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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

METAPHORS AND SIMILES FOR YAHWEH IN HOSEA 14:2-9 (1-8)
A STUDY OF HOSEANIC PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Bernhard Oestreich

January 1997

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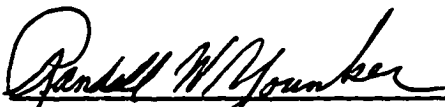
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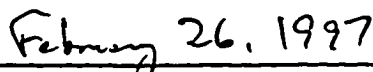
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ABSTRACT

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A STUDY OF HOSEANIC PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

by

Bernhard Oestreich

Adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

**Title: METAPHORS AND SIMILES FOR YAHWEH IN HOSEA 14:2-9 (1-8):
A STUDY OF HOSEANIC PICTORIAL LANGUAGE**

Name of researcher: Bernhard Oestreich

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Date completed: January 1997

Problem

Compared with the effort to interpret other parts of the book of Hosea, especially the first three chapters, the final chapter has been rather neglected. Additionally, the variety of explanations offered for certain biblical images in Hos 14 indicates a necessity to clarify the methods of interpretation of biblical metaphorical language.

Method

Chapter 1 clarifies the theory of metaphors on which the study is based. Chapter 2 determines the limitation and the structure of the passage Hos 2:2-9 (Eng.

1-8). In chapters 3 to 6 the metaphors and similes of this passage which refer to Yahweh, i.e., “healing,” “loving,” “dew,” and “tree,” are investigated in turn.

According to the results of modern linguistics, metaphors and similes are investigated as phenomena of language based on the Old Testament as their immediate cultural and linguistic context and, if necessary, on figurative speech of the ancient Near East. The language traditions of the metaphors are studied. On this background the actual usage in the book of Hosea with its twists, alterations, and reversals is interpreted.

Results

The study demonstrates that Hosea's metaphors and similes are deeply rooted in Israelite language traditions.

An interpretation based on mythology or cult practices, that understands the metaphors in some sense as a literal description of Hosea's or the people's experience, is rejected because it is not supported by the texts and because it implies a devaluation of the metaphors.

The metaphoric language in Hos 14 suggests that there exists a covenant relationship between Yahweh and His people Israel. Moreover, all the metaphors for Yahweh are traditionally connected with kingship. However, they are used in such a way that they give expression to an eschatological hope with Yahweh as Israel's king. This hope, however, does not downgrade Yahweh's radical judgment.

The use of similes and clusters of metaphors has a rational effect and demonstrates how the prophet argues with his audience.

Conclusions

Biblical metaphors and similes must be interpreted on the background of their language conventions. The particular characteristic of the use of the metaphor becomes clear and can only be appreciated in comparison to its conventions. The study of convention and actual usage yields the appropriate interpretation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHAW.PH	Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , Prichard, ed.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BEvTh	Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie
BHH	<i>Biblisch Historisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Reicke and Rost, eds.
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft von Altem und Neuen Testament
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>

<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTA</i>	Herdner, Andrée: <i>Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques Découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929-1939</i>
<i>CThM</i>	Calwer Theologische Monographien
<i>ÉTR</i>	<i>Études Théologiques et Religieuses</i>
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>FRLANT</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HAT</i>	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>HSM</i>	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HThR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNWSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOT, Suppl. Ser.</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KAT</i>	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>KAJ</i>	Erich Ebeling, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur Juristischen Inhalts</i>

MEOL	Mededelingen en Verhandelingen van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap „Ex Oriente Lux“
<i>MThZ</i>	<i>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Theologique</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>OTSt</i>	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
OTWSA	Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevSR</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i>
<i>RHPPhR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
StANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
TB	Theologische Bücherei
<i>THAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , Jenni and Westermann, eds.
<i>ThLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>ThQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalsschrift</i>
<i>ThZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TThSt	Trierer Theologische Studien
<i>TThZ</i>	<i>Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , Botterweck, Fabry, and Ringgren, eds.
UBL	Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur

<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VT Suppl.	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZEE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

PREFACE

This dissertation grew out of an interest in the way the message of God is delivered to humans. During my years of pastoral work, and especially while dealing with questions of homiletics at the Friedensau Theological Graduate School, the linguistic aspects of presenting the biblical message caught my attention. Accordingly, in biblical studies my interest was not only in the content of the message but especially in the linguistic means of presenting it. Dealing with the language conventions employed in divine messages means to approach the miracle which came to its perfection when “the Word became flesh.”

The subject of this dissertation selects one detail of the questions concerning the linguistic aspects of divine messages. First, from the “many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers” the prophetic utterances are selected, and from the prophetic books only one chapter is taken. Second, from the many different means of language only one is selected, i.e., metaphorical speech. It is my conviction and experience that studying one detail will mirror what is present in the whole of Scripture.

During the work on this dissertation I have received much support. I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to those who have aided me or given me financial support to make this work possible. I acknowledge Prof. Gerhard F. Hasel (†) and Prof. Jacques B. Doukhan, chairmen of the doctoral committee, for their encouragement, guidance, and critical comments. I also appreciate the helpful comments of Prof. Leona G. Running and Prof. Jonathan Paulien. I want to express my gratitude

to the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists for the financial support which made this dissertation possible for me. A special word of thanks goes to my wife Hannelore and my children Hildrun, Holger, Guntram, Reglindis, and Raimar for their sacrifices during the years of work on this study. To them this study is dedicated with love. Finally, the greatest indebtedness is to the One whose word this study seeks to understand a little better.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate the pictorial language used in Hos 14:5-9 (Eng. 4-8).¹ As is the case for the book of Hosea in general, pictorial language is also an important feature of this passage. However, a look at the variety of different interpretations of pictorial language indicates a considerable uncertainty as to its meaning. One simile may serve as an example: "I am like an evergreen cypress" (Hos 14:9). What does the text mean? Different explanations have been presented. Does the picture of the tree communicate that the tree gives shadow and protection?² Or, is the tree seen in its freshness and vigor?³ Some scholars connect this thought with Baalism which promised vigor and fertility, and against which Hosea was fighting.⁴ A different

¹In this study, all verse numbers are given according to the Hebrew text.

²Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 24 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 647. Cf. already William Rainey Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 415.

³Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 1: Hosea*, BKAT 14, 1 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 307.

⁴Wolff, *Hosea*, 307; Alfons Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten: Hosea, Joel, Amos* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1981), 63; Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, ATD 24, 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 173.

association is made to the idea of the tree of life.¹ The image of the tree has been derived from love poetry.² It has been claimed that the prophet uses the cypress as an image for stability, either because of its continuous green foliage,³ or because cypress wood is known for its durability and resistance.⁴

This example from the extensive pictorial language of Hos 14:5-9 is more or less typical for the other metaphors and similes used in this passage. The variety of associations, not all of which necessarily exclude each other, reveals the continuing problem of interpretation of metaphors. Which suggestion is correct and why? How is it that the interpretations are so diverse?⁵ These questions call for further research based on proper methodology.

Review of Literature on the Exegesis of Biblical Metaphors

At the beginning a review of literature dealing with Old Testament and especially Hoseanic metaphors and similes is in order. The first section of the review deals with works on Old Testament metaphors in general.

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 307; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 173; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 217.

²Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 63.

³Thus W. Rudolph, who thinks of the tree of life in Paradise. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Hosea*, KAT 13, 1 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), 252.

⁴Theodore Laetsch, *Minor Prophets*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 110.

⁵For the difficulties to understand biblical metaphors, as indicated by the diversity of proposed interpretations, see also Othmar Keel, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben: Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes*, SBS 114/115 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), 11.

Rhetorical Tradition

Older works mostly stand in the rhetorical tradition. They understand the metaphor as a stylistic means and a decoration of language.¹ It serves to address the listener, to stir emotions, and to heighten the language,² but it does not contribute to logical clearness; mostly it obscures it.³ The metaphorical word or phrase can be substituted by a literal expression because of an analogy, which is based on an *analogia entis*. “The use of metaphor is, implicitly, a reasoning by analogy.”⁴ Therefore, it is necessary to study the biblical world with its flora, fauna, customs, values, and feelings, which are the background of metaphors. Most of these older works treat the “images” in a phenomenological manner. They describe the different syntactic forms of metaphors or classify metaphors according to the realm from which the metaphoric term is taken: minerals, plant life, animal life, human affairs, etc.⁵ This classification, which is not very

¹For example, Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 185-203, understands metaphor to be an illustration, a means of rhetoric. He classifies most metaphors as conventional ones, which he considers to be weak: “The fact is that in a good deal of biblical poetry imagery serves rather secondary purposes, or sometimes there is not very much of it, and in any case ‘originality’ of metaphoric invention would not appear to have been a consciously prized poetic value” (p. 189).

²Cf. M. D. Rosner, “The Simile and Its Use in the Old Testament,” *Semitics* 4 (1974): 37-46; Terry Lee Brensinger, “Lions, Wind, and Fire: A Study of Prophetic Similes” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1985), 145-63; Claus Westermann, *Vergleiche und Gleichnisse im Alten und Neuen Testament*, CThM A, 14 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1984), 104.

³Stephen J. Brown, *Image and Truth: Studies in the Imagery of the Bible* (Rome: Officium Libri Catholici - Catholic Book Agency, 1955), 39, 27, 29.

⁴*Ibid.*, 11, 125, 39.

⁵For example, Brensinger, 59-90.

helpful and often disputable,¹ springs—sometimes frankly admitted—from the idea that the domain of experience that serves as a source of metaphors makes it possible to draw conclusions about the person of the author and his situation.²

It will become clear that the rhetorical theory of metaphor leads to unsatisfactory results in the interpretation of metaphors. Thus it is not possible to draw conclusions from the use of metaphorical vehicles to the personality and situation of the user. Metaphoric language is based on language, on semantic fields and image fields, and not primarily on real experience. Rhetorical explanations of metaphors fail to explain the semantic means by which the rhetorical effects are produced.³

¹See the criticism on this method in Luis Alonso-Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, *Subsidia biblica* 11 (Rome: Editrice Ponteficio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 120-21. However, his classifications according to different categories of form and content tend to reduce metaphors to a single word or a few words and isolate them from their context.

²Brown, *Image and Truth*, 23, also 48: "Amos, the Shepherd, will speak of the desert and of flocks." Cf. also Meir Weiss, "Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher dargelegt an Am. 1,2," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967), 21; Helga Weippert, "Amos: Seine Bilder und ihr Milieu," in Helga Weippert, Klaus Seybold, and Manfred Weippert, *Beiträge zur prophetischen Bildsprache in Israel und Assyrien*, OBO 64 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 1-29, cf. 11-12; Johannes Hempel, "Jahwegleichnisse der israelitischen Propheten," *ZAW* 42 (1924): 74-104 = *Apoxyismata: Vorarbeiten zu einer Religionsgeschichte und Theologie des Alten Testaments*, BZAW 81 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), 1-29. More cautious is Brensinger, 60, 69, 83. It is not necessary to have the experience of what is used as a vehicle in a simile, e.g., to have traveled to the seashore ("sands of the sea") or encountered a lion (lion metaphors), experiences quite unusual for most of the people in ancient Israel. "Such typical similes could therefore be adopted from the traditions. . . . Each society has its coined illustrations that are frequently heard or read but not directly experienced" (pp. 84-85). Unfortunately, Brensinger understands these "illustrations" as referring to traditional *experiences*, not to traditional *language*, which can even contradict experience.

³Other works on Old Testament metaphors, which are basically in the rhetorical tradition, include the following: Rudolf Mayer, "Zur Bildersprache der alttestamentlichen Propheten," *MThZ* 1/2 (1950): 55-65; idem, "Sünde und Gericht in der Bildersprache der

Mythological and Cultic Interpretations

Another important method of interpretation of the metaphor can be called the mythological interpretation. Very often this interpretation is connected with a cultic explanation. A prominent representative of this method is I. Engnell.¹ According to him, a long tradition stands behind the similes and metaphors of the ancient Near East. It often has magical and cultic roots. This has to be taken into account when interpreting biblical images.²

For example, concerning the tree image in Ps 1:3 Engnell states: "It is very difficult—in fact, impossible—to say where the distinction between cultic reality, ideology, and pure imagery should be made."³ He continues by connecting the tree motif

vorexilischen Prophetie," *BZ* 8 (1964): 22-44; Harold Fisch, "The Analogy of Nature: A Note on the Structure of Old Testament Imagery," *JThS* 6 (1955): 161-73; G. Johannes Botterweck, "Gott und Mensch in den alttestamentlichen Löwenbildern," in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten: Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler*, ed. Josef Schreiner, Forschung zur Bibel 2 (Würzburg: Echter, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972), 117-28; G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980); Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 26 (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1984), especially 251-72; A. S. Super, "Figures of Comparison in the Book of Amos," *Semitics* 3 (1973): 67-80.

¹Cf. Ivan Engnell, "The Figurative Language of the Old Testament," in *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament by Ivan Engnell*, ed. John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 242-90; idem, "'Knowledge' and 'Life' in the Creation Story," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley in Celebration of His Sixty-fifth Birthday, 24 March 1955*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas, VT Suppl. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 103-19; idem, "'Planted by the Streams of Water': Some Remarks on the Problem of the Interpretation of the Psalms as Illustrated by a Detail in Ps. 1," in *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Dicata* (Haunia: E. Munksgaard, 1953), 85-96.

²Engnell, "Figurative Language," 242-90.

³Ibid., 250; cf. *ibid.*, 249: "One must distinguish between cultic reality, figurative language influenced by cult, mythology, or ideology, and pure metaphors."

with the Tammuz cult: “These motifs are, at one and the same time, cultic realities and symbols for an ideology manifest both in mythology (Gen. 2:9 ff.) and in messianism.”¹ In Hos 14:9 Yahweh is compared to a tree. According to the mythological interpretation, through this simile Hosea claims Yahweh to be the true fertility god—dwelling in, or represented by, a tree—over against all the other deities that have connections with trees.²

Another example is the interpretation of the adultery motif in the book of Hosea. Many scholars claim that this motif is not only a metaphor for the turning to other gods but is at the same time an allusion to the sexual rites of the Baalistic fertility cult. Moreover, since in the Canaanite mythology Baal has consorts and engages in sexual activities, which are enacted in the cult by the worshipers, the term “adultery” in Hosea's accusation would become almost a literal expression.³

This method interprets the metaphors and similes of the Old Testament not as phenomena of language but from some external aspects.⁴ Texts create worlds—known to be fictional or believed to be real—which can be quite different from our normal world, e.g., fairy tales, science fiction worlds, mythological worlds of deities. What would be metaphoric in our real world can be literal in such a text world. Thus the mythological

¹Ibid., 250.

²Cf. *ibid.*, 250, 278, and *passim*.

³Cf. *ibid.*, 267 and *passim*.

⁴Cf. the criticism by Meir Weiss, *The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), 143–48.

interpretation removes the metaphors and takes them as realities in a mythological world.¹

The elimination of the metaphors and their literal interpretation in a mythological context seems to be more satisfactory. The words of a prophet seem more real, more to the point, if he speaks of a tree deity or sexual cult practice instead of a tree metaphor or a metaphor of adultery. But this impression is purchased for a devaluation of metaphoric language.² It is the aim of this study to demonstrate the power of the prophecy of Hosea without devaluating metaphoric language.³

¹This does not mean that a mythological text cannot contain metaphors. This fact does not find adequate consideration in the criticism which Marjo Christina Annete Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*, UBL 88 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990), receives from Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, "Jahwe und seine Aschera": *Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot*, UBL 9 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1992), 165.

²Note Engnell's devaluating expressions concerning metaphors, e.g.: "This [the lamp in 1 Kgs 15:4] is *not purely* figurative language, but refers to a cultic reality . . ." (emphasis mine). Engnell, "Figurative Language," 247. "Here, again [Ps 22], we are dealing with something completely different from the use of imagery in the modern sense, for these are terms used in the tradition for what used to be called a primitive or magical way of understanding and describing reality, and they come from a cultic background which has a highly dramatic ideology. . . . Thus we make a big mistake when we treat the figurative language of the psalms the same throughout and *reduce it to purely* symbolic language" (emphasis mine). *Ibid.*, 251. Cf. the devaluating in Ralph L. Smith, "Major Motifs of Hosea," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 18 (1975/76): 23: "Was this prostitution and adultery real or is Hosea's language *only metaphorical*? Does it refer *only* to the spiritual adultery of Israel in the worship of Baal? . . . Israel's harlotry was actual" (emphasis mine).

³According to Delbert R. Hillers, "The Effective Simile in Biblical Literature," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 185, similes in language are "not so much communication between speaker and hearer as the turning loose of an effective power in the world." He proposes to explain similes as derived from magic actions. His view fails to distinguish between *magic* using analogy and *language* assuming analogy and classifying by it. Hans-Peter

An important aspect of metaphors to which Engnell and other scholars have pointed is the fact that they are rooted in tradition. “Das Gelingen einer Metapher in Wort oder Handlung aber hängt in der Antike viel stärker als heutzutage von sanktionierenden Konventionen ab, die die metaphorische Zuordnung von Sachen und Bildern über lange Zeit hinweg im Rahmen einer gesellschaftlichen Konstitution der sprachlich bewältigten Wirklichkeit verbindlich geregelt erhalten.”¹ If most metaphors are in some way conventional, the images are not to be interpreted primarily from aesthetical perspectives or paraphrased as expressions of emotion. Accordingly, an important part of this study will be the investigation of the traditions of the motifs and metaphors.²

Metaphors Explained According to Iconography

O. Keel illustrates metaphors of the Old Testament with the help of iconographic material of the Ancient Orient.³ This method is based upon the fact that images of iconography and of language are both part of culture. Images result first of all not from reality, they are not simply duplicates of the world, but they result from the interpretation of the world, they are “Weisen des Sehens . . . , Interpretamente,

Müller, *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied*, OBO 56 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 26-29, refers to the mythological background of some metaphors only as linguistic and aesthetic reminiscences and revitalizations of mythological religion of long-ago times, which are unconsciously preserved in language (pp. 49-50).

¹Müller, *Vergleich*, 48.

²Cf. Eva Heßler, “Die Struktur der Bilder bei Deuterocesaja,” *EvTh* 25 (1965): 355, 358.

³Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977).

Vorstellungen, Denkschemata, die außer in Wort- und Bildschöpfungen nirgends greifbar sind.”¹ They must be interpreted according to their use in different contexts and according to the conventions of their usage.² An adequate method to interpret biblical metaphors, therefore, has to be based upon language conventions.³ The study of the *realia* of the world and the situations of life which are used as vehicles in metaphors can only be of help as they reveal how these *realia* and situations have been perceived by the user of these metaphors.

In his study of Canticles Keel points out that the horizon in which the images of this book have to be interpreted is first the Old Testament and Palestine. Keel rejects the attempts to understand the images primarily in the light of Mesopotamian or Egyptian parallels.⁴ This principle can also be applied generally for the exegesis of biblical metaphors. Before resorting to the other cultures of the Ancient Orient the interpreter has to look for the immediate cultural context and see if the metaphor can be understood in this realm.

Keel insists that the images that are used for the description of the parts of the human body in the love songs do not aim at the form but the function and the *dynamis* of

¹Cf. Othmar Keel, “Grundsätzliches und das Neumondemblem zwischen den Bäumen,” *Biblische Notizen* 6 (1978): 44.

²Othmar Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder, gesehen zu werden: Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder*, OBO 122 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), xiii.

³Keel, *Deine Blicke*, 15-16, states that love metaphoric, like most metaphors, is conventional. It typifies the experiences of lovers with the help of conventional motifs.

⁴*Ibid.*, 16-22.

these parts.¹ The metaphors are not only descriptions of a static reality but express an experience, they tell a story. The terms used metaphorically establish a whole concept and bring to mind effects of things, what happens to them, what experiences one has with them, etc.

According to Keel, iconography and literary tradition stand in a complex interaction so that texts can be interpreted with the help of iconography.² However, each has to be studied for its own sake. Keel insists that the images have the right to stand on their own, they have “das Recht, gesehen zu werden.” It is misleading to see an image immediately as an illustration of a text.³ But it would be equally misleading to see the metaphors of a text immediately as a verbal form of iconographic traditions. Iconography cannot be the decisive factor in the interpretation of literary images. Literature has its own traditions which do not necessarily go together with iconographic images and which therefore must first be studied independently. This relativizes all the attempts to explain Old Testament metaphors in the light of the iconographic remains of the Ancient Orient. Metaphors are first of all linguistic phenomena and have to be understood according to the conventions of their use in language.⁴

¹Ibid., 27-30.

²Ibid., 25: “Diese ganze Bilderwelt des Kunsthandwerks ist als Bezugshorizont um so wichtiger, als schriftliche Quellen zur nichtisraelitischen Liebeslyrik aus Palästina fehlen.”

³Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder*, 63, 95; see also xi-xii, 45.

⁴Cf. Manfred Görg, “Schriftwort und Bildkunst: Oder: Hört der Sehende besser?” *Bibel und Kirche* 40 (1985): 173-79.

Semantic Interpretations

Some proponents of literary criticism went beyond the rhetorical interpretation and argued that metaphors have their own say, which cannot be adequately substituted by a literal statement. L. Alonso-Schökel rejects the conception that images serve to dress up ideas, and describes the metaphor as “placing together and interchange of certain qualities.”¹ He continues: “The image brings together and places alongside two beings. When they cannot be distinguished or when one disappears, the image ceases to work.” Then it becomes a lexicalized image, that “due to excessive use has lost its reference to the sense object,” i.e., the vehicle. However, it is difficult to identify if a metaphor is already lexicalized. And one has to bear in mind “that a lexicalized image may regain its sense quality when used by a skilled writer.” “The really adventurous thing is to take up the well-known comparison in order to challenge it.”² As will become obvious, Hosea makes extensive use of this method.

Alonso-Schökel sees a mythological background behind many metaphors.³ Metaphorical personification is seen as a way of dethronement and demythologization of mythological beings. The question arises how the hearer of a metaphor could realize that it is meant as metaphor and not as mythological language.⁴ The decisive factor whether

¹Alonso-Schökel, 99.

²Ibid., 101-2; 107; cf. his example on p. 104.

³For example, *ibid.*, 123-25, the comparison of persons with trees.

⁴Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 146-48, points out that it is difficult and of little help to know a possible mythological origin of a metaphor. Cf. *ibid.*, 26, 147, and *passim*; *idem*, “Methodologisches,” 3, 9-10.

mythological or metaphorical interpretation is appropriate can only be the cultural context of the user and the receiver of the utterance. If this context would still suggest a mythological interpretation, the user of the image could prevent mythological understanding only by some linguistic means, for example, an explanation. The use of the image itself cannot be polemical against mythology.

Alonso-Schökel summarizes his chapter on images with some principles for the study of biblical images. A “comparative analysis is very helpful, if possible diachronic, following the development of an image. . . . Of fundamental importance is the analysis of images and symbols within the work to which they belong.”¹

Another important contribution to the principles of the interpretation of metaphors is the work of M. Weiss.² Weiss points out that the text must not be interpreted according to some external aspects as if it were a shell that contains a core outside the work. Rather it has to be interpreted as it stands with all the details on the basis of the work as a whole.³ Consequently, Weiss rejects an interpretation of metaphors that resorts to conventions or mythology, as if the meaning of a metaphorical

¹Alonso-Schökel, 140. J. Cheryl Exum, “Of Broken Pots, Fluttering Birds and Visions in the Night: Extended Simile and Poetic Technique in Isaiah,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 331-52, investigates similes in Isaiah following Alonso-Schökel. However, no attempt of a diachronic analysis of the images is made. Also following Alonso-Schökel, a survey of similes of the Old Testament is presented by D. F. Payne, “A Perspective on the Use of Simile in the Old Testament,” *Semitics* 1 (1970): 111-125.

²Weiss, “Methodologisches,” 1-25; idem, *Bible from Within*, esp. 130-240.

³Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 26.

passage can be determined by some knowledge from other sources than the text, as if there were a dictionary in which the exact meaning of each metaphor is listed.¹

While Weiss is right to reject the explanation of a metaphorical expression based on its assumed *mythological* background, which would be a *literal* meaning, it seems that he underestimates the importance of the *metaphorical* background and history of metaphors. Conventional metaphors belong to the linguistic knowledge of a cultural community. Only against this background can the individual variation of a metaphor be appreciated. Significantly, in his demonstrations of his methods Weiss carefully compares different occurrences of a conventional metaphor in order to demonstrate the individual features.²

Linguistic Interpretations

More recently some studies on Old Testament metaphors have been presented that make use of the new developments of linguistics of metaphor. They point out that the biblical authors were fully aware that they used metaphorical language.³ Accordingly, these authors interpret metaphors as a means of powerful communication that has to be interpreted as a phenomenon of language. In his investigation of passages

¹Weiss, "Methodologisches," 3-4; cf. idem, *Bible from Within*, 143-48.

²E.g., Amos 1:2; Joel 4:14-17; Jer 25:30; Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 194-240.

³Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen, *Untersuchungen zur allegorischen Rede der Propheten Amos und Jesaja*, BZAW 165 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 347; Korpel, 82-87; Gary Alan Long, "Dead or Alive? Literality and God-Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994): 518-23; similarly Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 77.

of Amos and Isaiah that use allegory, A. J. Børndalen comes to the conclusion that the motifs of Isa 5:1-6 do not stem from the fertility cult, and the vineyard in this text is not used as a metaphor of a woman, although the vineyard motif is used elsewhere in love songs.¹ He takes the images first of all as phenomena of language.² Similarly, M. Z. Brettler investigates an important metaphor of the Old Testament, God as king, and makes the following significant point: “For understanding the metaphor ‘God is king,’ popular perceptions of kingship are more important than the historical realities.”³ He points to the “literary rather than literal aspects of God's kingship, suggesting that entailments of the metaphor such as ‘God becomes king’ need not be actualized in the cult. God becoming king could have been a literary image.” Thus metaphoric language is not taken as an almost literal reference to a cultic reality, e.g., the assumed annual “enthronement festival,”⁴ but is given its own weight.

¹Børndalen, 257-79 and 280-90.

²However, Børndalen, 36-39, builds on Reichling's theory of metaphor (Anton J. B. N. Reichling, *Verzamelde studies over hedendaagsé problemen der taalwetenschap*, 4th ed. [Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1966]) that describes metaphor according to word semantics. This theory reduces the metaphor, even in complex metaphoric structures, to the semantics of single words, which leads to problematic consequences (“unvollziehbare Metaphorik,” *ibid.*, 123), resorts to intuition (*ibid.*, 57), and fails to explain why a speaker uses metaphors at all.

³Marc Zvi Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 76 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 25.

⁴*Ibid.*, 166-67.

One important work in this category is the study by K. Nielsen on the tree metaphor in Isaiah. Following the interaction theory of metaphors by Max Black¹ she understands metaphor as a juxtaposition of two ideas, not only two words, that interact and thus provide a new look at reality. The new understanding of reality then aims at new actions. The metaphor provides new information. It cannot be rendered exhaustively in literal language. Metaphors depend not only on the verbal but also on the cultural context. Both must be considered by the interpreter. Additionally, metaphors have a history and are open for reinterpretations.²

The review of literature so far reveals that for a long time the interpretation of Old Testament metaphors and similes has been determined by the rhetorical tradition that understood metaphors only as an adornment or heightening of language. Other interpretations of metaphors resort to extralinguistic categories like mythology, cult,

¹Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 65 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 47-67.

²Other works that interpret biblical metaphors linguistically include the following: Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*; Carol E. Newsom, "A Maker of Metaphors - Ezekiel's Oracles Against Tyre," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 151-64; Edwin M. Good, "Ezekiel's Ship: Some Extended Metaphors in the Old Testament," *Semitics* 1 (1970): 79-103; Michael Matthew Kaplan, "The Lion in the Hebrew Bible: A Study of a Biblical Metaphor" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1981), 185-86. The work of Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Methodology for Interpreting the Bible*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, no. 19 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), suffers from an inadequate reception of the results of linguistic research of metaphor. In his definition of metaphor he uses analogy as a criterion as if it were something naturally given (p. 49).

magic, psychology,¹ or iconography. These explanations tend to transform metaphoric expressions into literal expressions, which are valid in certain mythological, psychological or iconographical worlds established by the text. Only recently has the treatment of metaphoric language in the Old Testament taken up the results that have been produced by linguistic research of metaphors. Some scholars have dealt with Old Testament metaphors in general. Others have investigated one certain image or image field throughout the Old Testament. What is missing is the investigation of the different metaphors of a certain text in its immediate context.²

Review of Works on Hosea 14

Commentaries

The second section of the review turns to works that deal with metaphors and similes in the book of Hosea. I will begin with the commentaries and then turn to the works on Hoseanic images.

The fact that the book of Hosea is full of images has been widely recognized by commentators.³ According to the rhetorical interpretation of metaphor, in older works

¹For a psychological interpretation of the metaphors of Canticles, see Günter Krinetzki, *Kommentar zum Hohenlied. Bildsprache und theologische Botschaft*, Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie, no. 16 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1981).

²Cf. the criticism and request of Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 26, and his criticism of other works on biblical metaphors on p. 134.

³S. M. Lehrman, "Hosea: Introduction and Commentary," in *The Twelve Prophets: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary*, ed. A. Cohen (Bournemouth: The Soncino Press, 1948), 2; Wolff, *Hosea*, xv; James L. Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 7; Andersen and Freedman, 644.

the great number of images in the book of Hosea is ascribed to the prophet's character and personality¹ and is explained as an illustration.²

H. W. Wolff in his commentary explains the images of Hos 14 in three directions. He has been followed by many others. First, the images provide emotional power to the speech.³ Second, having many parallels with the love songs of Canticles, the images refer back to the theme of love and marriage developed in the first part of Hosea's book.⁴ At the same time they parallel the pictorial language of the Wisdom literature.⁵ Third and most importantly, Wolff refers to the mythology of Hosea's time: "Hoseas Theologie entfaltet sich im Gespräch mit der zeitgenössischen Mythologie, in

¹Harper, cxlv-cxlvii, speaks of Hosea as a person of deep feelings. Similarly Theodore H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, HAT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1954), 2; Lehrman, 2; Mays, 7; Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, vol. 1, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jona*, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 5.

²For example, Robinson and Horst, 54.

³Wolff, *Hosea*, 307: "Der Prophet holt seine Hörer unwiderstehlich hinein in das Klima und die Atmosphäre völlig heilen Lebens." Cf. *ibid.*, xvi.

⁴Wolff, *Hosea*, 302, 306, and *passim*; cf. Craigie, 83. David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 229-30, considers Hos 14:5-9 to be a divine love song clothed in agricultural language. See also Andersen and Freedman, 644; H. D. Beeby, *Grace Abounding: A Commentary on the Book of Hosea*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 183.

⁵Wolff, *Hosea*, xv. Similarly Rudolph, *Hosea*, 252: "Diese Pflanzen- und Baumbilder erinnern mehrfach an die Liebespoesie des Hohen Liedes (Wolff u.a.), man darf aber nicht vergessen, daß sie auch der Weisheitsliteratur nicht fremd sind." Cf. Mays, 188; Beeby, 183.

einem beachtlichen Prozeß von Rezeption und Polemik.”¹ The images are a polemic against Baalism. In his comment on Hos 14:9 he writes concerning the simile comparing Yahweh to a tree: “Noch einmal hat die theologische Polemik Hoseas, jetzt im Widerstreit mit den kanaanäischen Baum- und Orakelkulten, die mit den Sexualriten zusammenhängen (vgl. 4,12 f.), zu einer singulären Formulierung geführt, in ähnlicher Gedankenführung wie in der Frühzeit das Ehegleichnis.”² Especially this interpretation has been widely accepted.³

A different aspect is stressed by D. Stuart's commentary. He explains the message of Hosea consistently under the aspect of the covenant. “Understanding the message of the book of Hosea depends upon understanding the Sinai covenant. . . . Each blessing or curse is based upon a corresponding type in the Mosaic law.”⁴ This is also valid for the imagery of 14:5-9.

The comparisons of Israel's future beauty to that of the olive tree (cf. Jer 16:11) and scent to that of the (cedar) forests of Lebanon (cf. Cant 4:11) is simply one more variation on the theme of covenant blessing as mediated through agricultural bounty commonly expressed in the prophets on the basis

¹Ibid., xviii. Cf. already T. Worden, “The Literary Influence of the Ugaritic Fertility Myth on the Old Testament,” *VT* 3 (1953): 296-97.

²Wolff, *Hosea*, 307.

³Rudolph, *Hosea*, 49; Mays, 8-10, 188; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 173; Beeby, 3-4; Smith, “Major Motifs,” 22-32; Hans-Winfried Jüngling, “Aspekte des Redens von Gott bei Hosea,” *Theologie und Philosophie* 54 (1979): 335-59; Michael Lee Catlett, “Reversals in Hosea: A Literary Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1988), 213, and many others.

⁴Stuart, 6-7.

of the language of the covenant itself (e.g., Deut 33:13-16; 30:9-10; Jer 33:13; Amos 9:13-14; Joel 3:17, etc.).¹

These different ways of interpretation raise the question on what basis the metaphors and similes should be explained. Especially the question of the background of pictorial language of the last chapter needs to be addressed.

There is another important aspect to be considered. As Wolff compares the marriage metaphor and the simile of Hos 14:9, many commentators note the close connection between the last chapter of the book of Hosea and the previous parts. F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman speak of a “high level of coherence in the composition” of chapters 4-14.² For the images of Hos 14:6-8 they do not only refer to the love theme indicated by connections with Canticles, but they make another point: “The reference to grain, (olive) oil, and wine in vv 7-8 matches the participation of these crops in the eschatological chorus of c 2.”³ H. D. Beeby in his recent commentary on the book of Hosea asks: “Does not ch. 14, by providing a conclusion and consummation to the whole book, therefore present us with a totality, a unity, and a wholeness which has hitherto largely escaped us?”⁴ J. Jeremias in his commentary goes one step further when he says:

Die Einzelworte in der zweiten Hälfte des Hoseabuches sind teilweise so dicht formuliert, daß sich ihr Inhalt nur mit Hilfe sachlich verwandter vorausgehender

¹Ibid., 216. Cf. *ibid.*, 215. The covenant is also presupposed by Mays, 8.

²Andersen and Freedman, 70.

³Ibid., 644. Cf. also Beeby, 183.

⁴Beeby, 185. Cf. Mays, 185; James M. Ward, *Hosea: A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 237.

Hoseaworte erschließt, ohne sie aber unverständlich bleibt . . . ; manche Begriffe in diesen Kapiteln sind aus früheren Zusammenhängen her mit festen Assoziationen “besetzt”, die man nicht verstehen kann, wenn man die Worte isoliert liest.¹

The remarks of several scholars concerning the close connections in the book of Hosea² mandate a systematic study of the pictorial language of Hos 14:5-9³ without

¹Jeremias, *Hosea*, 19. He encourages decoding the message of Hosea not by starting with the marriage of the prophet in the first three chapters, but by analyzing chapters 4-14: “Ich bin der festen Überzeugung, daß der Weg zur Aufschlüsselung der Verkündigung nur der sein kann: von einer Analyse der weit eindeutigeren Kap. 4-14 aus zu den mehrdeutigen Anfangskapiteln zurückschreitend” (p. 7). Although he ascribes Hos 14:2-9 to a later hand, Jeremias is nevertheless impelled to point to contrasting connections between the images of Hos 14:6-9 and other parts of the book (p. 173).

²It has often been stated that the material of the book of Hosea is arranged in such a way that every section is concluded with a passage of hope: Andersen and Freedman, 643; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 26; Mays, 185. Gale A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBLDS 102 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 132, 137, 310-12, has elaborated this aspect under the assumption that it was a final redactor who developed the present arrangement of the book and always employed agricultural imagery in the hope passages.

³Several studies have been presented that deal with the salvation message of Hosea. To this belong the following: Georg Fohrer, “Umkehr und Erlösung beim Propheten Hosea,” in *Studien zur Alttestamentlichen Prophetie (1949-1965)*, BZAW 99 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1967), 222-41; Jörg Jeremias, “Zur Eschatologie des Hoseabuches,” in *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Jörg Jeremias and Lothar Perliß (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 217-34; Dirk Kinet, “Eschatologische Perspektiven im Hoseabuch,” in *Eschatologie: Bibeltheologische und philosophische Studien zum Verhältnis von Erlösungswelt und Wirklichkeitsbewältigung: Festschrift für Engelbert Neuhäusler zur Emeritierung gewidmet von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, ed. R. Kilian et al. (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1981), 41-57; Jeremiah Unterman, “Repentance and Redemption in Hosea,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 541-50; George H. Martin, “The Origin and Function of Restoration Passages in the Book of Hosea” (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985). However, the metaphoric language, although crucial for Hos 14 and other salvation passages, has not received due attention in these studies.

isolating it from other occurrences in the book.¹ It can be expected that careful study of the imagery of the last chapter could become of equal importance to understanding the book of Hosea as is the study of the marriage and adultery imagery in the beginning of the book.

Studies on Hosea's Images

It remains to consider the works which deal especially with the similes and metaphors in the book of Hosea.² According to C. J. Labuschagne, the prophet Hosea “made such an extensive use of similes to expound and illustrate his message.”³ Thus, Labuschagne explains the similes as rhetorical devices. Correspondingly, he groups the similes according to their origin, i.e., animals, plants, natural phenomena, and family life, a typical classification.

According to Labuschagne there are no images that refer to God without the comparative particle *kē*, “like.” A reason is, according to his view, that Hosea wanted to avoid the misunderstanding that Yahweh would be identified with events in nature

¹Catlett, 111-155 and passim, addresses the reversals—for example the opposite meaning of the dew image in Hos 13:3 and 14:6—, which are one integrating factor of the book. His findings “illuminate the structure of the text and show the connections between the various and often apparently dissimilar sections of the book” (p. 222).

²Only after finishing this work did I receive Brigitte Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden von Gott im Hoseabuch*, FRLANT 166 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Göran Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert: Metaphors, Models, and Themes in Hosea 4-14*, Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 43 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1996). Both works while dealing with Hoseanic metaphors in a more general way do not concentrate on chapter 14 and do not affect the conclusions of this study.

³C. J. Labuschagne, “The Similes in the Book of Hosea,” in *Studies on the Book of Hosea: Papers Read at the 7th Meeting Held at Stellenbosch University 1964*, OTWSA (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964-65), 64.

similar to pagan religion.¹ Labuschagne overlooks verbal metaphors which present Yahweh metaphorically as husband or father, and which are used without any hint of figurative language. It seems that Hosea was not afraid of being misunderstood and had other reasons to employ similes frequently.

Another important study is the dissertation by P. A. Kruger.² His aim is to investigate the function and meaning of certain metaphors and similes in the book of Hosea. He deals with those which are, in his opinion, selected by the prophet on the basis of the background of the Canaanite world,³ such as the marriage metaphor, the vine metaphor, the image of father and son, and the simile of dew and tree. Kruger assumes that Hosea takes up Canaanite conceptions in order to gain the interest of his listeners, to beat his opponents at their own game, and "by employing certain Canaanite mytholog-
mena (to present) Yahwism in a new way."⁴ His methodology is sensitive to the time and culture for which the prophet coined his message. Accordingly, Kruger presents important and valuable comparative material from the Old Testament and the ancient Near East.

¹Ibid., 76. He is followed by Paul Albertus Kruger, "Prophetic Imagery: On Metaphors and Similes in the Book of Hosea," *JNWSL* 14 (1988): 149.

²Paul Albertus Kruger, "The Relationship between Yahweh and Israel as Expressed by Certain Metaphors and Similes in the Book of Hosea" (D.Lit. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1983). Cf. also idem, "Prophetic Imagery," 143-51; idem, "The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea 2:4-17 against Its Ancient Near Eastern Background," *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1992): 7-25; idem, "Israel, the Harlot (Hos. 2:4-9)," *JNWSL* 11 (1983): 107-17.

³Cf. above p. 18.

⁴Cf. Kruger, "Relationship," 262, 274.

Kruger's study suffers from two problems: First, his approach and selection of metaphors and similes can only confirm his preconceived notion that the images take up Canaanite conceptions. A possible Israelite background of the images is excluded from the beginning. Second, he takes the images as something traditional and does not give due attention to the individuality and peculiarity of each usage of an image itself, and within the context of adjacent images.¹

A more philosophical approach is found in the paper by K. Nandrasky on the images in the book of Hosea.² According to him the images in the book of Hosea have a twofold effect: First, they make visible what otherwise would be abstract or perceptible only by other senses than the eyes ("Visualisierung"). Second, they result in a reduction of size, as if one would step back in order to have a greater overview at the expense of seeing everything smaller ("Minifikation"). Nandrasky's suggestion offers an alternative to the often repeated notion that metaphorical language results from experience and emotion. To make things visible and to receive an overview are more intellectual than emotional acts.

Recently P. J. Botha presented a survey of the use of analogy in Hosea. His special emphasis is the use of simile and metaphor as a speech act. From the cultural

¹In a later study Kruger (Paul Albertus Kruger, "Yahweh's Generous Love: Eschatological Expectations in Hosea 14:2-9," *Old Testament Essays* 1 [1988]: 27-48) deals especially with Hos 14. Here he takes the chapter as a later addition to the book of Hosea and relates the tree image in Hos 14:9 not to Yahweh but to Israel.

²Karol Nandrasky, "Die Anschauungsweise und Logik in der metaphorischen Ausdrucksweise des Propheten Hosea," *Linguistica Biblica* 54 (1983): 61-96; idem, "The Noetic Value of the Metaphoric Way of Expression in the Bible," *Communio Viatorum* 23 (1980): 211-27.

background of the vehicles which are used by Hosea, Botha concludes that the images rest on the experience of the listeners of an agricultural setting¹ and result in an integration of theology and life, of ethics and existence. "The extensive use of similes results in the creation of a theology which is intertwined with human life."² Botha's survey suffers from the lack of a clear definition of metaphor. Aspects of several theories are combined. Pragmatic aspects are considered in isolation from semantic aspects. A linguistic tradition of the similes and metaphors is not considered.

In her dissertation on the marriage and adultery metaphor in the book of Hosea, E. J. Adler uses results of linguistic research on metaphor. She follows Black and Soskice and investigates the "associated commonplaces" of the metaphoric vehicle in order to explain Hosea's use of metaphors. On the other hand, she also remains with the rhetorical tradition of metaphor, taking the analogies between the marriage bond and the covenant between Yahweh and Israel as ontological presuppositions for the metaphor.³

K. A. Tångberg investigates the symbolic value of the tree image of Hos 14:9. His conclusion is that "no doubt the use of tree symbolism in Hosea 14,9 reflects the common association of kingship-divinity-fertility in the Ancient Near East."⁴

¹P. J. Botha, "The Communicative Function of Comparison in Hosea," *Old Testament Essays* 6 (1993): 73.

²Ibid., 63.

³Elaine June Adler, "The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., Berkeley, 1989).

⁴K. Arvid Tångberg, "I Am Like an Evergreen Fir; From Me Comes Your Fruit': Notes on Meaning and Symbolism in Hosea 14, 9b (MT)," *SJOT* 2 (1989): 91.

A quite different approach to the figurative language in Hos 14 is demonstrated by H. Grün-Rath.¹ He points out that the images of Hos 14 have to be interpreted as a whole. There is not only a great number of different metaphors and similes, but the images are in relation to each other and form a network.

Similar to the works on metaphors in the Old Testament in general, there are three main approaches to the images of Hosea: the rhetorical approach, the cultic approach, and the covenantal approach. The first treats the figurative language only as an adornment of language and thus devaluates the metaphors. Also the second devaluates the metaphors and interprets them in the sense of literal cultic or mythological speech. The third presupposes an ontological analogy between the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and the vehicles in Hosea's imagery. What is missing is a consistently linguistic approach that takes the metaphors of Hosea for what they are, primarily linguistic phenomena. There is also no detailed investigation of the pictorial language of Hos 14:5-9. This study will try to fill this gap. It investigates the different metaphors and similes and treats them not in isolation from each other but as a whole. It seeks to make a contribution to an understanding of the final part of the book of Hosea and more generally to the understanding of pictorial language in Hosea and beyond.

¹Harald Grün-Rath, "‘Ich wirke wie Tau für Israel’: Theologie als Poesie in prophetischer Rede am Beispiel von Hosea 14,5-9," in *Lobet Gott: Beiträge zur theologischen Ästhetik: Festschrift Rudolf Bohren zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Seim and L. Steiger (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1990), 61-68.

On the Interpretation of Metaphors

Before turning to the metaphors of Hos 14 it is necessary to introduce some important terms, to clarify why an expression is considered as metaphoric, and to draw some conclusions for the interpretation of metaphors.¹ Basically I follow the theories of metaphor presented by H. Weinrich and E. F. Kittay.²

1. Words constitute “semantic fields,” structured content domains of the language in which the words are related to each other by affinity and contrast. Every term in the semantic field has its place only in relation to the other terms.³ The structures

¹Important works on metaphor of the last decades include the following: Max Black, “Metaphor,” in *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 22-47; idem, “More About Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19-43; Wilhelm Köller, *Semiotik und Metapher: Untersuchungen zur grammatischen Struktur und kommunikativen Funktion von Metaphern*, Studien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, no. 10 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlar, 1975); Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Werner Kügler, *Zur Pragmatik der Metapher: Metaphernmodelle und historische Paradigmen*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, ser. 13, no. 89 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984); Earl R. MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* (London: Bradford, 1985); also the works of H. Weinrich (see next note). For a review of the history of research of metaphor, see Anselm Haverkamp, ed., *Theorie der Metapher*, WdF 389 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983).

²Harald Weinrich, *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976); Harald Weinrich et al., “Die Metapher (Bochumer Diskussion),” *Poetica* 2 (1968): 100-130; Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Kittay somewhat neglects the important aspect of conventional metaphors. She ignores the results of Weinrich, Köller, also Friedrich Keller-Bauer, *Metaphorisches Verstehen: Eine linguistische Rekonstruktion metaphorischer Kommunikation*, Linguistische Arbeiten, no. 142 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1984).

³Kittay, 122, 223, 215; Köller, 104.

of semantic fields reflect the structures we impose upon certain parts of our world. Therefore, language not only refers to our world, it is at the same time a means to represent how we perceive and structure our world.

The semantic field describes in a general way *what we speak about*.¹

Meaningful communication remains within the semantic field unless the communication requires a change or the change is otherwise indicated.² In other words, the context establishes a semantic expectation of what terms can be used and in what sense ambiguous terms should be understood.³

2. The decisive criterion of metaphor is the fact that, in one context with its semantic field, words are used which constitute another semantic field.⁴ Weinrich defines metaphor as “ein Wort in einem konterdeterminierenden Kontext.”⁵ Thus two components constitute a metaphor. The first is the *topic*, which means what is spoken about in the context of the metaphor and what is also spoken about with the

¹Cf. Kittay, 214-57. According to Harald Weinrich, “Allgemeine Semantik der Metapher,” in *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), 317-27, every word does not have an existence for itself but belongs to a “Wortfeld.” Weinrich follows Jost Trier, “Altes und Neues vom sprachlichen Feld,” in *Wortfeldforschung: Zur Geschichte und Theorie des sprachlichen Feldes*, ed. L. Schmidt, WdF 250 (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 453-64.

²Cf. Kittay, 303-6.

³Weinrich, “Allgemeine Semantik,” 318: The meaning of a word is “Determinationserwartung.” Cf. Kittay, 55, 107-13; Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 290.

⁴Kittay, 70; Harald Weinrich, “Münze und Wort: Untersuchungen an einem Bildfeld,” in *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), 283: “Koppelung zweier sprachlicher Sinnbezirke.”

⁵Weinrich, “Allgemeine Semantik,” 320; Weinrich et al., “Bochumer Diskussion,” 100, 107. Cf. Kittay, 65.

metaphorically used word(s) in this specific context. The context of the metaphor is also called the *frame*. The second is the *vehicle*, which is what the metaphorically used word(s), sentence, or passage speaks about if understood literally.¹ The whole system of topic and vehicle is the *metaphor*.² Metaphors are recognized because of the semantic incongruity³ or because taken literally in their immediate context they would not be appropriate in the communication.⁴

Vehicle and topic are effective as representatives of incongruent semantic fields, which are held together in the mind. Each semantic field, which can be represented by different terms, establishes a whole concept and brings to mind episodes, effects, experiences, etc. Thus the metaphor is dynamic; it is not a single word, not a comparison of attributes, but the application of a little story.⁵

¹I adopt here Kittay's terminology, which is derived from Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 100 (*tenor* and *vehicle*); Black, "Metaphor," 28 (*frame* and *focus*); Andrew Ortony, "The Role of Similarity in Similes and Metaphors," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 189 (*topic* and *vehicle*). See Kittay, 26, 64-68, and *passim*.

²Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 116.

³Cf. Black, "More about Metaphor," 34-36; Kittay, 68-69, cf. also 74-75.

⁴Black, "More About Metaphor," 36, mentions such reasons as banality, pointlessness, lack of congruence with the surrounding text and nonverbal setting. Cf. Herbert Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *The Logic of Grammar*, ed. D. Davidson and G. Harman (Encino, NM: Dickenson, 1975), 64-75. Another reason, which is mostly overlooked, is that the metaphorical use of a word or phrase is already firmly established in the context so that a literal usage would be a deviation.

⁵This is one of the flaws of the description of Aristotle, *Poetics*, 457b, who defined metaphor as "a transfer of a foreign word." Although Weinrich defined the metaphor as "ein Wort in einem konterdeterminierenden Kontext" he later enlarges the metaphor to the word in its context and insists that the metaphorically used word brings with it the whole "Wort-

Weinrich has shown that the two fields constitute an *image field* ("Bildfeld").¹ To this image field belong all the metaphors which the many terms of the two semantic fields can create.²

3. A metaphor is not possible without a context. "Only in a sentence we can tell whether a given word is used literally or metaphorically."³ The context establishes the semantic field of the topic that constitutes the semantic expectation and often also the semantic field of the metaphorically used term(s).⁴ The extralinguistic situation belongs to the context that helps to determine the topic of the text. The text has a pragmatic component.⁵

feld." Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 116-17, 125. One of the first who overcame the limitation of word semantics in his theory of metaphor was Black, "Metaphor," 28-29. Black, "More About Metaphor," 28: The vehicle is "a system rather than an individual thing."

¹Weinrich, "Allgemeine Semantik," 317-27. Black, "More About Metaphor," 25, speaks of a "metaphor-theme . . . as an abstraction from the metaphorical statements in which it does or might occur. A metaphor-theme is available for repeated use, adaptation, and modification by a variety of speakers or thinkers on any number of specific occasions."

²Weinrich gives an example in "Münze und Wort," 276-90.

³Kittay, 23, 101-4. Cf. Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 108; Weinrich, "Allgemeine Semantik," 319; Black, "More About Metaphor," 25; MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory*, 94; especially Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 128-33, 291.

⁴Kittay, 164-65.

⁵Weinrich, "Allgemeine Semantik," 319. Cf. Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 117-18; Harald Weinrich, "Streit um Metaphern," in *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), 328-41; Köller, 173, 214.

Also the kind of text is an important factor that determines the semantic expectation and the establishment of a metaphor.¹ What is metaphoric in a text about our real world may be literal language in a fairy tale.²

4. "The meaning of a metaphor arises from an interplay of these components," i.e., topic and vehicle.³ Kittay determines the nature of this interplay in the following way: "In metaphor what is transferred are the relations which pertain within one semantic field to a second, distinct content domain."⁴ In the metaphor the semantic field of the vehicle imposes its structures—its contrasts, its graduated differences, its inner relations—on the semantic field of the topic.⁵

The transfer of relationships of semantic fields in the metaphoric process results in the reconceptualization of the world, an act comparable with classification and abstraction.⁶ This is the cognitive value of metaphor.

The cognitive force of metaphor comes, not from providing new information about the world, rather from a (re)conceptualization of information that is already available to us. Information which is not articulated and conceptualized is of little cognitive importance. Metaphor is a primary way in which we

¹Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 117.

²Cf. Kittay, 85-88.

³Kittay, 36. This is the basic idea of the interaction theory of metaphor.

⁴Ibid. However, she qualifies later (p. 175) that mostly only certain aspects of the topic's field are reconceptualized by the vehicle. Black, "More About Metaphor," 28-29, speaks of "a system of relationships" of the secondary subject (the vehicle) that projects upon the primary subject (the topos) an "implicative complex," a set of "associated implications."

⁵Cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 77: "partially structuring one experience in terms of another."

⁶Köller, 199-205, 331.

accommodate and assimilate information and experience to our conceptual organization of the world. In particular, it is the primary way we accommodate *new* experience. Hence it is at the source of our capacity to learn and at the center of our creative thought. In the process of accommodation and assimilation through metaphor, we gain a needed *epistemic access* to the metaphorical referent.¹

Metaphor is a means to express what is new, to structure what we have encountered in order to gain epistemic access to it. "Because of its special capacity to hint at a truth that cannot be described adequately in terms of general human experience, metaphor is the ideal vehicle to talk about God whom 'no one has ever seen.'"² Religion is expressed in language through a system of metaphors.³

5. If the transfer of structures of the vehicle to the topic is successful, in other words, if the metaphor is accepted, vehicle and topic are now similarly structured. The metaphor teaches one to see a structural analogy between vehicle and topic. To see this analogy for the first time is a creative act. Metaphor postulates similarities more than it

¹Kittay, 39; cf. also 75, 313. Cf. her metaphor of reordering the furniture of a room, pp. 316-23. Cf. Harald Weinrich, "Metaphora memoriae," in *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), 294: "Metaphern . . . haben den Wert von (hypothetischen) Denkmodellen." Cf. Black, "More About Metaphor," 37: "A metaphorical statement can sometimes generate new knowledge and insight by *changing* relationships between the things designated (the principal and subsidiary subjects)." Köller, 199: "daß sie (Metaphern) das usuell gültige System von sprachlichen Kategorisierungen in Frage stellen und zugleich neue Kategorisierungen vornehmen." Cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 139-46.

²Korpel, 77.

³Cf. Albrecht Grözinger, *Die Sprache des Menschen: Ein Handbuch: Grundwissen für Theologinnen und Theologen* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1991), 114-15. For metaphor in theology, see Paul Ricoeur and Eberhard Jüngel, *Metapher: Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache*, Evangelische Theologie Sonderheft (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974); Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*. For an overview, see the essays in Jean-Pierre van Noppen, ed., *Erinnern, um Neues zu sagen: Die Bedeutung der Metapher für die religiöse Sprache* (Frankfurt, M.: Athenaeum Verlag, 1988).

depends on already existing ones.¹ Weinrich states “daß die Metaphern der Sprache erst Analogien stiften, daß also Analogien nicht der Natur abgelesen werden, sondern in die Natur hineingelesen werden als unsere Entwürfe, als unsere Hypothesen. Eine Metapher ist ein Aspekt unserer Weltdeutung.”²

Like metaphor, simile—in contrast to literal comparison—crosses the boundaries of one semantic field.³ In a simile, the word *like* that invites the comparison is itself being used metaphorically.⁴ Because simile is also a metaphoric process, the similes and metaphors of Hosea are considered together in this study.⁵

Nevertheless, there are differences between metaphor and simile. The simile explicitly invites us to see analogies. This makes the simile an effective means to introduce a metaphor for the first time. The new structuring of the world is more intellectually reflected and openly suggested.

¹Cf. Black, “More About Metaphor,” 37. Cf. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 230-31. Aristotle claimed that the metaphor is based on similarity of two things. This has led Quintilian and many others to the conviction that metaphor is nothing else than a condensed or elliptical comparison. For criticism of the comparison theory of metaphor, see Black, “Metaphor,” 22-47; idem, “More About Metaphors,” 19-43. Cf. also Harald Weinrich, “Semantik der kühnen Metapher,” in *Sprache in Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976), 308.

²Weinrich et al., “Bochumer Diskussion,” 119. Cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 147-55.

³Kittay, 18-19; Long, 516-17.

⁴Cf. Kittay, 143; Ortony, “Similarity,” 188-97. Ortony speaks of “nonliteral comparisons” (p. 193). Further: Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 173-80, 197, 248; J. J. A. Mooij, *A Study of Metaphor: On the Nature of Metaphorical Expression, with Special Reference to Their Reference*, North-Holland Linguistic Series 27 (Amsterdam: Nord-Holland Publ. Comp., 1976), 144, 170-71; Lakoff and Johnson, 153.

⁵Several scholars of biblical figurative language have considered metaphor and simile together; for example Korpel, 54-58; Müller, *Vergleich*, 12-13; Caird, 144-45; Soskice, 59; Janet Martin, “Metaphor Amongst Tropes,” *Religious Studies* 17 (1981): 60.

Because metaphor opens up a new perspective of the world, it challenges the listener. This is the reason why metaphors stir emotions. The emotional impact of metaphor is not a quality besides, or even in contrast to, its cognitive value. It is rather a necessary effect of its cognitive power.

6. Every cultural community¹ has a certain stock of metaphorical concepts or image fields which are part of the language convention² and are learned together with the language as means of reference to the more complex aspects and experiences of our life.³ In fact, most of the metaphors are conventional or are new realizations of a conventional image field filling a gap within this image field.⁴

The conventional image fields are linguistic representations of the structures of how we see our world. "The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with

¹Weinrich, "Münze und Wort," 287. Cf. Joan Westenholz and Aage Westenholz, "Help for Rejected Suitors: The Old Akkadian Love Incantation MAD V 8," *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 217-18: "... ordinary literary metaphors, recognized as such by the literary tradition of the culture. These latter were probably the most common sort. Unlike the fixed formulas, they were not limited to one language only, but could be freely shared by all."

²Cf. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Claudia V. Camp, "Metaphor in Feminist Biblical Interpretation: Theoretical Perspectives," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 10-12.

³David E. Rumelhart, "Some Problems with the Notion of Literal Meaning," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 78-90, states that metaphorical language is not a special aspect of language that is only available after literal language is mastered. "Figurative language appears in children's speech from the very beginning." Cf. Jerry L. Morgan, "Observations on the Pragmatics of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 143: "one has to *learn* that 'warm' is used figuratively to mean friendly, responsive, and so on."

⁴Lakoff and Johnson, 52.

the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.”¹ What we judge as truth depends to a large extent upon the basic metaphors, which differ from culture to culture.²

The meaning of a conventional metaphor is understood instantaneously from previous usage.³ It needs no explanation by the speaker and no figuring out via literal understanding and interaction.⁴ Also a metaphor that employs new words but is based on a conventional image field is easily understood, because it is supported by convention and uses its potential.⁵

If the convention also includes the terms by which the image field is evoked, the metaphor tends to become finally a dead metaphor.⁶ At the end the clash between two semantic fields is not felt anymore⁷ because the term belongs now also to the second

¹Ibid., 22; cf. p. 146.

²Ibid., 22-23; 153.

³Cf. Morgan, 141-42.

⁴According to Kügler, 190, the conventional metaphor is understood via substitution, while the new metaphor is interpreted according to the interaction model. Keller-Bauer, 28-32 and passim, supposes that metaphors are understood because of prior usage which is known to the language community and can be reactivated.

⁵Weinrich, “Allgemeine Semantik,” 326-27.

⁶Catachresis is a case of rapid conventionalization of this kind. Cf. Kittay, 298.

⁷Kittay, 286: “A metaphor remains a live (and lively) metaphor as long as the two fields employed in the metaphor are structured differently in some significant manner.”

field.¹ There is a gradual transition from a conventional metaphor to a dead one. Some users of the same language may still realize the two fields while others do not. Dead metaphors can be revived by a word in the context or an elaboration of the metaphor or by a new metaphor of the same image field. It brings to mind the semantic field to which the term originally belonged.² Then both fields are present again and the metaphor is alive.³

When interpreting biblical metaphors the following questions arise: Is it a new metaphor? Is it a new realization of a conventional image field? Or is the metaphor itself a conventional one? If the author creates a new image of speech, then he cannot rely on the knowledge of the audience to know what is meant by the image. He often needs to give some hints along which lines the image is to be understood, and as to what aspects of the image are important in this particular usage. If he employs a conventional image field, he builds on the conventional usage and can use the metaphor in the established way, he can modify the image, shift the emphasis in certain, even unconventional, aspects, he even can reverse the image and contradict the usual meaning. He does all this by using certain words, coloring the concept by attributes, or even employing another image in the context.

¹Ibid., 89: "The dormant double semantic import is either fully forgotten . . . (a genuinely dead metaphor) or for practical linguistic purposes safely disregarded." Cf. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Die Metaphorische Verdrehung," in *Theorie der Metapher*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp, WdF 389 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 15; Earl R. MacCormac, *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1976), 85-86.

²Kittay, 89-91, 142-43.

³Cf. Kügler, 174.

7. How can we determine whether a biblical metaphor is conventionalized or new?

Long offers the following criterion: If the metaphoric expression has parallels in other passages of the Hebrew Bible or other ancient Near Eastern cultures and does not offer a substantially meaningful difference from its parallels, the metaphor is likely to be conventionalized.¹ However, “an expression might have been used in speech long before it occurred graphically.”² We need additional criteria to identify conventionality of metaphors. One could be if the metaphor is introduced in such a way that the audience is given no hint for a figurative understanding but is expected to be able to understand the expression instantaneously as a metaphor. Consequently, close attention will be paid to the introduction of metaphoric expressions.

However, because of the limited data at our disposal we may still incorrectly evaluate metaphors as novel ones which are actually conventionalized. We may even understand dead metaphors as novel or active. As a consequence, the ancient text might in our view be more abundant in metaphors than it actually was for the ancient audience.³

The current interest in biblical metaphor concentrates mainly on the ability of metaphor to say new things and to keep the language open for development. The fact that most metaphors are conventional or belong to a conventionalized image field has not received due attention. What is needed is an investigation of the conventional image fields. Only from

¹Long, 524. Cf. pp. 523-28. However, “an absolute answer is elusive” (p. 524).

²Ibid., 528.

³Alonso-Schökel, 99-100, rejects the common error that “oriental imagination” exaggerates metaphoric language. For example Brown, *Image and Truth*, 45: The Bible is an Oriental book, and all Oriental literature abounds in imagery.

this point the new developments in a metaphor found in the text can be appreciated. Consequently, this study always begins with an investigation of the employed traditions.

8. The semantic field with its relations of affinity and contrast is first of all a system of language and thought. Although it refers to reality outside of language, correctly or incorrectly, it *is* not a reality outside of language. That means that metaphoric language can imply associations and contrasts that contradict experience or reality. Conventional metaphors especially are at the disposal of the language user because of his language knowledge and not necessarily because of personal experience. The frequently found conclusion going from a person's metaphors to his or her situation of life is without warrant.¹

Especially for new metaphors, but also for conventional image fields, we have to investigate how the language user in Old Testament times perceived the employed concept. Our difficulties in understanding ancient metaphors can result from our ignorance of the vehicle, but more often it is a matter of culture.² We may know the thing, concept, or experience which is used as a vehicle, but still we do not know what analogies the metaphor suggests because in our culture we perceive it differently. If we proceed from the "reality" to which the metaphorically used terms refer, we actually

¹Weinrich et al., "Bochumer Diskussion," 101: "Metaphern in einem literarischen Werk müssen vor dem Hintergrund der metaphorischen Tradition interpretiert werden. Ein direkter Rückschluß vom Metapherngebrauch eines Autors auf seine mentale Struktur ist nicht möglich."

²Nielsen, *Hope*, 66: To interpret a metaphor we need "a reasonable knowledge of the notions that are associated in the given culture with the image analyzed. If this is neglected, one risks interpreting the image in the light of one's own preconceptions." Cf. Jean-Pierre van Noppen, "Metapher und Religion," in *Erinnern, um Neues zu sagen*, 45.

proceed from *our concepts* of it. This can be misleading. Tångberg points out: “A modern reader of the Bible might be satisfied with his understanding of Hos 14:9 when he associates the picture of the tree with vitality and glory, but the question is whether the comparison in its original context does not carry more connotations that are connected with traditional use of the language on which the prophet leans.”¹

9. For conventional image fields or conventional metaphors a diachronic study is in order. The study of the background enables us to determine if the metaphor is used conventionally and how far the author deviates from the conventions. We will realize the specific changes and differences of an actual metaphor, stressing a certain aspect, reviving a well-worn metaphor, transforming or reversing it.

The study of the background of a metaphor has to start with the immediate literary context, with the nearest cultural environment. Biblical metaphors have first of all to be explained with the help of biblical parallels, with parallels from Palestine. Parallels from Mesopotamia or Egypt must be considered with caution.

However, the study of the previous occurrences does not fully compensate the fact that we do not share the knowledge of metaphorical convention. A metaphor which for us is open to many interpretations may have had only one clear meaning for the ancient audience because of language conventions unfamiliar to us. Often the context gives us only little help in determining the meaning of a metaphor because the ancient audience did not need such help. All this leads to the incorrect impression that biblical metaphors are exceptionally rich in meaning.

¹Tångberg, 85.

10. An interpretation of a metaphor is an attempt to literally describe its meaning. However, a metaphor cannot be fully substituted by a literal explanation. Any explanation is less precise and comprehensive.¹ Moreover, the literal description is possible only *after* the metaphor has taught its lesson and caused to structure the topic in a new way.²

Method of the Study

From the theoretical consideration of metaphor and its conclusions for the interpretation of Old Testament metaphors, we can now lay down the path of this study. First I will investigate the limitations and the structure of the passage Hos 14:2-9. It will become clear that this text is dominated by some central metaphorical assertions about Yahweh, His actions, and His nature. In order to limit the scope of this study, I will deal only with four major metaphors and similes concerning Yahweh in this text. The investigation of these central sayings will aim to make a contribution towards a thorough understanding of the whole passage. For each metaphor I will proceed in the following way.

1. Identification of Metaphoric Language. The first step will clarify that an expression in the text is used metaphorically; that means that it recalls a semantic field different from the semantic field of the context.

2. Clarification of the Concept Used as the Vehicle. This step will investigate the semantic domain of the vehicle of the metaphor. First I will look at the phenomenon

¹Cf. Köller, 264.

²Paul Ricoeur, "Erzählung, Metapher und Interpretationstheorie," *ZThK* 84 (1987): 242, points out that to explain a metaphor is secondary against the process of understanding it.

that recalls the semantic field, namely the reference to the outside world. However, observation of the phenomena of the world need not be the only source of the image. In addition to, sometimes even in contradiction to, the phenomena, the image is established by what people in general think of it, the general commonplaces. These are revealed by studying the usage in language. Therefore I will deal with the mental and language concept of the vehicle and with its classification, which is the vehicle's cultural component. A clear understanding of the vehicle helps to avoid introducing our own modern concept of it into the ancient text and provides us with some clues as to what could be the intention of the speaker who uses it as an image in speech.

3. **Parallels of the Image in the Book of Hosea.** The third step will decide if we are dealing with a conventional or a new metaphor. To determine whether the image field is conventional I will search for parallels. I will begin with the immediate context, i.e., the book of Hosea. If the metaphor occurs already before Hos 14, I will treat all the relevant texts in the book of Hosea.

