ‘God sows’ — is more hopeful but this aspect of the meaning will be accentuated only after the words of judgement, in Hosea 2.

**Hosea 1:6-7**

The key word in the second statement of judgement is the verb דוד, ‘to have compassion’. It is related to the name Lo-Ruhamah, Not-will-she-be-given-compassion. The composition of these verses is such that vs. 6 expresses that the judgement for Israel is inevitable while vs. 7 presents a sideways look at Judah and expresses that Judah will be exempt from judgement for the present time.

6. And she became pregnant again and bore a daughter and he said to him:
   Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, Not-will-she-be-given-compassion for no longer will I have compassion on the house of Israel, let alone that I would forgive, yes forgive them!

7. But on the house of Judah I will have compassion and I will set them free by Yhwh their god but I will not set them free by bow nor by sword nor by war by horses nor by horsemen.

No chance of compassion for Israel

The verdict on Israel is further explicated by the withdrawal of compassion and forgiveness from the ‘house of Israel’. This statement must be understood in light of the preceding references to guilt and punishment. The harlotrous behaviour of the people (vs. 2) continues to form the background. Following the intimation of the fall of the kingdom in the preceding verse, the present verse indicates that no respite will be granted to Israel.

The verb דוד typically occurs in situations in which God is confronted with Israel in a dead-end situation. The showering of ‘compassion’ then points to the gracious act of God to turn the fate of Israel, avert the dangers and let it make a new start. The verb דוד and the noun דודר romant point to a mixture of compassion, care, love and responsibility that particularly belong to God and constitute a sort of reserve that he may call upon in order to give Israel a new lease of life, beyond the (im)possibilities of the situation at hand. In line with this, the root דוד

86. Studies of the root דוד are offered by Stoebe, דוד, pp. 761-768; Wolff, Hosea, p. 21, and F.H. Breukelman, ‘Een verklaaring van de gelijkenis van de onbarmhartige dienstknecht (Matt. 18:23-35)’, *Om het Levende Woord* 1-1 (1966), pp. 38-63 (44-47). Stoebe emphasizes the background of inequality between the one showing and the one receiving compassion (p. 761; cf. Isa. 9:16; 13:18; 49:15). Breukelman and Rudolph (Hosea, p. 38) emphasize that דוד ‘does not simply express an emotion but also includes the action resulting from this’.
occurs predominantly in situations of inequality in which Israel is in dire need of help.

The word forgiveness points to a similar situation. It presupposes that the situation of Israel is characterized by guilt, for this is the context in which the phrase הַשְּׁכִית regularly functions.\(^{87}\) The thrust of the statement is, however, that the guilt of Israel will not be ‘lifted up’ or forgiven. In other words, Yhwh withdraws from Israel two of his main favours, compassion and forgiveness. Within the immediate context this implies that all hopes that the definite fall of the kingdom could be postponed by an appeal to compassion and forgiveness are cut off.

**Respite for Judah**

Verse 7 contains two statements. The first is that the ‘house of Judah’ will be treated with compassion and be spared the loss of kingship and statehood. The second is a specification of how the deliverance of Judah will be accomplished. It will not happen ‘by bow or by sword or by war’ but by ‘Yhwh their god’. It has often been suggested that this verse forms an interpolation in the text, on account of (1) the sudden switch from judgement to promise, and (2) the switch in focus from Israel to Judah and the unexpectedness of a reference to Judah as such. I will come back to this point below, but first an attempt will be made to interpret the text as it stands.

In contrast to Israel, Judah will be treated with compassion and be delivered. The language is succinct but the point of the ‘deliverance’ probably lies in the fact that the house of Judah will be ‘delivered’ from the judgement that was just announced to the house of Israel. Judah will thus be spared from the threats expressed in the preceding verses and will not suffer the loss of statehood and kingship through the compassion of Yhwh.

The Hebrew word יְשַׁד refers to the ‘deliverance’ or ‘liberation’ from oppression and distress. It has the connotations of bringing about relief, providing new breath, space and freedom for the object that is ‘set free’ in contrast to previous circumstances of being locked up.\(^{88}\) The instrument with which the deliverance will be accomplished is in this case remarkable. Judah will be set free ‘by Yhwh their God’. Instead of the usual pattern that deliverance is accomplished by means of symbols of power and might, such as the hand or the sword, the name ‘Yhwh’ is presented as the means by which God will bring Judah freedom. The name Yhwh can thus apparently function as an effective instrument in bringing about deliverance, and, so the texts suggests, it is a more suitable and effective means for deliverance than a variety of weapons together.\(^{89}\)

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87. The combination of this verb and the noun יְשַׁד (iniquity, guilt) occurs, e.g., in Hos. 14:4; Ps. 85:3; Ex. 34:7; Lev. 10:17; with synonymous objects, e.g., in Gen. 50:17; Ex. 32:32; Ps. 32:1,5; Job 7:21.

88. The subject of this verb can either be Yhwh (Ex. 14:30; Judg. 2:16, 18; Ps 7:2) or a human being (cf. Judg. 3:31; 6:14; 2 Sam. 3:18). See further the comments made with respect to the name Hosea (Hos. 1:1).

89. It is peculiar that vs. 7b contains a reference to Yhwh in third person within a first person speech of Yhwh. However, the phenomenon that within a divine speech the divine name occurs in third person form is not uncommon (cf. Hos. 1:2; 2:22). It may be explained as a form of respect for the divine name or as a conventional feature of court language, in which royal
In the second half of vs. 7 five sorts of weapons are listed and disqualified for the salvational purposes of Yhwh. These weapons are divided into two groups: bow, sword and war form one group, and horses and horsemen form another. The syntactic distinction points to a differentiation in content as well. Bow, sword and war form a group of conventional weapons and point to forms of battle well-known in Israel. Horses and horsemen, however, are considered to be part of more refined strategies and are particularly associated with foreign powers such as Egypt and Assur. In the reference to these latter weapons, a polemical tone may be heard against the tendency to turn to these weapons as a source of hope.

On the whole this verse expresses scepticism with regard to military strategies which could save Judah. Caution is expressed against putting one’s trust in military investments. None of these strategies will be able to save Judah, but if Yhwh saves he will make use of another power to that end, the hidden power of his name. The point of the verse is thus twofold. The first statement is that Judah will be delivered from the imminent fate of Israel, and the second is a specification of how Yhwh will deliver Judah. His liberation will not follow a military route, but will come about by the use of a rather unconventional weapon: his name.

The positive role of Judah in Hosea 1:7: a vaticinium ex eventu?
How can the sudden positive reference to Judah in Hosea 1:7 be explained? What logic could lie behind it? The prevailing solution has been to label the verse as a secondary interpolation, due to its positive message and its sudden focus on Judah. Both of these elements would clash with the remainder of Hosea 1.

Not all scholars have concluded that the verse is secondary nor have all confined themselves to this assessment. A number of attempts have been made to decipher the function of vs. 7 within its present context. It has been argued, for instance, that vs. 7 clarifies the scope of the judgement and limits it to the northern kingdom, or that it serves to underline and reinforce the judgement of vs. 6. Characteristic of these interpretations is that they distract the attention away from the positive message concerning Judah, because vs. 7 is interpreted as an indirect statement about Israel rather than as a positive statement about Judah.

It seems that another approach is conceivable, if one is willing to regard the announcement about the positive future of Judah not as a general statement about Judah for all times and places but as an element within the context and setting of Hosea 1. One of the implications of this starting point is that one must question

persons speak about themselves in the third person (in the latter sense Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 195).


91. For a good discussion of this verse see G.I. Emmerson, Hosea. An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective (JSOTS 28), Sheffield 1984, pp. 88-91. Cf. further Harper, Hosea, p. 213 (‘from a later hand’); Wolff, Hosea, p. 22 (‘later gloss’); Rudolph, Hosea, p. 53 (‘cannot belong to the original content of chapter 1’); Davies, Hosea, p. 57 (‘no part of Hosea’s teaching’). All these scholars assume that vs. 7 may be attributed to Judean editors of the book. On the other hand, Stuart, Hosea, p. 31, and Van Gelderen, Hosea, pp. 31-32, regard vs. 7 as an integral part of the text.

92. For these suggestions see Emmerson, Israelite Prophet, p. 90 and Van Gelderen, Hosea, pp. 31-32.
the common conclusion that the promise of deliverance to Judah in Hosea 1:7 reflects a positive attitude to Judah. This would seem to be a grand generalisation, as nothing in the text is suggestive of a consistent attitude towards Judah. Hosea 1 shows no separate focus on Judah; the text only emphasizes in an aside that Judah will be exempt from the fate of Israel for the time being. In support of this, it may be pointed out that the text provides no motivation whatsoever for the different fates of Judah and Israel. There is no sign of a dissimilar evaluation of the conduct of Judah and Israel. The contrasting future of Judah is simply announced as a merciful gesture of God. In other words, to interpret the text as a sort of general tractate about Israel and Judah simply does not do justice to the interplay of elements within the text.

It is important, rather, to note that the promise of deliverance for Judah is set within a specific context, that is, the imminent fall of the northern kingdom (vs. 1). In light of this literary background, the announcement is phrased that Judah will outlive the destruction coming upon Israel (vv. 4-6). Judah will thus be spared in contrast to Israel. In all probability this may be explained as a vaticinium ex eventu. In the text the diverging fates of Israel and Judah are projected into the future, but it is in fact quite likely that these words of judgement and salvation originate with the knowledge of the collapse of the northern kingdom in 722 and the divergent fates of Judah and Israel since then. That historical knowledge, employed here for literary purposes, perfectly explains the sequence of Hosea 1:6-7 in the present text. This explanation does not affect the contextual explanation of vs. 7 given above, but sheds additional light on the position of vs. 7 within Hosea 1 and makes it more intelligible as an integral element of the text.

The text, finally, contains no suggestion that the distinction between the fates of Israel and Judah is absolute or everlasting. It can be gathered from elements in the subsequent chapter that Judah receives extra time rather than absolute salvation. In the opening section of Hosea 2 both Judah and Israel appear to be included in a promise of restoration and return to the land (2:2), which suggests that Judah, like Israel, had become exiled.

**Hosea 1:8-9**

8. And after she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah
   she became pregnant and bore a son.
9. And he said:
   
   Call his name Lo-Ammi, Not-my-people
   for you are not my people
   and I am Not-the-Present-one for you

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93. See Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. xxvi-xxvii, and Emmerson, *Israelite Prophet*, p. 95, 159-161. Both take this verse as evidence ‘that Judah had a positive place in Hosea’s thought’ and argue that Judah came to be seen as the preserver of the national identity when disappointment about Israel had seized the prophet. Wolff regards Hos. 1:7 as an addition of presumably Hosean material to an earlier text.
The ultimate breach

The report of the ‘weaning’ of the daughter in vs. 8 interrupts the succession of birth announcements and namings. As a calm before the storm, it provides a pause before the birth of the third child whose name forms the climax of the entire chapter. That vs. 9 contains a climax is indicated by a number of features, to which I made reference in the section on structure in Hosea 1 (section 4.5.1).

The name of the last child is Lo-Ammi, Not-my-people. The explanation of this name consists of two lines, expressing that the covenant relation between Yhwh and Israel is cancelled: ‘For you are not my people and I am Not-the-Present-one for you’. There is a remarkable wordplay upon the divine name in the final clause. A finite first person form of the verb īṯ is present as part of the name, so that the formulation ‘I am Present for you’, reminiscent of the explanation of the divine name given in Exodus 3:14, appears here in the twisted form ‘I am Not Present for you’. Name reversals and wordplays relating to names are evidently a favourite motif in Hosea 1-2, but the reversal of the divine name signifies a nadir. It suggests that Yhwh will no longer be known by the name that is indicative of his commitment as the covenant partner of Israel. God resigns as Israel’s covenant partner! The ties between God and Israel are severed and the whole enterprise, with all the promises and dreams that it implied, is over. In this manner, vs. 9 pictures the ultimate break in the relation of Yhwh and people.

Who is the addressee implied in the words ‘you are not my people’? The primary referent of this second person plural is probably the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. This Israel is the main focus in Hosea 1, as the references to the northern royal family and to the house of Israel in vv. 4-7 indicate. The switch in this verse from description to direct address is a frequent phenomenon in prophetic texts. It seems to indicate that descriptive passages within a prophetic setting do not really function as a description of a state of affairs, but rather as a form of prophetic address.

Conclusion

Different elements in the text contribute to the strong tone of finality in Hosea 1. First, the setting of the book is in the final days of the northern kingdom (Hos. 1:1). Second, the diagnosis of ‘harlotry’ expresses that the covenant disloyalty

94. These words contain an allusion to the stereotypical covenant formulation: ‘And you shall be my people and I will be your God’ (cf. Jer. 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; Ezek. 37:27).

95. The play on the divine name in Hos. 1:9 immediately brings to mind the revelation of the divine name in Ex. 3:14, with the words īṯ ‘H1>X ITON. The texts may be independent, but Hos.1:9 at least presupposes that a connection between the divine name and the verb īṯ is known.

96. Wolff, Hosea, pp. 23-24, makes it a point of discussion whether or not the prophet Hosea must be included in this group of addressees. In his view the prophet is included in the address in vs. 9 and thus falls under the judgement. For this reason Wolff argues that Hosea cannot and does not fulfill the role of Yhwh in his marriage with Gomer (pp. 15-16). This view is not persuasive, however. Most scholars deduce from vs. 2 that there is a parallel between the relationships of Hosea and Gomer and Yhwh and Israel.

97. One does not need to agree with the interpretation provided here in all details in order to accept the idea that the words of Hosea are situated in the final period of the northern kingdom. Wolff, Hosea, p. XII, wrote: ‘For almost thirty years Hosea has guided his contemporaries in the state of Israel with his prophetic word [...], during the final and most stirring episode of its history, as a messenger of its end’ (italics mine).
of Israel has reached an absolute limit (Hos. 1:2). Third, the name Gomer (Hos. 1:3) literally means 'completion' and qualifies the conduct of the people as 'enough'! Fourth, it is announced that the royal function in Israel will be brought to a conclusion (Hos. 1:4). Last, but not least, there is the abrogation of the covenant relation (Hos. 1:9) which points to a dramatic climax in the relationship between Yhwh and Israel.

On the whole, the observation thus finds support that the text portrays final events and ultimate words. The kingdom of Israel is pictured in its final days and the conduct of the people bears the quality of being at an end in its disorientation and wrongness. At the same time, the statement that 'the land commits harlotry away from Yhwh' should be understood not only as a neutral description but also as an appeal to repent. In the final analysis, a prophetic judgement text like this places before its audience an appeal to change. The text confronts its audience with the need to discern the disastrous consequences of its harlotry and to choose the alternative: to be faithful to the covenant and live orientated towards Yhwh.

Through the setting of the text in 'the last days of the kingdom', all words in the text acquire a particular sense of urgency. The things that are said and done now ultimately matter. This also holds true for the appeal to repentance. It gains additional weight through the notion that the final hour of the kingdom is tolling. Now is the time to distinguish between what is promising and what devastating. It is make or break and thus: time to repent.

The implication of this interpretation is that the historical information concerning the downfall of the kingdom of Israel in 722 was at the disposal of the text's author. The author apparently employed the historical setting of the final hour of Israel as a literary device in order to accentuate the urgency of the text's message of judgement and repentance.

6 Hosea 2

6.1 Features of literary structure in Hosea 2

Introduction

The following explanation of the structure of Hosea 2 focuses on the macrolevel of the text. It serves two goals: to provide a subdivision of the text into sections and to present a survey of the most important key words in the text. In my approach, I build on the studies of Hosea 2 presented by Cassuto (1927), Wolff (1961), Krszyyna (1969) and Clines (1978).

Seven Sections in the Text

Hosea 2 can be split up into two major parts: vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-25. A conspicuous distinction between these two parts is that Israel in Hos. 2:4-25 is addressed as a

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female person. This female personification of Israel is characteristic for Hos. 2:4-25 and does not occur in Hos. 2:1-3. Since Hos. 2:1-3 and 2:4-25 display essentially the same progression from a situation of judgement to new life beyond the judgement, these passages may be viewed as a short summarizing prologue and an elaborate presentation of the same theme.99

Hosea 2:1-3 summarizing prologue
Hosea 2:4-25 elaborate presentation of the same theme

Two recurrent elements within Hos. 2:4-25 are the opening markers זָרֵעַ and בִּשְׁמִיתוֹ. These phrases occur in vv. 8, 11, 16, 18, 23 and suggest that the chapter as a whole can be subdivided into seven sections:

Hosea 2:1-3 section 1 prologue
Hosea 2:4-7 section 2 accusation of harlotry
Hosea 2:8-10 section 3 measure of judgement
Hosea 2:11-15 section 4 measure of judgement
Hosea 2:16-17 section 5 new start
Hosea 2:18-22 section 6 reunion between Yhwh and Israel
Hosea 2:23-25 section 7 response in nature

These sections can be combined into three larger units: Hos. 2:1-3, 2:4-17 and 2:18-25:

Hosea 2:1-3 section 1 prologue
Hosea 2:4-17 sections 2-5 crisis in the present
Hosea 2:18-25 sections 6-7 new future

Syntactic structural elements
The above subdivision into sections is supported by certain syntactic signs in vv. 10 and 15. Two elements in vs. 10 indicate that the verse has a conclusive function within its immediate context. In the first place the verse starts with a nominal rather than a verbal clause (וננפָה אָפְּרָה, 'and she does not know'). This is remarkable within a context governed by verbal clauses (vv. 8-9). Some nominal clauses occur (vs. 8c) but these form the continuation of preceding verbal clauses and should be explained as cases of poetic variation rather than as distinctive syntactic information. In the present verse, however, the nominal clause is found at the beginning of a sequence of clauses. Characteristic of nominal clauses is that they do not describe an action but make a statement about the topic placed in first position in the clause.100

99. This suggestion has been made by Cassuto, ‘Second Chapter’, pp. 118-119.
100. See Schneider § 44.2.2. In general, nominal clauses do not express an event but present a comment to a certain topicolized noun or nominal construction. In discursive texts nominal clauses are more frequent than in narrative texts and cannot unequivocally be located to the beginning or conclusion of textual units. Nonetheless, the commenting aspect of nominal clauses remains intact and in certain cases nominal clauses within discursive texts may have a conclusive function.
This lines up with another element in vs. 10. The verbal forms in this verse are all qatal forms. These qatal forms do not bear an element of consecution, like the weqatal forms in vv. 8-9, but introduce a dimension of perspectivity in the text. Schneider and Leene have emphasized that such qatal forms may refer back to preceding actions in order to provide these actions with a sort of comment. Such forms thus describe something that is going on simultaneously to the preceding actions and present that as a side comment.\textsuperscript{101} In terms of interpretation one could introduce such a comment with the interjection ‘meanwhile’. The first clause of vs. 10 would then express something like ‘and while doing all these things, she does not know...’. The succeeding verbal forms in vs. 10 continue this perspective. As a result, the verse has the force of a side comment. The sequence of actions stops for a moment and a comment is made about the actions that were expressed in the preceding verses. The syntactic function of the verse thus seems to be to conclude what precedes, rather than to start a new textual unit.\textsuperscript{102}

The verbal forms in vs. 15 present another interesting case. This holds true not only for the two wayiqtol forms in vs. 15c-d, which form a brief narrative intermezzo within the discursive context, but especially for the qatal form נָאָדָשׁ in vs. 15e (‘but me she has forgotten’). This verbal form has a similar function as the verbs in vs. 10. The form נָאָדָשׁ stands beside the mainline of speech that is constituted by yiqtol and weqatal forms, it is part of a nominal clause and is in this case also part of the final clause in the verse. It again provides a comment to the preceding actions with a sort of summarizing tone: ‘but meanwhile she has forgotten me’. In combination with the formula מִנְנוּ שֵׁם the qatal form in this verse has the function not only of presenting a side comment but also of concluding the unit.

\textit{Changes of address as elements of structure}

Hosea 2:4-25 starts with a speech in which the addressee is in the second person (vs. 4) but furthermore predominantly consists of discourse in the third person. There are a number of switches from third person to second person. It is interesting that the points at which a form of direct address appears usually coincide with points of transition between the sections. The changes in address thus occur at important points within the structure of the text either at the beginning (vv. 4, 8, 18) or at the end of a section (vv. 21-22). For Hosea 2:4-25 the following picture emerges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Address Form</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:4</td>
<td>Contend, contend</td>
<td>2.masc.plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8</td>
<td>I will hedge up your way</td>
<td>2.fem.singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:18</td>
<td>You will call and no longer will you call me</td>
<td>2.fem.singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:21</td>
<td>I will take you as my bride I will take you as my bride</td>
<td>2.fem.singular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{101} Cf. Schneider § 48.3.2; Leene, \textit{Vroegere Dingen}, p. 32. Leene paraphrases the qatal forms in Isa. 44:12 with the terms ‘meanwhile’ and ‘all the time’.

