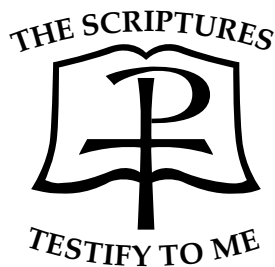


CONCORDIA COMMENTARY

A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture

HOSEA

Kevin S. Golden



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framework, we can further say that the structure is also the prophet's doing even if another did so on his behalf.

One more historical note that is worthy of further exploration is the relationship of Hosea with the Psalms in general, but especially Psalms 77; 80; and 81. For Graham Davies, those three psalms are good candidates for arising from within the Northern Kingdom of Israel, due to the absence of references to David and Jerusalem along with their repeated reference to the nation as "Joseph."³³

Hosea's Marriage(s) and Children

The preceding description of Hosea's historical setting naturally leads to a consideration of Hosea's marriage and children, since the shocking description of Gomer as a "whoring wife" and the harsh names given their "whoring children" (1:2b) has prompted some to question the historicity of the marriage and children. The driving motivation for questioning the historicity of Hosea and his family is not the text but a desire to lessen the shock of that text. That is not sufficient reason to call the text's historicity into question. Both Hosea and Gomer are identified by their patronyms (1:1, 3), underscoring that each is a real person. There are no textual markers that Hosea, Gomer, their marriage, or their children are nonliteral/nonhistorical. Similarly, there is no textual reason to hold that there are multiple prophets who are stitched together to give us the character of Hosea. There is one prophet Hosea. While another may have compiled Hosea's oracular and/or written material under the prophet's supervision, this commentary maintains that the whole of this book is the work of Hosea the son of Beeri, the husband of Gomer, a prophet in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the mid to late eighth century BC.

Nevertheless, there are a variety of understandings regarding Gomer. Eugen Pentiuic offers a helpful summary of the competing explanations for Hosea's marriage to Gomer as a historical event, a vision, or a literary fiction.³⁴ This issue is not restricted to contemporary interpreters but has been present for nearly as long as Hosea's prophecy has been studied.

Among the defenders of a literal intent are: Irenaeus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine, Luther, Laetsch, and probably a majority of modern exegetes, especially in the critical camp. Defenders of an allegorical intent (many of whom one is surprised to find here) include the Targum, Jerome, most medieval commentators, Calvin, Gunkel, Gressmann, von Rad, Young, and many evangelicals. A sort of middle position (really more a subdivision of the allegorical understanding) defends the view that the prophet saw this "marriage" as a vision: Origen, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi, Hengstenberg, Keil, etc.³⁵

A lead argument for an allegorical interpretation of the marriage is biblical Law regarding prostitution and adultery (e.g., Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18). More

³³ Davies, *Hosea*, 73.

³⁴ Pentiuic, *Long-Suffering Love*, 13–14.

³⁵ Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 286.

specifically, how do you reconcile the prophet marrying a whoring wife with Lev 19:29 and Deut 23:19 (ET 23:18)?³⁶ The allegorical interpretation also notes that after chapter 3, the marital language fades with the father-son language becoming more dominant. Aside from no textual markers to indicate that the text is nonliteral, the allegorical interpretation is difficult to maintain due to a lack of symbolic meaning for the name Gomer as well as her father, Diblaim (1:3).

Among those who hold to a historical interpretation of the marriage, some posit that Gomer was initially a faithful wife who eventually succumbed to whoredom. This position addresses the incongruity between biblical Law regarding marriage and Yahweh calling his prophet to marry a whore. "There is a certain undeniable attractiveness for the centrist position that Hosea was not *aware* of Gomer's propensities at the time of marriage (so Wellhausen, Eichrodt, Bright, Marti, C. J. Pfeiffer, G. W. Anderson, etc.)."³⁷ Others hold that Gomer was already unfaithful at the time of marriage. This commentary argues that the text presents Gomer as a whore at the time of marriage (see the textual notes and the commentary on 1:2b). It is shocking that Yahweh would call Hosea to marry a whore, but that is just the point. The text is intended to shock and even offend its readers in order to bring them to a recognition of the depth of Israel's depravity. Hosea's call is unique to him and applies only to him (it is descriptive of his call and prescriptive for no one else). He is not alone in being called by Yahweh to a shocking sign act (e.g., Isaiah's three-year nakedness, Is 20:2–3; Jeremiah's burial and recovery of his undergarments, Jeremiah 13).

Others minimize the shock of the text by suggesting that Hosea has two wives, the first of which is Gomer and the second being the unnamed wife of Hosea 3. Again, Pentiuic summarizes the scholarly positions regarding the relationship between Hosea 1 and Hosea 3 and how that affects the so-called two-woman theory.³⁸ Some see chapter 3 as a retelling of chapter 1 but as the creation of a later redactor. Similarly, some will argue that the two chapters narrate the same episode but from the same hand. Others see chapters 1 and 3 as originally a single narrative that was separated when a later editor inserted chapter 2. Still others hold that Hosea 1 and Hosea 3 are authentic depictions of two separate wives. Pentiuic himself holds that there was but one wife for Hosea and that Hosea 1 captures events around 748 BC and Hosea 3 is set over two decades later near the fall of Samaria to give a note of hope in a seemingly hopeless time. This commentary not only rejects the two-woman theory but also holds that Hosea 1 and Hosea 3 recount separate events involving Hosea and Gomer. Furthermore, Hosea 2 does not interrupt the flow but helps explain why there is such a dramatic transition from the broken marriage of Hosea 1 to the renewed marriage in Hosea 3. Hosea 2 recounts Yahweh's persistent love

³⁶ Compare the prohibitions against priests marrying prostitutes in Lev 21:7, 13–14.

³⁷ Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 287.

³⁸ Pentiuic, *Long-Suffering Love*, 14–15.

for Israel so that he woos his bride. Yahweh's renewed marriage (Hosea 2) leads to Hosea's renewed marriage (Hosea 3).

The history of interpretation reveals a host of diverse interpretations of the marriage. There was a time when interpreters might offer a Freudian psychoanalysis for why Hosea would love such a woman. Fortunately, such readings have fallen by the wayside. Some have suggested that Gomer could be a sacred prostitute serving potentially at either Dan or Bethel, thus explaining Hosea's sarcastic renaming of Bethel ("House of God") as Beth-aven ("House of Iniquity"). The Hebrew term for a "sacred prostitute" (קִדְּוֹת) is not used in Hosea 1–3, making such a reading difficult to maintain, though the term is used in 4:14 but not applied to Gomer.³⁹ Wolff goes so far as to argue that Gomer was simply following Canaanite bridal rites and thus the connotations of being a whore are not that applicable to her.⁴⁰

Hosea had but a single, literal, historical marriage to Gomer, which was renewed as a result of Yahweh renewing his marriage with Israel. But what is the point of that marriage as a metaphor for Yahweh's marriage with Israel? Brad Kelle summarizes the variety of understandings.⁴¹ The most prevailing understanding, which is also held by this commentary, is that Israel's infidelity is apostasy. Others posit that Hosea is not targeting Israel's religious infidelity but royal land acquisition that dispossesses landowners. While such actions would violate the Torah and are similar to the economic sins addressed by Hosea's contemporary Northern Kingdom prophet Amos, such a reading goes against the natural (and even clear) reading of the text. Israel has been unfaithful to Yahweh by chasing after the baals. That infidelity can best be described as syncretism, as the rites of Baalism crept into and perverted the worship of Yahweh, but it is certainly apostasy.

The depiction of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel as a marriage is not unique to Hosea, though his experience and proclamation of it are arguably the most powerful. Within the OT, similar marital language (often with apostasy as infidelity, resulting in divorce and remarriage) can be found in Is 54:5–8; 61:10; 62:4–5; Jer 2:2; 3:1–3; 31:32; Ezek 16:8, 45; 23:1–49. The NT also employs marital language to describe the union of God and his people in Christ, the Bridegroom, in Mt 9:14–15 || Lk 5:33–35; Mt 25:1–13; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25–27; Rev 19:7–9; 21:2, 9; 22:17.

³⁹ This solitary occurrence of קִדְּוֹת in Hosea in 4:14 has drawn significant attention in recent years from those who attempt to argue that sacred prostitution was not practiced in that time and culture. See DeGrado, "The *qdsha* in Hosea 4:14: Putting the (Myth of the) Sacred Prostitute to Bed."

⁴⁰ Wolff, *Hosea*, xxii: "Thus 'the whore' Gomer was probably no exception in her own day; rather, she was simply one of many Israelite women who had submitted to the bridal rites customary among the Canaanites." Later, Wolff explains: "Here we should take note of the inroads of a Canaanite sexual rite into Israel in which young virgins offered themselves to the divinity and expected fertility in return. They surrendered themselves to strangers inside the holy precincts" (*Hosea*, 14).

⁴¹ Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 14–17.

This section has given attention to the literal, historical marriage between Hosea and Gomer. Though not nearly as controverted, Hosea's children are also literal, historical children born from the marriage of Hosea and Gomer. Some have argued that the children as a whole or a portion of them are not Hosea's biological offspring. This commentary holds that all three are Hosea's offspring. As noted in the textual notes and the commentary on 1:2b–9, the first son, Jezreel, is conceived and borne *for* Hosea (לְ, “for him,” 1:3). The preposition *lamed* could express possession or advantage; either way, Jezreel is Hosea's son. While the text omits Hosea's name from the account of the conception and birth of the second child, Lo-Ruhamah/“No Compassion” (1:6–7), this event is done “again” (עַד, 1:6), so that she, like her brother before her, is conceived and borne for Hosea. The account of the conception and birth of the third child, Lo-Ammi/“Not My People” (1:8–9), is the most condensed of the three accounts. In 1:2b–9, there is a progression of removing elements (subject, prepositional phrase, etc.) in each subsequent account, while what remains is in the same syntactical order (וַתֵּהֱרָה followed by וַתֵּלֶד and the object בֵּן or בַּת), indicating that there is continuity. While this argument is grounded on the text itself, there is also theological significance. Just as it is the true children of Hosea who need to be renamed and renewed, so also it is the true children of Yahweh, not those belonging to some other god, who have his promise that they will be renamed and renewed.



Hosea and the Torah

Like the rest of the prophets, Hosea primarily draws from the Torah, applying it to his contemporaries. Hosea's proclivity to reference Israel's history drives him to utilize especially Exodus and Deuteronomy, with their respective renderings of Yahweh's action in history for the salvation of his people. This also accords with what some have described as “northern” accents, including the Mosaic covenant and the exodus, marriage as a metaphor for the covenant relationship with God, and Israel's days in the wilderness as a honeymoon rather than as rebellion or punishment.⁴² Even more, Hosea employs Deuteronomy because of their shared affinity for religious fidelity.⁴³ Hosea's regular references to the Torah also serve a rhetorical purpose. Since the Northern Kingdom had separated itself from the Davidic kingship two centuries earlier (931 BC) and since Hosea himself has pointed critique of the northern kings, he takes hold of Yahweh's foundational Word given before the establishment of the kingship.

Nineteenth-century Lutheran theologian Ernst Hengstenberg offers a significant list of passages from Hosea with the Torah passage(s) on which they

⁴² Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 229.

⁴³ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 366: “It is especially significant that the affinities are to be found in matters with which Deuteronomy is most concerned, such as the condemnation of idolatrous and syncretistic ways of worship on the one hand and the establishment of sincere relationship with God on the other. The verbal resemblances are particularly convincing.”

Superscription

Translation

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

^{2a}When Yahweh began speaking through Hosea, ...

Textual Notes

1:1 ¹אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־בְּעֵרִי | דְּבַר־יְהוָה—This is one of four times among the twelve Minor Prophets that the introductory formula אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־ is utilized (also Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zeph 1:1). It is an incomplete sentence comprised of a construct phrase serving as the subject and a relative clause that functions adjectivally. That it is the דְּבַר־יְהוָה which comes to Hosea is of high significance. Yahweh’s Word brings things into being, so his דְּבַר is more than just a word; it also encapsulates events. Thus it is not just the prophetic utterances of Hosea which are in view in this introductory formula but also all that happens to and through Hosea as a result. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer, the birth of their children, and the varying other events recorded within Hosea’s prophetic words are bound up in the דְּבַר־יְהוָה. The dynamic nature of הָיָה brings a range of meaning as well. Putting the two together, one can understand אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל־הוֹשֵׁעַ | דְּבַר־יְהוָה as “the Word of Yahweh that came to Hosea,” “the thing of Yahweh that happened to Hosea,” or, as a means to encapsulate the whole, “the dynamic Word of Yahweh that came upon Hosea.”

Hosea’s name also bears significance as a confession of Yahweh’s identity and actions (his identity and actions cannot be separated). הוֹשֵׁעַ, drawn from the Hebrew verb יָשַׁע, can be parsed as either a Hiphil perfect third masculine singular, “he has saved,” or a Hiphil infinitive absolute (as in 1 Sam 25:26, 33; Jer 11:12), which could function as an imperative, “save!” The name is related to יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, “Joshua,” as both come from the same verbal root. Joshua the son of Nun is even called הוֹשֵׁעַ in Num 13:8 before Moses names him as יְהוֹשֻׁעַ in Num 13:16 (see also Deut 32:44, where Joshua is named as הוֹשֵׁעַ). Three other persons are named הוֹשֵׁעַ in the OT: the last king of Israel (2 Ki 15:30), a leader in postexilic Jerusalem (Neh 10:24 [ET 10:23]), and a prominent leader of Ephraim (1 Chr 27:20). English translations regularly refer to these other three men bearing the name הוֹשֵׁעַ as “Hoshea,” thus distinguishing them in translation from the prophet “Hosea.” The LXX transliterates הוֹשֵׁעַ as Ωσηε, though in Numbers 13, it is transliterated as Αυση. Scholars have suggested fuller forms on which הוֹשֵׁעַ is based, but the suggestions remain conjectures.¹ What can be said conclusively is that the prophet’s name is a proclamation of salvation.

¹ A summary of such conjectures may be found in Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 152.

Further definition is given to Hosea as “the son of Beeri.” “Beeri” can be translated as “my well.” No other reference is made to Hosea’s father in Scripture. One other individual bears the name **בְּאֵרִי**, namely, the Hittite father of Esau’s wife Judith (Gen 26:34). 1 Chr 5:6 records that Tiglath-pileser took into exile **בְּאֵרָה**, “Beerah,” of the tribe of Reuben; rabbis suggested this was Hosea’s father.

בְּיָמֵי עֲזִיָּהּ יוֹתָם אָחָז יְחִזְקִיָּה מְלִכֵי יְהוּדָה—This list of these four kings of Judah lacks the so-called phrasal **וְ** to connect the latter names with the first one (asyndeton). At times, such lists will utilize **וְ** between each item (e.g., 2:10 [ET 2:8]). At other times, only a single **וְ** is used before the last name (e.g., 2:13 [ET 2:11]), similar to English usage. Still other times, **וְ** is sporadically used throughout a list (e.g., 2:7 [ET 2:5]), where it is placed among pairs). The complete absence of **וְ** is a rare usage but does not confound the meaning (see Waltke-O’Connor, § 39.2.1b; MNK, § 31.1.ii.d). Is 1:1 includes the same list of these four kings in asyndeton. Micah 1:1 lacks Uzziah but lists the other three asyndetically.

וּבְיָמֵי יִרְבֵּעָם בְּן־יֹאָשׁ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל—While four kings of Judah are listed, only one king of Israel is noted. Thus Hos 1:1 departs from Is 1:1, which lists only the four kings of Judah, underlining Isaiah’s prophetic ministry in Judah. The inclusion of a king of Israel in Hos 1:1 emphasizes Hosea’s ministry in the North. Similarly, the northern prophet Amos includes this same reference to Jeroboam the son of Joash after a reference to just one king of Judah, namely, Uzziah (Amos 1:1). This Jeroboam is often referred to as Jeroboam II to distinguish him from the Jeroboam who was the first ruler of the Northern Kingdom when the kingdom of Israel divided following the death of Solomon. The juxtaposition of four kings of Judah with one king of Israel also has significance for correlating the date of Hosea’s ministry with his principal focus (see the commentary).