4. **Old Testament and Ancient Orient Background of the Metaphor.** I will continue with an investigation of Old Testament and, if necessary, ancient Near East parallels. Before resorting to the other cultures of the Ancient Orient one has to look for the immediate cultural context. Therefore, the Old Testament parallels will be considered more important for the understanding of the metaphors than Mesopotamian or Egyptian parallels.

The investigation of the historical background of a metaphor is no unfailing guide to its correct understanding because the metaphor may have changed its meaning or may be employed without knowledge of its origin. However, the historical

background can provide insight into the conventions of metaphorical usage which are so important for the interpretation of metaphors.

5. The Meaning of the Metaphor in Hos 14: New Aspects and Peculiar Usage.

With the conventional usage in the background, this final part of the study of a metaphor will reveal the congruences and deviations from the conventions and thus the particular meaning of the text in Hos 14.

After the study of the different images of Hos 14, the final task will be to consider the metaphors and similes of the chapter as a whole, as a network of imagery.¹ It is expected that this will contribute to the theological understanding of the last chapter of the book of Hosea and of the whole prophetic book.

¹For the shifting of metaphors in order to structure a complex experience for which one metaphor is not sufficient, see Lakoff and Johnson, 221. For the persuading force of such metaphoric clusters, see Köller, 331.

CHAPTER 2

LIMITATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE PASSAGE HOSEA 14:2-9 (ENG. 1-8)

Limitation of the Text

The passage Hos 14:2-9 is a literary unit in itself. A new section begins with Hos 14:2. This is indicated by the following:

First, the content of the passage differs from what precedes it. In contrast to Hos 13:1-14:1, which is an announcement of judgment, Hos 14:2-9 contains a message of hope and restoration.

The key word for the passage is the root *šûb*. It occurs toward the beginning twice (vss. 2, 3), in the center of the passage twice (vss. 5a, 5c), and once toward the end (vs. 8).

The subject matter of the passage finds expression in appropriate terminology, such as *šûb*, *'hb*, *prh*, *rhm*. All of these words can be found in other parts of the book of Hosea, but not in chap. 13, the preceding passage. In addition to these key words, the passage has a number of words, many of them from the semantic field of plant life, which cannot be found elsewhere in the book of Hosea.¹ This means that Hos 14:2-9 as a unit is clearly distinguished from the preceding chapter and from the rest of the book.

¹Dong Soo Lee, "Studies in the Text and Structure of Hosea 12-14" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1990), 171, lists 11 words.

Several words are common to both Hos 13:1-14:1 and Hos 14:2-9. Nevertheless, the distinction between these passages finds expression in the fact that the words are used in a contrasting manner¹ or in a context of opposite meaning,² thus forming a reversal.³ Reversal is also indicated by contrasting themes in both chapters such as drought (13:5, 15) and abundant moisture (14:6), and a foolish son (13:13) and a pitied orphan (14:4). Contrasts are also formed by the renunciation of what had been Israel's common practice.⁴

The thematic and semantic aspects of the limitation of the text are supported by structural factors. The passage begins with an address to Israel. The nation is called by name. The verbal form is imperative enforced with *h*. This is in contrast with the previous section which is in the imperfect tense.

A fragment from Qumran confirms this delimitation of the text. It shows an empty line after a part of Hos 14:1 and before some words from Hos 14:3.⁵ This is explained best as a beginning of a new line with vs. 2. The fragment would be from the left side of the column, the right side with the remainder of vs. 1 broken away.

¹For example *šûr* (13:7; 14:9), *tal* (13:3; 14:6).

²Renunciation: *ʿwōn* (13:12; 14:2-3), *maʿśēh* (13:2; 14:4) and *ʿsabbîm* (13:2; 14:9); different subject: *yšʿ* (13:4, 10; 14:4).

³Cf. Catlett, 111-15.

⁴Handmade images (13:2; 14:4), power of the king (13:10; 14:4).

⁵Michel Testuz, "Deux Fragments Inédits des Manuscrits de la Mer Morte," *Semitica* 5 (1955): 37-38; Luis Vegas Montaner, *Biblia del Mar Muerto: Profetas Menores: Edición crítica según Manuscritos Hebreos procedentes del Mar Muerto* (Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano," 1980), 7.

Similar considerations lead to the conviction that Hos 14:10 forms a distinct unit separate from 14:2-9.¹ With 14:10 the subject matter again changes. The description of the restoration of Israel ends and the writer reflects on the fact that not all understand the message. The communicative situation also changes in Hos 14:10. In Hos 14:2-9 we find after the call to repentance Israel's announcement of return and Yahweh's promise of salvation. Israel is treated as a whole. In Hos 14:10 the author turns to every single listener or reader in order to ensure that everyone draws the right conclusion from what has been said.

Hos 14:10 contains key words which are well attested in the book of Hosea but do not occur in 14:2-9 (*yd'*, *sdqh*).

Unity of the Passage

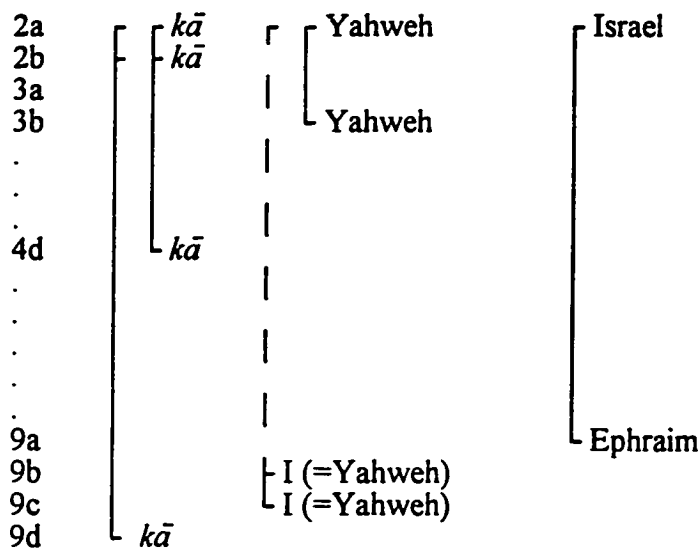
The limitations of the passage suggest that Hos 14:2-9 constitutes a literary unit in itself. This idea is supported by the structure of the unit. Considering the overall structure, we note following facts.

The beginning of the unit shows several structural connections to both the end of the whole passage and its smaller units. Thus, the second person singular suffix *kā*

¹See for example Wolff, *Hosea*, 310-11; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 253; Andersen and Freedman, 648; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 174. Many scholars take this verse as a later addition because of its wisdom motifs. See also Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, BZAW 151 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 129-36. But many thoughts of 14:10 can already be found at other places in the book of Hosea. See C. L. Seow, "Hosea 14:10 and the Foolish People Motif," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 212-24; Lee, 170; Hubbard, 234. Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, vol.1, *Hosea, Joel, Amos* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 235-37, takes the vss. 9-10 to belong together and form the Hoseanic conclusion to the book.

occurs two times in vs. 2 and again in vs. 4 and vs. 9.¹ It forms an inclusion for the whole passage of Hos 14:2-9 and also for the first part of this passage, namely vss. 2-4. Another inclusion is formed by the personal names Israel and Ephraim, respectively.² Both the first part of the passage and the last part are headed by a name. Both names form a parallel, as is the case in Hos 5:3, 5; 10:6; 11:8; 12:1. The name Yahweh sets up an inclusion for a smaller unit, vss. 2-3b. If the twofold "I" in vs. 9 represents Yahweh, as I will argue, the name Yahweh together with the "I" also forms an inclusion for the whole passage.

The structural features noticed so far can be listed in the following way:



The outline shows that vss. 2 and 9 form a threefold inclusion for Hos 14:2-9, in this way indicating the structural unity of the passage. Additional references within

¹“ . . . nur in V.2 zu Beginn und am Abschluß in V.9b wird Israel im Singular von Gott angeredet . . . Die Inklusion soll verdeutlichen, daß das Stück als ganzes, von Anfang bis Ende, Einladung Gottes zur Umkehr ist.” Jeremias, *Hosea*, 169.

²Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 643; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 169; Lee, 228.

the passage produce two more parallels. Vss. 4c and 9a have the words 'ôd and ma 'a'sêh yādēmû / 'a'sabbîm. And vs. 3 and vs. 9 both speak about "fruit." A more detailed investigation of the structure will reveal that vs. 9 serves as a summary and conclusion for the whole passage.

Substructure of the Passage

Considering the substructure of the passage we note a break between vss. 4 and 5. This break is commonly recognized. Most scholars divide the passage into two units: vss. 2-4 and vss. 5-9.¹ For the second part it is mostly assumed that Yahweh is the speaker. But the structure is more complex than this. Wolff divides vss. 5-9 into three subsections: vs. 5, vss. 6-8 and vs. 9.²

The problem which lies in vs. 9a, however, remains: "Ephraim, what have I to do with idols anymore?" Who is the speaker here? If it is Yahweh, as many exegetes suppose, then it should read "what has he (=Ephraim) to do with idols." Because it was Ephraim who dealt with idols, not Yahweh.³ Consequently, the text is often read as *lô*

¹For example: Robinson and Horst, 53; Fohrer, "Umkehr und Erlösung," 230; Wolff, *Hosea*, 302; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 250-51; Andersen and Freedman, 643-44; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 169; Stuart, 212, Ina Willi-Plein, *Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments: Untersuchungen zum literarischen Werden der auf Amos, Hosea und Micha zurückgehenden Bücher im hebräischen Zwölfprophetenbuch*, BZAW 123 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 228-32; Lee, 228.

²Wolff, *Hosea*, 302-3.

³Thus Rudolph, *Hosea*, 249.

(cf. the LXX) instead of *li*¹ or the form *li* is interpreted as an alternative form of third person singular.²

If Ephraim is the speaker, this line stands isolated within the speech of Yahweh, which seems to start in vs. 5 and to end in vs. 9. Is it plausible to assume that the speech of Yahweh is interrupted by line 9a? Robinson³ escapes the problem by regarding vs. 9 as a fragmentary appendix. He divides Hos 14:2-8 into two stanzas: vss. 2-5 and vss. 6-8. Harper⁴ divides Hos 14:2-9 into six strophes, vs. 9 being the last one. However, he arrives at his structure only after he has eliminated several parts of the text as later additions. Duhm suggests eleven stanzas for Hos 14:2-10, each consisting of three lines, removing the second line of vs. 3, the words *yoš' bê bešillô* of vs. 8, and the *'eprayim* in vs. 9.⁵ Another suggestion has been offered by Hubbard⁶ who notes that vs. 9ab does not continue the figurative speech and explains the obvious changes in vs. 9 as coming from a different *Gattung*. He regards vs. 9 as a divine complaint, while he identifies vss. 6-8 as a love song.

If we follow the text as it now stands we find the first unit in vss. 2-4. It contains the call to repentance and the suggested prayer of Israel. In vss. 2-3 several

¹For example Wolff, *Hosea*, 301; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 249; Willi-Plein, 235.

²Willibald Kuhnigk, *Nordwestsemitische Studien zum Hoseabuch*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 27 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 156.

³Robinson and Horst, 53.

⁴Harper, 408.

⁵Bernhard Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten: II: Buch Hosea," *ZAW* 31 (1911): 42.

⁶Hubbard, 229.

lines start with an imperative. In vs. 4 we have Israel's renunciation of the main sins (3x *lō'*) and a final reason for it. The personal suffix *kā*, vs. 2ab and vs. 4d, forms an inclusion around the whole unit. Another envelope is structured by *'^alōhēkā* (vs. 2) and *'^alōhēmū* (vs. 4).

This first unit falls into three stanzas of four lines each.¹ The first stanza has three imperatives and is formed by a double envelope structure with the imperative form of the verb *šūb* and the name Yahweh.

The second stanza is formed by an envelope structure with words of the semantic field of speech: *'imrū* and *s'^apātēmū*. Two lines begin with an imperative form.

The third stanza is distinguished by the threefold denouncing of what have been major sins in Israel's life. All verbal forms are imperfect. The first and last line of the stanza form an envelope by the words *yš'* and *rḥm* which both connote help. The envelope is supported by paronomasia of the first and last lines: *'aššūr* and *'^ašer*.

The three stanzas of the first unit are beautifully connected to each other. The first two form a parallel by having the word *'^awōn* in the second line and the imperative of *lqh* in the beginning of the third line. An antithetical parallel is formed by the verbal forms in the second line: *kšl* (stumble) and *ns'* (lift up). These verbs function like an outline for the whole passage: Israel has fallen and will be lifted up. The first line of the first stanza and the last line of the second are longer than the others and constitute a frame for the two stanzas. In addition to the semantic and grammatical features, the

¹Stuart, 212, understands vss. 2-4 as prose.

parallelism is supported by the similar sound of the beginning of the second and third lines of each stanza, *k* and *q*.¹

The second and third stanzas together form the prayer of Israel. The first and last lines of this prayer appeal to God's mercy (forgiveness and compassion for the orphan), forming an envelope for the promise of good words and the threefold renunciation of sins.²

A link for all three stanzas is the words of the semantic field of speaking. This semantic field forms an envelope for the second stanza, but it is already present in the first (3a) and is repeated in the third (4c).

The next unit is the short speech of Yahweh promising healing and love (vs. 5), containing three lines. We note that this unit is also organized in a pattern of three parts, similar to the first and, as we shall see, also to the following unit. The first two lines of vs. 5 form a parallelism. The first and the last line form an inclusion by the use of the root *šûb*³ and with the personal pronoun suffix with reference to Israel (first in plural, then in singular). The focus is on Yahweh, while the previous (except 4d, see below) and the following unit speak about Israel. There is no simile in this small unit.

There follows a unit (vss. 6-8) which, like the first unit, falls into three stanzas, each ending with the term *l'banôn*. The first two have three lines, the third has four

¹In order to achieve this parallelism in the beginning sound the author may have separated in vs. 3d the *kol* from the *'āwōn*, forming a broken construct chain.

²Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 645; Hubbard, 227. Harper, 412, transfers the line vs. 4d after vs. 3 because *b'kā* refers to the second person of the imperative verbs and the line "interferes with the strophic structure" as Harper constructs it.

³Cf. Yee, 132, who speaks of a chiasmic structure with the root *'hb* in the center. Similarly Lee, 231-32.

lines. The first two stanzas are parallel and display the same structure.¹ We have a pattern similar to the first unit, where the first two stanzas are very similar and the third somewhat different too.

The unit is dominated by seven similes taken from plant life. We can subsume “Lebanon” to plant life because the mountains of Lebanon are renowned for their abundant forests and vegetation. However, the plants mentioned are those which provide food, shade and pleasure to people. The images connote joy and happiness.

All verbs are imperfect; the last lines of stanzas two and three are nominal sentences. The second line of the first stanza and the second-to-last of the third stanza have the root *prh*, “to sprout,” forming an inclusion for the whole unit.

It remains to investigate the structure of vs. 9. It has been noted that this verse does not continue the pattern of the section vss. 6-8 and forms a unit in itself. How is it connected with the rest of the passage? It seems as if the structure of the text can provide a plausible answer to this question. I would like to propose a structuring of the text which to my knowledge has not yet been suggested.² It will have the advantage of reading the text without emendations.

¹Andersen and Freedman, 644, realize the symmetry of vs. 6bc and vs. 7bc, but separate them from vs. 6a, thus suggesting an ABA' pattern with vs. 7a in the center. Lee, 233-34, also sees a chiasmic structure with A=6bc, B=7bc, A'=8cd, but does not include the parts 6a, 7a and 8ab in his structuring.

²However, Hans-Peter Müller, “Imperativ und Verheißung im Alten Testament: Drei Beispiele,” *EvTh* 28 (1968): 561, comes close: “Auch Hos 14,2-9 zerfällt in einen Imperativ (Vv 2-4) und eine Verheißung (Vv 5-8); der abschließende Vers 9 rekapituliert beide.” He divides vss. 2-8, and consequently also vs. 9, into only two parts and overlooks the central role of vs. 5.

The key is provided by the already mentioned parallelisms of vs. 9 to certain lines in vss. 2-8. Vs. 9a parallels vs. 4c. This is manifested first in the word *ʿôd*, which occurs only in these two places in the whole passage. It is also manifested by the mentioning of the “idols,” which are at both places characterized as manufactured by men (roots *ʿśh* and *ʿśb*). Additionally, both lines express Israel's renouncement of idolatry.¹

The second line of vs. 9 is dominated by the divine “I” together with two verbal forms. These formal features are parallel to vs. 5 where Yahweh speaks and announces what He is about to do for His people. Vs. 5 also contains two verbal forms in the first person singular. Both texts speak about Yahweh's beneficial turning to Israel. Especially the verb *ʿnh* (vs. 9) has the connotations of *ʿhb* (vs. 5b), as is obvious in its usage in Hos 2:17.

The two last lines of vs. 9 are characterized by the simile for Yahweh, “I [am] like a luxuriant cypress.” This simile parallels the simile in vs. 6a, “I shall be like the dew for Israel.” It resembles the whole third unit of the passage from vss. 6-8 with its many similes. The word *perî* reminds one of the wine, oil, and grain which play an important

¹Emendation to *lô* would destroy the parallelism to 4c. The first word “Ephraim” is to be taken as the identification of the speaker (with the Targum and Syriac translation). A. S. van der Woude, “Bemerkungen zu einigen umstrittenen Stellen im Zwölfprophetenbuch,” *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor, AOAT 212 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), 484, assumes a dialogue, Ephraim being the first speaker in vs. 9a. The word *ʿni* may have an introductory function as in Qoh 8:2. Andersen and Freedman, 643-44, 647, opt for Yahweh as the speaker of this line but admit the possibility of an “alternating dialogue,” taking the word “Ephraim” as indicating the “dramatis personae,” 644; cf. Hubbard, 232.

role in the description of the conditions of restored Israel in vss. 6-8.¹ *peri* constitutes at the same time a word play with *'eprayim*, forming an inclusion for this unit.²

Therefore, the last unit of Hos 14:2-9 parallels all three previous units and forms a perfect summary of the whole passage. This special function of vs. 9 as a recapitulation of the whole passage explains the fact that the inclusion of *kā* and the mentioning of the divine name which we found in the first unit and in its first stanza, respectively, operate at the same time for the whole passage.³

The text will now be presented in transliteration in order to display the proposed structure of the passage. Bold face is used to highlight parallel words, sounds or thoughts. Those parts that form an *inclusio* are additionally underlined. Thus it becomes visible that the passage consists of a variety of interrelated parts that form an semantic and poetic network.


¹Most scholars interpret the *prym* in vss. 3f. with LXX as fruit: Wolff, *Hosea*, 301; Kuhnigk, 154-56; Andersen and Freedman, 645. It is probably a play on words; cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 248; Willi-Plein, 230. Then the end of vs. 9 would also refer back to the first unit.

²Cf. Yee, 133.

³See above, p. 44.

It follows a translation of the passage. It is presented in such a way that it reflects the proposed outline. Since the aim of this study is not a full exegesis of the passage but its use of metaphoric language for Yahweh, textual criticism is limited to the main problems. Some additional considerations of textual criticism will be presented later when the lines containing similes and metaphors for Yahweh are discussed.

1st unit (vss. 2-4)

1st stanza (vss. 2a-3b)	2a Return, Israel, to Yahweh your God, b for you have stumbled on your guilt. 3a Take words with you b and return to Yahweh	
2nd stanza (vs. 3c-f)	3c Say to him: d Forgive all ¹ guilt, e and accept what is good, ² f and we will offer the fruit of our lips. ³	
3rd stanza (vs. 4)	4a Assyria will not save us, b we will not ride upon horses, c and we will not any more say "Our God" to the works of our hands, d since in you the orphan finds mercy.	

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 301, assumes misreading of *bal* (LXX has *mê*): "Will you not take away guilt?" Rudolph, *Hosea*, 246; Stuart, 211; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 168; take the *kol* adverbially: "Completely forgive guilt." But see Andersen and Freedman, 645.

²Cf. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 168: "our good will." Wolff, *Hosea*, 301, and Rudolph, *Hosea*, 247, take *tôb* as meaning "word," following R. Gordis, "The Text and Meaning of Hos 14:3," *VT* 5 (1955): 88-90. Anderson and Freedman, 645, follow Kuhnigk, 154-55: "Accept (us) O Good One."

³Reading *p^êrîm*, "fruit" (with enclitical *m*). LXX has *karpon cheileôn*. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 301. But it could also be a play on words: The speech is offered instead of the bulls (*pārîm*). Jeremias, *Hosea*, 169: "Die beiden verschiedenen Auffassungen sind kaum Alternativen, sondern ergänzen sich im vermutlich doppelsinnigen Text." Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 248.

2nd unit (vs. 5)

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| 5a | I will heal their apostasy. | ⌈ | |
| b | I will love them voluntarily, | ⌋ | B |
| c | for my wrath has turned away from him. | ⌋ | |

3rd unit (vss. 6-8)

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|---|---|---|
| 1st stanza
(vs. 6) | 6a | I will be like dew for Israel. | ⌈ | |
| | b | He will flourish like a lily | ⌋ | |
| | c | and he will strike his roots like Lebanon. ¹ | ⌋ | C |
| 2nd stanza
(vs. 7) | 7a | His shoots will spread out, | ⌈ | |
| | b | and his splendor will be like the olive tree, | ⌋ | |
| | c | and his fragrance like Lebanon. | ⌋ | |
| 3rd stanza
(vs. 8) | 8a | They will again ² sit in his shade, | ⌈ | |
| | b | they will grow grain. | ⌋ | |
| | c | They will flourish like the vine, | ⌋ | |
| | d | his renown will be like the wine of Lebanon. | ⌋ | |

4th unit (vs. 9)

- | | | | |
|----|---|---|----|
| 9a | Ephraim: What have I to do any more with idols? | ⌋ | A' |
| b | I: I have answered and wached him. | ⌋ | B' |
| c | I am like a luxuriant juniper, | ⌈ | C' |
| d | from me your fruit is found. | ⌋ | |

The proposed outline finds support if we look at the usage of singular and plural pronouns for Israel. In the first lines of the passage the nation is addressed in the singular (vs. 2), then the plural is used for Israel both in the address and in the response of the people (vss. 3-4). But the last line of the nation's confession returns to the

¹To change to *lbnh*, "poplar," is not necessary and destroys the parallelism to 7c and 8d. Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 248.

²Stuart, 216, takes the verb *šûb* as referring to the exile. However, Andersen and Freedman, 647: "The verb *šûb* here is an auxiliary with *y'hayyû* and not a direct description of a return from exile." Differently Robert B. Coote, "Hos 14:8: 'They Who Are Filled with Grain Shall Live,'" *JBL* 93 (1974): 161-73.

singular (*yātôm*). Yahweh's response in vs. 5 speaks of Israel first in the plural but ends with Israel in the singular. The description of the salvation in vss. 6-7 begins with the singular; the plural follows in vs. 8. Vs. 9 returns to the singular for Ephraim. If we place these alternations of singular and plural into the suggested structure of the passage we find the following pattern:

	singular	2	A	}	Small inclusion	}
	plural	3-4c	B		in the first	
	singular	4d	A'	}	unit	
				}		
	plural	5ab	A	}	Chiastic	
	singular	5c	B		structure	
					of the 2nd	
	singular	6, 7	B'		and 3rd unit	
	plural	8	A'	}		
				}		
	singular	9	AA'	}		

The usage of singular and plural for Israel fits perfectly in and supports the suggested structure of the passage. It underlines that vs. 9 is a separate section which resembles the beginning, as we have seen for the usage of the pronoun suffix *kā* and the mentioning of Israel's God (vs. 2 "Yahweh" and vs. 9 "I").

The structure of the passage can be seen in a chiastic order. Units one and three, each with three stanzas, surround the short unit two. The same structure is repeated in unit four. This means that the statements speaking about Yahweh's actions are in the center of the passage. Unit two speaks exclusively of Yahweh. This is intensified by the lines immediately before and after the central unit which also focus on Yahweh. All other lines of the first and third units are concerned with what Israel is, says, or does.

Focus on words, acts or character of:

<u>1st unit</u>	1st stanza,	4 lines	Israel	γ	
	2nd stanza,	4 lines	Israel		A
	3rd stanza,	1-3rd lines 4th line	Israel Yahweh	∩ γ	
<u>2nd unit</u>		1-3rd lines	Yahweh		B
<u>3rd unit</u>	1st stanza,	1st line	Yahweh	∩	
		2-3rd lines	Israel	γ	
	2nd stanza,	3 lines	Israel		A'
	3rd stanza,	4 lines	Israel	∩	
<u>4th unit</u>		1st line	Israel	=	AA
		2nd line	Yahweh	γ	BB
		3rd line	Yahweh	∩	
		4th line	Israel	=	AA'

In a chiasmic structure the emphasis falls on the central section. This means that in Hos 14:2-9 the main point is Yahweh's gracious actions.¹ What is in Yahweh's heart and finds expression in Yahweh's deeds is the source of Israel's repentance (unit 1) and happiness (unit 3). The prophet does not only look into Israel's future; but he also, more importantly, looks into the heart of Yahweh.

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 302, comes from thematic considerations to the same conclusion: "Die Heilungsansage (5) ist die eigentliche Mitte des Stückes."

CHAPTER 3

THE “HEALING” METAPHOR IN HOSEA 14:5 (ENG. 14:4)

Introduction

The first metaphor for Yahweh in Hos 14:2-9 we find in vs. 5:

'rp' mšwbtm.

I will heal their apostasy.

The LXX has *iásomai tàs katoikías autôn*, “I will heal their dwellings.” It has derived the meaning of the object from a form of the root *yšb*, “to sit, to dwell.” Dong Soo Lee assumes a transposition of *š* and *w*; the translator read *mwšbtm* instead of *mšwbtm*.¹ But this would mean that we had to suppose the same consonantal change in both passages where we find the term *mšwbh* in the book of Hosea, because in Hos 11:7 the LXX reads *tês katoikías autoû*, “his dwelling.” It is more likely that the LXX read defective spelling and misunderstood the infrequent word.² The Masoretic text is to be preferred for several reasons. First, the context confirms the Masoretic text while the LXX text is “out of context.”³ Second, the Masoretic text is substantiated by the

¹Lee, 114.

²This is the case also at other places in the book of Hosea. Cf. Friedrich Dingermann, “Massora-Septuaginta der kleinen Propheten: Eine textkritische Studie” (Diss., Würzburg, 1947), 8, 65; Heinz-Dieter Neef, “Der Septuaginta-Text und der Masoreten-Text des Hoseabuches im Vergleich,” *Biblica* 67 (1986): 209, 219.

³Lee, 114.

Vulgate *sanabo contritiones eorum*, “I heal their contrition,” which, however, takes the *mšwbh* in a positive sense.¹ And third, the usage of the word² in Jeremiah and especially the parallel in Jer 3:22 *’erpāh m’šūbotēkem*, “I will heal their apostasies,” secures that *mšwbh* is derived from *šwb*, “to return.” The prophet Jeremiah continues the thoughts of Hosea; and we can suppose that he correctly understood the words of his predecessor.³

Why should the sentence be understood metaphorically? The implied subject of the verb *rp’* is Yahweh. Since Yahweh was known as a God who literally heals the sick, there is so far nothing that could lead to a metaphorical understanding. There are no direct signs that a metaphor is implied.

But the object of Yahweh's healing act is *m’šūbātām*, “their apostasy.” The word *m’šūbāh* does not denote a sickness; it does not belong to the semantic field of sickness and healing, but to the field of personal relationship. If *rp’* is used literally, the object can be a person or in some cases a sickness.⁴ In the sentence *’rp’ mšwbtm* the

¹Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, “Textual Gleanings from the Vulgate to Hosea,” *JQR* 65 (1974/75): 96, suggests that *contritio* is not a translation for a form of the root *šwb* but rather *šbr* and assumes a Hebrew *mšbryhm*.

²H. S. Nyberg, *Studien zum Hoseabuche: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Problems der alttestamentlichen Textkritik*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 6, 1935 (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1935), 110, takes the *mšwbtm* as Yahweh's return to Israel (the suffix would be Gen. obj.) and translates: “ich werde (sie) heilen, indem ich mich ihnen wieder zuwende.” This interpretation supposes that the negative term *mšwbh* was not known to Hosea.

³In Jer 3:22 the LXX like the MT takes the word as derived from the root *šwb* and translates *tà syntrimmata hymôn*. From the Qumran cave 4, one fragment of Hos 14 has been published but vs. 5 is not preserved. Cf. Testuz, 37-39; Montaner, 7.

⁴If the object of *rp’* is a person, the sickness is given with *min* (Lev 13:18, 37; 14:3, 48; 2 Kgs 8:29 parr) or with *l’* (Jer 30:13; Pss 103:3; 147:3). The object is a sickness in Isa 30:26; Jer 3:22; Ps 60:4; figuratively Jer 30:17; Hos 5:13; Jer 6:14; 8:11.

object is neither, and is therefore not expected in the context of literal *rp'*. Two semantic fields or areas of experience are connected, i.e., sickness and relationship.

The Concept of Sickness/Healing in the Old Testament

Healing of Wounds

The Meaning of *rp'*

The word for healing is *rp'*. The original meaning of the root seems to have been “to repair,” “to restore,” “to put together (again).”¹ *rp'* can be used for the change from illness to health, from imperfect to perfection, from a defective to an intact, from an unclean to a clean state.² However, in most occurrences the object of restoration is human or animal health or relevant objects.³ This confirms that the word conventionally denotes “healing,” a usage not related to health may be derived or figurative.⁴

¹M. L. Brown, “*rāpā'*,” *TWAT*, 7:619-20, “wiederherstellen, ganz/heil machen”; Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 3d ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967-90), s.v. *rp'*, 4:1187, “flicken”; H. J. Stoebe, “*rp'*, heilen,” *THAT*, 2:803, “flicken, ausbessern, zusammennähen”; Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 17th ed. (Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg: Springer, 1962), s.v. *rp'*, 769, “flicken, zusammennähen”; Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1973), 135, “flicken, zusammennähen, vereinigen”; Johannes Hempel, “Ich bin der Herr, dein Arzt,” *ThLZ* 82 (1957): 810: “vereinigen”; G. R. Driver, “Linguistic and Textual Problems: Minor Prophets. I,” *JTS* 39 (1938): 162: “binding up a wound.” For the discussion, see Brown, “*rāpā'*,” 617-20.

²Brown, “*rāpā'*,” 620. Cf. also *ibid.*, 622, for the priestly usage in Lev 13:18, 37; 14:3, 48 (skin diseases, moldy houses) and Ezek 47:8-12 (saltwater).

³Water (2 Kgs 2:21, 22; Ezek 47:8, 9, 11), house (Lev 14:48).

⁴2 Kgs 2:21-22; Jer 19:11.

The Context of the Term

The contexts in which the word *rp* ' is used indicate that in Israel the model and paradigm of healing of sickness were the healing of outer wounds.

1. The verb *rp* ' occurs sixty-seven times in the Old Testament. Of the forty-seven cases in which the context speaks about the kind of problem which needs treatment, thirty-four cases have a word which indicates that the sickness has its origin in an act of violence. The context points to all kinds of wounds that need healing.¹ A person is "struck" with leprosy,² Yahweh "strikes" (*nkh*) with ulcers or boils.³ In a similar sense illness is paralleled with being wounded (Ezek 21:19). To the description of general illness in Ps 38:2-11 belong festering wounds (vs. 6).⁴

¹Very often the verb *nkh*, "to strike," or the related noun *makkā* appears together with *rp* '. (With *nkh* in Isa 30:26; Hos 6:1; Deut 28:27; 1 Sam 6:3; Isa 57:17-19; Jer 30:12-17; 33:5-6; 2 Chr 22:6 parr.; 2 Kgs 8:29; 9:15. With *makkā* in Isa 30:26; Jer 15:18; 30:17; 2 Kgs 8:29; 2 Chr 22:6 parr. Cf. also Isa 1:6; 1 Kgs 22:35 for wound.) Other words are *mhs*, "to split," "to wound" (Deut 32:39; Isa 30:26; Job 5:18), *ngp*, "to smite," "to beat," and related nouns (2 Sam 24:21, 25; Num 17:11, 12; Isa 19:22), *sbr*, "to break in pieces," "to hurt" (Ezek 34:4; Zech 11:16; Ps 147:3; cf. also Ezek 30:21 and Isa 61:1), or the related noun *šeber* "wound" (Isa 30:26; Jer 6:14; 8:11; Zech 11:16; Jer 30:12-17; Ps 60:4; also Nah 3:19 has *šeber* and *makkā* parallel). Also can be found *nega* ', "stroke," "plague," from the root *ng* ', "to touch (violently)," "to strike" (Lev 14:3, 48; cf. also Deut 24:8), *hrs*, "to destroy" (1 Kgs 18:30), *pšm*, "to split" (Ps 60:4), *k'b* Hi, "to wound" (Job 5:18), and *hrg*, "to kill" (Eccl 3:3).

²*nega* ' *haššāra* 'at, "stroke of leprosy," in Lev 14:3; cf. also 2 Kgs 15:5 *wyng* ' *YHWH*, "Yahweh smote," and 2 Chr 26:19-20.

³Deut 28:27; also vs. 59 *makkôt gedōlôt*, "big strokes," parallel *holim rā'im*, "bad sicknesses." *nkh*, "to strike," and *palim*, "swellings, tumors," in 1 Sam 5:6, 9, 12.

⁴Cf. Klaus Seybold, *Das Gebet des Kranken im Alten Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bestimmung und Zuordnung der Krankheits- und Heilungspsalmen*, BWANT 99 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), 98-101.

2. The most frequent synonym of *rp'* is *hbš*, "to dress wounds."¹ Again it is the situation of an injured person. Another way of describing healing is *'lh rkh*, "to put on healing," (Jer 30:17; 33:6; also Isa 58:8, Jer 8:22) or *t'lh* (Jer 30:13; also Jer 46:11), which is often translated "plaster" or "bandage," but probably means the new flesh which covers the wound and constitutes its healing.²

3. Of fourteen occurrences of *rp'* which speak of an illness or disease and do not only have the general term *hly*, "sickness," eight have an illness that is visible at the skin.³ This emphasis probably does not reflect that skin diseases were more widespread than others,⁴ but rather indicates the concept and understanding of illness. Diseases with symptoms visible on the skin come closest to the concept of illness in terms of injury.⁵

4. If the means of healing are mentioned, then only⁶ those of outer treatment are found: balm, plaster or bandage, and a cake of figs, which is not eaten but placed on

¹*hbš* occurs together with *rp'* in Isa 30:26; Hos 6:1; Job 5:18; Ezek 34:4; Ps 147:3. Cf. Stoebe, 805.

²Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, s.v. *'rwkh*, 1:82, and s.v. *t'lh*, 4:1628; Paul Humbert, "Maladie et médecine dans l'Ancien Testament," *RHPhR* 44 (1964): 8. Cf. Hermann Grapow, *Grundriß der Medizin der Alten Ägypter*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956), 3:129, the analogous goal of treatment "sich überziehen zu lassen" of the wound in Egypt.

³Mostly leprosy (Num 12:13; Lev 14:3; without *rp'* 2 Kgs 5:3-11, 27), but also ulcers (cf. Deut 28:27), and boils (cf. Deut 28:27; 1 Sam 5:6, 9; 6:4). Other diseases in connection with healing are barrenness (Gen 20:17; 2 Kgs 2:21-22), defective sense organs (Isa 6:10), ill feet (2 Chr 16:12), or an unidentified disease of the bowels, which also results in open wounds (2 Chr 21:15, 19).

⁴Thus Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 143.

⁵Cf. Seybold, 32-33.

⁶The only exception is Ezek 30:21, where the remedy is not specified.

the boil.¹ Two effects of honey are mentioned in Prov 16:24 which parallel sweetness and healthiness. This parallelism includes the soul and body and probably indicates inward and outward usage of honey, suggesting that honey was used for the treatment of wounds.²

5. A more general term used parallel with healing is *hyh*, “to live” (Deut 32:39; 2 Kgs 20:7).³ Sickness threatens life and is the beginning of the way down to the grave or the world of death.⁴ It might have been the experience in Old Testament times that

¹Balm: Jer 8:22; 46:11; 51:8; also Gen 37:25. Cf. R. K. Harrison, *Healing Herbs of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 17-18. Plaster: Job 5:18; Isa 1:6; 30:26; Jer 8:22; 30:13, 17; 33:6; 46:11; Ezek 30:21; 34:4; Hos 6:1. Figs: 2 Kgs 20:7; Isa 38:21.

²For the usage of honey for outer treatment in the medicine of Egypt, see Grapow, *Grundriß*, 2:19, and *ibid.*, 3:128.

³For the same terminology in Babylon in the time of Hammurabi, see Johannes Hunger, *Becherwagsagung bei den Babyloniern*, Leipziger Semitistische Studien, no. 1, 1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1903), 35. For the assumed “medical meaning” of the “tree of life,” see already Ralph Marcus, “The Tree of Life in Proverbs,” *JBL* 62 (1943): 117-20.

⁴Pss 30:3; 103:4. Cf. Seybold, 35-38; Bertrand C. Pryce, “The Resurrection Motif in Hosea 5:8-6:6: An Exegetical Study” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1989), 279. The parallelism of sickness and death can also be found in many extrabiblical texts. For example the Akk. prayer to Ishtar in Walter Beyerlin, *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 134: “Wo Du hinblickst, wird der Tote wieder lebendig, erhebt sich der Kranke.” Cf. also the stele of Nebre, where Amun is praised after a sick son recovered: “Rescuer of him who is in the underworld.” *ANET*, 380-81; D. Winton Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 153. In the Ugaritic text about King Keret, he is called already dead in his sickness. See Johannes C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Religious Texts Translation Series 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 211. For more parallels of the Ancient Orient, see Brown, “*rāpā*,” 622.

often the wound or the sickness led to death (for example, Deut 19:5; 2 Chr 16:12-13).¹ This explains the desperate tone in the prayer of the sick in the Psalms.² It also explains why the sick person turned to a prophet for an oracle to know if life or death is to be expected (2 Kgs 1:2; 20:1).

To summarize: Illness, which confronts a person with an end to life, is perceived as injury caused by violence to the human body, with open wounds or symptoms visible on the skin. Accordingly the Israelites thought of healing in terms of the treatment and healing of outward injury.³

The Persons Involved

Israel's conception of illness supposes that three persons are involved: The one who beats and causes the wounds, the one who is beaten and sick, and the one who heals.

¹Cf. the contrast in Eccl 3:3 "to kill" versus "to heal." Cf. also Georg Fohrer, "Krankheit im Lichte des Alten Testaments," in *Studien zu alttestamentlichen Texten und Themen* (1966-72), BZAW 155 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), 174.

²Cf. Seybold, 34-35.

³Ibid., 32: "Für die Vorstellungen über die *Entstehung* einer Krankheit scheint die Erfahrung mit körperlichen Verletzungen bestimmend gewesen zu sein." Ibid., 33: "Eine Krankheit geht danach auf einen *von außen* kommenden Schlag oder Stoß zurück, der auf den Körper eines Menschen auftrifft und dort Schaden anrichtet" (emphasis of the author). Accordingly, the healer is seen as the surgeon of outer wounds. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 811; idem, *Heilung als Symbol und Wirklichkeit im biblischen Schrifttum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 240-41; Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 135; Fohrer, "Krankheit," 173. It was different in Egypt, where sickness was thought of something material which "goes into" the body and must be brought out. See Grapow, *Grundriß*, 3:26-31, 68-71. Accordingly, the Egyptians were much more concerned with inner diseases. Cf. *ibid.*, 59-64.

1. The sick person according to the Old Testament can be any human being.¹ The plague can hit a city or a people.² But in contrast to deities of Israel's neighbors, it is never Yahweh who gets sick or needs healing.³

2. The concept of sickness in terms of injury leads very naturally to the question of who caused the wounds.⁴ A person can be sick because he was wounded in warfare (2 Kgs 8:29 parr.) or in a private conflict (Exod 21:19) or by accidents (2 Kgs 1:2). Isa 1:5-7, although used in a figurative sense, indicates the possibility of being wounded as a result of punishment of a disobedient son (vs. 2).

According to the conception that illness is seen in the light of being wounded, the Israelites supposed that someone was responsible for the illness even in cases where the problem was not caused by an obvious violent action towards the human body. Then a divine being was assumed to have struck the person with sickness. For the Old Testament it is ultimately only Yahweh who is the cause for these superhuman strokes. If there are other forces supposed or mentioned, they are identified with Yahweh or subordinated to Him.⁵

¹Women (Gen 20:17; Num 12:13) and men, kings (2 Kgs 20), officers (2 Kgs 5:1), and ordinary people (Psalms), aged persons (Gen 48:1; 1 Kgs 13:14) and children (2 Sam 12:15; 1 Kgs 14:1-17; 2 Kgs 4:19-20). For the social implications of sickness and the behavior of the sick person, see Seybold, 48-55.

²The Philistines, 1 Sam 6:3, whole Israel, 2 Sam 24.

³Cf. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 820.

⁴This is in contrast to the modern concept of sickness that emphasizes the malfunction and does not necessarily presuppose someone who is responsible for it.

⁵Exod 12:23; 2 Sam 24:16; 2 Sam 24:1 = 1 Chr 21:1; Job 1:12; 2:6. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 818-19, finds in the Old Testament traces of a tradition that demons

3. The third person involved in the sickness is the one who heals. It is important to understand the role of the healer in Israel in order to comprehend the role Yahweh assumes in Hos 14:5 when He promises: I will heal.

In Mesopotamia and especially Egypt, which was famous for knowledgeable physicians, the physician was a recognized professional practitioner, an accepted specialist.¹ Many healing practices were more magical than rational.² The physician was connected with the cult, often close to the priestly office. But in Israel the priest had no healing function.³ If the illness had a bearing on the cult (leprosy), he served only to diagnose whether the person was sick or well.⁴ There is no mention of an incident in Israel where a sick person turned to a priest for healing.

and bad gods are responsible for illness, which are, however, dominated by Yahweh: Sheol is personified in Hos 13:14, death in Pss 18:6; 116:3, sickness in Job 18:13. For the meaning of "firstborn of death" (Job 18:13), see Georg Fohrer, *Hiob*, KAT 16 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 302-3. An angel of death is mentioned in Prov 16:14. Cf. also Seybold, 40-41.

¹Cf. H. E. Siegerist, *A History of Medicine*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951). For Egypt, see Grapow, *Grundriß*, vols. 1-3. Cf. the laws for the physician's payment in Codex Hammurabi, pars. 215-21, *ANET*, 175.

²In Egypt especially the priests of the goddess Sachmet. Cf. Grapow, *Grundriß*, 3:92-93.

³Gerhard F. Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 197-98. Brown, "*rāpā*," 623: "Das AT steht, was die geringe Anzahl an medizinischen Texten wie das Fehlen eines offiziellen 'religiösen Heilers', in deutlichem Kontrast zur allgemeinen ao. Vorstellung, wie sie in Mesopotamien und Ägypten bezeugt ist." Cf. Hempel, *Heilung als Symbol und Wirklichkeit*, 293.

⁴Lev 13-14. Cf. Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 136; Brown, "*rāpā*," 623 ("Untersuchungs- und Entscheidungsinstanz").

Several times it is reported that a sick person turned to a prophet. The prophet gave an oracle pronouncing whether the sick person would die or recover.¹ He could also pray, that Yahweh might heal the sick person.² But life and death were not in his hand. If the prophet heals, the messenger acts on the authority of Yahweh who sends him.³ If the prophet is expected to be able to heal, then it is because he is close to Yahweh, not because he has a special role as a healer.⁴

Were there specialists, professional healers in Israel? The professional healers mentioned in Gen 50:2 are Egyptians.⁵ The physicians in 2 Chr 16:12 whose help Asa was seeking were probably not Israelites but foreign specialists. Their treatment was a mixture of rational means and pagan magic practices.⁶ For this reason, Asa's action was reproved. In 2 Kgs 8:29 and 2 Chr 22:6 no healers are mentioned. It is possible that the

¹2 Sam 12:1-14; 2 Sam 24:13; 1 Kgs 14:12, 17-18; 2 Kgs 8:7-15; 20:1-7 = Isa 38:1-8; the Philistines: 1 Sam 6:1-19.

²For example Gen 20:17; Num 12:13. For intercession for the sick person, see Seybold, 59-62.

³Healing: 2 Kgs 4:32-41; 5:8-14. Raising the dead: 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:18-37; 13:20-21. In the same sense the prophet can also inflict sickness: 2 Kgs 5:27.

⁴Cf. Herbert Niehr, "JHWH als Arzt: Herkunft und Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gottesprädikation," *BZ* 35 (1991): 13-14.

⁵Brown, "rāpā," 623. Hasel, 198, assumes that not professional embalmers but physicians have been called for the task to avoid the usual magic rites.

⁶Cf. Brown, "rāpā," 623; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, HAT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955), 249; Stoebe, 306; R. Liwak, "r^hpā'im," *TWAT*, 7:629. It seems that the physicians represent a true alternative to Yahweh, hence foreign healing deities stand behind.

king had foreign professional healers. These could be the royal physicians, as common in Egypt or Assur.¹

Although there are general medical practices mentioned in the Old Testament,² mainly treatment of actual wounds, it is still doubtful if there was an established profession of the physician.³ Only late in Sir 38 is the professional healer mentioned. Of him is spoken in such a way, as if he is introduced in society and still needs to be supported in order to be accepted.⁴ If the professional healer was known to the Israelites,⁵ since this

¹Against Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 824, who does not find "königliche Leibärzte" in the Old Testament like the chief priest Adad-šum-ušur of kings Asarhaddon and Assurbanipal.

²Niehr, 17: "Daß wir über die Medizin im Alten Israel wenig wissen, hängt mit der Einseitigkeit der atl Quellen zusammen und ist nicht damit zu erklären, daß es keine Medizin in Israel gegeben habe." Cf. Donald J. Wiseman, "Medicine in the Old Testament World," *Medicine and the Bible*, ed. Bernard Palmer (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 13-42. It seems that medicine in Israel was not as far developed as in Egypt or Mesopotamia. Cf. Humbert, "Maladie," 24; Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 811, with literature.

³Dieter Lührmann, "Aber auch dem Arzt gib Raum (Sir 38,1-15)," *Wort und Dienst* 15 (1979): 55; Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 136; Humbert, "Maladie," 13-15. Exod 21:19 mentions the substitute of the loss caused by sickness and is followed by *rp' yrp'*. This law has been interpreted in parallel to laws of the ancient Orient (Codex Hammurabi, pars. 206, 215 [ANET, 175], the Hittite law [ANET 189]) to refer to the payment for the physician. Cf. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 810; Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, s.v. *rp'*, Pi, 4:1188. But since the exact amount of payment is not stated, *rp' yrp'* could paraphrase the substitution rule and generalize the healing to a full (also financial) restoration. Brown, "rāpā'," 620: "für Heilung sorgen"; Humbert, "Maladie," 6: "obligation de le soigner jusqu'à complète guérison." The other occurrences of *rp'* Pi could support the interpretation of "to heal completely." For the holistic aspect of healing, see Hasel, 191-202. Note the parallelism of *šwm* and *mrp'* in Jer 6:14; 8:11,15; Isa 53:5; 57:19.

⁴Cf. Lührmann, 57-58.

⁵For example Brown, "rāpā'," 623; Hasel, 199; Fohrer, *Hiob*, 247.

was an established profession in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies, it seems that in Israel the ordinary person did not have access to such a professional. Who, then, performed the healing tasks in Israel?

Hos 11:3 presupposes that healing the wounds of a child who learns to walk is the task of the father.¹ If the child is sick the father takes action in 2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 14:2; 2 Kgs 4:19. Also circumcision was normally done by the father (Gen 17:23). In the same way as it was the shepherd's task to take care of the wounds of his sheep, to bandage (*ḥbš*) the broken leg or the wound,² thus the leader of the family or another group acted on behalf of the sick.

In Israel the healing function of the leader of the family seems to have been transferred figuratively to the king or the leader of society.³ Several texts point to a leading person: In Hos 5:13 the people (metaphorically) seek healing not from physicians but from the Assyrian king. In Isa 3:7 the suggested leader refuses the office because he is not a *ḥōbēš*, “the one who binds up wounds.” In Israel's desperate situation the treatment of wounds—one of the duties of the official—together with providing

¹Driver, “Linguistic and Textual Problems,” 162, proposes for Hos 11:3 a metaphorical meaning “to bind together, to unite,” derived from the primitive sense of *rp*, “to bind up a wound,” because he fails to realize the connection between healing and parenting a child, namely the healing function of the father.

²In Ezek 34:1-4 the neglectful shepherds are in contrast to Yahweh as the true shepherd, vs. 16, who takes care of the injured. See also Zech 11:16.

³Because some sicknesses had a bearing on the cult, the priests were concerned with these kind of diseases. Similarly, it can be assumed that the leader of the family or society was in charge of sickness; because it had a bearing on the whole society (exclusion from the community), restoration of health was a social event. Cf. Seybold, 48-55; Fohrer, “Krankheit,” 180.

food would be most important.¹ In Jer 6:14 and 8:11 prophets and priests² are mentioned, who heal only lightly. In Jer 8:22 the prophet complains that there is no one who could ease and dress the wounds.³ This could indicate that there are no leaders of the people to take care of their needs. Although these passages speak of the healing function of the father and leader figuratively, they presuppose that there was such a function in society. The healing role of the king is also attested in texts from Ugarit,⁴ Assyria⁵ and

¹“Die Situation des Volkes wird als so aussichtslos dargestellt, daß ‘herrschen’ nur noch aus ‘heilen’ und ‘verteilen’ von Nahrungsmitteln bestehen kann. Selbst wenn *diese Züge immer zum Herrscher gehört haben* [my emphasis], sofern er - dem Bild vom Hirten entsprechend - das Gebrochene verbindet, so besteht die Paradoxie von Is 3,7 doch gerade darin, daß nur noch ein Wundarzt ‘herrschen’ kann.” G. Munderlein, “*hbš*,” *TWAT*, 2:727.

²Cf. the list of offices in Isa 3:2-4. The cultic personnel had a healing function in a metaphorical sense as leaders of society. This does not contradict the fact that in Israel they did not have a healing knowledge as professionals. (See above, p. 66.)

³The metaphor of sickness dominates the passage: illusory healing (vs. 11), bitter water (vs. 14), healing (vs. 15).

⁴In Ugarit the *rp ’u ’ars* (“the healer of the land”) is an epithet of Baal (cf. 2 Chr 7:14), but also of the king of Ugarit. (Cf. Johannes C. de Moor, “*Rāpi’uma - Rephaim*,” *ZAW* 88 [1976]: 324, 325, 329.) “It was the task of gods and kings to keep their country ‘healthy.’” (Ibid., 325.) Cf. also Oswald Loretz, *Ugarit und die Bibel: Kanaanäische Götter und Religion im Alten Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), 142.

⁵In an Assyrian letter to the king of the 8th or 7th century the priest mentions a servant Arad-Gula who is obviously sick to death: “No one gives him a thought; he is dying of a broken heart. (May) his cry (?) reach the king my lord! The king my lord is as a cypress tree, he restores life to many people.” See Robert H. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria: A Transliteration and Translation of 355 Official Assyrian Letters Dating from the Sargonid Period (722-625 B.C.)*, American Oriental Series, no. 6 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1935), 214-15. For the parallel “to heal - to restore life” cf. Deut 32:39; Hos 6:1, 2; also Ps 103:3. See also the examples in Brown, “*rāpā*,” 622.

Egypt.¹ This corresponds to the common royal epithet “shepherd”² who also had a healing function.

We can conclude that in Israel the father or another leading person of family, clan, or society was understood to be responsible for the treatment of a wounded or sick person.

To summarize: Israel's view of sickness presupposes someone who has been struck and asks for someone who is able to treat the wounds. If there is no human or animal that has caused the wound, it is assumed that Yahweh has struck the person. The treatment of the wounds with oil or other means is the task of the father or leader of the family or community. It seems that no established profession of physicians existed in preexilic Israel.

Yahweh as Healer

Introduction

Since Hos 14:5 speaks of Yahweh as the healer, we have to consider the implications of this role of Yahweh. In most of the Old Testament texts which mention

¹Grapow, *Grundriß*, 3:98, points out that also in Egypt, where the physician was a very well-established profession, nonprofessional persons were able to heal. In the inscriptions of Hatnub two local authorities claim to have been “gesundmachendes Heilmittel für den, der krank kam.”

²“Shepherd” was a widely used epithet of deities and kings from Sumerian times to Neo-Babylonian times. Cf. A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, Die Bibliothek der Alten Welt (Zürich, Stuttgart: Artemis-Verlag, 1953): Enlil, the “shepherd of the black-headed” (pp. 76, 121); the same for Shulgi, king of Ur (p. 115), king Lipitisttar (p. 126), and others. Marduk (p. 307) and Shamash (p. 317) are called “shepherd of men.” Cf. also Raphael Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea (a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha): The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, no. 6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 8-10, 46-47.

or indicate the person who heals, Yahweh is the subject.¹ If other healers are mentioned they heal only the surface (Jer 6:14; 8:11), do not fulfill their task of healing (metaphorically Ezek 34:4; Zech 11:16), or are not able to heal (Hos 5:13; Jer 51:9; Job 13:4).²

But Yahweh is not only the healer, He is also the one who “strikes” with all kinds of sickness.³ What is important to note is the fact that in most of the texts it is explicitly stated that the same person or group of persons is the object of both the punishing and healing activities of Yahweh.⁴ This observation indicates that in the texts under consideration Yahweh is not only the cause for everyone's fate, giving one person sickness, another health.⁵ Rather, a special role of Yahweh towards men comes into view which includes both causing sickness and healing. How is this role to be understood?

¹Cf. Niehr, 3. Seybold, 28, observes that all forms of *rp* ' in the Qal and the Nifal except the participle and infinitive have a divine subject. “Allein die Piel- und Hitpael-Belege geben der indirekten menschlichen Mitwirkung bei der Heilung Raum.” An exception is Hos 5:13 (Qal) where, although negative, Assur and the “king Jareb” are subject. Cf. Humbert, “Maladie,” 16.

²The only exception: Elijah restores, “heals,” the altar (1 Kgs 18:30).

³For example, Exod 9:8-9; 15:26; Deut 7:15; 32:39; 1 Sam 5:6; 2 Sam 12:15; 24:15; Isa 1:6; 53:4; Jer 8:15, 22; 14:19; Hos 5:12-13; Amos 4:10 and many others.

⁴Gen 20:17-18; Num 12:10-16; 2 Chr 7:13-14; Job 5:17-18; 33:19-28; Ps 60:4; Isa 19:22; 57:17-18; Jer 30:12-17; 33:5-6; Hos 6:1.

⁵Exod 15:26; Deut 7:15; 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6.

Suggested Interpretations

1. According to Hempel, Yahweh's role as the healer of human sickness is to be explained as an expression of monotheistic religion.¹ The statement "I am your healer" (Exod 15:26) can be understood as a polemic against the division of the realms of human life to different deities as in Israel's neighborhood: gods and demons for sickness, other gods for healing.² The polemical tone against other gods is also obvious in Deut 32:39, 1 Sam 2:6, Isa 45:7, especially in 2 Kgs 1.³

It is Israel's monotheism that leads to the conviction that Yahweh is not only responsible for healing but also for sickness. He claims death and healing to be His monopoly.⁴ According to Hempel this is unique in the ancient Near East.⁵

¹Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 820-24. Cf. also Fohrer, "Krankheit," 176.

²For healing gods, see p. 79, n. 4. For assumed remains of healing gods in the Old Testament, see Niehr, 4-5. Concerning the *rp 'ym*, see Liwak, 625-36. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 817, interprets the *rp 'ym* to be spirits of the dead, deceased ancestors, which are responsible for healing and fertility according to the Ugaritic *rp 'm*; similarly Niehr, 4-5. According to Norbert Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe, dein Arzt," in "Ich will euer Gott werden": *Beispiele biblischen Redens von Gott*, SBS 100 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), 41-42, there is much uncertainty to this interpretation. Cf. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, "Die ugaritischen Totengeister *RPU(M)* und die biblischen Rephaim," *Ugarit Forschungen* 8 (1976): 45-52. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 823, and Niehr, 4, think of the Bronze Serpent (2 Kgs 18:4) as a healing god, but cf. K. R. Joines, "The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult," *JBL* 87 (1968): 245-56.

³2 Kgs 1 reflects the controversy against the Baal of Ekron, although it is not healing but the oracle about healing or death that is expected by the sick king. Cf. Odil Hannes Steck, "Die Erzählung von Jahwes Einschreiten gegen die Orakelbefragung Ahasjas (2 Kgs 1:2-8, 17)," *EvTh* 27 (1967): 546-56. F. Charles Fensham, "A Possible Explanation of the Name Baal-Zebub of Ekron," *ZAW* 79 (1967): 361-63.

⁴Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 823. Cf. Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 138.

⁵Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 820.

There are, however, not only polemical passages but also texts that express trust in Yahweh or a call to confidence in Him.¹ The confidence is directed towards the one who strikes *and* heals. This indicates that Yahweh is seen representing a special role including both striking and healing, which is not sufficiently explained by Israel's monotheism.

2. Another aspect of Yahweh's healing power is stressed by Hasel: Yahweh is the creator God.² Yahweh created the world in a perfect state, "very good" (Gen 1:31). Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual life, living conditions and relationship to God and fellow men—everything forms part of a holistic concept of well-being, expressed in the word *šālôm*. "The OT view of 'healing' is . . . directly related to restoration of that broad state of well-being and peaceful relationship with God, self, fellow-beings, and environment embraced in the OT's holistic concept of 'health.'"³ The holistic concept of health naturally includes forgiveness.⁴

3. According to Lohfink, healing is originally related not to the official cult but to the religion of the family.⁵ Sickness and healing, birth and death are experiences which are closely related to family life. Concerning these experiences one turned to the

¹Deut 7:15; Job 5:17-18; Hos 6:1; also Exod 15:26 and Deut 32:39.

²Hasel, 191.

³Ibid., 197.

⁴Ibid., 201-2.

⁵Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 44-46. Cf. Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus in Israel und Babylon*, CThM A,9 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978).

god of the family,¹ who in Israel normally was Yahweh.² It seems that these experiences, metaphorically expanded for the whole nation and being part of the official cult, are the background for the formula in Hos 6:1: He has torn, He will heal, He has stricken, He will bind us up.³

There is another traditional concept of the healing function of Yahweh, related to the religion of the community from the beginning, that Lohfink finds in Deuteronomy.⁴ From earliest times⁵ the relationship to Yahweh takes the form of a covenant and is

¹This is reflected in personal names. Cf. Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 45.

²However, according to Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 44, there are nearly the same expectations and experiences with the god of the family, no matter which god it is and how much their official cult differs, for example in Israel and Mesopotamia. "Es scheint fast, daß von jedem real verehrten Gott auch Krankenheilung ausgesagt werden konnte." Cf. Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmon: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Auferstehungsgötter und an Heilgötter* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichssche Buchhandlung, 1911), 311.

³Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 47-48, assumes that the prophets moved the healing function of Yahweh into the official religion. It seems, however, that the formula in Hos 6:1 is already common and not introduced by the prophet. Cf. *ibid.*, 48, n. 108.

⁴*Ibid.*, 49-57.

⁵Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 49-51, dates the blessings and curses in Deut 28 in the Assyrian time, Exod 15:26 and Deut 28:58-61 (summing up of all curses as sickness) as postexilic. However, he sees the beginning of the tradition in premonarchic time. According to Jörn Halbe, *Das Privilegrecht Israels Ex 34,10-26: Gestalt und Wesen, Herkunft und Wirken in vordeuteronomischer Zeit*, FRLANT 114 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 483-502, Exod 34:10-16 is reflected in Exod 23:20-33, where the blessing of health is central. Both passages are predeuteronomical (pp. 493-98).

shaped according to the laws of the clan reflecting the relationship with, and the function of, the father and leader.¹

4. Niehr interprets the twofold function of Yahweh, to strike and to heal, according to the function of the widespread god of the sun.² Yahweh is the God of judgment, whose light is a symbol of His justice. That is expressed in the clearest manner in Mal 3:20.³

But if Yahweh is seen as the God of judgment, His task is to punish the wicked (e.g., with sickness) and justify the righteous (e.g., with healing).⁴ That means, normally different persons would be the object of the different activities.⁵ Niehr's interpretation does not do justice to the texts which confess Yahweh as the one whose striking and healing are directed towards the same object.

¹“Ihr Verhältnis zu ihrem Gott Jahwe konzipiert sie in Analogie zum zwischenmenschlichen Häuptlings- oder Vaterrecht: privilegiertlich. Die Gruppen, die in den Privilegbereich Jahwes aufgenommen sind, leben im Raum seines Segens.” Lohfink, “Ich bin Jahwe,” 49-50.

²Niehr, 8-11.

³Cf. also Isa 30:26. According to Niehr, 11, “erst die Rede vom rettenden Sonnengott bietet die Basis dafür, die Sünde des Volkes als Krankheit zu verstehen und einen Arzt gegen sie anzurufen.” The prophets transferred Yahweh's healing function from the family into the official religion and used sickness as a metaphor for the sin of the nation. But since in Israel sickness was understood as a result of being struck by somebody, it is more likely that the understanding of sickness as punishment is not the result but rather the cause of the transfer of features of the sungod to Yahweh.

⁴Niehr, 10-11.

⁵For example 1 Sam 2:6.

Yahweh as the Father/King

It seems reasonable to interpret Yahweh's role according to the above-described concept of healing in Israel: It is the function of the *father* or *king* which includes punishment and healing for his son or people. One of the father's usual ways of punishing a son might have been to beat him.¹ Thus the father and educator is the paradigm for someone who beats and heals one and the same person.² Yahweh's role of the punishing father in connection with sickness and healing is presupposed in Num 12:14; Ps 103:3,13 and explicitly mentioned in Deut 32:6.18-20; 8:5.³ Yahweh's strokes resulting in wounds or illness have been considered to be a typical way of disciplining His "son." His function of the righteous judge, which finds expression in the picture of the sun god, as Niehr points out, is part of, and derived from, the greater and more original role of the father or king.

This interpretation explains, very naturally, why sickness was connected with punishment, healing with forgiveness. Sickness and healing were experiences in which

¹Prov 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14; Ps 89:33.

²For the role and function of the father in Israel, see Lothar Perlitt, "Der Vater im Alten Testament," in G. Bornkamm and others, *Das Vaterbild in Mythos und Geschichte: Ägypten, Griechenland, Altes Testament, Neues Testament*, ed. H. Tellenbach (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1976), 50-101. For the educational role, see Roland de Vaux, *Das Alte Testament und seine Lebensordnungen*, vol. 1 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1960), 91.

³Cf. the comparison of Deut 32 and Hos in Umberto Cassuto, "The Prophet Hosea and the Books of the Pentateuch," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, vol. 1, *Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1973), 95-100; Kuhnigk, 35-40, with literature.

the person meets his God.¹ Yahweh punished with sickness,² threatened with the curse of sickness,³ provided healing as a sign of forgiveness,⁴ and promised health and longevity for the one who is faithful to the covenant.⁵ Therefore the sick investigated if there were sins in his or her life. This is reflected in the advice of Job's friends and especially in the Psalms.⁶ The signs of self-humiliation, confession of sins, and repentance were part of the behavior of the sick.⁷

That Yahweh is understood as the father or king includes the assumption of His positive attitude towards the single person and the people. Even if Yahweh punishes, His aim is complete well-being.⁸ Only this positive attitude towards the punished person encourages one to pray for the sick. The prayer for the sick is an important feature of

¹Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 137. For sickness as punishment in Babylon, see Johann Jakob Stamm, *Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel*, AThANT 10 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), 10-11.

²For example Gen 20:17; Num 12; 21:4-9; 25:1-9; 2 Sam 24:10-17; Job 5:17-18; 33:14-33; Pss 6:1-2; 32; 38; 41; Hos 5:12-13; Amos 4:10; Isa 19:22; 57:17-18; Jer 30:12-17; 33:5-6; 2 Chr 7:13-14.

³Deut 28:18, 21-24, 27-28, 35, 58-61.

⁴Gen 20:17; Pss 41:5; 103:3; 107:17-20; Isa 33:24; 53:4-5; 2 Chr 7:14; 30:18-20. Cf. Johann Jakob Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben im Alten Testament: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Bern: A. Francke, 1940), 78-84.

⁵Exod 15:26; 23:25-26; Deut 7:18; 28:4; Ps 91:14-16.

⁶For example Job 4:7, 17; 5:17; 8:4-7; 11:13-15; Pss 38:4-5; 41:5; Isa 38:3.

⁷Cf. Seybold, 77-96.

⁸For example Job 5:19-26.

the incidents of sickness and healing in the Old Testament.¹ That Job and other sick persons (Ps 73:26) do not understand their fate and are in doubt concerning Yahweh presupposes the belief in Yahweh's justice and favor.

Yahweh had to compete with other deities (2 Kgs 1). This indicates that He was not considered to be a healing God by nature.² Although He granted overall well-being (*šālôm*),³ He was not specialized in healing and had to stand against the typical healing gods.⁴

¹Gen 20:17; Num 12:13; 21:7; 1 Kgs 13:6; 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:32-37; Job 33:23-25; 2 Chr 30:18-20; cf. Ps 35:13. For the prophet as intercessor for the sick, see Niehr, 13; Seybold, 61-62.

²Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr," 823, interprets the participle *rōpē* Exod 15:26 not to be a term for the profession of the physician but the expression of an action. "Hinzu kommt noch, daß es sich nach dem Zusammenhang um ein Nichtkrankmachen und nicht um ein Heilen bereits ausgebrochener Krankheit handelt (vgl. auch II.Chron. 30,20), analog der Verheißung von Ex. 23,26." (Ibid.) This would indicate that He is not thought of as a professional healer or a specialized healing God.

³Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 44-47, assumes that the healing activities of Yahweh belong to a very early time, in which He was the God of the family, a close God, and therefore responsible for birth, sickness, and healing. From earliest times personal names attest the experiences with Yahweh in the family. According to Niehr, 6-7, originally Yahweh was not a healing God but took on the healing activities as He became the God of families and clans.

⁴A special god of healing is not known in Mesopotamia. But of almost every deity it can be said that it provides and restores human health. Cf. Baudissin, 311; Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 43-44; Brown, "*rāpā*," 624, with examples: Marduk, the "lord of life," the "physician who likes to heal"; Gula, "die Herrin, die Todkranke gesund macht." Cf. Hunger, 30-31; Michael L. Barré, "Bulluṣa-rabi's Hymn to Gula and Hosea 6:1-2," *Orientalia* 50 (1981): 241-45. Cf. Baudissin, 310-23. In Egypt the deities Amun of Thebes, Thoth, Min and Horus are healing deities. Cf. Grapow, *Grundriß*, 3:137-40; idem, *Die bildlichen Ausdrücke des Ägyptischen: Vom Denken und Dichten einer altorientalischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 141-42. For Baudissin's assumption that Yahweh

To summarize: The only true healer of all sickness is Yahweh who has life and death in His hand. His healing is part of a holistic concept including forgiveness and well-being. The paradigm and model for the healing function of Yahweh is the father who punishes and heals. Similar to the father's role is the corresponding—often metaphorical—function of the king. Therefore, when Yahweh is depicted as punishing and healing, He is seen in the image of a father or a king.