\textsuperscript{102} Contra Andersen & Freedman, \textit{Hosea}, pp. 240-41, who regard Hos. 2:10-11 as a separate subsection on account of poetic arguments and maintain that Hos. 2:8-9 and 2:10-15 form major subunits in the text (pp. 214-15).
The intermediate text uses the third person. It is remarkable that in this survey first a plural addressee appears (vs. 4). This group of people is addressed as ‘sons’ or ‘children’ in relation to Israel their ‘mother’. Almost immediately the focus then shifts to the single female addressee, who besides Yhwh is the main character in Hosea 2:4-25. In vv. 21-22 the largest concentration of direct speech addressed to the female person is found (four forms of direct address):

2:21 I will take you as my bride forever
I will take you as my bride with righteousness
2:22 I will take you as my bride
and you will know

This exceptional concentration suggests that the speech of Yhwh to Israel as a female person reaches a climax here. The effect of the second person speech is that the renewed commitment of Yhwh to Israel is not only announced but actually seems to be performed at that moment. The repetition of the verb and the emphatic direct address are thus formal indications that in terms of content these verses constitute the summit of the entire chapter.

Key words and recurrent motifs in Hosea 2
In Hosea 2 a great number of word repetitions occurs which bind the composition together. In the first place a significant correspondence between Hosea 2:1-3 and 2:4-25 may be noted. These text parts share the motif of name reversal so that this motif frames the entire chapter as a sort of inclusion:

2:2-3 for great is the day of Jezreel
Say then to your brothers: Ammi
and to your sisters: Ruhamah

2:24-25 and they respond to Jezreel
and I will have compassion upon Lo-Ruhamah
and I will say to Lo-Ammi: Ammi

The key words גֵּדֶר and יָד in Hosea 2:4-17
In Hosea 2:4-17 the words ‘to go’ (גֵּדֶר) and ‘to give’ (יָד) are key words. These words are related and both occur four times. These verbs occur first in vs. 7. This verse is a strategic point in the text since here the motif of ‘harlotry’ is brought in connection to the words ‘to go’ and ‘to give’. The text reads here:

vs. 7 their mother has committed harlotry [
for she said:
I will go after my lovers
that give me my bread and my water [...]

for great is the day of Jezreel...
The words הָלַךְ and לְנַחֲנוּ occur further in the following pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:7</td>
<td>to go</td>
<td>for she said: I will go after my lovers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7</td>
<td>to give</td>
<td>that give me my bread and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9</td>
<td>to go</td>
<td>she shall say: I will go and return to my first husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10</td>
<td>to give</td>
<td>yet she does not seem to know that it is I who gave her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:14</td>
<td>to give</td>
<td>these are the payment that my lovers gave to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>to go</td>
<td>and goes after her lovers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:16</td>
<td>to go</td>
<td>I will try to persuade her make her go to the wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:17</td>
<td>to give</td>
<td>and I will give her her vineyards from there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initially the verbs occur in connection to the woman and her lovers. A turning point lies in vv. 16-17 in which Yhwh functions as the subject of the verbs: he ‘makes the woman go’ and ‘gives’ her his gifts. This reversal points to a central contrast in the text, namely, that between Yhwh and the lovers.

The function of these key words goes even further. It has been observed that the two passages Hosea 2:8-10 and 11-15 may be explained as reversals of the motifs of ‘going’ and ‘giving’. The blocking of the woman’s route in vv. 8-10 may be seen as the reversal of the woman’s going, while the withdrawal of gifts in vv. 11-15 may be seen as a negative variation upon the theme of ‘giving’. The verbs ‘to go’ and ‘to give’ thus dominate Hosea 2:4-17 in the following way:

2:4-7 going and giving in relation to the lovers
2:8-10 prevented going
2:11-15 prevented giving
2:16-17 going and giving in relation to Yhwh

The key word אָהֳלָם

The word אָהֳלָם (‘lovers’) is another key word. It occurs five times in Hosea 2, all within vv. 7-15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:7</td>
<td>I will go after my lovers that give me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9</td>
<td>she shall pursue her lovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:12</td>
<td>I will uncover her shame before the eyes of her lovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:14</td>
<td>these are the payment that my lovers gave to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>and goes after her lovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though this word occurs only in Hosea 2:7-15, this does not imply that the theme of the woman’s love relations is limited to these verses. Other words from the sphere of male-female relationships articulate this theme as well and make it surface throughout Hosea 2:4-22.

103. Krszyna, ‘Struktur’, p. 49, makes this observation.
The key words


The words "man" ( shaving 'man') and 'master' or 'Baal') both occur four times in Hosea 2.

2:10 but they used it for the Baal
2:15 and I will visit upon her the days of the baals
2:18 on that day... no longer will you call me: My Baal!
2:19 and I will remove the names of the baals from her mouth

2:4 she is not my wife and I am not her husband
2:9 I will go and return to my first husband
2:12 and no one (literally: no man) shall rescue her out of my hand
2:18 on that day you will call: My husband!

The word 'husband' obviously stands in contrast to the word 'lovers':

2:7 she said: I will go after my lovers
2:9 then she will say: I will go and return to my first husband

Furthermore it also stands in contrast to the word 'Baal':

2:18 on that day... you will call: My husband
and no longer will you call me: My Baal

Conversely the words 'Baal' and 'lovers' occur in close proximity in the text:

2:15 and I will visit upon her the days of the baals
and goes after her lovers

So it becomes visible that the words 'lovers' and 'husband' point to an opposition in the text on a deeper level and that is the opposition between Yhwh and Baal or the baals. On the one hand, Yhwh is presented as Israel's husband and, on the other hand, Baal and the baals function as Israel's lovers.

Key words in Hosea 2:18-25

The last half of Hosea 2 is less marked by the repetition of key words but here again striking repetitions can be found. A central motif is the time reference 'on that day'.

2:18 and on that day you will call: My husband
2:20 I will make a covenant for them on that day
2:23 and on that day I shall respond
Another recurrent element is the verb הושע (‘to respond’). This verb occurs six times:

2:17 and she shall respond there as in the days of her youth
2:23 and on that day I shall respond
   I shall respond to the heavens
   and they shall respond to the land
2:24 and the land responds to the grain
   and they respond to Jezreel

The verb ישן (‘to take as bride’) is found three times:

2:21 and I will take you as my bride forever
   I will take you as my bride with righteousness and with justice
2:22 I will take you as my bride with faithfulness

It is further important for the interpretation of Hosea 2:18-25 that in this passage a great number of motifs and words from Hosea 2:4-15 recurs in a different setting. A few examples:

2:10 yet she does not seem to know that it was I who gave her
2:22 and you will know Yhwh
2:14 and the beasts of the field shall eat them [vine and fig tree] away
2:20 I will make a covenant for them on that day with the beasts of the field
   with the birds of heaven and the creeping creatures on the ground
2:10 that it was I who gave her the grain, the must and the fresh oil
2:24 and the land responds to the grain, to the must and the fresh oil

Such features bind Hosea 2 together as a whole. The reversal of the motif of divorce by the establishment of a new marriage may also be noted. The correspondence lies in this case not on the level of vocabulary but on the level of intention:

2:4 for she is not my wife divorce
   and I am not her husband
2:21-22 I will take you as my bride forever new bridal time

The broken and renewed relationship with Yhwh forms thus a structure of inclusion around the poem in Hosea 2:4-22. Hosea 2:23-25 may be seen as a further development and conclusion to Hosea 2:18-22 while it also resumes elements from Hosea 2:1-3, as was noted at the beginning of this section.104

104. These observations lead to a view that is substantially different from that expressed by Wolff, Hosea, p. 57. In Wolff’s view Hosea 2:18-25 is a compilation of diverse materials that is so distinct from Hosea 2:4-17 that it must be a secondary attachment.
A central opposition in Hosea 2

In Hosea 2 a central opposition between Yhwh and the baals emerges, as can be seen from the word pair ‘lovers’ and ‘husband’ and from the key words הַנַּחַל and יִשָּׂרָאֵל. More precisely, the text depicts the tension and the contrast between Israel’s relation to the baals and its relation to Yhwh. The fundamental question dealt with in the text is: What does it mean for Israel to have a relationship with Yhwh or with the baals and what difference does it make?

6.2 Explanation of Hosea 2

Hosea 2:1-3: an intermezzo of hope

The sense of finality which Hosea 1 brings so vigorously to the fore is contrasted in this section with the vision of a new beginning. The words ‘son’ and ‘day that God sows’ are the catchwords and indicate the new life that lies in store. The number of the children of Israel will grow tremendously and they will belong to the living god (vs. 1). As a community of people they will experience a revival as well. In contrast to the disintegration of the kingdom of Israel portrayed in chapter 1, the ranks will close and a new people consisting of Israel and Judah will be planted in the land (vs. 2). The relationships with Yhwh and with each other will be restored (vs. 3). The question how this positive intermezzo fits within its context will be dealt with after the interpretation of these verses.

2:1. But once the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea which can neither be measured nor numbered and instead of that it was said to them:

You are not my people it will be said to them:

Children of the living God.

2. And the children of Judah shall gather together with the children of Israel and they shall appoint themselves one head and go up out of the land:

for great is the day of Jezreel.

3. Say then to your brothers: Ammi, My-people and to your sisters: Ruhamah, Compassion-will-come-to you.

Literary structure

The unit is marked by a number of compositional features. Verse 1 consists of two equal parts which open with the phrase הַנַּחַל. Within the second part a parallelism is present through the repetition of the construction ‘it will be said to them’.

2:1 And it shall be And it shall be

it was said to them it will be said to them
Verse 2 consists of four lines. The last line is a nominal clause that serves as the climax of the verse.

2:2 And they shall gather
and they shall appoint
and they shall go up
for great is the day of Jezreel!

It is interesting that the word order in vs. 2a reflects the intended meaning of the words. The ‘children of Judah’ and the ‘children of Israel’ are clasped together in the midst of the clause and these words are framed by one other word on each side. In this way the togetherness of the children of Judah and Israel is also literally expressed in the form.

Verse 3 consists of two clauses which are exactly parallel in form, except for the verbal form which is not repeated in the second clause.

2:3 Say then to your brothers: My-people
and to your sisters: Compassion-will-come-to-you

In this short pericope the word יָּתַּן (‘son’, translated here as ‘child’) occurs four times and qualifies as a key word:

2:1a the number of the children of Israel
2:1g children of the living god
2:2a the children of Judah
2:2a and the children of Israel

The motif of name reversal is also prominently present:

2:1d-e and instead of that it was said to them You are not my people
2:1f-g it will be said to them Children of the living God
2:3a-b say then to your brothers Ammi
and to your sisters Ruhamah

A pivotal point in the section is formed by the words יָּתַּן in vs. 1. These remarkable words form the exact centre of the unit in terms of numerical structure.¹⁰⁵

A promise of blessing and life (verse 1)
The first promise in this verse entails that Israel will become innumerable. The ‘sand of the sea’ is traditionally considered to be uncountable and serves as a conventional means to indicate a vast, infinite amount.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, large quantities in the biblical idiom rarely indicate only magnitude in number but

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¹⁰⁵ In principle all words written as one are counted as one. An exception is made for word combinations linked by a maqef; in such cases the two separate parts count as two words. According to this method Hosea 2:1-3 counts forty-six word combinations of which the words מִּלְוָה form the midpoint (the twenty-third and twenty-fourth words).

¹⁰⁶ Cf., e.g., Gen. 22:17; 32:13; 41:49; Isa. 10:22; 48:19; Jer. 33:22.
frequently have a qualitative dimension as well.\textsuperscript{107} A large number thus represents might and power, and given the biblical theme that the existence of Israel can never be taken for granted, a large number of sons represents blessing and the continuation of life, an opening to the future, potential.

The subject of expansion is the ‘sons’ of Israel. One wonders whether the word ‘son’ in this connection does not have the outspoken meaning of ‘descendant, future generation’ rather than ‘member of a people’\textsuperscript{108}. It may well be that the promise does not just entail that the number of the ‘Israelites’ will be countless, but in particular that the number of the ‘offspring’ of Israel will be countless. The word ‘son’ almost naturally bears an association with the future, and in this context may be interpreted as a literal reference to new children that will be born in order to secure the continued existence of Israel as a people. Sons mean new life and, in this case, new life beyond destruction. The promise of ‘sons’ and ‘offspring’ is as such a characteristic formula of blessing which occurs in the biblical texts predominantly against the background of a dramatic situation such as the threatened continuation of a family or the near extinction of Israel as a nation.\textsuperscript{109}

The second promise to Israel consists of the pledge that the name Not-my-People will be replaced by the name ‘children of the living God’. Since a change of name implies a change of identity, Israel will thus no longer live under the judgement implied in the name given in Hosea 1:9, but it will begin a new existence, as sons, that is, as members of the household of God.

This newly received name is exceptional and striking, both on account of the fact that the people are called ‘sons’ of God, which does not occur often, and on account of the word combination ‘living God’.\textsuperscript{110} The latter means more than that a god is merely qualified as ‘alive’ or ‘living’. A brief exploration of the significance of the word \textit{תִּתְנָה} and the verb \textit{תִּתָּנָה} to which it is related yields that the root \textit{תִּתְנ} is distinguished from the root \textit{תִּתְנ} (to be, to happen). The verb \textit{תִּתְנ} occurs quite a number of times in combination with verbs such as \textit{לָשֵׁן} (to generate) and \textit{לְבָשֵׁן} (to become much).\textsuperscript{111} From these observations can be deduced that the verb

\textsuperscript{107}\textsuperscript{108}\textsuperscript{109}\textsuperscript{110}\textsuperscript{111}
The children of Israel will be the ‘sons’ or ‘children’ of this God. The word ‘son’ should not be understood here in the literal sense but points to a family relation in a metaphorical sense and so expresses a relation of belonging. The designation ‘sons of the living God’ thus identifies Israel as a people whose existence is substantially bound to Yhwh. As children they belong to the family and household of the living God.

A final matter in this verse is the point of reference of the name Israel. In view of the connection of this verse with the preceding, it seems most likely that the name Israel in this verse refers to the northern kingdom and points to the growth of this people transcending its destruction.

Israel replanted (verse 2)

In a nutshell vs. 2 portrays the reunion of Judah and Israel, the appointment of one head and a new fruitful existence of the people in the land. The verse presents many riddles on account of the succinct formulations and images that occur, but nevertheless it is clear that the provided picture has the character of a promise.

First, Judah and Israel will ‘gather’ together. This suggests that against the background of a present state of separation both fractions of the nation will come together and again form a unity. In prophetic texts the verb ‘to gather’ is almost a terminus technicus for the gathering of the people from places of exile in order to be brought home. Although the orientation ‘from exile to the homeland’ need not automatically be present, the verb frequently forms the overture for a journey of the people homewards. The last word of the line, הָיָה, underlines the togetherness and reunification of Israel and Judah.

Second, the people will appoint ‘one head’. The term refers to a person who is in the broadest sense placed ‘above’ others and may denote specifically the leader of a family or tribe, a military leader or a king. In the case of the present verse various suggestions have been made concerning the identity of this head, such as a military leader (Wolff, Rudolph), a king (Harper and Van Gelderen) or...
Yhwh himself (Proksch). Much depends here on how one assesses the remainder of the verse. If the first lines in this verse refer to the preparations for a travel homewards, then one could interpret the 'head' as a sort of marching leader or shepherd, guiding the people home. If the 'gathering' of the people is predominantly a matter of reunion without geographical connotations, then one could interpret the 'head' as a 'king' binding the restored nation together. On the whole, I tend to adopt the first view.

To 'go up from the land'? The phrase 'and they will go up from the land' has puzzled interpreters: from which land shall the people go up and in which sense shall they 'go up'? The most obvious interpretation is that a sort of exodus must be intended. The verb הָעַלָּבּ is after all typical of exodus language, pointing to the departure or 'ascent' from a place of servitude in order to achieve freedom. The verb frequently occurs with reference to the liberation from Egypt, as is illustrated in another verse in this same chapter (2:17), but also with reference to other places of exile. It is often accompanied by the phrase 'out of the land' and this land is then mostly specified as Egypt, though it also can be some other land. Such a specification is not provided here.

For this reason and because interpreters generally prefer an interpretation that allows the message of the verse to be situated in the eighth century, the exodus interpretation has been rejected by scholars such as Wolff, Rudolph and Emmerson. They support their position by the argument that in the book of Hosea the word הָעַלָּבּ does not occur with reference to a country other than the land of Palestine. Four alternative interpretations of the phrase 'to go up from the land' have thus emerged:

- The pilgrimage hypothesis. Wolff has argued that the verb הָעַלָּבּ can have the meaning of going up to a sanctuary (cf. Ex. 34:24; Isa. 2:3). Hosea 2:2 would then portray a sort of 'eschatological cult act' which consists of the pilgrimage of the entire nation to a common sanctuary. In this proposal, however, the preposition נַח מ is muffled away: the phrase לַעַל הָעַלָּבּ can hardly mean a movement 'away from some parts of the land to other parts of it' but more simply means away 'from the land'.

- The recapture hypothesis. In his commentary Wolff abandons his earlier view and suggests instead that the verb הָעַלָּבּ in combination with the phrase הָעַלָּבּ מִן הָעִיר looks out of the land.


116. HAL 3, p. 783, provides an accurate list of the instances in which the verb הָעַלָּב (Qal) occurs in an exodus context: a) with respect to leaving Egypt, cf. e.g., Ex. 12:38; 13:18; Num. 32:11; b) with respect to moving out of Babel, cf. Ezra 2:1, 59; 7:6-7; Neh. 7:5. It should not be overlooked that the verb can also occur absolutely with the meaning 'to go up from exile', as in 2 Chron. 36:23, the last verse in the Hebrew Bible.

117. See Wolff, 'Jesreeltag', p. 94; Rudolph, Hosea, p. 57, and Emmerson, Israelite Prophet, pp. 98-100. The argument concerning the term 'land' is not persuasive. In the first place the word הָעַלָּב does occur with the meaning 'earth, soil' in Hosea 2:24 and further it is not impossible, of course, that a text may use a word once in another meaning.

118. See Wolff, 'Jesreeltag', p. 95.
may have the meaning ‘to take possession of the land’ with reference to
the same expression in Exodus 1:10. Judah and Israel would thus ‘recapture’
the land of Israel which is now in hands of the Assyrians. This recapture inter­
pretation is not well-founded and has failed to find much support.¹¹⁹

- The plant-imagery hypothesis. Vriezen has made the suggestion that the verb הָלָה can have the meaning ‘to grow up, come up’, in the sense of ‘to sprout’. Verse 2c and 2d would then share the imagery of the people as plants and the image would serve to indicate the expansive increase of the people.¹²⁰ One of the contra indications for this view is the internal logic of vs. 2: not only is a sudden switch of imagery and language assumed between vs. 2b (appointment of one head) and 2c (sprout up), but also the order of the words ‘grow’ and ‘sow’ in vs. 2c-d is illogical and opposite to the natural order.¹²¹

- The resurrection hypothesis has been elaborated by Andersen and Freedman. These scholars suggest that the statement ‘and they will come up from the land’ has two levels of meaning. On one level the statement portrays an exodus out of a land of exile and on the other level it portrays a resurrection of the nation from the realm of dead. The argument for the second line of interpretation is that the verb הָלָה occasionally occurs in order to describe the ascent from death to life, while the word ‘land’ occasionally functions as a name for the realm of death, the Sheol.¹²² In response to this suggestion it may be noted that while the connotation of life and death may not be entirely absent in this text, the evidence in the Hebrew Bible for a connection between the ‘land’ and Sheol is absolutely minimal and must be considered hypothetical.

To sum up, it cannot be denied that the phrase ‘and they will go up from the land’ is mysterious and brief. No mention has yet been made of a situation or a land of exile, and it is thus not clear which land or what sort of land is meant. On the other hand, the preposition יָה is clear enough: the ‘land’ stands here from the situation from which Israel will depart. Glancing over Hosea 1-2 and the appearances of the word הָלָה in this text (Hos. 1:2; 2:2, 5, 17, 20, 23, 24, 25) it seems that the most decisive evidence is that the phrase ‘to go up from the land’ occurs in Hos. 2:17 with reference to the ‘going up’ from the land of Egypt. The verb הָלָה occurs then in the Hifil. This connotation of exodus and liberation from a land of misery (‘that land’) can hardly be absent in Hos. 2:2. In spite of the

¹¹⁹. With the exception of Van Leeuwen, Hosea, pp. 48-49. Exodus 1:10, however, is not a good argument, since in this passage the literal meaning ‘to go up from the land’ gives a good sense (cf. NRSV: ‘or... they will join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land’). Cf. the critique of Rudolph, Hosea, p. 58, on Wolff’s proposal.

¹²⁰. Th.C. Vriezen, Hosea: Profeet en Cultuur, Groningen-Batavia, 1941, p. 13. This view is taken over by Rudolph, Hosea, p. 58. It appeared already in some form in the survey provided by Harper, Hosea, p. 247. Vriezen finds arguments for his view in Deut. 29:22 and Gen. 2:9, yet these texts are only indirect parallels to Hos. 2:2 since in both Gen. 2:9 and Deut. 29:22 the subject of the verb is some sort of vegetation rather than people.

¹²¹. See Wolff, ‘Jesreeltag’, p. 95, for similar points of critique.