1:2a **וּתְחִלַּת דְּבַר־יְהוָה בְּהוֹשִׁיעַ**—The noun **תְּחִלַּת** is in the construct state. Typically in a construct chain, the absolute (*nomen regens*) is a noun or a participle. In this case, **תְּחִלַּת** is in construct with the entire phrase which follows (see Williams, § 30d; § 489). It is not uncommon for such a phenomenon to occur with designations of time and place (see Davidson, § 25), the former being the case here. Yet this construction is rather unique in that the word in construct lacks prepositional force, as do some nouns that function as prepositions (Waltke-O’Connor, § 9.6e). A more extensive discussion of this phrase is given by Andersen and Freedman.² Being in construct with the ensuing clause, **תְּחִלַּת** has a time-determinative function on the perfect verb in that clause (see GKC, § 130 d). That verb, **דָּבַר**, is a Piel perfect third masculine singular, though the vowel pointing (**-בָּ-**) varies from the norm (**-בִּ-**; see GKC, § 52 o). As it is a temporal phrase, I have opted to translate it as “when Yahweh began speaking through Hosea,” although its literal rendering is “the beginning of Yahweh speaking through Hosea.” Thus the ensuing narrative of 1:2b–9 constitutes Hosea’s call as prophet.

While 1:1 had **אֶל־הוֹשִׁיעַ**, with Hosea as the object of the preposition **אֶל**, here, in **בְּהוֹשִׁיעַ**, he is the object of the preposition **בְּ**. The former is what would be expected.

² Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 153–54.

The latter might be understood as the instrumental use of the preposition **בְּ**, indicating that the word not only comes “to” Hosea but also happens “through” him. This would indicate that Hosea is not the primary audience of the word he receives and the events he experiences but that he is the conduit or means by which these words and events are delivered to the primary audience. By comparison, Malachi opens with both prepositions being used: **בְּשֵׁן דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכֵי**, “the utterance of the Word of Yahweh to Israel *through* the hand of Malachi” (Mal 1:1).

Commentary

1:1 While there are common elements found within the introductory verse of prophetic texts, there is not a standard formula that is regularly used. Of the common elements within prophetic introductions, 1:1 employs four of those common elements: (1) identification of what is delivered, namely, the Word of Yahweh; (2) the prophet’s name, Hosea; (3) the prophet’s patronym, Beeri; and (4) the timeframe of his prophetic activity, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah and the reign of Jeroboam the son of Joash in Israel. Four other common elements are not found in 1:1: (5) the prophet’s hometown; (6) the subject matter of his prophecy; (7) a precise date rather than a timeframe of his prophetic activity and/or call; and (8) a reference to the prophet’s call (his call as prophet is found in 1:2–9, as noted in the textual note on 1:2a). While there is a variety among prophetic introductions, the four eighth-century writing prophets—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah—show a high degree of similarity, which may reflect a common prophetic introductory practice at that specific time. This prophetic introduction is found similarly in Lk 3:2, where the ministry of John the Baptist is introduced: “the Word of God came to John the son of Zechariah.” Thus John stands as a pivotal figure who is the last of the prophets of old who proclaimed the coming Messiah. John is the greatest prophet, as he proclaims the dawning of the kingdom of the heavens in Christ rather than promising that the kingdom would come (Lk 7:28).

As discussed in the first textual note on 1:1, “the Word of Yahweh” refers to far more than spoken or written utterances. The Hebrew noun **דְּבַר** can refer to a “thing” or an “action” as well as a “word.” Since the word/thing/action that came upon Hosea is from Yahweh, it can rightly be understood as a performative speech act—his Word does what it says.³ That Yahweh’s Word brings things into being will be prominently displayed at various points in Hosea’s prophecy. Most immediately, it will be seen in his declarations regarding the prophet’s wife and children, including the naming of the children (and the subsequent renaming of them). The performative nature of Yahweh’s Word flows from Genesis 1,

³ Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 315–19, points out that the phrase “the word of X” rose to prominence especially in the Neo-Assyrian period to authenticate a messenger as a representative of a higher authority. Thus, in its historical setting, the phrase “the Word of Yahweh” (**דְּבַר־יְהוָה**) underscores that the authority of this text is bound up not in the prophet but in Yahweh, who sent him.

where creation takes place by his speaking. The evangelist John proclaims that the performative Word of creation is none other than the Son of God (Jn 1:1–18). So also, as the Word comes to Hosea and then forth from him, it is none other than the Son of God who comes to and goes forth from Hosea. Christ’s Word is unequivocally a performative speech act, as by his Word the lame are healed, the dead are raised, and sins are forgiven. The performative power of the Word continues in Christ’s church in holy absolution, Holy Baptism, and the Supper as each delivers what it promises.

Just as the names of Hosea’s children bear significance, the prophet’s name does as well. As described in the first textual note on 1:1, the prophet’s name is derived from the Hebrew verb “to save” (יָשַׁע). Beyond the prophet’s name, that verb and its cognate noun will be used five times in this book (1:7 [twice]; 13:4, 10; 14:4 [ET 14:3]). Five occurrences hardly make it a dominating term/theme in the book. Yet its placement twice in the opening verses and then again in the closing verses of the book may grant it a framing function for the book, though not a dominant one. That Joshua the son of Nun is among the other persons who bear this name (see the first textual note on 1:1) has some significance. Hosea’s prophecy borrows heavily from Deuteronomy, in which Joshua plays a significant role. That Joshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) should also have been named Hosea (הוֹשֵׁעַ) is not terribly surprising, as both names have the same verbal root, “to save” (יָשַׁע). This prompts consideration of how the prophet Hosea is a type of Jesus, just as Joshua is a type of Jesus (“Jesus” being the Hellenized form of “Joshua”). The most apparent typological connection between Hosea and Jesus will be seen in Hosea’s marriage, which not only reveals the infidelity of Israel to Yahweh but also portends the marriage between Jesus and the church, his bride, whom he sanctifies (Eph 5:26), just as Hosea redeems his wife (Hos 3:2).

Hosea is a northern prophet, delivering the Word of Yahweh to the kingdom of Israel. Yet his prophetic activity is first described as taking place “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” Such attention is given to the timeframe of the southern kings likely because Hosea’s prophetic work was received not only in the Northern Kingdom but also in the Southern Kingdom. Since the Northern Kingdom would fall to the Assyrians within the timeframe of Hosea’s ministry (722 BC), it is probable that his prophetic words were preserved in the South as well. That the South would take note of Hosea’s prophecy is explained by his references to Judah (e.g., 1:7; 5:5, 10, 12; 6:4, 11) and even to the Davidic kingship (3:5), which itself is prophetic of Jesus, the Son of David, the true King of Israel. Even more, those in the South who cherish the Word of Yahweh would desire to preserve the faithful Word of his prophet, even if it had not contained explicit reference to Judah.

While four kings of Judah are mentioned as the timeframe of Hosea’s prophetic ministry, only one king of Israel is mentioned—“in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, the king of Israel.” This would be Jeroboam II, who reigned

793–753 BC.⁴ By comparison, the reigns of the kings of Judah—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—span 792 to 686 BC. Certainly, Hosea’s prophetic ministry did not last over a century. With Jeroboam II’s reign ending in 753 BC, the beginning of Hosea’s prophetic ministry can be estimated to be 755 BC. With Hezekiah’s reign beginning in 729 BC, Hosea’s prophetic ministry can be estimated to have ended sometime thereafter. This commentary will argue that portions of Hosea are best dated to the time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC (e.g., 13:12–14:1 [ET 13:12–16]). This approximate dating renders roughly a thirty-year prophetic ministry and allows for the possibility that Hosea survived until the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians in 722 BC. This also means Hosea’s ministry overlapped with Amos in the North and with Isaiah and Micah in the South.

This historical rendering prompts a significant question of why Hosea does not refer to the northern kings Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea, who ruled at the time of the southern kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.⁵ Two explanations are offered. First, Jeroboam is a descendent of Jehu (2 Kings 9–10). Jehu’s killing of Jezebel in Jezreel (2 Ki 9:30–37) is the background for the naming of Hosea’s first son in Hos 1:4. Thus the naming of Jeroboam in Hos 1:1, apart from any other northern kings, prepares the informed reader for the significance of the child’s name. A second explanation centers on the chaos that followed the death of Jeroboam in 753 BC. In the ensuing thirty years that culminated in the fall of Israel to the Assyrians, six different kings claimed the throne. Zechariah’s reign would last some six months before he was murdered by Shallum, who set himself on the throne only to be subsequently murdered a month later by Menahem, who would reign for eight years. Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah, who was promptly murdered by Pekah, whose twenty-year reign was full of turmoil as he trusted in alliances with other threatened nations in a vain attempt to ward off the menace of Assyria. He entered an alliance with Syria and pressured Judah to join as well. This move sealed Israel’s fate, as it would soon be steamrolled by Assyria. The final king of Israel, Hoshea, did not learn the lesson, as he futilely looked to Egypt for help against Assyria. All this international intrigue serves as the background for Hosea’s prophetic utterances. Yet the hapless kings who followed Jeroboam may not be mentioned simply because they were so inept that they were deemed not worthy of being mentioned by name. Indeed, Hosea will regularly speak of the failure of Israel’s kings throughout his prophetic corpus.

1:2a It seems odd for this initial section to end with a temporal phrase: “when Yahweh began speaking through Hosea.” The Masoretic scribes marked 1:1 as a verse by itself and then, after this initial temporal phrase in 1:2, left

⁴ In 1–2 Kings, Jeroboam II is the “Jeroboam” first introduced in 2 Ki 13:13, whereas previous “Jeroboam” references were to Jeroboam I.

⁵ For the northern kings during the ministry of Hosea, see further the start of the commentary on 7:1–12.

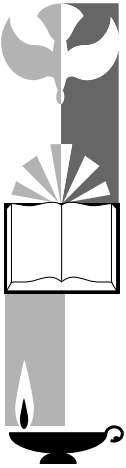
the rest of the line blank or open. Printed editions such as *BHS* and *BHQ* indicate this by placing a ¶ as a so-called “open paragraph” marker. This temporal phrase may be best understood as serving a similar purpose to 1:1—it is introductory for what follows but in a more limited capacity. Whereas 1:1 introduces the whole of the book, 1:2a introduces the initial section of the book, namely 1:2b–9. Furthermore, since this is the “beginning” of Yahweh speaking through Hosea, the rest of chapter 1 should be understood as Hosea’s prophetic call.

Theological Application

The Word of Yahweh comes with specificity. It is specifically the Word of Yahweh, not the word of Baal or another false god. It is specifically delivered by his prophet, who speaks not on his own authority but by the authority of Yahweh, whose Word he delivers. The Word is delivered in a specific context during the reign of specific kings within the specific kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Therefore, this specific Word of Yahweh calls to repentance specific people for specific sins. And this specific Word of Yahweh delivers hope by means of the specific Gospel that recalls Yahweh’s saving work in the exodus and anticipates his greater saving work in Christ, which will find its consummation on a specific day at the return of Christ.

While the Word of Yahweh is specific, it is also universal. Though it speaks to a specific historical context and will be properly understood only within that context, its message is applicable to people of all times and contexts. As the Word of Yahweh includes Yahweh’s actions, so this Word delivered by Hosea for eight-century BC Israel and Judah continues to work today, bringing about that which Yahweh desires, including the repentance of Yahweh’s people today and his subsequent restoration of the penitent.

This specific Word of Yahweh is delivered through a specific prophet whom Yahweh called to be his instrument. Though the family dynamics which Hosea will endure most certainly would have had a mighty impact upon him personally, ultimately the dynamic Word of Yahweh was for his people, even as that dynamic Word had its way with Hosea. So today, the dynamic Word of Yahweh is delivered through a specific pastor whom he calls to be his instrument in a specific place. That Word will certainly have an impact upon the pastor himself, but it is ultimately for the people of Yahweh in that place and time.



Yahweh’s Family: Future Hope and Present Judgment

Translation

- 2 ¹The numbering will be
of the sons of Israel
like the sand of the sea,
which cannot be numbered
and cannot be counted,
and it will come to pass in the place
where they were called
“you are Not My People,”
they will be called
“the sons of the living God.”
- ²And the sons of Judah will gather
and the sons of Israel together,
and they will appoint for themselves
one head,
and they will go up from the land.
How great is the day of Jezreel!
- ³Call your brothers “My People”
and your sisters “Compassion.”
- ⁴Contend against your mother! Contend!
For she is not my wife,
and I myself am not her husband.
Let her remove her whoring from her face
and her adultery from between her breasts,
⁵lest I strip her naked
and I exhibit her as on the day of her birth
and I set her as the wilderness
and I put her as a land of drought
and I kill her with thirst.
- ⁶And to her sons, I will not show mercy,
for whoring sons they are.
- ⁷How whorish was their mother,
[how] shameful she who conceived them,
for she said, “I will go
after my lovers,

who have given me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax,
my oil and my drink.”

⁸Therefore, behold, I will hedge
your way with thorns,
and I will wall in with a wall against her
so that her paths she cannot find.

⁹When she pursues her lovers,
she will not overtake them;
when she seeks them, she will not find them.
Then she will say, “I will go
and return to my husband, the first one,
for it was better for me then than now.”

¹⁰But she did not know
that I myself gave her
the grain and the new wine and the fresh oil
and that I increased her silver,
and the gold they made into Baal.

¹¹Therefore, I will turn, and I will take
my grain in its time
and my new wine in its season,
and I will snatch away my wool and my flax
that [I gave] to cover her nakedness.

¹²And now I will reveal her folly
to the eyes of her lovers,
and a husband will not deliver her from my hand.

¹³And I will cause to end all her exultation,
her feasts, her new moons, and her Sabbaths,
and all her assemblies.

¹⁴And I will ravage her vines and her fig trees,
of which she said,

“Wages they are for me,
which my lovers gave to me.”

And I will set them for thicket,
and the wild animals of the field will devour them.

¹⁵And I will visit upon her the days of the baals
to which she kept burning sacrifices
and adorns herself with her nose ring and her necklaces
that she might go after her lovers,
but me she forgot.

The oracle of Yahweh.

Textual Notes

The Masoretes rightly mark 2:1–15 (ET 1:10–2:13) as a new paragraph.¹ A distinct shift has taken place from the past-time narrative report of Yahweh speaking to the prophet in 1:2–9 to the prophetic future oracle of this section. Thus perfect *waw* consecutive verbs² with future time sense drive the main discourse of this section rather than imperfect *waw* consecutive verbs with a past time sense, which served in that capacity in chapter 1.

2:1 (ET 1:10) וְהָיָה מִסְפֵּר בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחֹל הַיָּם—In this context, וְהָיָה is not as pregnant with eschatological weight as it is in the clause וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא,³ yet it does signal an eschatological shift for 2:1–3 (ET 1:10–2:1).⁴ The phrase בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל (in the construct chain מִסְפֵּר בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל) serves as a genitive of measure (see Waltke-O'Connor, § 9.5.3f). “Like the sand of the sea” is a hyperbolic simile.⁵ Such hyperbolic similes and similar expressions are used to describe the number of God’s people also in Gen 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 22:17; 26:4; 32:13 (ET 32:12); Heb 11:12; Rev 7:9, though the specific phrase הַיָּם כְּחֹל is found only here and in Gen 32:13 (ET 32:12); 41:49; Is 10:22.

וְאָשֶׁר לֹא יִמָּד וְלֹא יִסְפָּר—The verbs יִמָּד (Niphal imperfect third masculine singular of מָדַד) and יִסְפָּר (Niphal imperfect third masculine singular of סָפַר) are examples of the frequentive imperfect, which describes actions that are general in occurrence, independent of time (see Davidson, § 44 a). They are also examples of the Niphal *tolerativum* that “express actions which the subject allows to happen to himself” (GKC, § 51 c). Here each is negated by a לֹא.