The Age of the Concept

There are several reasons to assume that Yahweh's healing role stems from a very early time.

1. That Yahweh is seen in the role of a father and leader who punishes and heals refers back to a time in which the clan was the dominant structure of society and the tasks had not yet been delegated to professionals and specialists. Thus the healing of the injured as part of the role of the father and leader probably stems from a time of nomadic life.

2. That the healing function of Yahweh belongs to the very early traditions is attested in the personal names which confess the healing activities of Yahweh.¹ In these names thankfulness and confidence are expressed. It is not the confidence in the healing competence of (the healer-) God, but a general trust in the father and shepherd of the

took over the healing function of the Canaanite god Esmun, see Joseph Ziegler, *Die Liebe Gottes bei den Propheten: Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentlichen Theologie*, *Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen*, ser. 11, no. 3 (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930), 95.

¹Cf. Niehr, 6-8; Lohfink, “Ich bin Jahwe,” 45; Alberty, 64.

people. The names are very general. Healing, saving and providing justice are one great holistic concept.¹

3. Health is part of the covenant blessings. We find Yahweh's healing role in the blessings of Exod 23:25-26. According to J. Halbe, Exod 34:10-26, the "Privilegrecht," has been modified in the time of the "Generation der davidisch-salomonischen Gründerjahre" and the blessings of Exod 23:25-26 have been placed in the center.² It seems that the blessing of health was even at that time an established formula referring back to earlier experiences (the plagues in Exod 7-12; Gen 20:17-18). It is to be assumed that the blessings in Exod 23 are of an early date, long before the time of Hosea.

4. Yahweh's striking with sickness—a part of Yahweh's role as leader and healer—is a very old concept of judgment. In the eighth century, Amos 4:10 declares sickness to be one of several, however unsuccessful, means of Yahweh to encourage repentance.³

Amos 4:10 describes the sickness with the words *deber b^ederek miṣrayim*, "pestilence in the manner of Egypt." This phrase⁴ refers back to the tradition of the

¹Niehr, 6; Brown, "rāpā'," 624; Hasel, 201-2.

²Halbe, 497-98.

³Cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona*, KAT 13, 2 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971), 172-73. With good reasons it can be said that this text stems from Amos, against Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 2: Joel und Amos*, BKAT 14, 2, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975), 250-58.

⁴According to Wolff, *Joel und Amos*, 261, it refers to the plague of the cattle in Exod 9:3-7 (ascribed to J); Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona*, 179, sees a reference to the dying of the firstborn in Exod 11:4-6; 12:29-30.

Exodus from Egypt and reminds one of the covenant blessings and curses (Deut 7:15; 28:27, 60; also Exod 15:26). In the days of Amos the sicknesses of Egypt¹ must have been already proverbial.²

We can conclude that in the time of Hosea Yahweh's function as the lord of sickness and health and His healing role as a father or leader was well known. Now we ask: How is the metaphor of Yahweh's healing used in the book of Hosea ?

The Healing Metaphor in the Book of Hosea

Hosea 5:12-13; 6:1

The Situation of the People

The metaphor of Israel's sickness and Yahweh's healing appears in the book of Hosea for the first time in chaps. 5:12-13; 6:1. Hos 5:12-13 reads:

*wa 'a'ni kā' āš l' 'eprāyim
w'kārāqāb l' bêt y' hūdā.
wayyar' 'eprayim 'et-ḥolyō
wihūdā 'et-m'zōrō
wayyēlek 'eprayim 'el-'aššūr*

¹Exod 7:17-24: nondrinkable water; Exod 9:3: dying of the cattle; Exod 9:9-11: ulcer (this plague has been ascribed to P, but since it is the most fitting background for the old tradition of the "sicknesses of Egypt" it seems to belong to the early tradition of the plagues of Egypt; cf. Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 26-27); Exod 9:15: possibility of pest; the dying of the first-born could also be a result of sudden sickness.

²According to Lohfink, "Ich bin Jahwe," 26-27, 56-57, the final form of the texts in Deuteronomy which summarize the plagues of Egypt in the light of sickness has to be dated in the time of the Exile or later. Amos 4:10 however indicates that already in the 8th century BC it was an established tradition to see the plagues of Egypt under the aspect of illness.

*wayyīšlah 'el-melek yāreḇ.
w'hū' lō' yūkal līrpō' lākem
w'lō' - yigheh mikkem māzōr.*

I will be like pus¹ for Ephraim
and like decay for the house of Judah.
When Ephraim saw his sickness
and Judah his wound,
then Ephraim went to Assyria,
and sent to the "Great King."²
But he is not able to heal you
or to remove from you the wound.

The text belongs to a passage which deals with the political affairs of Judah and Israel around 733 B.C. after the Syro-Ephraimite War.³ Both kingdoms were in a

¹Instead of "moth" the word 'š should be translated "pus." J. Driver, "Difficult Words in Hebrew Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson by the Society for Old Testament Study on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 66-67; Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, s.v. 'š, 3:848; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 124; Wolff, *Hosea*, 134; J. A. Soggin, "Hosea und die Außenpolitik Israels," in *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-fifth Birthday 6 September 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton, BZAW 150 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 132; recently again Hubbard, 123. Andersen and Freedman, 412, understand 'š and *rqḇ* as a parallel pair, "maggot and decay," which indicates the decay of the dead and would also fit the context. Robinson and Horst, 24, assume two parasites of the crops.

²For this interpretation of *mlk yrb*, literally "king of Yareb," the division of words has to be changed to *mlky rb* for the official title of the Assyrian king *šarru rabu*. Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 124-25, who comes to the same result without changing the text by taking *yāreḇ* as adjective to *yrb* "to be great." Cf. also Soggin, "Hosea und die Außenpolitik," 132; A. Gelston, "Kingship in the Book of Hosea," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at London, 1973*, ed. J. Barr et al., Oudtestamentische Studien 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 72-74. Gelston rejects the suggestion that the *melek yāreḇ* is a deity, as proposed by Nyberg, 6.

³Thus most commentators following A. Alt, "Hosea 5,8-6,6: Ein Krieg und seine Folgen in prophetischer Beleuchtung," *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 30 (1919): 537-

difficult situation and sought solutions in acts of surrender to the great political powers.¹ Tiglathpileser III took most of the Northern Kingdom, leaving only a small part independent around Samaria (2 Kgs 15:29). Pekah was assassinated by a Hoshea who became a vassal of Assyria (2 Kgs 15:30).

Hosea Employs Metaphorical Language

The prophet uses the sickness/healing motif for Israel's and Judah's time of great calamity. If we do not want to assume a literal epidemic we have to understand the sickness motif metaphorically: Hosea addresses the national disaster. Israel is entangled in political and national problems. Thus the semantic field of sickness/healing interacts with the semantic field of the political, social, and religious situation of Israel. This interaction constitutes the metaphor.

Hosea Uses a Common Metaphor

To speak of Yahweh as the One who causes literal sickness and healing was already well known in the eighth century. But was Hosea the first who employed the

68; = idem, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1953), 2:163-87. See Herbert Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern: Die Stellung der klassischen Propheten des 8. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. zur Außenpolitik der Könige von Israel und Juda*, VT Suppl. 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), 50-53; Jörg Jeremias, "'Ich bin wie ein Löwe für Ephraim...'" (Hos.5,14): Aktualität und Allgemeingültigkeit im prophetischen Reden von Gott am Beispiel von Hos.5,8-14," in *"Ich will euer Gott werden": Beispiele biblischen Redens von Gott*, SBS 100 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), 81-89. But see the criticism of Patrick M. Arnold, "Hosea and the Sin of Gibeah," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 454-59. A more cultic interpretation is presented by Edwin M. Good, "Hosea 5.8-6.6: An Alternative to Alt," *JBL* 85 (1966): 273-86. A critical evaluation of both is given by Andersen and Freedman, 401-3.

¹Ahaz of Judah: 2 Kgs 16:7, 8; Hoshea of Samaria: 2 Kgs 17:4.

motif metaphorically for a national catastrophe? Although we do not have earlier examples of such a usage,¹ there are several reasons to assume that this metaphor does not originate with Hosea.

1. From the eighth century² we have another passage which uses the healing motif metaphorically, namely Isa 6:10. This expression “macht einen formelhaften Eindruck.”³ It belongs to the “geläufigen Anschauungen der Kulttheologie.”⁴ This could indicate that the usage of this metaphor was already well known and common at that time.⁵

¹This metaphor occurs in Isa 1:6; 3:7; 6:10; 19:22; 30:26; 57:17-19; Jer 3:22; 6:14; 8:11, 15, 22; 14:19; 30:12-17; 33:6; 46:11; 51:8, 9; Lam 2:13; Ezek 30:21; Mal 3:20; Pss 60:4 (the country); 147:3.

²There is a general agreement that Isa 6:1-11 stems from Isaiah. See for example Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja*, BKAT 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 256; Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaja 1-12*, Die Neue Echter Bibel 17 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1986), 47. Concerning the suggestion of Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja: Kap 1-12*, ATD 17 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 123, who places Isa 6 into the time after the catastrophe of 587/6, see Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaja 1-39*, EdF 200 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 125.

³Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben*, 82-83.

⁴Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 233.

⁵Another passage in the book of Isaiah in which the sickness/healing motif is employed metaphorically is Isa 1:5-6, of which Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 20, writes: “dessen Echtheit unbestritten ist.” But there are several scholars today who date this text after the catastrophe of 587/6 B.C., e.g., Kilian, *Jesaja 1-39*, 32-34; Kaiser, *Jesaja 1-12*, 35. However, the metaphor of sickness/healing cannot be used as an argument for the late date, as is sometimes done. The motif of Yahweh's disciplinary strokes may also be found in Isa 9:12 (Eng. 13): “The people did not turn to him who smote them.”

2. In Hos 6:1 we find that punishment and healing are the actions the nation expects of Yahweh. Both actions have the same object, indicating that Yahweh is seen in the role of the father or king.¹

*hû' tārāp w'yirpā'ēmî
yak w'yahb'sēmû.*

He has torn, he will heal us,
he has stricken, he will bind us up.

Hosea puts the formula in the mouth of the people of Israel, but there is no introduction that would introduce the metaphorical usage of the formula. Either he casts the attitude of the people in words which reflect the common opinion or he quotes a cultic liturgy of repentance.² In any case this formula is an expression of what everyone thought or knew. We can conclude that Hosea employed a well-known metaphor for the fate of the nation and Yahweh's role.³

¹Herbert Gordon May, "The Fertility Cult in Hosea," *AJSL* 48 (1931/32): 74-76, 84-85, interprets the sickness/healing motif of Hos 6:2 in the sense of the myth of a dead and resurrected fertility god. But the subject of sickness and recovery is Israel, not the expected deity, Yahweh. See the criticism of J. Wijngaards, "Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context (Hos. VI 2)," *VT* 17 (1967): 227-28.

²Cf. Fohrer, "Umkehr und Erlösung," 226; Wolff, *Hosea*, 148. Willi-Plein, 147-49, separates Hos 5:15b-6:3 as an exilic salvation oracle. The reasons are not convincing and, most of all, the typical Hoseanic reversal of the metaphor of precipitation in vs. 4, which refers back to vs. 3, is destroyed.

³A very close parallel of the formula can be found in Deut 32:39: Two parallel lines with an antithetical component in each line, the emphasized pronouns, the verbs *hyh* and *rp'*, the sickness/healing motif. The context of Deut 32 indicates that the healing in vs. 39 cannot be limited to a literal understanding. As in Hos 6:1, a metaphorical use is implied. Since these thoughts have been common in the 8th century, Deut 32:39 could well be of earlier tradition. Cf. Cassuto, "The Prophet Hosea," 99-100.

3. It is noteworthy that Hosea introduces the sickness/healing metaphor by two similes (5:12): *kā' āš . . . w^ekārāqāb*, “like pus . . . and like decay.” The *k^e* gives the communicative signal that figurative understanding is intended.¹ Once the signal is given, the speaker assumes that the audience understands other terms belonging to the word field of sickness/healing in the same line.² This way the similes establish the metaphorical interpretation also of the terms *h^oli*, “sickness,” and *māzôr*, “wound,” *rp'*, “to heal,” and *ghh*,³ “to heal,” in 5:13—all belong to the realm of sickness/healing. As we will see, further occurrences of the sickness/healing motif in the book of Hosea are presented without the *k^e* or another formal indication of metaphorical usage.

4. In Hos 5:12 there is an important difference from other occurrences of the sickness/healing metaphor. The usual expression is that Yahweh strikes with sickness.⁴ In Hos 5:12 the prophet does not say that Yahweh strikes with an ulcer, but that He *is* like the abscess. This change constitutes a further development and presupposes that the introduced metaphor is already common. Hosea does not simply employ a common metaphor, he rather uses the conventional metaphor as raw material for his own intentions.

¹For the usage of *k^e* in biblical Hebrew, see Bruce C. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 202-5.

²For the terminology of sickness/healing in Hos 5/6 cf. Pryce, 279-85 and passim; Michael L. Barré, “New Light on the Interpretation of Hosea VI 2,” *VT* 28 (1978): 129-41; idem, “Bulluṣa-rabi's Hymn,” 243-44.

³A *hapax legomenon*, whose meaning can be derived from the parallel and from Prov 17:22.

⁴Metaphorically Hos 6:1; Isa 19:22; 53:4; 57:17; Jer 14:19; 30:14; 33:5 etc.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

What does the metaphor in Hos 5:12-13 communicate?

1. Sickness has been understood in terms of striking and injuring. War, the historical background of the prophet's address, left many wounded persons. It could have been in this line of thought that Hosea arrived at this metaphor. Israel and Judah¹ are both understood as wounded warriors.² This makes unmistakably clear that the situation is deadly serious.

This is underlined by the prophet's language. According to the common understanding of sickness, the prophet speaks of wounds that are visible at the skin surface. But the sickness goes deep down to the bones. Note the heightening from *š* at the surface to *rqb* of the bones (Prov 12:4; 14:30). In vs. 13 the prophet moves on from the more general *h'li* to concrete *māzôr*.³ Hosea amplifies his metaphorical interpretation of the situation by using strong language.⁴

2. Given the concept of sickness as "being wounded by somebody," the apparent question then is, Who is responsible for the terrible state of the two warriors, i.e., Israel and Judah? One would expect that the two enemies blame each other. Israel

¹Against Harper, 275, who substitutes "Israel" for "Judah."

²Some commentators, for example Mays, 90; Laetsch, 53, introduce the comparison: silently, but continuously rotting. But pus and decay serve to indicate how hopeless the situation is (Job 13:28).

³Again a heightening. Cf. Alter, 13: "The predominant pattern of biblical poetry is to move from a standard term in the first verset to a more literary or highfalutin term in the second verset."

⁴Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, xviii.

fought Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite War; Judah took revenge after Israel was defeated by Tiglathpileser III and captured the southern parts of Israel (vs. 10). But the prophet declares: Both have a common enemy—Yahweh.

This is expressed by startling similes. Yahweh is not referred to as the cause of sickness, but rather is compared to the sickness itself, i.e., pus and decay. Thus the distinction of cause and effect is blurred. These similes express a shocking closeness of Yahweh.¹ It is as if He is right in the bodies of the sick people. In their calamities the Israelites might have thought that Yahweh had withdrawn. Hosea teaches the opposite. He is as close as He can be. He will not withdraw until the punishment is completed (vs. 15).

3. By using the sickness/healing motif for Israel's situation Hosea claims Yahweh to be in the father's/king's role towards Israel and to have the corresponding rights.² That Israel turned to a foreign power for healing (vs. 13)—the prophet stays with the sickness/healing motif of vs. 12—indicates that the king of Assyria, the “Great King,” is considered to be the one who leads Israel as a father leads his family or a king his people. But to turn to Assyria is in vain, there is no help. And Yahweh is not ready

¹One of the old traditions of Israel is the experience of Jacob's sickness caused by the nearness and immediacy of the divine wrestler (Gen 32:24-26). It is the “Erfahrung der körpernahen, das leibliche Leben bedrohenden und segnenden Präsenz eines Gottes.” Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Müller, *Krankheit und Heilung*, Kohlhammer-Taschenbücher, no. 1008: Biblische Konfrontationen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 71.

²The motif of Yahweh educating and disciplining His people comes again in 7:11-12. There it is not the sickness/healing motif but the images of dove- and bird-hunting. But we find again the accusation of turning to other political powers and the word *ysr* (to discipline) which connotes the activity of a father who educates and disciplines a child.

to give up His rights of a suzerain established by the covenant. To turn to another king is one of the worst offenses of the vassal and entails the penalty of death (vs. 14). We have the language and theme of covenant underlying the passage.¹ Will Israel trust in Yahweh or turn to other means, to other political—that always means also religious—powers?

The well-known metaphor of sickness caused by Yahweh suggests a certain understanding of the current disaster of Israel. It must be seen as Yahweh's punishment, that is: His disciplinary measure. Diseases which the Egyptians suffered were part of the covenant curses and have become true in Israel.²

That the prophet has been understood by his listeners is indicated by their reaction. They condense everything that is conveyed in the prophet's metaphor to the statement: "He has struck us, He will heal us." The imagery of sickness brought to mind not so much the role of the physician but the role of the father who strikes (wounds) and heals (6:1). Therefore with a formula of confidence Israel returns to Yahweh, the One who is like a father or king to His people since He made His covenant with them.³

¹Cf. Wijngaards, 236-38; James M. Ward, "The Message of the Prophet Hosea," *Interpretation* 23 (1969): 400.

²Deut 28:27, 35, 60. Amos 4:10 indicates: the curses were known in the 8th century. Cf. Stuart, 105. Seybold and Müller, 51: "Daß prophetische Unheilsweissagungen mit der Vorstellung gottgesandter Seuchen und Plagen arbeiten, ist wohl darin begründet, daß dies ein altes und in gewisser Weise offizielles Motiv sakralrechtlicher Sanktionen und Fluchandrohungen ist (Deut 32; 2 Sam 24; Am 4,10; Hos 2,12; 13,14)."

³Wijngaards, 230-36, demonstrates from extrabiblical vassal treaties that "killing" and "restoring to life" are terms for dethronement and reinstallation of a vassal king. Thus the resurrection motif of Hos 6:2 would confirm Yahweh's role as royal overlord and the covenant motif of this passage. Cf. already A. Jirku, *Altorientalischer*

The divine answer in vs. 5, which forms a contrast to the human expectations, remains in the image of sickness caused by injury: *ḥāṣabti*, “I have hewn.” It is one of the rhetorical techniques of Hosea to take up the metaphor of his audience and reverse its meaning into the opposite.¹ The result is an effect of surprise: Yes, you are right in using this metaphor, but no, it has to be employed in the opposite manner. Yes, Yahweh fulfills the expectation of the people: He acts like the father of Israel. But at the same time Hosea shocks with the unwanted: No, Yahweh does not heal but strikes, “like a parent whose love requires that he or she punish a disobedient child.”²

To summarize: The image of sickness for the national disaster in Hos 5-6 gave the prophet's interpretation of the situation persuasive power. The similes call upon the audience to use their mental power and their reasoning to compare their situation with sickness and to remember that Yahweh is the true “father and king” according to the covenant. Reasoning and rationality balance the emotional side of Hosea's message and are important means to bring about effects on the part of the audience.³

Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923; reprint, Hildesheim: Dr. H. A. Gerstenberg, 1972), 214.

¹For the rhetorical technique to turn the metaphor of the opponent around for one's own argumentation, see Chaim Perelman, *Das Reich der Rhetorik: Rhetorik und Argumentation* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980).

²Stuart, 109.

³Other features of Hosea's style that appeal to reason are the rhetorical questions in 6:4 and 11:8, his usage of *d't*, *d't YHWH*, and the final appeal of his book in 14:10.

Hosea 6:11b-7:1

The Metaphor

The second time we find the sickness/healing theme in Hos 6:11b-7:1.¹

*b^ešúbi š^ebút ‘ammî
k^erop ‘î l’yiśrā’ēl
w^eniglā ‘^awōn ‘eprayim
w^erā’ôt šōmrôn.*

When I reverse the fate of my people,
when I heal Israel,
the sin of Ephraim is revealed
and the wickedness of Samaria.

“Turning the fate” in 6:11b and “healing” in 7:1a form a parallel.² If one does not assume that the fate of Israel is a literal illness that like an epidemic affected the whole nation, the text speaks of the generally unpleasant situation of Israel. The parallel line which speaks of healing addresses the same situation in metaphorical language. Thus parallelism secures the metaphorical understanding of *rp*.³ Once the metaphorical understanding is established, the whole passage is seen in this light.

¹For the structure of the passage, see Andersen and Freedman, 432-35. Some parts, especially the sentence mentioning Judah, have been considered to be a gloss from the time of exile: Jeremias, *Hosea*, 94; but see Andersen and Freedman, 443.

²The prepositions *k^e* and *b^e* are interchangeable. The *paraša* in the Hebrew text between vss. 6:11 and 7:1 may have been introduced in order to suggest a positive interpretation of the harvest of Judah in vs. 6:11. Cf. LXX.

³In Hos 5:12-6:2 the prophet secures the metaphorical understanding of the sickness/healing theme by the opening similes. Here, where the figure is used for the second time, a different method is applied.

The metaphor is introduced without similes; only the word *rp'* presents the sickness/healing motif. This brevity of expression is possible because the metaphor has been used before in the book of Hosea.¹

Yahweh Acts in the Father's/King's Role

In what sense does the healing activity of Yahweh reveal (*glh*, Ni) the sins of Israel? The infinitive construction *k'rop'i ʾyisrā'ēl* is a temporal or conditional clause² which asks for a concluding clause. The following words do not seem to be fitting. Should the words be deleted together with 6:11 as a gloss from the time of exile?³ Harper assumes that the proper concluding clause has been lost and restores the sentence: When I would heal Israel, my hope and desire is frustrated, for the guilt of Ephraim discovers itself.⁴ The meaning would then be: Yahweh cannot accomplish His desire to heal Israel. The majority of interpreters follow him in the explanation that Yahweh's desire is frustrated, however, without adding a concluding clause.⁵ The different explanations reflect the difficulties in comprehending the meaning of the verse.

¹The same tendency can be found in Hos 1:3-9, where the report about Hosea's children is shorter every time. What has already been introduced can be mentioned in brevity.

²Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, 205, 604.

³For example Rudolph, *Hosea*, 143-44, who judges: "eine Verbindung von 6,11 b mit 7,1 herzustellen" ist "unmöglich."

⁴Harper, 292.

⁵For example Jeremias, *Hosea*, 95; Hubbard, 131. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 143, is right in rejecting "alle diese Abschwächungsversuche." Stuart, 99, 112, translates: "Ephraim's iniquity will disappear (*glh*)." But his textual examples give evidence that this translation is a secondary one, only fitting regarding something which "disappeared"

The meaning becomes obvious if we take into consideration that the concept of healing is the treatment of wounds. As the whole extent of the injury becomes visible in the moment that it is laid bare for treatment, so the desperate situation of Israel's being involved in sin is revealed when Yahweh is going to change Israel's fate.¹ Yahweh is not prevented from acting as He wishes. He turns to the sick person and starts treatment.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

As in 6:4, the healing metaphor has a surprising effect. When Yahweh turns to the sick, one expects healing; however, the first result is not healing but disclosure. Unlike Hos 6:4, the surprise does not come from a reversal of the function of Yahweh as father/king, i.e., the change from the healing to the punishing activity. Rather the surprise is effected by focusing on a certain part of the treatment of wounds. Hosea turns the focus to the painful situation when wounds are laid bare for inspection, whereas normally the healing metaphor focuses on the restoration of health. Thus, the unexpected effect of the metaphor in Hos 7:1 depends on the fact that there is a "normal" usage, a metaphorical convention.

The healing metaphor of Hos 7:1 emphasizes the seriousness of Israel's situation. The people are not able to judge their situation correctly. Healing is not available as quickly as expected.

after the earth—in a negative sense—has been "laid bare," i.e., people or grass disappeared.

¹Laetsch, 62, goes in the right direction but clothes the situation in modern terms: "As the extent of the damage done by a cancer appears when the surgeon makes an exploratory incision, so when the Lord was about to heal Israel." Cf. Willi-Plein, 156.

At the same time there is a change of emphasis. While in the passage 5:12-6:2 the question is who causes the nation's disaster and who is able to help, in Hos 7:1 the question is how Israel's situation is to be evaluated. Another aspect of the sickness metaphor comes to the forefront, namely that sickness confronts with death. The metaphor indicates how terrible and hopeless the situation is.¹

There is another significant change in the usage of the image of sickness and healing compared to Hos 5:12-6:5. In Hos 5:12, 13 the wound is the political disaster. Likewise, Hos 6:11b (*šwb šbwt*) reminds one of the political and other national problems of Israel.² But 7:1 introduces a new perspective. The wound is the sin (*'wn*) and the wicked acts (*r'wt*).³ Thus Hosea moves from outer difficulties to the inner causes. It is the first time that the metaphorical usage of the sickness/healing motif refers to sin as the ultimate problem. In this way 7:1 prepares the way to the usage of Hos 14:5.

Again, as in 5:12—however in a different manner—, the difference between cause and effect is blurred. Sin has been the reason for the punishment or, in

¹This leads Hosea to add another metaphor *sbbwm m'lyhm* (vs. 2): Their wicked deeds are like a superior force which besieges the city; there is no escape.

²For the phrase cf. E. Preuschen, "Die Bedeutung von *šwb šbwt* im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 15 (1895): 1-74; E. L. Dietrich, "Die endzeitliche Wiederherstellung bei den Propheten," *ZAW* 40 (1925): 27-28; E. Baumann, "*šwb šbwt*: Eine exegetische Untersuchung," *ZAW* 47 (1929): 17-44; R. Borger, "Zu *šwb šbw/yt*," *ZAW* 66 (1954): 315-16; John M. Bracke, "*šûb š'bût*: A Reappraisal," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 233-44. Although this phrase is used by later prophets for the restoration of the nation in exile, it can mean a general reversal of the fate (Job 42:10). Bracke summarizes: "It is a technical term indicating a restoration to an earlier time of well-being—*restitutio in integrum*." *Ibid.*, 244. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 444.

³Against Jeremias, *Hosea*, 172, n. 9, who assumes that with the exception of 14:5, which he considers not to stem from Hosea, the sickness always means a political disaster. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 257.

metaphorical language, the cause for the sickness. Now it becomes the sickness itself. The result of this change is a dissociation: It is no longer the person who needs healing but the person's sin. The person and the sickness are distinguished. This way the prophet invites the audience not to identify with their own sins, but to take their stand against their sins.

Since it is the father's role to heal the wounds, "my people" (6:11) reminds one of "my son," which will become explicit in 11:1-3.

Hosea 11:1-3

The Metaphor

The next occurrence of the sickness-healing motif is found in Hos 11:1-3:

*kî na 'ar yiśrā'ēl wā'ōh' bēhû
ûmimmiṣrayim qārā'tî libnî.*

...
w'lo' yād'û kî r'pā'tîm.

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.¹

...
But they did not know that I healed them.

Yahweh is compared to a father who loves his son and cares for him. The parental metaphor is introduced here with *n 'r*, "child," *bny*, "my son," and the verbs *'hb*, "to love," and *qr'*, "to call," which establish the motif of the parent-son relationship.

¹LXX presents Plural, *tà tékna autoû*, instead of *lbny*. The translator took Israel to be the name of the patriarch whose sons went out of Egypt. Thus also Kuhnigk, 127. MT personifies the people with the name Israel.

For the first time Hosea uses metaphorical language of Israel's beginning of the relationship with Yahweh in 9:10, introducing it with the similes "like grapes" and "like the first yields of the fig tree." Once the metaphorical reference to the motif of Israel's early time is established in language, the following references to this motif come without similes (10:1; 10:11; 11:1). The same is true for the metaphor of healing, which was introduced with similes (5:12) and then repeated without similes.

Yahweh's caring treatment is contrasted to the unfaithful behavior of the son Israel. The metaphor is not carried through consistently. The reality shines through in the mentioning of Egypt and in the constant change of the pronouns from singular to plural. This is no inconsistency of thought but a device to secure the understanding of metaphorical language. The listener receives hints as to what is meant by the metaphor.¹ While Yahweh's actions are presented in appealing and emotional metaphorical language, Israel's actions of unfaithfulness are described in reality.² This way the contrast between Yahweh's loving and Israel's sinful actions finds its expression also in the form of language.³

¹Cf. H. Emonds, *Metaphernkommunikation: Zur Theorie des Verstehens von metaphorisch verwendeten Ausdrücken der Sprache*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 454 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1986).

²Cf. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 140.

³The educational emphasis of vs. 3 leads to a new metaphor in vs. 4: guidance of working animals. But the former metaphor shines through in 'dm, "man," and 'hbh, "love." The inconsistency of the metaphor is a means to secure correct communication.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

The father guides the son in his first steps as he learns to walk (vs. 3). *rp* ' is part of this activity. It fits perfectly in the father-son motif and does not introduce a new metaphor.¹ In this context the verb *rp* ' (vs. 3) confirms for Hosea's time what has been said above about healing activities. Even if the *rp* ' is used metaphorically, it presupposes that it was part of the father's task to care for the son's health.

Yahweh's education of Israel includes help when something has gone wrong, as a parent takes care of the wounds which may result when the child falls. The metaphor "heal" refers to the problem of sin, i.e., to events in Israel's early history when Yahweh provided forgiveness and a new beginning after the nation failed. Forgiveness could include literal healing.² The movement from external problems to sin as the true problem has already been observed in 7:1.

The stress of the healing metaphor in Hos 11 is on the restoration of well-being. Comparing the occurrences of the healing metaphor in the book of Hosea, we notice a movement from a negative to a positive accent. In Hos 5-6 the metaphor is turned to a negative emphasis, namely the punishing instead of the healing role of the father. In Hos 7:1 the metaphor still refers to unpleasant results; however, the father is already concerned with healing activities, namely the opening up of the wound for treatment. In Hos 11 we have the positive side of the metaphor in focus: restoration of health.

¹Against Stoebe, 807; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 142. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 215, translates *rp* ' here with "vor Krankheit schützen," Wolff, *Hosea*, 257, with "pflegen." But "to heal" fits perfectly the image of father and son.

²E.g., Num 16:41-49; 21:4-9.

However, the caring father complains about his frustrated efforts. As we will see, in the final occurrence, Hos 14:5, the healing metaphor is only positive.

The Meaning of the Healing Metaphor in Hosea 14:5

The Conventional Metaphor

We now turn to Hos 14:5 and its motif of “healing.” The occurrences of *rp*’ in the book of Hosea, which have been discussed above, have demonstrated that the prophet does not coin a new metaphor. This can be assumed also for Hos 14:5. The audience is familiar with the metaphorical usage of *rp*’ for Yahweh's gracious acts of restoration. This is especially true because the metaphor of Yahweh's healing has occurred earlier in the book of Hosea. Since the metaphor is already established in the book of Hosea, the metaphorical usage of the word *rp*’ evokes the full image of the parent or leader who cares for his child's wounds.

New Feature: Apostasy as the Object of Yahweh's Healing

In Hos 14:5 the object of Yahweh's healing is the *m^ešūbāh*, “apostasy.” The term is derived from the root *šwb*. When this root is not used in the sense of spatial movements, it belongs to the general topic of relationships and denotes a change—turning away from someone or returning to someone. The term *m^ešūbāh* occurs with one exception (Prov 1:32) only in the books of Hosea and Jeremiah.¹ It is fraught with

¹The closest parallel of Hos 14:5 in Jer 3:22 has *m^ešūbāh* in the plural.

meaning for these prophets.¹ They use words formed from the root *šwb* for the changes in relationship towards Yahweh.² The term *m^ešūbāh* has exclusively the negative meaning of “apostasy” or “turning away” from Yahweh.³

The term *m^ešūbāh* already occurs in Hos 11:7. This difficult text seems to express the hopeless state of Israel.⁴ There is no hope because of Israel's apostasy. However, in Hos 14:5 the *m^ešūbāh* is the object of Yahweh's metaphorical healing. For the first time this term is connected with the healing image.

¹Cf. Jeremias, “Zur Eschatologie,” 217-34; Fohrer, “Umkehr und Erlösung,” 222-41; Unterman, 541-50.

²Cf. J. A. Soggin, “*šwb*, zurückkehren,” *THAT*, 2:884-91.

³Th. Sprey, “*mšbh - tybwt*,” *VT* 7 (1957): 408. Heinz-Josef Fabry and A. Graupner, “*šūb*,” *TWAT*, 7:1136. However, the Vulgate translates *contritio* and assumes a positive attitude, namely repentance.

⁴Jeremias, *Hosea*, 138, takes the *tlw 'ym* in a figurative sense and translates: “Aber mein Volk bleibt verstrickt in die Abkehr von mir.” His interpretation and that of many others (cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 246) lean upon the modern figurative usage of “to hang” (cf. the doubts of Rudolph, *Hosea*, 211, and Willi-Plein, 202). It takes the preposition *l^e* to indicate to where the people are bound. But the preposition of the verb is normally *l^e*, only once (2 Sam 18:10) *b^e*. Another possibility according to the normal Old Testament usage is to understand the *tl' or tlh* literally. The preposition *l^e* would indicate the reason (Gen 4:23; Isa 36:9). The *l^elū 'im* is participle passive. This would yield the following translation: “My people (they are) hung ones because of turning (away) from me.” Thus the MT continues the image of war of vs. 6. Because of their apostasy the people are defeated and hung (Josh 10:26; 2 Sam 4:12). The LXX misunderstands, presupposing *mōšābō (ek tēs katoikias autoū)*. It could present the correct suffix here: “his apostasy.” Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 248. Or the suffix could indicate 3rd pers. sing., cf. Kuhnigk, 137.

The Meaning of the Healing Metaphor

What are the results of this new connection? What is the meaning of the healing metaphor of Hos 14:5? Both connected concepts—healing and apostasy—influence each other. Yahweh's “healing” becomes an activity reconstituting a relationship and “apostasy” takes the characteristic of a sickness. Both effects will be considered starting with the latter.

Israel's Desperate Situation

1. The metaphor of sickness connotes the seriousness of the situation: destruction and open wound. By the metaphor Hosea invites the audience to realize how much they suffer in their apostasy. They would have to expect death if there were no healing. The metaphor suggests that all the religious activities of the people besides the worship of Yahweh, which are meant to provide fertility and to increase the quality of life, are futile and destructive. There is nothing the sick can do; Israel needs to be treated. Healing can only be accomplished by Yahweh.

2. There is another significant difference in Hos 14:5 compared to the earlier occurrences of the healing metaphor. For the first time in the book of Hosea *rp*’ has as its object not the person who needs healing but the “disease.” The focus has changed from the person to the problem, as if the healer is now close enough to be concerned with the wound, to make the right diagnosis and start the treatment.

We have in the book of Hosea a heightening: After the prophet addressed Israel's political calamity in Hos 5:12-6:2 with the sickness/healing metaphor, in Hos 7:1 the real problem is identified as the sins. Hos 14:5 goes one step further: the ultimate sin

is the *m^ʿšūbāh*, the broken relationship with Yahweh.¹ A comparison with the closest parallel to Hos 14:5, i.e., Jer 3:22—probably dependent on Hosea—is instructive: *ʿrp* *mšwbtykm* “I will heal your apostasies.” This text has the plural, indicating that in Jer 3:22 the “apostasies” are conceived more as concrete deeds.² For Hosea, however, the *m^ʿšūbāh* is the fundamental turning away from Yahweh. Yahweh will heal not only some symptoms, but the root of Israel's problem.³

At the same time the focus is taken away from the one who causes the wounds. While in Hos 5-6 Yahweh is depicted as the One who punishes Israel, finally there is nobody mentioned who causes the sickness.

The Expression of Hope

That the *rp* has as its object not the sick person but the “sickness” has another effect. The person is no longer identified with its sickness but is disassociated from it. This way hope is expressed: Israel can become free of her apostasy. The prophet invites his audience to disassociate themselves from their “sickness,” their apostasy. The healing metaphor calls the people to confide in Yahweh as a wounded child confides in

¹Hellmuth Frey, *Das Buch des Werbens Gottes um seine Kirche: Der Prophet Hosea*, Die Botschaft des Alten Testaments, vol. 23, 2 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1957), 294: “Zentralschaden.”

²Plural also in Jer 2:19; 5:6; 14:7.

³Kruger, “Yahweh's Generous Love,” 40-41, assumes that the use of the healing metaphor for the religious abstract quality of Israel's backsliding does not stem from Hosea but is derived from the Jeremianic tradition. He refers to Jer 3:22 but overlooks that this text has the plural. The singular of Hosea is the more principal form.

the father. There is no doubt that Yahweh would be able to heal, unlike so many other healers who cannot help (Hos 5:13).

Royal Connotations of the Metaphor

Now we ask in the opposite direction. How does the term *m^ešûbāh*, “apostasy,” influence the meaning of the healing metaphor?

The term *m^ešûbāh* belongs to the word-field of relationship. In Hos 11:7 the term is used in the context of a “geschichtstheologische Anklagerede.”¹ Israel is accused of having continuously abandoned the covenant with Yahweh. Therefore the calling to sonship (11:1) is annulled:² Israel has to “return to Egypt,” and the Assyrian king will be her king.³ That means the term *m^ešûbāh* is a covenant term and has a “political” connotation.

This observation is confirmed if we consider the use of *m^ešûbāh* in the book of Jeremiah. This prophet follows Hosea in using the term in a covenant context, especially in Jer 3 intensified by the marriage metaphor. In Jer 2:18-19 the prophet addresses Israel's political situation, the people's pacts and dependencies.

We have seen⁴ that the healing metaphor also has an affinity to a political sense, because the healing function of the father is used as a symbol of the king's function to

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 249.

²Cf. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 142-43.

³Most commentators agree that the apparent negation *l'* at the beginning of vs. 5 is to be taken as an emphatic particle (Kuhnigk, 134; Andersen and Freedman, 584) or to be read *lô* and taken to the end of vs. 4 (Wolff, *Hosea*, 248; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 138).

⁴See above, p. 69.

take care of the well-being of the people. Already in the first occurrence of the healing metaphor in the book of Hosea we find this royal aspect: The people seek healing from the Assyrian king (Hos 5:13).¹

When Hosea uses the term *m^ešūbāh* in connection with the healing metaphor, he amplifies this aspect. The healing metaphor becomes a royal metaphor. Yahweh is depicted not only as the father who heals the wounds of His child, but also as the King who cares for His people. This fits perfectly in the context of Hos 14:2-9 since in vs. 4 the people renounce the trust in a political contract with Assyria and in military power. In the next chapters we will find more royal aspects in the metaphoric language of Hos 14.

Covenant Connotations of the Metaphor

Since *m^ešūbāh* has covenant overtones, Yahweh's healing of the *m^ešūbāh* implies a new covenant. Hos 14:5 therefore is an eschatological promise. The healing metaphor expresses Israel's eschatological restoration. Physical, mental and spiritual health, a holistic concept, is one important part of the covenant blessings and is expected by the people from her royal lord (Hos 6:1-2).²

¹The accusation of Israel's seeking help in political powers occurs also in 7:11; 8:9; 12:2.

²See Wijngaards, 236-39.

CHAPTER 4

THE “LOVE” METAPHOR IN HOSEA 14:5 (ENG. 14:4)

Introduction

The second metaphor for Yahweh in Hos 14:2-9 we find in vs. 5b:

'ōh^abēm n^adābāh

I will love them freely.

This sentence is the center of an envelope structure in vs. 5 formed by the repetition of the root *šwb*, “to (re)turn.”¹ This indicates that the term *'hb*, “to love,” is a key word of the passage.

Since Yahweh can love literally, why should this sentence be taken metaphorically? Also the word *ndbh*, “freely,” “with his own will,” does not immediately indicate that we have a metaphor. The sentence does not contain a semantic discrepancy that would require a metaphorical understanding.

However, there is another way a metaphorical comprehension can be triggered. If the context has already established a metaphorical understanding of the words of a certain semantic field, a later occurring word that belongs to the same semantic field will be understood in the light of this metaphor. Therefore we have to assume that for the

¹Robinson and Horst, 52 (without explanation); Wolff, *Hosea*, 301 (because of the singular suffix *mimmennū*), and others eliminate vs. 5c. But this would destroy not only the chiasmic structure of vs. 5 but also the parallelism to vs. 4. Israel's confession (vs. 4) and Yahweh's answer (vs. 5) both end with a statement of reason.

informed reader the word *'hb*, “to love,” recalls two major themes of the book of Hosea, i.e., the marriage metaphor for the relationship between Yahweh and His people and the motif of Israel being the son of Yahweh. Thus for Hosea's audience the previously employed metaphors—orally or written—constitute a metaphorical usage also in Hos 14:5.

'hb in the Old Testament

The Meaning of the Term *'hb*

The Hebrew verb *'hb* has a wide spectrum of meanings and denotes a close relationship between persons, which is characterized by emotional closeness, belonging, and caring.¹ The question of etymology of the root is not solved.² But very often the etymology of a word does not help in determining the meaning. In the case of *'hb* “the underlying meaning of the word must have been forgotten at a very early stage in the language, and the Hebrew used it to express ‘love,’ as he did other words of similar origin, quite unconscious of its primitive meaning.”³ More revealing than etymology is the usage of the word in its context with parallels and antonyms.

¹Cf. Ernst Jenni, “*'hb*, lieben,” *THAT*, 1:62.

²There are mainly two suggestions: (1) “breathe heavily (with desire).” Cf. August Wünsche, *Der Prophet Hosea übersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1868), 55; quoted in Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 13; D. Winton Thomas, “The Root *'āhēb* ‘Love’ in Hebrew,” *ZAW* 57 (1939): 62; J. J. Gluck, “Proverbs XXX 15a,” *VT* 14 (1964): 367-70; Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, s.v. *'hb*, 1:17. (2) It may be related to arab. *'ihab* which means both “(human) skin” and “(raw) leather.” Cf. G. R. Driver, “Supposed Arabisms in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 55 (1936): 101-120, esp. 111; idem, “Linguistic and Textual Problems,” 161-62; H. H. Hirschberg, “Some Additional Arabic Etymologies in Old Testament Lexicography,” *VT* 11 (1961): 373-74; Gerhard Wallis, “*'āhab*,” *TWAT*, 1:109.

³Thomas, “Root *'āhēb*,” 64.

The Use in the Old Testament

Parallels

Frequent parallels to *'hb* are *dbq*, “to cling,” “to be attached to,”¹ *hšq*, “to be attached to,”² *hps*, “to delight in,” “to have an affection for,”³ and *bhr*, “to choose, select.”⁴ The most important antonym is *šn'*, “to hate.”⁵ Wallis points out that the verb *'hb* has a pragmatic sense.⁶

Areas of Meaning

In the usage of *'hb* two areas prevail: First, the term *'hb* is used for the love between man and woman.⁷ A second area of human love is the one between parent and child.⁸ In addition, the word can express friendship and closeness between other persons, i.e. friends and relatives,⁹ it can even denote the relationship between student

¹Gen 34:3; Deut 11:22; 30:20; 1 Kgs 11:2.

²Gen 34:8; Deut 7:7, 8; 10:15.

³1 Sam 18:22; Pss 34:13; 109:17.

⁴Deut 7:7, 8; 10:15; Isa 41:8; Ps 78:68.

⁵E.g., Gen 29:31, 32; Exod 20:5, 6; Lev 19:17, 18; 21:15, 16; 2 Sam 13:15; 19:7; Pss 45:8; 109:3-5; 119:113, 127, 163; Prov 1:22; 8:36; 9:8; 10:12; 12:1; 13:24; 15:17; Eccl 3:8; 9:6; Isa 61:8; Ezek 16:37; Hos 9:15; Amos 5:15; Mic 3:2; Mal 1:2, 3.

⁶Wallis, 1:112.

⁷Gen 24:67; 29:18, 20, 32; 34:3; Judg 14:16; 16:4, 15; 1 Sam 1:5; 18:20, 28; 2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15; 1 Kgs 11:1, 2; 2 Chr 11:21; Esth 2:17; Hos 3:1; Cant 1:3, 4; 3:1-4, etc.

⁸E.g., Gen 22:2; 25:28; 37:3, 4; 44:20; Prov 13:24.

⁹Ruth 4:15; 1 Sam 16:21; 18:1-3; 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26; Prov 17:17.

and teacher,¹ servant and master,² or king and follower.³ In a more general sense *'hb* is used for the positive relationship to things, deeds, and values.⁴

Corresponding to the two main areas of human love, i.e. marital and parental love, Yahweh's love to Israel is expressed primarily in the images of marriage and parenthood.⁵ Other expressions include Israel's election⁶ and the blessing He provides for Israel.⁷

Marital Love in the Book of Hosea

Introduction

In the book of Hosea, besides 14:5, we find the term *'hb* with Yahweh as the subject in 3:1; 9:15 (denied); 11:1. But the concept of Yahweh's love occurs also

¹E.g., Prov 9:8.

²E.g., Exod 21:5; Deut 15:16.

³2 Sam 19:7.

⁴E.g., 2 Chr 26:10; Prov 8:17; 12:1; 17:19; 19:8; 20:13; 21:17; Eccl 5:9; Isa 1:23-24; 56:10; Hos 3:1; 4:18; 9:1; 10:1; 12:8; Zech 8:19, etc.

⁵Thus already the two main parts in the chapter on the ways of presentation of Yahweh's love in Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 49-91.

⁶Deut 4:20, 34, 37; 7:6-8; 10:15; Isa 41:8; 43:4; Jer 31:3; Mal 1:2; Pss 47:5; 78:68; 2 Chr 20:7. See Hans Wildberger, *Jahwes Eigentumsvolk: Eine Studie zur Traditionsgeschichte und Theologie des Erwählungsgedankens*, AThANT 37 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), 110-12; idem, "Die Neuinterpretation des Erwählungsglaubens Israels in der Krise der Exilszeit: Überlegungen zum Gebrauch von *bāhar*," in *Jahwe und sein Volk: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament*, TB 66 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1979), 192-209 (= *Wort - Gebot - Glaube: Festschrift W. Eichrodt*, ed. J. Stoebe, AThANT 59 [Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970], 307-24).

⁷Deut 7:12, 13; 23:6; Zeph 3:17.

without this term. Corresponding to the two main areas of the usage of *'hb* in the Old Testament, Hosea depicts the love of Yahweh as the love of a husband and of a parent. I will study these two image fields in turn.

The motif of marital love occurs in Hos 1:2, throughout chaps. 2 and 3,¹ and in Hos 5:7. In other texts the image of love between husband and wife is not explicitly mentioned. We only have references to the metaphor of *znh*, "to fornicate," and harlotry (Hos 4:10-12, 15, 18; 5:3, 4; 6:10).² I will concentrate on the characteristics of Hosea's marriage metaphor. The question of the history of Hosea's marriage will not be my concern,³ but the thrust of the employed imagery.

¹The question of the structure and composition of Hos 1-3 will not be our concern here. Cf. among others George Vernon Blankenbaker, "The Language of Hosea 1-3" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1976); Bernard Renaud, "Le Livret d'Osée 1-3," *RevSR* 56 (1982): 159-78; idem, "Osée 1-3: Analyse diachronique et lecture synchronique: Problèmes de méthode," *RevSR* 57 (1983): 249-260; Lothar Ruppert, "Beobachtungen zur Literatur- und Kompositionskritik von Hosea 1-3," in *Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten*, ed. L. Ruppert, P. Weimar, and E. Zenger (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1982), 163-82; idem, "Erwägungen zur Kompositions- und Redaktionsgeschichte von Hosea 1-3," *BZ* 26 (1982): 208-23; Walter Vogels, "'Osée - Gomer' car et comme 'Yahweh - Israel': Os. 1-3," *NRT* 103 (1981): 712-27; idem, "Diachronic and Synchronic Studies of Hosea 1-3," *BZ* 28 (1984): 94-98; Josef Schreiner, "Hoseas Ehe, ein Zeichen des Gerichts (zu Hos 1,2-2,3; 3,1-5)," *BZ* 21 (1977): 163-83.

²In Hos 9:1 the subject of the verb *'hb* is Israel, the object is *'etmān*, the fee of the harlot (cf. Deut 23:19; Isa 23:17, 18; Ezek 16:31, 34, 41; Mic 1:7). There may be an allusion to the marriage metaphor in 4:12 and 9:1 (*znh* motif connected with *min*: away from your true husband). However, the metaphor seems to be a stereotype because the verbs are masculine and the harlot motif is dominant. For Hos 9:15, see below p. 181.

³I do not engage in the question of Hosea's marital biography, especially the question of the identity of the women in chaps. 1 and 3, or the question of the relationship of the first three chapters of the book of Hosea. For a review of interpretations of Hosea's marriage until the end of the 19th century, see Stephan Bitter, *Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea: Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Göttinger

Hosea 1:2

The Metaphor

wayyōmer YHWH 'el-hōšē'
 lēk qah-l'kā 'ēšet z'mūnīm w'yaldē z'mūnīm
 kī-zānōh tizneh hā'āreṣ mē'ah^arē YHWH.¹

Theologische Arbeiten 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); P. Cruveilhier, "De l'Interprétation Historique des Événements de la Vie Familiale du Prophète Osée (1-3)," *RB* 13 (1916): 342-362; J. Coppens, "L'histoire matrimoniale d'Osée," in *Alttestamentliche Studien: Friedrich Nötscher zum sechzigsten Geburtstag 19. Juli 1950, gewidmet von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, ed. H. Junker and J. Botterweck, *BBB* 1 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1950), 38-45; Robert Gordis, "Hosea's Marriage and Message," in *Poets, Prophets and Sages* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1971), 230-54; idem, "Hosea's Marriage and Message: A New Approach," *HUCA* 25 (1954): 9-35; I. H. Eybers, "The Matrimonial Life of Hosea," in *Studies on the Book of Hosea: Papers Read at the 7th Meeting Held at Stellenbosch University 1964*, OTWSA (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964-65), 11-34; Leroy Waterman, "Hosea, Chapters 1-3, in Retrospect and Prospect," *JNES* 14 (1955): 100-109; Harold Henry Rowley, *The Marriage of Hosea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956).

¹It has been proposed by Rudolph, *Hosea*, 48-49; Ruppert, "Erwägungen," 212; Christina Bucher, "The Origin and Meaning of 'znh' Terminology in the Book of Hosea" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1988), 129-30; and recently Andreas Weider, *Ehemetaphorik in prophetischer Verkündigung: Hosea 1-3 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte im Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zum alttestamentlichen Gottes-Bild*, *Forschung zur Bibel* 71 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), 11-13, that both occurrences of the word *z'mūnīm* and vs. 2b have not been part of the original report. Its focus was on the symbolic names of the children, the marriage did not have a symbolic character. But we have to take into consideration the close connection between chaps. 1 and 2. Not only does Hos 1:2 anticipate the whoredom motif, but the following sayings refer repeatedly back to the metaphor of mother and children (2:3-4) and to the children's names, both in the judgment passages (2:4, 6) and in the salvation passages (2:1-3, 20, 23-25). That means that the whoredom-motif of chap. 2 and the symbolic names in chap. 1 are mutually correlated. The metaphoric verdict of Israel's unfaithfulness answers the questions prompted by the children's names. Cf. Phyllis Bird, "'To Play the Harlot': An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 81; Kruger, "Israel, the Harlot," 108; Blankenbaker, "Language," 9-10, 38-39.

And Yahweh said to Hosea:
Go, take yourself a wife of fornications and children of fornications,
for the land utterly fornicates away from Yahweh.

The woman and her children are designated by the term *z^emûnîm*, “fornications.” The woman is not a *zônâh*, a professional harlot, but an *'ēšet z^emûnîm*. The abstract plural noun points to habitual behavior and inclination rather than profession: a woman of loose sexual morals.¹ There is no sign of metaphorical application yet. The word *z^emûnîm* does not suggest that the woman had connections with the cult, as would have the term *q^edēšâh*, “holy woman.”² The children are claimed to have the same nature as their mother.³

A clearly metaphorical usage of the term *znh* can be found in the explanation of Yahweh's command to Hosea in 1:2: *kî zānōh tizneh hā'āreš mē'ah^arê YHWH*, “for the land utterly fornicates away from Yahweh.” The fact that the subject is the land and not a person requires a metaphorical understanding of the phrase. The metaphor is

¹Bird, 80. Andersen and Freedman, 157, “sexual misbehavior.” Similarly Hans Jurgens Hendriks, “Juridical Aspects of the Marriage Metaphor in Hosea and Jeremiah” (D.Lit. [Semitic Languages] diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1975), 86: “the attitude, not the activity as such”; cf. Weider, 11.

²This is assumed by Wolff, *Hosea*, 13; Mays, 26; Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*,” 14; Andor Szabo, “Textual Problems in Hosea,” *VT* 25 (1975): 509; and others.

³The *yaldê z^emûnîm* could be interpreted as children born of promiscuity, but “the mimicking construction of the paired terms and the linkage without an intervening verb suggest that the author intended to claim for the children the same nature as their mother.” Bird, 80. A similar result is reached by Laurie J. Braaten, “Parent-Child Imagery in Hosea” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1987), 223-32, who refers to the custom that the children have the status of the mother. Children of fornication would then mean children of low social status (who eventually are disinherited).

constituted by a figurative usage of *'rṣ*, “land,” for the inhabitants of the land¹ and of the term *znh*, “to fornicate,” for an activity of faithlessness—not necessarily consisting in sexual misconduct—against Yahweh.

What reason do we have to assume that the metaphor in Hos 1:2 speaks about marriage? The first reference to marriage in Hos 1:2 is the command to take a wife. The phrase *qah ṯkā 'ēšet*, “take for yourself a wife,” coincides with the technical term for beginning a marriage in the Old Testament.² The words used in this expression are words of normal, everyday language; there is no special term for “to marry.”³ Marriage is expressed as a relationship which is qualified by the fact that one person is for the other: *'iš*, “man,” or *'iššā*, “woman” respectively.⁴

The second reference to marriage in Hos 1:2 is the expression *znh mē'ah^aré*, “fornicate away from.” The word *znh* does not in itself constitute the imagery of

¹The fact that the subject is the land and not a person has its closest parallel in Lev 19:29. It is mostly assumed that cultic prostitution is in view in this text. Cf. Martin Noth, *Das dritte Buch Mose: Leviticus*, ATD 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 123-24, English trans.: *Leviticus: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1965), 143; Walter Kornfeld, *Levitikus*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1983), 77. See also Rudolf Kilian, *Literarkritische und Formgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Heiligkeitsgesetzes*, BBB 19 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1963), 64. He assumes ancient material in these laws (pp. 26-28). Cf. also Henning Graf Reventlow, *Das Heiligkeitsgesetz formgeschichtlich untersucht*, WMANT 6 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 74.

²Cf. Josef Scharbert, “Ehe und Eheschließung in der Rechtssprache des Pentateuch und beim Chronisten,” in *Studien zum Pentateuch: Walter Kornfeld zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Georg Braulik (Vienna, Freiburg, Basel: Herder, 1977), 215, 220; W. Plautz, “Die Form der Eheschließung im Alten Testament,” *ZAW* 76 (1964): 278-318.

³Scharbert, 224.

⁴Cf. *ibid.*, 215, for a discussion of the variations.

marriage because it is not exclusively used for adultery—the technical term for adultery is *n'p*—but can denote many kinds of sexual misbehavior apart from marriage.¹ But the expression *znh mē'ah'rê* “points . . . to the aggrieved husband” and “appears to be dictated by the marriage metaphor to which Hosea has adapted his usage.”² Almost all the parallels of the expression outside the book of Hosea have *znh 'ah'rê*, “whore after,” thereby emphasizing the sexual attraction and the attachment to the illicit lover.³

The Meaning of the Metaphor

What are the characteristics of the marriage metaphor in Hos 1:2? First we notice that it is introduced right from the outset as an ill relationship. Hosea's book does not begin with a metaphor of a happy marriage, but of a broken one.

Second, in a very broad sense we could speak of a juridical accent of the marriage motif in Hos 1:2. This is indicated by the manner in which it is introduced. It is the public and legal side of marriage to which the command *qah-ʾlkā 'ēšet*, “take for yourself a wife,” refers.⁴ The relationship between husband and wife is of public

¹Bird, 76-78. Cf. S. Erlandsson, “*zānāh*,” *TWAT*, 2:612-19; J. Kühlewein, “*znh*, huren,” *THAT*, 1:518-20; Scharbert, 220.

²Bird, 81.

³The only text outside the book of Hosea that has *znh min* . . . is Ps 73:27. For a further discussion of the phrase, see below page 145.

⁴The terms for the emotional aspect in marriage, *'hb* and its converse *śn'*, are not employed. They are used, for example, in the regulation for the case that of two wives one is more loved than the other: e.g., Deut 21:15-17. Cf. Scharbert, 219.

interest.¹ The public concern finds expression, for example, in marriage customs and legal aspects of marriage, i.e., marriage and adultery regulations and laws.² That the public aspect of marriage is in view in the metaphor corresponds to the function of Yahweh's command to Hosea. Since it was meant to be a symbolic action and had to communicate a message, it needed publicity.

Also the expression *znh mē'ah^arê*, "fornicate away from," emphasizes the juridical aspect of marriage. It points to the previous bond which is violated by the act of *znh*.

¹There are at least two reasons for it: First, the relationship, at least for the wife, is exclusive. Adultery means that a man's exclusive rights are touched. See Edwin LeBron Matthews, "The Use of the Adultery Motif in Hebrew Prophecy" (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 10; Bird, 77; on adultery in the Old Testament, Matthews, 10-88. For the woman's position in biblical society, see F. E. Greenspahn, "A Typology of Biblical Woman," *Judaism* 32 (1983): 43-50; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Patriarchal Family Relationships and Near Eastern Law," *Biblical Archaeologist* 44 (1981): 209-14; Anthony Phillips, "Some Aspects of Family Laws in Pre-Exilic Israel," *VT* 23 (1973): 349-61; idem, "Another Look at Adultery," *JSOT* 20 (1981): 3-25. The second reason is that the relationship between a husband and his wife is an important factor in the reproduction and growth of the people. Given the importance of family bonds and transmission of inheritance in ancient Israel and throughout the ancient Near East, clarity concerning the offspring was required. Cf. Matthews, 15; Adler, 33-35, 54-55.

²Cf. Phillips, "Some Aspects of Family Laws," 353 and passim; Henry McKeating, "Sanctions against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society, with Some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics," *JSOT* 11 (1979): 69; also Michael Fishbane, "Accusations of Adultery: A Study of Law and Scribal Practice in Numbers 5:11-31," *HUCA* 45 (1974): 25-45; Reymond Westbrook, "Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law," *RB* 97 (1990): 542-80; Walter Kornfeld, "L'Adultère dans l'Orient antique," *RB* 57 (1950): 92-109; idem, *Studien zum Heiligkeitsgesetz (Lev 17-26)* (Vienna: Herder Verlag, 1952), 70-73, 87-89; Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "The Laws of Adultery and Murder in Biblical and Mesopotamian Law," in *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures*, AOAT (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1980), 146-53.

Third, the use of the root *znh* instead of *n'p*, with its emphatic *zānōh tizneh* and the repetition of *z'nūnīm*, emphasizes promiscuity and wantonness. Not only has the marriage bond been violated; it has been violated in a very shameful manner. The accent is placed on the moral verdict: strong words are used to denote the misbehavior. The woman, the children, and the whole land are included in the accusation. Thereby a heightening is formed. The allusion to the defilement of the land is another way to express how serious the violation of the law is to be considered. This emphatic aspect of the metaphor of the broken marriage presupposes that sexual morality was still such that these violations would be considered serious.

Hosea 2: Aspects of the Marriage Metaphor

The next passage in which the marriage metaphor is prominent is Hos 2:4-25. I do not give a detailed exegesis of this text.¹ My concern is the characteristics of the marriage metaphor in Hos 2 for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.²

¹For the composition and exegesis of Hos 2, see the commentaries and among others the following studies: David J. A. Clines, "Hosea 2: Structure and Interpretation," in *Studia Biblica 1978*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 11 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1979), 83-103; Edwin M. Good, "The Composition of Hosea," in *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok 31*, ed. Harald Riesenfeld (Lund: Gleerup, 1966), 21-63; H. Krszyna, "Literarische Struktur von Os 2,4-17," *BZ* 13 (1969): 41-59; Bernard Renaud, "Genèse et unité rédactionnelle de Os 2," *RevSR* 54 (1980): 1-20; Ruppert, "Erwägungen," 208-23; Weider, 63-151; Umberto Cassuto, "The Second Chapter of the Book of Hosea," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, vol. 1, *Bible* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1973), 101-40; Hendriks, 117-60; Daniel Lys, "J'ai Deux Amours ou l'Amant Jugé," *ÉTR* 51 (1976): 59-77; Renita J. Weems, "Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor?" *Semeia* 47 (1989): 87-104. See also the literature above on page 109, n. 1.

²William D. Whitt, "The Divorce of Yahweh and Asherah in Hos 2,4-7.12 ff.," *SJOT* 6 (1992): 31-67, assumes that the marriage metaphor for Yahweh and Israel is as

First, we have to realize again that the metaphor is that of a broken marriage. The text contains several complaints and accusations of the husband against his unfaithful wife (vss. 4, 7, 9, 15). The passages of the renewed relationship presuppose, and look back to (vss. 18, 19, 25), the broken one. The future marital happiness does not function as an independent metaphor.

Second, in Hos 2 we again find the emphasis placed on juridical aspects. Marriage is depicted as a covenantal relationship with mutual obligations and expectations.¹ The wife is expected to remain faithful in the relationship. This is the norm not only in the book of Hosea but throughout the Old Testament. Adultery is seen as the great sin, a capital crime,² and is condemned for normal persons and kings alike.³

late as Jeremiah. He interprets Hos 2:1-7, 12 as referring to a divorce of the marriage between Yahweh and Asherah—according to Whitt, the mother goddess and consort of Yahweh universally accepted in 8th-century Israel—presented by the prophet in speech and action at the shrine of Gilgal. But his proposal draws a picture alien to the Old Testament. It rests on the elimination of many parts of the traditional text. It makes Hosea a fanatic, but lonely, henotheist. J. J. Schmitt, “The Wife of God in Hosea 2,” *BR* 34 (1989): 5-18, argues that the metaphorical wife of Hos 2 is not Israel but the city of Samaria. Cf. also Aloysius Fitzgerald, “The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403-16. But cf. Whitt, 54-56.

¹Kruger, “Israel, the Harlot,” 107.

²Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-27; cf. Gen 20:7; 26:9. Cf. Jacob J. Rabinowitz, “The ‘Great Sin’ in Ancient Egyptian Marriage Contracts,” *JNES* 18 (1959): 73; William L. Moran, “The Scandal of the ‘Great Sin’ at Ugarit,” *JNES* 18 (1959): 280-281; Adler, 127-29a; cf. Gen 20:9; 39:9.

³Cf. 2 Sam 12:9-13.

The husband's obligation is to provide food¹ and clothing² for his wife. This is also the general rule in the Old Testament (Exod 21:10) and the ancient Near East.³

The mention of bread and water, wool and flax, oil and drink in vs. 7, the similar list of goods in vss. 10-11, and the vine and fig tree in vs. 14 have often been taken as reference to the fertility cults. It is true that food and clothing depend on fruit-bearing and reproduction. However, the language of the verses does not refer to fertility. Growth, harvest, and reproduction of cattle are not mentioned. The listed goods are often of a processed nature—produce like bread, drink, and oil or resulting wealth such as silver and gold. The accused woman does not even hint at human progeny.⁴ It seems that these passages are better understood as referring to material prosperity.⁵ In the

¹Bird, 82, sees in Hos 2:7, 14 a reference to the harlot and her wages (cf. 9:1). Similarly Kruger, "Israel, the Harlot," 113-14. That might be in the background, but the main stress is on the wife's dependence on sustenance by the husband.

²In the light of this duty, the custom to spread the coat over the woman (Ruth 3:9; Ezek 16:8) was a sign to take over the responsibility. Wolff, *Hosea*, 40; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 41-42, and others follow Curt Kuhl, "Neue Dokumente zum Verständnis von Hosea 2, 4-15," *ZAW* 52 (1934): 105-6, and Cyrus H. Gordon, "Hos 2,4-5 in the Light of New Semitic Inscriptions," *ZAW* 54 (1936): 277-80, that to send out a wife naked from the house has the opposite meaning: it is part of a divorce ritual. Cf. also McKeating, 61-62; Kruger, "Marriage Metaphor," 12-15, 17-19; Westbrook, 559-60.

³Codex Hammurabi, par. 178, mentions food, oil, and clothing; cf. also 133-35 (*ANET*, 174); also Middle Assyrian Laws, Tabl. A, 36 and 46 (*ANET*, 183-84). Cf. L. Dürr, "Altorientalisches Recht bei den Propheten Amos und Hosea," *BZ* 23 (1935): 154-57; Hendriks, 28-55; Kruger, "Marriage Metaphor," 15-17.

⁴Hos 2:1 speaks of the great number of Israel in the future, not about birth and reproduction.

⁵It is significant that Hosea began his ministry in a time of relative prosperity in the Northern Kingdom. Cf. also Hos 4:18; 10:1; 13:6.

context of marriage it is the legal aspect of the husband's provision for his wife that is in view.¹

Because the wife has been unfaithful, the case is brought to court. Hos 2:4 begins with a formal accusation.² The facts are presented. Divorce and the death of the

¹For vss. 23-25 cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 65-66. He refers to the wisdom background of this "Kettenspruch" and points out that "mit der Befreiung Israels von den Naturmythologien das Baalskultes freies naturkundliches Beobachten aufkeimt."