¹²². Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 209: ‘Recent study has established that “the land” in ancient Israel was a name for the Underworld, the realm of the dead. This meaning makes sense here. Compare Genesis 2:6’.
imaginative proposals surveyed above, the exodus interpretation is still the most obvious one.\(^{123}\)

**Israel replanted**

The statement ‘for great is the day of Jezreel’ serves as the climax of vs. 2. The words ‘great’ and ‘day’ suggest that the text plays upon the typical prophetic motif of the ‘great day of Yhwh’, a decisive day on which awesome and exceptional events happen, a day of dreadful expectations in which Yhwh will bring about a turn in time. The reference to the ‘great day of Jezreel’ may be understood as a variation on this theme, although the day meant here has positive rather than fearsome connotations.\(^{124}\)

The element of variation is the word ‘Jezreel’. Jezreel, the first of the children’s names to reappear, can here either indicate the location where all the preceding events of growth and reunion take place or symbolically refer to the literal meaning of the word: ‘God sows’. The latter is most likely here.\(^{125}\) The expression would then imply that after the reunion of Israel and Judah and the ascent from ‘that’ land, Yhwh will ‘sow’ or ‘plant’ Israel anew in the land of their arrival. Although neither an object nor a place of this ‘sowing’ are mentioned, the best interpretation seems to be that the newly reunited people are the object of the sowing and that God sows them in the land of Israel.

The verb הָעַֽלִּים ('to sow') regularly occurs in a metaphorical sense, in relation to Yhwh and Israel. The idea is then expressed that Yhwh will ‘sow’ the people in the land after a period of destruction and near extinction. Against such a negative background, the notion that Yhwh will rebuild and replant Israel provides highly positive connotations. The verb הָעַלִּים carries then the overtones of a new period of fertility, with population growth and a fruitful and blossoming existence in the land.\(^{126}\)

The expression ‘day of Jezreel’ thus evokes the image of a day in which God ‘sows’ the people of Israel and gives them a new and solid basis of existence in the land.\(^{127}\) The key idea is that Yhwh begins anew with his people in the land. In this way the ‘day of Jezreel’ forms the climax of the preceding actions in vs. 2. The reunion of the people and their travel are completed by the promise of a new

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124. For the combination of the words מָלֵא and מִבְאֵשׁ see, e.g., Jer. 30:7; Joel 2:11; 3:4; Zep. 1:14; Mal. 3:23. The usual connotations of this day are terror and anxiety, cf. Zep. 1:14.

125. So Harper, *Hosea*, p. 247; Cassuto, ‘Hosea’, p. 118; Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 32. The locative interpretation is held by Rudolph, *Hosea*, p. 58, and Van Gelderen, *Hosea*, pp. 37-38. One of the problems with the interpretation of Jezreel as a location is that the notion that the reunion and further existence of Israel and Judah is related to a place in the northern kingdom is without precedent in the Hebrew Bible.

126. The verb ‘to sow’ is almost synonymous with the verb ‘to plant’ (cf. Jer. 31:27-28; 35:7; Deut. 28:38-39; Ps. 107:37). Especially Jer. 31:27 and Ezek. 36:9-11 are instructive parallels for Hosea 2:2 and show the same connotations of a return to the land and a subsequent replanting in the land. The case of Jer. 31:27 shows that the verb הָעַלִּים can easily occur in Hebrew in an absolute sense and without a prepositional phrase concerning the place ‘in which’ the seed is sown.

127. Cf. Clines, ‘Hosea 2’, p. 93: ‘Israel now comes to rest in a place where she will put down roots – so the imagery implies –’. 
and secure existence in the homeland. God will sow and replant Israel in the land in order to see it blossom up.

The nation renamed
The vision of new life in Hosea 2:1-3 concludes with the reversal of the two negative names Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah. The name Jezreel received a new content in vs. 2; similarly the judgement implied in the names Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah is inverted. The people will now address their ‘brothers and sisters’ with the names Ammi and Ruhamah, pointing to a renewed and positive relationship with Yhwh.

It seems exaggerated to attempt to identify the addressees precisely. The point of the verse seems to be that as part of the new future of Israel and Judah the negative names of the people will be changed into positive ones, signalling the restoration of the vital relationship to Yhwh. The names ‘Ammi’ and ‘Ruhamah’ will then resound as joyful cries among the people of Israel, who are together as brothers and sisters.

Hosea 2:1-3 in retrospect
The vocabulary and motifs that appear in Hosea 2:1-3, and specifically in vs. 2, have given rise to the view that this section is an erratic block within its present context. This inference has been made on account of the vision of a reunited Judah and Israel (vs. 2a) and the motif of the return from exile indicated by the word פָּרוֹת (vs. 2c). These motifs, so the argument goes, fit poorly in a prophetic text from the eighth century BCE, but do predominantly occur in texts that depict the future of Israel after the Babylonian exile. Particularly the correspondences between Hosea 2:1-3 and the visions of reunification in Ezekiel 34:11-13, 23-30, 37:15-25 and Jeremiah 31:8-12, 27-28 are striking. Such correspondences raise the question whether the authors of Hosea do not draw from the same vocabulary about the future reuniting of Israel and Judah as is present in these texts.

In this light different explanations have been given to the position of Hosea 2:1-3 in its context. The prevailing view is that Hosea 2:1-3 is a Judean interpolation in the original text and dates from the period of the Babylonian exile. According to a second view, Hosea 2:1-3 is intelligible in light of the situation in the northern kingdom just before the downfall of Samaria in 721 BCE. This period was characterized by strife between Judah and Israel and even war, as evidenced by the Syro-Ephraimite war in 734 BCE. To this background the promise of reunion (vs. 2ab) becomes feasible as an original element in the work.
of Hosea. The correspondences between Hosea 2:1-3 and the forenamed texts are in this way somewhat mitigated in favour of the connections between Hosea 2:1-3 and the historical situation in the eighth century. This is the position of Wolff, Rudolph and Emmerson.  

Though it is hard to judge the tenability of the latter explanation in view of our scarce knowledge of the actual situation in the eighth century, a few remarks may be made. The first is that attributing the motif of the reunification of Israel and Judah to the original Hosea and to the eighth century remains forced, taking into account that this motif of reuniting otherwise is particularly known from texts that have the Babylonian period as background. It is not impossible, but makes the prophetic book of Hosea an outsider in the canon due to its presentation of a vision of unity of Judah and Israel as early as in the eighth century. In the second place, scholars who advocate this interpretation of Hosea 2:2 are not unanimous in their treatment of Hosea 3:5, a verse that presents a quite similar case. Could the motif of one nation under the rule of a Davidic king be originally Hoseanic as well? Emmerson is consistent and answers this question positively, but Wolff detects here a Judean interpolation. Thus the need of a basis for making verifiable decisions with respect to what should be considered as interpolations is raised. In the third place, the phrase ‘and they will go up out of the land’ in Hosea 2:2 remains problematic when one does not presume a sort of exilic or negative situation as its point of reference, including both Israel and Judah.

In my view, Hosea 1-3 is not the sort of text to contain many references to a specific historical situation but rather consists of images and symbols and names used as signs. It is a poem and not a commentary to a specific historical situation. As a poem, the text jumps from one time frame to another and from one theme to another. Hosea 2 contains references to the exodus (2:17), to the wilderness period (2:17) and to the period in the land (2:10, 13). In light of this broad scope even allusions to the exile of Judah in the Babylonian period are conceivable, although the motif of Judah’s reunion with Israel as such does not fit within the eighth century context suggested by the text. There may be a temporary distraction from the original time setting here, with thoughts flowing from one scene of judgement concerning Israel to another concerning Judah as well. It seems indeed that judgement and life granted beyond the destruction is the main literary theme in Hosea 2:1-3, while the historical aspects recede into the background so that the judgements on Israel and on Judah merge into another. The text can thus, for a literary purpose, ‘borrow’ motifs from a later period of judgement to formulate its own promise. However this may be, the primary thrust of Hosea 2:1-3 within the present text is to formulate an intermezzo of hope in relation to the termination of Israel described in Hosea 1. This assessment can be made apart from whatever decision one makes concerning the associations raised by the vocabulary.

131. See Wolff, Hosea, p. 31; Rudolph, Hosea, pp. 57-58; Emmerson, Israelite Prophet, pp. 95-100.
Hosea 2:4-7

4. Contend with your mother, contend
   for she is not my wife
   and I am not her husband
   let her remove her harlotry from her face
   and her adultery from between her breasts

5. lest I will strip her naked
   and position her like on the day that she was born
   and make her like a wilderness
   and set her like a parched land
   and let her die of thirst.

6. On her children also I will not have compassion
   for they are children of harlotry.

7. For their mother has committed harlotry
   she that was pregnant with them has acted shamefully
   for she said:
     I will go after my lovers
     that give me my bread and my water
     my wool and my flax
     my oil and my drinks.

A controversy

The long unit of Hosea 2:4-25 starts with a recapitulation of the accusation of harlotry. Yhwh is speaking and directs the accusation to Israel in the feminine. The notion that the text involves a controversy or ההופעה (vs. 4) is fundamental. This verb has often been taken as indication that Hosea 2:4-17 is set within a juridical framework. More specifically, in its sequence of events the text would imitate divorce proceedings in which a husband takes his wife to court on account of adultery. On the other hand it has been emphasized that the juridical framework in Hosea 2:4-15 is neither ‘rigid nor realistic’ but that elements of this pattern have been freely employed within a larger literary composition.

It is important, however, to consider the implications of the word ההופעה on a less formal level. The issue at stake in every ההופעה is to determine who is right (בעון) and who is wrong (ESSAGES). A ההופעה is thus more than just a quarrel but it is concerned with rightness and righteousness, with justifiable or condemnable behaviour. In the prophetic literature elements from the ההופעה are carried over into

133. See Wolff, Hosea, pp. 37-43, and W.D. Whitt, ‘The Divorce of Yahweh and Asherah in Hos 2:4-7.12 ff’, SJOT 6 (1992), pp. 31-67 (31). In this theory, vv. 4-5 would represent the appeal to go to court and to take part in the accusation (vs. 4a), the actual accusation (vs. 4bc), an ultimatum-like warning of the accused (vs. 4de) and the threat of potential punishment (vs. 5). Vv. 6-7 would restate and unfold the accusation and vv. 8-10, 11-15 and 16-17 would represent proclamations of judgement and form the conclusion of the case.

134. Cf. Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, pp. 219-221; C. Westermann, Grundformen, p. 143 (‘szenische Einkleidung’ of the subsequent prophetic speech); Krzyzna, ‘Struktur’, pp. 56-58. The coincidence of several legal roles in the person of Yhwh (accuser, judge, executioner of punishment) is one of the arguments for this view.

the relation between Yhwh and Israel and are frequently employed as a framework for the prophetic message. Yhwh is portrayed then as having a ‘case’ against Israel on account of its conduct. Gemser has made some insightful comments about the thought pattern underlying this בְּרִי language:

The controversy is exponent of the feeling that there is something wrong in the relations of the entities concerned, that there is a hitch somewhere, that something is out of joint. This presupposes that there is an order of things [...]. This is the sedaqas, the ‘justice’ [...]. “Justice” is the dominant conception in Israel’s religious and ethical way of thinking.136

The use of the בְּרִי phraseology with respect to Yhwh and Israel means that the conduct of Israel is not a matter of indifference to Yhwh:

Nothing is neutral, indifferent, nothing undecided at the end. One is wrong or right, comes out justified or doomed.137

The word בְּרִי thus indicates that in Hosea 2:4-25 a dispute is going on in the sense described by Gemser. The harlotry of the people is the matter ‘out of joint’ and is questioned by Yhwh. He appeals to the children of Israel (2:4) to take a stand in this dispute. While the juridical framework in the text may not be rigid, the idea that Hosea 2:4-7 contains the unfolding of the accusation is nonetheless a good point of orientation for the explanation of this unit.

**Literary structure**
The word ‘harlotry’ is the key word in Hosea 2:4-7 and occurs both as a noun and as a verb.

2:4 let she remove her harlotry
2:6 for they are children of harlotry
2:7 for their mother has committed harlotry

Verse 7 is a strategic point in the text. In this verse the key word ‘to commit harlotry’ is explicated by means of the words ‘to go’ and ‘to give’. Further the ‘lovers’ are introduced. These ‘lovers’ govern the ‘going’ of the woman by their ‘giving’. The ‘harlotry’ of Israel is then no longer an abstract idea but is elucidated with respect to the partners with whom Israel commits harlotry:

2:7 their mother has committed harlotry [...] for she said:

I will go after my lovers
who give my bread and my water
my wool and my flax
my oil and my drinks.


A divorce
Verse 4 proclaims the divorce of Yhwh and Israel by the formulation ‘She is not my wife and I am not her husband’. The phrasing recalls the severance of relations in Hosea 1:9, where the wording was ‘You will not be my people and I will not be the-Present-One for you’. Whether the words are an official divorce formula or not, the purport of the statement is to deny the ties that bind Yhwh and Israel together and to annul the relation. This break in the relation is a consequence and reflection of the fact that Israel commits harlotry and does not live up to her partnership with Yhwh.138

Since the beginning of the present century it has been suggested that vs. 4b-c represents an official divorce formula. This view is held by, e.g., Cassuto, ‘The Second Chapter of Hosea’, pp. 122-123; Wolff, Hosea, p. 39; M.A. Friedman, ‘Israel’s Response in Hosea 2:17b: “You are my Husband”’, JBL 99 (1980), pp. 199-204 and Whitt, ‘The Divorce of Yahweh and Asherah’, pp. 31-67.

According to Cassuto, Hosea 2:4be represents the ‘ancient formula of divorce, as we know from Babylonian documents and from a Talmudic statement, and without doubt it is actually to this legal formula that the prophet alludes here’ (p. 122). Cassuto also connects the punitive measures in vs. 5 to the divorce procedure, explaining these as ‘the [customary] penalties that are inflicted on an adulterous wife’ after the divorce (p. 121). In this vein Cassuto explains vs. 5ab as the measure to strip the woman and deprive her of gifts, vs. 5cd as the expulsion of the woman from her home and vs. 5e as the death sentence upon the woman (cf. Deut. 22:21). The parallels between the legal material in Gen. 38:24; Deut. 22:21-24 and Hos. 2:4-5 are, however, not strong: the traditional death sentence for an adulteress is absent in Hos. (burning or stoning). It is further remarkable that the references to stripping of a female all occur with respect to metaphorical ladies rather than with respect to real women (Isa. 47:2-3; Ezek. 16:39; Nah. 3:5). This suggests that it is questionable whether the measure of stripping was applied to real women.

Later scholars such as Whitt (‘Divorce’, p. 35) support their view with reference to Elephantine documents, in particular to Papyrus no. 7 from the Brooklyn Papyri, in which an extended divorce formula is found of the type ‘I hate [or: divorce] my wife x and she shall not be a wife to me’ (see E.G. Kraeling (ed.), The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1953; the reference is to Papyrus no. 7 lines 21-22; the Aramaic text in these lines contains a verb and reads in transcription: sjanit le-anatati x...lo tehulah li anatat). The second half (!) of this formula according to Whitt forms a parallel to Hosea 2:4 and serves as proof that the formula in the biblical text is an official divorce formula.

Rudolph (Hosea, p. 65), however, concludes from a critical re-examination of the Elephantine material that an exact parallel to the formula in Hosea 2:4 is not found here nor in any other rabbinic or early Judaic source (i.e., the Murabba‘at divorce letter). The vice-versa formula in Hosea 2:4 does not have any parallels in the divorce formulas, since the latter always keep the male and female perspective strictly separated. Since some Brooklyn Papyri (no. 2 lines 3-4 and no. 7 lines 4)

138. Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, pp. 221-224, engage in a serious discussion concerning the question whether or not Hosea 2:4 points to a real divorce. Their problem with the idea of divorce is that it would make all further actions redundant: a divorce would simply be ‘the end of the story’. This interpretation suffers from a too formalistic and non metaphorical understanding of the notion of divorce.
contain marriage declarations of the type ‘she is my wife and I am her husband’, Hosea 2:4 can best be regarded as a negated marriage formula rather than an official divorce formula. It seems thus best to conclude that the formulation in Hosea 2:4 bears legal overtones, although it does not represent an official divorce formula.

**A final appeal**

A last call addresses Israel to remove ‘the harlotry from her face’ and the ‘adultery from between her breasts’. The abstract qualities of harlotry and adultery are visualised as concrete elements on the body of the female. This may have its origins in the apparel of a harlot, which may have consisted either of a veil or a painted face and of amulets dangling on a necklace or of other adornments and jewels on head and neck. Images from real life serve here thus to portray the woman as real as possible.

**Israel as person and Israel as land**

The set of penalties in vs. 5 shows a mixture of images. Israel is both conceived of as a woman and as a land or region. The statements ‘lest I will strip her naked’ and ‘position her as on the day that she was born’ (vs. 5ab) depict Israel as a female person while the statements ‘and I will make her like a wilderness’ and ‘set her like a parched land’ (vs. 5cd) portray Israel as a land. The final statement ‘and I will make her die of thirst’ (vs. 5e) alludes to both perspectives but predominantly returns to the image of Israel as a female person.

A common element in the verse is further the negative accent on the ‘wilderness’ of the land and on the deprivation of the woman. Yhwh is portrayed as the one depriving the woman of care and clothing and as the one making the land ‘parched’ and unliveable.

Both of these elements point to important aspects within Hosea 2:4-25. In the first place, the double focus on Israel as a female person and as a land continues to be present. The images of Israel as female covenant partner of Yhwh and as a people bound to the land constantly interact in Hosea 2:4-25. Not only in vs. 5 does the punishment affect both the woman (nakedness and thirst) and the land (wilderness and dryness), but also in vv. 11-15 the images of the naked exposure of the woman (vv. 11-12) and of the destruction of the land (vs. 14) go hand in hand. The same combination is visible in the reversal of the situation: the restoration of the relation between Yhwh and the people (vs. 16) is accompanied by the renewed gift of vineyards and fertility in the land (vs. 17), and the fresh commitment of Yhwh to Israel (vv. 18-22) is accompanied by a new fruitfulness of the land (vv. 23-25).

This points to a second motif: there is also a double image of Yhwh in Hosea 2:4-25. Yhwh is not only portrayed as the covenant partner of the people – as husband of Israel in the marriage metaphor – but also as the god of the land, providing life and fertility and if necessary withdrawing it. Especially significant

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139. The terms ‘harlotry’ and ‘adultery’ are almost synonymous when they relate to the infidelity of Israel with respect to Yhwh. Verbal and nominal forms of the roots הָנָא and הָנָה occur in combination in Isa. 57:3; Jer. 3:8; 5:7; 13:27; Ezek. 23:42; Hos. 4:13-14. The word מָדָּרָן is a hapax.

140. See for these and other proposals Rudolph, Hosea, p. 66; Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 224; Wolff, Hosea, p. 40.
in this connection is that Yhwh is not only portrayed as the god of life but also as
the god of destruction. Looking ahead towards the whole of Hosea 2:4-25, one
may discern here an element of contrast with the power of Baal who is a life-
giving deity but who must give way every season to Mot who destroys the
products of the soil. Yhwh, however, is portrayed both as the source of life and
as the source of drought and desolation in the land.\footnote{141}

The thrust of this double image of Yhwh is not so much to depict Yhwh as
source of life and fertility but rather to show that Yhwh is able to unite these two
functions of being Israel's historical covenant partner and being the source of life
and destruction: in that sense Yhwh is portrayed as superior to Baal.

\textbf{Harlotry as going after gifts}

In vs. 7 the harlotrous behaviour of the woman is expounded by the verbs 'to go'
and 'to give'. The introduction of these key words is connected to a third new
motif in the text: the lovers.\footnote{142} The harlotry of the woman takes the concrete form
of a desire to 'go after' and be with her lovers.\footnote{143} The reason for this 'going' is
the conviction that the lovers 'give' her the basic commodities of life. The gifts
that are mentioned form three pairs: bread and water, wool and flax, oil and
drinks. Bread and water represent the bare essentials of life. Wool and flax
represent clothing materials, equally vital for the survival of humans.\footnote{144} Oil and
drinks presumably represent the extras, the things that make life not only liveable
but also pleasant. Oil was used for personal care or as perfume, and drinks or
refreshments, probably in the sense of spirits, also have a dimension of luxury.

According to O. Loretz the second part of vs. 7 contains a fragment from a secular
love song (see O. Loretz, 'Ein kanaanäisch-biblisches Liebeslied in Hosea 2,7: Zum
7d-g a 'self-contained' poetic structure that may be explained as a 'tetracolon from
the repertoire of ancient Syriac [i.e. Ugaritic] and Israelite erotic love songs' (p. 315).