וְהָיָה בְּמִקְוֵם אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר לָהֶם לֹא עָמְי אֲתֵם—Regarding בְּמִקְוֵם אֲשֶׁר, Holmstedt points out that מִקְוֵם is in bound/construct form, which indicates that the following relative clause has a restrictive sense so that it is supplying crucial information that distinguishes this מִקְוֵם in comparison to other places (see GKC, § 130 c).⁶

וְיֹאמַר לָהֶם בְּגִי אֵלֵיהֶם—The verb יֹאמַר is Niphal imperfect third masculine singular of אָמַר. The combination of the Niphal of אָמַר with the suffixed preposition לְ is woodenly translated as “it will be said to them,” but the idiom is more smoothly rendered as “they will be called.”

2:2 (ET 1:11) וְנִקְבְּצוּ בְּגִי יְהוּדָה וּבְגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַחְדָּו—Generally in Biblical Hebrew, the Niphal has taken over the passive voice from the Qal passive, though the Niphal is properly reflexive. In this verse, there is no agent for the Niphal verb וְנִקְבְּצוּ, which is a perfect *waw* consecutive third common plural of קָבַץ. Thus this is the reflexive use of the Niphal. Notice the chiasmic structure of this bicolon on the pattern of ABB'A', in

¹ In Leningradensis, 2:1 (ET 1:10) begins on a new, indented line, and the division is marked in *BHS* and *BHQ* by a ¶ at the end of 1:9. In Leningradensis, after the end of 2:15 (ET 2:13), the rest of the line is left blank, which is reflected by the ¶ there in *BHS* and *BHQ*.

² Macintosh, *Hosea*, 30, contends that the וְהָיָה that introduces this section “implies transition from the preceding prophecy of judgment to a prophecy of recapitulation.”

³ See the first textual note and the commentary on 1:5.

⁴ Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 201.

⁵ Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 318.

⁶ Holmstedt, *The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew*, 205, 211.

which the outer elements (A and A') express unity by means of a verb (וְיִקְבְּצוּ) and then an adverb (וְיִתְקַדְּמוּ) and the inner elements (B and B') are parallel construct phrases designating groups of people (בְּנֵי־יְהוּדָה and then בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל).

וְשָׂמוּ לָהֶם רֹאשׁ אֶחָד וְעָלוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ—The verb שָׂמוּ (here as a Qal *waw* consecutive third common plural) takes the object רֹאשׁ to indicate the appointment of leadership (see Deut 1:13; Judg 11:11; Ps 18:44 [ET 18:43]; 1 Chr 26:10). לָהֶם is an example of the preposition לְ expressing the dative of advantage. וְעָלוּ is a Qal perfect *waw* consecutive third common plural of עָלָה. The wording may allude to a new exodus (see בָּאָרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם in Hos 2:17 [ET 2:15]; cf. Ex 1:10; cf. also, e.g., Gen 50:24; Ex 3:8; 13:18). Alternatively, an agricultural metaphor may be intended here, and עָלָה can have the sense “spring up, grow, of vegetation” (*DCH*, Qal, 4); see the commentary.

כִּי נִדְוַל יוֹם יוֹרְעָאֵל—Andersen and Freedman argue that there is not a logical connection to give rise to a causal use of כִּי. Thus they contend that כִּי intensifies the predicative adjective נִדְוַל (the so-called asseverative כִּי), which is reflected in the translation by the adverb “how.”⁷

2:3 (ET 2:1) אֲמַרוּ לְאֶחְיֵיכֶם עִמִּי וְלְאֶחְזֵיכֶם רְחֻמָּה—This verse commences with the Qal imperative masculine plural of אָמַר followed by two objects, each marked by the preposition לְ. This is distinct from the naming formula for the three children of Hosea and Gomer in chapter 1, which used the verb קָרָא with the object שָׁם. The change in formula is indicative of the renaming that is being promised. The parallel poetic structure from the first colon of this verse to the second is crisp with the verb אֲמַרוּ serving both cola.

2:4 (ET 2:2) רִיבוּ בְּאֶמְכֶם רִיבוּ—The Qal imperative masculine plural רִיבוּ ties this verse to the preceding verse, which also begins with an imperative masculine plural (אֲמַרוּ), though there is a distinct shift from promise there to contention here. The verb רִיב typically takes the preposition עִם to indicate that the contention is bilateral. Here it takes the preposition בְּ to underscore that it is unilateral (cf. Gen 31:36; Judg 6:32);⁸ see the commentary. The intensity of this unilateral contention is found in the repetition of the imperative at the opening and closing for this first colon of the tricolon that begins this verse.

כִּי־הִיא לֹא אֲשֵׁתִי וְאֶנְכִּי לֹא אִשָּׁה—The rationale for children contending against their mother is introduced by the כִּי that begins the second colon of the tricolon. The rest of the second colon and the third colon are parallel to each other in structure (personal pronoun—negative particle—noun with pronominal suffix) and meaning.

וְתָסַר וְנִתְּנָהּ מִפְּנֵיהָ וְנִאֲפֹפֶיהָ מִבֵּין שְׂדֵיהָ—The form וְתָסַר is a Hiphil jussive third feminine singular of סָוַר (in the Hiphil, the jussive is distinguished by *tsere* replacing the *hireq yod* of the Hiphil imperfect, which would be וְתָסִיר). The *waw* is affixed to indicate purpose for the preceding repeated imperative that calls upon the children to “contend” with their mother. Much as the previous line had parallel structure in the second and third cola, this line has parallel structure between the two cola as the initial

⁷ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 209–10; Tully, *Hosea*, 34.

⁸ Tully, *Hosea*, 37.

verb, וְהִטָּר, is shared between them. The remainder of the first colon and the second have the parallel structure of a suffixed direct object followed by a prepositional phrase introduced by מִן. Leningradensis has the anomalous מִפְּנֵיהֶּ, but other Masoretic manuscripts point the word with the usual form of the third feminine singular suffix, מִפְּנֵיהָ, “from *her* face” (see the *BHQ* apparatus). נָאֵרָה, “commit adultery,” appears in 3:1; 4:2, 13, 14; 7:4, though the derived noun here, נֶאֱבָרָה, is a hapax legomenon.

2:5 (ET 2:3) פָּן־אֶפְשִׁיטָנָה עֲרֻמָּה—The form אֶפְשִׁיטָנָה is a Hiphil imperfect first common singular of פָּשַׁט with a third feminine singular pronominal suffix along with energetic *nun*. In the Hiphil, this verb often connotes theft (Gen 37:23; 1 Sam 31:9; Job 22:6) or that clothes have been taken in judgment (Num 20:26; Ezek 23:26). Thus Tully contends that the focus is upon taking her clothes in judgment rather than on exposing her nakedness.⁹

וְהִצַּגְתִּיהָ כְּיוֹם הַהִלָּדָה—Following on the imperfect that begins the verse, אֶפְשִׁיטָנָה, are four perfect *waw* consecutive verbs (see Davidson, § 53 c), each first common singular. The first, וְהִצַּגְתִּיהָ, is a Hiphil of יָצַג with a third feminine singular pronominal suffix. יָצַג appears only in the Hiphil (“to set”; here “to exhibit”) and once in the Hophal, and though it is a first-*yod* verb, it acts like a first-*nun* with the initial *yod* assimilated and marked by a *daghesh* in the first remaining root letter (-צ-). For the translation of the preposition on כְּיוֹם, “as on,” see the third textual note on 2:17 (ET 2:15), where again it is followed by an infinitive construct. הַהִלָּדָה is the Niphal infinitive construct of יָלַד with a third feminine singular suffix, the Niphal being used passively.

וְשָׂמְתִיהָ כַּמְדָּבָר וְשִׂתְהָ כְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה וְהַחֲמִיתָהּ בַּצָּמָא:—Three more perfect *waw* consecutive verbs follow the initial imperfect (Davidson, § 53 c), each first common singular, of שָׂם, שָׂתָה, and חָמַת, respectively (the first two being Qal, the third being Hiphil). וְשָׂמְתִיהָ contains unusual vowel pointing for a Hiphil, a phenomenon which is common to חָמַת elsewhere (GKC, § 72 w). In each of the three clauses, the verb has a pronominal suffix as its (accusative) direct object, followed by a prepositional phrase rather than a second accusative (see Joüon, § 125 w, note 2). This is a normal construction with the verb שָׂתָה, which regularly has the second object prefixed with the preposition כִּי. Note also that וְשִׂתְהָ is a defective spelling (for וְשִׂתְהָה), with the *yod* missing from the first common singular perfect. וְהַחֲמִיתָהּ is also a defective spelling as the infixed *yod* of the Hiphil (present in וְהַחֲמִיתִיו in 1 Sam 17:35) is missing (as also in וְהַחֲמִיתִי in Hos 9:16).

The use of the article in comparisons fluctuates: it is present in the first comparison, כַּמְדָּבָר, but absent in the second, כְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה (see Davidson, § 22, Rem. 2).

2:6 (ET 2:4) וְאֵת־בְּנֵיהָ לֹא אָרַחֵם כִּי־בָנִי וְזוּנִים הֵמָּה:—Whereas the direct object marker was absent in the preceding verse, its use here is surprising (due to the general aversion toward the use of the direct object marker in Hebrew poetry). אָרַחֵם is the Piel imperfect first common singular of אָרַח, a verb of significance in Hosea, occurring also in 1:6, 7; 2:25 (ET 2:23); 14:4 (ET 14:3). In each instance of active forms, Yahweh is the subject of the verb, and for the passive form in 14:4 (ET 14:3), he is the agent (cf.

⁹ Tully, *Hosea*, 38.

1:6, 8; 2:3 [ET 2:1]). כִּי introduces the cause of Yahweh not being compassionate; the cause is delivered in the verbless sentence created by predicate position pronoun הִמָּה.

2:7 (ET 2:5) כִּי וְנָתְתָה אִמָּם הַבְּיָשָׁה הַזֹּרְתָם—This is another asseverative use of כִּי (see third textual note on 2:2 [ET 1:11]). וְנָתְתָה, “to whore,” first occurred twice in 1:2; it is found also in 3:3; 4:10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18; 5:3; 9:1. Here it is Qal perfect third feminine singular. הַבְּיָשָׁה is Hiphil perfect third feminine singular of בָּיַשׁ. In the Hiphil, the verb can be transitive (“put to shame”) or intransitive (“act shamefully”), the latter being the case here. הַזֹּרְתָם is Qal participle feminine singular of זָרָה (1:3, 6, 8) with a third masculine plural pronominal suffix: “she who conceives them.” While it is a parallel restatement of אִמָּם, “their mother,” the rhetorical thrust intensifies the children’s association with her shame and thus can explain how they are “whoring children” in 1:2.

כִּי אָמַרְתָּ אֵלֶיךָ אֲחָרַי מְאַהֲבָי—The verb אָמַרְתָּ is the Qal perfect third feminine singular of אָמַר and is marked by the *rebia* accent, as it introduces direct discourse. That direct discourse begins with the Qal cohortative first common singular of הָלַךְ. While אֵלֶיךָ is cohortative in form, both here and in 2:9 (ET 2:7), it has the force not of an invitation but of a purposed decision: “I will go” (see Joüon, § 114 c; Davidson, § 62). The plural number of the Piel participle masculine plural with the first singular pronominal suffix, מְאַהֲבָי, “lovers,” indicates promiscuity with multiple paramours and aligns well with the plurals “baals” (2:15, 19 [ET 2:13, 17]) and “idols” (4:17).

לְחֹמֶי וּמִיָּמַי צְמֹרִי וּפְשֻׁתֵי שְׂמֹנִי וְשִׁקְוִי—The Qal participle לְחֹמֶי (masculine plural) is parallel to מְאַהֲבָי, as it restates the “lovers” as “the ones giving.” The construct form of the participle is employed as a common means to indicate that the genitive items are the object of the participle, that is, these are “the givers of . . .” (see Davidson, § 98 b; Waltke-O’Connor, § 37.3c). The list of items given, לְחֹמֶי וּמִיָּמַי צְמֹרִי וּפְשֻׁתֵי שְׂמֹנִי וְשִׁקְוִי, is a rare example in which the phrasal ׀ is distributed irregularly throughout the series. More commonly, ׀ is used for each item in a series, as in 2:10 (ET 2:8). Though not as frequently, it may also be appended only to the final item in the series, similar to common English usage and as seen in 2:13 (ET 2:11). For more on the phrasal ׀, see Waltke-O’Connor, § 39.2.1b; MNK, §§ 31.1.ii.c; 40.8.i.a. פְּשֻׁתָּה, “flax,” is “a fiber plant utilized in making linen. It is an annual, two or three feet high, with beautiful blue flowers; it grows on the coastal plain and in the Jordan Valley. . . . Of the two materials for clothing mentioned here, each has a different source: the wool is pastoral, the flax agricultural.”¹⁰ The noun שִׁקְוִי, “a drink,” is related to the verb שָׁקַח, “to give to drink” in the Hiphil, and it occurs in only two other places (Ps 102:10 [ET 102:9]; Prov 3:8).

2:8 (ET 2:6) לִבְנֵי הַנְּנִי־שֶׁךְ אֶת־דֶּרֶךְךָ בְּסִיָּרִים—The participle שֶׁךְ is the Qal masculine singular of שָׁךְ, which is used only here and in Job 1:10, where it has positive connotation. The homonym שָׁךְ of the same meaning is found in Job 3:23; 38:8. The participle is in predicate position to the first singular pronominal suffix of הַנְּנִי. The construction הִנֵּה with a pronominal suffix (or a pronoun, as in 2:16 [ET 2:14]) and a participle expresses an imminent future action (GKC, § 116 p). The instrumental ׀ is affixed to

¹⁰ King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 124.

the plural of **סִירָה**, a noun that is found only four other times in the OT (Is 34:13; Amos 4:2; Nah 1:10; Eccl 7:6). For its meaning, see the next textual note.

וַתִּבְנוֹתֶיהָ לֹא תִמְצָא:—The Qal perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of **בָּנָה** takes its cognate noun as a direct object; the same verb and cognate noun direct object occurs in Ezek 13:5; 22:30. **גִּדְרָהּ** is literally “her wall,” but the sense of the pronominal suffix can be more than simple possession so that it may be rendered as “against her” (cf. Davidson, § 3, Rem. 2). The **וַ** on **וַתִּבְנוֹתֶיהָ** is indicative of a result clause and is translated accordingly. The fronting of the direct object **וַתִּבְנוֹתֶיהָ** in this final colon of the verse highlights this result all the more.

This verse may refer to the pathways of terraced slopes being obscured by thorns and new walls. *Sirim* are low shrubs of the rose family, used for fuel and fencing. This multi-branched shrub, one to two feet high, is the most common of its kind in Israel, especially in Jerusalem. Zohary describes this dwarf shrub as a “thorny burnet.” *Gader* designates a fence built of stones, or stones and plants. Today, vineyards are still protected with stone fences topped with thorny shrubs.¹¹

2:9 (ET 2:7) וַיִּרְדַּפּהּ אֶת־מִזְבְּחֶיהָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׁיג אֹתָם:—The verb **וַיִּרְדַּפּהּ** is a Piel perfect *waw* consecutive third feminine singular. **רָדַף** seldom occurs in the Piel (also Nah 1:8; Prov 11:19; 12:11; 13:21; 15:9; 19:7; 28:19; Pual in Is 17:13). Thus BDB grants an intensive meaning “pursue ardently” for such. **תִּשָּׁיג** is a Hiphil imperfect third feminine singular of **נָשַׁג**. The appearance of the direct object marker twice in this one line is striking in Hebrew poetry.

וּבִקְשָׁתָם וְלֹא תִמְצָא:—This sequence demonstrates the common practice of the perfect *waw* consecutive (in this instance, Piel third feminine singular of **בָּקַשׁ** with a third masculine plural pronominal suffix) being followed by the imperfect (in this instance, the Qal third feminine singular of **בָּצָא**) with the particle of negation taking the *waw* (see Davidson, § 52).

וְאֶמְרָה אֲלֶיהָ:—For the force of the cohortative **אֲלֶיהָ**, see the second textual note on 2:7 (ET 2:5). Indeed, **וְאֶמְרָה אֲלֶיהָ** is repeated from 2:7 (ET 2:5), yet the sense has changed significantly, as whom she goes after has changed.