²Ruppert, "Erwägungen," 210. The counterpart to this controversy between Yahweh and Israel—without the marriage metaphor—is the passage Hos 4:1-3. For the *rib*-pattern in this passage, see I. Cardellini, "Hosea 4,1-3, eine Strukturanalyse," in *Bausteine Biblischer Theologie: Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern*, BBB 50 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1977), 258-70; Dwight R. Daniels, "Is There a 'Prophetic Lawsuit' Genre?" *ZAW* 99 (1987): 345-47; Michael DeRoche, "Structure, Rhetoric, and Meaning in Hosea IV,4-10," *VT* 33 (1983): 185-98; B. Gemser, "The rib- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Harold Henry Rowley by the Society for Old Testament Study in Association with the Editorial Board of Vetus Testamentum in Celebration of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, 24 March 1955*, ed. Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, VTS 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 120-37; Julien Harvey, "Le 'rib-pattern,' réquisitoire prophétique sur la rupture de l'alliance," *Biblica* 43 (1962): 172-96; Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959): 285-95; Hubert Junker, "Textkritische, formkritische und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Os 4,1-10," *BZ* 4 (1960): 165-73; G. Liedke, "*rib*, streiten," *THAT*, 2:771-777; J. Limburg, "The Root *ryb* and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," *JBL* 88 (1969): 291-304; Helmer Ringgren, "*rib*," *TWAT*, 7:496-501; James A. Wharton, "Hosea 4,1-3," *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 78-83. For the function of the prophet as a covenant mediator and his role in the covenant lawsuit, see Walter Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis: A Study in Hosea* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 87-90.

adulteress are possible sentences.¹ This picture corresponds to what the Old Testament in general has to say about adultery and its legal consequences.²

Another pointer to the juridical side of marriage is the usage of the verb *'rs* (Pi), "betroth" in vss. 21, 22.³ It means a purely juridical act. The man, or his father when he is still alive and acts as the head of the family,⁴ normally by paying the bride-price, attains the right to take the woman into his house.⁵ It has been assumed that the four qualities in vs. 21b, righteousness, justice, faithfulness, and loving compassion, refer to the bride-price, since they are preceded by *b^c* like the bride-price in the expression in 2 Sam 3:14.⁶ There is no sexual aspect in this event. The final line, *w^cyāda'at 'et-YHWH*, "you will know Yahweh," summarizes the gifts or attributes of betrothal as revealing Yahweh's heart. The usage of the verb *yd'*, "to know," has no sexual overtone here,

¹Cf. Gen 38:24; Lev 20:10; Deut 22:23-27.

²Cf. Adler, 43-54; McKeating, 61-65; Phillips, "Some Aspects of Family Laws." For extrabiblical material, see John Huehnergard, "Biblical Notes on Some New Akkadian Texts from Emar (Syria)," *CBO* 47 (1985): 428-34; Moran, "Scandal," 280.

³Kruger, "Israel, the Harlot," 107. Cf. Scharbert, 217.

⁴Cf. Adler, 64-65.

⁵For this widespread custom, which provides a financial substitute for the loss of a working family member to the bride's family, see Plautz, 278-318.

⁶Wolff, *Hosea*, 64; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 80-81; Mays, 51. Differently Andersen and Freedman, 283.

because in that sense it usually has a male subject.¹ The marriage bond will be *ʿōlām*, “indissoluble,” again a term of juridical language.²

The third characteristic of the marriage metaphor is a historical aspect.³ The relationship is rooted in a history which both partners have in common. There was a time of beginning and of a better relationship (vss. 9, 17); the husband refers to what He has done for His wife in the past, especially the gift of the land⁴ with all its blessings (vs. 10, cf. the term *škh*, “to forget,” in vs. 15).⁵ There is also anticipation of future events in a renewed relationship (vss. 1-3, 16-25).

That historical aspects play a role in marriage regulations can be seen in the provisions which restrict the right of the husband to divorce his wife (Deut 22:13-19, 28-29) or to marry his former wife who after he divorced her was married to another man

¹Andersen and Freedman, 284.

²Wolff, *Hosea*, 64, following Ernst Jenni, “Das Wort *ʿōlām* im AT,” *ZAW* 65 (1953): 13.

³Cf. Adler, 27-30.

⁴The threat to change the land into a desert (vs. 5) and the outlook to a new beginning in the desert (vs. 16), often interpreted from the fertility aspect, remind one of Israel's history, the desert wandering. Cf. Weider, 207.

⁵This aspect corresponds with the repeated reference to aspects of Yahweh's salvation history with His people. For the historical themes in Hosea, see: Edmond Jacob, “Der Prophet Hosea und die Geschichte,” *EvTh* 24 (1964): 281-90; Jochen Vollmer, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, BZAW 119 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971); Heinz-Dieter Neef, *Die Heilstraditionen Israels in der Verkündigung des Propheten Hosea*, BZAW 169 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987); Matthias Köckert, “Prophetie und Geschichte im Hoseabuch,” *ZThK* 85 (1988): 3-30; Dwight R. Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History: The Early Traditions of Israel in the Prophecy of Hosea*, BZAW 191 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990).

(Deut 24:1-4). These regulations presume some way of remembrance or record about the history of a marriage.

A fourth characteristic needs to be discussed. The way the woman is depicted in Hos 2 is marked by its vividness and severe expressions. We note the drastic details in vs. 4b. The prophet quotes the woman with words revealing her eagerness and motivation (vss. 7, 14), but in reality she would never speak in such a way. She is even compared to an animal in heat that has to be hedged with fences of thorns (vs. 8; cf. Jer 2:23-24). Here Hosea changes the imagery and heightens the drastic and maligning language. The plural reference to the lovers (vss. 7, 9, 12, 14, 15), the Baals (vss. 15, 19), is another means to intensify the blame on the woman who not only committed adultery but fornicated with many lovers.¹ The vivid description of the unfaithful woman employs sexual motifs which are absent in connection with the former or future relationship, respectively, with her true husband.

The contrast between the loving attention of Yahweh and the wicked forgetfulness of the wife (vss. 10, 15) also contributes to make the passage an emphatic speech. The passionate language continues in the description of the punishment of the unfaithful wife (vss. 5, 11-14).

To summarize: The second reference to the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea, again a broken marriage, displays the same characteristics as the first: The juridical aspect is in the foreground, this time accompanied by a historical one. The

¹Bird, 83, interprets the plural as an “intentional device for belittling Baal, denying him a proper name and the status of a true rival.” This might be a secondary aspect, but the focus of the passage seems to be on the woman.

unfaithfulness of the wife is depicted emphatically. It is noteworthy that the sexual aspects of marriage appear only in the depiction of the woman going after her lovers.

Hosea 3

The Metaphor

The next passage containing the marriage metaphor is Hos 3.¹

wayyōmer JHWH ēlay
 'ōd lēk *hab- 'iššā
 *ahbat rē'^a
 ūm^anā'āpet
 k'ah^abat YHWH 'et-b^anē yisrā'ēl
 w^ahēm pōnīm 'el- *lōhīm *ahērīm
 w^aoh^abē *šišē *nābīm.

And Yahweh said to me:
 Go again, love a woman
 who is beloved of another²
 and an adulteress,
 as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel,
 who are turning away to other gods
 and are lovers of raisin cakes.

¹Some scholars have tried to solve the problem of the marital experiences posed by the utter brevity of the reports by ascribing chap. 3 to a later hand. E.g., L. W. Batten, "Hosea's Message and Marriage," *JBL* 48 (1929): 257-73; Francis Sparling North, "Solution of Hosea's Marital Problem by Critical Analysis," *JNES* 16 (1957): 128-30; Yee, 57-63; Whitt, 42, 43. But the report with its details on the purchase price and the unexpected turn from love to isolation does not exhibit the characteristics of secondary material.

²The passive of the second form of the root *'hb* is not to be changed to the active. Thus with LXX and Syriac versions; Wolff, *Hosea*, 70. But MT makes sense and should be preferred as the *lectio difficilior*. Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 84; Andersen and Freedman, 296. LXX and Peshitta read *ra'*, "evil," instead of *rē'*, "neighbor." Theodotion and Symmachus presuppose *rē'*. See the discussion of the text in Weider, 40-42. However, Weider interprets the *rē'* as the husband, that is, Hosea.

The symbolic acts of chaps. 1 and 3 form an envelope for the message expressed in chap. 2. Hos 3:1, 2 in many ways resembles Hos 1:2, 3. The divine command to act symbolically is reported, the interpretation of the act follows the command, then the action is described.¹ As in 1:2 the root *znh* occurs four times, so does the root *'hb* in 3:1. The *'ôd*, "again," in 3:1 serves as an additional link between both reports² no matter to which verb one relates it.³

The key word *'hb* contrasts with the key word *znh* in Hos 1:2. Since in chap. 1 the emphasis is on judgment, though not without glimpses of hope, the negative term is used. In chap. 3 the emphasis is on restoration, though not without reference to the violation of the bond; therefore, the positive term is employed. The latter part of the central chapter (2:16-25) serves as a transitional section for the change from the negative term *znh* to the positive *'hb*.

¹Hosea has a certain deviation from the usual pattern of the reports of symbolic actions of the prophets. Cf. Georg Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten*, 2nd ed., ATANT 54 (Zürich, Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1968), 18-19.

²Whether it is the same woman in both instances cannot be discussed here, although this view is preferable to the view of Rudolph, *Hosea*, 86-92, Stuart, 64-66, and others that Hosea bought a prostitute in order to enact the symbolic discipline of 3:3 or take her as his wife. Similarly, but the woman being a cult woman, see already A. D. Tushingham, "A Reconsideration of Hosea, Chapters 1-3," *JNES* 12 (1953): 150-59. See Andersen and Freedman, 392-94. For a summary, see Ward, *Hosea*, 54-56, 67-71.

³Grammatically both ways are possible; both have their problems: *'ôd* preceding the verb, but cf. Zech 1:17, or *'ôd* separated from the verb. The judgment of the commentators often depends on their decision concerning the relationship of the women of chap. 1 and chap. 3. A balanced view is held by Andersen and Freedman, 294-95.

The woman is depicted as acting in selfishness; she does not love anyone but permits herself to be loved.¹ This is explained in literal language: Israel turns away to other gods and loves raisin cakes. The subject of the last form of *'hb* is the Israelites, not the other gods, for the gods are in no way active except in the view and speech of the woman.² The *'ašišē 'anābim*, “raisin cakes,”³ are a symbol of joy and festivity (2 Sam 6:19; Cant 2:5) and refer back to the festivities in Hos 2:13 and the gifts of the lovers (2:5, 8, 9), a detail of what the Israelites are really after, their pleasure and general well-being. Thus, one detail drastically draws it all together. “Es geht um einen Kult, der die Wohlstandsvermehrung und den politischen Erfolg zum Ziel hat.”⁴

Do we have the marriage motif in Hos 3? In response to Yahweh's command the prophet acquires the woman. The terminology, *'hb* and *krh*, does not designate the beginning of a marriage.⁵ The word *'ekkrēhā*, “I acquired her,” may indicate that Hosea secures the full rights over his apostate wife. This would continue the marriage motif of chaps. 1 and 2. A clear signal for the marriage motif is the word *m'nā'āpet*, “the one who commits adultery.”

¹This explanation for the passive of MT according to Rudolph, *Hosea*, 84.

²Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 298.

³It is doubtful that they are identical to the cakes of the queen of heaven in Jer 7:18; 44:19.

⁴Jeremias, *Hosea*, 54.

⁵Scharbert, 221. For the problems of the word *krh*, see Andersen and Freedman, 298-300. According to Ruppert, “Erwägungen,” 212, and Szabo, 510, Hosea does not begin a new marriage.

Another obvious signal of the marriage motif is what follows.

wā'ōmar 'ēlēhā
yāmīm rabbīm tēš^ebi lī
lō' tiznī
w^elō' tihyī l' 'iš
w^egam 'anī 'ēlāyik.

And I said to her:
 Many days you will wait¹ for me.
 You will not fornicate,
 and you will not belong to a man,
 and also I [will not go]² to you.

The isolation of the woman, whom Hosea takes to his house after he has paid a certain price, does not seem to agree with the command of Yahweh to love a woman. Different explanations have been proposed. Is the love meant ironically,³ or is the isolation a disciplining action which is to be seen as an unexpected expression of educating love?⁴ I would like to make another suggestion. The isolation of the woman could be a second symbolic action in Hos 3.⁵ The closest parallel for an action of this

¹For this translation of *yšb*, see the discussion in Andersen and Freedman, 301; Ward, *Hosea*, 49-50.

²Wolff, *Hosea*, 70, supplies *lō' 'ēlek*, "I will not go." This elliptical sentence can also chiasmatically refer back to the first clause and mean: "I will wait for you, too" (supply *'ēšēb*). Cf. Ward, *Hosea*, 50-51.

³Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 87-89, who sees in 3:1-4 only a threat and considers vs. 5 as a later addition. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 55-57, explains similarly.

⁴Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "Hosea und das Deuteronomium: Erwägungen eines Alttestamentlers zum Thema 'Sprache und Theologie,'" *ThLZ* 110 (1985): 17; Stuart, 66. Weider, 52, gives a psychological explanation: Hosea and Gomer need a time for the psychological wounds to heal and the love to develop anew.

⁵This is also suggested by Hellmuth Frey, "Der Aufbau der Gedichte Hoseas," *Wort und Dienst* NF 5 (1957): 34-38, who divides chap. 3 into two parallel sections: vss.

kind is the regulation for marrying a woman who was taken captive in war (Deut 21:10-13).¹ The change of clothes (vs. 13) can be understood similarly to the stripping of clothes from a wife in divorce: the woman taken in war has to break off all previous bonds.² There are several analogies: The man is attached (*hšq*) to the woman, a term which is used in connection with *'hb* in Deut 10:15. It is similar to Hosea who is commanded to love (*'hb*) his wife. The woman is taken into the inner part of the man's house (*'el-tôk bêtékā*). The same is true for Hos 3: The woman stays in the house; *yšb* is used in both passages. The man cannot consummate the marriage³ before a month's time (*yeraḥ yāmîm*); similarly Hosea is not to consummate the marriage before many days (*yāmîm rabbîm*). If the rule of Deut 21:10-13 was known to Hosea and his

1-2 and 3-5. The second action does not report the divine command, but the action is announced to the woman. In chap. 1 the reports of the symbolic actions follow the usual pattern more closely, but they also show an increasing abridgment. Cf. Blankenbaker, "Language," 34.

¹This law of Deuteronomy is usually given a late date. Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 137; Rosario Pius Merendino, *Das deuteronomische Gesetz: Eine literar-kritische, gattungs- und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Dt 12-26*, BBB 31 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1969), 243-44. But the provisions seem to belong in an ancient context of holy war. Cf. A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1979), 301; Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 50; Fritz Stolz, *Jahwes und Israels Kriege: Kriegstheorien und Kriegserfahrungen im Glauben des alten Israel*, ATANT 60 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 28. Vs. 14 corresponds to the very old law concerning divorce in Exod 21:8.

²Anthony Phillips, *Deuteronomy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 140: The measures "symbolize the foreign woman's complete renunciation of her country of origin."

³For the marriage terminology, see Scharbert, 216.

contemporaries, then this symbolic action would again employ the metaphor of marriage. This explanation is not only in line with the command to love of vs. 1, it is also well fitting to the explanation in vss. 4, 5, which speaks of restoration after a time of war and captivity.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

What are the characteristics of the marriage metaphor of chap. 3? Again we deal with a woman of sexual misconduct. We also find besides the root *n'p* the strong word *znh*. Again the legal aspect of marriage is in the foreground. Love can be commanded; it is not primarily an emotion but an act of decision. Hosea gains juridical headship over the woman. And he reminds the reader of the law on marrying a woman from outside the Israelite society. The *yāmîm rabbîm* point also to a historical aspect of the marriage motif. This means that we have the same characteristics of the marriage metaphor in chap. 3 as in the previous chapters.

However, in chap. 3 we find for the first time the word *'hb* employed in the marriage metaphor. Yahweh's love is the term for the unexpected renewal of the broken relationship. *'hb* means commitment and dedication, which are expressed in decisions,¹ actions, even incurring expenses.

There is a sharp contrast between the husband's and the wife's love, both literally and metaphorically. Selfish love is set against selfless love that spares no expense. This contrast appeals to the audience and conveys a message. It presupposes that in the realm of personal life and family relationship, love still means something to the people.

¹Cf. the decision of 9:15.

Hosea 5:7

The Metaphor

Another reference to the marriage metaphor we may find in Hos 5:7a:

baYHWH bāgādū
kî-bānîm zārîm yālādū

Yahweh they deceived,
 for they have borne alien children.

Seen in the light of chaps. 1-3, this text seems to continue the marriage metaphor.¹

Yahweh is the betrayed husband whose wife conceived children by other men. This is confirmed by the immediate context. In Hos 5:3 Yahweh accuses Ephraim of fornication (*znh Hi*) and in vs. 4 He mentions a spirit of fornication (*rū^ah z^emūnîm*). Thus we have the same combination of the *znh* motif and the marriage motif as in chaps. 1 and 2.

Another confirmation comes from Jer 3:20 who quotes Hos 5:7 and makes the comparison clear: "As a wife deceives (*bāg^ddāh 'iššāh*) her husband so you have deceived me, house of Israel."²

The Meaning of the Metaphor

The metaphor speaks of a broken marriage. The emphasis is again on the juridical aspect. The unfaithful wife cheats her husband and in this way alien children are born. This was a great offense, since the legitimacy of the offspring was an important

¹Cf. Mays, 84; Andersen and Freedman, 395; L. M. Muntingh, "Married Life in Israel According to the Book of Hosea," in *Studies on the Book of Hosea: Papers Read at the 7th Meeting Held at Stellenbosch University 1964*, OTWSA (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964-65), 78-79.

²Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 395.

matter in a society built on family bonds. The text does not hint at cultic sex of the Canaanite fertility cults,¹ but can be understood purely metaphorically. The wife's children are the Israelites who worship alien deities.²

Summary: Characteristics of the Marriage Metaphor

A Broken Relationship

It is now possible to summarize the study of the term *'hb* in connection with the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea. First, we note that all occurrences of the marriage metaphor presuppose a broken marriage. The positive expectations of a renewed relationship in chaps. 2 and 3 depend on, and refer to, the unfaithful behavior of the wife. This result corresponds to the usage of the marriage metaphor elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The metaphor is never used as an image for the original and healthy relationship without reference to unfaithfulness or judgment.³ In most cases, the marriage metaphor appears in connection with the harlotry motif, which can also stand independent of the marriage motif.⁴ To be precise, one should speak of the metaphor of the broken (and eventually restored) marriage.

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 128, Jeremias, *Hosea*, 77, and many others think of children born of the fertility cult. But differently Stuart, 94.

²Cf. the children in Hos 1:2; 2:4.

³Isa 54:6; 62:4, 5, where the marriage terminology is figuratively employed in a positive sense, refer back to the time when the wife was forsaken.

⁴Harlotry without reference to marriage: Lev 20:5, 6; Num 14:33; Judg 2:17; 8:27, 33; 2 Kgs 9:22; 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 21:13; Ps 106:39.

Fertility Is Not Prominent

The second conclusion is that the marriage metaphor does not draw upon aspects of fertility. The emphasis of the metaphor is never on procreation, neither in the context of the relationship with Yahweh nor in Israel's turning to other lovers. The woman seeks sustenance or a harlot's wage from her lovers (Hos 2:7, 14; 9:1), if at all (cf. Ezek 16:33-34, 41), but she does not go to the lovers in order to have children.¹ If Israel practiced Canaanite fertility cults in order to secure the fertility of land, cattle, and people, why is this desire not reflected in the metaphor, which would suggest itself easily to that thought? This remarkable fact calls into question the common opinion that the marriage metaphor is derived from Israel's concern with the fertility of the land or is applied to the polemic against fertility rites.

Juridical and Historical Emphasis

A third conclusion takes into account that an important characteristic of the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea is its juridical emphasis. While we find sexual aspects emphasized in the image of the unfaithfulness of Israel,² as soon as the metaphor

¹The birth of the children in Hos 1 is not part of the marriage metaphor. The concern is on the symbolic names. Hos 1:10 and 2:23-25 do not belong to the marriage metaphor. The word *prš* following *znh* in Hos 4:10 does not imply that the fornication is done in order to multiply the population. The accused priests have increased the Baalistic worship (*znh*, Hi: "to cause fornication") for selfish reasons, vs. 8, not to increase the number of Israel's children. But they will not be able to "multiply" their possessions. (LXX translates *prš* with *kateuthýnō*, "to find satisfaction."). Cf. Harper, 258; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 105. Only Hos 5:7 speaks about children, however, with a juridical emphasis. Other texts mention the curses of drought and barrenness (Hos 4:3; 9:11-12, 14, 16), but without reference to Israel's striving after productivity. Cf. Stuart, 80.

²Wantonness, heat like animals, lust, etc. Hos 2:-9; 4:16.

describes the relationship with Yahweh the sexual aspects are dropped. This is not surprising in the light of the nonsexual character of Yahweh throughout the Old Testament. "Das eheliche Band zwischen Jahwe und Israel bildet ein Rechtsverhältnis und nicht ein Geschlechtsverhältnis."¹

The juridical aspect points to an application of the marriage metaphor quite different from the fertility cult.² Since an important aspect of marriage was the legal part which resulted in a contract, we have to assume that the marriage metaphor is a means to communicate the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.³ Like marriage, this covenant came into existence by the superior partner's election. Marriage begins with the declaration of a new relationship which includes certain expectations of both parties. Similarly, the covenant between Yahweh and His people forms a special relationship including mutual promises. The historical emphasis of the marriage metaphor, which is especially prominent in Hos 2,⁴ corresponds to the historical aspect of Yahweh's covenant with Israel.

¹Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 70; similarly Werner Schlibke, *Gottessöhne und Gottessohn im Alten Testament*, BWANT 97 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), 125-27.

²Jean-Paul Audet, "Love and Marriage in the Old Testament," *Scripture* 10 (1958): 78: It is important "to be exact about the aspect of marriage which serves as the implicit theme in Osee's image of the love between Yahweh and Israel. It is not that of fruitfulness of generation, but . . . that of love."

³It is the merit of Adler's dissertation to have stressed these analogies, thereby pointing to the "aptness of a model for covenant so often neglected in recent works" (Adler, 419). Cf. already Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 73-77.

⁴Also in Ezek 16:4-14, 27; Jer 2:5-7.

Shocking Language for Apostasy

A fourth conclusion has to be drawn from the fact that the infidelity of the wife is depicted in strong and emphatic language. Hosea is not alone in using drastic expressions. We find the same and even stronger language in Jeremiah and especially in Ezekiel. Again, the root *znh*, “to fornicate,” is used instead of *n’p*, “to commit adultery,” the more legal term restricted to marriage. Moreover, drastic expressions (Jer 13:27) and comparisons with animals in heat are employed (Hos 2:8; 4:16; Jer 2:23-24; 5:8; Ezek 23:20). The woman has had many lovers (Hos 2:7, 9, 12, 14-15, 19; Jer 3:1-2; Ezek 16:15, 24-26) and can never have enough (Hos 9:1; Jer 2:20; 3:6; Ezek 16:28-29; 23:43).

The reason for this kind of language can be found in its function in the prophetic message.¹ The metaphor is used as a means of clarifying and heightening an accusation. They wanted to communicate the severity of Israel's and Judah's sin. In order to achieve this they selected the most severe expressions and metaphors, most drastic in the ears and sight of the people.² That means that the drastic expressions are functioning against a background of moral values which the prophets had in common with their contemporaries, such as the following: Having many lovers and sexual

¹The drastic language has been explained as resulting from the inner turmoil of the prophet, who experienced troubles in his own marital life. Cf. Matthews, 176-79. While this might be true for Hosea, it is questionable for Jeremiah and Ezekiel. However, the silence of the Old Testament texts concerning biographical and emotional details of the prophets' lives should caution us against resorting to psychological explanations.

²The reason that Ezekiel uses more drastic expressions than Hosea or Jeremiah could be that the addressed people lived in a society with lower sexual standards and they needed more shocking terms in order to achieve the desired result.

promiscuity are detestable. Human sexuality in contrast to an animal's drive is distinguished by self-control; it is not determined by sexual drive or natural impulse towards reproduction. Its main concern is relationship.

The metaphor of marriage infidelity can function only as an accusation in a society which considers adultery a major offense against well-established laws.¹ The means of disgrace done to an unfaithful wife referred to in chap. 2 must correspond to actual laws and practice in the society, even if they are not carried out in every case,² in order to function as an illustration of Yahweh's reaction towards Israel's backsliding. We have to assume that in Israel, at least in theory,³ the standard of sexual morals and marriage was still high. Whatever the cultic practice of the people of Israel may have been, they considered it by no means endangering their high standards of sexual morals. The symbolic act of the prophet to take a wife known for sexual misbehavior could only arouse questions because such was not done normally. Otherwise the metaphor of broken marriage would have had no revealing force and accusing function.⁴

¹Siegfried Herrmann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im Alten Testament: Ursprung und Gestaltwandel*, BWANT 85 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), 4, 105-6, points to the fact that Hosea's marriage requires contemporaries who are able to understand what it means that he married an adulterous woman. The act must be scandalous in order to trigger thinking. This rules out all interpretations which depict Gomer as a woman of normal behavior, for example Wolff, *Hosea*, 13-14; Stuart, 26-27.

²Cf. McKeating, 61-63. See also above on the juridical aspects.

³Hos 4:2, 13b and 7:1-4 reflect the practice. But adultery stands in a series with other crimes and is not accentuated.

⁴See Helgard Balz-Cochois, *Gomer: Der Höhenkult Israels im Selbstverständnis der Volksfrömmigkeit: Untersuchungen zu Hosea 4,1-5,7*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, series 23, no. 191 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982); idem, "Gomer oder die Macht der Astarte," *EvTh* 42 (1982): 37-65. The consequence of her interpretation is:

Origin of the Marriage Metaphor

What is the origin of the marriage metaphor? Is there a traditional background for this metaphor, or some aspects of it, or did it originate with Hosea? If the latter were true, then it would depend on him what the metaphor communicated. If there had been a background for the metaphor, or even a tradition of it, then this would not only guide Hosea's usage—either confirming or altering the tradition—but also influence the audience's apprehension of the metaphor. Then we have to see the metaphor in the light of this tradition in order to grasp its meaning.

For the origin of the marriage metaphor several aspects have been emphasized and, since they are not mutually exclusive, have been combined in several ways.¹ I will briefly comment on these suggestions.

Previous Suggestions

Hosea's Own Marital Experience

It has been assumed that Hosea came to express the relationship between Yahweh and His people after he had experienced the unfaithfulness of his wife. Andersen and Freedman state: "The theological imagery arises out of his personal tribulation. . . .

"Der Grund, warum die Heirat mit Gomer nur für Eingeweihte einsichtig ist als Skandal und Symbol, ist einfach: in den Augen des Volkes ist Gomer eine fromme Frau." Ibid., 179.

¹E.g., Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 64-84: (1) Yahweh was called the Ba' al of Israel; (2) the idea of the covenant; (3) the nuptial experience of the prophet Hosea. Gary H. Hall, "Origin of the Marriage Metaphor," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982): 169-71: (1) Hosea's experience with his unfaithful wife; (2) the Canaanite myth; (3) Israel's covenant theology.

The lifetime experience of the prophet served as source and model for his message.”¹

Thus the marriage metaphor was not known before the eighth century and is the work of the prophet Hosea.²

This explanation suffers from the fact that the text does not reflect a gradual development of the metaphor during the marital experience of the prophet.³ The text does not speak about the feelings or insights of the prophet.⁴ Instead it reports the divine command to enact the marriage metaphor. According to the text it was not the prophet's insight that resulted in a message. Rather, it was Yahweh's message and order that resulted in the symbolic act of the prophet.

Further, if this assumption were true we should expect that the prophet employs the term *n'p*, “to commit adultery,” to denote the infidelity of the woman. Instead we find the root *znh*, “to fornicate,” frequently used, especially four times in the first occurrence of the metaphor (1:2). Although both terms can stand in parallel (Hos 4:13, 14), indicating that the latter can be used to denote adultery, *znh* is a broader term and the connotations are different.

¹Andersen and Freedman, 46; cf. also 48. Cf. Matthews, 113; Mays, 9; Balz-Cochois, *Gomer*, 178-84.

²Andersen and Freedman, 48.

³It is often assumed that Hosea's wife was in the beginning a woman with no signs of disloyalty, but only later proved to be unfaithful. Cf. Hans Schmidt, “Die Ehe des Hosea,” *ZAW* 42 (1924): 245-72; Andersen and Freedman, 162. The reference in Hos 1:2 that she and her children are adulterous is taken to be an expression summarizing Hosea's knowledge at a later time; cf. Andersen and Freedman, 167.

⁴Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 78-80.

Fertility Religion

The second proposal is to trace the marriage metaphor back to the Canaanite fertility cult. H. W. Wolff writes: "Darin [in the marriage metaphor] entfaltet sich Hoseas Theologie offenkundig im Gespräch mit der zeitgenössischen Mythologie, in einem beachtlichen Prozeß von Rezeption und Polemik."¹ Allusions to symbols of sexuality have been found throughout the book of Hosea: lists of food and clothing (Hos 2:7, 10, 14; 7:14);² the punishment of famine, drought and barrenness (Hos 2:5; 4:3, 10; 9:2, 12, 14, 16; 13:15); the dying and revival motif (Hos 6:1-3); the cultic festivals (2:13, 15; 8:13; 9:4-5); the abundant growth of plants in the coming time of restoration (2:20, 23-25; 14:6-9). Especially the expression in Hos 1:2 that it is the land that whores away from Yahweh has been taken as indication for the Canaanite conception that the land is the female that in the rainy season receives the sperm of Baal, the god of fertility.³

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, xviii. Cf. *ibid.*, 15-16; he follows Leonhard Rost, "Erwägungen zu Hosea 4,13 f.," in *Festschrift: Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet von Kollegen und Freunden*, ed. W. Baumgartner et al. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 455-59; already Leroy Waterman, "The Marriage of Hosea," *JBL* 36 (1917): 199; H. Schmidt, 264-67; May, "Fertility Cult," 73-98. Many others hold a similar view. F. Charles Fensham, "The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea for the Covenant Relationship between the Lord and His People (Hos. 1:2-9)," *JNWSL* 12 (1984): 71-78; Edmond Jacob, "L'Héritage cananéen dans le livre du prophète Osée," *RHPPhR* 43 (1963): 250-59; Louis Katzoff, "Hosea and the Fertility Cult," *Dor le Dor* 15 (1986/87): 84-87; Grace I. Emmerson, *Hosea: An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective*, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 28 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 25; Mays, 9; Gunnar Östborn, *Yahweh and Baal: Studies in the Book of Hosea and Related Documents*, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, N.F. Aud. 1, vol. 51, no. 6 (Lund: Gleerup, 1956), 79. A similar cultic background (*hieros gamos*) is assumed by Engnell, "Figurative Language," 267, 273, 277.

²See the more legal explanation above, page 117.

³For this mythological interpretation of Hos 2:1, see for example Hendriks, 227; Bird, 82; Mays, 25; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 27-28. However, this is a completely different

But there are three main problems with this interpretation.¹ First, Yahweh is a God of the people, not of the country.² In the marriage metaphor Yahweh is depicted as the husband of Israel, not of the land of Palestine. In Hos 1:2 the land is synonymous with the people, as in Lev 19:29 and Jer 22:29. The explicit comparison of the unfaithful wife to a dry land in Hos 2:5 excludes the wife of Yahweh as a metaphor for the land.

Second, sexual rites of the denounced cult are never explicitly mentioned. While the prophet does not hesitate to refer explicitly to other detestable practices,³ he never mentions sexual union with personnel of the shrines.

Hos 4:12-14 is often interpreted in such a way that it denotes cultic sexuality at the high places.⁴ But the question is why the prophet does not make this explicit while

concept which places the stress on fertility and procreation, which is not in the foreground in the context of Hos 1. The reference to the land might be better explained by the idea of defilement and pollution of the land by the crime of its inhabitants, a probably very old concept well attested in the book of Hosea and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: Hos 5:3, 9; 6:8-10; Lev 18:25-30; 19:29 (prostitution); Num 35:33-34; Deut 24:4; Josh 22:19; Ezra 9:11; Jer 2:7; 3:2; Ezek 36:18; Zech 13:2; etc. Cf. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 406-10. Somewhat differently Braaten, 282-92; he traces the metaphor back to the concept that Yahweh creates the people in the womb of the earth.

¹See also the discussion of Adler, 134-44.

²Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 68-69. Differently Braaten, 12-17, however, only after ascribing Hos 2:16-3:5 to a later hand (*ibid.*, 60-72, 273-80).

³For example 4:2; also moving of boundaries, 5:10; murder of kings, 7:7, and appointing new kings, 8:4; deceitful treaties, 10:4; most of all, worshiping other gods.

⁴For example: Rudolph, *Hosea*, 112; Mays, 74-75; Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 26; Stuart, 83; J. P. Asmussen, "Bemerkungen zur sakralen Prostitution im Alten Testament," *Studia Theologica* 11 (1958): 167-92. Especially see Balz-Cochois,

elsewhere he does not hesitate to “call a spade a spade.” The phrase “go aside (*prd* Piel) with the harlots” is often understood to refer to sexual activities in the surroundings of the shrine, which however would not be a cultic ceremony of *hieros gamos*. However, the verb *prd* parallel with *zbh* has no sexual connotations, but refers to cultic activities. The Hithpael of *prd* means “to dismember,” namely, to dismember the slaughtered animal and prepare parts for burning on the altar and other parts for the common meal.¹ Although Hos 4:14 employs the Piel, this could also be the meaning here. The parallel line has “sacrifice with the holy women” and describes the next step of the ceremony. The personnel are called by the proper term *q^edēšôt*, which refers to the cult and clearly reveals the prophet's concern with worship. Whether the *q^edēšôt* were involved in some sort of sexual activity is not certain.² The term *zonôt*, “harlots,” in the first line of the

Gomer. Rost, 455-56, followed by Wolff, *Hosea*, 13-14, 107-8; Alfons Deissler, “Die Interpretation von Hos 1,2-9 in den Hosea-Kommentaren von H. W. Wolff und W. Rudolph im kritischen Vergleich,” in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten: Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler*, ed. Josef Schreiner, Forschung zur Bibel 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 1972), 129-35; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 70, assume an initiation rite. But cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, “Präparierte Jungfrauen?” *ZAW* (1963): 65-73. Andersen and Freedman, 369-70, assume promiscuity of the priest's sons and daughters.

¹Cf. the discussion by Andersen and Freedman, 370, and Stuart, 83, who however still assume actual sexual activities at the shrines.

²J. Renger, “Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit,” *ZA* 24 (1967): 110-88, esp. 134, 141, 144, 176, 184; Eugene J. Fisher, “Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment,” *BTB* 6 (1976): 225-36; Robert A. Oden, *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 131-53; Bucher, 72 and passim. Adler, 199-243, also denies cultic sexuality but argues, somewhat unconvincingly, that the *q^edēšāh* was a profane harlot. Cf. also Hannelis Schulte, “Beobachtungen zum Begriff der Zônâ im Alten Testament,” *ZAW* 104 (1992): 255-62. Maureen L. Gallery, “Service Obligations of the kezertu-Woman,” *Orientalia* 49 (1980): 333-38, presents the only evidence so far for sexual activity of women in service of a goddess which stems from the Old-

parallel with its clearly sexual connotations would then be used to disqualify metaphorically and to downgrade the cultic personnel. Although Hosea's description of the idolatrous worship alludes to sexuality, this seems to be purely metaphorical.¹

The reference to the misbehavior of the young woman in 4:13b-14a means literal adultery. It is not a cultic activity because the female partners of the cultic action in vs. 14b are clearly distinguished.² The text indicates that the fathers, the responsible persons in Israel, who uphold a high standard of sexual morals, are concerned about their daughters and daughters-in-law who display loose sexual morals. The fathers did not see any connection between their daughters' malpractice and their own worshiping activities. They accuse the young women; but Hosea accuses the responsible fathers, revealing to them that what they do is figuratively adultery and causes the lowering of sexual morals, e.g., literal adultery.³

Babylonian time (ibid., 338). Very cautious also Helmer Ringgren and Walter Kornfeld, "qdš," *TWAT*, 6:1200-1; Marie-Theres Wacker, "Kosmisches Sakrament oder Verpfändung des Körpers? 'Kultprostitution' im biblischen Israel und im hinduistischen Indien: Religionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen im Interesse feministischer Theologie," *Biblische Notizen* 61 (1992): 57-59, 61. Cf. the completely different picture drawn by B. A. Brooks, "Fertility Cult Functionaries in the Old Testament," *JBL* 60 (1941): 227-53.

¹Bird, 83: "The sexual language belongs exclusively to the allegory, while the cultic activity to which it points is represented in terms elsewhere descriptive of normative Yahweh worship." Cf. Bucher, 148-52.

²Cf. Bird, 85.

³Fisher, 235; Bird, 84-88; Adler, 237.

The possibility that there were sometimes sexual practices in the Baalistic cult of the Israelites cannot altogether be excluded. However, the evidence is very doubtful.¹ Not only for the book of Hosea but for Syria and Palestine there is so far hardly any convincing evidence for cultic sexuality.² The texts do not support the assumption that Israel was mainly concerned with fertility and considered cultic sexuality as an integral part of life. It is a misconception to see the Israelites regularly involved in promiscuous sexuality at the Canaanite festivities.³

Third, and even more important, the focus of the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea is different from what one would expect if the metaphor had been derived from the fertility cult or from the fruitfulness of the earth. The *hieros gamos* of the deity enacted in the fertility cult focuses on sexuality and procreative power. If there was sexual intercourse between worshipers and cultic personnel, the accent would be on the

¹Cf. Adler, 130-295; Mary Joan Winn Leith, "Verse and Reverse: The Transformation of the Woman, Israel, in Hosea 1-3," *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 98-99; also the literature p. 138, n. 2. The question might be asked why the idea of a widespread cultic sexuality in Israel has suggested itself so readily to theological minds. Could it be that in the view of our time the prophets were more easily understood as defenders of moral values than of worship?

²Direct evidence from Ugarit is missing for the ritual of *hieros gamos*, which also Jeremias, *Hosea*, 28, admits. Cf. Dirk Kinet, *Ba'al und Jahweh: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Hoseabuches*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, ser. 23, no. 87 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1977), 79-80, 210: neither cult prostitution nor initiation rites of young women are found in Ugarit. See especially Adler, 131-43, 185-98.

³Thus Balz-Cochois, *Gomer*, 168: "Vor allem aber nimmt man nach dem Vorbilde von Priestern und Kedeschen teil an der allgemeinen Festpromiskuität, um durch das Opfer an Astarte die Gabe der Göttin zu feiern und zu genießen. Alle, Väter und Verlobte, Töchter und Schwiegertöchter, Ehemänner, Dirnen und Söhne, Ehefrauen und fremde Kultgäste nehmen daran teil."

same aspect. Fertility religion is connected with the cyclic repetition of the agricultural year. It is mostly assumed that the annual harvest festivals were the time to repeat the corresponding sexual rites. The emerging concept of a marriage metaphor would then place the emphasis on sexuality and progeny. Accusations could relate to the neglect of the marital partner or abandoning the due ceremonies. But the marriage imagery in the book of Hosea has a juridical thrust and focuses on marital fidelity.¹ Instead of cyclical repetition, there is emphasis on historical aspects of the marriage. Expressions with sexual connotations are used to denounce the practice of the Israelites. What in the fertility cults has positive connotations is used in a negative sense in the book of Hosea. The different aspects and values separate Hosea's metaphor from the fertility religion.²

Yahweh Is Called "Baal"

J. Ziegler assumes that the way for the marriage metaphor was paved by the use of the title "Baal" for Yahweh.³ A person was called "Baal" if he was lord, owner, especially husband, i.e., the owner of a wife.⁴ Ziegler refers to personal names (Ishbaal, Meribaal) assuming that "Baal" designates Yahweh. That this was possible is testified by the name *b'lyh* (1 Chr 12:6).⁵

¹Ibid., 147: She points out that cultic prostitution has no juridical implications.

²This has been described as Hosea's way to alter the Baalistic concept and make it fit into Israel's religion. Cf. for example Wolff, *Hosea*, xix. But the concepts are remote, and that one was developed out of the other seems unlikely.

³Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 72.

⁴Cf. Johannes C. de Moor and M. J. Mulder, "*ba'al*," *TWAT*, 1:707.

⁵Cf. *ibid.*, 727.

Since the title “Baal” can have different meanings, it is not clear in what sense it was applied to Yahweh. If it were used in the sense that Yahweh is the owner of Israel, then this could lead to the marriage metaphor. However, the two texts for this thought, to which Ziegler can refer (Jer 3:14; 31:32), are late and could have been influenced by the already established marriage metaphor.

In a different sense B. Margalit argues that in the syncretistic Israel of the eighth century Yahweh was transformed in the image of the Canaanite Baal.¹ Like Baal, Yahweh has a consort, His asherah, who follows Him as her husband. The term *'āšērāh* means literally “she who follows in the footsteps (of her husband).”² The inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qôm testify to this syncretism.³ Margalit proposes that Hosea “took over the idea and the imagery implied by *YHWH w 'šrth* and made it the cornerstone of a new Israelite theology. YHWH has indeed an asherah—i.e., a wife—named ‘Israel.’”⁴

However, we must not underestimate the step from the literal marriage between Yahweh and His asherah to the figurative marriage between Yahweh and Israel. Baal had a consort, a female deity. This is a mythological marriage with all the implications of sex and procreation. On the other hand, Hosea presents Yahweh having a relationship to a human people. Never is Israel deified in order to become a fitting partner for Yahweh.

¹B. Margalit, “The Meaning and Significance of Asherah,” *VT* 40 (1990): 281-83.

²*Ibid.*, 269.

³For literature, see below in the chapter on the tree image, n. 1 on p. 281.

⁴Margalit, “Meaning and Significance of Asherah,” 283-84.

The sexual connotations are suppressed. The emphasis is on juridical aspects, on belonging and sustenance. This is a completely different concept. The differences make it unlikely that Hosea drew his marriage metaphor from Canaanite mythology.¹

Covenant

J. Ziegler and others, recently especially E. J. Adler,² assume that the marriage metaphor has its origin in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Indeed, there are close connections of the marriage metaphor with the covenant. The juridical aspect of the metaphor points to a legal bond between Yahweh and Israel comparable to the marriage contract. Especially the adultery motif refers to an exclusive relationship. The historical aspect presumes that Israel understands her history as a chain of Yahweh's acts on behalf of His people.³

However, that we find analogies between the marriage metaphor and the covenant indicates not more than that the metaphor has fully convinced us. That we find a metaphor to be apt in its usage does not explain its development, but is only a sign of how strongly the metaphor has suggested its proposed analogies and thereby influenced

¹Cf. Edward Lipinski, "The Syro-Palestinian Iconography of Woman and Goddess (Review Article)," *IEJ* 36 (1986): 95. He stresses the covenant context of the marriage metaphor against a mythological context derived from a Syrian goddess.

²Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 73-77; Rost, 460; S. Herrmann, 109-10; Adler, 43-92.

³S. Herrmann, 109, points out that the syncretistic cult was "Verrat an einem Rechtsverhältnis, dessen reale Grundlage nur in den einst eingegangenen Bundesverpflichtungen gesucht werden durfte."

our view.¹ Metaphors do not verbalize analogies that are a reality independent of language; they are a linguistic means to structure our world by proposing analogies between parts of the reality which are logically distant.

Background of the Metaphor

Hosea Supposes the Metaphor to Be Known

Was Hosea the first who employed the marriage metaphor for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, as has often been assumed?² The way the metaphor is introduced in the book of Hosea does not support this view.³ Chaps. 1 to 3 all begin with the accusation of fornication or adultery. But before the motif of fornication in the sense of adultery can be applied, it must be clear that Israel's relationship with Yahweh is comparable to a marriage.⁴ If the marriage metaphor were completely new, Hosea would have had to give some introductory explanation. This explanation is never given in the book of Hosea.

¹This is the main objection against the work of Adler, who is concerned with the analogies of the marriage metaphor and the covenant but does not realize that these do not explain the origin of the metaphor. Cf. Alonso-Schökel, 136, who considers the conjugal symbolism not to be a secondary expression of the covenant but autonomous.

²E.g., Wolff, *Hosea*, 15; Matthews, 160; Halbe, 154; Franz Josef Helfmeyer, *Die Nachfolge Gottes im Alten Testament*, BBB 29 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1968), 158-59.

³Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 83: "Das Bild der Ehe ist in Hos 1-3 bereits vorausgesetzt und nicht erst hier neu geschaffen."

⁴Cf. George Vernon Blankenbaker, "Tradition and Creativity: Hermeneutical Use of Language in Hosea 1-3," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards, SBL Seminar Papers Ser. 21 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 20.

The absence of explicit reference to the covenant between Yahweh and Israel in connection with the marriage motif is not to be interpreted in the sense that in Hosea's time the idea of covenant was not yet developed. This would make the marriage metaphor even more unintelligible. Rather, the prophet seems to presuppose that everyone knows about the covenantal relationship and easily understands that it is comparable to marriage.¹

There is no question about the fact that the marriage metaphor is fully developed in the book of Hosea. Did all this suddenly evolve out of nothing? An investigation of the motifs connected with the marriage metaphor points in another direction.

The Fornication Motif

*Background is the denouncement
of pagan cults*

The expression *znh mē'ah^arê*,² "to fornicate away from," has been studied together with the expression *znh 'ah^arê 'ēlōhîm*, "to fornicate after gods."³ The phrase is used with minor variations in Exod 34:15, 16; Lev 19:7; 20:5, 6; Num 15:39; Judg 2:17; Ezek 6:9; 20:30; 23:30; Hos 1:2; 1 Chr 5:25. It denotes the unfaithfulness of Yahweh's people acted out in worshipping other gods. But there are two deviations from the usual wording. The first is Exod 34:15-16. Halbe has pointed to the fact that in this

¹Cf. Korpel, 220, 231.

²The *mē'ah^arê* corresponds to Hos 2:7, 15 *hālak 'ah^arê*.

³Halbe, 153-54; cf. Helfmeyer, *Die Nachfolge Gottes*, 156-59.

passage it is not Israel that is subject of the *zānāh 'ah^arē*.¹ Rather, the previous inhabitants of the land and their daughters whore after their own gods. The formula is not meant here in the sense that these people are in any way unfaithful towards their gods. On the contrary, acting in the way which is described by *znh* (and *zbh*), they practice worship according to their gods. In this passage the expression is not used in the usual figurative sense.² A part of the Canaanite worship, together with the sacrifice meal, is used to characterize the whole worship drastically. Halbe draws the conclusion that Exod 34:15-16 displays a very old tradition and is not dependent on the figurative motif of whoredom for unfaithfulness.³ We can go one step further. After vs. 15 has labelled Canaanite worship with the root *znh*, it is used in vs. 16 for Israelite misbehavior: they also whore after their (the Canaanites') gods. What was initially a term that denoted and downgraded foreign worship became a term to denote Israel's backsliding. This means that we are here at the birthplace of the *znh* motif as an expression for false worship. It is probably as old as Israel's first encounter with Baalistic cults. It is derived from the drastic characterization of foreign worship. It is

¹Halbe, 154-55.

²Adler, 324-26, understands this passage in the usual way, namely as covenant breaking by worshiping other gods. The term *znh* in the description of the Canaanite daughter's practice is taken as influenced by, and anticipating, the description of the resulting apostasy of Israelite men in vs. 16b. But this seems an artificial explanation.

³Halbe, 154-55, 160, assumes that the passage is an early comment of the covenant code, Exod 34:10-14, with the aim to prevent the Israelites from the Canaanite practice which would destroy the order of family and worship in Israel. Fensham, "The Marriage Metaphor," 76, also opts for an early date of Exod 34:15-16. Götz Schmitt, *Du sollst keinen Frieden schließen mit den Bewohnern des Landes*, BWANT 91 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), 27, assumes Exod 34:15b to be a late addition.

not a development from the marriage metaphor as elaborated in the book of Hosea, but independent and even one of its roots.¹

Israel maintained a high standard of sexual morals

That Israel labelled the Canaanite cult as fornication does not mean that prostitution and promiscuity were a widespread feature of this cult. Num 25:6 describes an incident that points in the opposite direction. This passage, often ascribed to the priestly source, displays the same usage of *znh* as Exod 34:15-16 and could be of very old origin. Cultic sexuality was not in the open at the festivity at Shittim. Sacrifice and a sacrifice meal are mentioned as cult practices (vs. 2); if there was sexual intimacy this would have taken place secretly. Only one of the Israelite leaders dared to bring a Moabite woman into his tent, and this in the sight of Moses and the elders. This detail is reported as the ultimate aggravation of the backsliding to demonstrate where the worship of Baal eventually leads.² The sexual aberration, the eventual worst result of the Canaanite cult, is used as the term to denote the whole cult practice: *znh*, "to fornicate." The terminology does not reflect the actual frequency of sexuality in Canaanite cult but the value system of the Israelites.³

¹Cf. Halbe, 156. Cf. also already Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 64-65.

²Note the parallel in Hos 4:13, 14: The Israelite men's turning away from Yahweh to idolatrous cult results in adultery and fornication of the young woman. The old tradition of the Baal-Peor event was well known to Hosea's audience, as can be seen in Hos 9:10, and serves as historical proof for the prophet's reasoning in 4:14.

³Cf. Leith, 106-07.

That *znh* became the term to denote a foreign cult testifies strongly against the assumption that cultic prostitution was widespread in Israel. To the contrary, sexual chastity demarcates the borderline between Israel and other nations.¹ Foreign worship was a transgression of this border and could thus be called *znh*.

What are the reasons that Israel had such a strong concern for sexual chastity? Before the generalization of *znh* in the sense of transgressing the border to the horrible foreign cult could take place, Israel must have understood herself as distinct from all other nations. This distinctiveness was expressed in a law that included sexual virtue. Thus the very old *znh*-motif could be taken as an indirect testimony for the covenant between Yahweh and Israel with its moral code.

Hosea modified the conventional motif

We can now return to the phrase *znh mē'ah'rê*. The book of Hosea is the second place where we find the *znh*-motif deviating from the normal and highly conventionalized wording.² In most passages outside the book of Hosea the point of reference for the *znh* is "other god(s)" or more specifically the name of a deity or an idol. In Hos 1:2—and there are two more passages where Hosea uses the motif in this peculiar sense: Hos 4:12 and 9:1—the land whores not towards or after other gods, but

¹It is noteworthy here that to become a harlot meant to be outside the Israelite society. Cf. Oral Collins, "The Stem ZNH and Prostitution in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1977), 112. Cf. also the term *zrh*, "foreign," for the harlot in Prov 2:16; 5:3, 20; 6:24; 7:5. Also the extensive laws concerning sexuality and cleanness in relationship to sexuality in the Pentateuch should be seen in this light.

²This has not been recognized by Halbe.

“away from Yahweh.”¹ This is not a minor difference. The emphasis is laid upon the fact that the relationship with Yahweh is violated. That this is practiced by worshipping “other gods” goes without saying. To assume that the Hoseanic version of the motif is the original one and the origin of the metaphoric usage of the *znh* motif requires an explanation—which would be difficult to give—as to why the expression *znh mē’ah^arê* *YHWH* is not continued. It is more likely that the expression “whore after other gods” is older than Hosea and originated, as indicated in Exod 34:15-16 and Num 25:1-9, in the manner outlined above. 2 Kgs 9:22 points in the same direction. Here *znh* occurs for the worshipping of other gods by Jezebel. The metaphor is used stereotypically, as if it were known and needs no explanation.

The motif has then been modified by Hosea.² The Hoseanic version is more general and seems to be the derived one. The reason for Hosea's modification is easy to understand. Because the prophet emphasizes the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and clothes it in the marriage metaphor, he alters the conventional figure of *znh* *’ah^arê* to *znh mē’ah^arê* or to *znh mē’al* in order to express the impact upon the covenantal bond between Yahweh and His people.³

¹The only other instance of this expression is Ps 73:27.

²That Hosea knew the expression in the sense elsewhere found in the Old Testament can be concluded from Hos 2:7, which has close parallels in Deut 8:19, etc.

³This interpretation opens the possibility that not only Exod 34:15-16, as Halbe argues, but other passages containing the expression under consideration are earlier than is mostly assumed. For Deut 31:16 and Judg 8:27, 33, see Halbe, 153.

The metaphor always refers to a broken relationship

That the *znh* motif is earlier than Hosea suggests that it is part of the background and basis of the marriage metaphor. This assumption is supported by the fact that there is no instance of the employment of the marriage metaphor in the Old Testament which is not related to Israel's unfaithfulness, i.e., the breaking of the marriage bond.¹ The marriage metaphor in itself does not require this restricted usage. Since it suggested itself for the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel,² it should be expected to be used right from the beginning of that relationship to explain the close tie, the mutual joy, the mutual expectations, etc. It could also have been used to define the relationship between Yahweh and His people juridically or in its intimacy without reference to unfaithfulness of Israel's part. But this is not the case.³ It seems that the specific employment of the metaphor reflects its origin and derivation from the earlier *znh* motif.

The Jealousy Motif

The second tradition in the Old Testament which could be related to the marriage metaphor is the motif of Yahweh's jealousy. The formula *YHWH 'el qannā'/qannō'* can be found in Exod 20:5; par. Deut 5:9; Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24; 6:15;

¹This fact is not recognized by Adler.

²Erlandsson, 615.

³Although the tender care of the lover towards his beloved is also used in Hos 2:16, this seems not to be the basic but a derived thought. All positive aspects of the marriage metaphor in Hos 2 presuppose the breaking of the marriage bond and are a further development.

Josh 24:19; Nah 1:2. In all cases with the exception of Nah 1:2 it stands in the context of prohibition of worship of other gods. The same concept is found in Num 25:11; Deut 29:19; 32:16, 21; 1 Kgs 14:22; Pss 78:58; 79:5; Ezek 8:3; 16:38, 42; 23:25.

Küchler argues that the origin of the designation of Yahweh as *'ēl qannā'* or *qannō'*¹ is the usage of the root in the realm of the relationship between man and woman, whence the term derives its basic meaning.² But he himself observes that *qin'āh* or similar expressions does not occur in the book of Hosea, although the concept is clearly there in chap. 2. His explanation that Hosea, and also Jeremiah, considered the term to be anthropomorphic and "nicht zart genug"³ is not satisfactory. To express the concept in different terms does not make it less offensive. And Hosea was bold enough to use very daring and seemingly unfitting images for Yahweh.⁴ A more convincing explanation would be that in Hosea's time the concept of Yahweh's jealousy was already well known so that the prophet could use other terms referring to it.

More recent studies of Yahweh's *qin'āh* separate the concept from the marital interpretation. B. Renaud in his thorough study⁵ proceeds from a general meaning of *qin'āh/qannā'*. He considers the texts Exod 34:14; 20:4 (Deut 5); Josh 24:19 to belong

¹Friedrich Küchler, "Der Gedanke des Eifers Jahwes im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 28 (1908): 45, sees the oldest occurrences of the motif in Exod 20:5; 34:14; Josh 24:19.

²*Ibid.*, 43, 47. He assumes that the motif stems from Hosea who compares the relationship of Israel and Yahweh with a marriage.

³*Ibid.*, 47.

⁴E.g., Hos 5:12.

⁵Bernard Renaud, *Je suis un Dieu Jaloux: Évolution sémantique et signification théologique de qin'ah*, *Lectio Divina*, 36 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1963).

to a very old tradition¹ in which the term is not derived from marital jealousy² but expresses Yahweh's wrath towards His people in case of unfaithfulness expressed by worship of other gods. It is the wrath of the one whose rights are touched. The formula *'ēl qannā'* functions as a threat of punishment. The term rests on the fact that there exists a special bond between Yahweh and Israel, a covenant. "Dieu es jaloux parce qu'Israël est son peuple, la communauté qu'il s'est acquise au Sinaï."³ In the course of the development of the usage of the term, the idea of God's love is included, so that the term takes the meaning of the wrath of the rejected love (Deuteronomy).⁴ According to Renaud, not before the time of the Exile, especially by Ezekiel, does the jealousy of God become part of the marriage metaphor describing the (broken) relationship between Yahweh and Israel.⁵

What is noteworthy in Renaud's interpretation is the fact that he assumes a development from an old usage of the jealousy motif independent of the marriage motif to an inclusion in the marriage metaphor. However, is it true that it was not before Ezekiel that the two concepts were unified? It remains unexplained why Hosea has the

¹Ibid., 28-30.

²Ibid., 44-45, 144.

³Ibid., 41; cf. also 140-42.

⁴Ibid., 137-38.

⁵Ibid., 142-44; cf. 75-90. Cf. Werner Berg, "Die Eifersucht Gottes - ein problematischer Zug des alttestamentlichen Gottesbildes?" *BZ* 23 (1979): 205; Ezek 16:35-42 "ist neben Ez 23,25 die einzige Stelle im AT, die die 'Eifersucht Jahwes' auf dem Hintergrund des Ehegleichnisses zeigt."

concept of marital jealousy but not the terms; even so, the concept was known long before the eighth century.

More consistent on this point is H. A. Brongers, who assumes that the expression is rather late in all its occurrences and, therefore, cannot be found in the book of Hosea.¹ He interprets the term in a more general sense, the jealousy between man and woman being only one special meaning among others.² He mainly comes to a translation where the term expresses "wrath" or "revenge." In connection with marriage he refers to the fact that marriage was not primarily a matter of love but was first of all a matter of possession. *qin'āh* can express the zeal of the husband to secure his rights.³ In this light the *qin'at YHWH* is the wrath of the possessor whose rights have been violated.⁴

However, the verdict that all the relevant passages are of late origin has been challenged by different scholars.⁵ Especially Halbe has argued that Exod 34:14 displays

¹H. A. Brongers, "Der Eifer des Herrn Zebaoth," *VT* 13 (1963): 282. Cf. Berg, "Die Eifersucht Gottes," 197-211, who interprets the jealousy of Yahweh to express the claim to be the only God of Israel because of His special relationship with Israel which is rooted in the history with this people (201), and considers the concept to be deuteronomistic (199, 200). See also P. Hieronymus Horn, "Traditionsschichten in Ex 23, 10-33 und Ex 34, 10-26," *BZ* 15 (1971): 219-22. He assumes deuteronomistic hands, formulating a covenant text.

²Brongers, 281.

³*Ibid.*, 283.

⁴*Ibid.*, 284.

⁵F. Langlamet, "Israël et 'l'habitant du pays': Vocabulaire et Formules d'Ex., XXXIV, 11-16," *RB* 76 (1969): 493, 495; Franz Elmar Wilms, "Das jahwistische Bundesbuch in Ex 34," *BZ* 16 (1972): 24-53, 30-37; *idem*, *Das jahwistische Bundesbuch in Exodus 34*, *StANT* 32 (Munich: Kösel, 1973), 157; Adler, 87-89. Cf. also Rolf Knierim, "Das erste Gebot," *ZAW* 77 (1965): 20-39, esp. 36-38. He assumes that the prohibition of worshipping other gods has been given in Shechem shortly after the

the most original form of the confession that Yahweh is *'el qanna'*¹ and is an integral part of the covenant words of Yahweh, which go back to the time of settlement of Israel's tribes.² This makes it likely that Hosea knew the concept³ and employed it, not by using the traditional terms, but by developing it into a metaphor of the jealous husband.⁴ The tradition of Yahweh's *qin'ah* would then be—besides the *znh* motif—another background and root of the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea.⁵

Like the *znh* motif, and even more obviously so, the motif of the jealous Yahweh presupposes the covenant. Only under the supposition that Yahweh has a special relationship with Israel and claims her as His people can one speak of His jealousy. Given the antiquity of the motif, we have another testimony for the early date of the covenant.

settlement (Josh 24). Recently Susan Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth-Century Judah*, HSM 46 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 58, assumes an “archaic, probably Mosaic, tradition of Yahweh's jealousy.” She follows David Noel Freedman, “The Name of the God of Moses,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 151-56.

¹Halbe, 134-40.

²Ibid., 510-22.

³Ps 78:58 (Piel, cf. Deut 32:16, 21) may serve as another evidence that Yahweh's jealousy was a widely known concept in Hosea's time. This psalm was written in the southern kingdom before 722. Cf. John Day, “Predeuteronomic Allusions to the Covenant in Hosea and Psalm LXXVIII,” *VT* 36 (1986): 8-11.

⁴Renaud, *Je suis un Dieu Jaloux*, 142-44, assumes a development in the same sense, however not before the time of Ezekiel.

⁵Cf. Cassuto, “The Prophet Hosea,” 92, who parallels the second commandment Exod 20:5 (*'l qn'*) with the seventh *l' tm'p*, “you shall not commit adultery.”

The Expulsion Motif

In the chapter which testifies to the early traditions underlying the marriage metaphor, i.e., Exod 34:11, we find a third tradition which may belong to the soil from which the marriage metaphor grew. Yahweh promises to expel the nations from the land which He is to give His people, Israel. Other texts are Exod 23:28-31; 33:2; Josh 24:12, 18; Judg 2:3; 6:9; Pss 78:55; 80:9; 1 Chr 17:21.¹ Mostly the Piel form of the verb *grš* is used. Exod 34:11 is the exception, using the Qal. Since the word *grūšāh* from the root *grš* denotes a woman that has been repudiated by her husband, the notion that Yahweh expels other nations from the land may have marital connotations.² This is not to say that the motif of expelling the Canaanite nations from the land constitutes the marriage metaphor, since it is never implied that Yahweh was married to several nations before the covenant with Israel. But the usage of the verb *grš*, "to expel," paves the way in the sense that if Hosea or someone before him speaks of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel in terms of marriage, this metaphor can easily be understood.

The Treaty Language

"Love" is a term frequently used in the treaties of equal rulers or of suzerain and vassal.³ This usage is also attested in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 5:15).⁴ "The vassal

¹For the ancient date of the passage and the concept, see Wilms, *Jahwistische Bundesbuch*, 150-53; Halbe, 141-42. For Ps 78, see Day, "Predeuteronomic Allusions," 8-12.

²Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num 30:10; Ezek 44:22.

³For examples see William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77-87; R. Frankena, "The Vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," *OTS* 14 (1965): 122-

is to love the Great King as he does himself and his own and the Great king (*sic*) is to take the vassal to heart as his friend.”¹ Weinfeld puts it this way: “The whole diplomatic vocabulary of the second millennium is rooted in the familial sphere.”² From these observations scholars have concluded that the expressions of a relationship of “love” and metaphors of family life for the relationship between Yahweh and His people in Deuteronomy and in the Hebrew Bible are closely related to, if not dependent on, the treaty terminology.³

E. Matthews considers the marriage metaphor of Hosea derived from the treaty language and assumes that the application of the marriage/adultery motif is often “political pragmatism.”⁴ He considers the political aspect the primary one, although soon surpassed by the cultic transgression.⁵

54; Michael Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 313-18; J. A. Thompson, “Israel's ‘Lovers,’” *VT* 27 (1977): 475-81. Cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, Analecta Biblica 21a (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 43, 106, 161, with examples and literature.

¹ Sam 18:1, 3; 1 Kgs 5:15; Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 22; 19:9.

¹McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 81.

²M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 90 (1970): 194, see also 189-95.

³Moran, “Ancient Near Eastern Background,” 77-87. He investigates those treaty passages which speak of the love of the vassal for the overlord. Lohfink supports this view in his remark on Hos 9:15: Norbert Lohfink, “Hate and Love in Osee 9,15,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 417.

⁴Matthews, 107, cf. also 112, 125, 129, 160.

⁵*Ibid.*, 127, 160.

However, the treaty language with its use of *'hb*, "to love," does not necessarily result in the marriage metaphor.¹ It only reveals that political treaties were understood in analogy to family bonds, for example, brotherhood. It is still a considerable step to the marriage metaphor. But we can assume that the fact that *'hb* was used in the treaty language for centuries helped to pave the way for the marriage metaphor in a covenant context.²

Yahweh Commanded to Employ the Marriage Metaphor

We do not know if Hosea was the first who went beyond the traditional motifs and developed the marriage metaphor. It could well be that this step was taken before him. In any case it was not a very great step. It has often been asked what prompted Hosea to develop the marriage metaphor. That the mental environment is prepared for a metaphor does not explain why it is actually used in a certain situation. The text gives

¹Cf. Moran, "Ancient Near Eastern Background," 77-78.

²It has been disputed that the covenant idea was already present in the time of Hosea. Cf. Lothar Peritt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 139-52. But reference to the covenant between Yahweh and Israel cannot be denied for Hos 6:7 and 8:1. See Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 179-88; Day, "Predeuteronomiac Allusions," 1-7; Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Prophets and the Covenant," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 31 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 175-83. Cf. also Stuart, xxxi-xlii, 177. If Hosea explicitly mentions the covenant, we can also assume that the traditional covenant language with the term *'hb* influenced his marriage metaphor.

only one short answer to this question: Yahweh commanded him to apply the metaphor, not only in speech but in marital experience.¹

Summary

To summarize the investigation of the background of the marriage metaphor in the book of Hosea the following can be said. The metaphor with its emphasis on legal and historical aspects is not directly derived from the Canaanite fertility cult during the time of Hosea. It is rooted in very old Israelite traditions: (1) the *znh* motif, which denotes and downgrades Canaanite worship by references to sexual prostitution, the worst, although infrequent, consequence of this worship; (2) the jealousy of Yahweh; and (3) the expelling of the former inhabitants of the land. All three traditions can be found together in Exod 34. This may be taken as an indication that this covenant code was known in some way in Hosea's time. The same traditions are also found in Ps 78. Since this psalm is considered to belong to the southern tradition (vss. 67-69), we can conclude that the traditions were common to all the tribes of Israel. If taken together these traditions—metaphorical expressions themselves—form an “image field” which easily yields the marriage metaphor. Additional impulse may have come from the treaty language with its metaphorical use of the term *'hb*. Thus, the figurative language traditions are the background to arrive at the marriage metaphor and, on the audience's side, to understand it.

¹The experience did not give birth to the metaphor, but vice versa. Cf. Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 80. Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 2, *Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964), 151-52: “Das Primäre war nicht ein intimes Erlebnis, sondern der Befehl Jahwes, eine Zeichenhandlung auszuführen.”

If we compare the background of the marriage metaphor with its characteristics in the book of Hosea, we find both continuity and new developments. Traditional is the motif of Yahweh's wrath, who is jealous because His people turned to other gods. Also in line with the tradition is the terminology which downgrades the foreign worship as fornication, although this aspect is more elaborated than before. Resuming traditional elements, Hosea makes it possible for his contemporaries to see his marriage with Gomer as a symbolic act. He continues the tradition by stressing the legal and the historical aspects¹ of the marriage bond. The ancient covenant background is prominent in this perspective.²

There are two important new developments in the imagery of Hosea. The first is the very personal and intimate aspect of the relationship expressed by the marriage motif. A sign of this development is Hosea's alteration of *znh 'ah^arê*, "whore after" other gods, to *znh mē'ah^arê*, "whore away" from Yahweh. Another clue is the different setting of the term *'hb* taken from a more formal usage in the treaty terminology to the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Hosea has revitalized the traditional, almost dead, metaphors by his elaborated marriage motif and in this way created a vivid and appealing rhetorical means.

The second new development is the positive outlook on the future relationship. The traditional motif of *znh* as well as the motif of Yahweh's *qin 'āh* are employed in a negative sense for the case that the covenant will be or was violated. Also the *grš* motif

¹Cf. Ps 78 and its historical report.

²"His [Hosea's] total message is thoroughly grounded in the memories and conditions of the old covenant tradition." Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, 54.

expresses negative attitudes. Yet Hosea develops the imagery of betrothal and hope for a future happy relationship. He portrays Yahweh as the one who labors for the renewal of the broken covenant. The term in which both of the new developments of the metaphorical tradition, the intimacy and the positive outlook, are embraced is the term *'hb*. It is the term which is arrived at in the first section of the book of Hosea, i.e., in Hos 3:1, after the passage started with the more traditional *znh* in 1:2. We will have to bear this in mind when we return to this term in Hos 14:5.