In a similar way, A. van Selms has detected in Hosea 2:7-9 a number of parallels
with the love poetry found in the Song of Songs, cf. A. van Selms, 'Hosea and
read on the 7th and 8th meetings of die Oud Testament Werkgemeenskap in Suid-
Afrika}, Pretoria 1964-1965, pp. 85-89. Van Selms lists five parallels: (a) the word
\textit{עריק} in Hos. 2:7 and Cant. 3:4; (b) the expression \textit{אני} in the sense of 'she planned'
in Hos. 2:7-9 and Cant. 7:8; (c) the use of the preposition \textit{ל} plus a verb of motion
in Hos. 2:7 and Cant. 1:4; (d) the combination of the verbs \textit{לֶאַה} and \textit{לֶאַה} in Hos.
2:9 and Cant. 3:1-2; 5:6 and (e) the enumeration of three pairs of gifts in Hos.
2:7 and Cant. 5:1. The observation that Hos. 2:7-9 contains at least five points of similarity

\footnote{141. This passage is inspired by the instructive survey about the function of Baal as life-giving deity
provided by U. Cassuto, 'Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts', in: Cassuto, \textit{Biblical and
\footnote{142. The word \textit{עריק} is a ptc. Piel from \textit{עריק} and has the meaning 'lover' in the active sense of 'those
who love'. The term occurs 5 x in Hos. 2 (vv. 7-15).}
\footnote{143. The expression 'to go after someone' can have two meanings: 'to go with someone' in the
context of love (HAL 1, p. 237; cf. Ruth 3:10) and 'to go after' a god or an idol, in the sense of
'to adhere' to it (cf. Hos 1:2, 'away from after Yhwh'). The text presumably plays with this
double meaning.}
\footnote{144. Cf. for this pair Deut. 22:11; Ezek. 44:17; Prov. 31:13. The indispensability of clothes is
illustrated by texts such as Ex. 22:26-27 and Isa. 58:7.}
with Canticles leads Van Selms to suggest that Hosea took over these elements from a repertoire of erotic songs which circulated long before these songs were collected in the book of Songs of Songs. Van Selms further unfolds the idea that the erotic songs reached Hosea thanks to his wife, who as a professional prostitute must have mastered the genre of singing love poetry. Hosea here 'was influenced by the words of her songs' (p. 89).

Hosea 2:8-10

8. Therefore, look I will hedge up your way with thornbushes
and raise up a stone wall for her
so that she will not find her paths.

9. And she shall pursue her lovers
but not overtake them
she shall seek but not find them
then she shall say:
I will go and return to my first husband
for it was better for me then than now.

10. Yet she does not seem to know
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the must and the fresh oil;
who lavished silver upon her and gold
but they used it for the Baal!

First measure of judgement: blocked going
Many terms with a connection to the word 'to go' appear in this section, such as 'way' and 'path' (vs. 8), 'to pursue' and 'to go' (vs. 9). The terms 'hedge' and 'stonewall' point to obstructions on the road and the expressions 'not find' and 'not overtake' subsequently point to an unsuccessful going. The central motif in this section is thus that the route following after the lovers is for Israel an 'impossible' way of life.

Literary structure
A notion common to vv. 8-9 is that the women will not reach her lovers:

2:8 she will not find her paths
2:9 she will not overtake them
she will not find them

It is interesting that the object of the verbs in vs. 9 gradually becomes shorter. The lovers, so to say, literally fade away:

2:9a she shall pursue her lovers a noun as object
2:9b but not overtake them the particle הָּ with suffix
2:9c she shall seek them suffix attached to the verb
and she shall not find no object
A significant repetition is also found in vs. 10 where the preposition " is found three times, as if to express a contrast between the investments of Yhwh (to her) and the investments of the people (to the Baal).

2:10b that it was I who give to her
2:10d who lavished silver to (upon) her
2:10e they use it to (for) the Baal

The second part of vs. 9 corresponds to the second part of vs. 7. The introduction with the word הָאָמֶרָה ('she says') is repeated as well as the opening word מֶלֶךְ ('I will go'). The outline of both statements is as follows:

2:7 for she said I will go
2:9 then she shall say I will go
after my lovers and return to my first husband
that give me my bread for it was better for me then than now

The repetition suggests a contrast between the 'lovers' and the 'first husband', both of which can be gone after. The second of these options, however, is qualified by the word 'good' in comparison to the former.

A road to nowhere (verse 8)
In vs. 8 Yhwh is cast as a countryman, who puts up barriers and stone walls in order to prevent the woman to continue her route 'after the lovers'. Thornbushes and stone walls are well-known means of obstruction or protection in order to prevent people or cattle entering into a specific area. In this context the 'way' and 'paths' of the woman that Yhwh blocks may stand for more than only routes of traffic, and may point metaphorically to someone's way of life and the whole complex of one's conduct and engagements. In this connection that way of life refers to Israel's pursuit of her lovers. The blocking of this route is a signal that this halakah is identified as 'impossible' and as a 'road to nowhere'. On this 'road' Israel will not reach its destination: her passionate search for the lovers will not succeed. She will pursue but not overtake them and seek but not find them. They will simply be entirely out of reach and unfindable.


145. Cf. Isa. 5:5; Ps. 80:13; Lam. 3:7-9.
146. According to Andersen & Freedman (Hosea, p. 238), these words 'share the ethical connotation of conduct, good or bad'. Lisowsky (p. 370) gives the following descriptions of the meaning of the word תָּפָר: way, enterprise, conduct, manner. The words 'way' and 'path' occur in combination, e.g., in Isa. 42:16; 43:16; 59:8; Prov. 1:15; 3:17; 7:25; 8:20; Job 24:13; Lam. 3:9.
147. The words תָּפָר ('to pursue') and לְוָא ('to overtake') form a fixed pair, cf. Gen. 31:23-25; Ex. 14:9; Jos. 2:5. The same holds for the verbs דָּרָה ('to seek') and נָד ('to find'), cf. Jos. 2:22; Cant. 3:1-2.

In the definition of O'Connor who builds on the work of Andersen & Freedman (Hosea, pp. 129; 393-94), a pseudo-sorites is a poetic strategy in which "a process to be negated is conceptualized in stages, and each stage is successively negated" (p. 242). This strategy is an imitation of the figure of the sorites, a series of connected statements of the type "If A is the case, then its consequent B will follow. If B is the case, then its consequent C will follow...etc". This figure has also been called climax gradatio. The pseudo-sorites is a sorites in the negative mode, which results in the pattern "A is not the case, and its consequent B will not follow. But in case B does follow, its consequent C will not follow...etc" (pp. 240-41). O'Connor discerns a reflection of this pattern in Hos. 2:8-12. The theme of the pseudo-sorites in these verses is 'blocked pursuit'. The device consists of three stages, found in vv. 8-9abc and 11cd-12ab. The blocking of the female's ways in vs. 8 so that she cannot find her lovers is the first stage. Yet if the blocking of the roads described in this verse will not work out, her pursued search for her lovers (vs. 9) is bound to fail. If she nevertheless apprehends her lovers and as a consequence Yhwh exposes her nakedness (vs. 11cd), then these lovers will not be able to rescue her (vs. 12ab). The central idea according to O'Connor is thus that 'pursuit is blocked, but if it is engaged in, then it is engaged in vainly' (p. 244).

O'Connor points thus to the logical coherence in Hos. 2:8-12 and to the climax that is reached in vs. 12 with the exposure of the woman 'in the eyes of her lovers'. His assertion that the central theme of this pseudo-sorites is 'blocked pursuit' is not far from my suggestion that the central theme in vv. 8-10 is the prevention of the woman's going after her lovers. Nevertheless, because this pseudo-sorites involves only some parts of the text of Hos. 2:8-12, skipping over other parts (vv. 9d-11b), and because O'Connor does not reckon with larger patterns of structure in the text, his observations seem to have only a partial explanatory value.

The option to return to the first husband

It is envisioned that when the passionate search for the lovers does not succeed, Israel will return to Yhwh as her first husband. The decision to return to Yhwh is phrased as the exact reversal of the pursuit of the lovers, as the correspondence between vs. 9d-f and vs. 7c-g suggests. The text points thus out that the return to Yhwh is preferable and 'better' for Israel than the present pursuit of the lovers.

The text situates this return to Yhwh in the future and in that light the problem that some commentators have raised with regard to the connection between the intention of repentance in this verse and the subsequent indictment in the next verse, is unfounded. The issue is not whether or not the speech of the woman is a genuine expression of repentance, as some commentators have argued, but the issue is simply that the text refers to repentance as a fantasy of Yhwh and as a future possibility. The next verse (vs. 10), however, moves back to the present situation of crisis and judgement.

It has been argued that the combination of the verbs 'to go' and 'to return' functions as a hendiadys expressing the woman's intention to 'go back', but that...
is unlikely from a grammatical point of view. One may rather prefer to retain the meaningful connotations of the verb בָּאָשׁ ('to return'), which often indicates repentance in the sense of a sincere change of attitude towards Yhwh.

The reference to the first husband is made by the words בֹּאָשׁ, as Deut. 24:4 shows. It may be assumed that the text here deliberately avoids the word בֹּאָשׁ, since the words בֹּאָשׁ and בֶּלַל are utilized to express one of the central oppositions in the text, namely, that between Yhwh and the baals (Hos. 2:18-19). The motivation for the woman to return is that the past was בֹּאָשׁ for her in comparison to the present. The first husband is thus associated with a situation that was 'good', as creation itself. Through this latter word the text qualifies the option to return to Yhwh as being far more positive than the pursuit of other lovers.

**Yhwh as giver (verse 10)**

Verse 10 presents a side comment and summarizes Israel's essential wrong as being that 'she does not know' that Yhwh gives her the gifts of nature. These gifts are described as 'grain, must and oil'. The Hebrew words used here are מִני, מְדִינָה and מִרְוָא. These terms are archaic and refer to unmanufactured and 'pure' materials: grain rather than bread, the first grape juice rather than wine and fresh olive oil rather than oil that is refined for use. This triplet of goods elsewhere represents the agricultural blessings that Yhwh gives to Israel in the promised land. Grain, must and oil are the symbols of the good and fruitful land 'where you will lack nothing' (Deut. 8:9).

It is interesting that the words 'grain', 'must' and 'oil' occur by preference in combination with one of the other terms. So the word 'grain' is accompanied by the word 'must' in all of its occurrences in Gen.-Deut. It occurs without מִני only in Joel 1:17; Ezek. 36:29; Lam. 2:12 (with יָּד); Ps. 65:10; 78:24. The word מְדִינָה occurs without מִני in Judg. 9:13; Isa. 24:7; Hos. 4:11; Mic. 6:15; Prov. 3:10; and in Joel 2:24; Neh. 10:38 where the word does occur in combination with מְדִינָה. It is open whether the word מְדִינָה is thus found without מִני and five out of thirty-eight times it is found without מִני or מִני (that is ca. 15%). The word מִרְוָא.

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149. So Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 239, according to whom the two verbs together express one action (to go back). It is true that the verb בָּאָשׁ can function as a semi-auxiliary verb and in combination with other verbs can express the adverbial notion 'back', cf. JM § 177bd and HAL 4, p. 1328. In such cases, however, the verb בָּאָשׁ must precede the other verb, which is not the case in Hos. 2:9 (cf. Hos. 2:11). It seems best, therefore, to treat the two verbal forms in vs. 9e as two grammatically equal forms, each with its own significance.

150. The expression מִני מְדִינָה מִרְוָא is only found in Deut. 24:4.

151. The characterisation 'archaic' is found in HAL 1, p. 205. The article preceding these words ('the grain, the must and the oil') can be understood as determination or as indetermination (so Andersen & Freedman, p. 215 who translate 'that it was I who provided her with grain, must and oil'). JM § 137i points out that when nouns are used generically (collectively) and understood as determinate, this may or may not be indicated by the article. I prefer to assume that some notion of determination is present here ('silver and gold' in vs. 10e are mentioned without article). It is open whether this determination must be understood in the sense of the grain 'that you, Israel, have' or in the sense of the grain 'that you know is the characteristic gift of the promised land'.

152. For the frequent combination of these three words see, e.g, Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51; Jer. 31:13; Hos. 2:10, 24; Joel 1:10; Hag. 1:11; Neh. 5:11; 10:40; 13:5, 12.
finally, is found only in combination with (one of) the other words except in Zech. 4:14. These statistics indicate that the terms ‘grain, must and oil’ belong to a common stock of words which by preference occur in combination.

The list of gifts from Yhwh is continued with the precious metals ‘silver’ and ‘gold’. In view of the valuable character of these metals, the exclamation that ‘they use these for the Baal!’ represents a climax. That what Yhwh grants to them in plenty (the verb נָבַל) the people pass on to the Baal utilizing it for the cult and worship of this deity. The most precious gifts of Yhwh are thus taken and received by the Baal. This points to a significant distinction between Yhwh the ‘giver’ and Baal the ‘taker’.

The presentation of Yhwh as the ‘giver’ of all gifts of nature raises a theological question. Does this imply that Yhwh is the giver of whatever is positively present in nature? Is it right to surmise, as Andersen and Freedman do, that ‘we are close to the claim that Yhwh is the fertility god’? In a sense, yes, although it is wise to replace the term ‘fertility god’ with ‘God of life’. Two aspects, however, should be taken into consideration. In the first place, the setting for this characterisation of Yhwh is a polemic with the baals. Israel attributes the gifts of nature to the baals, the gods of life, who are more or less one-talent gods. In contrast, the view is presented that Yhwh gives these gifts as an integral element of his power. The view that the gifts of nature constitute separate elements outside of the covenant of Yhwh and Israel is thus rejected. In the second place, Yhwh is known by other characteristics as well – his special relation to Israel and his creative and liberating work on behalf of Israel in history. In other words, the capacity to provide the gifts of nature is related to other characteristics of Yhwh and brought within that framework. The gifts of nature or rather the gifts of the promised land, as they are called here, can thus not be severed from the character of Yhwh as Israel’s covenant partner. Later in the text five other gifts are mentioned which are perhaps more characteristic for Yhwh in relation to Israel, namely, ‘righteousness and justice, loving kindness and compassion and faithfulness’ (vv. 21-22).

The word ילים
The word ילים occurs four times in this chapter, twice in the singular (vv. 10, 18) of which one time with the article (vs. 10) and twice in the plural (vv. 15, 19). It is present in three functions: as a divine name (2:10), as a generic indication of a plurality of Baal manifestations (2:15, 19) and as a noun with the meaning ‘husband’ (2:18).

When in the singular and with reference to a single deity that is not further qualified, the word ילים has the remarkable characteristic of being always preceded by the article, as if the name is not really a name but a specification drawn from a collective term for further unspecified spirits and deities. The point of

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153. Silver and gold are frequently mentioned as materials for making idols, cf. Ex. 32:1-24 (gold alone); Deut. 7:25; 29:16; Ps. 115:4-5; Hos. 8:4 (both silver and gold).
155. See HAL 1, pp. 137-138, and J.C. de Moor & M.J. Mulder, ילים, TWAT 1, pp. 706-727. According to Mulder, ‘The determination of Baal through the article belongs to the category of
reference of the singular form is perhaps not in every case identical and may vary from some anonymous deity of the Baal type, a local manifestation of Baal or Baal the god of life as such. The plural form **ד'ווים** obviously makes the deities involved anonymous by grouping them together in a plural form. The plural is mostly held to refer to ‘various manifestations of deities with some relation to Baal’.  

A moot point with respect to the interpretation of the word **ברא** in the biblical texts is the extent to which the deities referred to are related to the deity Baal as known from Ugarit. It has also been argued that the term should be understood as an inclusive term referring to a variety of unrelated local gods, in view of the common element that their worship undermines genuine Yhwh worship.

However this may be, it is clear that in the sphere of religion the word **לע** refers to the most outspoken opponent(s) of Yhwh in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical texts give incomplete and biased information concerning the profile of this Baal, so that most scholars fill in the picture with help of the image of Baal provided by the Ugaritic texts, assuming that a similar sort of deity is intended in the biblical texts. This results in the picture that Baal, i.e., Baal-Hadad in Ugarit, is the god of life and rain, closely related to the agricultural seasons and the fertility of nature. Such information can nonetheless only be a starting point for understanding the meaning of the word **לע** in this text. In order to reach greater clarity concerning the function of this term in this text and to move beyond the commonplace that Baal is a ‘fertility god’, it is important to realise that the word **לע** functions within Hosea 2 in clear opposition to the name Yhwh, so that both names or words derive significance from the way they are contrasted to one another. The points of distinction between Yhwh and Baal are shaped and defined as the text goes along. A summary of these distinctions will be found in my conclusions concerning Hosea 2. The nature of the polemics against Baal in Hosea 2 is further investigated in a separate appendix to Hosea 2 below.

**Hosea 2:11-15**

11. Therefore I will return and take my grain in its time  
   my must in its season  
   I will rescue my wool and my flax  
   which are to cover her nakedness.

12. Now I will uncover her shame  
   before the eyes of her lovers  
   and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

generic and abstract words which through their application to certain individuals can be looked upon as proper names’ (p. 718) (my translation).

156. See Mulder, *VïD*, p. 718.

157. See Mulder, *VïD*, pp. 718-19. Mulder prefers the view that primarily a relation to Baal par excellence is present in the term. He refutes the idea that the singular **дарל** may be interpreted as a collective term for various Canaanite deities and assumes that the word is mainly employed in order to refer to the single deity Baal.

13. I will cause to cease all her joy  
her festival, her new month and her sabbath,  
yes all her seasons of feast.

14. And I will lay waste her vine and her fig tree  
of which she said:  
    These are my payment  
    that my lovers gave to me.  
I will make them into a bush  
and the beasts of the field shall eat them away.

15. And I will visit upon her the days of the baals  
for which she burns incense offerings  
and decks herself with her rings and her jewellery  
and goes after her lover:  
but me she has forgotten!  
— speech of Yhwh —.

Second measure of judgement: the withdrawal of gifts

The central motif in this section is the withdrawal of the gifts that Israel had wrongly identified as being gifts from her lovers. The word 'to give' occurs only once (vs. 14) but opposite terms such as 'to take' (vs. 11), 'to snatch away' (vv. 11-12) and 'to destroy' (vs. 14) indicate that the emphasis is on the motif of the withdrawal of gifts. The thrust of this measure presumably is to point out that the gifts are not there of themselves but are at the disposal of Yhwh who 'gives and withdraws'. The resulting picture of destitution and desolation in the land prepares the revelation of Yhwh as the true and unparalleled giver of gifts (vv. 16-17).

Literary structure

The repetition of the first person suffix in vs. 11, which stands in opposition to the repeated first person suffix in vs. 7, is conspicuous:

2:7  (she) my bread and my water  
    my wool and my flax  
    my oil and my drinks

2:11  (Yhwh) my grain  
    my must  
    my wool and my flax.

The key words 'to go' and 'to give' also occur in this unit. In vs. 14 the word ἔδω is found in a word play with the words ἐδώ and ἐδώ and in vs. 15 the word כָּל occurs.

2:14 her vine and her fig tree  
of which she said: these are my payment  
that my lovers gave to me

(προσφορά (payment))

(τακτά (to give))
2:15 the days of the baals  
(in which) she goes after her lovers  
(גָּלֶל) (to go)

Both of these key words occur here in combination with the word ‘lovers’, a term that appears here in some concentration:

2:12 I will uncover her shame before the eyes of her lovers  
2:14 these are my payment that my lovers gave to me  
2:15 and goes after her lovers.

Features of connection within the unit are further the repetition of the words ‘to rescue’ (דָּלֶל) and ‘season’ (מִשְׁרַף).

2:11 I will rescue my wool and my flax  
2:12 and no one shall rescue her out of my hand  
2:13 I will take... my must in its season  
2:13 I will cause to cease... all her seasons

In vs. 13 the repetition of the final ah-sound is striking:

2:13 all her joy  
her festival – her new month – and her sabbath  
hers seasons of feast

Israel dismantled as a person (verses 11-12)
In this second stage of punishment the text switches constantly between viewing Israel as a female person and as a land or a people. The female personification of Israel remains the same but the conception behind it shifts from the land to the female person, to the nation and back. This distinction is not strict: the images are fluid and sometimes change from line to line. Vs. 11 starts, for instance, with the statement that Yhwh will take away the grain ‘in its time’ and the must ‘in its season’ affecting the land and its products, and then moves to the indication that he will snatch way the wool and the flax ‘which are to cover her nakedness’, thus evoking the image of Israel as a female person.

The two words זמן (‘time’) and_Season_ (‘season’) form a parallelism. These expressions may simply refer to the time ‘when grain and must are there’ or may refer specifically to the ‘harvest time’ which would add the dramatic note that Yhwh takes away the grain and the must precisely when the harvest is within reach.

Parallel to this action Yhwh will ‘snatch away’ his wool and flax. The verb נָזַן is part of a wordplay and occurs in this verse with a meaning that is opposite to the more common meaning ‘to rescue’ that occurs in the next verse (vs. 12). Wool and flax have the function of clothing material and serve ‘to cover her nakedness’.

159. So Wolff, Hosea, p. 45; Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 245.
In the subsequent statement that Yhwh will uncover the shame of the female (vs. 12), the role of the lovers is accentuated.\(^{160}\) Everything will happen before their eyes and yet none of them will be able to rescue the female. The lovers are pictured as powerless, thus contrasting with Yhwh. Whereas Yhwh is presented as powerful and intervening, the lovers are depicted as silent, inactive and helpless.