וְאִשׁוּבָהּ אֶל־אִשִּׁי הָרִאשׁוֹן:—The Qal cohortative singular **אִשׁוּבָהּ** is from **שׁוּב**, which is the language of repentance in Hosea (2:11 [ET 2:9]; 3:5; 4:9; 5:4; 6:1; 7:10; 14:2, 3, 5, 8 [ET 14:1, 2, 4, 7]).

כִּי טוֹב לִי אִזְ מִעֲתָה:—The combination of the adjective **טוֹב** with the prepositional phrase **מִן** is an example of the comparative use of **מִן**.

2:10 (ET 2:8) וְהִיא לֹא יִדְעָה כִּי אֲנֹכִי נִתְתִּי לָהּ:—Not only is **הִיא** emphatic by virtue of its occurring first in this verse, but “she” is also emphatic due to the redundant identification of the subject that is already signified by the form of **יִדְעָה** (Qal perfect third feminine singular of **יָדַע**). This doubly emphatic use of the pronoun in the first colon of this tricolon is echoed in the second colon, where **אֲנֹכִי** is fronted, while teaming with **נִתְתִּי** (Qal perfect first common singular of **נָתַתִּי**).

¹¹ King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 123.

הַרְגֵן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֶּהוּדָה—For the use of the phrasal ׀ in the serial list of “the grain and the new wine and the fresh oil,” see the third textual note on 2:7 (ET 2:5).

וְנָסַף הַרְבֵּיתִי לָהּ וְזָהָב עָשׂוּ לְבַעַל:—The Hiphil perfect first common singular וְנָסַף is from רָבָה. The parallel prepositional phrases לָהּ, “for her,” and לְבַעַל, “for Baal,” strikes a contrast between Yahweh, who provides abundantly for his people, and Baal, whose followers are to provide for him.

2:11 (ET 2:9) לִכְנֹן אָשׁוּב וְלִקְחֹתִי דָגְנִי בְעֵתוֹ וְתִירוֹשִׁי בְמוֹעֶדוֹ—Though not particularly common, it is not odd to have the coordinate use of an imperfect (here Qal first common singular of שׁוּב) with a perfect *waw* consecutive (here Qal first common singular of לָקַח), as is the case with אָשׁוּב וְלִקְחֹתִי (see Davidson, § 83; GKC, § 120 e). Further attention ought to be given to the verb אָשׁוּב. Both שׁוּב and נָסַף can be used adverbially, and שׁוּב is a counterpart to נָסַף, in that both express repetition, שׁוּב in movement opposite of what was previously taken, and נָסַף in movement continuing what was previously taken, perhaps even augmenting it (cf. Joüon, § 177 b–c). The first singular pronominal suffixes on both דָגְנִי, “my grain,” and תִּירוֹשִׁי, “my wine,” emphasize Yahweh’s ownership of that which he entrusts to his people.

וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶת-עֲרוֹתָהּ:—The form וְהִצַּלְתִּי is a Hiphil perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of הִצִּיל. The sense of “snatch away” here is found elsewhere (Gen 31:9, 16; 2 Sam 20:6; Ps 119:43), but it is far more common for the Hiphil of this verb to bear the sense of “deliver, rescue,” as it does in the next verse (2:12 [ET 2:10]) and in its only other occurrence in Hosea (5:14). It also has that sense in Deuteronomy, upon which Hosea heavily relies (Deut 23:15 [ET 23:14]; 25:11; 32:39). Thus the usage here is pointed and particularly condemning.

In 2:7 (ET 2:5), she had supposed that it was her lovers who gave her “wool” and “flax,” but Yahweh rebuked this notion in 2:10 (ET 2:8): he is the true giver. The infinitive construct with לְ here, לְכַסּוֹת, expresses purpose (Joüon, § 124 l): Yahweh had given her his wool and flax “to cover her nakedness.”

2:12 (ET 2:10) וְעַתָּה אֲגַלֶּה אֶת-נִבְלָתָהּ לְעֵינֵי מְאֻדְבֵּיהָ—The temporal adverb (with ׀) וְעַתָּה marks “a shift in argumentative tack with a continuity in subject and reference” (Waltke-O’Connor, § 39.3.4f). Hosea uses it to draw attention to something alluded to previously (see also 5:3; 10:3; 13:2). אֲגַלֶּה is a Piel imperfect first common singular of גָּלָה. When גָּלָה appears in the Piel, “to uncover, expose,” with “nakedness” (עֲרֹוֹת) as the direct object, it can mean “have illicit sexual relations with”—relations that Yahweh prohibits (e.g., Lev 18:6–19; 20:11–21; Ezek 22:10). With an ironic twist based on context, here Yahweh is the subject of the Piel (as in Ezek 16:37; Nah 3:5) and the object is נִבְלָוֹת, expressing a reproach. The feminine noun נִבְלָוֹת is a hapax legomenon and thus naturally prompts varying understanding. Some have understood it to refer to the genitals,¹² based upon the appearance of עֲרֹוֹת in the preceding verse. *HALOT* understands its root as the verb נָבַל, “to be foolish.” Thus others¹³ have understood it to

¹² Wolff, *Hosea*, 37–38.

¹³ Macintosh, *Hosea*, 59–60; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 248–49.

describe the exposure of foolish and shameful decisions/actions which have been a concern since 2:4 (ET 2:2) regarding who best gives her what she desires.

וְאִישׁ לֹא יִצִּילֶנָּה בְּיָדָיו:—Tully contends that אִישׁ is being used impersonally in conjunction with לֹא for a rendering of “no one.”¹⁴ Similarly, Davidson, § 11, Rem. 1 b, describes this clause as a pronominal expression capturing the totality of those included. In this instance with לֹא, it is the totality of those who are not included, as no man will be able to deliver. While such a reading is quite defensible, the context of marital fidelity/infidelity prompts אִישׁ to be understood as “husband.” יִצִּילֶנָּה is a Hiphil imperfect third masculine singular of יָצַל with a third feminine singular pronominal suffix and an energetic *nun*. This is a rhetorical reuse of the Hiphil of יָצַל from the preceding verse so that while Yahweh promised to “snatch away” the wool and flax he gave to cover her, thereby revealing her nakedness, now there is none who can “deliver” Israel from Yahweh’s judgment.

2:13 (ET 2:11) וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי כָּל־מְשׁוֹשָׁה חֲגֻה חֲדָשָׁה וְשַׁבָּתָהּ וְכָל מוֹעֲדָהּ:—The verb וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי is a Hiphil perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of שָׁבַת. There is an ironic thrust to Yahweh’s proclamation that he will bring about a sabbath from Israel’s Sabbaths. Regarding the use of the phrasal ׀ in “her feasts, her new moons, and her Sabbaths,” see the third textual note on 2:7 (ET 2:5). “Such triple synonyms can also function as expletives, filling out the line.”¹⁵ The combination of feasts, Sabbaths, and new moons is also found in Is 1:13–14; Ezek 45:17; Neh 10:34 (ET 10:33); 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:3 (ET 2:4); 8:13; 31:3.

2:14 (ET 2:12) וְהִשְׁמַתִּי גִפְנֵיהָ וְהִתְאַנְתָּה אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָה—The Hiphil verb וְהִשְׁמַתִּי is a perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of שָׁמַת; this is the sole occurrence of this verb in Hosea. One would expect a preposition with a resumptive pronoun to appear in the phrase אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָה עֲלֵיהֶם, i.e., “which she said about them [the vines and fig trees].” That it is missing in this instance is not surprising as that is often the case with the verb אָבַר (cf. Davidson, § 10, Rem. 2; Joüon, § 158 i (1)).

אֶתְנָהּ הַמֶּדֶה לִּי אֲשֶׁר נִתְּנִי לִי מֵאֲהָבָה:—The noun אֶתְנָהּ is a hapax legomenon and is fronted for emphasis. Wolff suggests that the term may be coined as a wordplay on הִתְאַנְתָּה and נִתְּנִי in the verse.¹⁶ The similar noun אֶתְנָן, “the fee of a prostitute,” will appear in 9:1. Tully suggests that Hosea may have chosen to not use אֶתְנָן here since the imagery is not of technical prostitution.¹⁷

וְשָׁמְתִים לְיַעַר וְאֶקְלְתֶם חֵיַת הַשָּׂדֶה:—The verb וְשָׁמְתִים is a Qal perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of שָׁמַת with a third masculine plural pronominal suffix. This common verb serves as a sound play with וְהִשְׁמַתִּי at the start of the verse. יַעַר appears in the prophets as a harsh desert area (Is 21:13) and as a place that was once cultivated but is now neglected and thus covered with briars and thorns (Is 29:17; 32:15; Jer 5:6; Micah 3:12). The vowel pointing and accentuation of וְאֶקְלְתֶם (Qal perfect *waw* consecutive

¹⁴ Tully, *Hosea*, 50.

¹⁵ Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 174.

¹⁶ Wolff, *Hosea*, 38.

¹⁷ Tully, *Hosea*, 52.

third feminine singular with a third masculine plural suffix) is slightly askew of normal usage as explained by GKC, § 59 g.

2:15 (ET 2:13) וּפְקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ אֶת־יְמֵי הַבְּעָלִים אֲשֶׁר תִּקְטִיר לָהֶם—The Qal וּפְקַדְתִּי is a perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of פָּקַד; see the fourth textual note on 1:4 regarding the usage of this verb, which appears also in 4:9, 14; 8:13; 9:9; 12:3 (ET 12:2).

When the relative pronoun (אֲשֶׁר) appears with a resumptive pronoun (on לָהֶם) following an expression of time (אֶת־יְמֵי הַבְּעָלִים), the relative pronoun may be translated as “when” (cf. Davidson, § 145). Yet the translation above (“to which”) argues that the relative pronoun refers back to the baals. תִּקְטִיר is Hiphil imperfect third feminine singular of קָטַר; this verb will appear again in 4:13; 11:2. The verb is common but is not commonly used regarding the worship of other gods, as is the case in its three occurrences in Hosea as well as in 1 Ki 11:8; Jer 48:35; 2 Chr 34:25. This occurrence is a rare case of the imperfect expressing past frequentative action (Joüon, § 118 n).

וַתַּעַד וְחִלְתָּה וַתִּלְבָּד אֶחָדִי אֶחָדִי מֵאֲהַבֶּיהָ—A pair of imperfect *waw* consecutive verbs (the first to appear since 1:9) marks the close of this section. The first, וַתַּעַד (a Qal imperfect *waw* consecutive third feminine singular of עָדָה), follows the pattern of a Qal verb for putting on (or taking off) that takes an accusative object (see Davidson, § 73, Rem. 3). The subject, “she,” is the person who adorns herself with two suffixed objects (וְחִלְתָּה וַתִּלְבָּד). The noun חִלְתָּה is a hapax legomenon. The second verb, the Qal imperfect *waw* consecutive third feminine singular of לָבַד, recalls the cohortatives of the same root in 2:7, 9 (ET 2:5, 7).

וְאֵתִי שָׂכַחָה—The direct object marker is not always used when standard Hebrew word order (verb-subject-object) is utilized. However, when the object precedes the verb, then the direct object marker is used (Davidson, § 72, Rem. 1), which explains its presence here, even in Hebrew poetry. וְאֵתִי is fronted to bring it into contrast with מֵאֲהַבֶּיהָ, which immediately precedes. In contrast with the preceding pair of imperfect *waw* consecutive verbs, שָׂכַחָה is Qal perfect third feminine singular, thus marking it as a summary. The verb שָׂכַח will recur in 4:6; 8:14; 13:6.

נְאֻמֵּי־יְהוָה—This phrase further marks the close of the section. It recurs in 2:18, 23 (ET 2:16, 21), where it marks the beginning of discrete sections, and then at the conclusion of 11:11, where it marks the close of a section, as it does here. The noun נְאֻמֵּי, “utterance,” occurs 376 times in the OT, though its denominative verb, נָאֵם, “utter a prophecy,” occurs only once (Jer 23:31). The prophets regularly use נְאֻמֵּי to underscore the certainty of a matter, for that which Yahweh has spoken he will do.

Commentary

While 1:2b–9 focused upon Hosea’s family, attention now turns to Yahweh’s family. As Hosea’s family is a picture of Yahweh’s, it can be challenging to distinguish between what describes Hosea’s family and what describes Yahweh’s. It is proper and fruitful to hear the prophet’s words as describing both simultaneously. One key distinction, however, should be noted: while Hosea’s wife and children are distinct persons, Yahweh’s wife and children are one and the same. Some distinction could potentially be drawn between the leaders of Israel

(kings, priests, and prophets) as the “mother” against whom the children cry out in 2:4 (ET 2:2). This potential distinction receives some credence from 4:4–6, which speaks of priests and prophets with the distinction of mother and sons. Yet this distinction quickly becomes muddled. When Yahweh speaks of his wife, the whole of Israel is referenced. When Yahweh speaks of his children, the whole of Israel is referenced.

Hos 2:1–15 (ET 1:10–2:13) consists of eschatological promise (2:1–3 [ET 1:10–2:1]),¹⁸ accusation (2:4–10 [ET 2:2–8]), and temporal consequences (2:11–15 [ET 2:9–13]). The historical setting is quite possibly in the days following Tiglath-pileser III taking the Jezreel Valley and setting up his base in Megiddo along with the initial deportation of Israelite leaders in 733 BC. Thus this eschatological promise (2:1–3 [ET 1:10–2:1]) comes in the face of the great oppression and suffering that embodies the consequences proclaimed in 2:11–15 (ET 2:9–13). The reason that Yahweh has allowed Assyria to overrun Israel is explained by 2:4–10 (ET 2:2–8).

2:1 (ET 1:10) Hosea shifts to speaking of “the sons of Israel” rather than “the house of Israel” (1:4, 6) or “the house of Judah” (1:7). This is an inclusive shift, as the sons of Israel would include both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. This inclusivity is full of Gospel promise, for they will be numbered as the sand, an expression that bespeaks abundance.¹⁹ An abundance like the sand of the sea can be condemning (Jer 15:8), but it is commonly used positively. In Hos 2:1 (ET 1:10), it is fully positive and purposefully recalls Yahweh’s promise to Abraham in Gen 22:17, the fulfillment of which is also highlighted in Jer 33:22. Just as Hosea promises the restoration of Yahweh’s people even as the Northern Kingdom faces overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, Jeremiah promises the restoration of Yahweh’s people even as the Southern Kingdom faces overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Babylonians (Jer 16:14–21; 29:10–14; 30:1–22; 32:36–44).

What is the referent of the “place” (מִקְוָה, 2:1[ET 1:10])? In commenting on Paul’s use of this verse in Rom 9:26, Mark Seifrid argues that the reference to the “place”

recalls the desolation of the land and Israel’s exile, which the Lord will finally follow with mercy (e.g., Hos. 2:14–15 [MT 2:16–17]; 5:8–15; 11:8–11; 14:1–7 [MT 14:2–8]). Implicitly, the present judgment on Israel will be followed by mercy. Already here Paul points to the final salvation of the nation. Yet “place,” too, becomes level ground for the Gentiles: precisely in their place, there they shall be called “sons of the living God.”²⁰

¹⁸ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 200, state the eschatological thrust of 2:1–3 (ET 1:10–2:1) quite well: “The scope of Hos 2:1–3 [ET 1:10–2:1] points to a future that history cannot contain; the eschatological dimension is remote, not in the sense of being far distant in time, but as something beyond historical possibility without the direct intervention of God.”

¹⁹ Gen 22:17; 32:13 (ET 32:12); 41:49; Josh 11:4; Judg 7:12; 1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 17:11; 1 Ki 4:20; 5:9 (ET 4:29); Is 10:22; 48:19; Jer 15:8; 33:22; Hab 1:9; Pss 78:27; 139:18; Job 6:3.

²⁰ Seifrid, “Romans,” 648.