Parental Love in the Book of Hosea

Hosea 11:1-4

The Metaphor

The passage in the book of Hosea where *'hb* is most obviously used in the sense of parental love is Hos 11:1:

*kî na'ar yiśrā'el wā'ōh' bēhū
ūmimmiṣrayim qārā'ti libnî.*

When Israel was a lad I loved him
and from Egypt I called (him)¹ my son.

This line is the beginning of a unit. There is no agreement on the length of the unit.² But it seems clear that vs. 1-4 refer back to the history of the relationship between Israel and

¹Andersen and Freedman, 577, assume that “the 3 m s suffix with *w'hbhw* also serves the other verb, *qr'ty*.”

²Several scholars understand the whole chapter 11 as one unit: Harper, 360; Wolff, *Hosea*, 249-50; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 212-13; Mays, 152; Andersen and Freedman, 575-76; Stuart, 175-76; Yee, 214-29 (exilic redactor); Hubbard, 185; Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 65. Others separate the passage of judgment 1-7 from what follows: Vollmer, 60-61; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 139-40; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 87; Martin J.

Yahweh,¹ contrasting the tender and caring love of Yahweh and the forgetfulness and apostasy of Israel. The word *mimmiṣrayim* is then a reference to the Exodus from Egypt. The review of history serves as a justification for the threat of the following part.²

The people of Israel are personified and metaphorically spoken of as if they were a young child. This makes the father-son relationship a metaphor for the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel.³ The father-son image fits both the loving relationship between Yahweh and Israel and the mention of the time of beginning.⁴ That the passage 11:1-4 is closely related to Hos 14:5 is indicated by two important key words: *rp*’, “to heal,” and *’hb*, “to love.”

Buss, *The Prophetic Word of Hosea: A Morphological Study*, BZAW 111 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1969), 107-8; Fohrer, “Umkehr und Erlösung,” 163-64; Martti Nissinen, *Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch: Studien zum Werdegang eines Prophetenbuches im Lichte von Hos 4 und 11*, AOAT 231 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991), 263-65; Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 86.

¹Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 87-88.

²Cf. Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 83, 91; Vollmer, 65; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 87.

³That a deity is called “father” is not infrequent in the Ancient Orient, however, not father of a people but of another deity, a king, or a single person. Cf. Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 85-88; Buss, 111.

⁴Cf. Harper, 361; Robinson and Horst, 43.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

Baalism

Basically two interpretations have been offered for the meaning of the term *'hb* and the understanding of the concept employed. The first is derived from Hosea's conflict with Baalism. Wolff, for example, reflects on the father-son image in the wisdom and education tradition of the ancient Orient, but despite some parallels he does not see the origin of Hosea's metaphor here but rather refers to the Canaanite myths and cult: "Die Welt, in die hinein Hosea denkt, ist die des in Israel eingedrungenen kanaanäischen Mythos und Kultus. Hier gehört zur Muttergottheit die Vatergottheit."¹

This interpretation has been further developed by Kruger.² He refers to the fact that Hosea repeatedly comes back to a term or concept which was used in an earlier passage. He finds the concept of sonship in 1:2; 2:1, 6; 5:7. There the Israelites are depicted as sons of whoredom (*bny zrnwrym*) or bastard sons (*bnym zrym*), but finally they will be sons of the living God (*bny 'l hy*). In all these terms he finds references to the Canaanite fertility cult. Hos 11:1 would then be a deliberate contrast to the *bny zrnwrym* and *bnym zrym* and a parallel to *bny 'l hy*.

Also Mays assumes a polemic against Baalism when he suggests to understand the term *'hb* in Hos 11:1 in connection with the marriage motif in Hos 1-3. He traces the image of parental love back to the symbolism of husband and wife for Yahweh's covenant with Israel. Going to salvation-history, Hosea "removes the love-motif from its

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 256.

²Kruger, "Relationship," 228-33.

sexual-cultic setting and gives it a historical locus in an imagery that fits the election of Israel far better—father and son.”¹

The problem of this interpretation that connects Hos 11 with Hos 1-3 lies in the difference between the images in both parts of the book of Hosea. In chaps. 1-2 the sons are depicted in relation to their adulterous mother (1:2; 2:4, 6). The “sons of the living God” (2:1)² are also related to the picture of sons of an adulterous wife, because 2:1 obviously refers back to chap. 1. Also in 5:7 an unfaithful mother is presupposed. In all cases the sons are plural.

In Hos 11:1, however, the situation is completely different. The son (MT: singular) is seen in his relationship to his father³ who calls, loves, and cares for a helpless child. “Es geht um Berufung und Rettung, nicht um Abstammung.”⁴ The mention of Egypt in vs. 1 and the reference to Israel's backsliding in vs. 2 point to a historical aspect, which is absent in the Canaanite notion of a father deity.⁵

¹Mays, 153. Cf. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 141.

²Kruger, “Relationship,” 229-32, assumes that the phrase *’l hy* refers to the fertility cult and forms a contrast to the dying Baal. But see Helmer Ringgren, “*hyh*,” *TWAT*, 3:891-93.

³For the assumption that in Hos 11:1-4 Yahweh is presented not as a father but as a mother, see Helen Schüngel-Straumann, “Gott als Mutter in Hosea 11,” *ThQ* 166 (1986): 119-34; Othmar Keel, “Yahweh as Mother Goddess,” *Theology Digest* 36 (1989): 233-36; and the response by Siegfried Kreuzer, “Gott als Mutter in Hosea 11?” *ThQ* 169 (1989): 123-32.

⁴Kinet, *Ba’al und Jahweh*, 99.

⁵Cf. *ibid.*, 294, n. 20.

Adoption

The second interpretation points to a certain ambiguity or a double-entendre of the passage.¹ Hosea employs the verb *qr'*, "to call." It can have the meaning "to summon," which would fit the geographical notion "from Egypt." *qr' f* can also have the special meaning "to call with a name" or "to appoint into a position or status."² This understanding of *qr'* together with the statement *bny*, "my son," has led to the conviction that in Hos 11:1 we have an adoption motif.³

In order to appreciate the understanding of Hos 11:1-4 in the light of the adoption motif, we have to discuss three important aspects of adoption in Israel and the ancient Near East.⁴

¹Cf. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 141; Stuart, 178; Hubbard, 187; Yee, 217; Nissinen, 236-38.

²The Greek translations reflect the ambiguity: LXX translates the *qr'* as "to summon": *kai ex Aigýptou metekálesa tà tékna autoú*, "from Egypt he called his children." Others decide for the meaning "to call (with a name)" or "to appoint (to a position)." Theodotion: *ekálesa autòn tôn hyión mou*, "I called him 'my son'"; Symmachus: *Ex Aigýptou kéklētai hyiós mou*, "from Egypt he was called 'my son.'" Cf. Nissinen, 237.

³Jeremias, *Hosea*, 141; Mays, 153; Hubbard, 187; Stuart, 178; Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 88; Nissinen, 233-39; Yee, 215-16; Vollmer, 63; Perlitt, "Vater," 99-100; especially Braaten, 292-308.

⁴For adoptions in the Old Testament, see Exod 2:10; Esth 2:7, 15, possibly also Gen 48:5; Ruth 4:16, 17. Cf. Herbert Donner, "Adoption oder Legitimation? Erwägungen zur Adoption im Alten Testament auf dem Hintergrund der altorientalischen Rechte," *Oriens Antiquus* 8 (1969): 87-119, esp. 104-14; Samuel Feigin, "Some Cases of Adoption in Israel," *JBL* 50 (1931): 186-200. The Old Testament contains no adoption laws. For reasons for this fact, see Donner, "Adoption," 112-13. Korpel, 259, following H. Haag, "*bn*," *TWAT*, 1:678, assumes that adoption was unknown in Israel. But even if the adoption was not usual praxis, it would be known as a praxis of the neighboring nations. The adoption motif is employed for the relationship between

First, in the act of adoption the new status of sonship is granted by a solemn declaration.¹ M. David reconstructs the declaration, the “verba solemnia,” from the frequently quoted formulas which dissolve the parent-child relationship.²

Bei einer datio in adoptionem dürften diese etwa gelautet haben: “du bist sein Vater, du bist mein (*sic*) Kind”; wenn eine Arrogation vorlag, “du bist mein Vater”, bzw. “du bist mein Kind”.³

This assumption is supported by Codex Hammurabi, pars. 170, 171, where the father must say “my children” to those of his children who are born to him by a female slave in order to make them equal with the sons of his wife and equal heirs of his goods.⁴ Further support comes from a document in which a mother gives her child for adoption

Yahweh and the (Davidic) king: 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Pss 2:7, 8; 89:27, 28. Cf. Weinfeld, 189-96; Martin Noth, “Gott, König, Volk im Alten Testament: Eine methodologische Auseinandersetzung mit einer gegenwärtigen Forschungsrichtung,” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TB 6 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957), 222-26; Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, 5th ed., BK 15, 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1978), 18-20; Nissinen, 280-98. Critical is Donner, “Adoption,” 114. For adoption in the ancient Near East see Martin David, *Die Adoption im altbabylonischen Recht*, Leipziger rechtswissenschaftliche Studien, no. 23 (Leipzig: Theodor Weicher, 1927); idem, “Adoption,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, ed. E. Ebeling and B. Meissner (Berlin, Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), 1:37-39; de Vaux, 93-95, 181-83.

¹For solemn declarations in general and in adoption, see the examples and literature in Shalom M. Paul, “Adoption Formulae: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses,” *Maarav* 2 (1979-80): 179-80; also David, *Adoption*, 80-81.

²Cf. David, *Adoption*, 47-48, with examples.

³*Ibid.*, 79.

⁴*ANET*, 173. Cf. David, *Adoption*, 79; Paul, “Adoption Formulae,” 179. Donner, “Adoption,” 106, 114, however, points out that the text speaks about a legitimation and not a real adoption.

and declares: "Take the girl,¹ it is your child."² Another example comes from a political document of Hattušili I where the king declares, "I, the king, called him my son," and, "Behold, Muršiliš is now my son."³ There are Aramaic papyri stating, "My son he shall be,"⁴ or "You will be a son to him."⁵ A similar expression can be found in a Neo-Babylonian adoption document: "I will rear him, and he will be my son."⁶ Thus in Hos 11:1 the phrase *qr' lbny* refers to the adoption of a child and recalls the declaration the adopter uttered in order to enact the adoption. Yahweh has uttered the solemn declaration "my child."⁷

¹Or "the child of lower status." Cf. David, *Adoption*, 68-69.

²M. Schorr, *Urkunden des altbabylonischen Zivil- und Prozeßrechts*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 5 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913), #78:10-13 (= Josef Kohler and Artur Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz*, vol. 3, *Übersetzte Urkunden, Erläuterungen* [Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1909], 32); cf. David, *Adoption*, 79-80.

³F. Sommer and A. Falkenstein, *Die hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattušili I (Labarna II)*, Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Abt., N.F. 16 (Munich: Abhandlung der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1938), I/II 4, 37. Cf. Paul, "Adoption Formulae," 179-80; Weinfeld, 191-92.

⁴*The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*, ed. Emil G. Kraeling (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 8:5, 9, p. 226. Cf. Paul, "Adoption Formulae," 180; Braaten, 245.

⁵J. B. Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqâra with Some Fragments in Phoenician*, Texts from Excavations, no. 11 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983), 29.

⁶*ANET*, 547.

⁷Nissinen, 238-39, assumes a formula in the general background, without the reference to Egypt, which could read: "Ein Knabe war NN und ich liebte ihn, NN berief ich als meinen Sohn."

In Hos 11:1 the child is depicted as an infant.¹ Yahweh alone decides to take the child, to make it His son, to care for it, and to raise it. No other party is involved in the act of adoption; no former parents or guardians are mentioned.²

The one-sided decision of the adopter does not mean that there are not certain expectations towards the child. To the disappointment of the father it could happen that the adopted son will eventually turn against the one who took care of him. The adoption documents contain regulations in case of a violation of the adoptive bond.³ Braaten has convincingly argued that the adoption motif in Hos 11 is further elaborated by recalling Yahweh's caring for the son Israel.⁴

Second, we have to consider the role of the witnesses. The decisive words are spoken in the presence of witnesses. It is a natural quality of performing statements that they can have their power only if someone hears them. That this was true also for the adoption declaration is obvious from the fact that the adoption documents which have been found present a list of witnesses at the end.⁵

¹Therefore, it is misleading to speak of an "agreement with one another," Braaten, 298.

²Braaten, 300, emends Hos 11:7 and interprets the term *ywmm* in such a way that it alludes to the fact that Yahweh, not Baal, raised His son: "To Baal they call, he will by no means rear them."

³Codex Hammurabi, pars. 192 and 193, *ANET*, 175, indicate that the son, adopted as a small child, when grown up has no right to revoke the familial relationship. Cf. Donner, "Adoption," 115; Braaten, 300-2. See also the adoption documents p. 169, n. 4.

⁴Braaten, 298-300.

⁵David, *Adoption*, 56.

The institution of witnesses indicates that adoption was an act of social relevance and therefore in some sense of public concern.¹ The same is indicated by the fact that adoption laws are included in the law collections of Hammurabi.² The witnesses are of importance for future reference. Questions concerning the adoption involve the necessity to ask for persons who can testify for the adoption as a witness.³ An adoption which has not been made public in some sense in the first place cannot successfully be referred to later on.

What is the role of the witnesses in Hos 11:1? The passage does not announce an adoption but refers back to one. This means that the question of witnesses for the mentioned adoption becomes relevant. In other words, Yahweh cannot successfully complain about the failure of the adopted son Israel if nobody knows about the previous adoption. Who serves as the witness in Yahweh's case concerning His unfaithful son? We will return to this question later.

The third aspect is the adoption document. The adoption agreement led to the production of a written document.⁴ The documents which have been found are written

¹Donner, "Adoption," 92: "Die vollzogene Adoption muss allem Anschein nach der Stadtbehörde angezeigt werden." Cf. p. 17; Ephraim A. Speiser, "New Kirkuk Documents Relating to Family Laws," in *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, vol. 10, for 1928-29, ed. American Schools of Oriental Research (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 12-13.

²Par. 185-93, *ANET*, 174-75.

³David, *Adoption*, 56, 60. For examples of witnessing, see *ibid.*, 63-64; Speiser, "New Kirkuk Documents," 66-67; Braaten, 298-99.

⁴The form of this document with its several (possible) parts has been described by Donner, "Adoption," 94-95: (1) "Adoptionsklausel" with the name of the adoptee, the name(s) of the previous parents or guardian(s), the name of the adopter(s), in case of

in an objective manner and represent the viewpoint of an observer.¹ Therefore, the declarative words are not repeated but the adoption is reported, which might result in “den Šamaš-abili haben von Šaḫamatum, Marat-ištar, ihrer Tochter, und Taribum, ihrem Sohne, Buniniabi und Ḫušutum, die Hierodule Marduks, die Gattin des Buniniabi zur Kindschaft angenommen.”² The specific relationship is always mentioned: son, daughter, father, mother.³

An important part of the adoption documents consists of the regulations which deal with the situation that one party could possibly wish to dissolve the contract. This situation is introduced in such a way that the father/mother/parents say to the son/daughter “you are not my/our son/daughter” or the son/daughter says “you are not my father/mother.”⁴ That means, when dealing with future possibilities, the adoption

foundlings name of adopter, name of the adoptee. (2) “Erbrechtsklausel” for the case that the adopter will have children of his own. (3) “Revokationsschutzklausel” with sanctions in case one party revokes the adoption. (4) Sometimes “Auferziehungsgeldklausel.” (5) “Zeugen, Datum, Aktenvermerke.” Similar already in David, *Adoption*, 58. See also the different list in Braaten, 296. Cf. Speiser, “New Kirkuk Documents,” 7-8; John van Seters, “Jacob’s Marriages and Ancient Near East Customs: A Reexamination,” *HThR* 62 (1969): 385.

¹Donner, “Adoption,” 94. Cf. David, *Adoption*, 42. It may reflect the fact that mostly the persons involved in the contract asked someone else to write the document.

²David, *Adoption*, 43.

³See the formulae in Paul, “Adoption Formulae,” 180-84.

⁴The formula is the denial of the adoption declaration. For example Edward Chiera, *Old Babylonian Contracts*, The University Museum, Publications of the Babylonian Section, no. 8, 2 (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1922), 131-32: “Should Patija say to ⁴Ninshubur-tajar, his father: ‘My father thou art not’ he shall pay. . . . And should ⁴Ninshubur-tajar say to Patija, his son: ‘My son thou art not’ he shall pay. . . .” Similar formulas are found in a document where a man marries a widow and adopts her children. The formula for the eventually abandoned husband and father is quoted: “My

documents present the words of the anticipated declaration instead of the objective style of report. The same is true for the laws. Where a possible declaration is considered or a future declaration is anticipated, the expected words are quoted.¹

Evaluating the importance of the adoption document, David concludes that it was a necessary part of the contract, not only according to the Assyrian law code but also in the earlier Babylonian law.² Documents of controversies about adoptions and possessions show that the written document of adoption had to be produced³ or an oath had to be given that the document had not been destroyed.⁴ Breaking the clay tablet would mean to abolish the contract and to invalidate the adoption.⁵

Unlike the ancient adoption documents, in Hos 11:1-4 we do not have the word of an observer and witness. The one who once uttered the declaration Himself reports here. The declaration formula *bny*, “my son,” is repeated. This indicates that the

husband thou art not, my father thou art not.” For the disowned children it is quoted: “My sons ye are not,” 125-26.

¹For example Codex Hammurabi, par. 170, *ANET*, 174.

²David, *Adoption*, 60-65.

³A Neo-Babylonian tablet testifies to the reading of the document, possibly of adoption, in the presence of witnesses for some reason 10 years after the child was taken: “(Diese sind) die *mâr-bânî*, vor welchen Nabû-nâdin-šumi, Sohn des . . . und Širâ, seine Ehefrau, die Tochter des . . . , i[hren(?)] Vertr[ag] über die Šêpittâ, welche Širâ von der Straße aufgehoben und dann großgezogen hatte, wobei sie ihre (d.h. der Šêpittâ) Füße auf Lehm gesetzt hatte, verlesen haben.” *Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden I: Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden der Berliner Museen aus vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1935), 615-16.

⁴“Wahrlich, der Sohn des S. bin ich, zur Kindschaft hat er mich angenommen, meine Urkunde ist nicht zerbrochen worden.” Schorr, 259. Cf. David, *Adoption*, 61.

⁵David, *Adoption*, 61.

function of the passage is different from that of a record of an adoption. Hos 11:1 does not refer back to an act of solemn declaration in order to testify that an adoption has taken place; about this there seems to be no question. Not a juridical record of an adoption is given, but an emphatic expression of the disappointed adopter with His grown-up child.¹

The question may be asked then: Where is the written record of the adoption to which the disappointed father refers? Of course, we are dealing with metaphorical speech in Hos 11:1. Therefore it is not necessary that there be real witnesses and an actual written record of an adoption, although this would strengthen the argument greatly.² But Hosea's metaphor would fail to express a complaint about the unfaithful adopted son, if the prophet could not build on the knowledge of his audience, that Israel's relationship to Yahweh is comparable to that of an adopter and his adopted son. How did the audience know the motif?

¹Other biblical examples for the motif of the disappointed (adoptive) father are Deut 32; Isa 1:2-6; 63:8-10; Jer 2:30; 3:19; Ezek 16; Hos 9:15; Mal 1:6. An example expressing the disappointment of a father can be found in a Sumerian text: "Genug! Wie ich mich für dich abgemüht habe! Wer ist er, der sich mehr als ich für seinen Sohn abgemüht hätte?" (lines 97-98, cf. also lines 53-54). Åke W. Sjöberg, "Der Vater und sein missratener Sohn," *JCS* 25 (1973): 105-69. Cf. Robert G. Boling, "Prodigal Sons on Trial: A Study in the Prophecy of Hosea," *McCormick Quarterly* 19 (1965): 13-27, 38; Elizabeth Bellefontaine, "Deuteronomy 21:18-21: Reviewing the Case of the Rebellious Son," *JSOT* 13 (1979): 13-31; Braaten, 301-4.

²Cf. Exod 34:27. Richard Hentschke, "Gesetz und Eschatologie in der Verkündigung der Propheten," *ZEE* 4 (1960): 55, comes to the conclusion that the law was already known in the 8th century.

Hosea 9:10

The Metaphor

There is another passage that must be considered in connection with the motif of parental love, namely Hos 9:10-17. The passage is structured in two main parts: vss. 10-14 and 15-17.¹ Each part begins with a historical retrospective (vss. 10, 15).² A certain event is recalled by a local name³ and serves to demonstrate Israel's current apostasy. It follows the announcement of judgment (vss. 11-13, 16). In both sections the punishment concerns parental miseries: no sons are born, the existing sons are put to death. Thus far the passage is divine speech. Each section closes with a word of the prophet (vss. 14, 17).

An often overlooked parallel of the two parts of Hos 9:10-17 is the allusion to the adoption motif in both verses⁴ that reach back into history. Hos 9:10a reads:

*ka 'a nābīm bammidbār māṣā'ti yiśrā'el
kebikkūrāh bit 'ēnāh b're'sitāh rā'itī 'a bôtēkem*

Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel.
Like early figs on a fig tree at its beginning I saw your⁵ fathers.

¹For the structure and unity of the passage, see Wolff, *Hosea*, 210; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 120-21; Stuart, 150; differently Andersen and Freedman, 539.

²Beginning with Hos 9:10 we find a historical retrospective several times in the book of Hosea. This prompts Wolff, *Hosea*, 210, Stuart, 150, and Jeremias, *Hosea*, 120, to assume the beginning of a new section of the book.

³For the problem of which historical event is meant, see Wolff, *Hosea*, 213-14, 217; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 124-25.

⁴Braaten, 308-15, does not recognize the adoption motif in Hos 9:10a. However, he interprets Hos 9:15 in the light of disownment of a son.

⁵LXX has *autōn*, but this is assimilation according to the context.

Both lines start with a fruit simile. Grapes and figs are symbols of a happy life.¹ The early figs are especially first-choice.² The fruit similes express Yahweh's delight when He encountered Israel and made it His own people.³ It is not because of Israel's excellence that Yahweh rejoices in finding this people, but the joy is rooted in Yahweh's decision to relate Himself with Israel.⁴

The verbs in both lines fit perfectly with the fruits.⁵ But their objects are not the fruits but Israel/your fathers. This means that the verbs are also used in a metaphorical sense.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

For the meaning of these verbs it has often been proposed that “to find” means election.⁶ Is this simply a general figure of speech or do we have another metaphor

¹1 Kgs 5:5; 2 Kgs 18:31; Joel 2:22; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10; negative, Hos 2:14; Jer 5:17; 8:13; Joel 1:7; Hab 3:17. Cf. Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 57.

²Isa 28:4; Jer 24:2; Mic 7:1.

³Rudolph, *Hosea*, 185; Mays, 132-33; Andersen and Freedman, 540; Hubbard, 164; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 71; Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 57.

⁴Stuart, 151. Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 214.

⁵For example, *r'h*, Isa 28:4.

⁶Wolff, *Hosea*, 212; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 121; cf. Andersen and Freedman, 540; Yee, 293. Robert Bach, “Die Erwählung Israels in der Wüste” (Diss., Bonn, 1952), assumes that Hos 9:10 together with Deut 32:10; Ezek 16:1-7 displays rudiments of a “Fundtradition” which is independent of the Exodus tradition, the Sinai tradition, or the tradition of the patriarchs. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 212, 213. Critical to Bach's assumption, among others: Walter Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, BK 13, 5 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958), 345-46; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 185; Vollmer, 81; Hartmut Gese, “Bemerkungen zur

besides the fruit metaphor? There are several reasons to assume that it is the adoption motif which is employed here.¹

First of all, “to see” someone can have the meaning of finding an exposed and abandoned child and taking it for adoption. Biblical examples are Exod 2:5 and Ezek 16:6.² “To find” as a term for the act of taking an exposed child is not attested in the Bible. But it is used in connection with another widely recognized employment of the adoption motif, the election of the Davidic king.³ Additional confirmation comes from the fact that in Old Babylonian adoption texts the technical term for foundlings is: “found in a pit.”⁴

The abandonment of unwanted offspring was acceptable social practice in the ancient world. It was usually done in such a way as to attract the attention of others

Sinaitradition,” chap. in *Vom Sinai zum Zion: Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie*, BEvT 64 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974), 40-43; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 116-17; Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 57.

¹Stephen G. Burnett, “Exegetical Notes: Hosea 9:10-17,” *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 211-14, assumes that the marriage metaphor is employed in this passage and vss. 15, 17 display divorce formulas. But the same formulas are widely used for disowning a son, as Braaten, 308-15, has demonstrated, and *grš* is never used of a divorce, but of disownment; *ibid.*, 309. Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 57, interprets the *mš*’ in a very general way: Yahweh experienced Israel.

²Another exposed child is Ishmael, who was cast under a bush by his mother in distress. Here the child is “heard” by Yahweh, not “seen.” That it is the child who is heard, not the mother, reminds of the motif of exposed children and their rescue by someone who passes by.

³E.g. Ps 89:21. For the adoption metaphor applied to the Davidic king, see Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73 (1961): 202-25.

⁴David, *Adoption*, 15-16. Cf. Donner, “Adoption,” 91.

who might take pity on the infant and take it as their own.¹ Even if this custom was not common in Israel, it is clear that it was known to Israel, as can be seen in Ezek 16:4-6.²

Malul has thoroughly investigated the background of the practice of exposing of children, as referred to in Ezek 16:4-6. He compares Old Babylonian adoption documents “which report acts of adopting/exposing children ‘in their amniotic fluid’ and/or ‘in their blood.’” He points out:

According to the available evidence from various societies and periods, children were exposed soon after their birth, i.e., they were exposed with the birth blood still on them, without receiving the usual treatment that every newborn underwent when its parents decided to keep it.³

He concludes:

When a legal document reports the adoption of an infant still lying in its amniotic fluid and birth blood, it is intended to specify that it is an exposed child, abandoned by its parents soon after its birth. Anyone adopting it in this state acquires full right to it, for the adopter is considered to have taken

¹William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, Word Biblical Commentary 28 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 222. For the widespread practice of exposing children, cf. David, *Adoption*, 77; Meir Malul, “Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16.1-7,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 105. See also “The Legend of Sargon,” *ANET*, 119. For a general treatment of abandonment of children, see John Eastburn Boswell, “Expositio and Oblatio: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval Family,” *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 10-33.

²Cf. Isa 49:15. See also Cooke, 215-16, who argues that the adoption can be used as a metaphor in Israel despite the rare cases of actual adoption in the Hebrew Bible.

³Malul, 106; cf. 106-12. Thus already Claus Wilcke, “Noch einmal: *šilip remim* und die Adoption *ina mê-šu*: Neue und alte einschlägige Texte,” *ZA* 71 (1981): 87-94.

possession of an ownerless child. The child's natural parents can no longer reclaim it from its adopter.¹

The declaration in Ezek 16:6, *b^cdāmayik ḥ^ayī*, “though bloody, live,” must be considered an adoption formula.²

If, as Malul has shown, Ezek 16:4-6 is not only the report of finding a child but implies an adoption, it is possible that the “see” and “find” in Hos 9:10 display the adoption motif. Therefore, we can confirm the interpretation that “to find” expresses Israel's election. Israel is elected to be in a special relationship with Yahweh, metaphorically to be Yahweh's son. The connection between “being found” and election is established by the adoption motif: an abandoned child is found and elected to be a son, i.e., adopted.

Second, that Hos 9:10 has the adoption motif we find confirmed in considering the word *bammidbār*, “in the wilderness.” The question has been asked if it belongs to *ka^anābīm* or to the verb *māṣā^a’ī*.³ It is mostly agreed that it belongs to *ka^anābīm*.⁴

¹Malul, 109-10. Cf. Codex Hammurabi, par. 185, *ANET*, 174. See also Donner, “Adoption,” 92, n. 23, who refers to a document from Elam that speaks of handing over an infant still in his amniotic fluid and blood.

²Malul, 111.

³Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 540: “The desert is the location of Yahweh's discovery of Israel, not the location of the grapes.” They find support in vs. 13, “planted in a meadow” which could complete the image of the fig tree of vs. 10. Cf. also Bach, 16-29, who draws *bmdbr* to *mš^a’ty* and concludes that there has been a “Fundtradition.”

⁴Harper, 336; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 185 (“es ist natürlich an Oasen gedacht”); Vollmer, 80; Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 56. This leads to speculations about a wilderness “honeymoon” (Hubbard, 164) or “inniges Verhältnis zwischen Jahwe und seinem Volk, das die Wüstenzeit kennzeichnete” (Rudolph, *Hosea*, 185). For the desert motif, see also Paul Humbert, “Osée, le prophète bédouin,” *RHPPhR* 1 (1921): 97-118;

But the difficulties remain. “Auffällig jedoch bleibt bei der sonst so strengen Parallelität der Teilverse *aa* und *aß*, daß *bmdbr* und *bt'nh* sich nicht genau entsprechen. Man würde ja zunächst statt *bmdbr baggepen* oder etwas Ähnliches erwarten.”¹ For the unexpectedness of the grapes there is no parallel in the next line, because the early figs can be expected. Did Hosea “transplant” the grapes in the wilderness because of the historical reality?² The best explanation is that he uses *bammidbār* as a word which serves double duty and thereby merges two images here, i.e., finding delicious fruits and the adoption motif.³

The place where an exposed child has been found plays a very important role in the adoption documents. Malul following Cogan⁴ demonstrates that the term *hišlik*, “to cast out,” is a technical term for the formal legal act of casting out to the ownerless domain that which is not wanted.⁵ Important terms for the outside area are *śdh*, “open

differently Shemaryahu Talmon, “The ‘Desert Motif’ in the Bible and in Qumran Literature,” in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 31-63.

¹Vollmer, 80-81. He concludes that the “irreale Vergleich” underlines Israel's value for Yahweh. *Ibid.*, 81.

²Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 56. Cf. Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 70.

³Braaten, 311, does not recognize the double-duty word. Therefore he judges that “there is no thought here that Israel has been discovered in the wilderness.”

⁴Morton Cogan, “A Technical Term for Exposure,” *JNES* 27 (1968): 133-35.

⁵Malul, 100-6.

field,” and *mdbr*, “uninhabited land, desert.”¹ One who adopts a child found in the ownerless domain has full legal rights to it.²

This evidence sheds light on the term *mdbr* in Hos 9:10 (cf. also Deut 32:10). Israel was found like an exposed child that has been cast out to the ownerless area, the wilderness. *mdbr* is a technical term for any place outside of the domain of society. It refers to the fact that Yahweh has full rights to His adopted child Israel. No one else could have any claims concerning Israel.

This explanation resolves the difficulty that Hos 11:1 refers to the adoption of Israel in Egypt, whereas in Hos 9:10 the adoption took place in the desert.³ The desert of Hos 9:10 as an ownerless area could be anywhere outside the inhabited areas of cities and villages and does not necessarily mean the wilderness of Israel's sojourn.⁴ The

¹Ibid., 102-3.

²Cf. Malul's interpretation of a document from the time of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon which reports an adoption of a child “from the dog's mouth,” another term for the ownerless area. “In order that the adopter could gain full possession of the boy, his mother had to relinquish all legal rights to him and completely sever her ties with him. This she did by ‘casting him to “the dog's mouth,”’ and the adopter, by ‘picking him up from “the dog's mouth,”’ thereby adopted an ownerless child, i.e., a foundling which was absolutely free of any legal encumbrances. Hence, the adopter's legal right to the child was complete.” Ibid., 104-5. Cf. A. Leo Oppenheim, “Assyriological Gleanings I,” *BASOR* 91 (1943): 36-37.

³Cf. for example Wolff, *Hosea*, 255, who distinguishes between the Exodus tradition in 11:1 and the election tradition in 9:10; 10:11. Also Bach, 16; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 214; Kruger, “Relationship,” 225. Braaten, 292, bypasses the problem by understanding Hos 11:1 *mimmiṣrayim* only in a temporal sense and translates “since (his time in) Egypt,” which lacks precision, for an adoption declaration can only be uttered at an exact time.

⁴The motif of Israel being found in the wilderness is not to be considered an independent tradition as Bach, 40-42, proposes. Gese, 40-42, concludes that the

election did not happen in the wilderness but belongs to the Exodus tradition. Only because of the election and guidance of Yahweh has Israel escaped from Egypt and reached the desert.

We can conclude that *bammidbār* serves double duty in the line. As part of the fruit image it denotes the unexpectedness and delight of Yahweh to have found Israel. But at the same time it leads over to the adoption motif and refers to the ownerless area in which the child has been exposed and in which Yahweh found it, thereby having full rights to His adopted son.¹

Third, further confirmation for the adoption motif is the word *b^erē'sītāh*, "in the beginning," in the second line. Like the word *bammidbār* it has the center place of the line. It also has a certain ambiguity to it. *b^erē'sītāh* refers to *bit'ēnāh*. It means the beginning of the season.² Many commentators, taking the word as a gloss, eliminate it

"Fundtradition" is a reinterpretation of the Sinai tradition. Cf. also Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 117. He assumes that the "wilderness" refers to the desert of Israel's sojourn and that the undisturbed relationship between Yahweh and Israel is a special interpretation of this time. Both assumptions fail to reckon with the fact that the wilderness is a technical term in connection with the motif of the adoption of an exposed child. In this light we conclude that the "Fundtradition" as adoption motif is part of the Exodus tradition. This comes close to the position of Kurt Galling, *Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels*, BZAW 48 (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1928), 5-26, although he does not discuss Hos 9:10.

¹*bammidbār* has no equivalent in the following parallel line. That is no unusual feature in Hebrew poetry. See Alter, 24-25; Michael P. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 123-29. After the first line has clarified the legitimacy of Israel's adoption, the second line can omit this thought and give way to a stronger example of wanted fruit: the early figs (cf. Isa 28:4). Cf. also David J. A. Clines, "The Parallelism of Greater Precision: Notes from Isaiah 40 for a Theory of Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 91-92.

²Rudolph, *Hosea*, 181.

with the Syriac version for the reason that it does not say anything new, but was inserted to explain the rare word *bikkûrāh*.¹ But the “early figs are produced in sufficient quantities to be brought to market for sale and are a regular part of the fruit production of the fig tree.”² The term *bikkûrāh* is not so rare³ and the root *bkr* is too common to justify an explanation.⁴ The word *b^ʿrē^ʾšūtāh* has a special function in the line; it serves as a reminder, a pointer. The line not only speaks of the first fruits of the fig tree—for this the *b^ʿrē^ʾšūtāh* would not be necessary—but also speaks of the beginning of the people of Israel. To this the word *b^ʿrē^ʾšūtāh* points.⁵

Fourth, another reminder in the second line is the word *ʾabôtêkem*, “your fathers.” Again the language leaves the imagery and returns to reality. But *ʾb* belongs also to the semantic field which forms the motif of adoption. Its connotations together with *māsāʾîi*, *rāʾîîi*, *bammidbār*, and *b^ʿrē^ʾšūtāh* serve to establish the motif of fathering an infant found at an ownerless place.

¹E.g., Wolff, *Hosea*, 207; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 119; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 181; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 67.

²Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History*, 56.

³Four times in the Hebrew Bible.

⁴Willi-Plein, 179.

⁵Labuschagne, 71, refers to Jer 2:3, where Israel is called “the first fruits of His (Yahweh's) harvest.” He sees a connection between Israel as “first fruit” and “first-born son” (Exod 4:22). This would be another pointer to the adoption metaphor.

Hosea 9:15

The Metaphor

We now turn to Hos 9:15. Yahweh reminds of the sin of Gilgal¹ and declares:

*kî-šām š'ne' tîm.
'al ro' ma' al' lêhem
mibbêti 'gār' šēm
lō' 'ôsep 'ah' bātām.*

There I came to hate them.
Because of the wickedness of their deeds
I will cast them out of my house,
I will no longer love them.

God's love is denied and paralleled with hate. Although these terms could be understood literally, they immediately recall the metaphoric language of a covenant relationship.

Metaphoric interpretation is unmistakably required by the statement: Israel shall be cast out of Yahweh's house.

The Meaning of the Metaphor

What image is employed? Interpreters generally identify the terms as referring to divorce and think of the marriage metaphor.² But the context does not support this interpretation. While the passage Hos 9:10-17 has no other reference that could be

¹For a discussion of the meaning, see Jeremias, *Hosea*, 124; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 188; Vollmer, 103-4.

²Ziegler, *Liebe Gottes*, 54; Harper, 339; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 188-89; Mays, 136; Andersen and Freedman, 545; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 125; Reuven Yaron, "On Divorce in Old Testament Times," *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité* 3 (1957): 122. Lohfink, "Hate and Love," 417, finds the terminology of the treaty formula in this verse; similarly Stuart, 153. Hubbard, 167, considers an image of driving out an ungrateful guest, Yahweh depicted as a host.

applied to marriage, the parallel in vs. 10 contains the adoption motif. The punishment in vss. 11-13 and vs. 16 refers to parental miseries.¹ Additionally, the term *šrrym*, “rebels,” in vs. 15 is a term that is used to describe the wayward son in Deut 21:18, 20.²

Therefore, it is reasonable to understand vs. 15 in the light of the adoption metaphor.

That this interpretation makes good sense is demonstrated by Braaten. He argues that the term *grš* is used in contexts of disownment and casting out of a son.³ His view is further supported by the fact that the word “to hate” occurs also in Judg 11:7 for the expulsion of Jephthah, of whom Feigin assumes that he was adopted by Gilead.⁴ It can also be found in the context of adoption texts with the meaning that the relationship is violated by one side.⁵ Therefore it is justified to see in Hos 9:15 another reference to the adoption motif. This time the adoption is revoked by the disappointed father.

¹Charles F. Fensham, “The Covenant-Idea in the Book of Hosea,” in *Studies on the Book of Hosea*, OTWSA (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964/65), 42-43, demonstrates that denial of progeny is a common covenant curse. Cf. also Stuart, xxxvi.

²Braaten, 310.

³Gen 21:10, Judg 11:2, 7; Braaten, 100, 108-9.

⁴Feigin, 186-200.

⁵“To hate” is used in the Codex Hammurabi, par. 193, for the situation that an adopted son dissociates himself from his adopter: “If the (adopted) son . . . came to hate his foster father and his foster mother . . .” (*ANET*, 175). It is also found in a letter from Mari: “If you hat[e] Abi-Samar, then you hate our own ci[ti]es. . . . Perhaps [you are s]aying, ‘Abi-Samar is not my son and my house is not [his] house.’ (Yet) indeed (my) house is your house and Ab[i-Sa]mar is your son.” Georges Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*, Archives Royales de Mari, no. I (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950), 2:7-8; cf. Braaten, 119. Another example may be added: In an adoption tablet from Ugarit we find: “Wenn in Zukunft Jasiranu Ilkuja, seinen Sohn, haßt, wird er. . . . Wenn aber Ilkuja Jasiranu, seinen Vater haßt, dann wird er.” *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1, *Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden, Historisch-chronologische*

Summary: Characteristics of the Adoption Metaphor

We can now summarize some important characteristics of the adoption metaphor. First, the adoption metaphor is a means to express the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. This relationship came into existence not by descent but by the one-sided decision of Yahweh, His election.¹ Although the adoption metaphor speaks about the son, it does not allude to offspring and fertility. All texts speak about Israel as the son in the singular; the number of sons (plural)—which would be an important concern of fertility—is not part of the metaphor.

Second, the metaphor displays a juridical implication. The father has a claim to the adopted son. He has spoken the solemn words which have put the adoption into effect. Since Yahweh found Israel in the desert, i.e., in the ownerless area, nobody could dispute His right to His adopted son. No other deity has the right to demand Israel's obedience. However, the accusation, to which the metaphor leads in every case, is not directed against a third party but against unfaithful Israel. The son is rebellious, therefore the parental relationship will be repudiated.²

Texte, ed. Otto Kaiser (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1982-85), 212. Cf. Donner, "Adoption," 102; David, *Adoption*, 92.

¹It is not correct that "the element of choice . . . was certainly more characteristic of this institution [marriage] than it was of the alternative metaphors" (Adler, 66). In the book of Hosea the motif of election is clearly expressed through the metaphor of adoptive sonship ("to call," "to find"), but not in connection with the marriage metaphor.

²Braaten, 1-8 and 240-50, sees already in the names of Hosea's second and third child the motif of repudiating and disowning a child. Weider, 27 and 33, interprets the names in a similar way. Thus the motif of parental love is already present in chap. 1.

Third, Yahweh, the adopter, has secured His right by His continuous care for His son. Thus the adoption metaphor has a historical emphasis.¹ Each time the metaphor is employed we find a reference to Yahweh's loving and caring activities. However, not only are Yahweh's acts recalled, but also the history of Israel's apostasy. The historical emphasis points to the contrast between Yahweh's and Israel's activities. Thus the metaphor is used to justify Yahweh's accusation.

Fourth, the adoption metaphor in the book of Hosea has an emotional emphasis. The joy of finding the child (9:10), the details of how Yahweh cared for the infant (11:3, 4), the readiness of the child to turn away from the adopter father (9:10; 11:2), all this appeals to the audience to understand the disappointment and wrath of Yahweh. It suggests that every Israelite would feel the same if he had a similar experience with his son.

Origin of the Adoption Metaphor

Previous Suggestions

Introduced by Hosea for the First Time

How was it possible that the audience understood the adoption metaphor? We come here to the question of the origin of this metaphor. Is it correct, as Braaten supposes, that it was Hosea himself who originated it?² In this case the prophet would have directed the understanding of his audience towards the intended interpretation. Or

¹Cf. Kinet, *Ba'al und Jahweh*, 96-99; Köckert, 3-30.

²Braaten, 308. Similarly Wolff, *Hosea*, 255; Mays, 153; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 141; Neef, *Heilstraditionen*, 90.

was this metaphor part of the language tradition? Then the prophet would build on the tradition and possibly emphasize certain aspects by the manner in which he presents the metaphor.

Hos 9

First we turn to Hos 9:10. The couplet in 9:10a displays a certain ambiguity. Although the passage refers to the adoption motif, the main point is the finder's delight in finding delicious fruit or the infant. The symbols of delight are introduced with the comparative *kʿ* (*kʿnbym* and *kbkkwrh*) by which the prophet signals to his audience that he introduces figurative speech. But these similes do not necessarily lead to the adoption metaphor. There is no comparative particle for the adoption motif proper. That indicates that the prophet presupposes the knowledge of the adoption metaphor and assumes that certain key words would suffice to recall the motif.

The same is true for Hos 9:15. The adoption motif is introduced by key words and finds support in the context. There is no comparative *kʿ* since the metaphor has been employed before in vs. 10. Again, if the adoption metaphor were not known, the audience would miss the point.

To this formal argument there may be added another one with regard to the contents. The adoption motif of Hos 9:10 and 15 is employed to express the disappointment of the adopter because the adopted son turns out to be unfaithful to his father. The metaphor serves to lead the audience to an understanding of Yahweh's judgment.

That means the metaphor does not speak about an act of adopting a son but functions as a reference to a prior adoption. If Hosea's audience did not know about the

“adoption,” then Yahweh's complaint expressed by the prophet would have had no relevance. A lawsuit concerning an adoption asks for witnesses and even a written document. In the same manner Yahweh's complaint asks for someone who knows about the previous adoption.

Hos 11

We now turn to Hos 11:1. Did this utterance serve to introduce the adoption metaphor for the first time? This is doubtful for two reasons.

To begin with, the first line of Hos 11:1 refers to Israel as a *n 'r*. This term can denote any dependent person from early childhood until young adulthood.¹ The term has a certain lack of precision. The same is true for the term *'hb* because of the many ways of possible usage of the verb. There is so far no allusion to adoption. The first line states that at some time in the past when Israel was still dependent the speaker was in favor of him (*'hb*). The second line starts again with a description of Israel's past: from Egypt. This adds much precision to the first line because it refers to a well-known part of Israel's history. Together with the verb *qr 'ty*, the second line so far provides clarity and accuracy to the more general term *'hb*. Yahweh loved the young Israel and called him out of Egypt. There is still no hint of adoption. It is the very last word of the second line, *lbny*, that provides a new aspect, the aspect of adoption, so that we see the whole couplet in a new light.² Now the *n 'r* becomes an infant that has been loved and

¹Exod 2:6; Gen 21:12; Jer 1:6, 7. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 255; Andersen and Freedman, 576.

²“Line B drives us back to read line A again in the light of what line B has added to line A.” Clines, “The Parallelism of Greater Precision,” 78; see also 95.

adopted as a son. “From Egypt” becomes additionally a temporal sense: “from the time of Egypt on, there for the first time and on.”¹ While the previous understanding remains valid, it is this new understanding on which the prophet elaborates in the following verses: rearing the infant with great care, disappointment because of the son's rejection of the father, punishment of the son. Returning to the question whether Hosea here introduces to his audience a metaphor they have never heard of before, the metaphor of adoption, we must say that this is very unlikely. Since the adoption motif comes very late and double meaning remains in the couplet, there is room for misunderstanding in the introduction of the adoption motif. That makes Hos 11:1 an unfitting passage to function as the statement that an adoption has taken place, a statement which is needed to develop the complaint and introduce the punishments by the disappointed father.

A second point must be added. It has often been observed that Hosea presents his figurative expressions with the usage of the comparative particle *kē*, “like.” When there are metaphors without the particle, like the healing metaphor in 5:13 and all the following occurrences of *rp*’, it is only after Hosea has introduced the motif with the particle the first time, 5:12: *k’š* and *krqb*. One could therefore expect in Hos 11:1 to read *kn’r*. But the adoption motif comes almost in passing without a comparative particle. This also leads to the conclusion that Hosea assumes that the adoption metaphor is already known to his audience.

¹For example Braaten, 292, with reference to Hos 12:10; 13:4; and 10:9, *mîmê haggîb’ āh*, “since the days of Gibeah.”

Summary

We can summarize that the prophet Hosea uses the adoption motif in such a way that he supposes that his audience knows that Yahweh has adopted His people Israel.¹ The necessary witnesses to the adoption case in Hos 9:10, 15 and 11:1-4 are therefore the listeners themselves. They all can be addressed as those who know about the “adoption.” They all have to realize that Yahweh's complaints are justified. There is no way to argue against Hosea's metaphor because the prophet takes it from their own knowledge.

Divine Adoption of a King

If Hosea does not introduce the adoption metaphor, what is the origin of this motif? A suggestion comes from M. Nissinen. He sees in the adoption motif of Hos 11:1-7 a development of the motif of the divine adoption of the king. He assumes that the Predeuteronomistic author of the “Grundschrift” of Hos 11 has drawn his concept from the royal prophets and applied it to the whole nation.² But the functional differences between the sonship of the king and that of the nation make Nissinen's assumption unlikely.³

¹Cf. Mays, 153: “The portrayal of Yahweh as father of the tribe or people goes back into Israel's earlier history as is evident in the theophoric names such as Abijah, which combine the elements of ‘father’ and ‘Yahweh.’” Cf. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966; reprint of 1928 ed.), 73.

²Nissinen, 300-7.

³The Assyrian parallels of the king's assurance by a goddess who is depicted as a nurse and sometimes as a mother must not easily be equated with the adoption motif applied to a nation. The difference is implicit in Nissinen's theory; he speaks of a

Wisdom Tradition

Is the adoption metaphor derived from the wisdom tradition of the ancient Near East, which regularly calls the pupil “son” as Wolff takes into account?¹ This is unlikely because of the different functions of the “sonship.” Hosea's metaphor has a legal and historical emphasis, because the metaphor serves to support an accusation. Wisdom, however, presents universal insights; the emphasis is not on history but on teaching authority.

The Background of the Adoption Metaphor

Israel Is Yahweh's First-born Son

There is reason to assume a development of the adoption motif from two sources of Israel's tradition. Hosea reminds his audience that “from Egypt” Yahweh called Israel “my son” (Hos 11:1). The passage that comes to mind is Exod 4:22-23:²

And you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says Yahweh: Israel is my first-born son. And I say to you: Let my son go that he may serve me; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son.”

complete reversal of the concept: “schroffes Widerspiel,” “Ironisierung” (ibid., 303, 306). Cf. also the rejection of Wolff, *Hosea*, 256; Stuart, 177. An integration of the motif of divine sonship as expressed in the older concept of the divine election of His son Israel into the concept of the king as the adopted son of Yahweh—a development in the opposite direction compared to Nissinen's theory—is assumed by Cooke, 217-18, and Schlißke, 113-14.

¹Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 256, who finally rejects the wisdom origin of the father-son metaphor because of his assumption that Hosea is influenced by the Canaanite mythology and cult.

²Cf. Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, 27; Andersen and Freedman, 577; Stuart, 177; Cassuto, “The Prophet Hosea,” 89.

This passage belongs to the tradition of the Exodus and is located still in Egypt.¹ It is striking that this text fits perfectly the reference to Egypt in connection with Israel's sonship in Hos 11:1.

We have in Exod 4:22 the formula "my firstborn son." Although this formula may resemble an adoption formula,² there is no clear signal how the sonship came into existence. It could be adoption, but it could also be Yahweh's creation of His people, as indicated in Deut 32:6; Ps 100:3; Isa 43:1. The emphasis is on the fact that Israel owes Yahweh his existence.

As we have seen, there must have been a knowledge of this calling into sonship with Hosea's audience. Although the passage Exod 4:22-23 is often considered to be a late addition to the account of the calling of Moses,³ it has been demonstrated that Exod 4:22-23 presupposes a concept of very early date.

¹Yahweh's love is also expressed in Deut 4:37; 7:8; 10:15. The sequence is noteworthy in these passages. First comes the statement that Yahweh's loves and elects, second the Exodus.

²Cf. P. G. Bretscher, "Exodus 4:22-23 and the Voice from Heaven," *JBL* 87 (1968): 301-11, who points out that adoption was often executed in order to provide an heir for the childless family. The reference to the "firstborn" in Yahweh's declaration of adoption points to the promise of inheritance of the land.

³Bruno Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri*, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903), 33; Martin Noth, *Das zweite Buch Mose: Exodus*, ATD 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 33; Werner Fuss, *Die deuteronomistische Pentateuchredaktion in Exodus 3-17*, BZAW 126 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 85-87 (a redactor replaced original *ammi* with *beni*); Johannes Peter Floss, *Jahwe dienen - Göttern dienen: Terminologische, literarische und semantische Untersuchung einer theologischen Aussage zum Gottesverhältnis im Alten Testament*, BBB 45 (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1975), 200 (redaktioneller Zusatz); Georg Fischer, *Jahwe unser Gott: Sprache, Aufbau und Erzähltechnik in der Berufung*

Die Jahwesohnschaft wird ohne Erläuterung vorausgesetzt. Erklärt sich die Wahl des Ausdrucks auch vom Gegenüber zur ägyptischen Erstgeburt her, so wird sachlich doch unterstellt, daß Israel in dieser Weise seine Stellung vor Jahwe wiedergeben konnte. J oder die Bearbeiter kannten also die Vorstellung.¹

It could well be that this tradition which finds expression in Exod 4:22-23² is one source of Hosea's adoption metaphor.³

Yahweh Is the Father of the Orphans

The second source of Hosea's adoption metaphor could be reflected in the passage Ps 68:6-9. It is also considered to display a very old tradition.⁴ Yahweh is called "father of the orphans" (vs. 6, Eng. 5). This is a very common royal epithet.⁵ It is

des Mose (Ex 3-4), OBO 91 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 29-35.

¹Schlißke, 162. An early date of the motif of Israel's sonship is also assumed by Cooke, 217.

²It probably existed in written form. The facts about an adoption are normally written on a document. The written tradition that Yahweh called Israel "my firstborn son" in Egypt could testify for the legitimacy of Yahweh's accusation of unfaithfulness to the adoptive bond.

³The image of father and son for Yahweh and Israel without the adoption motif is employed especially in Deuteronomy and in the prophetic books: Deut 1:31; 8:2, 5; 11:2; 14:1; 32:5, 6; Isa 1:2-9; 30:1, 9; 43:1, 6; 45:11; 63:8-10, 16; Jer 2:29, 30; 3:4, 5, 14, 19, 22; 4:22; 31:9, 20; Mal 1:6; 2:10. Cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, "Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father-Son Relationship between Yahweh and Israel," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 144-47, esp. 147.

⁴Kraus, 470-71; Korpel, 287.

⁵For example: Codex Hammurabi, XXV, Reverse, 21-23, *ANET* 178. Cf. also Isa 22:21. For more examples see also Korpel, 238.

part of the task of the king and judge to protect orphans, widows, and strangers.¹ Yahweh has taken over this role.² That Yahweh is seen as the king is explicit in vs. 25 (Eng. 24). The striking fact in Ps 68 is that the royal metaphor (“father of the orphans”) is combined with the Exodus and Yahweh's leading in the wilderness (vss. 7, 8). Thus Israel becomes like the orphan that is taken by Yahweh and given a home. There is still no explicit adoption as in the books of Hosea or Deuteronomy.³ But it suggests itself strongly.

Israel Is the Rebellious Adoptive Son

The adoption metaphor is a combination of the two metaphors: (1) Israel is Yahweh's son; (2) Yahweh, the divine king, cares for the orphans. What was the reason for the combination? The usage of the adoption metaphor gives a hint. Although this motif would be very fitting to express the positive relationship of Yahweh and Israel, we

¹Ringgren, “*jātôm*,” *TWAT*, 3:1077. See also Isa 1:23; 10:2; Ezek 22:6, 7. Cf. F. Charles Fensham, “Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature,” *JNES* 21 (1962): 129-39. Cf. also Korpel, 315; according to her the concept of kingship of Yahweh is a very old concept.

²Pss 10:14; 146:9; Exod 22:22, 23; Deut 10:18. He commands to care for the orphans: Deut 24:17; 27:19; Pss 82:3; 94:6-7; Isa 1:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Zech 7:10.

³Cf. also Deut 10:18-19 here. It presents Yahweh as the one who loves (*'hb*) and cares for the orphans, widows, and strangers. Then it recalls that Israel was in Egypt most needy, was loved by Yahweh in the same way He loves (*'hb*) the strangers, and thus brought out of despair by the Exodus. Like the orphan, the stranger is also a member of the standard group of needy ones, e.g., Deut 24:17; 27:19; Job 22:9; 24:3, 4; 31:16-23; Pss 82:3.4; 94:6; 146:9; Isa 1:17, 23; 10:2; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10. Ascribing the chapter to an exilic redactor, Yee, 216-26, is compelled to assume that Hos 11 presupposes deuteronomic thoughts.

find it explicit only in connection with Israel's apostasy.¹ The adopted son (or daughter, Ezek 16) proves to be rebellious (*sôrēr*). The law of Deut 21:18-21, the trial of the rebellious son, is presupposed here.² In Deut 21 the son is accused of rupturing the parent-child relationship.³ In the same way Israel and her leaders are rebellious (Hos 9:15: *sôr̄rîm*) and refuse the covenant.

The adoption motif intensifies the accusation against the rebellious son. He not only rejects a father who—like most fathers—in his love continuously protected, cared for, and educated His son (cf. Deut 1:31; 8:2-5; 11:2), but one who did all this without any necessity of natural bonds of descent, only because of His free decision to adopt an exposed child that otherwise would be doomed to death.

This indicates that the combination of the sonship motif and the (royal) motif of care for the orphans forming the adoption metaphor is the result of the reflection of Israel's unfaithfulness. It points to the gravity of Israel's apostasy. According to its origin the adoption metaphor has a strong juridical emphasis.

¹Besides Hos 9:10-17 and 11:1-4 also Deut 32:10 and Ezek 16:6.

²Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 249; Boling, 23. That Deut 21 reflects old tribal tradition is also presupposed by Bellefontaine, 13. Yee, 226 (however dating Hos 11 exilic): "Moreover, Hos 11:1-6 assumes our knowledge of the law found in Deut 21:18-21."

³Bellefontaine, 17, refers to a parallel in the Codex Hammurabi, par. 192, where an adopted son repudiates the bond to his adoption parents (cf. *ANET*, 175).

Since in the book of Hosea this final step towards the adoption metaphor is already presupposed, it seems that it was taken before Hosea. We have to assume that there was already a tradition of the motif.¹

Father-son Image in Treaty Language

Additional support for the development of the adoption metaphor comes from the covenant language. F. C. Fensham has studied the treaty terminology of ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties and Old Testament texts—including Hos 11:1—in connection with the father-son image.² He comes to the conclusion that the father-son relationship is a common figure for the relationship between overlord and vassal (for example, 2 Kgs 16:7). Hosea and his contemporaries must have known this usage of the father-son image as far as they were informed or had the knowledge of politics.

¹Seen in this light, it could be that the adoption metaphor found in Deut 32 could be of earlier origin than usually assumed. In Deut 32 the metaphor is elaborated to an image of raising a foundling who, once grown up, is unfaithful to his adopter parent, a parallel to the metaphor in Hos 9:10-17 and 11:1-4. For the early date of this text, see Cassuto, "The Prophet Hosea," 95-100; F. Charles Fensham, "Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 132; Otto Eißfeld, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32, 1-43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist. Klasse 104, 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958); William F. Albright, "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII," *VT* 9 (1959): 339-46.

²Fensham, "Father and Son," 122-35. Cf. McCarthy, "Notes on the Love of God," 144-47. Andersen and Freedman, 576, realize that the metaphor of adoption is employed but "it is more likely that the relationship was quasi-political, like that between a suzerain and a vassal." See also above on "love" in covenant language, p. 155.

However, there are also differences. First, the covenant language uses the father-son image in a highly stereotyped way, while in Hosea it is considerably elaborated and developed into the act of adoption.

A second difference is the fact that in the treaties the son or servant is normally a person, not a people, even if in certain Hittite treaties the people are also mentioned or included.¹

The most important difference is the tender relationship between Yahweh and His son Israel as depicted in the book of Hosea. McCarthy observes that in the treaties and also mostly in Deuteronomy, “the father-son relationship is essentially one of respect and obedience. . . . A loving relationship according to our way of looking at these things, is a special Hosean concept.”² Most of the treaty texts of the Assyrian time do not mention the love of the overlord but only command the love of the vassal, which is also the main concern of Deuteronomy.³ On the other hand, Hosea never speaks of, or demands, Israel's love towards Yahweh.⁴

Thus, the treaty terminology does not sufficiently explain the metaphor in Hos 9 and 11. The elaboration of the metaphor goes beyond the formalities of treaty language.

Notwithstanding all the references in the treaties to the “love” of suzerain for vassal and of vassal for suzerain, to the suzerain as “father” and the vassal as “son,” such relationships were surely hardly ever like that. Vassals did not

¹Fensham, “Father and Son,” 126.

²McCarthy, “Notes on the Love of God,” 145.

³Ibid., 146.

⁴Wolff, *Hosea*, 217; Moran, “Ancient Near Eastern Background,” 77; Nissinen, 297.

as a rule “love” those who conquered, subdued, and dominated them. . . . To tell Israelites that Yahweh “loves” them in the same way as a suzerain . . . “loves” his vassal, and that they are to “love” Yahweh as vassals “love” their suzerains, would surely have been a bizarre depiction of Yahweh's love of, and commitment to, his people, and of the love and commitment with which they were called upon to respond. . . . The reality is surely that terms such as these and others, supposedly derived by the biblical writers from their knowledge of treaties, belonged in the first instance to familiar settings of everyday life, and needed no treaties to mediate them or give them a special nuance.¹

However, treaty language and adoption metaphor are not mutually exclusive. Fensham might be correct in considering “a fusion of the adoption and covenant connotations.”²

Summary

What are the results of our investigation of the background of the adoption motif? We have seen that when Hosea employs this image he does not introduce a new metaphor. He reminds the audience of what they know, namely, Yahweh and Israel are in a relationship that is comparable to the relationship between a father and his adopted son that was established by a free gracious act. That means we have to interpret the adoption metaphor in a covenant context.³

¹Nicholson, *God and His People*, 78-79.

²Fensham, “Father and Son,” 130. Cf. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 161; Stuart, 178.

³Hans Walter Wolff, “‘Wissen um Gott’ bei Hosea als Urform von Theologie,” *EvTh* 12 (1952/53): 533-54; A. Feuillet, “L'universalisme et l'alliance dans la religion d'Osée,” *Bible et Vie Chrétienne* 18 (1957): 27-35; Fensham, “The Covenant-Idea,” 35-49; Stuart, xxxi-xlii and passim.

The adoption metaphor is not derived from Canaanite mythology. It is rooted in language conventions: First, Israel is Yahweh's son, and second, Yahweh is like a king whose special task is to care for the orphans. An additional support may have been the treaty terminology which uses the father-son relationship in a stereotyped way for the relationship of overlord and vassal.

The adoption metaphor with its emphasis on legal and historical aspects presupposes the reflection of Israel's apostasy. Hosea employs it in the traditional way, when he uses it in the accusation of Israel's apostasy. Israel as the inferior partner of the covenant did not meet the expectations that he would appreciate what has been done for him by living faithfully according to the relationship.¹ Thus, Yahweh is depicted as the disappointed adopting father who brings His rebellious son into court.

Hosea's audience, because it is familiar with the adoption motif, functions as the witnesses for the adoption and may even recall written covenant tradition as the "adoption document." Their tradition includes the history of Yahweh's covenantal protection, fostering, and help.

What does Hosea make of the traditional metaphor? He depicts the covenant to the people in as appealing a way as possible. The tenderness of Yahweh, His parental love and caring, are emphasized. Hosea connects the adoption metaphor with the metaphor of delicious and most-wanted fruit (9:10). The stress is on the personal

¹Cf. Weinfeld, 184-98, on the promissory type of covenant, the royal grant, which has been employed in suzerain-vassal relations in the ancient Near East.

relationship.¹ It is Hosea's aim that the people cannot but agree with Yahweh's complaint about the unfaithful son.

The Meaning of the Love Metaphor
in Hosea 14:5

Hosea 14:5 Employs the Conventional
Adoption Metaphor

We can now return to Hos 14:5 and ask for the meaning of *'ōh' bēm n' dābāh*, “I will love them freely,” in the light of the results of our investigation of parallels in the book of Hosea and beyond.

First, we note the brevity in which the thoughts of chap. 14 are presented. As frequently in the book of Hosea, a theme once introduced in the book is later referred to in a very short way. The reader is expected to remember earlier passages.

Our discussion of the occurrences of *'hb*, “love,” in the book of Hosea has demonstrated that the prophet employs two metaphors: marriage and adoption. Both metaphors are not new but are part of the tradition which Hosea shares with his audience. Since both metaphors are well known and firmly established in the book of Hosea, we can assume that the word *'hb* in Hos 14:5 is meant to recall one or both of these metaphors and has to be understood metaphorically.

Can we determine which of these metaphors is in focus in Hos 14:5? There are several reasons to assume that the love metaphor in Hos 14:5 is to be understood in the sense of the adoption metaphor.²

¹McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 297.

Parallel to Hos 11:1-4

First, we note the close parallel with Hos 11:1-4. Two of the verbs occur again: *rp*, “to heal,” and *’hb*, “to love.” They are placed in the opposite order, though. In chap. 11 Yahweh and Israel were in a movement of separation. Yahweh had loved Israel and called this people into sonship, but then had to labor for the ever-backsliding nation, healing their apostasies. Now we have a movement towards union. Yahweh finally heals Israel's apostasy and the love relationship reaches the goal He had in mind since His first call to them in Egypt. The close parallel of the two passages suggests that the imagery of chap. 11 is carried over to chap. 14 and Yahweh's love is colored by the image of a parent loving his child.

Context

Second, the context (vs. 4) introduces the motif of the parent-child relationship:

’šer-b^ekā y^eruḥam yātôm, “because in you the orphan is pitied.”¹

Just as an adult takes in an orphan and loves it as his own child, so God promises to receive Israel again. The orphan in ancient Israelite society was desolate and helpless, unable to survive on its own. Yahweh promised to be the orphan's protector in the covenant (Exod 22:22). On this compassion the future Israel could rest its hope.²

²Against Yee, 247, 310, who interprets chaps. 12-14 more in light of the marriage metaphor.

¹Stuart, 211, reads *’ašrê*, “blessed.” But the *’šer*, “because,” makes good sense.

²Ibid., 214.

The orphan is not necessarily a little child. To care for the widows and orphans was a special task of the judge and king. The one who helps the orphan is here called “father of the orphans,”¹ a well-attested title for the king.

One special way of help for an orphan is to adopt him or her as son or daughter. We have seen that Hosea employs an image of this kind in Hos 9 and 11 and presupposes it to be known by his audience. Additionally we are reminded of the name of Hosea's second child, *lō' rūhāmāh*, “not pitied” (Hos 1:6). This name recalls the fate of an unwanted and exposed child. Therefore Hos 14:4 leads us to understand Yahweh's love in vs. 5 as the love of the adopting father.² Hos 14:4 takes up the traditional adoption motif, thus linking together the words of repentance, Hos 14:3-4, and the divine speech beginning in vs. 5.³

¹Ps 68:6; Job 31:17, 18; cf. Pss 10:14; 146:9.

²Emmerson, 48, does not recognize that the imagery of Hos 14:4 and 5 is connected by the adoption motif. From “the absence of any such consistency in the imagery of 14:2-4 and 5-8” she concludes that “the salvation saying is not integrally related to the summons to penitence, but rather owes its position to editorial arrangement.”

³For the discussion on the relationship between Hos 14:2-4 and 5-9, see Georg Warmuth, *Das Mahnwort: Seine Bedeutung für die Verkündigung der vorexilischen Propheten Amos, Hosea, Micha, Jesaja, und Jeremia*, Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie, no. 1 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1976), 53-55; Wolff, *Hosea*, 302; Müller, “Imperativ und Verheißung,” 561-64; Hentschke, 51; Jeremias, “Zur Eschatologie,” 232-33; Fohrer, “Umkehr und Erlösung,” 232-41 (however, *ibid.*, 230, deleting Hos 14:5 as a gloss); Kruger, “Yahweh's Generous Love,” 32-33 (rejecting the original unity of Hos 14:2-9, overlooking the link between vss. 4 and 5, i.e., the adoption motif).

Free-will Action

The third reason can be found in the term *n^edābāh*, “freely.”¹ There seems to be a consensus of scholars that this word refers in an abstract manner to the generosity of Yahweh's love. His love is not conditioned by the human side “but springs solely from his divine generosity. That is exactly what the word *ndbh* (‘generously’, vs. 5) wants to emphasize: Yahweh's love is spontaneous.”²

Could it be that the word *ndbh* in Hos 14:5 has a more specific meaning or do we have to stay with the denotation of the abstract idea of generosity?³ In most cases the term has an almost technical sense. The assumption has been put forward that this word in its earliest occurrences belongs to the terminology of the holy war.⁴ For the usage in later texts it has been argued that the word *n^edābāh* is a technical term for certain sacrifices in the cult. It denotes offerings made voluntarily or out of generosity.⁵ “The ‘generous impulse’ which is the key idea underlying the usage is always one

¹Cf. Paul Joüon, “Racine *ndb*,” *Biblica* 16 (1935): 422-30.