\textit{Israel dismantled as land}

Verse 13 switches to the concept of Israel as community and describes the termination of festivals and the happiness and joy that these bring. Three sorts of festivals are mentioned and the order reflects the increasing frequency of these events: annual festivals, monthly festivals and a weekly day of celebration. Negatively speaking, this order is suggestive of the complete abandonment of happiness, which is underlined by the twofold ‘all’ in this verse (all joy, all occasions of feast) which leaves little doubt that all periods of celebration will be terminated.\(^{161}\)

The mention of the word ‘sabbath’ in this verse is thought provoking because the sabbath in relation to the cult of Yhwh has been called a ‘cliché common to literature of the sixth and fifth centuries’ (Lang). According to Lang the sabbath in this sense is a creation of the exilic period.\(^{162}\) This view ties in to the observation that the word ‘sabbath’ particularly occurs in the so-called evidence from the P-source in the Pentateuch, Trito-Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nehemiah and 1-2 Chronicles.\(^{163}\)

These circumstances have raised questions concerning the meaning of the word ‘sabbath’ in Hosea 2:13. Should the term be understood here as reference to a day of

\(^{160}\) Naked exposure of a female is felt as an utter disgrace (Lev. 18:6-19; Ezek. 16:37; 23:10-18) and is one of the major items in feminist critique on Hosea 2 (see chapter 2, section 4).

\(^{161}\) The word $\text{םש}$ in vs. 13c is a general term for seasonal get-togethers and summarizes all periods of celebration just mentioned. The preceding waw should thus be understood as a waw explicativum (cf. JIM § 170c). The first term, $\text{שנה}$, has become the technical term for the three annual high feasts which involve a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem (Pesach, Sukkoth and Shabuot; cf. Lev. 23:4-43; Deut. 16:1-16). The word $\text{ימים}$ refers here to the day marking the start of a new month: it was celebrated as a day of rest and special offerings (Num. 28:11-15; Ezek. 46:6-7).

\(^{162}\) Lang, Monotheism, p. 43, writes: ‘I take the sabbath to be an institutionalization of the Yahweh-alone idea. This weekly day of rest is [...] a conscious creation of the sixth century. In using the sabbath to moor monolatry in popular custom, it cannot be introduced in a vacuum, but has to be connected with some already existing practice. The founding fathers start from two institutions which are [...] very popular. The first is the seventh day of rest which ancient Israelite law grants to the agricultural labourer at ploughing time and harvest [...]. The second is the day each month when the moon is full, which, since time immemorial is called the sabbath. It is not just a day without work, but a day set aside for ritual observances. It is clear that in pre-exilic times, ritual obligations were not only due to Yahweh but also to other gods; in Hosea, the sabbath is one of those holy days called “days of the Baalim”. The fathers of the exilic sabbath make every possible effort to rededicate this day to the exclusive worship of Yahweh. [...] “Sabbath of Yahweh” is a cliché common to literature of the sixth and fifth centuries, which seems to reflect the elite’s insistence on the connection between Yahweh and the sabbath’.

\(^{163}\) A survey of the word ‘sabbath’ shows that the word in the Former Prophets only occurs in 2 Kgs. 4:23; 11:5-9; 16:18; in Jer. only in chapter 17; in Ezek. in chaps. 20-22 and 45-46 and outside of Hosea in the Minor Prophets only in Amos 8:5. Apart from the P-material in Ex.-Lev.-Deut. the sabbath is a substantial topic in Ezek. 20:46; Isa. 56, 58; Neh. 10; 13 and these texts unanimously stem from not earlier than the sixth or fifth century BCE.
rest and worship without a particular relation to the cult of Yhwh (Wolff and Davies) or should it be interpreted in the sense of the Decalogue in Ex. 20 and be viewed as a day of celebration that forms an integral element of the worship of Yhwh? This issue encroaches on another question, namely, whether the three festivals mentioned in this verse - annual festival, new month and sabbath - carry positive or negative connotations. Are these festivals removed on account of the fact that the celebrations are devoted to the baals (Wolff, Davies and Lang), or are they removed as a form of punishment and deprivation of positively valued elements?

To start with the second point, most arguments point in favour of a positive interpretation of these festivals. A first argument for this view lies in the immediate context of Hosea 2:13. In Hosea 2:11-14 only elements with a positive value are withdrawn from Israel. Grain and must, wool and flax, vine and fig tree (vv. 11-14) are all attributes with a positive function for Israel and the punishment lies precisely in the withdrawal of such elements. For this reason the joy in connection to the festivals and sabbath presumably has positive connotations as well. In the second place, the Hebrew word for 'joy' in vs. 13a is an unambiguously positive term. In the third place, Hosea 3:4 contains a parallel to the present verse. The absence of 'king and princes, sacrifices and pillars, ephod and teraphim' in this verse points to a period during which Israel will be without positive social and religious institutions. Surely these elements are not univocally positive - consider the pillars (matsebot) - but, nevertheless, a similar withdrawal of institutions is envisioned as in 2:13. The institutions mentioned in 3:4 are constitutive of the national identity and in that sense are positively valued. A more distant parallel to Hosea 2:13 may be found in Lam. 2:6: 'the Lord has abolished in Zion festival and sabbath' (cf. Lam. 1:4). On the whole this means that with respect to textual arguments, there is not much reason for a negative interpretation of the feast days mentioned in this verse; on the contrary, several indications support a positive interpretation.

The inference that the reference to the 'sabbath' occurs here with a positive evaluation does not necessarily imply that we have to interpret 'sabbath' here in terms of its exilic development - as a day of celebration tied to the Yhwh cult -; although on the whole there do seem strong reasons for doing so. In the first place it would seem the most obvious interpretation to assume that the word 'sabbath' here carries the usual associations and functions as a day of celebration for Yhwh rather than as a day set apart for rest and offerings of various kinds. Most references to the 'sabbath' in the Hebrew Bible point to an understanding of the sabbath in the former rather than in the latter sense. In the second place, the same abbreviated reference to these three occasions of celebration occurs further only in Neh. 10:33 and points to legitimate elements within the worship of Yhwh. In the third place the use of the word in vs. 13b without further details seems to build on an understanding of the word that is also of a late date (cf. Ezek. 45:17; Lev. 23:4-43; Deut. 16:1-16; 2 Chron. 8:13). The interpretation that the term points to the major 'pilgrimage feasts' seems at least more valid than speculations concerning 'wine festivals' in connection to this term.

In summary, the reader is faced with two alternatives: the word 'sabbath' in Hosea 2:13 must either be interpreted against the background of the eighth century and would then carry none of its usual associations - this would seem to be a detour and highly unlikely in view of the developed festival practice suggested in vs. 13 - or it must be interpreted in a more direct manner as a reference to a day of celebration within Yhwh worship. The latter interpretation would undermine traditional assumptions about the dating of the book and give it a distinctively later aspect. On the
whole, the latter is more likely: the word 'sabbath' may be looked upon as another intrusion from the time of the text into the setting portrayed in the text.

Verse 14 continues to describe the dismantling of Israel and shifts from a focus on the community to a focus on the land. The vine and the fig tree, both symbols of cultivation, will be devastated and turned into bushes or woods, indicative of chaos and a lack of cultivation.

The vine and fig tree together are proverbial for prosperity and peace. To be able ‘to sit under one’s vine and fig tree’ is a scriptural ideal and functions as an image of rest and peace. When ‘vine and fig tree’ are ruined this means that pars pro toto the good and prosperous aspects of the land are demolished.\footnote{Andersen & Freedman (Hosea, p. 252) unnecessarily complicate the interpretation of this verse. They conclude from the masculine pronoun הָעָד in vs. 14c that the terms ‘vine and fig tree’ in v. 14a cannot be the antecedents of the pronoun since these terms are grammatically of a female gender. Their suggestion is that the pronoun points to the children (?!!) and that vs. 14ab and c-f constitute two separate units. Their translation is: ‘I shall lay waste her vines and her fig trees. Those of whom she said, “These are my wages, which my lovers paid me”, I shall consign them to the jungle, and wild animals of the countryside will devour them’. In Hebrew, however, some words can have both genders, and if there is only a hint of masculine gender present in either הָעָד (cf. Hos. 10:1) or הָעָד, the male pronoun is perfectly explicable. Further there is not always agreement between nouns and pronouns, particularly not in the case of words that are used as collective, as is the case in Hos. 2:14. One could}

...
thus presume a *constructio ad sensum*, in which the terms יָרֵס and נָשִׁים are grammatically neutralised on account of their collective meaning.\(^{171}\)

**Identification of the baals and the lovers**

Verse 15 returns to the image of a single female figure who ‘goes after her lovers’. At the same time the sacrificial terminology in vs. 15b indicates that there is a subtle switch to the idea that the female is representative for the people.

The significance of this verse lies in the identification of the lovers with the baals. In this verse a double image of the lovers occurs for the first time. The lovers are not only the ones for whom she decorates herself ‘with nose ring and jewellery’ but also the ones for whom she burns ‘incense offerings’. That means that two definitions of the lovers overlap in this verse: they are humanlike on the one hand and godlike on the other hand as the sacrificial terminology indicates. The verse indirectly equates the lovers with baals: the ‘days of the baals’ (vs. 15a) are closer defined by the statement ‘so she goes after her lovers’ (vs. 15d). The harlotry of Israel is thus ultimately of a religious nature.

The phrase ‘days of the baals’ points to the time that is spent in adoration of the baals.\(^{172}\) These days contrast with the ‘days of her youth’ (vs. 17) which were characterised by a strong commitment to Yhwh. The ‘days of the baals’ are graphically depicted in a brief intermezzo. Going after the baals involves that ‘she burns incense offerings for them and decks herself with her nose ring and jewellery and so goes after her lovers’.\(^{173}\)

The two *wayiqtol* forms in vs. 15c-d are exceptional in the context of discursive speech and difficult to understand from the viewpoint of traditional grammar. The usual understanding is that such *wayiqtol* forms require a translation in the past tense. With help of the grammar of Schneider and the comments of Leene, another insight into the sequence of verbal forms in this verse may be suggested. The pattern of verbal forms in this verse is as follows:

2:15a וָּפֵדָהּ weqatal And I will visit...
2:15b שָׁנַהְתָּ לָּהּ yiqtol for whom she burns incense offerings
2:15c חָגֶּרֶתָהּ וֹתַנְדַּתָהּ wayiqtol and she decks herself with her rings
2:15d וֹתַנְדַּתָהּ וֹתַנְדַּתָהּ wayiqtol and her jewellery
2:15e וֹתַנְדַּתָהּ וֹתַנְדַּתָהּ qatal but me she has forgotten

The view proposed here is that the sequence of *yiqtol* and *wayiqtol* builds a brief narrative intermezzo within the discursive speech. It portrays a series of successive events which are presented as if they take place in the present, similar to a

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\(^{171}\) Cf. IM § 134a and § 148-149.

\(^{172}\) The genitive is objective rather than subjective. The present interpretation is contrary to that of Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. 47-48, and the NRSV which interprets the days of the baals as ‘festival days of the Baals’, thus linking vs. 15 to vs. 13.

\(^{173}\) The verb יִנַּֽעַ is a special term from the sacrificial vocabulary and points to offerings which are sent up in smoke, especially incense offerings (BDB, pp. 882-83; HAL 3, pp. 1022-23). Translations of Hosea 2:15 vary between a more general term such as ‘to offer’ (Rudolph, *Hosea*, p. 62) or a more specific term such as ‘to offer incense to’ (NRSV).
sport match report on the radio. Everything depends on the yiqtol form in vs. 15b which governs the interpretation of the succeeding wayiqtol forms and functions to alert the hearer and to evoke his or her involvement. The syntactic function of such forms may be paraphrased with notions such as ‘listen!’ or ‘imagine!’

The following narrative forms then picture a sequence of actions, which the hearer is expected to hear in an alert manner as though they are performed ‘live’ in his or her presence. The sequence of actions in vs. 15 could thus be paraphrased as: ‘She (imagine it!) offers incense to them, and (so I tell you) she decks herself with her ring and jewellery and so she goes after her lovers (what a story!)’. The last narrative form is still a part of the narrative and concludes it. The crucial point here is the fundamental difference between wayiqtol forms and verbal forms signifying a past tense. According to Schneider wayiqtol forms essentially present a sequence of actions, a series of successive events. Within a narrative context such forms may be translated in the past tense, but if signs in the context indicate that the speech situation is discursive and engaging (yiqtol forms), wayiqtol forms may also present a sequence of events happening at present. Such wayiqtol forms then realistically stage a sequence of actions before the eyes of the reader, as if he or she is presently watching them. The narration expressed by narrative forms thus does not always signify distance but can also point to a form of ‘engaged and engaging narration’. 

By way of summary and conclusion it is stated that Israel in the course of all her actions has ‘forgotten Yhwh’. That is the implicit consequence of her going after the lovers.

Hosea 2:16-17

16. Therefore, look I will try to persuade her
    make her go to the wilderness
    and speak to her heart.
17. And I will give her her vineyards from there
    and turn the valley of Achor into a gate of hope
    and she shall respond there as in the days of her youth
    as on the day of her going up out of the land of Egypt.

A turning point
Verses 16-17 mark a turning point within Hosea 2:4-25. Both the motifs ‘to go’ and ‘to give’ reappear in this verse but with a different orientation than before. The lovers are replaced by Yhwh who will make Israel ‘go’ to the wilderness and who will there ‘give’ her her vineyards. Various elements indicate that the relationship between Yhwh and Israel is renewed. A new entry into the land is envisioned and this represents also a new prospect for the relation between Yhwh

174. See Schneider § 48.6, and Leene, Vroegere Dingen, pp. 31-32. In § 48.6 Schneider discusses some evidence of narrative forms within discursive speech. Schneider qualifies these forms as examples of ‘besprechendes Erzählen’ (cf. the example of Gen. 37:7). The instructive comparison with a sport match report on the radio is made by Leene (p. 32). In his view the combination of yiqtol and wayiqtol forms does not portray events in the past, but realistically stages the actions of a character. The series of events is made ‘visible’.
and the people. The reminiscences of the pattern of exodus — wilderness period — entrance into the land are strong and form the backbone of these verses.

**Literary structure**

The motifs ‘to go’ and ‘to give’ appear here for the last time:

2:16 I will... make her go to the wilderness
2:17 I will give her her vineyards from there

Verse 17 consists of two pairs of parallel clauses, each pair consisting of one verb with a double object or a double adverbial phrase.

2:17a I will give her her vineyards from there
2:17b and turn (I will give) the valley of Achor into a gate of hope
2:17c she shall respond there as in the days of her youth
2:17d as on the day of her going up out of the land of Egypt.

Further the repetition of the word אֶנֹֹ in two different forms in vs. 17a and 17c is conspicuous:

2:17a I will give her her vineyards from there
2:17c and she shall respond there (literally: towards there)

**Reunion in the wilderness** (verses 16-17)

The reunion between Yhwh and Israel will take place in the wilderness. In this connection the wilderness does not represent a place of desolation that is devoid of life (cf. 2:5) but rather a place that is devoid of distraction. The powers of fertility play no role in the desert so that all attention can be on the two partners, Yhwh and Israel, and on their relationship. In that sense the wilderness is a suitable location for a new beginning.

In the wilderness Yhwh will ‘speak to her heart’. This expression seems to have predominantly positive connotations. It occurs in combination with terms of love, kindness and consolation and thus usually points to a kind and affirmative sort of speech. In the present context its implication is that Yhwh surpasses the separation and speaks to Israel in a mood of reconciliation. Subsequently, and still with the desert as background, Yhwh will renew his gifts to Israel and give her vineyards that symbolize the renewed gift of the land (cf. vs. 14).

Simultaneous to the gift of the vineyards Yhwh will turn the valley of Achor into a ‘gate of hope’. The reference to the valley of Achor is remarkable in this context. The valley of Achor is mentioned eight times in the Bible. The combination with ‘comfort’ is found in Gen. 50:21; Isa. 40:2; Ruth 2:13. For a diametrically opposite view see F. Van Dijk-Hemmes, ‘Als Hij tot haar hart spreekt: Een visie (op visies op) Hosaeae 2’, in: E. van Alphen en I. de Jong (red), Door het Oog van de Tekst: Essays voor Mieke Bal over Visie, Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988, pp. 121-139 (132-134). Van Dijk-Hemmes argues that the expression ‘to speak to her heart’ functions both in Gen. 34:4 and Judg. 19:3 in the context of sexual violence and suggests that a similar negative meaning is present in Hos. 2:16. She paraphrases the expression as ‘he forced his view on her’ (p. 134).
context, since it is a small and detailed geographical reference within a general discourse. The allusion may be only to the location of Achor in the region of the Jordan or may be specifically to the story explaining the name Achor in Joshua 7:24-26. In view of the other references to the sequence of exodus – wilderness – entrance in Hosea 2:16-17 which suggest a thorough knowledge and skilful use of Israel’s traditions, it seems likely that the latter is the case and that the text alludes to the story related to Achor, which deals with a moment of failure during the entrance into the promised land. Precisely this valley of Achor, once a hallmark of unsuccessful entrance, will now be turned into a ‘gate of hope’ and facilitate a successful entrance into the land. The suggestion is that Israel after its reconciliation with God receives a new chance and once again stands on the brink of the entrance into the promised land.

Davies makes an interesting comment when he states that the reference to the valley of Achor illustrates that ‘Hosea is fond of using place-names to recall episodes in his people’s history’ (Davies, Hosea, pp. 79-80). It certainly is intriguing that Hosea 2:17 contains a reference to such a detail from Israel’s past, which despite its sudden occurrence in the text is meaningful and well-chosen. At the same time, the almost typological mention of the valley of Achor – as a chiffre for failing entrance into the land – requires an advanced and masterly knowledge of Israel’s traditions, as Wolff and Davies have noted. It is indicative of the wide scope and advanced knowledge of the history of Israel that is present in Hosea 2:16-17 and contributes to what may be called the encyclopaedic accent in Hosea 2.

In the second half of vs. 17, the parallels between the present reconciliation of Yhwh and Israel and the constitutive events in Israel’s past continue to be present as the exodus from Egypt is recalled. The point is made that Israel now will react positively to Yhwh ‘as in the days of her youth’ and in a manner that recalls the ‘day of her going up out of Egypt’. This response is still situated in the desert. Israel will ‘there’ give ear to the voice of Yhwh and respond to it, as in the days of her fresh commitment to Yhwh and as on the day of her exodus from Egypt. These two time references (in vs. 17cd) explain one another. Common to the days of the liberation from Egypt, the days of youth, and the present time is Israel’s positive response to Yhwh.

To sum up, the text presents in vv. 16-17 the reunion between Yhwh and Israel in terms of the pattern of exodus – wilderness – entrance into the promised land. The accent falls on the wilderness period, as vs. 16 and the words ‘from there’ and ‘to there’ in vs. 17 indicate. The wilderness here represents the period of the beginning of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel and the place that, in contrast to the cultivated land, lacks the presence of other deities and distractions: it is the location in which Israel can concentrate upon Yhwh.

176. References to the valley of Achor are found in Jos. 7:24-26; 15:7; Isa. 65:10; Hos. 2:17. The opposition between the ‘valley of Achor’ and the ‘gate of hope’ in Hos. 2:16 leaves little doubt that Achor is foregrounded here in view of its connection with the notion of entrance and particularly ‘blocked entrance’. The story related to Achor is that one of the Israelites brought ‘doom’ over the camp in the valley of ‘doom’ by taking part of the booty for himself (Jos. 7:1-26).

177. The phrase הרע is somewhat problematic on account of the ποιον-locale. It literally means ‘in that direction’ rather than ‘there’. According to BDB (p. 1027) and Davies, Hosea, p. 81, however, the phrase can be interpreted as a synonym of בָּא (cf. Gen. 43:30; Jos. 2:1).
Without idealizing the wilderness in general, the text suggests that as far Israel’s response to Yhwh is concerned the days in the wilderness were optimal. These were the days of Israel’s positive commitment to Yhwh, the days of a close, pure and unblemished living together. The prophetic words entail that the atmosphere of these days will be present again in the days to come, not as though Israel should stay in the desert but in the sense that the response of Israel to Yhwh in the land will be as positive as in the desert. On the whole, the sequence of national events functions thus as framework and model for the present reunion of God and people. The renewed relationship between Israel and Yhwh in turn receives the connotation of a new entrance into the promised land.

The positive perception of the wilderness period in Hosea 2:16-17 is remarkable in two ways. In the first place, it is at odds with other portrayals of this period which focus on the rebellion of the people against Yhwh (see e.g., Ex. 16-18; Ps. 78:17-32). In the view presented in Hosea 2, however, the purity of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel counts as the major characteristic of the wilderness period. This accent may be related to the thought that the wilderness constitutes a positive contrast to the cultivated land, which with its fertility and many deities led Israel into apostasy (see for a similar accent Jer. 2:2; 2:6-7).

In the second place, this means that the wilderness period comes out as the most positive event in the national past. A special accent is put on the wilderness period rather than on the exodus event. The wilderness is the scene where the beginnings of the relation between God and Israel lie – including the Sinai-covenant – and this is the time of the purest devotion of Israel to Yhwh and in that sense a decisive period in the relationship.