Most striking is that the people will be far more than sons of Israel; they will be “the sons of the living God” (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים). This bespeaks a doubly gracious identification for the sons of Israel. First, “the sons of the living God” replaces their identity as a whoring wife and whoring children (1:2). Second, “the sons of the living God” initiates the renaming of Yahweh’s people, whom he had named “Not My People” (לֹא עַמִּי, 2:1 [ET 1:10]; cf. 1:9), a renaming that comes to a fullness in 2:3 (ET 2:1). The Gospel bound up in their being called “the sons of the living God” is even more potent than their being renamed. The designation “the sons of God” is quite rare in the OT.²¹ In the limited occurrences of “the sons of God,” the referent is difficult to ascertain (e.g., Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1).²² Yet in Hos 2:1 (ET 1:10), the referent is quite clear. This is the sole unambiguous usage of “the sons of God” as a reference to God’s people in the OT. This designation recalls Ex 4:22, where Yahweh refers to Israel as “my son” (cf. Hos 11:1). It also draws on Deut 14:1, where Israel is told, “You are sons to Yahweh your God” (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). The designation “the living God” is common²³ and often serves as a means to contrast Yahweh with dead idols. For Hosea’s original audience, Yahweh the living God would stand in contrast to Baal the dead god.

Hos 2:1 (ET 1:10) funnels into Peter’s confession of Jesus as “the Son of the living God” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος) in Mt 16:16, an example of Jesus being Israel reduced to one, as the eschatological promise of the sons of Israel being the sons of the living God finds its fulfillment in him. The apostle Paul directly references Hos 2:1 (ET 1:10) in Rom 9:26, in which he includes the salvation of the Gentiles as those who were “not my people” being called “the sons of the living God.” Hos 2:1 (ET 1:10) may also serve as the background for Christ’s statement in Lk 6:35, in which he calls his disciples to love their enemies and says that they will be called “the sons of the Most High.”

2:2 (ET 1:11) As the previous verse used the inclusive “the sons of Israel” to capture both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, so this verse uses both “the sons of Judah” and “the sons of Israel” to remove any doubt that the whole of Yahweh’s people is included in the eschatological promise. Part of the promise is that they are “together” (יַחְדָּם), which is a stark contrast to the divided kingdoms of the eighth century BC. For two centuries, North and South had been at odds, a tension that was heightened in this time by the Syro-Ephraimite War, in which the Northern Kingdom allied itself with Syria to war against the South to pressure it to join the Syro-Ephraimite defensive alliance against

²¹ By way of contrast, “the sons of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) is found not only in this verse but more than five hundred times throughout the OT.

²² “The sons of the Most High” is used in Ps 82:6 as a related parallel. So also, Deut 32:8 utilizes “the sons of Israel” in the MT, yet the LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls offer alternative readings that point toward the possibility of “the sons of God.”

²³ See “the living God” and related expressions in Num 14:21, 28; Deut 5:26; 32:40; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26; 2 Ki 19:4, 16 || Is 37:4, 17; Pss 42:3 (ET 42:2; LXX 41:3); 84:3 (ET 84:2; LXX 83:3); Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:21, 27 (ET 6:20, 26); Acts 14:15; 1 Thess 1:9.

Assyria (see 2 Ki 16:5; Is 7:1–2; 2 Chr 28:1–21). It is an amazingly sweet promise that the days are coming when such pointed division will be ended. This eschatological overcoming of divisions is joyful hope for the people of Yahweh today as well, with the manifold divisions that exist within the church catholic, individual confessional bodies, specific congregations, Christian families, and the like. The day is coming when the divisions will be gone. There is but one reason that division can and will be eliminated: they will have “one head” (רֹאשׁ אֶחָד). This promise is echoed in 3:5 with the certainty that “in the latter days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים), the sons of Israel will return and seek after Yahweh and David their king. Hosea delivers this Word of Yahweh more than two centuries after David’s reign. Thus this promise of David is prophetic of Christ, the son of David. Yet in 2:2 (ET 1:11), the promise is that Yahweh’s people are together under one “head,” rather than one king, as is promised in 3:5. Hos 2:2 (ET 1:11) remains prophetic of Christ, but instead of the fulfillment of the kingship in him, the language of headship is reminiscent of the time prior to the establishment of the monarchy, when it was a “head” (רֹאשׁ) who led the people (cf. Num 7:2; 10:4; Deut 33:5, 21; Josh 21:1; Judg 11:8–11). It does seem odd that the people would be able to appoint their head in the eschaton, though Yahweh had said they could set a king over them whom he had chosen (Deut 17:15). Their appointment of their head echoes the language of Num 14:4 and Judg 11:8–11, in which the people sought to establish their own head. Yet in the eschaton, the sons of the living God have so been freed from dead idols that they acknowledge but one head, Yahweh. The motif continues into the NT, where Christ is designated as the “head” of the church, his body, with all baptized believers as members.²⁴



The eschatological promise continues: “and they will go up from the land” (וַעֲלֶיךָ בְּיַדְהָאָרֶץ). As Yahweh’s covenant with Abram included the promise that he would give Abram’s offspring the land (Gen 15:18), so the eschatological promise is tied to the land. The promise of a new creation likewise ties Yahweh’s blessings to his creation (Genesis 1–2). Just as the days are coming when Yahweh will restore his creation, so also his temporal judgment is described as the withdrawal of his created gifts. Within Hosea, this will be seen in 2:5, 11, 14 (ET 2:3, 9, 12); 4:1–3. Yet here the focus is not on temporal judgment but on eschatological promise. “Go up from the land” is best understood in the very next statement: “how great is the day of Jezreel.” As “Jezreel” is a Hebrew verb meaning “he will sow,” it employs agricultural imagery that will be found throughout Hosea, including here, as “they will go up from the land” describes how Yahweh’s people will grow and flourish like a plant.²⁵ This language is taken up again in 2:25 (ET 2:23), where Yahweh promises, “I will sow her for myself in the land” (וַזְרַעְתִּיהָ לִּי בְּאֶרֶץ).²⁶

²⁴ See, e.g., 1 Cor 12:12–27; Eph 1:22; 3:6; 4:15; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18; 2:10, 19.

²⁵ Macintosh, *Hosea*, 33.

²⁶ This view is held by Vriezen, *Hosea*, 13, 22.

Another layer of significance is bound up in “the day of Jezreel.” With the likely specific historical setting of this passage including Tiglath-pileser III holding the Valley of Jezreel, the positive declaration of the great day of Jezreel promises the eschatological overthrow of the enemies of Yahweh’s people, even as those enemies hold the field at the moment. This is reminiscent of the forces of Midian and Amalek, who came against Israel and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel (Judg 6:33) only to be thoroughly defeated by Yahweh through Gideon. The language is also akin to the eschatological resurrection language found in Ezek 37:12–14.

Yahweh has taken the name of Hosea and Gomer’s first child (Hos 1:4–5) and transformed it from temporal condemnation to eschatological deliverance. The name Jezreel has not changed, but its weight has shifted due to Yahweh’s decisive promise, a promise fulfilled in Christ. The names of the other two children undergo similar transformation in the next verse.

2:3 (ET 2:1) The eschatological promise comes to a beautiful conclusion with the joyful anticipation of the sons of the living God being named “My People” (עַמִּי) and the daughters of the living God being named “Compassion” (רַחֲמֵהָ). Due to the eschatological context (and the temporal judgment that will commence in the very next verse), this renaming is specifically applied to the people of Yahweh rather than to Hosea’s children.

It is also worth noting the progression of titles used for the people of Yahweh in 2:1–3 (ET 1:10–2:1). They are first referred to as “the sons of Israel” in 2:1 (ET 1:10). Later in the same verse, they are called “the sons of the living God” (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים), a significant shift from “Not My People” (לֹא עַמִּי, 2:1 [ET 1:10]; cf. 1:9) as the eschatological identity shifts from biological lineage to having been claimed by Yahweh. Hos 2:2 (ET 1:11) then proclaims that the promise is for the full people of God, as it is “the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel together” (בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַחְדָּו) whom Yahweh promises will enjoy the great “day of Jezreel.” The scope of the people of Yahweh is further described as being both “your brothers” (אֶחָיִךְ) and “your sisters” (אֶחָתֶיךָ), which includes Hosea’s second and third children along with Jezreel, who has already been mentioned, and further proclaims that it is the whole people of Yahweh, both male and female, who receive the eschatological fulfillment. As discussed in the commentary on 2:1 (ET 1:10), “the sons of the living God” is funneled into Peter’s confession in Mt 16:16 that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Thus all those who are in Christ are part of this eschatological promise and are proleptically “the sons of the living God.” Furthermore, Christ’s earthly ministry is the inauguration of the eschaton. Both for the eighth-century BC people of God and for the people of God today, it is a blessing that the eschatological promise of deliverance precedes the announcement of temporal judgment. Without such a promise engendering faith, judgment can prompt denial rather than contrition. Hosea’s contemporaries were called to trust that Yahweh’s coming deliverance would eclipse the judgment. We are called to trust that Yahweh’s eschatological deliverance, which was inaugurated in the

death and resurrection of Christ and which will be brought to consummation at his return, eclipses the judgment we have earned. Contrition for sin, most certainly. Faith in Yahweh's deliverance in Christ, even more.

2:4 (ET 2:2) The glorious eschatological promise of the preceding three verses does not nullify temporal judgment. The potency of the double imperative "contend!" (רִיב) is magnified by its object, "against your mother" (בְּאִמֶּךָ), and by the stark contrast between this verse and the eschatological promise that precedes it. This repeated imperative רִיב, *rîb*, serves a major structural purpose, since its usage in the introductory chapters prepares for the noun רִיב, *rîb*, "contention," to mark the second and third major sections of Hosea as it appears in 4:1–3 (along with the verb twice in 4:4) and again in 12:3 (ET 12:2) as Yahweh sets forth his "contention" against his people (cf. Jer 2:5–9; Micah 6:1–8). Who is the referent of "your mother" against whom the contention is to be made in Hos 2:4 (ET 2:2)? One possibility is that it is the kings, priests, and prophets who have not led Israel faithfully so that the people of Israel (i.e., the children) rightly speak Yahweh's contention against the leaders (i.e., their mother). The capital city Samaria can be understood as the mother of the people of northern Israel, much as Jerusalem/Zion is the mother of the people of Judah in Is 51:18; 54:1, 13; 66:7. While there is an element of applicability to reading the text in this fashion, Israel cannot be so easily divided into groups. As the mother goes, so go the children; as the leaders go, so go the people. The communal understanding of sin and shame means that the contention against the mother is a contention against them all, even as Gomer, the whoring wife, gives birth to whoring children (1:2). So also, it is the children who are the object of judgment in short order (2:6 [ET 2:4]) because the people as a whole have fallen into idolatry.

Yahweh's contention against Israel is that she is not his wife and he is not her husband (2:4 [ET 2:2]). Some understand this to be a divorce declaration.²⁷ That is not a universally accepted position. For example, Anderson and Freedman argue that

Hosea's threats of punishment are proof that his [and Yahweh's] marriage continues. The corrective discipline expresses his authority over his wife, and his continuing claim upon her. The husband does not take any initiative to dissolve the marriage. That, rather, is what the wife has already done by her conduct. This could explain why Hosea does not take the initiative himself in argument; he is not engaged in litigation against his wife. . . . From the wife's side (Israel's) the relationship was severed; from Hosea's (Yahweh's) it was not. In 2:4–25 [ET 2:2–23] the woman is treated as not his wife in practice and yet still his wife in principle.²⁸

Others argue that a divorce declaration would upend the reconciliation that will take place in Hosea 3, since Deut 24:1–4 states that it is an abomination to

²⁷ Wolff, *Hosea*, 32–33; Friedman, "Israel's Response in Hosea 2:17b: 'You Are My Husband.'"

²⁸ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 221–22.

Yahweh Renews His Marriage

Translation

- 2 ¹⁸And it will come to pass in that day
—the utterance of Yahweh—
she will call me “my husband,”
and she will not call me
again “my baal.”
- ¹⁹And I will remove the names of the baals from her mouth
so that they will not be remembered again by their names.
- ²⁰And I will cut for them a covenant
in that day
with the beasts of the field
and with the birds of the heavens
and the creeping things of the earth.
Bow and sword and (weapons of) war
I will break in pieces from the land,
and I will cause them to lie down in safety.
- ²¹And I will betroth you to me forever.
And I will betroth you to me
in righteousness and in justice
and in mercy and in compassion.
- ²²And I will betroth you to me in faithfulness,
and you will know Yahweh.

Textual Notes

2:18 (ET 2:16) וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא—The classic eschatological formula וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא begins with the Qal perfect *waw* consecutive third masculine singular of הָיָה followed by the prepositional phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא. The full formula was previously seen in 1:5 and will be seen again in 2:23 (ET 2:21), while the phrase וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא will recur in 2:20 (ET 2:18). Morris argues that it is only in 2:18–25 (ET 2:16–23), not in 1:5, that the phraseology is used in “any systemic way.”¹

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא—This phrase recurs in 2:23 (ET 2:21). See the fourth textual note on 2:15 (ET 2:13).

¹ Morris, *Prophecy, Poetry, and Hosea*, 52. He says (53):

The three-fold use of וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא [2:18, 20, 23 (ET 2:16, 18, 21)] and the double use of וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא [2:18, 23 (ET 2:16, 21)] indicates a certain pattern of formula here, giving some structure to the oracle as a whole, but ... this is not much. If the use of formulaic introductions and structural signposts is a sign of the genre of rhetoric, Hosea barely qualifies, if at all.

תִּקְרָאֵי אִישׁי—Though only two words, the clause is significant (see the commentary). תִּקְרָאֵי is a Qal imperfect second feminine singular of קָרָא, with Israel being referred to with the feminine since she is the wife of Yahweh in the text. Typically, when used for naming someone something, קָרָא takes two complements, the person being “called/named” (marked with לְ) and what that person is being called. The first is omitted in this case (it would be לִי, “to me,” as in the next clause), yet the context makes it evident that Yahweh is the one being called אִישׁי. It is also significant that קָרָא appears in the imperfect rather than the imperative. Rather than Yahweh commanding Israel to call him “my husband,” he is prophetically promising that she will do so.

וְלֹא־תִקְרָאֵי־לִי עוֹד בַּעַלִּי:—In poetic fashion, the verb from the previous colon, קָרָא, is repeated but is now negated by לֹא. The two cola are thus an example of negative parallelism, where the two cola state the same thing, with the first colon stating it positively, while the second colon states it negatively. בַּעַל has a greater range of meaning than “Baal,” the title for a god who serves as “lord” for its subjects. It can refer to an “owner” (e.g., Ex 21:28–29, 34, 36) or even be a title for a “husband” (cf. Gen 20:3; 2 Sam 11:26). While “Baal” is typically capitalized as a proper name for an idol, in the translation above, I did not capitalize “baal” because it is being used not as a proper name but as a title parallel to “husband.” Similarly, in the next verse, I lower-cased “baals” since it is not a proper name but a title given to a group of idols whose devotees called “Baal.”

2:19 (ET 2:17) וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת־שְׂמֹת הַבַּעַלִּים מִפִּיָּהּ—The Hiphil וְהִסְרֹתִי is a perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of סָוַר. The causative nature of the Hiphil gives attention to Yahweh as the one acting so that the names of the baals are removed from Israel’s mouth. The use of בַּעַל to refer to Israel’s idols in contrast to its use in 2:18 (ET 2:16) as a title, “baal,” given to a “husband,” is an example of antanaclasis, a rhetorical device that magnifies the contrast between Yahweh as the true אִישׁי, “husband,” of Israel (2:18 [ET 2:16]) in contrast with Israel’s בַּעַלִּים, “baals,” as idols/lovers.

וְלֹא־יִזְכְּרוּ עוֹד בְּשֵׁמָם:—The verb יִזְכְּרוּ is a Niphal imperfect third masculine plural and is negated by לֹא. It has a passive meaning with “the baals” of the prior colon understood as the subject. The parallelism between the prior colon and this colon shows a result. Because Yahweh caused the names of the baals to be removed from Israel’s mouth in the prior colon, the baals will not be remembered again by their names.

2:20 (ET 2:18) וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית בְּיוֹם הַהוּא—The Qal verb וְכָרַתִּי is a perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of כָּרַת. This verb regularly takes בְּרִית as its object, as it does here. “Cut a covenant” is a common Hebrew idiom for making a covenant. The first person singular verb keeps the focus on Yahweh as the primary actor; just as he was the one wooing his wife in the prior section (2:16–17 [ET 2:14–15]), so in this section, he is the initiator and completer of the restored marriage. The common prophetic prepositional phrase בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, “in that day,” carries eschatological force; see the first textual note on 2:18 (ET 2:16).