²Kruger, “Yahweh's Generous Love,” 39. He follows Wolff, *Hosea*, 305; cf. also Rudolph, *Hosea*, 251; Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 62; Harper, 413; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 172; Hubbard, 230; Hentschke, 51; Emerson, 48.

³Joüon, 426; Aloysius Fitzgerald, “*MTNDBYM* in 1QS,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 497.

⁴C. Rabin, “Judges V,2 and the ‘Ideology’ of Deborah's War,” *JJS* 6 (1955): 128-30; Fitzgerald, “*MTNDBYM* in 1QS,” 495. Cf. Judg 5:2, 9 and Gerhard von Rad, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 6-7.

⁵Cf. Stuart, 215.

directed toward the cult.”¹ Hos 14:5 and also Ps 68:10 (plural) seem to be the only texts which are not connected with a clearly defined act, e.g., war or sacrifice.

For Ps 68:10 Joüon assumes a reference to the gift of manna in the wilderness.² But what specific meaning has the term in Hos 14:5? Our study on the metaphorical background of Yahweh's love suggests that in Hos 14:5 another clearly defined act of free decision is denoted: adoption. The love of the adoptive parent does not rest on natural bonds but on a free-will decision. Although there is normally no need to make this explicit, we nevertheless find some cases where Assyrian adoption documents report that one went into the adoptive relationship “with his own will.” This is most remarkable when it is stated by the adoptive parent: “Amminišina, die Tochter des Aradšerua wollte es; mit ihrem Willen hat sie die Aḥat-uqrat, die Tochter der Belassunu zur Adoption genommen.”³ Hos 14:5 could refer to the adoption metaphor by the statement that Yahweh's love rests on His sovereign free-will decision.

¹Fitzgerald, “*MTNDBYM* in IQS,” 498.

²Joüon, 428.

³David, *Adoption*, 103 = no. 3 in Erich Ebeling, *KAJ* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1927). Cf. also no. 1 in *KAJ*, where the father willingly gives his son into adoption, and nos. 2 and 4, where the adopted is willing to enter into adoption. Cf. David, *Adoption*, 101, 104-5. See also the reference to two documents from Larsa, *ibid.*, 78. For the expressions of volition in ancient Near Eastern legal documents, see Yochanan Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine*, *Studia et Documenta ad Iura Orientis Antiqui Pertinentia* 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969; reprint New York: Ktav, 1973); *idem*, “Joy and Love as Metaphorical Expressions of Willingness and Spontaneity in Cuneiform, Ancient Hebrew, and Related Literatures: Divine Investitures in the Midrash in the Light of Neo-Babylonian Royal Grants,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, Part 3, *Judaism before 70*, ed. Jacob Neusner, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* 12 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 1-36.

Reference to the Negative Tradition

A fourth detail can be added. Once we have realized that Hos 14:5 recalls the image of the adoptive parent, the last part of Hos 14:5 presents itself in a new light.

... *kī šāb 'appi mimmennū*

... for my wrath has turned from him.

Wolff and others¹ consider this clause to be unnecessary and delete it as a gloss. However, the background of the adoption motif leads us to another conclusion.

Originally the adoption metaphor serves to present the case of infidelity of one party and disappointment and anger of the other party. We have seen that the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is clothed in a detailed image of adoption only in passages which deal with Israel's unfaithfulness. This means that the verb "to love" in Hos 14:5 establishes an image that refers back to a broken relationship in the same way as the verb "to heal." In the healing metaphor the negative background is already suggested because of the basic meaning of the word: Before the healing there must have been sickness. In the adoption metaphor the broken relationship is not necessarily given in the image or in the employed term *'hb*, "to love." But since the metaphor is developed out of the reflection of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, the negative background is suggested by the history of the metaphor. This background manifests itself at the end of vs. 5. The mention of Yahweh's wrath (*'p*) is thus a reference to the broken covenant that is part of the tradition of the adoption metaphor.²

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 300; Robinson and Horst, 52; and many others.

²The marriage metaphor has traditionally the same negative background. See above, on page 129.

We may assume that the wrath of Yahweh has a specific sense. It is the wrath of the disappointed parent against his rebellious son (Deut 21:18-21), which was already in the background of Hos 11.

New Features of the Image

Positive Context

Hosea employs a conventional metaphor but uses it in an unexpected manner. There are several new aspects. First, the originally negative context of the adoption metaphor is turned into a positive one. After we realize that the adoption metaphor originally had a negative emphasis, we can appreciate that the image is now used in a context of salvation. In Hos 14:5 the image is extended to express the renewal of the covenant relationship. This seems to be Hosea's work.

Emotional Emphasis

The second new aspect is a corollary of the first. The traditional metaphor belongs to the prophetic judgment speech against unfaithful Israel. It serves to give reasons for the accusation. Its emphasis is on the juridical aspect: Yahweh has the right to expect Israel's covenant fidelity because of His adoption initiative (9:10; 11:1) and His continuing care for His people (11:3, 4).

However, Hosea's application of the adoption metaphor brings a new aspect into play: the emotional side. Yahweh is presented not only as the adopter whose rights are violated but also as the loving father whose delight is disappointed (9:10) but who cannot give up His child (11:8). In Hos 14:5 the emotional aspect gets the main emphasis. This changes the function of the metaphor. It does not give juridical reasons

but—by pointing to one of the strongest family bonds: the parent-child relationship—makes the announced new beginning of Yahweh with His people emotionally plausible and attractive.

Invitation of the Audience

Third, the new function results in a new role of the audience. We have seen that when the adoption metaphor is used in the accusation, the audience has the role of the witnesses of the previous adoption. They are supposed to know that Yahweh adopted His people and thus speak their own sentence. But when the adoption metaphor serves to announce a new covenant, the audience is invited to marvel about Yahweh's love and turn to Him with all their heart.

The Meaning of the Love Metaphor in Hosea 14:5

Yahweh Begins Anew

Our findings about the love metaphor lead to three points for its meaning in Hos 14:5. First, the metaphor has an eschatological thrust. After Yahweh has turned away from His wrath, the disowned son is again accepted into sonship. The election of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, is depicted as the “first adoption.” What Yahweh announces in Hos 14:5 can be paralleled to these events in Israel's history. “Indem Jahwe Israel aus freien Stücken liebt (14,5), fängt er wieder mit dem Anfang an, wie die Korrespondenz von 14,5 mit 11,1 zeigt. Das durch die Glut des Zornes hindurchgegangene, das in seiner Vergangenheit vergangene *Israel* *ersteht neu in Jahwes Vergangenheit mit ihm.*”¹

¹Köckert, 29 (his emphasis).

Yahweh does not simply continue the old relationship between Himself and Israel, rather He starts anew.

Royal Connotations of the Metaphor

Second, from Ps 68:6, 25 we have learned that the metaphor of adoption has a royal background. Hos 14:4 reminds of the royal epithet “father of the orphans.” So it is not only the first line of Hos 14:5 with the healing metaphor but also the second line that emphasizes the royal aspect. Yahweh is expected to be (vs. 4), and presents Himself as (vs. 5), the king of the renewed Israel.

Parallel to the Marriage Metaphor

Third, there is a parallel to the marriage motif. The immediate context of Hos 14:5 leads us to understand the word *'hb*, “to love,” in the sense of the adoption metaphor, which is already firmly established in the book of Hosea. However, the word *'hb* is used likewise in connection with the marriage metaphor. This puts the question whether the word *'hb* serves double duty and reminds one also—to a lesser degree—of the marriage motif.

The adoption metaphor and marriage metaphor share a number of common features and are employed because of the common aspects; they form a parallel. Both have juridical and historical aspects; both express a covenantal relationship with mutual expectation and promises; both serve traditionally in the accusation of Israel's covenant

unfaithfulness and are turned into an announcement of salvation by Hosea.¹ Yahweh wins back the adulterous wife (Hos 3) and adopts the orphan anew (Hos 14:4, 5).

The image of marital love is evoked by the nature similes following Hos 14:5. Several parallels connect Hos 14:6-8 with Canticles.² Already Hos 2:20-25 presents the renewed love relationship between Yahweh and Israel with the help of the imagery of nature. Thus we can conclude that after the adoption metaphor is recalled, the text additionally reminds one of the marriage metaphor.

¹It is instructive to see how these two images occur again in later books of the Old Testament. Jeremiah also switches between the image of sonship and that of marriage (Jer 2:20-25 [marriage], 29-30 [parent]; 3:1-10 [marriage], 19-20 [parent]). In a different way Ezekiel combines the two images. In chap. 16 the child is not a son but a daughter. This way Yahweh is depicted first as foster father and then as husband of the unfaithful person. For the coupling of images, see Alonso-Schökel, 115-17.

²Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 302; Hubbard, 230-32; A. Feuillet, "S'asseoir à l'ombre' de l'époux (Os 14, 8a et Cant 2, 3)," *RB* 78 (1971): 391-405; for Hos 2 also A. van Selms, "Hosea and Canticles," in *Studies on the Book of Hosea: Papers Read at the 7th Meeting Held at Stellenbosch University 1964*, OTWSA (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964-65), 85-89.

CHAPTER 5

THE “DEW” METAPHOR IN HOSEA 14:6 (ENG. 14:5)

Introduction

The next image for Yahweh is found in Hos 14:6.

'ehyeh kaṭṭal ʿyisrā'ēl.

I will be like the dew for Israel.

This sentence contains figurative language connecting two different semantic fields. The first is represented by the word *ṭal*, “dew,” a meteorological phenomenon. The second is established by the speaker, Yahweh, Israel's God. Both fields are connected by the particle *kē*, thus forming a simile.

Dew in Palestine

Summer Dew

There are two different kinds of dew in Palestine.¹ The summer dew develops during calm nights. Since Palestine is located on the east shore of the Mediterranean

¹See Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, vol. 1, *Jahreslauf und Tageslauf* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1928), 94-96, 516-17; followed by Paul Humbert, “La rosée tombe en Israël: A propos d'Ésaïe 26,19,” *ThZ* 13 (1957): 488; Kruger, “Relationship,” 244-45. See also H. Klein, “Das Klima Palästinas auf Grund der alten hebräischen Quellen,” *ZDPV* 37 (1914): 302-6; R. B. Y. Scott, “Meteorological Phenomenon and Terminology in the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 64 (1952): 21-22; Philippe Reymond, *L'eau, sa Vie, et sa Signification dans l'Ancien Testament*, VT Suppl. 6

Sea, the wind often blows from the land to the sea on summer mornings. But when the day gets hot the wind turns to the west and carries humidity from the Mediterranean into Palestine. This wind calms down in the cool late hours of the night before changing direction and blowing from the east. In the time of motionless air, conditions are perfect for the falling of dew.¹

In the night the temperature drops considerably. The difference between maximum and minimum temperatures on one day can be over 10°C, up to 18°C.² Cold air cannot hold as much moisture as warm air. When the air cools down it finally reaches the dew point, the point where it can no longer hold the water it carries. Because the water vapor needs some other material to begin the condensation process, it condenses to small drops on all surfaces exposed to the air. Especially under cool northerly wind conditions, copious dewfall can be expected.³

Additionally, in some places, especially on hilltops or in lower plains, clouds of mist lie on the surface until they evaporate in the morning sun.

(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 25-27; Thomas Chaplin, "Das Klima von Jerusalem," *ZDPV* 14 (1891): 110-12.

¹Klein, 316-17.

²Cf. Gen 31:40; Klein, 303, 312; Scott, 21; Angel González, "El Rocío del Cielo," *Estudios Bíblicos* 22 (1963): 112; Dalman, 1:91, 1:283.

³Klein, 322; González, 112.

Fall Dew (Drizzle)

Another kind of dew develops when the humid air from the west is blown uphill on the slopes of the mountain range of Palestine.¹ While the air rises it cools down and the vapor condenses into clouds of fog. These clouds cause drizzle to fall which the wind drives uphill, moistening everything it comes into contact with. This kind of dew or drizzle is more often experienced during the fall.

On rainy nights there cannot be any dew. Therefore, there is less dewfall during the winter.

Abundance of Dew

Dewfall can be heavy in Palestine,² bringing a considerable amount of water.³ Observations of dewfall revealed that precipitation of dew amounts, on a monthly

¹Klein, 303; González, 113; Dalman, 1:94-95.

²Klein, 304, reports (in March and June): “. . . Zelte so nass von Tau, als ob es die ganze Nacht geregnet hätte.” “. . . [Zelt] wie von Regen durchnäßt.” Dalman, 1:95 (in October and April): “Infolge solchen Taus [drizzle] lief Wasser von der Dachrinne.” “. . . Zeltdächer vom nächtlichen Tau völlig durchnäßt worden waren, als hätte es geregnet.” Ibid., 517 (in July): “Ich mußte den Schirm aufspannen.” Chaplin, 111: “. . . so naß sind, als ob es geregnet hätte.”

³According to B. Margalit, Judg 6:37-40 and a Ugaritic poem suggest that there has been “an ancient technique of water collection. . . . This technique involves exposing a highly absorbent material, such as wool-fleece, overnight during the summer months to collect the dewfall” and then wring out the water. Baruch Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT: Text, Translation, Commentary*, BZAW 182 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 366; cf. Reymond, 26. However, B. Otzen, “*tal*,” *TWAT*, 3:350; and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu*, AOAT 16 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1971), 100, interpret the Ugaritic passage in the sense of a rain magic. Also M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, “‘Wasser- und Tauschöpfen’ als Bezeichnung für Regenmagie in KTU 1, 19 II 1-3a,” *UF* 17 (1985): 95-98, however without explaining how the dew for the rain magic is scooped.

average, to three to four millimeters during April to September on the coastal plain and the western slopes of the mountain range. In the summer months there is dewfall on 20 to 30 nights per month with the maximum between June and August.¹ However, the actual dewfall is more abundant than meteorological observation reveals because it also depends on the type of surface of soil and leaves. "Dew forms not in accordance with the surface area which the plant occupies on the ground, but with the sum of surface areas of its leaves. . . . The total amount of dew-water yielded on plants during the entire dry period of 7 months would thus amount to 200 mm and more."²

Importance of Dew for Vegetation

Dew is important for the vegetation in Palestine.³ It is the only source of moisture during the rainless season from May to October. The dew moistens the soil, and some plants have especially shallow roots to profit from the dew water.⁴ Plants benefit from the dew even in cases when the dewdrops are only on the leaves and do not reach the ground before they evaporate during the morning. One reason is that less water evaporates from the leaves while the dew is on them.

¹M. Gilead and N. Rosenan, "Ten Years of Dew Observation in Israel," *IEJ* 3 (1953): 120-23. See also the figures in Michael Zohary, *Plant Life of Palestine: Israel and Jordan* (New York: Ronald Press, 1962), 32.

²D. Ashbel, "On the Importance of Dew in Palestine," *JPOS* 16 (1936): 319; followed by Kruger, "Relationship," 247; cf. Reymond, 26. For comparison: Annual rainfall at Jerusalem amounts to 650 mm according to Scott, 13. N. Rosenan, "One Hundred Years of Rainfall in Jerusalem: A Homotopic Series of Annual Amounts," *IEJ* 5 (1955): 137-53, reports ca. 550 mm.

³Cf. Dalman, 1:518-19; González, 114-15; Scott, 21.

⁴Kruger, "Relationship," 247.

In the fields, the moisture stays among the plants for several hours after sunrise. In shady places, the dew keeps till noon or even later. We can actually say that in the daily period of 24 hours only a few hours are dry, whereas during the rest of the hours of dewy days the plants remain moist, which reduces their transpiration to a minimum.¹

The second reason is that the leaves are able to take water into the system through their leaves.²

Accordingly, dew is considered to be a blessing for the land and its inhabitants (Deut 33:13).³ If dew is withheld there will be a disaster (Hag 1:10). Presence or absence of dew is mentioned in words of blessing (Gen 27:28; Deut 33:13, 28) or cursing (Gen 27:39; 2 Sam 1:21; 1 Kgs 17:1).⁴

The Dew Similes in the Book of Hosea

Hosea 6:4

The Text and Its Similes

In the book of Hosea the dew image occurs for the first time in Hos 6:4b.

*w^aḥasā kem ka^a nan-bōqer
w^akaṭṭal maškîm hōlēk.*

Your loyalty is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.

¹Ashbel, 319.

²Ibid., 320. Differently however Zohary, *Plant Life*, 32.

³However, also harmful dew is sometimes mentioned in the Talmud; see Klein, 305-6; Dalman, 1:313-14.

⁴Cf. Otzen, 346-47.

The dew image is part of a phrase that parallels two similes: cloud and dew. Both similes describe the *hesed*, “loyalty” or “covenant love” of Israel. These similes belong to Yahweh's reaction to Israel's decision to return to Yahweh, which is expressed in vss. 1-3.¹

In vs. 3b Israel also expresses her expectation with the help of similes taken from meteorological phenomena.

w^eyābô' kaggešem lāmû
*k^emalqôš yôreh 'āres.*²

He will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth.

Yahweh will come for them like the rain and like late spring showers. Additionally, the image of the morning (which often brings dew) is present. Yahweh's going out³ is compared with the certainty of the dawn (*k^ešahar nākôn*, vs. 3a). Thus the images of vs. 4b correspond to the images of vs. 3.

The Meaning of the Images in the Context

What is the meaning of the rain similes in vs. 3b? They have no explanation or *tertium comparationis*. But the context indicates that the images of rain and dew have

¹Probably part of a liturgy aiming at Yahweh's theophany and the people's restoration. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 148; Rudolph, *Hosea*, 134-35; Good, “Hosea 5:8-6:6,” 279-81.

²*yôreh* is a Hi of *yrh*, “water,” as in Hos 10:12; emendation is not necessary. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, 424-25. Daniel Grossberg, “Multiple Meaning: Part of a Compound Literary Device in the Hebrew Bible,” *East Asia Journal of Theology* 4 (1986): 84, assumes a double meaning of *yôreh*.

³Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 134; Andersen and Freedman, 422-23.

positive connotations, which is traditional, as we will see below. Moreover, the dawn is traditionally the time when Yahweh answers prayers, when He comes and helps His people.¹

The positive connotations are additionally supported by a heightening in the comparisons of vs. 3b. The showers at the end of the rainy season (*malqôš*) are valued most because of their importance for the crops.² Thus the people expect Yahweh's coming as a benefit and a blessing (*lāmi*).³

Wolff and others interpret the rain image of Hos 6:3 in the light of the Canaanite fertility cult. Israel reveals “naturmythologisches Denken, das vom Kanaanäertum infiziert ist.”⁴ The passage must be seen in the light of the Canaanite cult of the dying and returning fertility god.⁵

¹Cf. Joseph Ziegler, “Die Hilfe Gottes ‘am Morgen,’” in *Alttestamentliche Studien: Friedrich Nötscher zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, ed. H. Junker and J. Botterweck, BBB 1 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1950), 281-88.

²Cf. Dalman, 1:303.

³Cf. Rudolph, *Hosea*, 137.

⁴Wolff, *Hosea*, 151. Similarly Artur Weiser, *Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten, I: Die Propheten Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, ATD 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 57; Mays, 96; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 86; Edmond Jacob, Carl-A. Keller, and Samuel Amsler, *Osée, Joel, Abdias, Jonas, Amos*, Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament, vol. 11a (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982), 47-48; Kinet, *Ba'al und Jahweh*, 154.

⁵May, “Fertility Cult,” 73-85; Jacob, “L'Héritage cananéen,” 254-58.

However, in Hos 6:1-3 the people expect restoration, not a deity.¹ Moreover, this interpretation undervalues the figurative language. Images of nature are not necessarily a sign of Canaanite religion. The rain imagery can have full meaning, metaphorically referring to blessing and prosperity. It is not necessary to assume that it refers to natural rain or real fertility of plants, cattle and people. The text has no reference to the Canaanite cult.²

Hos 6:4 places the cloud and dew similes in parallel with one another. What is the meaning of the cloud image? Clouds can give shade during a hot summer and are a source of rain in autumn and winter.³ These are the most important qualities of clouds reflected in conventional language. Moreover, there is the connotation of height connected with clouds.⁴ Thus clouds are often used as a sign of Yahweh (Ps 36:5; Hi

¹May, "Fertility Cult," 75 and passim, identifies people and deity, which is not justified.

²Rudolph, *Hosea*, 138; Andersen and Freedman, 425; Ward, *Hosea*, 118; idem, "The Message of the Prophet Hosea," 395. Oswald Loretz, "Tod und Leben nach alt-orientalischer und kanaanäisch-biblischer Anschauung in Hos 6,1-3," *Biblische Notizen* 17 (1982): 41-42, compares Hos 6:1-3 with a rain magic in the Keret Epic of Ugarit and concludes: "Der fruchtbringende Regen und das Kommen Jahwes werden nur vergleichsweise miteinander in Verbindung gebracht. Dieses Bicolon wird deshalb nur noch als ein später Nachhall alter Baallyrik und -mythik zu begreifen sein." But cf. idem, *Ugarit*, 165. Wijngaards, 228-34, rejects cultic interpretations and explains according to treaty terminology: to kill means removing from kingship; raising to life means to reinstall the vassal. Labuschagne, 73, interprets the rain images like the dawn image in the sense of certainty.

³"W[olke]n sind in Palästina bedeutsam als Schattenspender im Sommer (Js.25.5) und Regenbringer in Herbst und Winter (1Kg18,44f. Ps147,8 Spr16,15 Hi37,11f. Prd11,3)." H. W. Hertzberg, "Wolke," *BHH*, 2181. Cf. E. F. Sutcliffe, "The Clouds as Water-Carriers in Hebrew Thought," *VT* 3 (1953): 99-103.

⁴Reymond, 29-30.

35:5) or His angels (Ps 18:11). They accompany a divine revelation and belong to the sanctuary.¹

But clouds can also bear negative connotations: They accompany thunder, storm and darkness and can be symbols of Yahweh's judgment.² They are sometimes a source of disappointment, especially at the end of the summer when the vegetation suffers from drought. Then morning clouds give hope of the eagerly expected rain. But such hopes are often disappointed, because they disappear or pass high above without bringing any dew or rain.³

Which aspect of the cloud image is selected by the author of Hos 6:4? And how can the reader decide which aspect to reflect upon? At first, the positive connotations of the natural images of vs. 3 determine how the cloud image of vs. 4 is received. The imagined moment is pleasant: a fresh morning with promising clouds. There is so far no indication that the clouds are employed in a negative sense. However, unlike the rain, a cloud is not yet the benefit itself. Clouds can be promising or

¹Divine revelation: Exod 19:9; 24:16-18; 34:5; Num 11:25; 12:5; Deut 4:11; 5:22; Ps 18:10-11. Sanctuary: Exod 40:34-37; Lev 16:2; Num 9:15-23; 10:11, 12, 34; 1 Kgs 8:10-11.

²Pss 18:13-14; 97:2; Jer 4:13; Dan 7:13; Zeph 1:15.

³Prov 25:14; Isa 5:6. Klein, 231: "Die in diesem Monat [Oct.] zwar zunehmende Bewölkung des Himmels braucht nicht immer Regen zu bedeuten." Ibid., 246: "Der Himmel ist in solchen Dürrezeiten nicht immer wolkenlos, vielmehr oft sogar voll schwerer Wolken, ohne dass auch nur ein einziger Tropfen zur Erde fällt." Cf. Dalman, 1:111-13.

disappointing.¹ Thus, the cloud image already brings up the question whether the people's *hesed* will hold what it promises.

The Dew Image

The dew image follows the cloud simile. The positive connotations of the imagery of vs. 3 lead naturally to an image of blessing. As we will see, this is a conventional image. If Israel's *hesed* is compared to dew, at first the audience thinks of something positive. Compared with cloud and dew, the people's *hesed* is seen as something valuable, as the condition for life, because dew and rain make life possible. The images propose that turning to Yahweh is the way to a prosperous life.

It is not before the words “rising up early and going” (*maškim hōlēk*) that the negative sense of the dew image becomes apparent. At the end of the last image the aspect of transitoriness is introduced. After the positive context and tradition gave rise to a positive expectation, the focus is changed, the sense is altered and turned to the opposite. The freshness and life-giving humidity of the dew will disappear soon when the day becomes hot. Motivated by the people's usage of the dawn and rain simile (Hos 6:3) and taking the traditional positive image of rain (and dew) as a starting point, Hosea turns the images around into negative ones. The intended reversal of metaphors is why Hosea adds the explanation *maškim hōlēk*, indicating how he wants the simile to be understood.²

¹Dalman, 1:516. A promise of blessing is the sense of the simile in Prov 16:15.

²Hosea's negative similes correspond to the positive images of vs. 3b (Good, “Hosea 5:8-6:6,” 280-81) in the reference to the morning, in the usage of precipitation,

The new aspect of transitoriness introduced by the dew image has its effect on the first image. The clouds also “go.” While the first image leaves it to the imagination of the listener what aspect is meant, the second simile explicitly mentions the *tertium comparationis*.

The phrase *maškim hōlēk* also influences the connotations of the “morning.” In vs. 3b “dawn” has a positive connotation: things are changing for the better. The morning cloud in vs. 4 is still promising. But finally, the evanescence of (morning) dew indicates a situation of disappointed expectations. As the day becomes hot, clouds and dew disappear and things change for the worse.

Why is it that the negative connotation does not come before the end of the dew image? This device causes a moment of surprise and disappointment in the audience. In this manner the prophet expresses his feelings about the instability of Israel's faithfulness. He wants his people to be shocked and alarmed about their situation. The language effects what it speaks of: disappointment and anger.

Turning an image around emphasizes the contrast of old and new. The novelty of the view is felt much more strongly. The reversal of the dew metaphor gains its strength from the opposition of a traditional view. The natural facts about dew and rain are not of primary importance here but their traditional usage in the language. In other words, the metaphor of evanescence gains its strength not from the fact that dew is an important means of watering the vegetation during the summer—this is equally as true as

and in the fact that they are presented in a parallelism. We can speak of a reversal here. Cf. Catlett, 28-29.

the fact that dew evaporates, as well as many other features of dew—but that traditionally dew is used in language as an image for a blessing.

The reversal of a metaphor or simile is one of the strongest means of opposing the statement of another person. The argument of the other person is beaten on its own ground because the image is already established in the actual communication. It is even beaten with the help of the opponent because the metaphor presupposes his usage and thus requires his cooperation.¹

Parallelism of the Cloud and Dew Images

Hosea uses two similes in parallel: clouds and dew. The two similes direct the eyes from the sky (clouds) down to the earth (dew). With this pair, sky and soil, a wholeness is circumscribed, suggesting a whole experience.

As in vs. 3, there are several elements of heightening in the two similes of vs. 4b.² Formally, the cloud simile has the addition *bōqer*, “morning.” The dew simile has the explanation *maškim hōlēk*, “that goes away early.” The dew image is not only more explicit concerning its meaning of transitoriness,³ but because its explanation contains a

¹Most commentators assume that in Hos 6:1-3 the people are speaking. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 148; Andersen and Freedman, 417; Hubbard, 124; Jacob, *Osée*, 47. This can be confirmed by Hosea's reversal of images as a strong argument to contradict the people's expectation. Jeremias, *Hosea*, 84, assumes that the prophet interprets the opinion of the people in his own words. Cf. Harper, 283. Stuart, 107, speaks of a genuine song of Hosea.

²For the aspect of heightening in biblical parallelism, see Alter, 10-26, 62-84.

³Andersen and Freedman, 427-28, take the *holek* as modifying both similes and not belonging only to the second one. But this results in a more complicated structure of the verse and is not necessary.

verbal form, it is also more vivid. The simile does not refer to an attribute of dew as an abstract truth, but it refers to a happening, it tells a story, it recalls an experience. This is one reason for the effectiveness of the simile.

But there is also a heightening with regard to the contents. This heightening goes in a negative direction. While the clouds at least sometimes will stay and bring rain, the dew evaporates in any case.¹ Thus, the second image is more unequivocal.

Background of the Negative Dew Image

Traditionally, the dew is an image of blessing. Was it Hosea who developed the negative dew image for the first time? In the Old Testament it is only Hosea who uses the dew image in a negative sense.² And unlike in many other passages, the *tertium comparationis* of the dew image is not understood but explicitly given.

However, there is reason to assume that the negative sense of the dew image is also already conventional. In an Akkadian “Fire Incantation” we find the dew image in a negative sense similar to Hos 6:4:

Scatter like fog, rise like dew,
like smoke ascend to the heaven of Anu.³

¹Differently Andersen and Freedman, 427: “Only one phenomenon, in fact, is meant: the early morning ground fog, a ‘cloud’ associated with the formation of dew.” Similarly Wolff, *Hosea*, 152. Scott, 24, interprets ‘*ānān*’ as “ground-fog, morning mist,” not the rain cloud: ‘*āb*’. But ‘*ānān*’ can be any type of cloud.

²Except for Daniel; see below p. 247.

³W. G. Lambert, “Fire Incantations,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 33 (1970): 40. Cf. Hillers, 182.

We have here not only the same figurative use of dew but also a cluster of images including cloud (fog) and smoke as in Hos 13:3.¹ This makes it likely that a negative tradition of the figurative use of dew in the sense of transitoriness existed apart from the positive dew image.

However, unlike the negative usage of the dew image of the Akkadian incantation, there is an additional notion of *disappointment* in Hosea's simile. Disappointment presupposes the positive connotations of dew and rain as established in the context (vs. 3). If the clouds did not promise rain, if dew was not beneficial, there would be no disappointment when they disappear.

Hosea 13:3

The Text and Its Similes

In Hos 13:3 the similes of clouds and dew occur the second time.

*lākēn yihyū ka^a nan-bōqer
w^b kaṭtal maškīm hōlēk^c
k^e mōš y^f sō^g ēr miggōren
ūk^e āšān mē^a rubbāh.*

Therefore they will be like a morning cloud
and like the dew that goes early away

¹Y. Avishur, "The Ghost-expelling Incantation from Ugarit," *UF* 13 (1981): 13-25, presents an incantation from Ugarit with a cluster of four similes describing how an evil spirit should depart. The first simile is "like smoke from a chimney."

²Weiser, *Kleine Propheten*, 94; Robinson and Horst, 48, and others delete the first two similes as a gloss because they already appear in Hos 6:4. But this is not justified and destroys the heightening of the cluster. For clusters of similes, see Jonas C. Greenfield, "The 'Cluster' in Biblical Poetry," *Maarav* 5-6 (1990): 159-68.

and like chaff that is swirled¹ from the threshing floor
and like smoke from a window.

If we compare this text with the first occurrence of the dew image in Hos 6:4, we find identical words for the cloud and the dew simile. However, there are important differences.

The Meaning of the Images in the Context

The context of 13:1-3 does not establish the positive images of rain and dawn. Rather, it strongly suggests that the images belong to a word of judgment. Vs. 3 is the conclusion (*lākēn*) of a statement concerning Israel's sin. Therefore it is to be expected that a negative connotation is meant. Additionally, the reader of the book of Hosea is reminded of the shock of Hos 6:4. He still remembers the drastic change of feeling and expectation in the usage of language and imagery and the negative outcome of these images.

In Hos 13:3 the images of cloud and dew are extended by another pair of images: chaff and smoke. Chaff is a conventional image for uselessness and worthlessness.² As usual in the Hebrew language, the image is not the simple object but a happening, an experience. In most cases, in one way or another, this image mentions not only the chaff but also the wind that blows the chaff away.³ One sees the chaff flying

¹For the emendation to Pual, see Andersen and Freedman, 633; Wolff, *Hosea*, 219; Paul N. Franklyn, "Prophetic Cursing of Apostasy: The Text, Forms, and Traditions of Hosea 13" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986), 36.

²For examples of the same image in Akkadian texts, see Hillers, 183.

³Ps 1:4 *tidd'penmî rū'h*, "the wind blows away"; Ps 35:5; Isa 17:13; Ps 83:14 (this text has *qaš*, "stubble") *lipnê rū'h*, "before the wind"; Job 21:18 *g'nābattū sūpāh*,

away in the air, never to be seen again. Zeph 2:2 is interesting here: A day is worth almost nothing, it is like the disappearing chaff. The image is again the chaff flying through the air (‘*br*, “fly by.”)¹ In all these cases a verdict is expressed, or the *result* of a judgment.

In Hos 13:3, however, the threshing floor is mentioned as the place where the farmer throws the grain and the chaff into the wind in order to separate them and to cause the chaff to fly away. This distinguishes Hos 13:3 from other texts where a threshing floor is not in view. Here we have an *actual judgment scene*.² Thus, the image of the chaff has, like all images, more than one aspect, and the user is free to select what suits his purpose. The phrasing of the expression, the details mentioned, and the context are means to indicate what aspect is to be considered.

A fourth image is added: smoke from the window. The image of smoke is also a conventional one used for transitoriness (Isa 51:6; Pss 37:20; 68:3; 102:4). We find the image stereotyped in Akkadian incantations, for example: “May my evil be

“the storm steals”; Isa 29:5 *mōš* ‘*ōbēr*, “disappearing chaff”; Jer 13:24 *k’qaš*- ‘*ōbēr* *l’rū’ḥ midbār*, “like stubble that disappears by the wind of the desert.”

¹In Theodotion the image is paralleled by the dew: “like the chaff flying away and the dew disappearing early.” Cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Micha-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, KAT 13, 3 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975), 272. Two of Hosea's four images are used, but in the reverse order. The idea of disappearance is stressed and heightened: dew disappears silently, without any trace, without being noticed. In Hos 13:3, however, the heightened idea is the valuelessness—dew is of value, chaff is not.

²The same is true for Isa 41:15, 16, where the threshing floor is not mentioned, but the whole picture of the threshing and winnowing activity is drawn.

dissipated, like smoke may it rise to heaven.”¹ However, it is only Hosea who mentions the window as the opening where the smoke escapes the house.² The stress is not so much on the *resulting* disappearance in the sky but on the *process* to get rid of the annoying smoke in the house.

The Meaning of the Cluster of Images

Hos 13:3 presents two pairs of images. What is the effect of the cluster of four images? Since we have already considered the meaning of the first pair in connection with Hos 6:4, we need to investigate the second pair here and will then consider the meaning of the whole cluster.

The smoke picture heightens the previous image in three aspects. First, the smoke is something more desired to be driven away than chaff since it causes sore eyes and a cough if it remains in the house (Prov 10:26; Isa 65:5). The window is mentioned in Hos 13:3 because it evokes the image of smoke in the house. Second, the imagery is moved from the threshing floor located somewhere outside the village to the very living place, the house.³ Thus the expression moves the event close to the listener. Again the mentioning of the window proves to be meaningful. Third, similar to clouds, smoke has

¹Michael C. Astour, “Two Ugaritic Serpent Charms,” *JNES* 27 (1968): 24, who brings further examples. Cf. Wilfred G. E. Watson, “Reflexes of Akkadian Incantations in Hosea,” *VT* 34 (1984): 242. See also Hillers, 182, and the Akkadian incantation referred to above, p. 220.

²For the “opening,” see Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, vol. 7, *Das Haus, Hühnerzucht, Taubenzucht, Bienenzucht* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1942), 74-75.

³Although the point of view is still outside of the house, keeping a certain distance.

a connection with the appearance of Yahweh (i.e., Isa 6:4; Joel 3:3) and especially of His wrath (for example, Pss 74:1; 80:5; cf. Gen 19:28). But smoke has the connotation of the wrath itself, not only indicating the effect of wrath like the image of chaff. Thus the figures of the second pair of images, threshing floor and smoke, confirm each other in the sense of judgment and amplify the imagination of Yahweh's wrath.

Considering the whole cluster of four images, we realize that the second pair of images has an effect on the first. The image of chaff and especially smoke is a reminder of the fact that the clouds also have a connection to divine revelation and judgment.¹ Since the image of clouds is open to quite different connotations, the reference to judgment is not a matter of course right from the beginning.

There are several elements of amplification in the cluster of four images: First, there is a constant movement from the far distance (sky) to the very home of a person (house). Second, there is a heightening from feeling sorry about the disappearance of cloud and dew to a wish for the disappearance of worthless chaff and annoying smoke.

In contrast to Hos 6:4, this time the dew image together with the other similes is employed not for Israel's loyalty (*hsd*) but for Israel herself.² The evanescence of Israel is the consequence of her fickle loyalty towards Yahweh through idolatry and Baalistic worship (13:1-2).

¹See above, page 216.

²Rudolph, *Hosea*, 243, interprets vs. 3 as referring to the cast bull-images of vs. 2, which will vanish. But the images are part of a curse of Israel. Cf. Franklyn, 123-24.

The Communicative Effects of the Cluster

Hosea uses four similes taken from different experiences which aim at the same assertion. He could have used one image, and could have elaborated it as he does with the marriage metaphor. An elaborated image stays longer in the mind of the audience and gives enough time to develop the appropriate *feelings*. Feelings are much slower than thoughts, need some time to be raised, and are not so easily changed. Elaborated images have their effect by their emotional thrust. The rapid change of images, however, signals a certain transitoriness already in the form of language. Moreover, four different images address the *mind* and are used to convince by their intellectual power. One argument follows the other.¹

While figurative speech reveals a certain view of reality, it hides other aspects at the same time. The figures conceal that a judgment is always a terrible experience. War and destruction, pain and death are not mentioned. It seems as if the judgment is a very simple thing, going almost by itself. Moreover, the four images suggest that Israel's disaster will not be the result of an enemy but an outcome according to the nature of the unfaithful nation. As clouds and dew, as chaff (blown by the wind) and smoke disappear by themselves, Israel's disaster is programmed in its nature. This concept of judgment is intellectual and refers to the sapiential "Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang."

The development of the speaker's point of view taken with his words in this passage is also of interest. While there could still be some regretting of the vanishing of clouds and dew, finally the fact is welcomed that chaff and smoke disappear. The

¹The assumption that Hosea is a prophet of strong emotions needs at least to be supplemented by the fact that he is also a prophet of strong rational arguments; e.g., Hosea's stress on "knowledge of God." Cf. Wolff, "Wissen um Gott."

speaker is in a spectator's position, distant enough not to be touched by the announced judgment. That is no contradiction to the above-mentioned movement from distant (sky) to near (house).¹ While the judgment moves closer to the human living situation, it is not the speaker who is affected.

In other passages Hosea presents drastic visions of destruction (e.g., Hos 14:1). But this time he does not paint a picture of horror and disaster. He does not want to move the people by strong emotions but wants them to make a conscious choice. Confronting his listeners with one image after another, he tries to bring them "to reason." The distance in the four images invites the listeners to take the same outside stand and look at their situation from God's perspective. At the same time the mental distance is the first step towards a distance to the reproached praxis.

The Old Testament Background of the Dew Image

Interpreting the dew images in the book of Hosea outside of chap. 14, we have found signs that this image was conventional. If we now turn to the Old Testament background of the image, this assumption will be confirmed.

Dew (*tal*) is mentioned thirty-five times in the Old Testament, twelve times in a figurative manner. We find several different though interrelated connotations.

Blessing

Because dew is important for the growth of the vegetation, it can express the blessing of abundant harvest (Gen 27:28, 39) and more general well-being and

¹Note, however, that the image has not the perspective inside the house.

prosperity. Since both belong together, it is difficult to say if the reference to dew means the blessing with crops (literally) or blessing in general (figuratively).¹ Deut 32:2 compares pleasant speech with the blessing of dew and rain (cf. also Job 29:22-23). The king's grace and favor are like dew (Prov 19:12). The harmony between brothers is a blessing like abundant dew (Ps 133:3).

In all the cases of figurative usage with the meaning of blessing no point of comparison is mentioned. We do not find a phrase "as dew is a blessing for the land" or anything similar. It is understood and must have been conventional that dew can figure as a symbol for blessing. We found the same to be the background of the image in Hos 6:4.

Miracle

For the ancient people the phenomenon of dew was not a result of natural causes but a divine gift that secured the fertility of the land.² While in the Canaanite

¹Gen 27:28, 39; Deut 33:13, 28; Zach 8:12, in a general sense in Job 29:19; withheld blessing is the sense of Hag 1:10 and probably 2 Sam 1:21; cf. González, 124. For the old poetic parallelism of Gen 27:28, 39 *tal haššāmayim* and *šmannē hā'āreš*, "the dew of heaven" and "the oil of the earth," and its parallels in the 'nt epic of Ugarit, see Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "Der bildliche Gebrauch von *šmn* im Ugaritischen und Hebräischen," *ZAW* 82 (1970): 209-16. The rain is metaphorically called "fat, oil." This metaphor emphasizes the *result* of abundant rain, i.e., the rich harvest brought forth by the earth. For the dew, which is associated with the heaven, no metaphor is used. The emphasis is on the *origin* of this precipitation. Obviously the dew recommended itself more for the origin because of its miraculous character. The parallelism is comprehensive. It not only includes the two main sources of irrigation, rain in the winter and dew in the summer, but also the notion of source and effect.

²Humbert, "La rosée tombe," 488; Otzen, 345-46; Dalman, 1:313.

religion Baal was the source of rain and dew, in Israel it was Yahweh who can give it and can withhold it.¹

In many references to dew there is a moment of amazement. Although observation of the meteorological circumstances of dewfall led to a knowledge of when dew was to be expected, it was nevertheless something miraculous. Therefore, dew is one example of the amazing works of creation that demonstrate Yahweh's wisdom (Prov 3:20; Job 38:28). The connotation of dew being a divine miraculous creation is present when dew is mentioned in connection with the story of the gift of manna (Exod 16:13, 14; Num 11:9). The manna seems to fall together with the dew or seems almost like an effect of the fertile dew.²

As a divine gift, dew has the connotation of not being open to human influence. This connotation leads Gideon to request that the dew should fall only on the fleece and not on the surrounding area, and vice versa, because this would certainly be a sign of divine action (Judg 6:37-40). Nobody can restrict dew to a certain area. Consequently, in figurative speech dew can express the idea of something inexplicable or of divine origin. In this manner the origin of rain and dew is employed as an image in Mic 5:6. The meaning of the image is explained in the immediate context. The dew comes "from Yahweh," dew and rain come in such a way that no human can bring it about or restrict it.³

¹1 Kgs 17:1; Hag 1:10; cf. Reymond, 40-41, 48.

²Humbert, "La rosée tombe," 490; González, 134.

³Cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 4: Micha*, BKAT 14, 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 129.

The stress here is not so much on the one who can make dew but on human beings who cannot influence it.¹

A simile in the speech of Hushai yields the same sense: As the dew falls on every exposed surface and there is no way to prevent it from falling on a certain spot, so David and his men cannot do anything when Israel falls upon him under Absalom's guidance (2 Sam 17:12). There might be the additional connotation of abundance, which, however, is already expressed in the image of the "sand of the sea" in vs. 11.

The dew image in the difficult text Ps 110:3² also seems to express—possibly besides the great number³—the divine and miraculous origin of the king's young men and army.⁴

The meaning of the image in Isa 18:4 is uncertain. Possible explanations are the fresh morning mist, Yahweh's unaffected observation or high clouds that disappoint because they bring no rain.⁵

¹González, 130-31, gives a different explanation: The dew symbolizes not the benefit that Israel represents for the nations, but the great number of Israel, that enables Israel to dominate the nations. Thus the tension between vs. 6 and vs. 7 is removed. But the explanation at the end of vs. 6 does not support this suggestion.

²For the different interpretations of this dew image, see below p. 243.

³Artur Weiser, *Die Psalmen: Zweiter Teil: Psalm 61-150*, 7th ed., ATD 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 477.

⁴Hans Walter Wolff, "Psalm 110, 1-4," in *Herr, tue meine Lippen auf: Eine Predigthilfe*, ed. Georg Eichholz, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Wuppertal-Barmen: Emil Müller, 1961), 317; Franz Delitzsch Nötscher, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen*, *Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament*, pt. 4, vol. 1, 2 (Leipzig: Dörfling und Franke, 1874), 204.

⁵Morning mist: Scott, 21; similarly Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 691; Klein, 302-3; cf. Sir 43:12; Exod 16:13-14; Yahweh's observation: Reymond, 31; high clouds: Otto

Dew as a Military Image?

F. J. Helfmeyer¹ proposes that a military connotation of the dew image existed. He explains the dew image in Isa 26:19, “dew of light is your dew,” as referring to the young men available for military service. He finds support in Ps 110:3, where the image of dew may be understood as referring to the young men following the king, and in 2 Sam 17:12, which speaks about a military action.² However, in both texts the military aspect is established by the context. Nothing justifies assuming that this aspect is already part of the dew image.

Helfmeyer also takes Mic 5:6 as referring to the military power of Israel among the nations. This would make the image of dew parallel to the image of the lion in vs. 7. But, as mentioned above, the meaning of the image comes from the connotation of dew as being not under human but only under divine control: dew comes “from Yahweh,” rain does not “wait for man.” This sense is explicitly given in the last line of vs. 6. On

Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 13-39*, ATD 18 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 78.

¹Franz Josef Helfmeyer, “‘Deine Toten - meine Leichen’: Heilszusage und Annahme in Jes 26,19,” in *Bausteine Biblischer Theologie: Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern*, ed. H.-J. Fabry, BBB 50 (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1977), 255-57.

²In IQM 12, 9-10 the soldiers of the sons of the light are compared with dew and rain that cover the earth. Cf. B. Jongeling, *Le Rouleau de la Guerre des Manuscrits de Qumrân*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica*, no. 4 (Assen: van Gorcum, 1962), 285; Otzen, 348.

the other side, the political and military consequences of the regained strength of Jacob's remnant are pictured in Mic 5:7 by the image of the lion. The explanation of the image is again presented in the last part of the verse: no one can resist the young lion or Jacob's remnant, respectively. Although vss. 6 and 7 are formally parallel, they do not have the same message and thus military power is not part of the dew image.¹

Helfmeyer² also sees a dew image with military connotations in Hos 13:3. The young warriors, Israel's sons, vanish, as Hos 13:13 explains. But the young men are not in the foreground of Hos 13:3. Moreover, Hos 13:13 is not the explanation of vs. 3, but is another image for the incredible foolishness of Israel which does not realize what the time demands and therefore cannot live.³ Hos 14:1 explains that Israel will vanish by destruction of the city and killing of all the inhabitants including the newborn and unborn. The destruction will not be the result of the lack of a young generation.

Helfmeyer suggests that the miracle of Judg 6:37-40 is a sign looking ahead to the selection of the men partaking in the fight against the Midianites (Judg 7:2-8). Dew, according to this view, would function as a symbol of Gideon's army. But the miracle does not suggest that Yahweh will select only a certain number of men. In the second night the dew is not further restricted to an even smaller spot but spread to the whole surface except the fleece. The connotation here is that humans have no influence on the

¹Additionally, in Mic 5:6 the dew is parallel to rain. If Helfmeyer were right in his assumption that the dew is an image for the young warriors of restored Israel, then the same must be true for the rain (*rebibim*). But this also is not attested in the Old Testament.

²Helfmeyer, "Deine Toten," 257.

³Wolff, *Hosea*, 296; Mays, 180; Hubbard, 220-21; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 166.

dewfall. This indeed looks ahead to the upcoming battle and the victory which will be Yahweh's alone (Judg 7:2).¹

It seems far-fetched to interpret the dew in Deut 33:28 and 2 Sam 1:21 as Israel's army. Helfmeyer includes these texts only reluctantly in his considerations. Corn, wine, and dew in Deut 33:28 indicate blessing. 2 Sam 1:21 is part of an imprecation upon the mountains of Gilboa, in which withholding of dew and rain means the withheld blessing of fertility.² Considering the evidence, we can conclude that the assumption that dew had a connotation of young warriors is not justified unless this meaning is explicitly given by other indications in the text.

Dew's Soft and Almost Hidden Effectiveness?

It has been suggested to interpret some images of dew in the sense of its soft, almost hidden effectiveness. González finds this aspect used in 2 Sam 17:12: The army of Absalom will fall upon David and his men unnoticed like the dew.³ But the military context rules out a "soft" interpretation. González gives another possible example in Isa 18:4: Yahweh remains silent but nevertheless is active in a hidden way.⁴

H. Grün-Rath interprets the image of dew in Hos 14:6 in the sense of the hidden effectiveness of dew. The transitoriness of dew is obvious, but it does its positive work

¹Cf. H. W. Hertzberg, *Die Bücher Josua, Richter, Ruth*, 2nd ed., ATD 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 194-95.

²Otzen, 347.

³González, 133, 135.

⁴Ibid., 135, also 137.

secretly.¹ But it seems that the interpretation of a concealed effectiveness of dew is dictated by the experience of dew in European countries where dew is less abundant. Dewfall in Palestine can be bountiful and its effect is obvious.²

Dew in Connection with Creation and Resurrection

Isa 26:19

Isa 26:19 has the dew image in connection with (re)birth or resurrection.

Your dead shall live, my bodies shall rise.
O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy.
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead spirits.³

The meaning of this dew image has been widely discussed. Helfmeyer understands the sentence in Isa 26:19, “dew of the lights is your dew,” to be a confirmation⁴ of the promise “your dead shall live, my bodies shall rise.” This means it *repeats* figuratively what has been said before. But it seems that the sentence *kî tal 'ôrôt tallekâ* functions *as a reason* for the expectation of resurrection. The reason is that the dew is

¹Grün-Rath, 63: “Jetzt wird auf die Wirkung des Taus aufmerksam gemacht, die nicht so offensichtlich ist wie seine Flüchtigkeit, also gewissermaßen im Verborgenen geschieht.” Again, p. 65: “Der Tau jedoch ist, wie in Hos 6,4 und 13,3 zu lesen ist, flüchtig. Schon bald verdunstet er. Seine Wirkung bleibt unscheinbar.”

²For heavy dewfall that drenches and soaks the surface, see above p. 210.

³For the text, see Humbert, “La rosée tombe,” 491; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 985. Cf. the emendation of Günther Schwarz, “‘...Tau der Lichter...’? Eine Emendation,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 280-81.

⁴Helfmeyer, “Deine Toten,” 258: “erneute Zusage” and “Interpretation.”

of a special kind. Commentators have often recognized this function of the sentence.¹

But what kind of dew is meant?²

It seems that we have here a tradition of a miraculous and reviving dew. What is the background of this tradition? A few observations may lead to an explanation which seems worthy of consideration, although it is far from being conclusive.

Isa 26:19 does not place any other phenomenon beside, or in parallel to, the dew. This is remarkable because if dew occurs and the emphasis is on fertility or in a figurative sense on any other blessing, we normally also have in the context mention of rain in its different forms (*mātār*: Deut 32:2; 2 Sam 1:21; 1 Kgs 17:1; Job 38:28; *r^ebîbîm*: Mic 5:6; *gešem* and *malqôš*: Hos 6:3, 4), waters of the ground (Deut 33:13, 28; Job 29:19; Prov 3:20), or the earth as the receiver and profiteer of the irrigation (Gen

¹For example Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 996; Schwarz, 280; Marie-Louise Henry, *Glaubenskrise und Glaubensbewahrung in den Dichtungen der Jesajaapokalypse*, BWANT 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), 107; Otzen, 350-51; Kaiser, *Jesaja 13-39*, 175; Reymond, 215-16.

²González, 137, thinks of dewdrops that glisten in the morning sun and interprets dew as a symbol of life. Humbert, "La rosée tombe," 492, interprets the dew of lights as shooting stars. Jean de Savignac, "Essay d'interprétation du Psaume CX à l'aide de la littérature Égyptienne," in *Oudtestamentische Studiën*, no. 9, ed. P. A. H. de Boer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 107-35; idem, "La rosée solaire de l'ancienne Égypte," *La Nouvelle Clio* 6 (1954): 345-53, refers to an Egyptian concept of dew as a life-giving means. Loretz, *Ugarit*, 163, considers Ugaritic influence: "Wenn sowohl in Jes 26,19 als auch in Jes 18,4 anstelle von 'wr 'Licht' ein 'r 'Honigtau' angesetzt wird, ergibt sich die Möglichkeit eines Anschlusses an die ugaritische Gestalt *pdry bt ar* 'das Mädchen des Honig-Taus.'" John Day, "*tal 'ôrôt* in Isaiah 26:19," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 265-69, sees the dew of dawn that causes rebirth of Israel or the king. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 997, refers to an Arabic tradition that the dew has a reviving effect.

27:28, 39; Prov 19:12; Hag 1:10; Zech 8:12).¹ It seems as if the positive effects of Isa 26:19 are not the result of normal irrigation which could also be brought about by other means of watering like rain or water from the ground. It is the dew, to be precise, a special dew of the lights, that has the marvelous effect.

Another feature is the word “dust” (*’āpār*) in the context of dew in Isa 26:19. Dust has the connotation of deadly drought. The summer heat turns the soil into dust so much that plant life becomes impossible until the ground receives water in the form of dew or artificial irrigation or when the rainy season begins. Dust can be a symbol of death. This seems to be the case in Isa 26:19, since the first line speaks of the dead and the second line of the ones lying in the dust.

Further, Isa 26:19 connects dew and light. Of course, dew is naturally found in the early morning light. But why is this fact mentioned? In connection with a figurative use of dew, the morning also occurs in Ps 110:3 and Hos 6:2-3.

There are striking parallels in the creation story in Gen 2:5-7 to these features of the special dew image in Isa 26:19. The earth is depicted as dry without rain as in the summer, so that there is no life on earth. But an *’ēd* comes up from the earth and moistens the surface of the soil. And then Yahweh forms man from the dust of the earth. Could it be that Isa 26:19 and other texts allude to a topos of dew of creation?

¹If we exclude the passages which refer to dew mainly as a meteorological phenomenon—in the context of the manna: Exod 16:13, 14; Num 11:9; the miracle of Gideon's fleece: Judg 6:37-40; the madness of Nebuchadnezzar: Dan 4:12, 20, 22, 30; 5:21—there remain the following texts which have dew without mentioning any other meteorological phenomenon or the land: Isa 26:19; Ps 110:3; Hos 14:6; perhaps Ps 133:3.

Excursus on the meaning of 'ēd

The meaning of the Hebrew word 'ēd is dubious. It occurs only in Gen 2:6 and perhaps with a suffix in Job 36:27 ('ēdō). In Job the context suggests a meaning of "mist," which is also attested in the oldest translations of Job, the Targumim and the LXX. In Gen 2:6 the Targumim have "cloud, mist,"¹ but the LXX, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate have "spring."

The etymology of the word is not yet clarified. W. F. Albright suggested an association with Sumerian/Akkadian *id*, "river."² E. A. Speiser refers to Akkadian *edū*, "flood, waves."³ The majority of scholars today seem to prefer Albright's proposal. Whether its meaning is taken to be "river" or "high flood," in any case a considerable amount of water from under the ground soaks the surface of a certain area. D. T. Tsumura interprets the situation in such a way that the flood from the subterranean

¹For a discussion, see Sutcliffe, 100-101.

²William F. Albright, "The Babylonian Matter in the Predeuteronomic Primeval History (JE) in Gen. 1-11," *JBL* 58 (1939): 102-3.

³Ephraim A. Speiser, "'ēd in the Story of Creation," *BASOR* 140 (1955): 9-11; Otto Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel*, *BZAW* 78 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1962), 102-6. For the etymology, see Magne Sæbø, "Die hebräischen Nomina 'ed und 'ēd - zwei sumerisch-akkadische Fremdwörter?" *Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 24 (1970): 130-41; David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 94-116; Maximilian Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology* (London: Luzac, 1962), 13; E. J. van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3: A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis Applied to the Story of the Garden of Eden*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1989), 148-50.

ocean inundates the land—but not the whole earth—in an uncontrolled manner so that plants could not grow.¹ Many others hold similar views.

In any case these suggestions pose contextual problems.² Vs. 5 reports that there was no vegetation because of a lack of rain. This suggests a deadly dry world. What sense does it make to have vs. 6 saying that the surface of the earth was partly flooded with water from the ground? Why did this water not allow some sort of plant life? And if *'ēd* is a river according to the Sumerian origin of the word, why is it clearly distinguished from the rivers which water the garden of Eden (vss. 10-14)? And how does the verb *'lh* go together with the supposed meaning “river” since mist and clouds can go up, but rivers go down?³ The LXX translates *pēgē*, “spring,” and this seems to be the understanding of Tsumura and many other scholars,⁴ but it is not supported by the assumed etymology. The supposed Sumerian origin of the word indicates “river.” And if the word comes from the Akkadian *'edū* it means “flood, waves” which can go up;

¹Tsumura, 164.

²Cf. James Barr, “Limitations of Etymology as a Lexicographical Instrument in Biblical Hebrew,” in *Transactions of the Philological Society 1983* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 49-51.

³This question, asked by Cyrus H. Gordon, *Homer and Bible: The Origins and Character of East Mediterranean Literature* (Ventnor, NJ: Ventnor, 1967), 26, is left unanswered by Tsumura.

⁴Cf. also Hans-Peter Müller, “Gott und die Götter in den Anfängen der biblischen Religion: Zur Vorgeschichte des Monotheismus,” in *Monotheismus im Alten Israel und seiner Umwelt*, ed. O. Keel, *Biblische Beiträge* 14 (Fribourg: Verlag Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1980): 105; Christoph Dohmen, *Schöpfung und Tod: Die Entfaltung theologischer und anthropologischer Konzeptionen in Gen 2/3*, *Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge*, no. 17 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 51-55.

however, not from the earth but from the ocean or from a river or some other form of water.

Realizing the contextual problems of the suggested translation “a flood went up” many scholars assume that Gen 2:6 belongs to a different source or tradition and has no appropriate context in Gen 2.¹

M. Dahood refers to the month *ga-šum*, “the month of heavy rain,” which in a newer calendar has the name NI.DU.² Dahood associates this name with the Semitic *i-du* and identifies it with the Hebrew word *'ēd*. Thus *'ēd* would mean “rain cloud.”³

Recently M. Görg has also proposed an etymology from an old Semitic word *'ijadl' idl' ēd* with the meaning “dew,” “mist.” He comes to this conclusion from an

¹Cf. for example Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift: Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Genesis 1,1-2,4a und 2,4b-3,24*, 2nd ed., WMANT 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1967), 197; Claus Westermann, *Genesis: Genesis 1-11*, BKAT 1, 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1974), 273; Werner Fuss, *Die sogenannte Paradieserzählung: Aufbau, Herkunft und theologische Bedeutung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1968), 66-70. But see Manfred Görg, “Eine heterogene Überlieferung in Gen 2,6?” *Biblische Notizen* 31 (1986): 19-24. Ernst Kutsch also argues for the homogeneity in “Die Paradieserzählung Gen 2-3 und ihr Verfasser,” in *Studien zum Pentateuch: Walter Kornfeld zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Georg Braulick (Freiburg, Vienna: Herder, 1977), 9-24.

²Mitchell Dahood, “Eblaite *i-du* and Hebrew *'ēd*, ‘Rain Cloud,’” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 534-38.

³He is followed by Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 155.

Egyptian word that he interprets as a loan word from the Semitic which preserved this meaning.¹ His interpretation allows Gen 2:6 to be kept in its context.

J. Barr points out that the question of the meaning of words cannot be answered satisfactorily by etymology alone.² The context helps to determine the meaning of the word. Considering the passage, he asks if it is not, after all, a mist that went up. "It only damped the surface, perhaps thus making the earth pliable for God to fashion man out of the soil."³ Therefore, the context suggests an interpretation which is the traditional one already manifest in the Targumim and which has found support by the suggestions of Dahood and Görg.⁴ It seems reasonable to stay with this interpretation of the word *'ēd* until further clarification is reached. This concludes the excursus on the meaning of *'ēd*.

The meaning of Gen 2:6 is then that the dry surface of the earth was moistened by a mist or dew, making it possible to form man from the dust as a potter forms his

¹Görg, "Eine heterogene Überlieferung?" 22-23. See the criticism by Tsumura, 94, and Görg's response in Manfred Görg, "Noch einmal zu *'ēd* (Gen 2,6)," *Biblische Notizen* 50 (1989): 9-10.

²Barr, "Limitations," 51.

³Ibid.

⁴Thus already Karl Budde, *Die Biblische Paradiesesgeschichte*, BZAW 60 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1932), 6-10; cf. P. E. S. Thompson, "The Yahwist Creation Story," *VT* 21 (1971): 203, n. 1: "Clearly the process of evaporation and condensation are involved here." Ellenbogen, 13, states that the verb *hašqeh* "refers to a thorough soaking or drenching (in addition to the more common meaning of 'giving to drink'), and as an agricultural term it is usually rendered by 'to water, to irrigate,' a process which cannot be effected by the application of vapor or mist." This opinion fails to take into consideration the heavy dewfall possible in Palestine which can drench the surface like a rain.

artifacts from clay.¹ A very rare word refers to this mist or dew. This could indicate that the tradition of this “pre-creation” dew is a very old one. It could also be, more likely, that the author of Gen 2 wanted to indicate that it was not the normal dew (*tal*) but a miraculous, divine dew that existed at the beginning of Yahweh's creation work.²

For a possible topos of dew of creation we may also refer to the praise of God's wisdom manifesting itself in creation. Job 38:28 and Prov 3:19-20 mention dew as one admirable work of creation.

If Isa 26:19 alludes to the divine miraculous dew³ of the creation tradition, it expresses the expectation that the dew that falls on the ones who lie in the dust⁴ is a

¹For the widespread motif of creation of man out of clay, cf. Job 10:8, 9; 33:6; Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:7; Atraḥasis I, 189-219, 231-34; Gilgamesh-Epos I, II 33-35; Enuma Elish VI, 1-16. See the collection of texts in Othmar Keel and Max Küchler, *Synoptische Texte aus der Genesis*, part 1, *Texte*, Biblische Beiträge 8, 1 (Fribourg: Verlag Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1971), 12-20. See also Victor Maag, “Sumerische und babylonische Mythen von der Erschaffung des Menschen,” *Asiatische Studien* 8 (1954): 85-106, esp. 91-94; Ernst Haag, *Der Mensch am Anfang: Die alttestamentliche Paradiesvorstellung nach Gn 2-3*, TThSt 24 (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag: 1970), 14-17, 20; Hamilton, 156-58; Ruth Amiran, “Myths of Creation of Man and the Jericho Statues,” *BASOR* 157 (1962): 23-25; Ferdinand Herrmann, *Symbolik in den Religionen der Naturvölker*, Symbolik der Religionen, no. 9 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1961), 128-30; Barbara C. Sproul, *Primal Myths Creating the World* (London: Rider, 1979), esp. 77-122; G. Pettinato, *Das altorientalische Menschenbild und die sumerischen und akkadischen Schöpfungsmythen*, AHAW.PH, 1971 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1971), 39-44.

²Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story” (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1978), 52-53, parallels the *'ēd* in Gen 2:6 with the *rūḥ* in Gen 1:2, another divine element before the start of creation.

³Humbert, “La rosée tombe,” 493, recognizes the miraculous and eschatological character of the dew, however, without reference to Gen 2:3; similarly Pryce, 298.

⁴“Your dew” in the sense of “the dew that falls upon you.” Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 995; Helfmeyer, “Deine Toten,” 257.

special dew, the dew that was involved when Yahweh created mankind out of the dust the first time.

For the fact that the dew is called “dew of lights” we may refer to light as the first act of creation in Gen 1:3 and the topos of morning light as the beginning of the whole world (Job 38:[7],12; Amos 5:8). Yahweh's acts of salvation belong to the morning. “Das Heilseingreifen am Morgen bedeutet nach Ps 46,3ff. eine Restitution der Schöpfung, die von Chaosmächten bedroht ist. Hi 38,4-15 ist wohl so zu verstehen, daß nicht nur der urzeitliche Morgen, sondern jeder Morgen eine Erneuerung der Schöpfung bedeutet.”¹ In Egypt it is the rising of the sun that restores the creation: “Jeder Sonnenaufgang ist eine Wiederholung der Weltschöpfung.”² Since dew is a phenomenon closely associated with the morning (Exod 16:13; Judg 6:37-40; Hos 6:4; 13:3; also Ps 110:3 and Wis 11:23), we may assume that the creation story mentioning the dew suggests the creation work to be accomplished in the morning. In any case, it is Yahweh's creative power, referred to by the “creation dew,” that justifies the expectation that the dead will come to life.

¹Sverre Aalen, “’ôr,” *TWAT*, 1:173; cf. idem, *Die Begriffe “Licht” und “Finsternis” im Alten Testament, im Spätjudentum und im Rabbinismus* (Oslo: I Kommissjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1951), 32-43, 62; Ziegler, 281-88; Bernd Janowski, *Rettungsgewißheit und Epiphanie des Heils: Das Motiv der Hilfe Gottes “am Morgen” im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, vol. 1, *Alter Orient*, WMANT 59 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989).

²Aalen, “’ôr,” 163.

Ps 110:3

We now turn to Ps 110:3: “From the womb of dawn for you the dew of your youth.”¹ This psalm belongs to the time of the Davidic monarchy and is older than Hosea.² Ps 110:3 is another text where dew is not in connection with rain or other water. Nor is the earth mentioned which profits from the dew. But the text has the dawn, which is related to light. What is the meaning of dew here? I summarize the extensive debate on this text in five main proposals.

1. The dew is an image for the blessing that the king will bring to his people.³ But it seems that the reference to dew and morning light refers more to the source of the king's strength than to the results of his ruling.

2. The dew is an image for the divine origin of the king.⁴ This image does not necessarily exclude the former.⁵ It is seen as an indicator for a mythological background of Ps 110.⁶

¹The LXX lacks *lk tl*, which could have been omitted because of the difficulty to translate. For a discussion of the difficult text, see Cooke, 219-22.

²Cooke, 204; recently Th. Booij, “Psalm CX: ‘Rule in the Midst of Your Foes!’” *VT* 41 (1991): 406. Stefan Schreiner, “Psalm CX und die Investitur des Hohenpriesters,” *VT* 27 (1977): 216-21, assumes a postexilic revision of older material.

³Kraus, 934, understands the dew as the blessing, the “erquickende Lebenskraft . . . , die der ‘göttliche König’ mit sich bringt.” R. Tournay, “Le Psaume CX,” *RB* 67 (1960): 17, who dates Ps 110 in the time after the Exile, takes the reference to dew as a symbol of the blessings of the messianic era.

⁴For example: Cooke, 223; J. Coppens, “La Portée Messianique du Psaume CX,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 32 (1956): 11-12; idem, “Les Parallèles du Psautier avec les Textes de Ras-Shamra-Ougarit,” *Le Muséon* 59 (1946): 129-31; Booij, 399-401; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral*

3. Others have gone further and have interpreted the dew as a reference to the mythological birth of the king from a goddess of dawn.¹ This view has been objected to especially for the reason that *mišhar* / *šahar* is masculine and the Ugaritic *šhr* is also a male god.²

4. A. Caquot regards the reference to dew as a symbol of the king's offspring: "Le roi reçoit de Yahwé la rosée matinale de génération, c'est-à-dire la rosée qui assure la croissance de son arbre, de sa descendance: manière imagée de dire que Yahwé assure au roi une postérité."³

Legitimation of the Israelite Kings, Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament series 8 (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 264; Schlißke, 100.