This view of the wilderness has been interpreted as an indication of the prophet’s adherence to a nomadic ideal. That ideal would entail that life and religion should be maintained or restored in the manner of the desert. Since Hosea 2:16 situates the renewal and revival of Israel in the desert, Hosea has been regarded as an adherent of such an idyllic view of the wilderness and as a ‘prophète bedouin’ (P. Humbert quoted by Th.C. Vriezen, *Hosea: Profeet en Cultuur*, Groningen/Batavia: Wolters, 1941, p. 7). Is it correct to view Hosea 2:16-17 as a nostalgic return to the wilderness; to see here a plea for restoration of the old state of affairs in opposition to the spoiling influence of Canaanite culture? Is the wilderness in this passage a goal in itself? Vriezen and Vollmer have both denied that Hosea 2:16-17 exemplifies a nomadic ideal. As the latter puts it: ‘Jahwe expects Israel to serve him in the land of Canaan. That was the ideal that Hosea had in mind. Already the fact that Yhwh brings Israel again into this land, makes it incomprehensible that references are made to the “nomadic ideal” in Hosea’ (J. Vollmer, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja* (BZAW 119), Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971, pp. 86-96 (94) and cf. Vriezen, *Hosea*, pp. 9-11). Though it is true that the newly constituted relation between Yhwh and Israel begins in the desert, it is meant to be put into practice in the land. In other words, the wilderness motif in Hosea 2:16-17 should not be isolated from its context: the wilderness functions in these verses as a transition en route to Canaan and not as a goal in itself.

178. For similar observations, see Andersen & Freedman, pp. 269-270: ‘Yhwh has in mind nothing less than a recapitulation of the Exodus, Wandering and Settlement’.
Hosea 2:18-22

18. And on that day
   — speech of Yahweh —
   you will call: My husband!
   and no longer will you call me: My Baal!
19. And I will remove the names of the baals from her mouth
    and they will no longer be remembered by their name.
20. I will make a covenant for them on that day
    with the beasts of the field
    with the birds of heaven
    and the creeping creatures of the ground;
    and bow and sword and war
    I will break out of the land
    and I will enable them to lie down in safety.
21. And I will take you as my bride forever
    I will take you as my bride with righteousness and justice
    with loving-kindness and compassion.
22. I will take you as my bride with faithfulness
    and you will know Yahweh.

Husband and bride
The last two sections of Hosea 2, vv. 18-22 and vv. 23-25, elaborate the future that lies in store for Israel. The picture is bright and focuses on the removal of the baals and a new bridal time for Yahweh and Israel. There is an alternating focus on the relational level (Israel and the baals, vv. 18-19), on the surrounding world (vs. 20) and on the relational level again (Yahweh and Israel, vv. 21-22). The formula ‘on that day’ (vv. 18, 20) places the announced events in a time to come and adds a tone of great expectation.

Andersen and Freedman have called Hosea 2:18-25 a ‘little apocalypse’. In their view this section together with Hosea 2:16-17 consists of five ‘vignettes of the end time’. Each portrays a different aspect of what will be accomplished: the restoration of the relation between husband and wife, the establishment of a covenant of peace, the betrothal and remarriage of man and wife, the restoration of harmony in nature and the reunion of mother and children with their husband and father. Hosea 2:18-25 offers in a nutshell a vision of the ‘transformation of nature and the achievement of universal harmony’.

Literary structure
Verses 18 and 19 share the word הָרַע and the notion of reversal expressed by the phrase ‘no longer’.

2.18d and no longer will you call me: My Baal
2.19b and I will remove the names of the baals from her mouth
       and they will no longer be remembered by their names

The difference between the past and the present is expressed in a close parallelism:

2.18c and you will call: My husband
2.18d and no longer you will call me: My Baal

Verses 21 and 22 share the key word ‘to take as a bride’.

2.21a and I will take you as my bride forever
2.21b I will take you as my bride with righteousness and justice
2.22 I will take you as my bride with faithfulness

The removal of the baals (verses 18-19)

Verses 18 and 19 focus on the removal of the baals. The most intriguing aspect is that the designations וֹתָא and בֵּטֵל are both applied to Yhwh (vs. 18). Israel will no longer call Yhwh ‘My Baal’ or ‘My master’ but will call him ‘My husband’. This statement can be interpreted on two levels. One may simply focus on the distinction between the terms וֹתָא and בֵּטֵל as two designations for the concept ‘husband’, not taking into consideration the connotations attached to the word בֵּטֵל in terms of the deity Baal. One may also interpret the word בֵּטֵל in a double sense, namely, both as a term meaning ‘husband’ and as an allusion to the deity Baal. It seems that the latter interpretation with the double entendre in the term בֵּטֵל recommends itself since only in this light is the pejorative and negative meaning of the designation בֵּטֵל, that we may assume to be present in this verse, explainable. The text thus contains a wordplay with the word בֵּטֵל, employing it here in the double sense of ‘husband, master’ and ‘Baal’.

Another inference can be made. The text portrays Israel as having had the practice of calling Yhwh ‘My Baal’. If we continue to interpret the word בֵּטֵל in a double sense, this implies that Israel understood, or at least addressed, Yhwh as Baal, applying the word בֵּטֵל to Yhwh! That means that the contrast between Yhwh and the baals (vs. 10, 15) is redefined here as a contrast between two perceptions of Yhwh. The verse depicts a switch from the perception that Yhwh can be called a ‘Baal’, being perceived as a common deity, to the idea that the God of Israel cannot be interpreted as such but must be interpreted as וֹתָא. The term וֹתָא, then, within this context has a special meaning as well and stands for the unique marriage partner, the covenant God with whom Israel has a special alliance (cf. Hos 2:4). In any case, the contrast between the words וֹתָא וֹתָא and בֵּטֵל בֵּטֵל in this verse coincides with the contrast between a ‘baalised’ and a genuine perception of Yhwh. The latter will ultimately replace the former.

180. As designations for ‘husband’ the terms וֹתָא and בֵּטֵל do not seem to have significantly diverse connotations. There is hardly any evidence for the suggestion of Wolff, Hosea, p. 60, that the word וֹתָא has a more emotional value and the connotation of love while the word בֵּטֵל accentuates the juridical position of the husband as ‘owner’ of his wife. A number of instances either contradict this suggestion or are neutral towards the contrast sketched above (cf. 2 Sam 11:26; Joel 1:8). Cf. the critique of Rudolph, Hosea, pp. 75, 78.

181. So Wolff, Hosea, p. 60, according to whom vs. 18 points to a form of ‘syncretism’ in which Yhwh is worshipped as Baal.
A covenant of peace (verse 20)

Verse 20 switches from the focus on Yhwh and Israel to the sphere of nature. The verse combines two images of harmony and peace in the natural world and in the human world. This perspective is established by depicting previous enemies (beasts-humans, humans-humans) as partners in peace. In the words of Wolff: ‘Nach der Erneuerung des Bundesverhältnisses wird die Erneuerung der Welt zum Thema’.

The covenant that Yhwh arranges has an unusual form: it is established ‘with’ the animals and ‘for’ Israel. The presence of three partners and the involvement of the animals as covenant partners of Yhwh are both unconventional elements. The first has led to the interpretation that Yhwh functions here as intermediary for a covenant between two other partners and is not part of the covenant himself. That would seem to go a step too far, for the text clearly identifies Yhwh and the animals as primary covenant partners. The preposition דדן is unambiguous in this respect. The most essential point seems to be that Yhwh establishes his covenant with the animals ‘for’ Israel – with Israel as beneficiary – and that suggests that the term ‘covenant’ here has the connotation of a gift and emphasizes the one-sided commitment of Yhwh. The thrust of the covenant is that Yhwh brings the animals, formerly a source of danger and threat (Hos. 2:14), under his jurisdiction. Simultaneously, the instruments of war and military violence will be destroyed. As a result, Israel will be able to ‘lie down in safety’. The image is one of untroubled security and peace. Yhwh will remove all the violent and threatening forces amidst which Israel lives, and will create a place where the people can live in complete safety and peace.

A new betrothal (verses 21-22)
The key word in these verses is נָשָׁה. This verb refers to the engagement of two partners in order to get married. The use of this particular word expresses that the new relation between Yhwh and Israel is not looked upon as a reunion or as a return to a previously existing marriage but as a completely new beginning! A fresh start is made, past failures are erased and Israel and Yhwh are depicted at the dawn of a new bridal time.

182. See Wolff, Hosea, p. 61.
183. So Wolff, Hosea, pp. 61-62, who maintains that Yhwh does not function as ‘Bundespartner’ but as ‘Bundesvermittler’, and similarly Rudolph, Hosea, p. 80. Davies, Hosea, pp. 83-84, interprets the expression in the sense that Yhwh imposes a covenant upon Israel that regulates the harmony between Israel and the animals. Again Yhwh is not really partner in this covenant.
184. The combination of the verb נָשָׁה with the prepositions דדן and ב is unique in the Hebrew Bible. The preposition דדן alone is more common (cf. HAL 1, p. 150-51). The combination with ב with Yhwh as subject occurs especially in prophetic texts (Isa. 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 34:25; Ps. 89:4). The thought expressed in Hos. 2:20 is essentially similar to Ezek. 34:25 (‘I will make for them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may... sleep in the woods securely’).
185. In texts as Isa. 32:17 and Lev. 26:5-6 נָשָׁה (‘safety’) and נֶשֶׁה (‘peace’) are parallel concepts. The motif of peace between humans and animals occurs more often in expectations of the latter days, cf. Isa 11; Isa. 65:25; Ezek. 34:25-28.
186. The verb occurs eleven times (Ex. 22:15; Deut. 20:7; 22:23-28; 28:30; 2 Sam. 3:14; Hos. 2:21-22). J. Kühlewein, מַשְׁתִּיח, THAT 1, pp. 240-242, emphasizes that the word should be understood as a reference to a public act by which the marriage is juridically finalized. At the moment of the betrothal, according to Kühlewein, the bride price was paid (2 Sam. 3:14).
The verb יִתְנָה occurs three times in sequence with three specifications. Yhwh will take Israel as his bride ‘forever’, ‘with righteousness and justice, with loving-kindness and compassion’ and ‘with faithfulness’. The preposition ב (‘with’) refers here to accompanying circumstances and implies that the relation between Yhwh and Israel is established ‘in the accompaniment of’ qualities such as righteousness and justice. Yhwh brings these qualities with him and they shall characterize the relation between Yhwh and Israel and the human relations within Israel henceforth.

The qualities mentioned here are conspicuously different from the gifts motivating and describing the relation with the baals. Those were all natural products, these are all relational qualities. The pair ‘righteousness and justice’ points to a loyal and right disposition in relations with others and to individual acts of justice corresponding to this disposition. The pair ‘loving-kindness and compassion’ refers to an attitude of kindness that ever again affirms and creates bonds between people or people and God, and to deeds of compassion which stem from a fundamental sense of solidarity between those involved. The concluding characteristic mentioned in vs. 22 is ‘faithfulness’, a word that points to the reliability and stability of a commitment and in this case particularly expresses the stable and faithful commitment of Yhwh to Israel. Such gifts Yhwh brings with him in order to structure his relationship with Israel.

The result will be that Israel ‘will know Yhwh’. To ‘know’ someone in the biblical sense is to discern his or her distinctiveness and to know what makes someone special. That is precisely the function of the five gifts that Yhwh bestows upon Israel. These gifts show a priority that is different from the priority on nature and its products in the worship of Baal. Instead, these gifts focus on what is human within humanity. Righteousness and justice, loving-kindness and compassion, these gifts will lead Israel to truly ‘know’ Yhwh.

Hosea 2:23-25

23. And on that day
   I shall respond – speech of Yhwh –
   I shall respond to the heavens
   and they shall respond to the land.

24. And the land responds
    to the grain, to the must and to the fresh oil;
    and they respond to Jezreel.

25. And I will sow her for me in the land
    and I will have compassion upon Lo-Ruhamah
    and I will say to Lo-Ammi: You are my people!
    and he will say: My god!

187. See BDB, p. 89 (‘concomitant conditions’). It has been suggested that the preposition ב in this connection refers to the bridal price which Yhwh pays for Israel (thus the interpretation of Wolff, Hosea, p. 64). The stumbling block is that in this case the bride price would be paid to Israel which is unusual and makes this interpretation questionable.

A festival of rain
The bridal time of Yhwh and Israel invites a response from nature (vv. 23-24). Heavens and earth, grain and fields respond in a great chorus to the renewal of the bond between Yhwh and Israel. In the chain of elements that bring about the fertility of the soil, none fails to cooperate. Everything works together and fulfills its function so that nature will yield produce in abundance. This motif together with the reversal of the children's names (vs. 25) indicates that the time of judgement has past and is replaced by the promise of new life for Israel in the land.

Literary structure
The key word 'to respond' occurs five times in a sequence:

2:23a and on that day I shall respond
2:23b I shall respond to the heavens
2:23d and they shall respond to the land
2:24ab and the land responds to the grain, to the must and to the fresh oil
2:24c and they will respond to Jezreel

Further the motif of the name reversal of the three children reoccurs, as in Hosea 2:1-3.

2:24c and they respond to Jezreel
2:25b and I will have compassion upon Lo-Ruhamah
2:25c and I will say to Lo-Ammi: You are my people!

The response of the heavens and the earth (verses 23-24)
The verb התי is used in vv. 23-24 in a remarkable way. Contrary to customary usage, the verb occurs here with elements rather than persons as subject (heavens – land – grain, must and oil) and with reference to a non-verbal response. Its ordinary meaning would be 'to give a positive reaction to, respond positively to', but in this context its significance comes close to 'to cooperate with'. Yhwh will cooperate with the heavens and the heavens with the earth in order to produce human sustenance.189

That the sequence of elements in these verses reflects the way food is produced has long been acknowledged.190 The purpose of the chain is to result in 'grain, must and fresh oil', which provide humans with the necessities of life.

189. Three other proposals concerning the interpretation of the verb התי in Hos. 2:23-24 may be mentioned: a) the idea that Yhwh 'responds' here in a liturgical sense to a preceding prayer by Jezreel (Wolff, Hosea, p. 65); b) the idea that the responses of Yhwh, heaven, land and grain, must and oil are related to a ritual of covenant making between Yhwh and Jezreel in which heaven and earth – and all cosmic powers – function as witnesses (Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, pp. 285-287); c) the idea that the verb התי in Hos. 2:23-24 indirectly relates to the goddess Anath, a goddess of fecundity (A. Deem, 'The Goddess Anath and Some Biblical Cruces', JSS 22 (1978), pp. 25-30). The problem with all of these interpretations is that they are strained and forced. It is no doubt the best option to deduce the meaning of the verb התי here from the effect that it has, which is that the forces of nature are stimulated towards abundant fertility.

190. So Wolff, Hosea, p. 65, and cf. Isa. 55:10; Ps. 65:10-12
sequence does not stop, however, after having brought about the good products of the land, but mentions 'Jezreel' as the ultimate beneficent of the cooperation of heaven and earth. The people in Jezreel are thus the goal for which all powers of nature work together. In the term Jezreel one discerns the name of the first of the three children. At the same time the term Jezreel functions in this verse as a pars-pro-toto indication of the whole people of Israel.

The response of Israel to Yhwh (verse 25)
The final verse alludes to the renewal of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel. The female Israel, personifying the people, will be 'sown' into the land. The children, personifying the people of Israel in another way, will find their names turned about into the positive and, as a single collective, will call Yhwh 'my God'. The relation between Yhwh and Israel will thus be reciprocal and in that sense ideal.

The idea that Yhwh 'sows' Israel in the land is the sign of a new beginning. It is promising in view of what will grow and sprout from this seed. It is an evocative image rather than clear-cut information. One may understand it as an indication that Yhwh will bring Israel 'to blossom' in the land. In Hosea 2 the verb ירה occurs only here as a verb. Through the play on words between the verb, with its unequivocally positive meaning, and the name Jezreel in the preceding verse, the suggestion is made that the name Jezreel is now turned from a sign of judgement into a sign of promise. The same happens with the names Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi.

In connection to this last name the text switches to a second person singular. It addresses Israel as 'you (sg.) are my people' and Israel responds (sg.) with the acclamation 'My God'. This singular form is remarkable in view of the plural form found in Hosea 1:9. The one-to-one aspect that the text foregrounds here may reflect the idea that the covenant must essentially be understood as a one-to-one relation, as in a marriage. With the acclamation 'my' God, Israel responds to Yhwh in recognition of Yhwh as its one and only partner. In light of all that has preceded, this response may be understood as a love commitment. This wholehearted 'yes' to Yhwh and the complete reciprocitiy between Yhwh and Israel mark the covenant relationship in its most pure and perfect form.

191. Cf. my comments to Hos. 2:2 ('the day of Jezreel'). The construction of the verb 'to sow' with a female object has brought F. van Dijk-Hemmes to discern sexual overtones in the text ('and I inseminate her for me in the land'), see her 'Als H/hij tot haar hart spreekt: Een Visie op (Visies op) Hosea 2' in: E. van Alphen and I. de Jong (eds.), Door het oog van de tekst: Essays voor Mieke Bal over visie, Munderberg: Coutinho, 1988, pp. 121-139 (esp. p. 127); for a similar view see Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 288. Wolff (Hosea, p. 67) more adequately interprets the clause in the sense that Yhwh 'plants' Israel into the land.
6.3 Conclusions concerning Hosea 2

A central opposition in the text
One opposition is particularly central in the text, namely, the opposition between Yhwh and the baals, or between the husband of Israel and the lovers.

Yhwh  baals
husband  lovers

It is interesting to see how the text elaborates the contrast between Yhwh and the baals by means of a rich variety of small-scale oppositions and characteristics. Before I come to that, however, there is a complication to be dealt with. Verse 18 suggests that the opposition between Yhwh and Baal involves on a more fundamental level two conceptions of Yhwh. This appears from the fact that the word "בָּעַל" in this verse does not refer to the baals but to Yhwh, alluding to a certain understanding of Yhwh and implying that Yhwh is viewed as a Baal.

Yhwh as husband  Yhwh as Baal

From this verse the conclusion can be drawn that the crucial issue in Hosea 2 is not the opposition between Yhwh and Baal as two distinct deities but between two forms of Yhwh worship, genuine and perverted. The perverted form of Yhwh worship is linked to the term ‘Baal’ and is characterised by a confusion of Yhwh and Baal. The genuine form of Yhwh worship is delineated in opposition to that.

In my assessment this is a key aspect of Hosea 2. The opposition between Baal and Yhwh does not simply represent a confrontation between two gods that appeal to Israel, but it ultimately represents a dispute about the shape of genuine Yhwh worship. One may see the text as the answer to the question: Assumed Yhwh is our God, what distinguishes him from other deities and what is the shape of a genuine worship of Yhwh? That is the issue around which the text circles.

How can it be explained that Hosea 2 nevertheless depicts Yhwh and the baals as two separate deities? The most probable answer is that the contrast between the two forms of Yhwh worship is presented in terms of a contrast between Yhwh and the baals for didactic purposes. The clear confrontation between two types of deities better clarifies the distinction between two forms of Yhwh worship than a more nuanced approach would. It should, however, be kept in mind that the term Baal stands for perverted forms of Yhwh worship rather than for forms of Baal worship external to Yhwh worship. The main purpose of Hosea 2 is thus to clarify the genuine character of Yhwh through the confrontation between these two positions: the adherence to Yhwh and the adherence to the Baal.192

Differences between Yhwh and Baal
A number of features in Hosea 2:4-25 outline the contrast between Yhwh and the baals, in either a more pronounced or a more subtle way:

- The plural-singular distinction. The baals and lovers are consistently referred to in the plural while Yhwh is referred to in the singular. The plural suggests that the baals are anonymous and exchangeable. The covenant relation with Yhwh, however, is compared to a marriage relation and conceived of as being a one-to-one relationship.

- The baals take rather than give. The notion that the baals are the 'givers' of gifts is clothed with ambiguity (vs. 7, 14). Twice the opposite situation is portrayed, in which the baals are not presenting gifts to the woman but the woman is presenting gifts to the baals (cf. the preposition ' in vv. 10, 14, 15). She uses the gold and silver that have been given by Yhwh for the Baal (vs. 10) and burns incense offerings to them (vs. 15). That the baals are beneficent to the woman altogether seems a misconception: they seem to be ‘giving’ but are actually ‘taking’ goods from the people.

- The baals are passive. They do not speak, cannot intervene (vs. 12) and do not undertake action. Yhwh on the other hand speaks and reacts to the woman – as punisher, reconciler and lover (vv. 8-17). Thus it is shown that Yhwh surpasses the baals in power.

- Yhwh is the giver of natural and relational gifts. On the one hand Yhwh is associated with the gifts of nature (vv. 10, 23-25), thus taking over the traditional function of Baal. On the other hand Yhwh is associated with the gifts of righteousness and justice, loving-kindness, compassion and faithfulness (vv. 21-22). This second set of gifts is distinct from the former in that there is a focus upon an ethical orientation within human life. In relation to Yhwh complementary gifts come to the fore. The text suggests that the second group of gifts surpasses the first, since they are characteristic only of Yhwh – not of the baals – and since they concern God and humans in their relationships rather than in their possessions.

This final point deserves special emphasis. The sudden accent on the gifts of righteousness and justice, loving-kindness and compassion in Hosea 2:21-22 is a striking aspect of Hosea 2. These terms come from an entirely different semantic field than do the products from nature. They are covenant terms and characterize the specific character of the relation between this God and Israel. They point to qualities that uniquely belong to Yhwh in relation to Israel. These qualities – righteousness and justice, loving-kindness and compassion – are also meant to be reflected in the mutual human relations of people living in this covenant perspective.