עִם־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְעִם־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְרֶמֶשׂ הָאָרְצָה—The preposition עִם is attached to the first of three items in this sequence as well as to the second item, but the third item lacks the preposition. This breaking of the pattern can indicate the conclusion of a series of items. The sequence “living things of the field and birds of the heavens and

creeping things of the earth” is language intentionally borrowed from the creation narrative of Genesis 1 as well as the flood narrative (see the commentary). The language of the creation narrative is often taken up in eschatological texts as the promise of a new creation is set forth.

וְקָשֶׁת וְחַרְבַּב וּמִלְחָמָה אֲשַׁבֵּר מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁכַּבְתִּים לְבֶטֶחַ:—A pair of first person singular verbs drives this tricolon with the ongoing focus on Yahweh as the actor. The first of those verbs, אֲשַׁבֵּר, is a Qal imperfect first common singular of שָׁבַר spelled plene, with the *mater* letter for *holem* (-י-) between the second and third root letters. The verb recalls 1:5, where another first person form of שָׁבַר appeared with Yahweh as the subject and where his judgment included the breaking of Israel’s קָשֶׁת, “bow.” Now the verb expresses the eschatological goodness when Yahweh will shatter every bow from the land. The combination “bow” and “sword” and “war” is repeated from 1:7, where Yahweh stated that such things would not save Israel. The eschatological promise is that they are all shattered because the aggression of Assyria or any other aggressor has been removed.

The second first person singular verb of the tricolon is וְהִשְׁכַּבְתִּים, a Hiphil perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of שָׁכַב with a third masculine plural object suffix. The Hiphil again places the focus on Yahweh as the causative actor who brings about the lying down. The phrase לְבֶטֶחַ is critical for Yahweh’s causative action to be fully positive. He makes Israel lie down “in safety,” or, as an adverb, “safely.” The preposition לְ introduces “a condition or state” (BDB, s.v. לְ, 5 k) denoted by the noun בְּטָח, “security, safety.”

2:21 (ET 2:19) וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ לִי לְעוֹלָם—“And I will betroth you” continues the focus on Yahweh as the active person with וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ, a Piel perfect *waw* consecutive first common singular of אָרַשׁ with a second feminine singular direct object suffix. אָרַשׁ occurs only in the Piel and Pual and a total of only eleven times in the OT, three of those being the identical form וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ concentrated here three times in 2:21–22 (ET 2:19–20; see also the next textual note). Only one of the other occurrences is found outside the Torah (2 Sam 3:14). While אָרַשׁ appears in Ex 22:15 (ET 22:16), the remaining six occurrences are in Deuteronomy (Deut 20:7; 22:23, 25, 27, 28; 28:30). The feminine singular object suffix on וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ treats Israel as a collective. While masculine plural forms were used for Israel in 2:20 (ET 2:18; the suffixes on לָהֶם and וְהִשְׁכַּבְתִּים), elsewhere in this section, Israel is referred to in the feminine singular, as she is Yahweh’s wife (2:18–19, 21–22 [ET 2:16–17, 19–20]). The movement between masculine and feminine is common in Hebrew. לְעוֹלָם continues the eschatological focus with its promise of Yahweh’s betrothal to Israel being “to perpetuity.”

וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ לִי בְצִדְקָה וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים—The identical verb form וְאַרְשִׁיתִיךְ was in the prior colon of this verse and will be repeated in the next verse, with each also using the prepositional phrase לְ to indicate the person to whom Israel will be betrothed (to Yahweh, the speaker). This threefold use of “I will betroth you to me” resembles a superlative, which can be expressed with a threefold repetition of a substantive (Ezek 21:32 [ET 21:27]; GKC, § 133 l, also cites for comparison the threefold use of verbs in Hos 2:21–22 [ET 2:19–21] and Is 33:10). It is a beautiful example of Hebrew poetry in which the repetition of a phrase or clause creates a growing

weight. Often in Hebrew poetry, such repetition includes some progression of thought from one use to the next. In this instance, the progression is the addition of four substantives (בְּרִחְמוֹם וּבְחַסְדֹּךָ וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָךָ) in this tricolon and a fifth (בְּאֱמוּנָתְךָ) in the next verse (2:22 [ET 2:20]), each introduced with the preposition בְּ. In the enumeration of a series of substantives each governed by the same preposition, it is common for that preposition to be repeated with each substantive, as happens here as well as in 1:7 (Joüen, § 132 g; Davidson, § 101). This list (“in righteousness and in justice and in mercy and in compassion ... in faithfulness”) will be echoed later in 10:12 (לְצִדְקָהּ ... חֶסֶד ... צְדָקָה); 12:7 (ET 12:6; וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחַסְדֹּךָ); and 14:4 (ET 14:3; וּבְרִחְמוֹם).

2:22 (ET 2:20) וְאֶרְשָׁתֶיךָ לִי בְּאֱמוּנָתְךָ—The third and final appearance of לִי בְּאֱמוּנָתְךָ is identical to its two appearances in the preceding verse with the addition of “in faithfulness.” When Hebrew poetry engages in such repetition, the final appearance may carry greater weight. That the second appearance of the clause in 2:21 (ET 2:19) was accompanied by four substantives introduced by בְּ and that this final appearance has only one such substantive, “in faithfulness,” ought to grab the reader’s attention. That faithfulness would be given such weight makes sense in the ongoing context of Yahweh renewing his marriage to his unfaithful wife.

וְיָדַעְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה:—The Qal verb וְיָדַעְתָּ is a perfect *waw* consecutive second feminine singular of יָדַעַת. With the focus on faithfulness in the preceding colon, this colon can be read as describing what such faithfulness entails, namely, that Israel “will know” Yahweh. Thus this text of eschatological promise comes to its culmination with “and you will know Yahweh” (contrast יָדַע לֵאלֹהֵינוּ in 2:10 [ET 2:8]; 5:4; 11:3).

Commentary

Though Yahweh was the aggrieved husband, he took the initiative to woo back his wife (2:16 [ET 2:14]). Now comes the fruit of his wooing—a restored marriage—which is also his doing. Yahweh again takes the lead in these verses. While the first verse of this section has Israel as the subject of the verbs, it is Yahweh’s gracious action that enables her to call him “my husband (2:18 [ET 2:16]),” and the remaining verses have Yahweh as the subject. The intimacy of his actions resonates as we hear not Hosea speaking of Yahweh in the third person but Yahweh speaking in the first person. As Yahweh initiates and completes the restoration of his marriage, so also he remains today the initiator and completer of justification by grace through faith. In these verses, we hear the fulfillment of what was promised in 2:1–3 (ET 1:10–2:1). Yet as is Yahweh’s way of fulfilling prophecy, the fulfillment is greater than the promise. The earlier eschatological promise was focused on the children. Their restoration will be found in 2:23–25 (ET 2:21–23). Here we marvel at the restoration of the marriage as well. Yahweh is not content for partial restoration. He fully restores his family.

2:18 (ET 2:16) “And it will come to pass in that day” brings eschatological joy back to the fore as it had prominence in 2:1–3 (ET 1:10–2:1). Since the Northern Kingdom of Israel did not return from its 722 BC exile in the same fashion as Judah would return from its 587/586 BC exile, the restoration of



Yahweh’s marriage to Israel is truly an eschatological promise. The promise is not for a restoration of the political entity that was Israel, but for the restoration of the people to an unending marriage to Yahweh. Thus Hosea also delivers the promise of Israel and Judah being “together” as a people who belong to Yahweh under “one head” (2:2 [ET 1:11]). That this single head is the Davidic King who will reign “in the latter days” is made clear in 3:5. The eschatological restoration of Yahweh’s marriage to Israel finds its fullness in Christ, the Davidic King (Mt 1:1; 2:2; 27:37). Eschatological marriage language is not restricted to Hosea. In the NT, it takes on the language of a marriage feast for the King’s Son (e.g., Mt 22:1–14).

“She will call me ‘my husband,’ and she shall no longer call me ‘my baal’” is arguably the simplest expression of the marriage metaphor in Hosea.² For certain, this metaphor echoes throughout the whole of the book, even when the marital language wanes in overt expression, beginning in chapter 4. Chapters 4–14 are built on the marriage metaphor established in the first three chapters, especially as described here. That Israel “calls” (קָרָא) Yahweh “my husband” recalls Yahweh’s repeated instruction to Hosea in chapter 1 to “call” (קָרָא) his children by their specific names (1:4, 6, 9). In chapter 1, the “calling” was a potent delivery of the Law’s condemnation. Here “calling” has been transformed into Gospel as it displays the restored relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The Gospel of calling/naming will continue in the next section (2:23–25 [ET 2:21–23]) as Israel is called by names that undo the names given to Hosea’s children (although the verb “call” [קָרָא] is not used there). The repeated attention to the calling/naming of persons and even of Yahweh is illustrative of name theology. Not only do biblical names regularly have a meaning, as is the case with Hosea’s children and even Hosea himself,³ but a person’s name is inseparable from the person. What is done to one’s name is done to that person. This is why Yahweh delivers to Israel through Moses his command that “you shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain” (Ex 20:7; Deut 5:11; cf. Hos 10:4). What is done to the name of Yahweh is done to him. So also, what Yahweh does with your name he does to you. This funnels mightily into baptismal theology, where we are given the triune name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). Baptism’s blessings are bound up in the name of the God who delivers his very presence, since he cannot be separated from his name (Ex 34:5–7; Jn 17:6, 12; Acts 4:12; Rev 3:12).

That Yahweh says he will no longer be called “my baal” bears a bit of shock. Why would Israel ever have called Yahweh “my baal”?⁴ As set forth

² Light, “Theory-Constitutive Metaphor and Its Development in the Book of Hosea,” 63–65.

³ For Hosea’s name, see the first textual note and the commentary on 1:1. For his children’s names, see the commentary on 1:4, 6, 9.

⁴ Day, “Hosea and the Baal Cult,” 207, notes:

It may be, therefore, that Hosea opposed both Baal worship as such as well as the tendency to confuse Yahweh with Baal. However that may be, it is noteworthy that

in the fourth textual note on 2:18 (ET 2:16), “baal” is used on occasion as a title for a woman’s husband. Certainly, Israel’s syncretistic worship of Yahweh that blended in aspects of Baalism would have made “baal” a distasteful title to apply to Yahweh. Also, the use of “baal” to connote ownership does not capture the kind of marriage Yahweh has with Israel. Instead of a baal/lord/owner, Yahweh is a “husband” (אִישׁ, literally, “man,” 2:18 [ET 2:16]) to Israel, who is his wife (commonly denoted by אִשָּׁה, “woman”). Husband/wife and man/woman deliver the relational health that Yahweh establishes with Israel. “Man” versus “owner” as a term for a husband also clarifies, focuses, defines what it means for Yahweh to be a husband to his people, including us. The shift in the usage of “baal” in this verse as a title for a husband to the use of “baals” in the next verse as a clear reference to idols is an example of antanaclasis—the repetition of a word in which the second occurrence utilizes a different and even contrary meaning.⁵

Some have argued that “she will call me ‘my husband’” amounts to a remarriage formula following the supposed divorce declaration of 2:4 (ET 2:2).⁶ This commentary maintains that 2:4 (ET 2:2) was not a divorce declaration but a potent statement of the estrangement that Israel’s idolatry had occasioned. The marriage is restored by the gracious working of Yahweh, who never ceased in marital fidelity and love toward Israel.

2:19 (ET 2:17) It is Yahweh who removes the names of the baals from Israel’s mouth. He is the author of Israel’s repentance. The plural “baals” reflects the various local manifestations of baal that were part of Baalism in the eighth century BC. The removal of their names is a means of destroying them. To purge the names of idols from the mouth is comparable to confessing with the mouth the name of the Lord Jesus and being saved (Rom 10:9–10). Hosea’s foundation upon the Torah is evident once again, as Yahweh had previously instructed Israel through Moses that the names of other gods were not to be invoked or found on their lips (Ex 23:13; also Josh 23:7), nor were those gods to be served (Ex 23:32–33). Rather, the altars of those gods were to be destroyed (Deut 12:3), and any prophet who presumed to preach in their names was to be put to death (Deut 18:20).

Yahweh promises that the names of the baals “will no longer be remembered” (לֹא יִזְכָּרוּ עִוֵּד, Hos 2:19 [ET 2:17]), so full will be his restoration of his marriage with Israel. Thus the name of Yahweh stands alone as the name by which God is remembered by Israel (Ex 3:15). Yahweh commanded Israel that

the Samaria ostraca, dating not long before the time of Hosea, contain as many as six different theophoric names with Baal alongside nine with Yahweh, which offers strong testimony to the highly Baalized nature of the northern Israelite cult at that time. Further, not only Yahweh but also Baal is referred to in the early eighth-century Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, the language of which shows clear northern Israelite connections in spite of the site’s southern location.

⁵ Noegel, “Wordplay” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 170.

⁶ Friedman, “Israel’s Response in Hosea 2:17b: ‘You Are My Husband.’”

they were not to cause the names of other gods to be remembered (לֹא־תִזְכְּרוּ, Josh 23:7) by invoking them. Thus David says that while for some it will be chariots and for others horses, yet those who know that the name of the God of Jacob protects them (Ps 20:2 [ET 20:1]) “invoke the name of Yahweh our God” (בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֶלְתִּינוּ נִזְכֵּיר, Ps 20:8 [ET 20:7]). Yet this remembering/invoking the name of Yahweh and not the names of other gods would be a constant struggle for Israel. Isaiah addresses the house of Jacob as those called by the name of Israel who swear by the name of Yahweh and who invoke (יִזְכִּירוּ) the God of Israel neither in truth nor in righteousness (Is 48:1). Amos captures the depth of Israel’s sin in the eighth century BC as he records the words of one who would choose silence rather than the invoking of the name of Yahweh (לֹא לְהִזְכִּיר בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, Amos 6:10). Remembering and invoking are bound together, as Scripture does not set forth remembering (זָכַר) as merely a matter of mental recollection. When Yahweh remembers, he does not recall something that had slipped from his mind. Instead, his remembrance is his acting on the basis of a promise. When the people of Israel remember Yahweh, they are invoking him and even taking hold of his promises. Thus the faithful will not remember/invoke the names of non-gods. Yahweh so restores his marriage to Israel that his people do not remember/invoke but forget the names of idols.

2:20 (ET 2:18) “In that day” again draws attention to the eschatological focus of this text. Through Hosea, Yahweh brings something that had not been previously heard, as this prophecy in the eighth century BC is the first reference in the OT to a new covenant for the end time.⁷ While the adjective “new” is not used in this verse, the “covenant” is new because it is to be cut in the future. The “new covenant” will most famously be described by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31–34) as well as Ezekiel (Ezek 36:24–32) in the early sixth century BC as the Southern Kingdom of Judah is exiled and awaiting restoration.

This “covenant” is new, not in having different or unprecedented content, but in its promise to make all things new. The covenant is made “with the beasts of the field and with the birds of the heavens and the creeping things of the earth” (Hos 2:20 [ET 2:18]), recalling God’s creative work (Gen 1:28, 30), his provision for life on the ark (Gen 6:20; 7:14, 21), his restoration of life to the earth following the flood (Gen 8:17, 19), and his covenant with Noah and all others whom he delivered through the flood (Gen 9:10). Yahweh’s past work is not insufficient or lacking, and so there is a trajectory from what he has done to what he is doing to what he will do. All are bound together, cut from the same cloth. His new covenant cleanses what sin had soiled. From creation to a washed, renewed creation after the flood to the fullness of the new and holy creation that will be ours in the new heavens and new earth at the return of Christ, Yahweh does not leave his creation to decay but renews it.

⁷ Wolff, *Hosea*, 51.

The peace promised in this covenant is seen in the shattering of bow, sword, and weapons of war (recalling Hos 1:5, 7), the presence of the wild animals without threat (in contrast to their actions in 2:14 [ET 2:12]), and Israel lying down in safety. Such language recalls Yahweh's promise of life in the land when Israel lives by Yahweh's word (Lev 26:5–6). The description resonates also with Isaiah's prophetic promise of the wild animals that shall not hurt or destroy (Is 11:6–9; 65:17–25).