¹Besides the blessing Kraus, 933, underlines the (metaphoric) divine origin of the king. Cf. also Cooke, 223-24.

²Rudolf Kilian, "Der 'Tau' in Ps 110,3 - ein Mißverständnis?" *ZAW* 102 (1990): 417-19, considers that *tal* could be the pleasant smell that distinguished the Egyptian gods. Indeed, already H. Grapow mentions that dew was a common metaphor for a pleasant smell in Egypt (Grapow, *Die bildlichen Ausdrücke*, 39-40.), but this dew metaphor is not found in Israel.

¹Geo Widengren, "Psalm 110 und das sakrale Königtum in Israel," in *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung*, ed. Peter H. A. Neumann, WdF 192 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 194-95; J. W. McKay, "Helel and the Dawn-Goddess: A Re-examination of the Myth in Isaiah XIV 12-15," *VT* 20 (1970): 458; Otzen, 351.

²Cf. Mettinger, 264; Cooke, 223-24; Karl-Heinz Bernhard, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Psalmenexegese*, VT Suppl. 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), 235.

³A. Caquot, "Remarques sur le Psaume CX," *Semitica* 6 (1956): 44.

5. Dew refers to the miraculous availability of the king's young men in his army.¹ This interpretation has the advantage to interpret vs. 3 in line with the motif of warfare which is present throughout the psalm.

It seems safe to say that Ps 110:3 speaks about the fact that the king himself or more likely the king's young warriors² come into being by Yahweh's creation.³ And we have, as in Isa 26:19, the concept of morning light, this time expressed by *mišhar*.⁴ Thus the reference to dew in Ps 110:3 could be another example of the topos of the dew of the creation morning. It would serve here to indicate that the young warriors of the king are miraculously available in the same manner as Yahweh created man in the beginning. In this case the image of dew retains its connotation of blessing, since the young men are a blessing for the king.

Ps 133:3

Ps 133:3 has been mentioned as an example of the fact that dew is used as a metaphor for divine blessing. But we must return to this text here because it may also be

¹Nötscher, 204; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary 21 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 86; similarly Wolff, "Psalm 110:1-4," 316-17; Weiser, *Psalmen*, 475, 477.

²Many scholars read with LXX, Peshitta and many Hebrew manuscripts *y^oliditika* "I have begotten you" instead of *yaldutēka*. For example, Kraus, 927; Coppens, "La Portée," 10. But this seems to avoid the rare *yaldūt* and could be stimulated by Ps 2:7, a Psalm with many other parallels to Ps 110. It also introduces the divine "T" while in vss. 2 and 4 the psalmist is speaking. See Tournay, 12; Wolff, "Ps 110,1-4," 316; Allen, 81.

³Cf. the paternity of Yahweh for rain and dew in Job 38:28-29.

⁴*mišhar* is *hapax legomenon*. Kraus, 927, reads *mēreḥem šaḥar* eliminating the *m* as dittography.

an example for the topos of the divine dew on creation morning. The anointing of Aaron seems to hark back to the beginning of the priestly service (Exod 29:7; Lev 8:12).¹ The second comparison, “dew of Mount Hermon,”² may also refer to a beginning, the beginning of life when Yahweh created man. *ḥayyim*³ is an important word in Gen 2:7. Hermon together with Mount Lebanon is often a symbol of the ideal area, Paradise.⁴ They also symbolize the divine dwelling place.⁵ Therefore we can understand the “Hermon” as a symbol for Yahweh, His creation of man, and Paradise. The “dew of Hermon” would then be the miraculous dew of Yahweh.

There might also be an allusion to the story of the brothers Cain and Abel. Shortly after the first humans left Paradise, they were unable to live well together. Seen in this light, Ps 133 refers to Zion as the place where Yahweh by His blessing will make true what was in His mind when He created humanity and elected Israel.

¹Cf. Allen, 214-15.

²The dew of Mount Hermon was abundant. George A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 25th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 65: “The dews of Syrian nights are excessive; on many mornings it looks as if there had been heavy rain.”

³The word is omitted in 11QPsa, but should be retained because of the paronomasia with *’ahim*, vs. 1. Cf. Allen, 213.

⁴Ezek 28:13, 14 situates Eden on the Holy Mountain.

⁵Some scholars have pointed to the fact that it is geographically impossible to have the dew of Mount Hermon falling upon Mount Zion. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 571-72, suggested *’iyyôn* instead of *ṣiyyôn*, “Berge von Ijjon”; followed by W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, vol. 2 (London: Soc. for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), 536. Kraus, 1067, emends *ṣiyyôn* to *ṣiyyāh*, “desert.” But “Hermon” has symbolic meaning.

Dew as a Negative Image?

Cant 5:2

Questions have been raised whether dew is mentioned in a positive or negative sense in Cant 5:2. The lover comes to the door of his beloved and asks to be let in. As a reason for his request he says: "My head is wet with dew." Some have interpreted this statement as a complaint about the unpleasant situation of having to be outside the house during the night.¹ But this interpretation overlooks the fact that elsewhere in Canticles the lovers like to stay in the open overnight (Cant 7:12, possibly also 1:16, 17). We also know that during the summer Palestinians regularly sleep outside the house on the roof or in the garden, despite possible abundant dewfall.² We also have to take into consideration that in Canticles the city and the houses form a certain contrast to the open field or the gardens. The city is not depicted as being helpful to the lovers.³ The open country is the ideal place. Consequently, the dew indicates the seductive freshness of love in the same way as the open country does elsewhere in Canticles (1:8, 16, 17; 2:8-13; 7:12, 13). It might even be a reminder of Paradise, as has been discussed above.

Dan 4 and 5

So far only positive connotations of the dew image have been mentioned. Dan 4:12-30; 5:21 mentions dew five times in describing the circumstances of the Babylonian

¹Wilhelm Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth-Das Hohe Lied-Die Klagelieder*, KAT 17, 1-3 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 156, quotes from a German love song, but this is from a completely different climatic and cultural context. Cf. also González, 132.

²Dalman, 1:93, 1:474: One sleeps even with the face covered.

³The beloved strays in the city, meeting hostile guards, Cant 3:2, 3; 5:6, 7.

king in abnormal human conditions. To be soaked by dew during the night is seen as a situation not fitting for human beings. This passage is the only place (except in the book of Hosea) where dew, in itself not metaphorically used here, is depicted as unpleasant.

The Dew Image in Hosea 14:6

Suggested Canaanite Background

Now we return to the dew simile in Hos 14:6. Several propositions have been put forward to interpret this simile.

It has been assumed that the dew image has its roots in the Baalistic religion. "People believed Baal to have control over the dew and the rain." Hosea "borrows" the dew image to combat Canaanite ideas and "employs a Canaanite mould for casting his Yahwistic ideas in."¹ He deliberately chooses the image to make clear that it is not Baal but Yahweh who gives dew, rain, and fertility.²

There is no doubt that in the Ugaritic mythology Baal is the provider of precipitation. The texts mention "his (your) rain," "his (your) voice in the clouds," "his (your) winds," and "his (your) lightnings."³ However, the texts from Ugarit speak of the *power* of Baal over these meteorological phenomena. This is literal language employed in a mythological context.

¹Kruger, "Relationship," 249; cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, xviii; already Worden, 296-97.

²Cf. also Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 63; Wolff, *Hosea*, xviii.

³*CTA* 4:V:68-71=*ANET*, 133; *CTA* 4:VII:29=*ANET*, 135; *CTA* 5:V:6-11=*ANET*, 139. For a discussion of relevant texts, see Kinet, *Ba'al und Jahweh*, 13-27; Kruger, "Relationship," 250-54.

Dew seems to be represented by the daughters of Baal *pdry*, *tlly* and possibly *'arsy*. The language here is again literal, because the daughters of Baal are (mythologically) considered to be real beings.¹

Hosea, on the other hand, uses dew as a simile for Yahweh. That is figurative language. To explain Hos 14:6 in the sense of the Baal mythology is to understand the dew literally: "He [Yahweh] will then be the only Dispenser of the dew."² As far as I know, there is no text from Ugarit that likens Baal to rain or any other form of precipitation.

Proceeding from the great importance of dew for vegetation and agricultural life in Palestine, Kruger interprets the dew image in the sense of dependence.³ Yahweh is the source of life for Israel. However, we have not found a trace of evidence that the notion of dependence was a traditional sense of the dew image in the literature of the Old Testament. If Hosea wanted to employ the image of dew in that sense, he would have needed to make this explicit, for example, by adding a phrase like: "as the plants depend on dew."

¹If the daughters of Baal whose names are connected with dew were an analogy of the dew simile in Hos 14:6, we would have a change from a female to a male deity. For an explanation of the names and attributes of these goddesses, see de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, 81-83; Kruger, "Relationship," 254-55.

²Kruger, "Relationship," 256. Probably not satisfied with this interpretation, Kruger adds: "Moreover, his dealings with his people will be like the dew." But he does not explain what "like the dew" means. Guided by the assumed Canaanite background, he is concerned with the question where the (literal) dew comes from. Cf. Reymond, 42, note 3: "Osée affirme que Yahweh assume lui-même les fonctions de donneur de rosée."

³Kruger, "Relationship," 243, 248; cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 305: "lebensnotwendig."

Kruger's interpretation in the sense of dependence is dictated by his assumption that Hosea uses the dew image in a polemical sense against Baal worship. "Whereas they have in the past expected their salvation from the foreign gods (chapter 2) or the foreign powers (5:13) the new Israel will be totally directed to Yahweh like a plant to the dew."¹ While in the background there might still be the polemic against Israel's "lovers" who she thought provided her with bread and water, wool and flax, oil and drink (2:7-10), Hos 14:6 does not stress the divine "I."² Israel has renounced the idols (14:4). Now the Baals are out of focus. Why should Hosea insist on the accepted fact that without Yahweh there can be no life? Therefore, although it is true that Israel depends on Yahweh as the plants depend on dew, this is not what the dew image aims to express.

The context of the dew image precludes a polemical notion. The following verses depict the abundant growth of vegetation, which is the result of the dew. But the same growth would be possible if the dew were given by Baal or any other deity. If this passage were polemical, we would expect a kind of comparison in the sense that the "dew" of Yahweh is more ample or more effective.

According to Kruger, the meaning of the dew simile "should be sought in the natural and cultural surroundings of his [Hosea's] audience."³ Kruger assumes that figurative speech grows out of natural and cultural realities. He does not recognize that it first of all grows out of language conventions.

¹Kruger, "Relationship," 248.

²In Hos 2:10, *'ānōkī nātattī lāh*, "I gave her," the "I" is stressed. In Hos 14:6 *'ehyeh*, "I will be," the "I" is not stressed.

³Kruger, "Relationship," 240.

The Dew in Hosea 14:6 as an Image for Eschatological Blessing

Blessing as Traditional Background

The dew is an image of relationship. It is always employed in the sense that it has an effect for someone.¹ In Hos 6:3 the people expect that the dawn (also dew, both daily) and the rainy season (annual) are something reliable, a phenomenon one can count on. Hosea reverses the expectation. In Hos 6:4 and 13:3 dew has the connotation of disappointment. Disappointment is also a category of relationship. In Hos 14:6 the dew simile contains the explicit reference that the dew is “for Israel” (*lʾyisrāʾēl*). Again we have the relationship expressed. This makes dew a fitting image for the covenant.

The dew simile in Hos 14:6 mentions no *tertium comparationis*, but the positive sense of the simile is evident. The image is part of the speech of Yahweh that announces the restoration of Israel which Yahweh will accomplish (vss. 5-8). It stresses the invaluable good that Yahweh is for Israel. Thus the context guides us to understand the dew simile in the traditional sense of blessing.²

New Features of the Dew Image

Although Hosea uses the dew image in the traditional sense of blessing, he does not use it as a cliché. In several aspects he deviates from the language traditions. This is

¹Schwarz, 281, is correct when he insists: “Bei diesem Tau geht es um ein ‘Sein-wofür’, nicht um ein ‘Kommen-woher.’”

²Mays, 188, “Yahweh is the one who confers every blessing on his people . . . but note—it is the people who flourish, not the crops, for it is the people on whom the God Yahweh concentrates. His salvation-history is the cultivation of a church, not a plantation.” Cf. also Jeremias, *Hosea*, 172; Laetsch, 109; Stuart, 215.

indicated by the particle *kē*. The simile is used in order to direct the audience's attention to the new features of the dew image. Therefore, we need to grasp in what special way Hosea employs the conventional image in order to comprehend the meaning of his metaphor. Three important features of his metaphor must be considered here.

First, the dew simile implies that Israel is like a plant that profits from the dew. The conventional metaphor¹ of a plant for Israel is already used in Hos 10:1. Thus the simile in Hos 14:6 merges two conventional metaphors: dew in the sense of blessing and a plant as a metaphor for Israel. This combination revives the traditional dew metaphor. Conventional metaphors can easily become clichés. But in Hos 14:6 dew is not only a traditional figure for an abstract blessing, but it functions as a key word to evoke a dynamic scene, a happening. If plants receive dew they sprout and bloom. The stimulating force of the combination of the metaphors results in the vivid image in vss. 6b-8, where the abundant growth of Israel is described.²

Second, the dew image stands for Yahweh. In Hos 6:4 the negative dew image was employed for Israel's covenant love. In Hos 13:3 the prophet compares Israel herself with the dew. This intensification continues in Hos 14:6. Now it is Yahweh—only here in the Old Testament—who is compared with the dew.³

¹For example Num 24:6; 2 Sam 7:10; Ps 80:9-17; Isa 5:7; 27:6; 42:10; Jer 2:21; 12:2; 24:6; 32:41; Amos 9:15.

²Dalman, 1:313, followed by Aalen, *Die Begriffe "Licht" und "Finsternis,"* 55, interprets Hos 14:6-8 as the description of the spring plant life.

³Whether the Aramaic personal name from Elephantine *yhwʾtl* is derived from *tl* or rather from Aramaic *sl*, "shade," is not certain. Cf. Otzen, 351; H. Bauer, "Die hebräischen Eigennamen als sprachliche Erkenntnisquelle," *ZAW* 48 (1930): 76, 80.

When Israel was compared with clouds, dew, chaff, and smoke (Hos 13:3) the role of Israel was a passive one. Something happens with dew; it is absorbed by the sun. The chaff and the smoke are blown away by the wind. However, in Hos 14:6, where Yahweh is compared with dew, the dew is active, it does something, it moistens the surface and makes the vegetation grow.¹

Hosea previously used negative similes to express Yahweh's *activity*, i.e., the judgment.² Likewise, in the positive dew image an *active* role is underlined: Israel does not receive the dew as a gift; she is subject to the dew, has an experience with the dew. Again, the simile is not static but dynamic, it is a happening.

Third, we have seen that Hos 6:4 turned the conventional positive image of dew into a negative one. In Hos 14:6 the positive sense of the dew image is another reversal. While in Hos 13:3 Israel was compared with the dew in the sense of transitoriness, Yahweh is now compared with dew in the sense of blessing. This reversal has two aspects: the change from Israel to Yahweh and the change from negative to positive meaning. The term “dew” is the common hub around which the reversal turns. This is possible because the figurative usage of dew can employ opposite aspects of this phenomenon.

Concerning Yahweh, Hosea uses the image of dew in order to demonstrate that Yahweh is “God and not man” (Hos 11:9). “Contrasting components of the meaning of

¹In Hos 14:5 the prophet used verbal metaphors for Yahweh in order to announce what Yahweh will do to His people. The dew simile is formally different, but also expresses Yahweh's action.

²For example Hos 5:12, “pus,” Hos 5:14 and 13:7, “lion.”

tal have been used to highlight the distinction between the nation and Yahweh while retaining a connection between the two.”¹

Concerning Israel, there is the contrast of nonexistence and new life. The images of Hos 13:3 portray a situation of no-future. Comparing Israel with cloud, dew, chaff, and smoke makes Israel almost nonexistent. Hosea and his listeners, being part of this history, are unable to think of their own nonbeing. Figurative language is needed to express it and to find a way of rationalizing the unthinkable. Her history becomes an episode without continuation, not worthy to be considered.²

But in Hos 14:6 Israel has a bright future. This future does not result from the nation's characteristics but from Yahweh's nurturing care. The contrast indicates the miracle and the completeness of the new beginning.

The announcement of Hos 14:6 surpasses the expectation of the people in Hos 6:3. There they compared Yahweh's *coming* with precious rain; now *He Himself* is compared to dew.³

The Meaning of the Dew Simile

Dew of creation

In the Old Testament and in the Ugaritic mythological texts, precipitation is mostly mentioned in groups or parallels. It is noteworthy that Hos 14:6 is one of the few

¹Catlett, 113.

²This message is also expressed in the name of his third child “Lo-ammi.” Some other passages go in the same direction. Yahweh kills, Yahweh as a beast, etc.

³There is a tension between the judgment messages and the salvation predictions throughout the book. The tension must not be dissolved by reducing the seriousness of the judgment. Cf. von Rad, *Theologie*, 155-56.

texts in which dew is not paralleled by rain or other forms of precipitation or irrigation. Above¹ I proposed that these texts may display a tradition of the miraculous dew of creation.² Already G. Dalman has pointed out that dew “hat etwas Geheimnisvolles und Lebenschaffendes.”³ It is possible that the motif of dew of creation stands behind Hos 14:6.⁴ If Ps 110:3, a psalm from the time of the early monarchy of Jerusalem,⁵ refers to the same tradition, we can assume that it was not new in the time of Hosea.

Paradise

The dew image in Hos 14:6 opens the description of a paradisiac situation of Israel.⁶ If the image employs a tradition of creation dew, which seems well possible, the

¹See p. 234.

²John Day, “A Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation: The Dependence of Isaiah XXVI.13-XXVII.11 on Hosea XIII.4-XIV.10 (Eng. 9) and Its Relevance to Some Theories of the Redaction of the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse,’” *JThS* 31 (1980): 312-13, also sees a connection between these texts. He supposes that Isa 26-27 is an interpretation of Hos 13-14. Thus the dew image in Isa 26:19 would be dependent on the dew simile in Hos 14:6. In both cases the dew causes the national restoration, gives new life. He includes also Ps 110:3, a text that he considers to be behind the prophetic passages. Cf. also idem, “*tal ’ôrôt* in Isaiah 26:19,” 265-69.

³Dalman, 1:313; cf. Humbert, “La rosée tombe,” 493.

⁴For another reference to the creation tradition in the book of Hosea, see Michael DeRoche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” *VT* 31 (1981): 400-409.

⁵Kraus, 229-30.

⁶Cf. Kruger, “Relationship,” 242; idem, “Yahweh's Generous Love,” 41; Izak Cornelius, “Paradise Motifs in the ‘Eschatology’ of the Minor Prophets and the Iconography of the Ancient Near East: The Concepts of Fertility, Water, Trees and ‘Tierfrieden’ and Gen 2-3,” *JNWSL* 14 (1988): 45; S. Herrmann, 116-18.

reference to Paradise would be even stronger.¹ In any case, the dew image indicates that Yahweh in His grace is ready to begin a new creation. This time mankind is not only placed in the garden of Eden but is himself (metaphorically) the garden with all the luxurious vegetation. This means that Paradise is back, never to be lost again. Hosea in his dew image, together with the description of paradisiacal plant life (cf. Hos 2:23-24), expresses a comprehensive eschatological hope,² a metaphorical vision of the new world.³ Israel is seen as a new creation, abundantly blessed and free of any danger of falling back into apostasy.

G. von Rad has pointed out that Hos 14:6-8 does not refer to Israel's history, although this was an important aspect in the book of Hosea from chap. 9 on.⁴ Israel's judgment grows out of the course of her history. But the new existence of Israel does not result from history but is an act of Yahweh's salvation,⁵ a completely new beginning,

¹According to Heinrich Gross, *Die Idee des Ewigen und Allgemeinen Weltfriedens im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, TThSt 7 (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1956), 87, also the eschatological passage Hos 2:20 refers to a "Motiv des paradiesischen Urzustandes" in Gen 2:19-20.

²Cf. Humbert, "La rosée tombe," 493; Coppens, "La Portée," 11; Keel, *Deine Blicke*, 67.

³Köckert, 29: "Gott fängt wieder mit dem Anfang an."

⁴Von Rad, *Theologie*, 157; cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 308; Kruger, "Relationship," 242.

⁵Cf. Gerhard von Rad, "Das theologische Problem des alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TB 8 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1958), 140-42. In the Old Testament the creation is not an independent theme but is seen together with Yahweh's acts of salvation.

a new creation.¹ Therefore it is expressed in images of nature.² It results only from Yahweh's decision to heal and to love.³

Royal image

If the dew simile of Hos 14:6 belongs to the same tradition as Ps 110:3, we have to consider the possibility that this simile has connotations of kingship. In Ps 110:3 the dew motif is used in connection with the enthronement of the king. Moreover, W. Brueggemann has studied the texts that speak of "being raised from dust to power, a formula which makes best sense if it is understood as an enthronement formula."⁴ Death and dust symbolize removal from the throne; resurrection and "being raised from the dust" means enthronement (Gen 2:7; 1 Sam 2:6-8; 1 Kgs 16:2-3; Ps 113:7). "The creation formula, supported by 1 Sam 2:8b, makes the connection between kingship and creation."⁵ In the same manner, the motif of raising from the dust in Isa 26:19 refers to

¹Interestingly enough, also in Hos 9:10, 13 the election of Israel and its beginning are depicted with the help of vegetation similes.

²For S. Herrmann, 117, followed by Franz Hecht, *Eschatologie und Ritus bei den 'Reformpropheten': Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Pretoria Theological Studies 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 91, the images of "naturhafter Fruchtbarkeit" are the reason to deny the Hoseanic origin of this passage. But Hosea does not refer to fertility in general but to the creation and Paradise.

³Wolff, *Hosea*, 308, explains the reference to nature in Hos 14:6-8 thus: "Das erklärt sich am besten daher, daß sich ihm [Hosea] die Sprache alter Liebeslieder aufdrängt." It seems, however, that the similarity between Hos 14 and the love songs of Canticles results from the fact that both refer to creation and Paradise.

⁴Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 4. Brueggemann finds support for his thesis in Wijngaards, 231-34.

⁵Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," 12.

the enthronement of a king.¹ This means that two important parallels of the dew image in Hos 14:6 have connotations of kingship.

We have seen that Hosea connects the traditional dew image with the image of a plant employed for Israel which also has royal connotations. In connection with the promise of the Davidic kingship we find the passage: "I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them (*n^e'ta 'tîw*), that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more" (2 Sam 7:10). This promise is taken up in connection with the renewal of the Davidic kingship (Amos 9:11) in Amos 9:15. And in Ps 80:18, after an elaborated image of Israel the vine, we find a prayer for the king.² This evidence affirms that the dew image of Hos 14:6 has connotations of kingship.

¹Ibid., 11-13. He is followed by Nicolas Wyatt, "Interpreting the Creation and Fall Story in Genesis 2-3," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 14-15. Cf. also Engnell, "'Knowledge' and 'Life,'" 111-12. However, he assumes a cultic background based on the mythology of the divine king. But in the Old Testament any mythological background of the king motif is repressed and the motif is used figuratively.

²For the discussion of the date of this psalm, see Kraus, 720-22.

CHAPTER 6

THE “TREE” METAPHOR IN HOSEA 14:9 (ENG. 14:8)

Introduction

The fourth image for Yahweh in Hos 14 is the tree simile in vs. 9.

*ʿnī kibrôš ra ʿanān
mimmennī perykā nimšāʾ*

I am like a luxuriant *bʿrôš*;
from me your fruit is found.

The speaker of these lines compares himself to a tree.¹

The text has the terms *bʿrôš*, *ra ʿanān*, and *pʿrî*, which establish the semantic field of a living tree. There are four important details that further qualify the concept used. First, the text speaks of a *bʿrôš*; the species of the tree is explicitly given. We will have to determine what species of tree is meant and what connotations are connected with this kind of tree.

Second, the text has the word *ra ʿanān*.² The image is that of a living, green, luxuriant tree. It is not thought of as a tree trunk or a beam of timber, which could also

¹For the question whether Israel or Yahweh is the speaker, see below.

²Cf. D. Winton Thomas, “Some Observations on the Hebrew Word *ra ʿanan*,” in *Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner*, VT Suppl. 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 387-97; Peter W. Coxon, “The Great Tree of Daniel 4,” in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, ed. James D. Martin and Philip R. Davies, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 42 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 97.

be the meaning of the word *b^erôš*.¹ The tree is not considered under the aspect of its value for building purposes.²

Third, the fact that the tree is thought of in terms of its impression upon, or its benefit for, humanity is of no negligible significance. The tree is not depicted for its own sake; neither its growth nor its destruction, its rooting in the ground or its rustling of leaves is mentioned. Rather, the dialogue of vs. 9 suggests that one is to understand the tree in its meaning for the speaker's audience. This is indicated by the mentioning of *your* fruit and is already prepared for by the dew image of vs. 6, to which the tree image refers back.³ The dew simile has the addition *l'yiśrā'el*, "for Israel." This addition is not repeated later on but it is implicit in vs. 9.⁴ Thus we may understand the text in this sense: I am a luxuriant *b^erôš* tree *for you*.

Fourth, the simile speaks of fruit. Although it is not explicitly said, the text suggests that the fruit of the tree is meant.

The semantic field of the tree is connected with a second semantic field, namely that of personal relationship. It is constituted by the person of the speaker with the bold "I am" (*ʾani*), the addressed person (suffix *kā*), and the phrase "from me" (*mimmennī*). The speaker expresses the conviction that he or she is of special importance for the addressee. The speaker compares *himself* to the tree. In connection with the benefit

¹Cf. e.g., Isa 60:13; Cant 1:17, where the *b^erôš* or *b^erôt* is depicted as a log or beam of timber.

²This fact makes the interpretation of Laetsch, 110, unlikely: "the cypress, an evergreen noted for the durability of its wood, practically immune against decay."

³On the structure of the passage, see p. 51.

⁴Cf. Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 177.

that the tree provides for others, we must conclude that the comparison is presented to the audience with boldness.

The two semantic fields create the tension which is typical of metaphoric language.¹ The particle *kē* connects both semantic fields. We are dealing here with a simile.

The *b^eroš* Tree

The simile mentions the species *b^eroš*. What species is it? What is the significance of this species in a tree image? We will first try to clarify the identity of the *b^eroš*.

The Hebrew term *b^eroš* occurs twenty-one times in the Hebrew Old Testament. In twelve cases the word refers to the wood as material for artifacts or construction purposes.² The wood of the *b^eroš* tree was highly valued; eight times it is mentioned together with the famous cedar of Lebanon.³ The *b^eroš* tree must have been a tall tree that yielded timber of useful size. It also must have grown on the Lebanon mountains, because timber of *b^eroš* is mentioned together with Solomon's request for timber of cedar

¹These two semantic fields could be understood literally only if the text were a parable like Judg 9:8-15. But nothing justifies such an assumption.

²Building material: 1 Kgs 5:22, 24; 6:15, 34; 9:11; 2 Chr 2:7; 3:5; also Isa 60:13; metaphorically Cant 1:17; shipbuilding Ezek 27:5; musical instruments 2 Sam 6:5; weapons Nah 2:4.

³1 Kgs 5:22, 24; 6:15; 9:11; 2 Chr 2:7; Isa 60:13; Cant 1:17 [*b^erôtim*]; Ezek 27:5.

addressed to King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 5:22, 24; 9:11; 2 Chr 2:7).¹ It seems that the *b^erôš* tree was not native to Palestine and that timber of this kind had to be imported.

In Akkadian sources we find *burāšū* mentioned as a source of incense² and aromatics.³ The wood or resin of the *burāšū* tree was used in incantations.⁴

Nine occurrences of the word *b^erôš* refer to a green living tree (2 Kgs 19:23/Isa 37:24; Ps 104:17; Isa 14:8; 41:19; 55:13; Ezek 31:8; Hos 14:9; Zech 11:2). Six times the green *b^erôš* tree is paralleled to the cedar, thus confirming that this tree was part of the flora of Lebanon. Although Hos 14:9 does not mention Lebanon, it occurs three times in the preceding verses. "The context leads one to consider the possibility that the tree in question in v 9 is one of the large, majestic trees of Lebanon."⁵ The parallelism to the mighty cedar of Lebanon (2 Kgs 19:23/Isa 37:24; Isa 14:8; 41:19; Ezek 31:8; Zech 11:2),⁶ the fact that the stork has its nest in this tree (Ps 104:17), and several

¹Cf. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute; Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin Verlagsbuchhandlung, [1965]), 326 (= *CAD*): "Shalmanassar III: 'I went into the Amanus and cut timber of cedar (and) juniper trees.'"

²Wood or sap. Cf. Kjeld Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel*, VT Suppl. 38 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 27, 32.

³M. Stol, *On Trees, Mountains, and Millstones in the Ancient Near East*, MEOL 21 (Leiden: Ex Oriente Lux, 1979), 16: "The most common drug in the cuneiform medical texts is the aromatic obtained from the *burāšum* (Sum. *gis.li*), supposedly the juniper tree."

⁴Heinrich Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Babylonischen Religion*, Assyriologische Bibliothek, 12 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901), 126-90.

⁵Tångberg, 84.

⁶Cf. also 1QH VIII5, which mentions *b^erôš* together with cedars. Eduard Lohse, ed., *Die Texte aus Qumran* (Munich: Kösel, [1971]), 142. *b^erôt* is found also in

comparisons of the *b^erôš* to other trees¹ indicate again that the *b^erôš* was a tree of considerable size and of high value and beauty.²

For identification of the *b^erôš* tree we must be aware that the ancient terms are not used as an exact designation of a species.³ *b^erôš* could have been a term for different coniferous trees.

Several species have been proposed. Scholars⁴ suggest the Cilician Fir, *Abies cilicica*,⁵ especially when it is mentioned together with the cedar, because it constitutes a mixed forest on the Lebanon mountains. It is a tall tree of valuable wood.

TestLevi 38, 18 in a list of trees suitable for sacrifice. Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 199.

¹Isa 55:13 has *b^erôš* in contrast to the shrubs of the desert; see also Ezek 31:8.

²Trees of the most valuable species (among others cedar and *b^erôš*) growing in the desert are a clear sign of the time of salvation (Isa 41:19).

³Cf. Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible: A Complete Handbook to All the Plants with 200 Full-color Plates Taken in the Natural Habitat* (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106. Tångberg, 84: "In Akkadian *burāšu* correspondingly can denote more than one kind of conifer. It is a general designation of large conifers."

⁴Zohary, *Plants*, 106; George E. Post, *Flora of Syria, Palestine and Sinai*, 2nd ed. by John Edward Dinsmore, American Universities of Beirut, Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Natural Science Series no. 1, vol. 2 (Beirut: American Press, 1932), 799; Tångberg, 85.

⁵The Vulgate in Hos 14:9 translates *Abies*.

Another suggestion is the Cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens (horizontalis)*, an evergreen tree of considerable size and dense foliage.¹ The scalelike leaves have a typical odor. From the leaves an oil was extracted for cosmetic and medical purposes.² However, excavations have shown that this species was native to the Palestinian mountains,³ which made it less necessary to import the timber from Lebanon.⁴ Moreover, the cypress does not grow together with the cedar on the high mountains of Lebanon.⁵

¹Thus Zohary, *Plants*, 106, besides *Abies*. Also R. Campbell Thompson, *A Dictionary of Assyrian Botany* (London: The British Academy, 1949), 258, but "pine" seems to him "to be more probable." Idem, *The Assyrian Herbal: A Monograph on the Assyrian Vegetable Drugs* (London: Luzac, 1924), vii, and Gesenius, 114, translates "Cypress." LXX has *kypárisos* in 8 verses which have *b'rôš* in the MT. In Hos 14:9 it translates with *árkeuthos* = juniper. For the size, see Michael Zohary, *Flora Palaestina* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1966), 19: 10-30m high, the trunk up to 1m diameter.

²Ibid., 19.

³Zohary, *Plants*, 106: pollen and remains of wood have been found. Cf. also Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Mold, *Plants of the Bible* (Waltham, MA: Chronica Botanica Company, 1952), 89-90. But Mira Homsy and Shmuel Moshkovitz, "Cypress Wood in Excavations in Eretz - Israel," *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977): 71-78, found only a few remains of cypress wood from the time before the Hellenistic period. Nili Liphshitz and Yoav Waisel, "Dendroarchaeological Investigations in Israel (Taanach)," *IEJ* 30 (1980): 132-36, found neither cypress nor juniper wood.

⁴Zohary, *Flora*, 19, identifies the cypress with Heb. *l' 'aššûr*. Post, 800, and Moldenke and Mold, 89, think of Heb. *gofer*.

⁵J. Feliks, "Zypresse," *BHH*, 3:2256.

More likely, the *b^erôš* tree is to be identified with the juniper tree.¹ It is also used for building purposes as well as for aromatics. *Juniperus phoenicia* and *Juniperus oxycedrus*² grow more like a shrub or a small tree (about 5m) and do not provide timber for building purposes.³ But the species *Juniperus excelsa* is a tall tree, “the largest of the juniper trees in Western Asia. . . . If conditions are good it can reach close to a hundred feet.”⁴ It grows in the Lebanon mountains, Amanus mountains and Taurus mountains,⁵ often together with the cedars. It is also found on Mt. Hermon.⁶ Its appearance is similar to the cypress.⁷

After we have identified the species of the tree in Hos 14:9 as *Juniperus excelsa* we are confronted with a difficulty. The *b^erôš* is not a fruit tree but a majestic forest

¹For the juniper also opt Shalom M. Paul, “Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 183; Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), s.v. “*burāšu(m)*,” 1:139; Stol, 16.

²Immanuel Löw, *Die Flora der Juden* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1924; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 3:33-37, identifies *b^erôš* with *Juniperus phoenicia* or *oxycedrus*. Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, s.v. “*b^erôš*,” 1:148, think of *Juniperus phoenicia*.

³Zohary, *Plants*, 117; idem, *Flora*, 20; Post, 801-2.

⁴M. B. Rowton, “The Woodlands of Ancient Western Asia,” *JNES* 26 (1967): 272. Cf. Feliks, 2254-56; *CAD*, 326-27; especially see J. Hansman, “Gilgamesh, Humbaba and the Land of the Erin-Trees,” *Iraq* 38 (1976): 28-30.

⁵Cf. Rowton, 261-77; Thompson, *Assyrian Botany*, 258.

⁶Post, 802. Cf. also Ezek 27:5.

⁷Post, 802; Kurt Galling, “Wald und Forstwirtschaft,” *Biblisches Reallexikon*, 357; Zohary, *Plants*, 107. He mentions that the local Lebanese population calls this tree “brotha.” This might be the same term as the *b^erôtîm* of Cant, and linguistically related to *b^erôš* (the *t* from Aramaic).

tree. How are we to understand the fact that the tree simile is followed by a phrase mentioning fruit? This phrase cannot be a homogeneous part of the *b^erôš* image, but must be an extension of it. The image changes from a forest tree to a fruit tree. That means we have first to interpret the simile without reference to the fruit. In a second step we must then ask in what sense the figurative expression changes by introducing the new image of a fruit(-tree).

What are the consequences for the interpretation? As we have seen, the *b^erôš* tree is depicted in its impact and benefit *for humans*. The benefit the living *b^erôš* gives cannot be its fruit but must be some other boon, which is offered by forest trees with abundant foliage. It is not said what gift this is, but it is assumed to be known. In order to understand the image we have to look for a conventional usage of the image of beneficial forest trees.

The Background of the Tree Image

Since the tree simile does not occur elsewhere in the book of Hosea, we turn immediately to the tree metaphor in the Old Testament, which is one of its most important images. This image can be used in many different ways.¹ It can have positive (e.g., Isa 65:22; Cant 5:15) or negative meanings (e.g., Ps 37:35; Job 19:10). In all figurative speech of the Old Testament the tree is depicted as a *living* tree. The context determines in what sense the tree metaphor is employed. The point of comparison can be explicitly given (e.g., Isa 7:2; Ps 92:12). It can be implicit in the application of the

¹Kirsten Nielsen, “‘ēš,” in *TWAT*, 6:293: The tree is “als Metapher ambivalent.”

image (e.g., Eccl 12:5). It can also be implicit in the situation of the tree (e.g., Ps 1:3; Amos 2:9) or in the description of the events of the tree's life (e.g., Ps 29:5; Jer 12:10).

What is surprising is not the tree as an image but the statements or the narrative about the tree that the prophet conveys. The tree can be used typically, but also a-typically; new connotations can be created and utilized; a well-known myth can be given a special twist, and an expected meaning can turn out to be a false trail. The more traditional the image, the more surprising is the effect of a-typical use and the easier it is for the author to exploit the hearers' preconceptions and prejudices.¹

Metaphor is what the tree “does” or what happens with the tree. The Metaphor is a dynamic concept, not a static one. It is not simply a word, but rather a little story.

The tree metaphor occurs frequently. It is also part of the culture and language of Hosea's time. We must take into consideration the conventions about the usage of the tree in figurative speech.² If the metaphor is used according to one of the conventional applications in the language community, the user does not need to give many instructions about the point of comparison. He only indicates where he deviates from the usual application, thus modifying the image. That means that we have to expect a conventional usage of the tree metaphor especially in such cases, as in Hos 14:9, where the point of comparison is not explicitly given. Because of traditions and conventions familiar to the ancient language community, it probably presented no difficulty for Hosea's audience—unlike the modern reader—to find out in what sense the image was employed.

¹Nielsen, *Hope*, 224.

²Ibid., 72.

Suggested Interpretations of the Tree Image

It is necessary now to discuss the different interpretations for interpreting the tree simile in Hos 14:9 as suggested by Old Testament scholars.

Israel

One important tree image widely used in the Old Testament is that of Israel compared to a tree or plant, especially the vine.¹ This figure was not unknown in the time of Hosea, as indicated by Hos 10:1 where the prophet compares Israel with a luxuriant vine that bears fruit in abundance. Several scholars explain the simile in Hos 14:9 according to this usage and assume that in Hos 14:9b Israel is claiming to be like a luxuriant tree.²

There are, however, some objections to this view. First, we have to refer to the fact that the assumption that Israel is the speaker in Hos 14:9b does not do justice to the structure of the passage.³

¹Ps 80:8-14; Isa 3:14; 5:1-7; 27:2, 6; Ezek 15:2, 6; Isa 24:7; 32:12; Jer 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; 11:16; 12:10; Ezek 19:10-11; Joel 1:7, 12; Nah 2:3.

²Cf. Kruger, "Yahweh's Generous Love," 33, 42. According to this more recent explanation—changing his earlier view in "Relationship," 256-62—it is Israel that is meant by the tree in vss. 8 and 9. He reasons that vs. 9 is the only instance where Yahweh is likened to a tree and that it is unlikely that the tree symbol of the Canaanite religion was used for Yahweh. Thus already van der Woude, 484-85. Cf. also Sydney Lawrence Brown, *The Book of Hosea*, Westminster Commentaries 21 (London: Methuen, 1932), 121; Nyberg, 112; Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), 58. Already the Vulgate has: *et dirigam eum ego ut abietem virentem*.

³On the structure, see above p. 51.

Second, in most cases when Israel is compared to a tree it is depicted as a fruit tree, especially a vine (exception Num 24:6), not a forest tree. Also the comparison to a vineyard is common. The highly valued vine and fruit tree indicates Yahweh's high appreciation of His people (i.e., Ps 80:8-14; Isa 3:14; 27:2-6; 61:3; Jer 6:9; 12:10) or His disappointment about Israel. In the latter case the prophets reverse the figure and turn it into a negative image:¹ The vine did not produce the expected fruit (Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezek 17:5-10; 19:10-14), the fruit is offered to other gods (Hos 10:1), there is no value in the vine if one considers usability for construction purposes (Ezek 15:2-5). Therefore the plant is useless and will be destroyed (Jer 8:13; Joel 1:7.12), the tree burned or cut down (Jer 11:16). The tree image becomes an image of judgment (Ps 80:13-17; Nah 2:3).

Further, the speaker of Hos 14:9 claims to be beneficial for someone else like a tree. Israel, however, never calls herself a vine or fruit tree being precious for Yahweh. The bold "I am" expressing the consciousness of being beneficial for others is fitting to be uttered by a superior or at least by an equal person or power.² All these reasons argue against interpreting the *b^erōš* tree as an image of Israel.

The Righteous

Another familiar biblical image compares the righteous person with a luxuriant, constantly growing tree that is situated at an ideal place, namely close to the resources of water (Gen 49:22; Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8; Ps 92:13; negatively Job 15:33; Jer 11:19). This

¹Nielsen, *Hope*, 77-78.

²Cf. Cant 2:1 where the girl boldly calls herself a flower and *šōšannā* for her beloved, which indicates the equal status of both sexes.

category of tree image, which belongs to the wisdom literature, seems to provide a very close parallel to the phrase in Hos 14:9. In Ps 52:10 we read *wa ʾnī kʾzayit ra ʿānān*, “but I (am) like a luxuriant olive tree.”

However, we notice four important differences. First, the righteous is always depicted as a fruit tree, while Hos 14:9 has the *bʿrōš* tree.¹ Second, in all cases the ideal location of the tree is mentioned. Third, Ps 52:10, as all other texts where this tree image occurs, expresses a contrast to the transitoriness of the wicked person (vs. 7). The emphasis is on the tree's ability to grow and to bear fruit in contrast to the wicked one who is dying like an uprooted tree (Ps 52:7 *šrš*; cf. 92:8 *šma*), whose existence is meaningless like chaff (Ps 1:4), who is in a miserable state like the thornbush in the desert (Jer 17:6). The emphasis is not placed upon what the tree is for someone else as in Hos 14:9. Fourth, there is again the objection that in Hos 14:9 Yahweh is speaking, while Ps 52:10 is uttered by a human. These differences indicate that Hos 14:9 is not to be interpreted according to the tree image of the righteous.

The Lover

Commenting on Hos 14:9, several scholars refer to the tree similes found in love songs.² Does the tree represent the beloved person of a love relationship?

¹Cf. the comparison of the “heated man” with a forest tree, the “silent man” with a fruit tree in the instruction of Amen-em-opet VI,1-12, in *ANET*, 422. Cf. Willy Schottroff, *Der altisraelitische Fluchspruch*, WMANT 30 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 131-32.

²Grün-Rath, 66; Cornelius, 46. Hos 14:6-9 is called a love song by Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, OBO 53 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 637; Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 63; and Hubbard, 229.

There are indeed striking similarities between our text in Hos 14 and Canticles.¹ The lovers are compared to plants and trees (Cant 1:6, 14; 2:3; 4:13; 7:9; 8:12). This is related to the conventional metaphor of the woman as a garden, vineyard or orchard (Ps 128:3; Cant 1:6; 4:13; 8:12; Isa 5:1-4). Associated is the figure of plants in the time of spring, often blossoming plants (Cant 1:14), as a metaphor for the time of love (Cant 2:13, 15; 6:11; 7:13). Hos 14:6-8 also speaks of flourishing plant life. Additional parallels are the image of Lebanon (Cant 4:8, 11, 15; 5:15) and the bold "I am" (Cant 2:1; cf. also 4:16; 6:2). We will come back to this comparison later.

However, in almost all cases² we find the image of fruit plants.³ Especially instructive is Cant 2:3 because it compares the beloved with the apple tree and praises it in contrast to the forest trees. The fruit serves as a measure for the value of the tree.⁴ The fruit tree was a common figure in the love songs of the ancient Near East.⁵ Although the tree simile in Hos 14:9 is colored with the tree metaphor of the love songs, it is not a fruit tree and therefore cannot be exclusively explained along this line.

¹For the debate on dating Canticles, see Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, Anchor Bible, vol. 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 22-34.

²The only exception is Cant 5:15. Cant 1:17 and 8:9 belong to a different category of tree images because they depict the timber, not the living tree.

³Vine, fig tree, apple tree, nut tree, pomegranates, etc. Cf. Cant 2:3; 8:5.

⁴Cf. Judg 9:8-15. On the importance of fruit trees in Palestine, see Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, vol. 4, *Brot, Öl und Wein* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1935), 162-65; Nielsen, *Hope*, 75-79.

⁵Cf. the Sumerian examples in Müller, *Vergleich*, 25. For Egypt cf. William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 312-15.

Vitality and Fertility

Vitality, vigor, and fertility can certainly be important aspects of the tree image. This has been pointed out by many scholars.¹ However, it is not the tree in general that has the connotation of fertility. The image of the tree always gives indications in what sense, positively or negatively, it is used. We find the withering (Job 15:32-33; Isa 1:30; 16:8; 24:7; 34:4; 56:3; Joel 1:12), uprooted (Job 19:10), broken (Ps 29:5), felled (2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 6:13; 10:33-34; 14:8; 37:24; Jer 11:19; 22:7), or burned tree (Isa 10:19; Jer 11:16; Ezek 21:3; Joel 1:19; Zech 11:1) employed as an image of judgment or diminution of life.² And we find the sprouting and growing tree with luxuriant foliage, situated at the water, as an image of fullness of life.³ The images of the fruitful vine (Ps 128:3) and of the sprouting stump⁴ belong likewise to this category. The same concept, though used more symbolically, can be found in the texts where luxuriant trees indicate fullness of life of the eschatological time (Isa 41:19; Ezek 47:7, 12).

However, if the tree image indicates vitality and fertility, it refers to *its own* attributes. But as we have seen, in Hos 14:9 the tree indicates what Yahweh is *for Israel*. Can the tree image represent life, vigor and fertility *provided for someone else*?

¹For example, Rudolph, *Hosea*, 252; Mays, 189.

²These negative images receive additional force by the fact that the tree normally is expected to grow and live for a long time (Isa 65:22).

³For examples, see above p. 269. Hosea reverses this image in his announcement of judgment in 10:4: the judgment will sprout like poisonous weeds.

⁴Job 14:7; Isa 11:1; also Isa 6:13. Differently G. K. Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* 41 (1991): 270-71.

This question becomes especially urgent if we consider that in the first instance the tree image must be interpreted independently of the fruit image.

Tree of Life

The previous question leads us to the next suggestion to understand the tree image of Hos 14:9. H. W. Wolff and other exegetes have perceived the tree as the tree of life of Gen 2-3, indeed a tree that offers life and vigor to humanity.¹ A. Feuillet calls it “l'arbre de vie par excellence,” because “il est toujours vert.”²

The tree of life is mentioned in the Old Testament apart from Gen 2-3 only in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4).³ It is used metaphorically; but differently from Hos 14:9 and all other tree images there is no description of the tree; nothing happens to the tree. It is used like a stereotype depicting something desirable. This already makes it unlikely that the clearly described tree of Hos 14:9 is to be understood as an image of the tree of life.⁴ Above all, according to Gen 3:22, the tree of life is a fruit tree.

¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 307.

²Feuillet, “S'asseoir à l'ombre,” 392. Similarly Rudolph, *Hosea*, 252; Mays, 190; Frey, *Hosea*, 299; Weiser, *Kleine Propheten*, 103. Hesitantly also Andersen and Freedman, 647; Otto Procksch, *Die kleinen prophetischen Schriften vor dem Exil* (Calw und Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1910), 61; Stuart, 217-18.

³Cf. also 1 Enoch 24:4; 2 Enoch 8:3, 5, 8; 9:1; 2 Esdr 8:52.

⁴Marcus, 117-20, assumes that the image is used in a profane sense meaning “health-giving drug.” Cf. also Haag, *Der Mensch am Anfang*, 30; and William H. Irwin, “The Metaphor in Prov 11, 30,” *Biblica* 65 (1984): 97-100.

Some scholars have seen parallels between the tree of life in Gen 2-3 and representations of trees in the mythology and iconography of the ancient Near East.¹ In mythology and iconography, trees and plants, branches and twigs, fruits and wooden objects are often mingled to one supposed concept of the "tree of life." But we have to differentiate among the many images and representations of trees.² H. Genge and others have convincingly argued that there does not exist a tree of life outside of Israel.³ The

¹Jeremias, *Hosea*, 173. Cf. Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri A.-B., 1943), 10, 25, and passim; Edwin O. James, *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, Studies in the History of Religions, no. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 66-92 and passim; idem, "The Tree of Life," in *Essays in Honour of G. W. Thatcher*, ed. E. C. B. MacLaurin (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1967), 103-18; Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion (King and Saviour IV)*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 4 [1951] (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1951), 6 and passim; see also Manfred Lurker, "Der Baum im Alten Orient: Ein Beitrag zur Symbolgeschichte," in *Beiträge zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion des Alten Orients: Festschrift E. Unger*, ed. Manfred Lurker (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1971), 153-63. More cautiously Howard N. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, no. 32 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 103-11; Urs Winter, "Der 'Lebensbaum' in der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik," in ". . . Bäume braucht man doch!" *Das Symbol des Baumes zwischen Hoffnung und Zerstörung*, ed. Harald Schweizer (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1986), 57-88.

²Cf. Bernhard Lang, *Kein Aufstand in Jerusalem: Die Politik des Propheten Ezechiel*, Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978), 73: "Allzu rasch hat man, der Art der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule folgend, jeden irgendwie symbolischen Baum als Variante einer universalen, über einzelne Kulturen hinausgreifenden Baumsymbolik gesehen."

³Cf. H. Genge, "Zum 'Lebensbaum' in den Keilschriftkulturen," *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971): 321: "Das Bemerkenswerteste am 'Lebensbaum' in den Keilschriftkulturen ist die Tatsache, dass es ihn nicht gibt." Genge is followed by Kutsch, 14. Along the same line argues Åke W. Sjöberg, "Eve and the Chameleon," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer, JSOT, Suppl. Ser. 31 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 219-21. See

cedars which Gilgamesh felled on the cedar mountains were not trees of life but timber.¹ The plant in the Gilgamesh epic, XI, 266, which could provide rejuvenation, is not a tree nor the fruit of a tree.² The tree in the Babylonian *namburbû* ritual is a torn-off branch, mostly of tamarisk, never of *b⁶rôš*, that was thrown into the river, thus removing all kinds of evil.³ Thus, neither the tree of life of Gen 2-3 nor the many different plants or parts of plants of mythology provide the explanation of the *b⁶rôš* tree in Hos 14:9.

God or Goddess

Since in Hos 14:9 Israel's God Yahweh is compared to a tree, it seems reasonable to understand this comparison in analogy to ancient Near Eastern correlations of deities and trees. Consequently, most scholars connect this image of the tree with the Canaanite cultural background.⁴

also Fritz Stolz, "Die Bäume des Gottesgartens auf dem Libanon," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 154; Cornelius, 55.

¹Hansman, 25: "The journey of Gilgamesh was undertaken, in part, as a practical mission to locate ERIN-trees; to find timber, most probably for use in building construction at Uruk." Differently James, *Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, 71.

²See the list of differences between this plant and the tree of life in W. G. Lambert, "Trees, Snakes and Gods in Ancient Syria and Anatolia," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985): 440.

³R. Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum," *Orientalia* 34 (1965): 105-31. Cf. Astour, 22-25.

⁴Cf. Widengren, *King*, 56; Cornelius, 45-47; Labuschagne, 72; Kruger, "Relationship," 261-62; Wolff, *Hosea*, 307; Petra von Gemünden, *Vegetationsmetaphorik im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt: Eine Bildfelduntersuchung*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 75.

In the Ancient Orient the tree was not venerated for its own sake but for a numinous or divine being that was assumed to live in the tree or to be represented by the tree.¹ Evidence for the role of the tree in connection with gods and goddesses is found especially in the iconography of the ancient Near East.²

Does the iconography explain the simile of Hos 14:9? First, we must notice that the “sacred tree” can be depicted in many different ways and is not the symbol of only one deity.³ Therefore we must pay attention to the details in the depiction and description of the various sacred trees.

Second, O. Keel insists that the iconography and the literature generally have to be interpreted in their own rights. In other words, the tree in literature is not to be equated with the tree in iconography. The “hunting for the textual quotation” can

¹Lurker, 147; Karl Jaroš, *Die Stellung des Elohisten zur kanaanäischen Religion*, OBO 4 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 214-15.

²H. York, “Heiliger Baum,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, 4:269-82. Iconographic examples of seals in Jaroš, *Die Stellung des Elohisten*, 220-28; idem, “Die Motive der Heiligen Bäume und der Schlange in Gen. 2 - 3,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 207-10; Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 530-639; Cornelius, 61-75; Tångberg, 90-91; Metzger, 54-94.

³Jaroš, “Die Motive,” 210. Cf. Lambert, “Trees,” 439-40: “There is thus no good reason to take the first-millennium stylized tree in Mesopotamia as a symbol of a particular god. It seems rather to symbolize the blessings which flow from worship of a particular deity.” For Egypt Othmar Keel, “Ägyptische Baumgöttinnen der 18.-21. Dynastie: Bild und Wort, Wort und Bild,” chap. in *Das Recht der Bilder*, 64: “Ihre [the sycamore tree] Gleichsetzung mit einer der grossen bekannten Göttinnen [Isis, Nut, Hathor etc.] steigert diese primäre Numinosität und kommt einem weit verbreiteten Bedürfnis nach Ordnung und Klarheit entgegen, aber sie ist sekundär, wie die wechselnden Namen und der gelegentliche Verzicht auf eine solche Identifizierung auch bei späten Belegen zeigen, nachdem eine solche Praxis an und für sich längst Usus geworden ist.”

prevent the correct understanding of the image, a quick analogy drawn to iconographic material can misguide the interpretation of the text.¹

Egyptian goddesses

In Egypt² we find the holy sycamore tree, often also the palm tree, of the goddesses Isis, Nut and Hathor (“Lady of the sycamore tree”). The tree as a representation of a goddess offers to the deceased shade, fruit and even drink—the tree is situated next to a pond.³

If we compare the Egyptian tree goddesses to the image in Hos 14:9 we find intriguing similarities. Both trees are beneficial for humans, both represent a deity. And the Egyptian drawings depict the tree quite naturally as a living tree.

However, we have also to notice the differences. First, the life-giving tree is mostly a sycamore or a date palm, hence a fruit tree. The fruit is an integral part of the tree image. In Hos 14, on the other hand, we find a forest tree, and the fruit is an extension of the image. Second, in Egypt the tree is a representation of a female deity. Both reasons make it unlikely that the simile in Hos 14:9 is shaped according to the Egyptian conception.

¹Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder*, 95: “Grundsätzlich und methodisch sind Bild und Text jedoch als je eigenständige Grössen anzugehen.”

²For tree goddesses in Egypt cf. M.-L. Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *JNES* 6 (1947): 80-97; Edmund Hermsen, *Lebensbaumsymbolik im Alten Ägypten*, Arbeitsmaterialien zur Religionsgeschichte 5 (Cologne: in commission with E. J. Brill, 1981); Winter, “Der ‘Lebensbaum,’” 58-63; recently Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder*, 61-138.

³Cf. Hermsen, 117-21.

Baal

Elizabeth Williams-Forte¹ presents evidence that the sacred tree on cylinder seals can represent the lightning, the weapon of the fertility god Baal-Hadad, which he uses to slay the serpent, Mot, the god of death and drought. Ugaritic and Egyptian texts support this assumption. The tree-weapon of Baal is drawn as a coniferous tree, most probably a cedar.² It is generally depicted as a stylized tree, a trunk with two or more symmetrical branches left at one end. Often it is in the hand of Baal, but it can also be depicted instead of the deity, and be adored by worshipers as a symbol of Baal's victory over Mot. There is good reason why the tree is stylized. A tree used as a spear-like weapon cannot be a living tree but rather a trunk deprived of its main branches.

In connection with the god Hadad and other deities Babylonian tablets mention cedar and juniper (*burāšu*) as a means for incantations and magic rituals.³ But these trees are not mentioned as living trees but as wood or resin for incense.⁴

The differences between the tree of Baal and the tree image of Hos 14:9 are apparent. "In the texts, published thus far, Ba'lu is never equated with herbs or trees."⁵

¹Elizabeth Williams-Forte, "The Snake and the Tree in the Iconography and Texts of Syria During the Bronze Age," in *Ancient Seals and the Bible*, ed. Leonard Gorelick and Elizabeth Williams-Forte, Occasional Papers on the Near East 2, 1 (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1983), 18-43.

²Ibid., 35-36.

³Zimmern, 134-35: Ritualtafeln für den Beschwörer (*āšipu*) Nr.27 Col.II.

⁴For the use of juniper (*burāšu*) resin and turpentine for medical purposes, see Thompson, *Assyrian Botany*, 258-62; idem, *The Assyrian Herbal*, vii, xvii.

⁵Korpel, 587.

The *living* tree is not attested as a symbol of Baal.¹ Although incense or wood of the juniper is mentioned and the cedar, a coniferous tree like the juniper, is in the hand of Baal as his spear-like weapon, incense, wood, tree trunk or stylized lightning-tree all stand in contrast to the living, luxuriant tree of Hos 14:9.

Asherah

Many scholars interpret the tree image of Hos 14:9 as a symbol of the goddess Asherah. J. Wellhausen suggested an emendation of *ʾnī ʿānītī wa ʾšūrenmū* in Hos 14:9 reading *ʾnī ʿnātō wa ʾšērātō*: “I am his Anath and Asherah.”² He has found many followers.³ Asherah is characterized as a goddess of fertility. The tree with its power of life would be a fitting attribute. Hence, the tree image of Hos 14:9 is interpreted as a

¹Against Samuel E. Loewenstamm, “The Cypress as a Symbol of the Life Giving Force,” in *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures*, AOAT (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 29, who assumes that the evergreen *bʿrōš* tree was a symbol of Baal.

²Julius Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 4th ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 134.

³For example Fohrer, “Umkehr und Erlösung,” 171; Jacob, *Osée*, 95, 97; idem, “Der Prophet Hosea und die Geschichte,” 290; Korpel, 593; first edition of Ernst Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, KAT 12 (Leipzig, Erlangen: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922), 108 (in the second edition, 1929, p. 142, he calls Wellhausen’s suggestion “mehr geistvoll als richtig”); Duhm, 43.

symbol of fertility.¹ Yahweh would then be described as the true life-giving force versus Asherah.²

Evidence for a connection of the tree with the goddess Asherah is found in the iconography of Palestine. S. Schroer and R. Hestrin³ describe the iconographic material and show the close connection between the goddess and the tree.

Besides the fact that the tree can be an attribute not only of one deity (Asherah), we must realize that the iconographic "tree" is not depicted as a natural tree like the simile in Hos 14:9, but as a stylized tree or a twig.⁴ This fact cautions us against identifying the *b^crōš* tree with the goddess Asherah.

¹For symbols of fertility in iconography, see Martin Metzger, "Gottheit, Berg und Vegetation in vorderorientalischer Bildtradition," *ZDPV* 99 (1983): 54-94. Mays, 189: "Once again Hosea exploits the fertility cult to appropriate the role of sacral tree (4.12f.) for Yahweh." Cf. also Emmerson, 49.

²John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *JBL* 105 (1986): 405, thinks of "a play on the names of the goddesses Anat and Asherah." Cf. also idem, "Inner Scriptural Interpretation," 315. Similarly also Emmerson, 50; Lee, 119.

³Silvia Schroer, "Die Zweiggöttin in Palästina/Israel: Von der Mittelbronze II B-Zeit bis zu Jesus Sirach," in *Jerusalem: Texte - Bilder - Steine: Im Namen von Mitgliedern und Freunden des Biblischen Instituts der Universität Freiburg Schweiz herausgegeben von Max Küchler und Christoph Uehlinger zum 100. Geburtstag von Hildi und Othmar Keel-Leu*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 6 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 201-25; Ruth Hestrin, "The Lachish Ewer and the 'Asherah'," *IEJ* 37 (1987): 212-23. Cf. also Silvia Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder: Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament*, OBO 74 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 19-45; and Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 530-639.

⁴Cf. Urs Winter, "Der stilisierte Baum: Zu einem auffälligen Aspekt der altorientalischen Baumsymbolik und seiner Rezeption im Alten Testament," *Bibel und Kirche* 41 (1986): 171-77.

However, the identification of the tree with Asherah found new support from the findings of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd, a trading post in the southern Negev, and Khirbet el-Qôm.¹ At these sites inscriptions have been discovered that connect Yahweh and "his asherah." One of these inscriptions dating about 800 B.C. reads *brkt 'tkm lyhwš šmrn wl'šrth*, "I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his asherah."²

Some scholars interpret "his Asherah" as the goddess and consort of Yahweh.³ Others hold that since the personal name Asherah cannot be used with the personal pronoun, "his asherah" refers to a cult object and is not the name of a goddess.⁴ In any

¹See the discussion and rehabilitation of Wellhausen's conjecture in Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 173-82. For the discussion of the drawings and inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd and possibly a related inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm, see recently Ackerman, 62-66, with literature. Also among others Pirhiya Beck, "The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud)," *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982): 3-68; Judith M. Hadley, "Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *VT* 37 (1987): 180-213; André Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah? Startling New Inscriptions from Two Different Sites Reopen the Debate about the Meaning of Asherah," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10/6 (1984): 42-51.

²Storage jar 1, ll. 1-2. Cf. Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 44.

³David Noel Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah," *Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987): 247. Similarly Whitt, 31-67; Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115-24; William G. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrûd," *BASOR* 255 (1984): 21-37; idem, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990), 144-45; recently Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 77-100. Andreas Angerstorfer, "Ašerah als 'consort of Jahwe' oder Aširtah?" *Biblische Notizen* 17 (1982): 7-16, assumes a goddess Aširtah. But see Day, "Asherah," 392, n. 21.

⁴Cf. J. A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrûd," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 1-20; André Lemaire, "Les

case there seems to have been, at least in some circles, a very close connection between Yahweh and Asherah.¹

The Old Testament parallel to the inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd is often found in the tree simile of Hos 14:9 because in this text the tree, taken as the symbol of the goddess Asherah, is linked to Yahweh. Thus Hos 14:9 has to serve as one of the key texts for the assumption that in Israel Asherah was considered a consort of Yahweh.² We have to ask whether Hos 14:9 can bear the burden of proof. However, it is not our task here to investigate the role of Asherah in Israel.³

First, we have to mention the difficulty that if the tree simile would in any way refer to the goddess Asherah, Yahweh would be equated to a female deity, which is unlikely. The inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd confirm what we would expect, namely,

Inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qôm et l'Ashérah de YHWH," *RB* 84 (1977): 604-7; idem, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 46-50; Day, "Asherah," 392; Philip J. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah - An Archaeological Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 104-6; Hadley, 204; Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 174 and 189-90, ns. 87-89; Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder*, 33.

¹Baruch Margalit, "Meaning and Significance of Asherah," 264-97, argues that the meaning of the word asherah is "consort," "wife" ("the one who follows") and that it is used in this general sense in the inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd. "The ultimate and decisive proof of this hypothesis comes from the drawing which accompanies the inscription" (p. 227) in which the second figure is depicted behind the first. Cf. also idem, "Some Observations on the Inscription and Drawing from Khirbet el-Qôm," *VT* 39 (1989): 374.

²Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 174-81.

³Cf. among others Day, "Asherah," 385-408; Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 77-133.

that in a polytheistic environment the male and the female deities were not equated but placed side by side. If Hosea wanted to address an audience influenced by Canaanite conceptions, he probably could not expect to be understood when he equated a male and a female deity.¹

Second, if "Asherah" means a cult object it is generally considered to be a wooden pole erected next to a sanctuary.² The existence of these poles is well documented in the Old Testament.³ Can we equate the sacred poles with the living tree of Hos 14:9? John Day has convincingly argued that the objects which in the Old Testament are called Asherah cannot have been living trees.⁴ They are clearly manufactured objects indicated by the use of the verbs *'āśā, bānā, nāṣab*. In 1 Kgs

¹For example Schroer, "Die Zweiggöttin," 217, overlooking this fact, assumes that Hos 14:9 articulates a competition between Yahweh and the Asherah, in that Yahweh "gegen die Götzen (=Göttinnen!) für sich allein beansprucht, Israels immergrüner heiliger Baum zu sein."

²Cf. the discussion in Day, "Asherah," 401-8. Also Johannes C. de Moor, "'šrh," *TWAT*, 1:477-79; Floss, 144-48; James, "The Tree of Life," 123; idem, *Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, 17-19. Lipinski, "The Syro-Palestinian Iconography," 93, understands Asherim as "'holy places', either sacred groves or chapels erected on heights, near old spreading trees." William LaForest Reed, "The Nature and Function of the Asherah in Israelite Religion according to Literary and Archaeological Evidence" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1942), 96, argues against the interpretation of biblical "Asherah" as a tree or tree symbol. But see the critical notes by Herbert Gordon May, review of *The Asherah in the Old Testament* by William L. Reed, in *JBL* 68 (1949): 377-79.

³Exod 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:2-3; 16:21; Judg 6:25-30; 1 Kgs 14:15, 23; 15:13; 16:33; 2 Kgs 13:6; 17:10, 16; 18:4; 21:3, 7; 23:6, 15; Isa 17:8; 27:9; Jer 17:2; Mic 5:13. In some texts, however, the goddess Asherah is meant: Judg 3:7; 1 Kgs 18:19; 2 Kgs 23:4; 2 Chr 24:18.

⁴Day, "Asherah," 402-4.

14:23; 2 Kgs 17:10; Jer 17:2 the asherah is erected under the green trees. Living tree and asherah are clearly distinguished.¹ How then can the living, luxuriant tree of Hos 14:9 be an asherah?²

Third, often the tree image is understood in the light of the fertility cult. Baruch Margalit³ assumes that the symbol of the goddess Asherah could have been a living tree, more precisely a fruit tree, since Asherah was a goddess of fertility. He refers to the rabbinical literature discussing the term Asherah and presupposing a fruit tree (date palm).

Interpreting the tree simile in Hos 14:9, Cornelius connects Asherah, the goddess of fertility, and the tree of life. In his opinion “the idea of the sacred tree containing life, symbolized as an asherah, is reflected in Hos 14.”⁴

These interpretations assume that the symbol of Asherah was a fruit tree.⁵ Besides the fact that the fruit does not play a role in the tree symbolism of Asherah, the *b^rōš* tree of Hos 14:9 is clearly not a fruit tree.

¹Cf. de Moor, “*šrh*,” 477-78.

²Kruger, “Relationship,” 261, eludes the problem by the assumption that there was a development from living trees to poles. Day, “Asherah,” 404-6, is inconsistent when he takes Hos 14:9 as an implicit reference to Asherah. That Asherah is mentioned in Isa 27:9, a passage which he considers to be parallel to Hos 13/14 (Day, “Inner Scriptural Interpretation,” 309-19.), does not necessarily have its reason in the tree image but can simply be an explication of the “idols” in Hos 14:9.

³Margalit, “Some Observations,” 371-78.

⁴Cornelius, 62-63. Wyatt, 17, links the trees of Gen 2-3 with the gods Ilu and Asherah. “The *šerā*-pole of the goddess was undoubtedly a surrogate tree (of life).”

⁵In Assyria and Babylonia the sacred tree is often a date palm. Cf. Lambert, “Trees,” 438.