In the sense that these elements are unique to Yhwh, they have priority over the gifts of nature. The hidden momentum of the text is that the covenantal gifts also should have priority for the people. In terms of overall effect, the attention of the people is thus drawn away from bread and water, wool and flax, as priorities for life and sources of happiness. These elements may at any time prove to be unreliable and ambivalent, and are easily devastated by Yhwh (vv. 11-14). Instead, compassion and solidarity receive priority. A central aspect of the text is
that these qualities which specifically belong to the covenant with Yhwh, are sources of happiness and life, rather than the worship of Baal.

**The audience confronted with an alternative**

Hosea 2:4-25 presents a contrast between two conceptions of Yhwh. This contrast is not presented in a neutral way but the text sides with one of the two positions and promotes this while denouncing the other. So the covenant relationship with Yhwh is surrounded with purely positive and promising notions whereas the opposite idea, the relationship of Israel with the Baals, is presented in an unequivocally negative way. By these means the text urges the reader to make the same choice as the text.

In terms of audience effect, we must take into account that the text speaks to different sorts of audience. The primary audience coincides with the addressee-in-the-text and consists in Hosea 2:4-25 of Israel as a female person (vv. 8, 18, 21-22). This lady Israel is not invited to take part in the events or to make choices, as in Deutero Isaiah, but almost exclusively functions as object of the actions of Yhwh. On this level Israel is not addressed but acted upon. This female Israel has no choice to make but simply is part of the events.

On the second level, there is the addressee-of-the-text. That is a theoretical construct of engaged readers who to some extent identify with the Israel pictured in the text. To this implied audience the text communicates the following message. In the first place this audience is invited to include itself in the “harlotry of Israel”. The references to the attractiveness of the Baal confront this audience with the way they themselves worship Baal in the disguise of Yhwh. In the second place this audience will feel included in judgement that is passed out and in the new future that is brought about for the Israel-in-the-text. But the most significant element is that they are not only ‘part of the events’ but also ‘addressed’ by the events. The contrast that the text portrays between Yhwh and Baal, between genuine and baalized Yhwh-worship, concerns and addresses them in the sense that they have a choice to make between these two options of Yhwh-worship. They are faced with the perspective of a right and fruitful relation with Yhwh and a blossoming existence and implicit in this is the exhortation to ‘choose life’ and to repent and turn to Yhwh. As Wolff formulates it, the only aim of the text with respect to its implied audience is that ‘Israel turns anew to Yhwh’.

On the third level and for the contemporary audience, the text presents the same alternative between genuine and perverted Yhwh-worship, the same life-or-death-alternative. The text motivates the reader in a certain direction, suggesting what is life and what not, but in this stage every reader is free to make her own choices of interpretation and see to which extent she can identify with the implied audience. At least, the text may leave the impression that Yhwh does not readily give up his covenant partner. His attempts to win her back are passionate. Does this have anything to do with how twentieth century people live? In so far the power and attractiveness of Baals is felt again and again, and in so far the need to formulate what makes Yhwh unique and distinct continues to be felt, the text does not lose its topicality.

193. Wolff, Hosea, p. 54.
6.4 The marriage imagery in Hosea 1-2

The text of Hosea 1-2 does not portray the love of Yhwh for his people in a simple manner. It rather offers a complex mixture of love, rejection and reunion, while also displaying a focus on the attractiveness of other lovers than Yhwh. The text actually tells a story, the story of how the partnership between Yhwh and Israel is endangered, how it moves into the sphere of passionate and one-sided judgement and how it is revitalized in the end. Which special accents come to the fore in this marriage imagery?

- Hosea shows a particular accent on the notion ‘harlotry’. This diagnosis of ‘harlotry’ or ‘adultery’ has its roots in the notion that the covenant is a one-to-one relation, a partnership of two in which there is no room for the interference of other lovers. Hosea 1-2 brings strongly to the fore that the covenant between Yhwh and Israel is meant as a one-to-one relationship.
- The anthropomorphism is far-reaching. The image that Yhwh is wedded to Israel includes such elements as divorce (2:4) and a new bridal time (2:21-22). The parallels with human marriage are thus quite elaborate.
- It is interesting that Yhwh and the baals are portrayed in this text as rival partners of Israel. This brings two distinctive elements of the relationship with Yhwh to the fore: the gifts of righteousness and justice, loving-kindness, compassion and faithfulness (2:21-22) which replace the undependable gifts of nature and point to life in a covenant perspective, and the one-to-one dimension which characterizes the relationship between Yhwh and Israel in distinction to the more anonymous relationship with a plurality of baals.
- Yhwh is not indifferent to the response of Israel, but clings to Israel and longs for the people to be only and completely his own. Yhwh does not give up on Israel as his covenant partner, but rebukes and threatens, attacks and persuades the people in order to restore the covenant relation. The bottom line of the marriage imagery in Hosea 1-2 is that the love declared by Yhwh is of the sort that is aimed at a response. In essence, the presentation of the covenant as a love relationship in Hosea 1-2 suggests that within this relationship the answer of Israel to the proposal of Yhwh is a matter of vital importance.

6.5 Appendix: the religious polemics in Hosea 2

What can in retrospect be said about the character of the religious polemics in Hosea 2 and about the background of the positions taken in the text? These are important issues in relation to the contribution of the book of Hosea to the history of Israelite religion. Two points then deserve re-examination. The first is the term בֵּית בָּעַל and its meaning and function in Hosea 2. The second is the character of the Israelite religion with which Hosea has a controversy. These points tie in to a third issue involving the dating of the book.

In the classical approach the word בֵּית בָּעַל in Hosea is explained as a reference to the deity Baal, a weather and fertility god modelled after Baal-Hadad, which we
know from the Ugaritic Ras Shamra texts (1350 BCE). The worship of this deity is regarded as a characteristic feature of pre-exilic Israelite religion and is explained as the intrusion of a foreign Canaanite element into Israelite religion, which endangered the true and exclusive worship of Yhwh.

In his study of the word בְּנֵי in the book of Hosea, Jeremias moves in another direction. He presents the interesting observation that the word בְּנֵי in this book functions as a chiffre and as a comprehensive term for perverted forms of Yhwh-worship. The term does not point to a single deity with the name Baal but functions as a comprehensive term for all gods and goddesses whose worship threatens the genuine worship of Yhwh. According to Jeremias the central concern of the prophet is to reorientate Israel to the genuine knowledge of Yhwh. In this connection the terms 'Yhwh' and 'Baal' represent two forms of Yhwh worship, one right and acceptable and one wrong and apostate.

Jeremias undergirds his view that the word בְּנֵי in Hosea functions as a chiffre for denounced forms of Yhwh worship with three arguments. He points to the occurrence of the word בְּנֵי in the plural, to the lack of specific information about the Baal cult and to the brief and isolated references to Baal in Hosea 11:2 and 13:1. All of these elements indicate a highly abstract usage of the term. In the view of Jeremias such a usage of the word בְּנֵי can only be understandable if the audience is already familiar with the abstract use of this word. That brings him to the conclusion that the text is only conceivable against the background of an already ongoing debate about the character of genuine Yhwh worship.

For this reason Jeremias considers the theory of Lang, according to which Hosea has been one of the first ones to make a sharp distinction between Yhwh and Baal, to be highly unlikely. Hosea stands in the prophetic tradition of Moses, Samuel and Elijah and their struggles to delineate genuine Yhwh worship. His usage of the word בְּנֵי builds on a longer polemics against Baal. At the same time, according to Jeremias, the highly schematic character of the Yhwh-Baal opposition in the book of Hosea makes it impossible to draw any solid conclusions with respect to the religious circumstances that the prophet addresses.

I find Jeremias' remarks about the abstract usage of the word בְּנֵי and his assertion that the religious-historical background of this usage cannot exactly be determined highly interesting. Both these elements seem to detach the text from its supposed eighth-century background, although Jeremias himself does not
arrive at this conclusion. In general my interpretation of Hosea 2 is largely in agreement with the observations of Jeremias. Both the idea of the schematic usage of the word רע in Hosea 2 and the idea that the term relates to an issue within the sphere of Yhwh worship are points of correspondence. A point of difference is that these observations in my view do not by definition require or support the view that Hosea is an eighth-century text.

At this point, it is appropriate to pause in order to add nuances to the notion that Hosea 2 only contains ‘polemics’ with the Baal. Lemche has pointed to an interesting paradox in Hosea by observing that the book of Hosea offers an image of Yhwh that comes at times surprisingly close to that of the god Baal.200 The paradox is that Hosea rejects the worship of a blended image of Yhwh and Baal but, in reaction to this, portrays a Yhwh who takes over functions of Baal, such as the functions of giving rain and providing fertility.201 Lemche interprets this as a ‘solution’ to the dilemma of portraying an image of Yhwh that, on the one hand, preserves the distinctiveness of Yhwh in comparison to Baal and, on the other hand, suggests the superiority of Yhwh over Baal. In response to this dilemma Yhwh is presented as the national deity with a special relation to Israel (historical liberation acts, ethical demands) and as a deity that grants fertility and incorporates elements otherwise associated with Baal.202 In this way Lemche calls attention to the ironical fact that there is a double tendency in Hosea 2, one of a clear distinction between Yhwh and Baal and one of close affinity between the two.

We may now return to the reflections of Jeremias and take them one step further. Jeremias points out that the issue in Hosea is not an external clash between Israelite and Canaanite culture but an internal Israelite debate about the character of Yhwh worship. The term רע does not refer to Baal as a distinct deity but to various gods whose worship endangers genuine Yhwh worship. If these observations are correct and such an abstract usage of the term רע can indeed be observed in Hosea, what would then contradict the conclusion that the Baal polemics in the book of Hosea need not by definition be understood against an eighth century background? Assumed that blended forms of worship of Yhwh and other deities existed during the exilic and early Second Temple Period as well, the Baal polemics in the book of Hosea may well reflect the concerns of a later time. Formulated slightly differently, one may venture the hypothesis that the Baal polemics in Hosea may be explained as a thematic rather than as an historical concern of the book.

Three arguments may be mentioned in favour of this hypothesis. First, it is clear that the word רע is limited to certain biblical texts and occurs especially with reference to the period of the judges and with reference to the royal house in Samaria during the period of the divided monarchy. The distinction between the

202. The reason for Hosea to hammer away at the distinctions between Yhwh and Baal, according to Lemche, lies in the fact that Hosea is opposed to a too strong accent in Yhwh worship on fertility to the neglect of ‘other parts of human life such as justice or general ethical questions’ (Lemche, ‘Hosea’, pp. 253-254).
kingdoms of Judah and Israel in this respect is conspicuous and points to a deliberate literary patterning rather than to an historical accuracy. Second, the book of Amos, which is situated in roughly the same period as the book of Hosea, contains no mention of the word באל at all. This is surprising and seems to suggest that the books of Amos and Hosea are more thematic than historical in design. Indeed, in view of the abundant references to Baal worship in the books of Kings and the setting of books as Amos and Micah in a comparable period, the silence concerning the baals in these latter books is rather remarkable, seemingly underlining the point that devices of composition outweigh the report-like character of these prophetic books. Third, Jeremias has suggested that the book of Hosea with its abstract usage of the term באל comes close to the cliché-like usage of this term in Jeremiah. The plural references to באלים (Jer. 2:23; 9:13) and the combination of the word באל with references to ‘other gods’ (Jer. 7:9; 32:29) suggest that the word באל in the book of Jeremiah functions as a prototypical reference to other gods besides Yhwh, rather than to a specific deity with the name Baal. It is further interesting that Jeremiah employs the word באל with reference to the recent past of Judah (Jer. 32:29, 35). In light of this, it is possible that the word באל in Jeremiah and Hosea refers to polemics to other gods in the broadest sense and has a point of reference that is not limited to the pre-exilic period. There is indeed evidence that the worship of other deities continues to affect Israel during and after the Babylonian exile. The cult of high places and the dedication to idols continue to raise scorn and disapproval, as texts such as Zechariah 13, Isaiah 65-66 and Jeremiah 44 demonstrate. The word באל, as a general term for wrong and syncretistic forms of Yhwh worship, would therefore in principle be understandable against this background.

If this interpretation of the Baal polemics in the book of Hosea is viable, it would considerably change our perception of the contribution of the book of Hosea to the history of Israelite religion. Decisions in this matter will ultimately always be on the level of the paradigm of interpretation with which one approaches a text as Hosea. I have wanted to show that, besides many other elements, the Baal polemics in Hosea 2 can be read in the light of two different paradigms of interpretation, a literary-functional one and a historical-biographical one. In the end neither the book itself nor the religious situation and polemics that it reflects require a date in the eighth century BCE. This provides at least the freedom to interpret the book with less pressure from historical concerns. The point being made here is thus not so much that the Baal polemics in Hosea 2 suggest a sixth-century date of origin for the book of Hosea, but that

203. Jeremias, ‘Baal’, p. 96, has therefore qualified the ‘Baal-Thematik’ primarily as ‘Thematik des Nordreiches’. The books 1-2 Kings contain approximately forty references to the Baal to a total of approximately eighty. Within these books only 2 Kgs. 21:3; 23:4-5 relate to the kingdom of Judah. A similar tendency is visible within 2 Chronicles which conspicuously disconnects the kings of Judah from the baals (2 Chron. 17:3; 23:17; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3; 34:4).


205. The fact that Deuteronomy pays extensive attention to the worship of other gods is significant in itself and demonstrates that the worship of other deities besides Yhwh was still an issue at the time of the constitution of the new Yhwh-centred community (cf. Deut. 13:2-11; 17:2-7; 29:25-27).
they cannot be employed as an argument against the late dating of the book, if one should arrive at such a conclusion on other grounds.

In conclusion I will briefly recapitulate the three major positions with respect to the character of the religious polemics in Hosea 2.

- The classical view. Hosea battles against the Canaanite fertility cult and against its attraction for Israelites. The prophet is engaged in an Israelite-Canaanite debate (Wolff and Davies). In this debate the distinction between monotheism (in an already developed or preliminary stage) and polytheism is at stake.

- The revised view. The Baal polemics in Hosea are part of an internal Israelite debate. The attraction of the Canaanite cult plays no role, but the issue rather is the character of the Israelite worship of Yhwh. There is thus no clash of cultures but a clash of theology concerning the concept of Yhwh (Lemche). In the conservative variant, the debate is between established monotheism and a group of apostates (Jeremias). In the progressive variant, the debate is between a small group of Yhwh-alone adherents and a majority of polytheists (Lang).

- A third view. The Baal polemics in Hosea are part of an internal Israelite debate, see the preceding view, that may be situated in the sixth or fifth century BCE (Lemche). This view reflects the paradigm shift in prophetic studies viewing the work as a product of its final redaction. Along this line of thought, the religious polemics in the book of Hosea are interpreted as a response to ‘baalistic’ characterizations of Yhwh in Judah during the sixth or fifth century BCE.

7 Hosea 3

7.1 Introduction

In many respects Hosea 3 resembles Hosea 1-2. It presents another narrative in which marriage imagery is employed and the text moves again on two levels relating to the marriage relationship of the prophet and his partner and to the partnership of Yhwh and Israel. Furthermore the sequence of events in Hosea 3 is essentially the same as in Hosea 1-2: the text moves from adultery on the part of Israel to punishment and finally reunion. The details in Hosea 3, however, are decidedly different and for that reason Hosea 3 is not simply a continuation of Hosea 1-2 but rather forms a separate statement with a different scope.

In terms of marriage imagery Hosea 3 does not add substantially new aspects, although the verb הֵדָע (‘to love’) occurs here for the first time with respect to the relationship of Yhwh and Israel. The main contribution of Hosea 3 within the present investigation lies in the light that it sheds on Hosea 1-2. In Hosea 3 the paradigm of marriage is employed to portray a dialectic of...
separation, judgement and re-established partnership within the framework of the special commitment of Yhwh to Israel. Is that not precisely the case in Hosea 1-2 as well? The marriage imagery offers the possibility to conceive of Israel’s disloyalty as adultery, to conceive of the covenant between Yhwh and Israel as an exclusive and mutual relationship, to conceive of judgement in terms of a nadir within the relationship and to conceive of Yhwh as committed to Israel beyond all negativity with a persevering and ongoing love. This love has the potential to renew Israel and to bring it to a reunion with Yhwh that implies restoration as well.

7.2 Translation and notes to Hosea 3

3.1. And Yhwh said to me:
   Go again and love a woman
   who is beloved by another and commits adultery
   just as the love of Yhwh for the children of Israel is
   while they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes!

2. So I bought her as mine
   for fifteen pieces of silver
   a homer of barley and a lethech of barley.

3. And I said to her:
   Many days you shall sit down for me
   you shall not commit harlotry
   and shall not belong to a man
   not even I will come to you.

4. For many days the children of Israel shall sit down
   without king and without ruler
   without sacrifice and without pillar
   without ephod and teraphim.

5. At last
   the children of Israel shall return
   and they shall seek Yhwh their god
   and David their king
   and they shall come in awe to Yhwh and to his goodness
   in the latter days.

Text-critical, grammatical and syntactical notes

Hosea 3:1
- The word רע can be interpreted in combination with either the verb ‘to say’ (say again) or the verb ‘to go’ (go again). I prefer the latter interpretation on account of the parallel with Hos. 1:2 where a similar command ‘to go and take a woman’ is phrased. Hosea must now go ‘again’. In terms of grammar it seems to be more common that the adverb רע succeeds rather than precedes the verb (IM § 155k), which would speak in favour of the first interpretation (see NRSV, Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 294). There are cases, however,
in which דַּעַת precedes the verb (e.g., Hos. 12:10; Jer. 2:9; 31:4; in combination with an imperative form see Zech. 1:17; 11:15. In the latter text, an exact parallel to Hos. 3:1, there is no doubt concerning the syntax since the Masoretes have put a disjunctive accent after the word preceding דַּעַת. In the present case the Masoretic punctuation is not conclusive). In view of the parallel with Hos. 1:2 it is, nevertheless, likely that דַּעַת should be interpreted here in combination with the verb ‘to go’ (see LXX and Wolff, Hosea, p. 70).

- The critical apparatus of the BHS proposes to change the passive participle תְּמַלַּכָּה into the active participle תְּמַלָּקָה, following the LXX and Vulgate. That is a tempting suggestion but since the LXX has a different reading altogether (she loves ‘wicked things’ – πονηραί – rather than ‘a companion, another man’) and one can hardly take over one acceptable component from a coherent construction, the MT must be retained. The passive participle is constructed with the noun דַּעַת (with the meaning ‘a person, someone else’) and that implies that the noun refers to the performer of the action (JM § 121p). This would lead to the translation that the woman is ‘beloved of another’ (cf. Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 296). The passive form may also be understood as a tolerative form, in the sense that she ‘lets herself be loved by another’ (cf. NBG).

- The syntactical structure of vs. 1d–e is irregular and uneven. One problem is that the final clause, vs. 1e, is a main clause rather than a relative clause. Contrary to expectation it does not start with וַעֲשָׂנָה but functions as a sort of climax in the verse (in literal translation: ‘...just as the love of Yhwh for the children of Israel is; but they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes!’). A related problem is that the particle of comparison ל in vs. 1d assumes the function of a conjunction, being followed by a separate clause rather than introducing an element of comparison within the same clause. According to JM (§ 174d) this occasionally happens. Most translations add a verb or change the noun ‘love’ into the verb ‘to love’ (‘just as the love... is’ or ‘just as Yhwh loves’).

Hosea 3:2

- The verbal form הָרְכֵּד points to the root הָרְכֵּד which is fairly uncommon in biblical Hebrew (Deut. 2:6; Job 6:27; 40:30). The grammatical form found here has been explained either as a 1.sg.ipf. Qal of the root הָרְכֵּד with a dagesh in the כ for reasons of pronunciation (so Wolff, Hosea, p. 70; HAL 2, p. 472-473) or as a 1.sg.ipf. Qal of the same root assuming the inflected forms of the root הָרְכֵּד (so KB, p. 454). The meaning of the root in both cases is identified as ‘to buy, to get by trade’.

- I have translated the prepositional phrase יָלֵי (‘for me’) as ‘I bought her as mine’ rather than as ‘I bought her for me’, in the understanding that the phrase can be understood as expressing possession (JM § 133 d).

- The word לֶטֶח is a hapax-legomenon. A letech is a measure and the Mishna identifies it as half a homer (so Harper, Hosea, p. 224). An homer is estimated at a content of between 210 and 400 litres.
Hosea 3:3

- The prepositional phrase *'in vs. 3b is best understood in the sense that it expresses for the sake of whom or in the interest of whom something is done (JM § 133d).

- A difficulty is found in the last clause of this verse, in the words הָעֵדֵד אֲתָי אלִיךָ. These words literally mean ‘and even I... to you’ or in the context ‘not even I... to you’. The difficulty is that a verb is missing and that the meaning of the clause is debatable. In view of the climactic function of ד (HAL 1, p. 188), the point of the clause seems to be that the woman will be isolated from all contacts, even with Yhwh. One must then assume that the negative force of the two preceding clauses continues to be present in vs. 3e (in my rendering, ‘not even I will come to you’, the verb is added).