2:21 (ET 2:19) The eschatological renewal of Yahweh's marriage to Israel includes an eternal betrothal. As Scripture describes the unending wedding feast of the Lamb and his bride, the church (Rev 19:6–9; cf. Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17), so the betrothal knows no end. The language is echoed by Hosea's contemporary in the Southern Kingdom Isaiah (Is 62:4–5). Jerome comments on the betrothal in this verse:

First, he [God] betrothed her [Israel] to himself in Abraham or in Egypt, so that he might have an everlasting spouse. Secondly, on Mt. Sinai, in the engagement, by giving her the equity (*iustitiam*) and judgment (*iudicium*) of the law, and the compassion (*miser ricordiam*) connect to the law, so that whenever she sinned she would be given up into captivity; whenever she sought penitence, she would be brought back to [her] homeland, and she would pursue compassion. . . . By his crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, he [Jesus] betrothed [her] not in the equity of the law, but rather in faith (*fide*) and grace (*gratia*) of the Gospel.⁸

A question arises regarding the prepositional phrases “in righteousness and in justice and in mercy and in compassion.” One option is to understand these as reflecting the character/quality of Yahweh and his betrothal. Another option is to understand these as the gifts given by a groom to the bride's family, a practice in place in the eighth century BC.⁹ This latter is in keeping with the tenor of this passage, in which Yahweh is the actor who accomplishes the marital renewal. He wooed Israel; he renews his marriage to Israel; he even provides the groom's payment to himself since he is both husband (2:18 [ET 2:16]) and father to Israel (“the sons of the living God,” 2:1 [ET 1:10]). This foreshadows the salvific work of Christ, wherein God gives the ransom and pays the price to himself for our redemption¹⁰ (cf. this commentary's discussion of 3:2). The price paid is far weightier than what Hosea will use to redeem Gomer (3:2).

⁸ Jerome, *Hosea*, 1.2 (PL 25:840; quoted in Pentiuic, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 48).

⁹ Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 59, states this about the verb “betroth” and the preposition “with”:

The verb שָׂדַד (piel) refers to the ancient Israelite practice of settling the marriage contractually by the groom's payment of the bride-price to the bride's father. . . .

David betrothed Michal *with* (בְּ) promises of blessing [2 Sam 3:14; cf. 1 Sam 18:22–27]. Playing a dual role, Yahweh pays *himself* the bride price, as Israel's husband and father.

¹⁰ E.g., Mt 20:28; Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 5:18; Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 2:6.

Yahweh’s own righteousness, justice, mercy, and compassion alone are sufficient for the task.

Jerome comments on Yahweh’s mercy in this passage:

How great is God’s mercy! A prostitute fornicates with many lovers, and because of her offense is handed over to the beasts. After she returns to her husband, she is said not at all to be reconciled to him but rather to be betrothed. Now notice the difference between God’s union and that of men. When a man marries, he turns a virgin into a woman—that is, a nonvirgin. But when God joins with prostitutes, he changes them into virgins.¹¹

That is mercy. Such mercy from Yahweh to us calls us to be similarly merciful (Lk 6:36).

2:22 (ET 2:20) The betrothal “in righteousness and in justice and in mercy and in compassion” (2:21 [ET 2:19]) is now said to be “in faithfulness.” As Israel had been the unfaithful bride, whoring after other gods (2:4–15, 19 [ET 2:2–13, 17]), betrothal “in faithfulness” is twofold. First is the ongoing fidelity of Yahweh to Israel. Second is the resulting faithfulness of Israel to Yahweh. His fidelity begets ours. The faithfulness is tied to “knowing” (יָדָעַתְּ) Yahweh. In sin, Israel “did not know” (לֹא יָדָעַתְּ) that it was Yahweh who gave her all her good things (2:10 [ET 2:8]). Now Israel’s “knowing” of Yahweh (יָדָעַתְּ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, 2:22 [ET 2:20]) is the undoing of the closing word of condemnation in 2:15 (ET 2:13)—“she forgot me, declares Yahweh.”

Theological Application

Yahweh woos his whoring wife, not only renewing his marriage to her but even renewing her so that she is no longer a whore but a betrothed virgin. He continues to do the same for us in Christ (2 Cor 11:2). He first granted us new life in Holy Baptism (Jn 3:3, 5; Eph 5:26–27; Titus 3:4–7). He continues to renew us through confession and absolution so that sin no longer defines us (1 Jn 1:8–9). We are defined by him who has claimed us as his own.

Having been redeemed and renewed by Christ, our lives confess him. Just as Israel would no longer call Yahweh “my baal,” but “my husband” (Hos 2:18 [ET 2:16]), so we speak specifically of God and to God. Christ teaches us to call upon God as “our Father” (Mt 6:9; cf. 1 Cor 1:3). The baptized children of God (Gal 3:26–29) name God specifically as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as he has revealed himself to us (Mt 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:13 [ET 13:14]). We call upon God specifically in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn 14:13–14; 1 Cor 1:2; Col 3:17), the divine person of the Trinity in whom God the Father is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:18; 14:8–11; 1 Cor 2:10–16). Betrothed to God in faithfulness, we spurn alternate titles for God that are offered by the world. “Mother, Child, and Helper” is no substitute for the triune name God has revealed.



¹¹ Jerome, *Hosea*, 1.2 (quoted in Ferreiro, *The Twelve Prophets*, 12).

How we speak of God and to God teaches us how to invoke God. The Invocation is specific and baptismal: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” As his invocation is specific, so also is his remembrance: “Do this in remembrance of me,” for the bread is “my body” and the chalice “is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:24–25). The Lord’s Supper remembers and specifically delivers the fulfillment of the divine promise of the new covenant: his body and his blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. Christ remembers the ancient scriptural promises and bestows in the Supper the new covenant gifts so that we, fed and renewed in faith, may conduct our lives remembering his promise and invoking him according to that promise until he returns (1 Cor 11:26). That is what you expect from the God who betroths himself in mercy and compassion to a renewed Israel, to a renewed church, to a renewed you.

Hos 2:16–22 (ET 2:14–20) appears twice in Series B of the Three-Year Lectionary, namely, on the Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord and on Proper 3 (May 24–28).¹² Tragically, both liturgical dates rarely come to fruition, as the former requires a very late date for Easter and the latter requires a very early date for Easter. On both dates, Hosea is teamed with Mk 2:13–22, which chronicles the calling of Levi and the questioning of Jesus as to why his disciples do not fast. It seems that the lectionary pairing is occasioned by the latter as Jesus says that the disciples do not fast because the Bridegroom is with them. Yet Jesus also notes that the disciples will fast when the Bridegroom is taken from them. Christ thus proclaims himself as the eschatological Bridegroom referenced in Hos 2:16–22 (ET 2:14–20), who is present among the wedding guests and who will be taken from them into death, yet shall arise and return to them in glory. Until then, he comes to us in grace through his Word and Sacraments. In Christ, the promises of Yahweh are dawning upon Israel as he betroths himself to those who have sinned badly (οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες, Mk 2:17), for he betroths himself to them in mercy and compassion.

¹² *LSB*, xvi–xvii.

“On the Third Day” (Hos 6:2) According to the Scriptures

The church confesses in the Nicene Creed that Christ “suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.”¹ Of course, the Creed does not pull this confession out of the air but draws it from Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth and Luke’s account of the Gospel. Paul hands on what he had received: “*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*” (ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς, 1 Cor 15:3–4). Paul’s words are in accord with Christ’s own words, which Luke reports that he spoke following his resurrection: “*Thus it stands written that the Christ suffer and rise from the dead on the third day*” (οὕτως γέγραπται παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, Lk 24:46). Similarly, but without the time reference, Peter and the other disciple are puzzled by the empty tomb, “for they did not understand the Scripture that [Jesus] must rise from the dead” (οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφήν ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι, Jn 20:9). But where in Scripture does it stand written? Which OT texts teach the resurrection of Christ on the third day?

The account of Jonah in the belly of the great fish comes to mind rather quickly. In Mt 12:38–42, Christ himself proclaims that the only sign that will be given a wicked and adulterous generation is the sign of the prophet Jonah, for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. But where else? What other OT texts teach the third-day resurrection of Christ? Other possibilities include the resurrection texts of Ps 16:10 and Is 53:10–12, but neither has a specific time reference to the third day. What about Hos 6:2?

The prophet reports the words of the people of Israel, who says of Yahweh:

*“He will revive us after two days.
On the third day he will cause us to arise
that we may live before his face.”*

יְחַיֵּנוּ מִיָּמַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יִקְרָאנוּ וְנַחֲמָה לְפָנָיו:

It seems rather promising because here you find an explicit reference to Yahweh restoring life after two days and on the third day raising up (with the Hiphil of קָרָא, literally, “cause to rise”). Yet current scholarship is not persuaded. For example, Ciampa and Rosner reject this possibility with two explanations.

¹ E.g., *LSB*, 158.



First, they contend that Paul refers to “Scripture” in the singular when citing a specific text, but 1 Cor 15:3 and 1 Cor 15:4 each use the plural, “the Scriptures,” because he is speaking generally about how Christ’s resurrection is in accord with OT categories, rather than in accord with a specific passage. Second, they contend that “according to the Scriptures” in 1 Cor 15:4 modifies “was raised” rather than the temporal reference “on the third day.”² Furthermore, some argue that Hosea’s use of the phrase “on the third day” is a thematic OT motif of God’s action³ and that 6:2 therefore refers merely to God’s action and is not a literal reference to the third day.

A survey of current exegetical commentaries on Hosea does not yield positive support either. The lead commentary on Hosea, written by Francis Andersen and David Noel Freedman, simply comments that

the sequence “two days ... on the third day” is an artistic turn, not a time schedule, though it may reflect the widespread belief that there was a three-day period after death before the final separation of the soul from the body. ...

Hosea reflects the adaptation of individual physical death and resurrection to the experience of the nation, and thus is figurative.⁴

Notice that Andersen and Freedman follow the norm for current exegetical practice in that they understand the text in its original context both historically and literarily. For this, they are to be commended, as understanding the text in its context is indispensable. But unless there is a quotation of a text in a later scriptural text, they do not connect the scriptural dots in ways the dots potentially could be connected; they have a limited matrix for interpretation.

While present-day scholarship generally does not find 6:2 to be prophetic of Christ’s resurrection, the church fathers offer a different story. They regularly and unashamedly read this text as referring to Christ’s resurrection. Before diving into the fathers, I acknowledge my debt to Eugen Pentiu, who brought these texts to the fore in a paper delivered to the 1999 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, a paper that was subsequently published in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*.⁵ While I consulted the fathers in their Latin and Greek texts,⁶ Pentiu’s translations are reflected in what follows. Before turning attention to the church fathers, it is also noteworthy that Targum Jonathan on the prophets, which dates to the second century AD, offers an Aramaic translation of 6:2 that expands on the text significantly. The Targum reads: “He will give

² Ciampa and Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” 744.

³ Cf. Gen 22:3–4; 42:18; Ex 15:22; Josh 22:16; 2 Ki 20:5; Jonah 2:1 (ET 1:17); 2:11 (ET 2:10); Esth 4:16; 5:1.

⁴ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 420.

⁵ Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations.”

⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Oseam Prophetam (Hosea)*, PG 71:9–328; Jerome, *In Osee Prophetam (Hosea)*, PL 25:815–946; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentarius in Oseam Prophetam (Hosea)*, PG 66:123–210; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Enarratio in Oseam Prophetam (Hosea)*, PG 81:1551–1632; Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Expositio in Prophetam Oseam (Hosea)*, PG 126:563–820.

us life in the days of consolations that will come; on the day of the resurrection of the dead, he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.” The context of the second century AD may explain why the Targum would remove the explicit reference to the third day, due to the Christian weight for the phrase. Yet it is interesting that the third day is replaced by “the day of the resurrection of the dead” (בְּיוֹם אֲחֵייתָ בְּחַיֵּיתָ אֵלֶיךָ).

Tertullian, in the early third century AD, may offer the earliest Christian connection between Hosea and the resurrection of Christ.⁷ He makes use of the LXX of Hos 5:15. The prophet delivers Yahweh’s Word that he will return to his own place until the people of Israel acknowledge their guilt, and then “they will seek me earnestly” (שָׁחַרְנֵנִי, 5:15). The Hebrew verb שָׁחַר, translated as “seek wholeheartedly,” is brought into the LXX as ὀρθρίζω, meaning “to get up very early in the morning.” Tertullian sees this early morning seeking of Yahweh as a reference to the myrrh-bearing women who went to the tomb “at early dawn” on the day of Christ’s resurrection (Mk 16:1–2; Lk 24:1).

In the fifth century AD, Theodoret of Cyrus not only connects Hos 6:2 to Christ’s resurrection but also applies it to the resurrection of Christians. Theodoret states: “By these [words] he designates the Savior’s resurrection which occurred after three days, which mediated the universal resurrection, giving all of us the hope in immortality made possible through the knowledge of God.”⁸

In the late eleventh century AD, Theophylact of Bulgaria (also known as Theophylact of Ohrid) expounds on 6:2 as follows, referring to the human nature which Christ assumed in his incarnation and which therefore participated in his resurrection:

Certainly, it alludes to the mystery according to nature. For he has struck the nature in death and gave those who sin to death. But he inserted his Son in the stricken nature, the one who became a cure for the blow of death; he healed and raised us on the third day. For by raising the acquisition he assumed from us, he bestowed upon us all the resurrection, so that we may have it at specific times, and may live. For if one died for all, one also rose for all, so that we may live not far away from him, but being seen in his presence, and having perfect knowledge.⁹

Theophylact further says: “We shall rise on the third day, when the third part of the soul, the reasoning faculty will be quite clearly illuminated through spiritual contemplation. For at that time, we shall live in the presence of God, that is, contemplating him face to face.”¹⁰ Notice how Theophylact, like Theodoret,

⁷ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.43; Tertullian, *Against the Jews*, 13.23.

⁸ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Hosea* (PG 81:1581C–D [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 43]).

⁹ Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Hosea* (PG 126:673C [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 43–44]).

¹⁰ Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Hosea* (PG 126:676A [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 44]).

speaks not only of Christ's resurrection but also of the resurrection of believers in Christ.

This same pattern of connecting 6:2 to Christ's resurrection and then to the resurrection of all who trust in him is found in Jerome (late fourth–early fifth century AD), who wrote:

Therefore, God smote and healed us [Hos 6:1]; for “God reproaches him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” [Heb 12:6]; not only that he cures, but also [that] he gives life after two days, and on the third day rising again from the lower regions, raised along with him the entire humankind. . . . We shall live in his presence; we shall know him and follow zealously to know the Lord, who rose on the third day, so that we may rise. In these sayings one explains what often we were reminded of, that Israel and Judah, namely, those ten and two tribes, should have one shepherd, King David [Ezek 34:23; 37:24], at the time when they will believe in the resurrected Lord.¹¹

Jerome weaves in various other strands of Hosea's prophetic language as he describes how this verse speaks of Christ's resurrection and that of his believers.

In the early fifth century AD, Theodore of Mopsuestia offers a different handling of 6:2 as he speaks not about new life but restoration to former prosperity. Theodore writes: “Thus, he heals us immediately, as in two or three days the longest, in order to restore us to the old prosperity.”¹²

It is Cyril of Alexandria (early fifth century AD) who is most replete in commenting on Christ's resurrection within the prophetic work of Hosea. Cyril does not restrict himself to 6:2 and its immediate context. Referring to Yahweh's promise in 1:5 that he will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel, Cyril comments that “having been laid in the tomb, [Christ] rose again, turning their insidious schemes into nothing, and breaking the bow, he is no longer subject to suffering.”¹³ Then, for 2:2 (ET 1:11), Cyril comments on Hosea's prophecy regarding Israel coming up from the land in the great day of Jezreel with the following: “‘They come up out of the land,’ namely, they live the life of the saints, ‘for great is the day of Jezreel.’ For, indeed, great is the day of Christ, when he will raise to life all the dead.”¹⁴ Here it is not only the resurrection of Christ but also the resurrection of his saints that is view. When Hosea redeems his wife for fifteen shekels of silver in 3:2, Cyril finds a wealth of significance. First, he says silver is a type of the instructive Word. He then divides the fifteen pieces of silver into seven as a reference to the Sabbath and the Mosaic Law and eight

¹¹ Jerome, *Hosea* (PL 25:867 [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 44]).