Sacred Trees, Sacred Groves

It has also been suggested that Hos 14:9 is to be understood in the light of sacred living trees growing next to a sanctuary or constituting a sacred grove.¹ Also a connection between the living sacred tree and Asherah has been suggested.²

Undoubtedly there have been living trees connected with deities in Palestine.³ Several "sacred trees" are mentioned in the Old Testament. Yahweh revealed Himself to Abraham, Deborah, and Gideon under trees.⁴ David received divine guidance by the rustling of trees (2 Sam 5:24).⁵ At the sanctuary of Shechem there was a sacred tree.⁶ Most of all, green trees belonged to the Canaanite high places, hence the stereotype formula of the prophets regarding these places: "on every hill and under every green

¹For example Jeremias, *Hosea*, 173.

²Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 50, prefers "to think of it [the Asherah] as a sacred tree or possibly a group of trees, as in a grove." However cf. Lemaire, "Les Inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qôm," 604-7, listing some difficulties. Cf. also the response by Day, "Asherah," 400, 402. Also Wallace, 111-14, however unconvincingly, argues for a connection between the goddess and living trees. The fact that Asherah's cult places could have been located under living trees does not make a living tree an Asherah.

³Cf. Schroer, "Die Zweiggöttin," 215.

⁴Gen 12:6; 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; Judg 4:5; 6:11, 19. Cf. Nielsen, "'ēš," 290-91; Mario Liverani, "Le Chêne de Sherdanu," *VT* 27 (1977): 212-16.

⁵Cf. James, "The Tree of Life," 107-8. Oracles under trees are found also in the Baal texts of Ugarit, V AB, D 58. See J. Aistlaitner, *Die mythologischen und kultischen Texte aus Ras Shamra*, Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica, no. 8 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiado, 1959), 28.

⁶Josh 24:26; Judg 9:6, also a cultic pillar. Cf. Beale, 268.

tree.”¹ However, the species of trees mentioned for these sacred trees² are terebinth (*'ēlôn* or *'ēlā*), tamarisk (*'ēšēl*)³ and sometimes oak (*'allôn*).⁴ The *b^ērōš* tree is never mentioned as a sacred tree.⁵ In Hos 4:13 three species of trees growing at the Canaanite cult places are mentioned: terebinth (*'ēlā*), oak (*'allôn*), and *libneh* (poplar?), but not the *b^ērōš*.⁶ This makes it unlikely that the *b^ērōš* tree of Hos 14:9 refers to the sacred trees.

The reason why the *b^ērōš* is not mentioned in connection with the sacred trees and groves may be found in the fact that this species did not grow in Palestine. If the

¹Cf. Ackerman, especially 187-94. For a discussion of the sixteen occurrences of the phrase in the Old Testament, see William L. Holladay, “On Every Hill and under Every Green Tree,” *VT* 11 (1961): 170-76.

²With the necessary reservation that the identification of the trees is not always clear because the same tree can be designated with different terms; see for example 1 Sam 31:13 and 1 Chr 10:12.

³Cf. James Barr, “Seeing the Wood for the Trees? An Enigmatic Ancient Translation,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 13 (1968): 11-20.

⁴In Isa 1:29 and 57:5 the *'ēlīm* represent the cult places. In Isa 1:30 the metonymy is modified to a simile: The judgment will be like the withering of a tree, this time an *'ēlā*. See also Isa 6:13 and 57:5. Cf. Beale, 259-60. Also Isa 61:3 may be referred to because the restored Israel is called *'ēlê haššedeq*, a planting of Yahweh, thus depicting a sacred grove of terebinth trees. For the assertion that Isa 1:29-31 refers to holy trees, see Nielsen, *Hope*, 214.

⁵Cf. Loewenstamm, “The Cypress as a Symbol,” 28. James, *Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, 33, incorrectly mentions the cypress. Dietrich and Loretz, “*Jahwe und seine Aschera*,” 178-79, argue that “im syrisch-palästinischen Gebiet auch der immergrüne Wacholderbaum als Lebensbaum figurieren konnte.” To support this hypothesis they refer to Phoenicia and Assyria, where the cypress was considered to be a holy tree or parts of it were ritually used. This is not convincing.

⁶In connection with the stereotypical formula “under every green tree” we find the terebinth (*'ēlā*) also in Ezek 6:13.

tree simile of Hos 14:9 had been used to point to the sacred groves, it would have to refer to a tree that grew at these sacred places and not to a species that had to be imported from Lebanon. We conclude, therefore, that the *b^erôš* tree in Hos 14:9 is not a reference to the sacred trees of the Canaanite cult places.

The Forest Tree as an Image of the King

Biblical and Extrabiblical Evidence

In order to interpret the simile in Hos 14:9 we have first to understand the metaphorical usage of forest trees, which is clearly distinguished from the usage of fruit trees. The fruit tree functions as a figure of a relationship.¹ It stands for a beloved person,² expresses Yahweh's joy or disappointment with Israel,³ and symbolizes the appreciation of the righteous,⁴ judgment of the wicked (Job 15:33), or hostility (Jer 11:19).

On the other hand, when we consider the metaphors and similes using the trees of the famous forests like the cedar⁵ and *b^erôš* of Lebanon or the oak of Bashan, they are

¹Cf. von Gemünden, 66-71. She calls the fruit tree a "Gemeinschaftsbild."

²Cant 2:3; 4:13; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 8:12; exception, 5:15.

³Pss 80:8-14; Isa 3:14; 5:1-7; 27:2, 6; Ezek 15:2, 6; Isa 24:7; 32:12; Jer 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; 11:16; 12:10; Ezek 19:10-11; Hos 10:1; Joel 1:7, 12; Nah 2:3.

⁴Ps 1:3; 52:10; Jer 17:8, cf. also Gen 49:22. For the image of "the tree planted next to the water," see the detailed explanation of Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 135-63. Ps 92:13-15 mentions besides the palm tree also the cedar.

⁵The single tree and the whole forest are used similarly; see Nielsen, *Hope*, 134.

generally used as an image of kings or political forces.¹ Consequently, Tångberg interprets the tree of Hos 14:9 not only as a symbol of fertility but also of kingship.²

The following texts are instructive: In Isa 37:24 (2 Kgs 19:23) the cutting of trees of Lebanon is used as a metaphor for the subjugation of kings and powers. The same image occurs in Isa 14:8. The trees of Lebanon rejoice because the great king, who came and cut them down for building purposes, perished. That the king will not undertake campaigns to obtain timber from Lebanon becomes a metaphor for the fact that he will not conquer other kings anymore.³ Again, in Ps 80:11, the vine, Yahweh's beloved people, displaces other powers and grows in such a way that it will overshadow the cedars, the other rulers. In 2 Kgs 14:9 (=2 Chr 25:18) the king of Israel compares himself to the cedar of Lebanon against the bramble, the king of Judah.

The destruction of trees of Lebanon is a common image of the prophets for the judgment of a king. Yahweh is the tree-feller.⁴ The same image occurs in Isa 2:13, Zech

¹Tångberg, 87-88: "In the Old Testament the cedar serves as first and foremost a symbol of royal power." Cf. Nielsen, *Hope*, passim; von Gemünden, 70-71; inconsistently, however, she counts some of the metaphors of the great trees as "Gemeinschaftsbilder."

²Tångberg, 88. Cf. Feuillet, "S'asseoir à l'ombre," 395, who speaks of a "fonction royale." But, referring to Cant 2:3, he understands Yahweh's speech as the speech of a husband. For the connection of the tree image in Hosea and Canticles, see below p. 306.

³Cf. Nielsen, *Hope*, 162. The concern is not "overcutting" of the forest as Tångberg, 86, assumes.

⁴King of Assyria: Isa 10:18-19, 33-34 (cf. Nielsen, *Hope*, 124-36); king of Judah: Jer 22:7, 23; king of Egypt: Ezek 31; king of Babylon: Dan 4 (cf. Coxon, 91-111; also von Gemünden, 74). In 4QOrNab 2,2 it is said of the king Nabonid "you are a cedar" (Beyer, 224). Amos 2:9 speaks of king Sihon of the Amorites (cf. Num 21:21-28). That in Amos 2:9 the fruit is mentioned does not declare the cedar or oak to be a

11:1-2,¹ and possibly Isa 1:29-31.² Likewise, the wicked man in Ps 37:35 could be a king or a person of political influence.

Ps 29, generally considered to be a very early hymn,³ praises Yahweh as the king (vs. 10) who conquers other powers. For these powers the hymn uses the tree metaphor, namely the cedar of Lebanon (vs. 5).⁴

Yahweh's judgment in favor of Israel is the reason for the joy of mountains, forest and all trees in Isa 44:23. This may be seen as a metaphor for the joy of all nations and political powers. In Ps 96:12 and 1 Chr 16:33 trees of the forest, the nations, rejoice because of the judgment of Yahweh, the just ruler.

fruit tree. Rather we have here the common stereotype expression "fruit upwards and root downwards" found also in Isa 37:31 = 2 Kg 19:30 and in a Phoenician tomb inscription: "May they have no root downwards or fruit upwards." Widengren, *King*, 49. Cf. also the phrase in the *Era* epos, IV, 126: "Des Baumes Wurzel will ich abschneiden, nicht soll der Trieb gedeihen." P. F. Gössmann Oesa, *Das Era-Epos* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1955), 32-33.

¹Judgment against political powers; cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai-Sacharja 1-8-Sacharja 9-14-Maleachi*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament 14 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976), 200.

²K. Nielsen suggests "that the disappointing oaks, which shall burn up, are metaphors for kings in whom Judah is not supposed to trust." See Kirsten Nielsen, "Reinterpretation of Metaphors: Tree Metaphors in Isa 1 - 39," in *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden': Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Jerusalem 1986*, Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums, no. 13, ed. Matthias Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck (Frankfurt/Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1988), 428.

³Cf. Kraus, 235.

⁴Cf. also Num 24:6, where cedar trees at the waters may be an image for the political power of Israel.

The difference between the images of fruit tree and tree of the Lebanon forest is especially obvious in Ezek 17. The prophet compares the deportation of the king of Jerusalem with the breaking of the top of the cedar of Lebanon and taking it to Babylon.¹ The installation of a new king is also depicted with the image of a cedar. But in vs. 6 the image changes to the vine.² There the concern is the conduct of Israel in her relationship to the Babylonian king and also to Yahweh, who decides the fate of Israel. At the end of the chapter (vss. 22-23) the image changes again. Yahweh brings about the messianic time by planting a cedar on the mountain of Jerusalem.³ This may be a reference to the messianic king.⁴

Another interesting passage is the fable of Jotham in Judg 9:8-15.⁵ The trees that reject the suggestion to become king are all fruit trees. The bramble, the tree with the lowest value, accepts the kingship. Its pretension for power and determination to

¹Cf. Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, "Zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten im Ezechielbuch: Erwägungen zu Ez 17,19 und 31," in *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Volkmar Fritz, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, and Hans-Christoph Schmitt, BZAW 185 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 150-72. Pohlmann points out (pp. 155-56), "daß es im alttestamentlichen Schrifttum durchaus nicht unüblich war, im Bild der Libanonzeder auf das Königtum oder auf Jerusalem als Sitz des Königtums anzuspielen."

²Cf. also the change of the image in Ezek 19:11, where the vine is depicted as the great world tree. Cf. von Gemünden, 72-73.

³For the changes of metaphors in Ezek 17, see von Gemünden, 72; Nielsen, *Hope*, 175-76.

⁴Cf. Bernhard Lang, "Die prächtige Zeder (Ezek 17,22-24)," chap. in *Kein Aufstand*, 61-80. Cf. also IQH VI,15 where the future power of the community is depicted as a plant overshadowing the whole earth (Lohse, 134).

⁵Cf. Rüdiger Bartelmus, "Die sogenannte Jothamfabel," *ThZ* 41 (1985): 97-120, who has demonstrated the antiroyal tendency of the parable.

conquest is expressed by the metaphor of burning the cedars of Lebanon.¹ It seems that already in this early text² the trees of Lebanon were metaphors for political powers.

Not only in the Old Testament is the forest tree, especially the Lebanon tree, a metaphor for kingship. We are dealing here with a very old concept which can be found throughout the Ancient Orient. Of Sumerian kings it is said: "Wie eine Zeder, wurzelnd an reichlichem Wasser, angenehmen Schattens bist du."³ "Der Trieb einer Zeder, ein Wald von ḥašur-Bäumen bin ich."⁴ "Auserlesene Zeder, Zier des Hofes von Ekur, Urninurta, das Land Sumer möge vor deinem Schatten Scheu empfinden."⁵ Enki praises king Urninurta: "Sein Schatten bedeckt von Sonnenaufgang bis Sonnenuntergang alle Länder."⁶ In the hymns of the Sumerian king Lipiteštar (about 1875-65) it is said: "Fürst Lipiteštar, Sohn Enlils, Hirte voller Weisheit, der die Menschen leitet, süßen Schatten

¹W. C. van Wyk, "The Fable of Jotham in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting," in *Studies in Wisdom Literature*, ed. W. C. van Wyk, Old Testament Studies, Papers read at OTWSA at the University of Pretoria 1972 and University of South Africa 1973 (n.p., [1977]), 89-95, assumes that this fable combines two older ones: In the first, fruit trees boast of their merits; in the second, the bramble and the cedar enumerate their merits. But cf. Bartelmus, 105-6, 117-20.

²Bartelmus, 118-19, dates the passage in the time of Jehu. Others, who take the parable as a once independent piece, assume a much earlier origin.

³P. Maurus Witzel, *Perlen Sumerischer Poesie*, Keilschriftliche Studien, no. 5 (Fulda: Publ. of the author, 1925), 56-57.

⁴A. Falkenstein, "Sumerische religiöse Texte, 1: Drei 'Hymnen' auf Urninurta von Isin," *ZA* 49 (1949): 129.

⁵Ibid., 108-9. For more examples, see Widengren, *King*, 42-43; Kruger, "Relationship," 257-58; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 28-29.

⁶Falkenstein, 116-17; Witzel, 100-1.

spendet.”¹ “Lipiteštar, der Sohn Enlils, bin ich. Nachdem ich wie der Schössling einer Zeder (stolz) das Haupt erhoben hatte, bin ich der Mann, der gewaltige Kraft besitzt, von zwingender Macht.”² And of Išmēdagān: “Ein höchster meš-Baum mit dicken(?) Wurzeln, mit strahlenden weit (ausgebreitet)en Zweigen bin ich, der Schirm Sumers, sein süßer Schatten bin ich.”³ “Der gute Same [des] Königtum[s], der [S]ame (!) des Herrschertums bin ich, der Spross einer Zeder, ein Wald (!) von Zypressen bin ich, ein Buchsbaum, der mit sü[sser(?)] Üppigkeit ausgestattet ist, bin ich.”⁴ In Akkadian we find “Your love, O lord, is as the fragrance of cedar.”⁵ S. E. Loewenstamm⁶ refers to a passage in a letter from an Assyrian priest: “The king my lord is as a cypress tree [“*burāšu*], he restores life to many people!”⁷ This is a very close parallel to Hos 14:9.⁸

¹Willem Hendrik Philibert Römer, *Sumerische “Königshymnen” der Isin-Zeit*, Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiquis, no. 13 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 24.

²Ibid., 30.

³Ibid., 52.

⁴Ibid., 53; for Egyptian examples, see Grapow, *Die bildlichen Ausdrücke*, 45-46.

⁵Westenholz, 216.

⁶Loewenstamm, “The Cypress as a Symbol,” 28; cf. Tångberg, 87.

⁷Pfeiffer, 214-15, no. 318, Rev, 6.

⁸A comparison with a fruit tree, a date palm, is found in the Era epos, IV,40, Gössmann Oesa, 28-29: “Wehe Babylon! das ich wie eine Dattelpalme prächtigen Ertrag habe tragen lassen: der Wind dörrte ihn aus.” The lamentation of the destruction of Babylon reveals a relationship of the speaker with Babylon, and the relationship is expressed in the image of a fruit tree. Cf. the vine in Isa 5:1-7. Tångberg, 87, refers to the Era-Epos, but does not consider the difference between fruit tree and (Lebanon) forest tree.

What is the point of comparison between tree and king? The majestic trees on the Lebanon mountains (cedar or juniper) or other famous places (oaks of Bashan) can serve positively as an image of eminence (Cant 5:15 for the beloved; Ps 104:16 for Yahweh's creation) or negatively of pride (Ps 37:35; Isa 2:13; 10:33; Jer 22:23; Amos 2:9).¹ This aspect of the tree image can be combined with the destruction of the tree, thus forming a metaphor for conquering a mighty opponent (2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 2:12-13; 37:24; Jer 22:7; Ps 29:5; Amos 2:9; Zech 11:1-2).

However, another feature of the great tree seems to be even more important. The luxuriant tree provides shade and protection and is a metaphor for a caring or protecting power or person, especially the king.² As the tree provides a preferred place for many animals and birds,³ so the people live under the protection of the king and in the sphere which makes life possible. Hence the common phrase "to live in its shade."⁴ This phrase employed for a king seems to be related to the image of the tree even in cases where the tree is not mentioned.⁵

¹Cf. Tångberg, 87.

²Cf. Harper, 415; Andersen and Freedman, 647; Robinson and Horst, 54.

³Genge, 328, refers in this connection to iconographic material depicting a tree with animals at each side.

⁴Judg 9:15; Ezek 17:23; 31:6; Dan 4:8-9, 17-18. For the formula "to be under someone's shade," see Feuillet, "S'asseoir à l'ombre," 394-96.

⁵Lam 4:20; cf. Hans Jochen Boecker, *Klagelieder*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare, vol. 21 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985), 84; also Isa 30:2-3; Bar 1:12.

The shade of a tree is a very old and widely known royal metaphor.¹ In the Old Testament we find the most elaborated examples in late texts (Ezek 17; 31; Dan 4). That this usage of the tree image is of earlier origin than the exilic time is clear from its occurrence in the parable of Jotham (Judg 9:15), where the king's rulership is described with the words: "hide in my shade."² Thus Genge³ concludes that the tree is the symbol of the king in his peaceful and ordering functions which lead to the personal happiness of his people.⁴ Likewise the protection of Yahweh can be expressed by the image of the shade.⁵

¹See the extrabiblical examples above, pp. 291 f.

²In Egypt, too, the shade is a metaphor meaning protection, often of a king. Examples are given by Grapow, *Die bildlichen Ausdrücke*, 45-46. In the same light we have to see the *kiškanû* tree in Eridu. It is a world tree symbolizing the rulership of the god Ea. Cf. Genge, 332-34. Note the connection of *kiškanû* tree, king, and shade in a Middle Assyrian tablet according to M. J. Geller, "A Middle Assyrian Tablet of Utukkû Lemnûtu, Tablet 12," *Iraq* 42 (1980): 24.

³Genge, 327-28.

⁴*Ibid.*, 331: "Der Beliebtheit dieses Wortes Hirte entspricht in der Bildkunst die Häufigkeit des Motivs der Friedfertigkeit (Flankierter Baum). Die Sprache hat ihre Mittel, die Bildkunst andere, eben optisch wirksame! . . . Entsprechend ist in der altorientalischen Bildkunst der Baum als Bild (nicht Abbild!) für König(tum), Ordnung und Glück ein Element der 'Bilderkunst'." Cf. also Winter, "Der stilisierte Baum," 173-75. For the connection of kingship and sacred tree in the late Assyrian period and for forms of sacred trees and plants, see York, 278.

⁵However, the image is not always derived from the shade of the tree (human hand: Isa 49:2; 51:16; wings of a bird: Ruth 2:12; Pss 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 63:8; 91:1, 4). Cf. what is said of Ramses II: "der schöne Sperber, der Ägypten mit seinen Flügeln schützt, der den Untertanen Schatten spendet." Grapow, *Die bildlichen Ausdrücke*, 45. See E. Schwab, "šēl," *TWAT*, 6:1039-41.

In conclusion we can say that, in the ancient Near East and also in the Old Testament, the (Lebanon) forest tree functions as an image of the king.¹

It is noteworthy that in the Old Testament a tree that is not native to Palestine is used as an image for the king. There may have been many Israelites who had never seen a living cedar or tall juniper tree (*Juniperus excelsa*) in their lives. Nevertheless, the image was common and well understood. It must have been imported from outside, probably together with the idea of kingship.

Mythic-ritual Symbol or Metaphor?

Scandinavian scholars² have linked the royal (forest) tree image with the sacred (fruit) tree motif. In their view, the tree is more than a metaphor; it is a mythic-ritual symbol of the divine king who stands in a special relationship to the dying and revived god of fertility.³

¹Cf. also Lang, 68, 70; von Gemünden, 71. Renate Brandscheidt, “Nun ist der Mensch geworden wie einer von uns. . . .” (Gen 3,22): Zur Bedeutung der Bäume im Garten Eden,” *TThZ* 103 (1994): 7, has recently suggested to understand the trees of Gen 2/3 in the sense of the (royal) image of “Herrschaft und die mit ihr verbundene Daseinsfülle.” But these trees are fruit trees; the royal trees are forest trees.

²See especially Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*; Widengren, *King*.

³Cf. Widengren, *King*, 58; also Engnell, “Figurative Language,” 250. Tångberg, 88, concludes that the evidence “points to the use of the tree as symbol of kingship or as ‘symbol of order’” but then asks: “Does it not function as symbol of the divine power of life and fertility as well?” Both notions are mixed together. Metaphor and symbol are not distinguished.

We can leave aside here the question if there existed in Israel a “divine kingship.”¹ However, we have to ask if the tree image in Hos 14:9 and in the Old Testament is used as a metaphor or as a mythic-ritual symbol. Several problems with the latter view need to be mentioned.

First, the majestic Lebanon tree, the motifs of the felled and the sprouting tree, the tree's fruit, the (fruit) tree of life, as well as the wooden scepter and other motifs connected with trees or parts of trees are subsumed under one notion.² But a careful study of a text has to take into account not only that a tree or part of it is mentioned, but also what species of tree is referred to as well as all the details, the whole living image.³ The tree in general is ambiguous; it is the detail of the image and its context that determines the meaning.

Second, the cultic interpretation often implies a devaluation of the metaphoric language of the text. This can also be found in interpretations where the tree of Hos 14:9 is understood as referring to a god or goddess of fertility. Metaphors are called

¹Cf. the criticism of M. Noth on this assumption: Noth, “Gott, König, Volk,” 188-229. Cf. also the criticism of Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 142-48.

²For example Widengren, *King*, 15: “The Tree of Life is watered by the king, who pours out over it the Water of Life which he has in his possession. . . . We have found the Mesopotamian king functioning as the custodian and caretaker of the Tree of Life.” Accordingly the king is the possessor of the plant of life, holds twigs or rods of this plant in his hand as his scepter, and therewith restores health or gives life (pp. 20-26). But he can also be himself a twig or branch of the “Tree of Life” (pp. 50-56) or its totality (pp. 56-58). See also Kruger, “Relationship,” 256-62; James, *Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, 101, 106; also Tångberg, 90, who mentions fruit sacrifices (cones) of the tree and asks: “Could this cultic use of fruit be part of the background in Hos 14,9b?”

³Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 144.

“empty imagery.” To understand the tree as a deity is regarded as a more vital interpretation.¹ M. Weiss rightly rejects Engnell's verdict that a metaphorical understanding of an expression would be a perversion of its meaning. Metaphors are a sign of powerful speech. “The living image is the clearest sign of the vitality, the freshness, the ebullient energy of the idea expressed.”²

Is the tree simile symbolic or figurative language? Using the tree as a symbol of divine kingship means speaking of the king or the deity literally, because the tree is a manifestation of the king or deity. What the symbol represents is to a certain extent present in it.³ Using the tree as a metaphor or in a simile, on the other hand, means using the tree figuratively. The user of the tree figure is simultaneously conscious of both: what he speaks about—the king; in Hos 14:9, however, he speaks about Yahweh—and a literal tree, a living, luxuriant *b^erôš* tree. That Hos 14:9 evokes a lively image of the tree in all its details points to a figurative usage.⁴

¹Loewenstamm, “The Cypress as a Symbol,” 29: “The life-giving power of the cypress was not, therefore, an empty imagery, but a fact of life.”

²Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 145.

³Cf. Grözinger, *Die Sprache des Menschen*.

⁴Korpel, 82-87, has shown that the people in Ugarit and Israel when speaking about their god(s) knowingly used figurative language. Cf. Nielsen, *Hope*, 82. Moreover, that the tree image can be used to express rivalry between kings (2 Kgs 14:9 = 2 Chr 25:18) and even polemic against the idea of kingship (Judg 9) indicates that the tree is not used as a cultic symbol.

The Tree Image in Hosea 14:9

The Royal-tree Image as Background

After we have established that the (Lebanon) forest tree is a common figure for the king and the kingship, we return now to Hos 14:9. Can we infer that the *b^erôš* tree in this passage is employed in this sense?

The first confirmation is offered by the context. Lebanon is already mentioned three times.¹ Thus it is confirmed that the *b^erôš* tree in vs. 9 is a tree of the Lebanon. Also the phrase “to live under the shade” occurs already in vs. 8.² In vs. 8 the speech changes from figurative to literal. The image of the olive tree in vs. 7 leads to the conventional motif “to live under one’s (fruit) tree,”³ which brought forth the phrase “dwell in its shade.” Returning to figurative speech, the shade leads to the metaphor of the royal tree.

Second, the *b^erôš* is depicted as a luxuriant tree (*ra^anān*). This attribute depicts the tree as a shade tree.⁴ The protecting shade is the basic point of comparison for the royal-tree metaphor.

¹Lebanon in Hos 14:6 stands for the forest of Lebanon. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 301; Jeremias, *Hosea*, 173; Jacob, *Osée*, 97; differently Andersen and Freedman, 646.

²It is not clear to what *š^ellô* refers. Wolff, *Hosea*, 301, 306; Coote, 162; also many others read *b^ešillî*, “in my (Yahweh’s) shade,” an emendation which, according to Andersen and Freedman, 647, simplifies the dialogue, however without warrant.

³Cf. Werner Berg, “Israels Land, der Garten Gottes: Der Garten als Bild des Heiles im Alten Testament,” *BZ* 32 (1988): 43-44.

⁴Barr, “Seeing the Wood,” 16.

Third, the *b^erōš* tree proudly rises (on the Lebanon mountains). There is a claim in the saying: I am like a luxuriant *b^erōš* tree. It is the claim to be of vital importance for the people. It is typical for the claim of a king.¹

We can conclude that in the tree simile of Hos 14:9 Yahweh presents Himself as the king of Israel.² He is ready to fulfill what the people expected from the king, that he would provide protection, would give life in fullness, would heal and “restore life.”³

The New Features of the Tree Simile in Hosea 14:9

The Simile

The image is used in a simile (*kbrš*). The comparison makes clear that the image is not applied in the usual way. Kingship is transferred to Israel's God. Yahweh is not a human king like others for whom the tree image was common. The simile discloses this transfer, so that the audience may realize that the royal-tree metaphor is

¹Cf. the “I-am-proclamation” of the Sumerian kings, for example: “The scion of a cedar, a forest of *ḥašur*-trees I am.” Widengren, *King*, 43. See also the Hymn to Lipiteštar (2256-46 B.C.): “The one who lifts up the arms, fills the hand, (and) is gracious, am I. A gracious lord, of pleasing favor, am I. Libit-Ishtar, king of lands, am I.” James B. Nies and Clarence E. Keiser, *Historical, Religious and Economic Texts and Antiquities: Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 41-43, no. 24/25. See also the hymns of Išmēdagān in Römer, 52-53; examples above on pp. 291 f. Cf. von Gemünden, 84, n. 31. Yahweh's claim to be of importance for Israel is found throughout the book of Hosea (5:12, 14; 13:7-8; 14:6). Cf. Kruger, “Prophetic Imagery,” 150.

²Against Östborn, 54. For the comparison of Yahweh and the king, see Brettler.

³Cf. the Assyrian letter quoted above, p. 292. The comparison of the king with the *b^erōš* tree occurs in a passage concerning a probably sick person (Pfeiffer, 214). For the healing task, see above, p. 69.

used in a new way. The unusual application of the royal-tree metaphor arouses expectations. What is different about this “king”?

Fruit as the Extension of the
Royal-tree Image

There is one detail in Hos 14:9 which now demands our attention because it is not an original part of the royal-tree metaphor. Normally the tree which metaphorically represents the king is a tall and famous tree of the forest. But Hosea adds: “Your fruit is found from me.”

Sometimes the royal-tree metaphor also mentions the fruit.¹ Especially in late texts of the Old Testament we find a combination of the image of fruit trees and Lebanon trees. Ezek 17:23² and Dan 4:18 mention fruit besides the dense foliage thus combining several aspects of the tree image. Ps 92:13-15 combines fruit tree (palm tree) and cedar.³ In Sir 24:13 we find a simile which employs cedar and cypress. In this passage Sir 24:13-19, wisdom is compared to a number of trees, including fruit trees and others.⁴ Also in Sir 14:26-27 wisdom is depicted in the image of a tree that provides shade. Sir

¹Already Shulgi, the king of Sumer, can be addressed as a date palm. Witzel, 30-31, 34-35; Widengren, *King*, 42.

²Georg Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, HAT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955), 97, suggests to read in Ezek 17:23 *po 'râ*, “branch,” cf. Ezek 17:6, because the fruit does not fit with the cedar.

³According to Kraus, 811, probably a late psalm.

⁴Wisdom boasts abundant growth, pleasant smell, and rich fruit. In contrast to Hos 14:9, the growth of the tree is in view, referring to a development.

50:10 combines olive tree and cypress in a simile for the high priest.¹ In these mostly late texts the tree metaphor is elaborated and several aspects of different trees (fruit tree and forest tree) are combined. This makes it likely that we have a combination of originally independent tree metaphors and that the fruit is not an integral part of the royal-tree metaphor.²

In contrast to these late passages, Hos 14:9 does not immediately connect the fruit with the tree. It is not said that the tree provides fruit, rather that from Yahweh the fruit is found. This detail additionally confirms that the fruit is not an original part of the traditional forest-tree metaphor employed.

The Paradise Trees as Background for the Fruit

What is the origin of the fruit concept here? Scholars refer to the cones of coniferous trees or to the berries of the juniper tree.³ But metaphorical language is not restricted to botanical realities. To identify the tree according to the fruit mentioned does not take into consideration that we are dealing with figurative language. Mostly the

¹See also Schroer, "Die Zweiggöttin," 220-21; Alain Fournier-Bidoz, "L'arbre et la demeure: Siracide XXIV 10-17," *VT* 34 (1984): 1-10.

²Loewenstamm, "The Cypress as a Symbol," 28, has realized the tension between the different parts of the tree simile. He judges that Harper's comment "shelter and protection" inserts a foreign idea, because it does not go together with the fruit. Also Wallace, 110, feels a tension and calls it "anomalous in the context of the cedar" that in Ezek 17:23 the fruit is mentioned. He explains the text as a blending of the image of the big tree with the image of "the sacred tree, planted on the mountain dwelling of the deity."

³Cf. Tångberg, 90. Moldenke and Mold, 46, even identify the tree in Hos 14:9 according to the fruit: "The only conifer of the region with an edible nut-like seed is the stone pine, *Apinus pinea*."

fruit is considered to be an indication that the tree represents an image of fertility. This interpretation, however, does not take into account, that the fruit is an attribute additional to the traditional motif of the royal tree.

There are good reasons to assume that in Hos 14:9 the image of the luxurious tree of the Lebanon that bears fruit is a combination of the metaphor of the royal tree with the trees in the center of the garden of Eden.¹ First, Hos 14:9 contains two statements concerning the tree: it is luxurious and it bears fruit. The first statement speaks about the pleasure the green tree offers as a resting place in the shade of dense branches. The second statement speaks about the good food the tree provides. The description of the tree has striking parallels to the trees in Gen 2:9 (Gen 3:6 in opposite order): The trees in Paradise look beautiful—of course not only in their eminence but also in their promise of shade²—and bear fruit good to eat. This parallel suggests that Hosea has the trees of Paradise as an additional background of his royal-tree simile.³

¹Cornelius, 45, describes the motifs of the passage Hos 14:6-9 as “paradisiacal,” but takes the view that in vs. 9 the motifs “do not stem from the Eden tale but from the general Canaanite cultural background” (pp. 47 and 53).

²Haag, *Der Mensch am Anfang*, 58, interprets the phrase *ta^awâ-hû’ l’ ênayim* in Gen 3:6 as referring to the expectation that the eyes will be opened. If this is applicable for the luxuriant tree of Hos 14:9, it would mean that Yahweh is not only the source of all life but also of true knowledge.

³This would modify the assumption that the primordial history of Gen 2/3 has no echo in the early Old Testament literature. Cf. Haag, *Der Mensch am Anfang*, 6-8. Cf. for another parallel D. J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX),” *VT* 24 (1974): 8-14.

Second, the context of Hos 14:9 confirms our suggestion because we find several points of connection between the two different traditions, the royal-tree image and the Paradise tradition.¹

The image of the divine dew resembling the dew of creation in Gen 2:6 has already been discussed.² Now we must deal with the term Lebanon, which has been mentioned already three times in Hos 14. There has been a conventional image of a luxuriant garden of fruit trees on Mount Lebanon.³ In the preexilic Ps 72:16⁴ an image occurs which resembles Hos 14: “like Lebanon (be) its fruit” (cf. also Isa 29:17). That Lebanon was a symbol of a garden full of fruit is also indicated by the Assyrian expression “image of Lebanon” for a luxurious garden with aromatic plants and fruits.⁵ These expressions seem to have been already standard in the seventh century B.C. and could well be much older.

¹Wyatt, 10-21, argues—unconvincingly to me—that the Eden story is to be dated in the exilic time. However, he admits that the traditions may be earlier (p.14). Cf. also P. E. S. Thompson, “The Yahwist Creation Story,” 197-208, who argues for an early creation story which was adapted later.

²See above, pp. 234 ff.

³Cf. Nielsen, *Hope*, 126-28.

⁴Kraus, 657.

⁵Edward Lipinski, “Garden of Abundance, Image of Lebanon,” *ZAW* 85 (1973): 358, speaks of a “pre-existent metaphorical image, which is also attested with Mt. Amanus in place of Lebanon.” He follows Wolfram von Soden, “Die Unterweltsvision eines assyrischen Kronprinzen,” *ZA* 43 (1936): 1-31. Cf. “A Vision of the Nether World,” in *ANET*, 110, line 24. Cf. also Isa 35:2; 60:13; also Manfred Weippert, “Libanon,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, 6:645.

But Lebanon is not only a place of an abundant garden, it is also the abode of God (cf. Pss 80:11; 104:16). We have here a tradition well known in the ancient Near East.¹ This tradition has been combined with the tradition of the Paradise in Eden.² That the cedar, the juniper, and other famous trees of Lebanon were not native to Palestine may have attributed to them a particular and exceptional character. F. Stolz finds the first combination of the two traditions in the book of Ezekiel. In Ezek 28:13-16 the garden of God, called Eden, is located on a mountain, and in Ezek 31:9, 16, 18 the trees of Lebanon, in the "garden of God," are called "trees of Eden."³ But it is not impossible that Lebanon was understood as the paradisiacal place already by the prophet Hosea and his contemporaries.⁴

That Lebanon was seen as a luxuriant garden of divine origin makes the "glory of the Lebanon, the splendor of our God" a fitting symbol of eschatological blessings (Isa 35:2; 60:13). Cedars occur in the divine planting of Isa 41:18-19. Similarly, Isa 51:3 speaks of the divine salvation using the terms "garden of Yahweh" and "Eden."⁵

¹Cf. Wallace, 78-89; M. Weippert, "Libanon," 648; Widengren, *King*, 45; Stolz, "Bäume," 141-156. Stolz assumes an old mythological tradition of a garden of god on the Lebanon mountains. His interpretation is followed by Nielsen, *Hope*, 83-84, 127.

²Cf. Wallace, 71-86. For the location of Eden, cf. Haag, *Der Mensch am Anfang*, 22-27.

³Cf. Stolz, "Bäume," 141, 142.

⁴Also Nielsen, *Hope*, 127-28, assumes an earlier connection between Eden and Lebanon. She refers to Cant 4:12-15 where the Paradise is combined with the Lebanon.

⁵Cf. Ernst Haag, "Der Weg zum Baum des Lebens: Ein Paradiesmotiv im Buch Jesaja," in *Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten*, ed. L. Ruppert, P. Weimar, and E. Zenger (Würzburg: Echter, 1982), 40.

Similarly, in Qumran we find the trees of Lebanon mentioned as an image of Paradise-like vegetation.¹ All this demonstrates that the term Lebanon links the royal-tree image and the Paradise trees.

Third, there is another clue in the passage if we consider it in connection with its parallel in the book of Hosea. The luxuriously growing plants in Hos 14:6-8 not only resemble the garden of Eden; it is noteworthy what kind of plants are mentioned: olive tree (vs. 7), grain, and vine (vs. 8). This corresponds to the products which are mentioned in Hos 2:24: grain, wine and oil. Additionally both passages are connected by the key word *'nh*. In Hos 2:23-24 Yahweh promises: "I will respond."² In Hos 14:9 Yahweh says: "I have responded."

It is important for our study that the Eden passage of Gen 2:19-20 stands in the background of Hos 2:16-24.³ But we find also allusions to the creation tradition of Gen 1, namely the language and vocabulary of Hos 2:16-24, *haššāmayim*, *hā'āreš*, also the list of wild beasts, birds and reptiles in 2:20. Andersen and Freedman come to the conclusion: "The abundant references to animals, plants, and cosmic powers take us

¹Cf. 1QH VIII,5 (Lohse, 142).

²For the chain of responses in Hos 2:23-24, see Wolff, *Hosea*, 65-66, who sees a "naturkundliche Darstellung von Zusammenhängen." Andersen and Freedman, 285-87, think of "responses in the covenant ceremony in the presence of witnesses."

³See Gross, 87. There are other parallels of Gen 2-3 in the book of Hosea: It seems very possible that the phrase in Hos 10:8 *qôš w^edardar*, "thorn and thistle," is borrowed from Gen 3:18, the only other instance of the phrase.

beyond the historical, or at least back to the creation stories, rather than to the Exodus traditions, for the imagery being used.”¹

Since Hos 14 is parallel to Hos 2:16-24, we can assume that in Hos 14 the creation tradition stands in the background in the same way as it lies in the background of Hos 2:16-24. This confirms our assumption that the tree of Hos 14:9 is linked to the trees of Gen 2.²

Lebanon Tree and Fruit Tree in Canticles

Was Hosea the first to combine the famous tree as a well-known metaphor of the king with the concept of the paradisiacal trees? We have no earlier evidence. It seems that the key word “Lebanon” served as the bridge to bring them together. It could well be that Hosea revived and enlarged the long-established royal-tree metaphor by blending it with the concept of the trees in Eden.

However, we have in the Old Testament a striking parallel of the connection of the royal-tree metaphor with the Paradise tradition. In the love songs of Canticles the image of the garden has multiple connotations of the garden of Eden with its fruit trees.³ The lovers are compared to fruit trees: the young man is compared to an apple tree (Cant

¹Andersen and Freedman, 266; cf. also 281.

²Cf. the description of the tree of life in Eden in Enoch 18:6-9; 24:1-25:7 as a blend of the cedar and the date palm.

³Cf. Francis Landy, “The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 513-28; idem, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs*, Bible and Literature Series, no. 7 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); Nielsen, *Hope*, 81. For Mesopotamian parallels of the garden metaphor, see Westenholz, 212.

2:3), his beloved to a palm tree (Cant 7:8-9)¹ or a vineyard (1:6; 8:12 etc.). The lovers leave the city which is hostile to their love and meet in an open area like a paradisiacal garden.²

At the same time the young man is compared to a king (1:4, 12; 3:9-11; 7:6).³ Also the palace of cedar and cypress (1:17) has the connotation of kingship, since these species of trees are typical metaphors for a king, and at the same time are building material of the royal palace.⁴ It is not surprising that we find in Canticles the image of Lebanon too.⁵

Especially interesting is Cant 2:3. In the apple tree, which provides not only fruit but also shade, the motifs of the Paradise fruit tree and the royal shade tree merge.⁶

¹Cf. also the Sumerian parallel: "My mother is a palm tree with a very sweet smell." Westenholz, 215.

²"The recollection is of human origins, in a paradisaal landscape, in the open, under fruit trees." Thus Landy, *Paradoxes*, 214, commenting on Cant 8:5. For the metaphor of the garden, see idem, "The Song of Songs," 513-28.

³But see D. W. de Villiers, "Not for Sale! Solomon and Sexual Perversion in the Song of Songs," *Old Testament Essays* 3 (1990): 317-24, who identifies Solomon as an antihero, as the fool on the throne (8:7). There is certainly a critical component in the presentation of the king in the Songs, however more in the sense of a heightening than in the sense of a contrast: The lover is like a king, even more than a king.

⁴For the metaphor of the king in the Songs cf. Müller, *Vergleich*, 30, 43; Gillis Gerleman, *Ruth, Das Hohelied*, BKAT 18 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 60-62.

⁵Cf. the description of the young man "like a cedar" of "Lebanon" in 5:15. Also 4:8, 11, 15; 3:9.

⁶The apple tree occurs again in 8:5. Also in 8:5 we have the king in the background, because this verse corresponds to 3:6, a context where the lover is compared to the king.

Also the comparison of the apple tree with the forest trees reminds one of the comparison of the famous cedar with other trees as an expression indicating the greatness of a king.¹

It has often been noticed that there is a close similarity between Canticles and the last chapter of Hosea.² One aspect is the reference to Paradise: Being with the beloved person is like living in Paradise (Canticles), in the same way as living with Yahweh brings back Paradise (Hos 14). Another aspect is the reference to the king. In Canticles the beloved friend is compared to a king; in Hos 14 Yahweh introduces Himself with royal imagery.

In both books these two aspects are expressed through a combination of tree metaphors. In Canticles the beloved person is depicted as a fruit tree but the image is enlarged with the royal tree. Thus the fruit tree gives shade (Cant 2:3). In Hos 14 the royal-tree image, the *b'rôš* of Lebanon, is in the forefront and is enlarged by the aspect of fruit and Paradise. Thus the royal tree bears fruit.

If the love songs are of early origin³ and their specific use of tree imagery was already known in Hosea's time, we could assume that the tree metaphor of Hos 14 also bears connotations of a love relationship. This would further contribute to the multiplicity of the tree metaphor.

¹2 Kgs 14:9; Isa 9:9; 55:13. Cf. van Wyk, 94, who assumes that the fable of trees in Judg 9 is derived from a dispute of who is being more useful for mankind.

²Hubbard, 230; Feuillet, "S'asseoir à l'ombre," 396-401; followed by Yee, 138-40; for Hos 2 also van Selms, 85-89.

³Van Selms, 88.

The Meaning of the Tree Simile in Hosea 14:9

Paradise Regained with Yahweh, the Eschatological King

What is the result of our investigation for the interpretation of the tree simile in Hos 14:9? The combination of the two traditions represented by trees results in a new understanding of both concepts. Paradise and its trees, in Gen 2-3 depicted as a reality created by Yahweh, become a metaphor. Yahweh and mankind are not distinguished from Paradise. They become sprouting and growing plants themselves.¹ This Paradise which they themselves are cannot become lost to them. The expulsion from Paradise is reversed forever.²

The trees of Paradise, on the other hand, give color to the royal-tree metaphor. Israel will live under the shelter and protection of its only true king Yahweh.³ He will provide not only for the daily necessities like a human king, but for paradisiacal life. The elements of rivalry, conquest, and destruction, often part of the royal-tree metaphor, are eliminated. This might be one reason for the fact that the simile in Hos 14:9 does not speak of the cedar. Normally the cedar is the first-mentioned tree of Lebanon. "In enumerations 'rz tend [*sic*] to appear in the first place, *brwš* in the second place: Ps

¹Cf. Kruger, "Yahweh's Generous Love," 41.

²Cf. Frey, *Hosea*, 299.

³For the critical attitude of Hosea towards the kingship in Israel cf. especially Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*. Cf. already H. W. Robinson, *Two Hebrew Prophets*, 35-36; further Wolff, *Hosea*, 295; somewhat differently Helmut Utzschneider, *Hosea: Prophet vor dem Ende: Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Institution in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie*, OBO 31 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 105-25; Ward, "The Message of the Prophet Hosea," 396-400.

104,16-17; Is 37,24; Ezek 31,8; Zech 11,1-2; Cant 1,17 (reverse order Is 14,8; Ezek 27,5).”¹ It is possible that traditionally the cedar has too many connotations of pride, conquest, and judgment, while Hosea's concern is the gift of life.²

This king is presented in a paradisiacal light. The rulership of Yahweh will be different from all others; it will be like a new creation. Yahweh is the eschatological king who brings back the lost Paradise. Hosea presents his message of hope of future restoration in terms of the eschatological renewal of Paradise.³

The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is a loving one. Since king image and paradisiacal nature are elements of love songs, the combined tree image suggests that Yahweh and Israel will belong together like lovers. In this aspect the book of Hosea comes full circle in taking up at the end the theme of the first three chapters.

Tree Image and Fertility

After we have investigated the royal and the paradisiacal components of the tree simile of Hos 14:9, we can now understand its force in an environment of the fertility cult. As for the *royal-tree simile*, the luxuriant tree suggests life in abundance. It gives to the animals and birds what they need for life, first of all shelter and pleasant shade. In

¹Tångberg, 88, n. 33.

²The cedar is likewise not mentioned in Isa 60:13, another passage of salvation. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 253, proposes another reason for the use of *b^erôš* instead of cedar in Hos 14:9: He assumes that the name of the tree, *b^erôš*, forms a pun and reminds of the *b^erît*.

³Kruger, “Yahweh's Generous Love,” 41. For the garden of Eden as a symbol of the eschatological salvation, see Berg, “Israel's Land,” 45-51.

the same way the king provides for the people what is necessary for their life. Fertility is but one aspect of the fullness of life.

The *paradisiacal trees*, on the other hand, are part of the luxuriant plant life of Paradise. They symbolize the fertility of the garden of Eden and provide sustenance for humanity with their fruit. Again, fertility is but one, albeit important, aspect.

In Hos 14:9 the royal-tree image and the paradisiacal trees meet to convey the message: Yahweh is the true provider of fertility and prosperity *because He is creator and king*.

It has often been said that the tree image fits perfectly the situation of Hosea's audience.¹ We can now further qualify this assertion in three respects.

First, the tree in Hos 14:9 has a very broad meaning. Although fertility is an important aspect, what Yahweh gives to Israel is more than fertility. Since Israel lived in an agricultural society, she might have been concerned mainly with fertility of the vegetation, herds and people. Therefore she worshiped Canaanite deities, perhaps sometimes with sexual practices. Hosea broadens Israel's view to Yahweh's *universal* blessings by combining the royal-tree image with the paradisiacal tree image. Hosea makes clear that well-being does not depend on fertility but on the relationship to the Creator God who is the true "king" of Israel.²

¹In using images also relevant to the Canaanite religion, Hosea speaks in "strong, almost risky, language," he "borrowed the enemy's sword." Thus Hubbard, 233. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, xix, 307; Jüngling, 354-55; Kruger, "Relationship," 261-62; Deissler, *Zwölf Propheten*, 63.

²If P. E. S. Thompson, "The Yahweh Creation story," 206, is correct that Gen 2-3 is "an outright denial of the claims traditionally made for Baal in Canaan," namely, that it is not Baal but "Yahweh alone who by his gracious ordering of creation has

Second, the tree in Hos 14:9 is demythologized. The people of Israel are not to change from the place “under the green tree” to the “luxuriant tree” as if Yahweh were another or better deity of fertility. The two trees are not comparable. In the fertility cult the tree functions as a symbol of the deity. The tree partakes in the numen. Therefore it can grant fertility.

In the book of Hosea the tree is not the manifestation of the divine being but a linguistic figure used in a simile.¹ The linguistic figure of the tree recalls a “normal” tree. That it gives shade and fruit is one of its normal features. “Es geht also nicht mehr darum, diesen Baum kultisch zu verehren oder unter diesem Baum Kultpraktiken durchzuführen, sondern Ephraim/Israel kann an diesem Baum Früchte ernten—d.h. eine normale Beziehung zu diesem Baum haben.”²

Third, the tree image in Hos 14:9 and the trees in fertility cults have different functions. The fruit trees or tree trunks in the cults of Baal and Asherah function as *manifestations* of the fertility deity. The tree represents the giver of fertility; therefore, it is part of the cult. A justification for the rites which are performed with, or under, trees in order to obtain fertility is neither given nor necessary. Hosea's use of the tree image,

provided for man's life and sustenance on earth,” then the prophet's opposition against the fertility cult rests on the concept of creation. This can also be assumed for “Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel; of the scathing invective of Amos (iv 4-9), and the anguished reproach of Israel in Hosea (ii 8 ff., also Jeremiah iii 3). The prophets all take it for granted that Yahweh is Lord of all creation and of history and the giver of all fertility; even Elijah appeals to it not as a new fact or a new insight but as something which is being forgotten and ignored by both king and people” (ibid., 206-7).

¹When the Old Testament mentions a tree in the context of pagan deities, the language is literal and deliberately profane (Isa 44:14). Cf. also Metzger, 94.

²Grün-Rath, 66.

on the other hand, gives *reasons* for the expectation of Yahweh's blessings. The tree image is not part of the cult but part of an *argument* referring metaphorically to Yahweh as creator and king.¹

Hosea's boldness in using the tree image in a situation greatly influenced by the fertility cult has been praised.² What was it that gave him the assurance of not being misunderstood? The threefold difference in Hosea's usage of the tree image compared to the usage in the fertility cult is the answer to this question. Hosea must have been sure that the tree image in the manner he used it would connote kingship and creatorship.

¹Kruger, "Relationship," does not discuss the different functions of the tree image of Hos 14:9 and the tree of the fertility cults. He places them side by side as if Hosea would simply claim that Yahweh gives what has been expected from Baal. Thereby Hosea's reasoning is overlooked.

²For example Wolff, *Hosea*, xviii-xix, 307.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Conventional Metaphors

After we have studied the images of Hos 14 employed for Yahweh, it remains to summarize our results and draw some conclusions for the passage and the book of Hosea as a whole.

Our first concluding point relates to the application of metaphoric language. According to the results of modern linguistics, we have interpreted the metaphors and similes as phenomena of language. We found that all the occurring metaphors and similes are deeply rooted in Israelite language traditions. They are based on conventional, sometimes well-worn, metaphors, which are revived, altered, or reversed by the prophet.¹

We have rejected explanations that devalue the metaphors by taking them as literal in a mythological text-world or in the experience of Hosea or the people. The marriage metaphor, for example, is not based on Hosea's nuptial experience; rather it provides the base for Hosea's symbolic action. The fornication metaphor is not a description of the people's sexual behavior in the cult; rather it metaphorically denounces (normally nonsexual) cultic practices on the ground of a high sexual value system.

¹A similar conclusion is reached by Buss, 113, 115.

The Rational Effect of the Metaphors

Our second point reflects on the metaphoric language and the personality of Hosea. Hosea uses the comparative particle *kē* for the dew and the tree images.¹ One reason for the similes is their function to signal the change from literal to metaphoric speech. Hosea introduces the sickness/healing metaphor for the first time by two similes (5:12); later he uses metaphors of the same image field. He also introduces the historical review with two similes (9:10). Later we find no simile but verbal metaphors for Yahweh's activities (9:15; 10:9-10; 11:1; 13:4-5).

Further, the simile, while itself a kind of metaphoric speech, makes the audience realize that by metaphoric expressions a new categorizing and structuring of the topic is suggested. The metaphoric process becomes more transparent, more rational.² This creates a certain distance which gives room for critical reflection. Hosea's similes are a way to argue.

Another sign that Hosea wants the audience to reflect on their situation intellectually is the fact that quite often Hosea uses clusters of images and not only one elaborated metaphor.³ The change from one metaphor to another strengthens the

¹Labuschagne, 76, proposed that Hosea used similes instead of metaphors in order to avoid identifying Israel's God with nature. But such identification would result if figurative language—simile and metaphor alike—is taken as literal. Hosea uses (verbal) marriage metaphors, which Labuschagne ignores, without hesitation, although these expressions could easily be interpreted literally according to the Canaanite mythology and thus make Yahweh into a deity like Baal. Labuschagne's explanation is not convincing and suffers from an inadequate understanding of language.

²Weiss, "Methodologisches," 15, calls similes more intellectual.

³Even the elaborated marriage metaphor in chap. 2 is interspersed with other images: desert (vs. 5), horticulture (vs. 8), nature (vss. 14, 20, 23-25).

rational argument but weakens the emotional impact. The emotional effect of a semantic field, which is used as a metaphor for another field, becomes stronger if the listener is made to dwell on it for a certain time. The elaborated metaphors of the deceived husband or the disappointed adopter father, therefore, are emotionally moving. On the other hand, the structuring of one semantic field by another is mentally more convincing if it is supported by one or more other fields. Hence the argumentative power of a cluster of metaphors.¹ Hosea wants his audience to reflect on their past and on their moral and religious behavior and to distance themselves from their faithless conduct.

Hosea certainly had strong feelings. But he was by no means primarily an emotional person.² He must also have been a person of a rational mind. This would explain not only his use of similes and clusters of metaphors but also the many connections with wisdom literature.³

Metaphoric Network

A third point of our summary relates to the connection between the different similes and metaphors. Grün-Rath has pointed out that an image is not to be considered in isolation from other images of the context.⁴ We have to consider the metaphors and

¹Cf. p. 226.

²Against John L. McKenzie, "Divine Passion in Osee," *CBQ* 17 (1955): 167-179. See also von Rad, *Theologie*, 150, who speaks of the "Eindruck einer äußersten Leidenschaftlichkeit." He sees Hosea "von Affekten ganz persönlicher Art her bestimmt, von denen der Liebe, des Zorns, der Enttäuschung, ja des Zwiespaltes zwischen zwei gegensätzlichen Empfindungen." Cf. also p. 17, n. 1.

³Cf. n. 3 on p. 91.

⁴Grün-Rath, 61-68.

similes of the whole chapter as a network of imagery. We will now point to some important links between the images of Hos 14.

Royal Images

Our study of the background of the images of Hos 14 has brought to light what, so far, has escaped the attention of exegetes. Each of the images has royal connotations: Healing is traditionally the task of the father or leader of the clan and was metaphorically assigned to the king. “To be a father of the orphans,” a common way to express the task of the king, colors the love metaphor of Hos 14:5. The great forest tree giving shade and providing a place of well-being for birds and animals is a widespread image of the king in the ancient Near East. Likewise the dew image is connected with the king (Ps 110).

Recently A. Moenikes has pointed to Hosea's radical criticism of the institution of kingship which is parallel to his rejection of worshiping other deities besides Yahweh.¹ Human kingship—as foreign cults—contradicts Yahweh's claim to be Israel's only Lord. Additionally, in Hosea Moenikes finds a rejection of the kingship on the ground of real negative experiences with the kings, for example, assassinations and wrong foreign politics. He concludes that Yahweh cannot be called “king” before the exile, when negative connotations of real kingship are already pushed in the background.²

However, the fact that Hos 14 expresses Yahweh's lordship, the alternative to human kingship, in a metaphorical way derived from the rejected institution contradicts

¹Ansgar Moenikes, *Die grundsätzliche Ablehnung des Königtums in der Hebräischen Bibel*, BBB 99 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994), 175-208.

²Ibid., 219.

Moenikes's historical construct. To date Hos 14 as exilic would not resolve the problem because at least the royal imagery of healing and adoption is well established in other parts of the book of Hosea (Hos 5-6; 9; 11).

Likewise, W. H. Schmidt comes to the conclusion that Hosea not only criticizes the politics of Israel's kings and announces a judgment against the king (like Amos 7:9, 11), but rejects the institution of kingship altogether (Hos 7:16; 8:4; 10:15; 13:11), because Yahweh alone is Israel's helper (Hos 13:4, 9-10; 10:3).¹ In Hos 2:2 Israel's new ruler is called a head (*rō'š*), not a king. However, the royal images indicate that the idea of kingship has influenced the thinking in such a way that the role of Yahweh is understood in terms of the rejected idea: Yahweh is "Israel's king" (cf. 1 Sam 8:7; Judg 8:23). This metaphor has structured the way the relationship between Israel and Yahweh is perceived.²

Presupposed Covenant

We have seen that the love metaphor in its two variants, the marriage motif and the adoption motif, originally speaks of a broken relationship. Similarly, the healing metaphor, which presupposes a miserable situation, refers to Yahweh's role in punishing the unfaithful with sickness and restore the faithful to health, recalling the covenant curses and blessings. Also the dew and tree images have connotations of covenant

¹Werner H. Schmidt, "Kritik am Königtum," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 450-51. A different conclusion is drawn by Gelston, 84-85.

²Schmidt, "Kritik am Königtum," esp. 448-461, has pointed to the influence of this metaphor on the perception of human kingship.

blessings and emphasize the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. All the images of Hos 14 suggest that already there exists a covenant relationship between Yahweh and His people Israel.¹ This result confirms the opinion of several scholars who maintain that Hosea refers to a covenant between Yahweh and Israel.²

That the images suggest an already existing covenant does not mean that the covenant is the soil from which the images have grown. We have to distinguish between the background of the metaphors and their effect. As background of the images we found a number of different language traditions of Israel (healing function of the father and leader in the clan, denouncement of foreign cults as fornication) and of the ancient Near East (family language of political treaties, the blessing of dew, the great forest tree in royal language). The images are selected and organized in such a way that the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is seen in terms of a covenant.

Images of Paradise

Our investigation has revealed that the images of Hos 14, especially the two nature images, present Yahweh in such a way that they recall Yahweh's creation work. The image of the majestic Lebanon tree points to the garden of Eden, especially because the forest tree image is connected with the fruit. The dew image has the traditional positive meaning of blessing; moreover, it seems to refer to the miraculous dew at the creation morning when Yahweh created mankind out of the dust.³ The healing image

¹Cf. Hentschke, 47.

²Cf. n. 2 on p. 157.

³Cornelius, 47, 53, 64, finds motifs similar to the Paradise, but not derived from Gen 2-3.

points to the universal wholeness that Yahweh will provide according to His covenant promises. And the love image implies a new beginning of Yahweh with His people.

This poses the question of how the salvation passages of the book of Hosea go together with his message of judgment. Some have suggested the elimination of some or all of the positive parts of the book as later additions.¹ But this would only be a deferment of the problem, because the question would remain how the redactor(s) of Hosea could hold together in one book the radical judgment of the original prophet and the inserted hope passages.

Others understand the judgment passages as a disciplinary means² or see a development of the theology of the prophet from a conditional salvation message to the unconditioned "Erlösungsglauben."³ That means that there is still a relationship between Yahweh and Israel, of which judgment is a part. However, this explanation results in a weakening of the judgment and is very similar to the people's expectation in Hos 6:1-3. They acknowledge Yahweh's disciplinary strokes and, at the same time, expect His soon coming healing. But Hosea rejects this notion (6:4). By the names of his children "Not-pitied" and "Not-my-people" he has to proclaim that the relationship between Yahweh

¹Harper, 408-9; William F. Stinespring, "A Problem of Theological Ethics in Hosea," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and J. T. Willis (New York: Ktav, 1974), 133-43; Jeremias, "Zur Eschatologie," 231-33; Kruger, "Yahweh's Generous Love," 27-28, 31-32, 43; Hecht, 91.

²For example Brown, *Hosea*, xxx; von Rad, *Theologie*, 156. However, von Rad speaks of a "Nullpunktsituation," from which Yahweh begins anew.

³Fohrer, "Umkehr und Erlösung," 232-40; cf. also Wolff, *Hosea*, xxii-xxiii.

and Israel has come to an end.¹ This verdict must not be downgraded by the hope message.² On the contrary:

The seriousness of the situation requires not merely a normal discipline which one might bear repeatedly but a drastic destruction to be followed by a new situation altogether. . . . For Hosea, however, Israel's downfall is definitely sealed, so that it is appropriate for him to look beyond the impending disaster to a new order fulfilling the will of God. In other words, Hosea's words would be less drastic if they did not include a hope. . . . The promises serve to underline the inescapability of the threats, while the threats lead on to a new situation.³

Because the coming disaster leads to total destruction, the future cannot be less than a new creation. Hope rests solely on the decision of Yahweh.⁴ Hosea's eschatology emerges from the insight of the deadly seriousness of the human backsliding (*m^ešūbāh*). Thus, the metaphors that refer to the creation correspond to the radical judgment and, at the same time, structure the expectation of Yahweh's future as something never before heard and seen. W. Eichrodt is correct when he speaks of a renewal of creation and states: "All hope for salvation from the divine judgment of wrath rests on an absolute miracle which is withdrawn from all human calculation."⁵ One cannot think of a begin-

¹Cf. also 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:5. Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, xx.

²Ward, *Hosea*, 236: "Yet wrath is more than the disciplinary agent of love that seeks to educate. Wrath is a destructive power, the evil effect of which on human life cannot be rationalized away with pious words about the 'ultimate' love of God."

³Buss, 129.

⁴Warmuth, 56-57; Kinet, "Eschatologische Perspektiven," 50-55; Hentschke, 51.

⁵Walther Eichrodt, "'The Holy One in Your Midst': The Theology of Hosea," *Interpretation* 15 (1961): 273. Similarly Buss, 133: "Its paradisiacal form goes beyond anything known to experience and points to a divine kingdom."

ning more radical than that of creation. Therefore paradisiacal images are the linguistic means of Hosea to express what is beyond human understanding and language.¹

We have seen that it is one of the achievements of Hosea that he turns the traditional images of the broken marriage and of the disappointed adopter into hopeful images of love (Hos 2:16, 21-22; 14:5). This reversal of a negative image into a positive one corresponds to the creation image developed out of the radical and final judgment. Hosea opens a new perspective by reversing the traditional imagery and blending it with aspects of the creation tradition.

Results for the Interpretation of the Whole Book

The fourth summarizing point relates to the connections between Hos 14 and the whole book. The images of Hos 14 are the final part of a network of imagery that pervades the entire book. In Hos 1-3 the image of love is represented by the marriage metaphor. However, already in Hos 1 we find the motif of rejected, and finally acknowledged, children (Hos 1:4-2:3). In later parts of the book this motif is elaborated into the adoption metaphor and, finally, occurs in Hos 14:4-5. Also the image of healing and the dew image occur already several times before chapter 14. Only the tree image is found just once. However, if we take the luxuriant tree together with the imagery of abundant plant life, we notice parallels in Hos 2:23-25 and find the vine in Hos 2:15 and 10:1. Additionally, the paradisiacal plant life reminds one of love poetry and thereby connects the last chapter with the first chapters.²

¹For the paradisiacal images in Hosea, cf. Gross, 87-89; Cornelius, 44-47.

²Hubbard, 230-31.

We want to point to four aspects of the manifold connections between the metaphors of the different parts of the book of Hosea. First, the images form contrasts and reversals: broken marriage and new betrothal (chap. 2); complaint about, hate of, and expulsion of, the stubborn adoptive son (9:10; 11:1-4; 9:15) and the free-will love and adoption of the orphan (14:4-5); Yahweh's inflicting wounds (6:5) or even being a festering wound (5:12) and His healing (14:5); dew as an image for the destruction of Israel (13:3) and for the abundant blessing (14:6); destruction of nature and devastation of gardens (2:14) and paradisiacal growth of nature (2:20, 23-24; 14:6-8). The reversal of images is an appropriate means to express the connection between Hosea's message of total destruction in judgment and of hope as a completely new beginning.

Second, we find a positive heightening of the images at the end of the book. The subject of the sickness/healing image changes from Israel (5:12-13; 7:1; 11:3) to Israel's faithlessness (14:5). It is a movement of decreasing identification of Israel with sickness. The same is true for the dew image. While in the judgment passages Israel is identified with the (negative) dew, this identification is not continued in Hos 14. Thus what is negative in Israel is separated from Israel.

For the positive images we find the opposite movement. While in the beginning of the book Israel is not identified with the growing plants (except perhaps Hos 2:25) but the plants grow *for Israel* (2:17, 23-24), at the end Israel is identified with the abundant vegetation. Even Yahweh Himself is compared to a luxuriant tree.¹ Thus, the good that

¹Ward, *Hosea*, 237, finds it only consistent that at the end of the book images of nature are employed for Yahweh. Already in chap. 2 the question is raised whether Yahweh is part of nature and thus nature can be influenced by the cult or whether Yahweh is the sovereign provider who gives out of His own will.

Yahweh does for Israel comes closer to the people and, finally, Israel herself becomes positive. This double movement is a strong expression of hope. It is supported by the change of Yahweh's role in connection with the sickness/healing motif from causing sickness (5:12-13) to healing (7:1; 11:3; 14:5), from negative to positive.

Third, if we compare the function of the metaphors at the beginning of the book of Hosea with their function at the end, we find also a correspondence and a change: In the beginning the images function as an *accusation*. Therefore, the juridical and historical aspects of the marriage and adoption metaphor are emphasized, expressing the personal guilt of the covenant partner, depicting Israel as an active and responsible person. In the last chapter, however, the healing, the love, the dew, the tree—all of these metaphors point, not to Israel's action and responsibility, but to the effect for Israel. Israel has a more passive role and is invited to realize the advantages of the restored relationship with Yahweh. The metaphors make clear that Israel's future is by Yahweh's action and gift. The effect on Hosea's audience of this kind of announcement is a strong *invitation* to accept what is graciously offered. In any case, the One who is active is Yahweh. Israel's actions play no independent role.

Fourth, our study of the images in the book of Hosea has detected several instances where certain terms, which occur at the end of a statement, suddenly cause the whole utterance to be seen in a new light. For example, in Hos 6:1-4 the traditional and contextually positive meaning of the dew image is reversed to the negative only in the last clause.¹ In Hos 11:1, only at the end does the word *lbny*, “my son,” clarify that the

¹See p. 217.

adoption metaphor is employed.¹ The cluster of images in Hos 13:3 functions in such a way that the last two images make the whole cluster to be seen in the light of divine judgment.² The tree simile in Hos 14:9 is followed by a statement about the fruit. This casts new light on the forest-tree image.³ Obviously, it is one of the techniques of the prophet to end a passage in such a way that the end casts a new and surprising light on the whole. Can we assume that technique to be operative concerning the end of the whole book also?

It has often been observed that the book of Hosea closes each section with a positive passage (chaps. 3; 11; 14).⁴ This feature seems to function in the same way as we found it working for smaller units. The final and surprising positive outlook at the end sheds light on the whole. For the whole book of Hosea this means that the correct understanding of its message discloses itself only if we take into consideration the surprising twists and turns of the last chapter.⁵ Hos 14 helps us to appreciate Yahweh's complaints, to understand the character of His judgments, to realize His way to salvation. At the end of the book it becomes clear that Hosea proclaims a God for whom the total destruction is not the end because He creates the future of His people out of nothing.

¹See p. 186.

²See p. 225.

³See p. 310.

⁴Cf. p. 20.

⁵Jeremias, *Hosea*, 7.

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