Hosea 3:5

- The verb נָרַד literally means ‘to tremble’ and may express physical excitement for several reasons or combinations of reasons: fear, joy or awe (see, e.g., Deut. 28:66-67; Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:5; Jer. 33:9). In combination with the preposition ב the verb expresses both excitement and an orientation or motion in a certain direction. Thus it may mean ‘to move trembling towards’ (so HAL 3, p. 871). The translations of Andersen & Freedman, Hosea, p. 291, and of the NRSV capture the connotations of the verb quite well: ‘and they will come trembling to Yhwh and his goodness’ or ‘they shall come in awe to the Lord’.

7.3 The literary structure of Hosea 3

The text consist of two parts, one with a focus on the human marriage of Hosea and his spouse and one with a focus on Yhwh and Israel:

3:1-3 the prophet and his partner
3:4-5 Yhwh and the children of Israel

The opening verse combines these two perspectives and expresses that the love of the prophet for the woman completely parallels that of Yhwh for Israel. Both the woman and the children of Israel are further defined by two participle constructions:

3:1 go again and love a woman
    who is beloved by another and commits adultery
    just as the love of Yhwh for the children of Israel is
    while they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes
The term "to love" is conspicuously repeated in this verse and occurs four times, three times as verb and once as noun:

3:1 love a woman
   who is beloved by another
   just as the love of Yhwh... is (noun)
   they... love raisin cakes

The phrase ‘many days’ and the verb ‘to sit’ are repeated in vv. 3-4 and mark the correspondence between the fate of the woman and the fate of Israel:

3:3 many days you shall sit down for me
3:4 many days the children of Israel shall sit down

There is a wordplay between the verbs בָּשָׁם (to sit) and בָּשָׁה (to return) in vv. 4-5. The forms yeshevu (vs. 4) and yashuvu (vs. 5) have an almost identical acoustic effect.

3:4 for many days the children of Israel shall sit down
3:5 at last the children of Israel shall return

A less conspicuous repetition is that of the word ‘god’ in vv. 1 and 5. The two times that this word occurs contrast strongly. The first time the reference is to the plural ‘gods’ which Israel loves: these remain anonymous. The second time the word has a singular meaning and refers to Yhwh who is qualified as ‘their god’.

3:1 while they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes
3:5 and they shall seek Yhwh their god

This word repetition in the two verses framing the chapter points to a central contrast in the text. The initial situation is that Israel turns to ‘other gods’ but the final situation will be that Israel will turn to Yhwh ‘their god’. The significance of this contrast is underlined by the fact that only in these two verses does the name ‘Yhwh’ occur, making the relation between Israel and Yhwh the explicit theme only in these two verses. These features function as a device of inclusion.

7.4 Explanation of Hosea 3

Loved with perseverance (verse 1)
The prophet is commanded to ‘love’ a woman who is further defined as a woman ‘who is loved by another man and commits adultery’. The verb רָעָה (‘to commit adultery’) is a synonym of the verb רִעה (‘to commit harlotry) and this makes the two commands in Hosea 1:2 and Hosea 3:1 strikingly similar. The prophet must thus go and love a woman that is attached to other lovers.

Such a love mirrors the love of Yhwh for the children of Israel. The term בָּשָׁם (‘to love’) is a new element and expresses the affectionate nature of the partnership between Yhwh and Israel. The prophet must ‘love’ the woman as
Yhwh ‘loves’ Israel. Yhwh’s love for the people is a theme that in Deuteronomy frequently has the associations of ‘election’ and points to the special and favourite place of Israel before Yhwh.  

The love of Israel, however, has another orientation: the people turn to other gods and are devoted to ‘raisin cakes’. The significance of these ‘raisin cakes’ is a riddle, presumably they are a delicacy (2 Sam. 6:19; 1 Chron. 16:3; Cant. 2:5) which function here in connection to the worship of other gods. Perhaps the cakes baked for the goddess Queen-of-heaven are a helpful parallel (Jer. 9:18; 44:19). In any case, the raisin cakes represent something that is attractive and edible and which provides momentary gratification. It is tempting to see here a reminiscence to the ‘gifts of the lovers’ that motivated Israel to go after these lovers (Hos. 2:7, 14).

The verse is brief in its description of God’s love for Israel. A few inferences about this love can nevertheless be made. In the first place, Yhwh loves a partner that commits adultery and is not faithful. This makes his love somewhat illogical. His love is not answered in the same way that it is offered, but comes predominantly from one side. The implication is that, in the second place, the love of Yhwh can be characterised as a love with perseverance. It is aimed at regaining Israel and winning her back as partner despite her present lack of response.

**Purchased (verse 2)**

Hosea then ‘buys’ his wife for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. This element of purchase and the additional description of the price come as a surprise. The effect of the statement is, nevertheless, clear: the woman becomes ‘his’ through the purchase.

Attempts have been made to find a symbolic meaning in the price paid. It was estimated that a homer and a lethech together would represent a value of approximately fifteen pieces of silver, so that the total price would amount to thirty pieces of silver which would be precisely the price of a slave girl (Ex. 21:32). The implicit point of the transaction would be that Hosea redeemed a slave girl to be his partner. That is rather hypothetical. It seems preferable to assume that the image shifts to the relation between Yhwh and Israel and alludes to the ‘redemption’ or purchase of Israel by Yhwh.

Such ‘transactional’ language occurs more often in relation to Yhwh and Israel, though not with the verb הבשן. Parallels are Isa. 11:11 (the verb הבשן, to acquire); Deut. 7:8 (השבים, to redeem) and Isa. 43:3-4. The last text refers to the ransom that Yhwh will pay in order to purchase Israel’s freedom and that transaction is motivated by the notion that Israel is ‘precious in his sight’ and ‘honoured’ and ‘loved’ by Yhwh. The element of purchase in Hosea 3:2 seems, therefore, to allude to the redemption of Israel from servanthood in order to become Yhwh’s companion. The price that is paid has presumably no other meaning than that it consists of ‘silver’ and ‘barley’ and that it is paid by Yhwh in all of its concreteness. The products ‘silver and barley’ correspond to the two

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209. So Wolff, Hosea, p. 76. The price of a homer of barley is indirectly deduced from 2 Kgs. 7:1, 16-18, where reference is made to two-thirtieth of a homer which is sold for one shekel. The pieces of silver mentioned in Hos. 3:2 are then identified as shekels.
categories of natural gifts that were mentioned in Hos. 2:10, precious minerals and agricultural products. Yhwh puts in both in order to purchase Israel.

In the absence of all partners (verse 3)

After the purchase, a period of detachment between Hosea and his partner follows. His spouse is to ‘sit down for many days’. In order to understand this, one should not interpret this verse as referring exclusively to Hosea and his partner while assuming that the shift to Israel and Yhwh is made only in the next verse (vs. 4). Such a strict distinction between Yhwh and Israel, on the one hand, and Hosea and his partner, on the other hand, cannot be made. Verses 3 and 4 deal with a similar period of isolation and elucidate one another.

The period of isolation that is portrayed here is usually understood as a disciplinary measure and as a form of punishment regarding the adultery of Israel. The text, however, neither emphasizes the guilt of Israel nor points to the logical connection of guilt and punishment. It does not portray Yhwh as taking the initiative in bringing about the period of isolation, but simply states that a period of isolation will follow for Israel and presents this as a reality. As a matter of fact, the portrayal of Yhwh’s role in the judgement scenes in Hosea 2 and 3 is remarkably different: Hosea 3 does not depict Yhwh as an active agent or a performer of the judgement, but as being relatively separate from the events.

The larger question of how text and audience relate to the described period presents itself here. Does the period of isolation still lie in the future or is it already part of the present experience? If we assume that there is a parallel between the motif of isolation in vv. 3 and 4, the question shifts to whether the dismantlement of the state that is envisioned in vs. 4 is to be explained as a foretelling of future events or as a reflection of events that have already happened and which need to be explained and understood. In my view, the latter is more likely: the period of isolation and the break down of the national state portrayed in vs. 4 correspond to a historical period which is presumably already part of the national experience. If this is indeed the case, the references to the period of isolation would constitute a vaticinium ex eventu. The text of Hosea 3 would then have to be interpreted as an attempt to make sense of particular historical events and to provide the audience with a sense of Yhwh’s lasting commitment and a perspective of hope beyond the present disaster. The import of the references to the period of isolation in vv. 3-4 would then lie not in the depiction of these events as a measure of judgement, but in the context in which these references are placed. In that context the accent falls on the poignant unfaithfulness of Israel in the past (vv. 1-2) and the continuing love of Yhwh which offers a perspective of hope even beyond the present misfortune (vs. 5).

‘For many days’ Israel will sit down and will not commit harlotry or belong to any man. She will be destitute of all contacts, even of the contact with Yhwh. It will thus be a period of loneliness. There is, however, one point of orientation and that lies in the phrase וַעֲשַׂר (‘for me’). The female partner of Hosea will sit down ‘for me’ (vs. 3b) and that phrase stands in apparent contrast to the statement that she will not be ‘for a man’ (vs. 3d). In other words, she does not

belong to anybody but to the prophet or, on the other level, to Yhwh. Even during the period of isolation, she remains indissolubly ‘his’.

In the absence of Yhwh (verse 4)
In this verse the transition is made to the children of Israel. They will likewise ‘sit down’ and be destitute of three pairs of elements: king and ruler, sacrifice and pillar, ephod and teraphim. The whole serves to make a dramatic impression. When Israel ‘sits down’ this mostly implies that the nation is at rock bottom. Such sitting occurs in the context of devastation (Lam. 1:1), mourning and humiliation (Lam. 2:10) and exile (Ps. 137:1). Similar connotations are present here.

The impact of this period of sitting is specified in the first place by the absence of king and rulers, that is, political organisation and unity. The second pair of terms, ‘sacrifice and pillar’, points to the sphere of the cult. The sort of sacrifice referred to here (תָּמִיתא) consist of sacrifices that involve a communal meal and affirm the communion between Yhwh and people. These are happy and legitimate occasions within the cult of Yhwh. Quite in contrast is the mention of ‘pillars’ or massebot which have a negative reputation and point to denounced forms of worship (Hos. 10:1-2; Deut. 12:3). The last pair, ephod and teraphim, refers to means of consulting Yhwh. The ephod is the garment of the high priest that contains the Urim and Thummim, the sacred lots used for consulting the divine will. The ephod itself could also be used for consulting, although it could also be used as an object of apostate worship. The teraphim are small portable idols which could be used as means of divination. When these opportunities of consultation and communication with Yhwh fall away, the approach to Yhwh is completely blocked and no sense of the presence of Yhwh is left.

The absence of all of these elements that constitute Israelite society and religion suggest that the people will live for a while outside the presence of Yhwh. There is no possibility of contact, no king, no feasts, nothing. In the absence of all of these elements, God’s absence from the people is felt. Can such losses be survived?

A change of orientation towards Yhwh’s goodness (verse 5)
In the final verse everything is turned about. Israel will ‘turn’ and ‘seek’ Yhwh. It will approach Yhwh and his goodness with anticipation and fear and will live henceforth under the shield of his goodness. How is that possible? What initiates this repentance towards Yhwh? No explicit answer is given, the text rather portrays a vision of how things may go. On the one hand, it is up to Israel to repent, but, on the other hand, Yhwh’s love for the people and his faithful partnership may motivate this repentance and open up this perspective.

The key word נאשא (‘to repent’) contrasts with the key word יָשָׁהוּ (‘to sit’) in the preceding verse. The acoustic similarity between the verbal forms ‘they shall sit down’ (vs. 4) and ‘they shall return’ (vs. 5) may be interpreted in the sense that the latter virtually replaces the former. The second word clearly contrasts with the first in the measure of activity that it suggests: ‘to sit’ is passive but ‘to

211. So BDB, p. 257.
212. For ephod and teraphim as means of consultation see 1 Sam. 23:9-12; Ezek. 21:26; Zech. 10:2. Judg. 8:27 and 1 Sam. 2:28 show that the ephod could be worshipped as an idol.
repent' is to rise to one's feet and to come into action and seek a new orientation towards Yhwh. Repentance is one of the great themes of the book Hosea. It never implies a return to the old state of affairs but rather a turning to a new commitment to Yhwh.

The motif of repentance is elaborated in two parallel clauses (vs. 5cd-e):

they shall seek Yhwh their god and David their king
they shall come in awe to Yhwh and to his goodness

Both verbs point to a new orientation towards Yhwh. The first case includes a reference to king David. This is the only time that the name of David is mentioned in the book of Hosea. His name is here prototypical for a kingship that is after God's heart. The expectation of a sprout from the house of David who will bring peace and justice and reunite the people 'in a new age' is found more often in biblical texts, particularly in texts that relate to the Babylonian exile (Jer. 30:9; 33:15-21; Ezek. 37:24-26). It does not correspond to an eighth-century setting of the text. It does fit, however, within the structure of the verse and within the context (cf. the absence of kingship in vs. 4) so that one is bound to accept it as an integral element of the text.

In addition, the children of Israel will come to Yhwh 'and his goodness'. The term 31U is a comprehensive term for manifold good things, benefactions and blessings. In this context the word does not point to goodness as an internal quality of Yhwh, but to the goodness that he performs in relation to Israel and bestows upon Israel. Manifold good things will be experienced by the people in the presence of Yhwh. He will bestow them with prosperity and many benefits and blessings. This will happen in the days 'to come' when Israel repents. The act of repentance will thus open up a new and good future for the people, beyond the dramatic period of isolation sketched in the preceding verses.

Summary
The whole of Hosea 3 portrays three major moments of action: the purchase of Israel by Yhwh, the subsequent period of isolation and the future in which Israel repents towards Yhwh and the relationship is restored. If the assumption is correct that the situation of life in the absence of Yhwh (vv. 3-4) reflects the present plight of Israel, then the accent falls on the overtones of hope in the text. Even such a black situation as portrayed in vv. 3-4 is not the end. It will last 'many days' but ultimately will be surpassed by new opportunities and a positive future. The alternative view that the text presents a combination of 'Strafe und Bekehrung' (Rudolph) focuses too much on the element of punishment, which is, in my view, hardly present in Hosea 3.

213. See, e.g., Hos. 6:1-3; 12:7; 14:2-3.
214. Wolff, Hosea, pp. 70-71, and Davies, Hosea, pp. 104-105, regard the phrase as a Judean insertion in the text. Emmerson (Hosea, pp. 103-110), on the other hand, maintains that the phrase is explainable within an eighth-century background. She argues that the eighth-century prophet Hosea may have put his hopes in a Davidic-like kingship for the northern kingdom. That is very hypothetical, however, and far more uncertain than the usual standpoint that this is an exilic element in the book of Hosea.
215. On the reference to David see further the section discussing the relation between Hosea 1-2 and Hosea 3 (below).
For the contemporary audience the point seems to lie in the opposition between ‘to sit’ and ‘to turn to Yhwh’. The text confronts its audience with this contrast and invites it to participate in the repentance that the text portrays. Repentance requires that one turns away from ‘other gods’ and that one discerns the decisive distinctions between Yhwh and other gods. A few clues are offered in the text with respect to this distinction. Yhwh buys Israel free to be ‘his’. He perseveres in loving her despite her recurrent failure to respond. That resilient love and commitment form the background music even during a period of misfortune. Finally the turn to Yhwh is presented in a way that implies that ‘good things’ will be found in his presence. These three features serve to motivate readers to make a choice similar to the one made in the text.

In terms of the marriage imagery two accents come to the fore in Hosea 3. First, the notion of Yhwh’s love functions as an attendant element through the whole of the people’s history. This love has the capacity of carrying the people through a disaster and to a new future beyond. Second, Hosea 3 also makes clear that the love of Yhwh is unfulfilled as long as no adequate response has been given. The response of the people is indeed a vital element within the love and partnership of Yhwh. The love of the God of Israel is thus not to be simply taken for granted, but is a question and a proposal.

7.5 The relation between Hosea 3 and Hosea 1-2

A pressing issue in the history of interpretation has been to establish the relation between the women mentioned in Hosea 3 and Hosea 1-2. Is the partner that Hosea is to ‘love’ in Hosea 3 the same as Gomer, the woman of harlotry, mentioned in Hosea 1 or not? Either way one runs into problems. If the answer is yes, one is faced with the anomaly that nowhere mention is made of the dissolution of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer, which would be a necessary prerequisite for the command to remarry in Hosea 3. If the answer is no, the resulting picture is even more problematic. Not only does the question arise as to what has become of Gomer and of the marriage to Gomer, but, more significantly, it would appear that the parallel between Hosea-Gomer and Yhwh-Israel breaks off. If Hosea receives the command to marry another wife, does this mean that Yhwh also seeks a bride other than Israel? That would undermine the idea that Israel is Yhwh’s one and only partner, ostensibly one of the central tenets of the marriage metaphor.216

As yet no final solution has been found to the question of the identity of the two women. It will presumably remain an unanswered quest, for the simple reason that the question concerning the identity of the two women may not be

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216. See Davies, *Hosea*, pp. 105-109, and M.T. Wacker, *Figurationen des Weiblichen im Hosea-Buch*, pp. 110-11, for brief surveys of the most recent opinions in this matter. According to Wacker and Davies the prevailing view is that Hosea 1 and 3 refer to the same woman. The condition is that Hosea 1 and 3 are not read as accounts of successive events but as parallel accounts with a different accent (in Hosea 3 the command is to love rather than to marry, Hosea 3 fills in the gaps of Hosea 2 with respect to the arrangement of the marriage between Hosea and Gomer, etc.).
adequate and may lean too heavily on the idea that the events told in Hosea 1-3 are biographically conceivable and historically reconstructable. It may, therefore, be appropriate not to narrow down the question to the relationship of the two women but to focus on the relationship of the two texts of Hosea 1-2 and 3 and to address the question how the texts relate.

This question can be addressed on two levels. On a strictly synchronic level it is possible to observe different accents in Hosea 3 in comparison to Hosea 1-2. Characteristic for Hosea 3 are the notion of love, the dimension of duration and inactivity (‘many days you shall sit’), contrasting to the non-stop course of events depicted in Hosea 2, the role of Yhwh as being withdrawn rather than punishing and the motifs that accompany the reunion of Yhwh and Israel (vs. 5). On the whole Hosea 3 is a text with a different character and colour, observable in its phrasing, wordplay and structure. It presents a different world and in that sense a message distinct to that of Hosea 1-2.

On the level of the relations between text and extra-textual reality, some additional observations can be made about Hosea 3 in relation to Hosea 1-2. The last verses of Hosea 3 give the strong impression that they are composed in view of the situation of Judah during the time of the Babylonian dominance. The references to the complete dismantlement of state and cult, the disappearance of kingship and the absence of Yhwh (vs. 4) and, on the other hand, the hopeful perspective of a Davidic king (vs. 5) fit in with the circumstances and the traditions of Judah. This has led Diebner to suggest that Hosea 1-2 deals with the past, present and future of Israel in the framework of marriage imagery, while Hosea 3 accomplishes the same with respect to Judah. Hosea 3 is, in other words, an intentional parallel to Hosea 1-2 and deals with the fate of Judah in the same way as Hosea 1-2 deals with the fate of Israel.

In my view the point of distinction between Hosea 1-2 and Hosea 3 does not lie in the contrast between Israel and Judah but in a widening perspective with respect to Israel. The proposal of Diebner may thus be slightly modified. The assumption that Hosea 3 is composed in view of Judah seems correct but the text nevertheless presents itself as a statement concerning the ‘children of Israel’ (Hos. 3:1). That implies that the perspective on the fate of Judah that is presented in Hosea 3 continues to focus on Israel, here in the sense of ‘Gesamt-Israel’. Hosea 3 thus offers an inclusive perspective on Israel. It incorporates the historical fate and demise of Judah within the metaphor of the marriage relation and offers a prospect of hope even beyond the Babylonian exile. In that sense it extends and widens the scope of Hosea 1-2 with its focus on the demise of the northern kingdom. From an historical perspective one could say that the image of

217. Cf. B.J. Diebner, ‘Die zweite Frau des Hosea (Hos 3)’, DBAT 19 (1984), pp. 134-138 and M.T. Wacker, Figurationen des Weiblichen im Hosea-Buch, pp. 228-33. According to Diebner the radical picture provided in vs. 4, which suggests the complete absence of any cultic acts, corresponds better to the situation in Judah after 586 BCE than to the demise of Israel in 722 BCE.

218. See Diebner, ‘Hosea’, pp. 137-38. The implication is that the expression נַחֲלָיָה אוֹמָל in Hos. 1:4-6 has a different point of reference than the phrase נַחֲלָיָה נַחֲלָיָה in Hos. 3:1-5. In the first case Israel would refer to the inhabitants of the northern kingdom Israel, in the second case it would refer to the inhabitants of Judah.
marriage and continuing partnership functions in Hosea 3, and in retrospect also in Hosea 1-2, as a tool to interpret the historical fates of Israel and Judah and to point to a future of hope beyond destruction. From a literary point of view, however, that assessment is a reduction of the full literary power of the text.