¹² Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hosea* (PG 66:160C [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 45]).

¹³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Hosea* (PG 71:44 [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 41]).

¹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Hosea* (PG 71:57 [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 41]).

as a reference to Christ’s resurrection on the eighth day (the first day of the new week) so that fifteen refers to the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵

With Cyril of Alexandria finding references to Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of the saints at various places in the early chapters of Hosea, it is not surprising that he finds resurrection in 6:2. Cyril says:

[Healing and restoration] will occur to the mortals not for the first time, not even for the second time, but for the third time, namely, for the last and uttermost time. For all periods of time number three: initial, middle and last, when Christ appeared to us. That is why the very ones say from medical experience: the healing will happen after two days, as the prophetic word measures one day opportune for us. . . . We shall rise together with Christ; and since one died for all, we live His life, not removed from the eyes of God for transgression, nor cast behind for sin, but brought in sight and having confidence in Him for the righteousness in Christ.¹⁶

Much more investigation could and should be done regarding how these examples factor into the whole of each church father’s teaching. For the purposes of this excursus, the quotes above have illustrated the frequency with which the fathers found 6:2 as referring to the resurrection of Christ. For the first millennium AD, it was common for commentators to understand 6:2 in the context of Christ’s resurrection. The fathers are not alone in reading 6:2 in the context of Christ’s resurrection. Martin Luther comments on 6:2: “He is speaking about Christ’s resurrection. . . . Paul glories about this passage when he says that Christ was to rise on the third day [1 Cor 15:4].”¹⁷

Earlier we noted that most current scholarship is at best reluctant to find any Christological significance in 6:2. A closer examination of the primary foci of current exegetical methodology will clarify why so many scholars are so reluctant. Then, after briefly examining 6:2 through current exegetical methodology, we can consider whether we can bridge the gap between the fathers and current exegetical treatment of 6:2.

Two of the primary foci for exegetical methodology today are understanding the text in its historical context and in its literary context. First, let’s consider the historical context of 6:2, a matter to which the fathers do give some attention. Hosea’s eighth-century BC context looms large in his work.¹⁸ Especially prominent for our specific text is the looming threat of Assyria and Tiglath-pileser III, which is underscored by a great deal of military imagery. In 5:8, we hear the blowing of the horn in Gibeah with clear military overtones. In 5:13, the prophet derisively speaks of how Ephraim went to Assyria in search for help but found none. Hos 6:5 further describes Ephraim and Judah being hewn and

¹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *Hosea* (PG 71:105).

¹⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Hosea* (PG 71:164 [trans. Pentiu, “Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations,” 43]).

¹⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Hosea* (AE 18:31).

¹⁸ See “Historical Setting” in the introduction and the commentary on 1:1.

slain under Yahweh's judgment. This historical context sounds a distinct note of judgment, especially as Hosea repeatedly proclaims throughout the whole of his corpus that Israel will not escape the sword of Assyria which comes as judgment against them.

A quick consideration of the literary setting comes to a similar conclusion. The flow of 5:8–6:3 can be described as follows:

- 5:8: Yahweh sounds the alarm for the Syro-Ephraimite War.¹⁹
- 5:9, 11: Yahweh condemns Ephraim, that is, Israel.
- 5:10: Yahweh also condemns Judah.
- 5:12: Yahweh condemns Ephraim and Judah together.
- 5:13: Ephraim and Judah respond to Yahweh's condemnation.
- 5:14: Since Ephraim and Judah do not turn to Yahweh, he will be a lion who will tear them, and no one will be able to rescue them.
- 5:15: Thus, since Ephraim and Judah have not turned in repentance, Yahweh will return to his place, awaiting the time they will repent and seek him.
- 6:1–3: In response, Israel says: "Come, let us return to Yahweh, for he has torn us that he may heal us. ... After two days he will revive us; on the third day, he will raise us up that we may live before him."

Are these words sincere? Have Ephraim and Judah repented? Or is this more of their shallow, false religious response? Horace Hummel describes their words as "a sincere confession," making it possible that they are "predictive of Christ's resurrection." Though he qualifies that verdict by saying that "Paul's reference [1 Cor 15:4] may not be so much to individual passages ... as to the judgment-salvation, death-resurrection pattern throughout the Old Testament."²⁰ With all due respect to Hummel, I contend that Israel's words in 6:1–3 are not the least bit sincere. Yahweh's response in 6:4–11 makes it clear that he does not find their words sincere.

Hos 6:4: "What shall I do with you? ... Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away."

Hos 6:5: "Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth."

The historical context and literary context of 6:2 grant it a clear and distinct sense of the insincere words of impenitent Israel. Judgment lies close at hand. For these words to be understood as prophetic of Christ's resurrection (akin to the understanding of the church fathers) requires a radical transformation. Yet Hosea is a book of transformations. The transformations within Hosea itself are a first reason for understanding that Christ's third-day resurrection stands written according to the Scriptures in 6:2. Such a radical transformation is what Christ does. As Rikk Watts states:

¹⁹ This war was in 734–732 BC. See 2 Ki 16:5–9; Is 7:1–2; 2 Chr 28:1–21.

²⁰ Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 295.

It is objected that Hos. 6:1–2 appears nowhere in early Christian exegesis. . . . However, the Targum sees it as referring to the final resurrection, and the later church fathers saw it as pointing to Christ’s resurrection. . . . To exclude Hosea because it refers to national restoration and not physical resurrection (but then, neither does Dan. 7 or Isa. 53 explicitly speak of physical resurrection) is precisely to miss the point of Jesus’ identification in his person of the Son of Man and the servant with Israel.²¹

It was noted earlier that Targum Jonathan saw 6:2 as pointing toward the resurrection of the dead. Such a teaching is not isolated within Judaism. Rabbinic literature also ties 6:2 with Is 34:4 regarding the replacement of the old creation with the new creation via resurrection. Joshua Moon examines no less than six rabbinic references to Hos 6:2 and concludes that “these references demonstrate a pervasive and consistent view in developed Judaism of 6:2 as embodying the hope of God’s raising his people from death at the last. And all such readings fit Hosea’s interest exactly: YHWH’s exercising his power over death to raise his people to life from the midst of judgment.”²² Again, this is what Christ does.

Consider how the book of Hosea captures Yahweh’s transformative work, a work that comes to fullness in Christ. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer so captures the marital relationship between Yahweh and Israel that both marriages are in view with Yahweh’s Word through Hosea: “she is not my wife, and I am not her husband” (2:4 [ET 2:2]). Yet those words will give way to eschatological promise. “And in that day, declares Yahweh, you will call me ‘my husband’ ” (2:18 [ET 2:16]).

The first child of Hosea and Gomer is named Jezreel, a name that bears the bloody load flowing from the sin of Ahab, Jezebel, and Jehu (1:4). Yet Yahweh brings about eschatological transformation of the name. “And in that day, I will answer, declares Yahweh. . . . And they shall answer Jezreel. And I will sow her for myself in the land” (2:23–25 [ET 2:21–23]). The verbal root of “Jezreel,” the verb “to sow” (זָרַע), is used to promise eschatological blessing.

Hosea and Gomer’s second child is named Lo-Ruḥamah/“No Compassion” (לֹא רַחֲמָה) because Yahweh will not be merciful to Israel (1:6–7), and their third child is named Lo-Ammi/“Not My People” (לֹא עַמִּי) because Israel is not his people, and he is not their God (1:8–9). Yet both names are transformed into eschatological blessings as well. “And in that day, I will answer, declares Yahweh. . . . I will have compassion on Lo-Ruḥamah, and I will say to Lo-Ammi, ‘You are my people’ ” (2:23, 25 [ET 2:21, 23]).

Hosea’s pattern of transformation of Law and judgment to Gospel and grace goes beyond his family. Earlier we considered Israel’s words in 6:1–3, asking whether they were sincere in saying that the people would return to Yahweh. And we heard Yahweh’s assessment that the people’s repentance was short-lived as he declares that their love is like the dew that quickly disappears (6:4).

²¹ Watts, “Mark,” 177.

²² Moon, *Hosea*, 120.

Yet in one of the concluding verses of Hosea (14:6 [ET 14:5]), Yahweh proclaims that he will be dew to Israel in a context in which it is clearly a promise of moisture that replenishes, perhaps underscoring that the slightest grace from Yahweh is great enough to sustain.

Yet another transformation takes place in Yahweh's depiction of himself as a lion. We came across this earlier as we considered the structure of 5:8–6:3. Specifically, in 5:14, Yahweh says that he will be like a lion to Ephraim and Judah, tearing and dragging them off with no one who can rescue them. This is likely playing off Tiglath-pileser's regular depiction of himself as a lion. Here Yahweh's judgment eclipses that of Assyria. Yet in 11:10–11, Yahweh promises that he will roar like a lion and thus his people will come home from Egypt and Assyria. Hosea employs this wonderfully effective rhetoric that transforms prior judgment into promise. We ought not be surprised to find the same dynamic when Hosea is utilized elsewhere in Scripture.

A second reason for understanding that Christ's third-day resurrection stands written according to the Scriptures in 6:2 is the pattern of the transformative usage of Hosea in the NT. Just as Christ's words regarding the sign of Jonah transformed Jonah beyond his eighth-century BC historical and literary context (Mt 12:38–42), so also the NT regularly transforms Hosea beyond his eighth-century BC historical and literary context.

Through Hosea, Yahweh proclaims, "Say to your brothers, 'You are my people,' and to your sisters, 'You have received mercy'" (2:3 [ET 2:1]). In its original context, Yahweh is clearly speaking to Israel as the people of Ephraim and Judah. Yet, when the apostles Peter and Paul harness these words in 1 Pet 2:10 and Rom 9:25–26, they apply them well beyond Ephraim and Judah, including Gentiles, to whom the Lord says, "You are my people." The transformative reality of Christ stretches Hosea beyond his original context.

Similarly, Mt 2:15 proclaims that Hos 11:1, "out of Egypt I called my son," is fulfilled as Joseph takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod until the Lord reveals that the threat is passed, and then his Son, the Christ, comes out of Egypt. In its original context, 11:1 clearly recalls the events of the original exodus. Matthew teaches that Christ transforms the text as he is Israel reduced to one. This grants a specific anchor as Jesus is recapitulating Israel in his own life and ministry. Thus the insincere words of Israel in 6:2 could be read as the sincere words of Israel reduced to one, Jesus Christ, who trusts his Father to raise him on the third day.

One more example of the transformative reality of Christ bound up in the NT usage of Hosea is found in 13:14. The original context again makes it clear that Hosea is delivering Yahweh's judgment upon Israel. Yahweh says, "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes." Yahweh is calling death and Sheol to visit their plagues and sting upon Israel. Yet Paul harnesses these questions in quite a different direction in 1 Cor 15:55. In Christ and because of his resurrection, the questions

are transformed to proclaim that death and Sheol are neutered and powerless against Christians.

To put it simply, Jesus is Israel reduced to one. He takes 6:2 into himself, transforming Ephraim and Judah’s insincere words to his own perfectly sincere words. While he has no need to “return” to his Father in repentance (6:1), he makes himself one with sinful Israel (Mt 3:5–6, 13–15), becoming sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), so that when he rises from the dead and ascends into heaven, he returns to the Father in our stead, bringing us to the Father along with him. So also Jesus speaks confidently of the third-day resurrection. Jesus is the first-fruit fulfillment of Hos 6:2, with more to come. In Christ, 6:2 becomes our sincere confession of the resurrection. Because Jesus is Israel reduced to one, we can sing with Paul Gerhardt:

Come, You Lost in Strife and Sorrow

Come, you lost in strife and sorrow,	Kommt, ihr traurigen Gemüter,
Come and join in our return	Kommt, wir wollen wiederkehrn
To the Lord whose glorious morrow	Zu dem Herren, dessen Güter
Nothing can destroy or burn.	Kein Verderben kann verzehrn;
God, whose might no mishap brings,	Dessen Macht kein Unglück fällt,
God, whose grace restores all things	Dessen Gnade wieder stellt,
That his zeal did rend and sever;	Was sein Eifer umgestürzet:
God, whose love abides forever.	Seine Gnad bleibt unverkürzet.
Though we now are torn asunder,	Zwar hat er uns ja zerrissen
Though God’s face turns dark and dim,	Mit ergrimtem Angesicht
Though we’ve felt God’s wrath and thunder,	Und uns, da er uns geschmissen,
Seen our lives grow harsh and grim,	Sehr erbärmlich zugericht’t.
Yet our hearts are undismayed,	Doch deswegen unversagt!
For the one from whom we’ve strayed	Eben der uns schlägt und plagt,
Will bind up our wounds and bruises,	Wird die Wunden unsrer Sünden
Earned by sin that grace refuses.	Wieder heilen und verbinden.
Every ill to which we’re captive	Alle Not, die uns umfangen,
Breaks apart by God’s strong arm;	Springt vor seinem Arm entzwei;
Two days pass and God turns restive,	Wenn zwei Tage sind vergangen,
Freeing us from death and harm.	Macht er uns vom Tode frei,
When the third day’s light breaks through,	Daß wir, wenn des dritten Licht
Everything is made anew;	Durch des Himmels Fenster bricht,
Now we stand, restored and living,	Fröhlich auf erneurter Erden
In the new life God is giving.	Vor ihm stehn und leben werden.

Now we meditate and ponder,
 As we look with sharpened eye
 On the gifts of grace and wonder
 Given from above the sky;
 Just to these and these alone,
 These great blessings we've been shown,
 We direct our thoughts and gazes,
 Our confession and our praises.

Alsdann wird man acht drauf haben
 Und mit großem Fleiße sehn,
 Was für Wundergnad und Gaben
 Uns von obenher geschehn.
 Da wird dieses nur allein
 Unsers Herzens Sorge sein,
 Daß wir Gott, des wir uns nennen,
 Mögen recht und wohl erkennen.

God appears now as the dawning
 Of a day made fresh and bright,
 Over which the whole world fawning
 Sings in joy and great delight.
 God comes now—and just in time—
 Bringing blessing, strength sublime,
 Like the rain, the earth refreshing,
 All things in new hope enmeshing.

Denn er wird sich zu uns machen
 Wie die schöne Morgenröt,
 Über welche Lust und Lachen
 Bei der ganzen Welt entsteht.
 Er wird kommen uns zur Freud
 Eben zu der rechten Zeit,
 Voller süßen Kraft und Segen,
 Wie die früh und spaten Regen.

You my children, you I cherish,
 You I give new life, rebirth,
 You, in grace, I shield and nourish,
 Like the clouds above the earth;
 Silv'ry clouds that bear cool dew
 In the morning, clean and new,
 Shading you from sun's fierce burning,
 Satisfying all your yearning.

Ach, wie will ich dich ergötzen,
 O mein hochgeliebtes Volk!
 Meine Gnade soll dich netzen
 Wie ein ausgespannte Wolk,
 Eine Wolke, die das Feld,
 Wann der Morgen weckt die Welt
 Und die Sonne noch nicht leuchtet,
 Mit dem frischen Tau befeuchtet.²³

²³ Gaiser, “‘Come, You Lost in Strife and Sorrow’: Paul Gerhardt’s Hymn Paraphrase of Hosea 6:1–3” (*Word and World* 28 [2008]: 177–81). Translation copyright © 2008 Frederick J. Gaiser. Used by permission. The German text, which is in the public domain, is reproduced from Paul Gerhardt, *Wach auf, mein Herz, und singe: Vollständige Ausgabe seiner Lieder und Gedichte* (ed. Eberhard von Cranach-Sichart; Wuppertal, Germany: Brockhaus, 2004): 209–10. Tune: WIE DER HIRSCH IM GROSSEN DÜRSTEN OF ZION KLAGT MIT ANGST UND SCHMERZEN OF FREU DICH SEHR, O MEINE SEELE (87 87 77 88).