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HOSEA 3:1–5

Afterwards the Israelites Shall Repent and Seek the Lord Their God

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.

[1]The Lord said, "Go again, love a woman
who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress;
even as the Lord loves the people of Israel,
though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."
[2]So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver
and a homer and a lethech of barley.
[3]I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days;
you shall not play the harlot, or belong to another man;
so will I also be with you."
[4]For the Israelites shall dwell many days
without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar,
without ephod or teraphim.
[5]Afterwards the Israelites shall repent
and seek the Lord their God, [and David their king;]
and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his
goodness [in the latter days]. – Hosea 3:1–5

Many of the early commentators consider the entirety of Hos. 3:1–5 as a later insertion on the supposition that the absence of kings, princes, sacrifices, etc. already reflects the situation after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722/721 BC. The expression "for many days" (ימים רבים), in particular, is thought to indicate an enduring climate of devastation, and these commentators

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argue that the words "pillar" (מצבה), "ephod" (אפוד), and "teraphim" (תרפים) are not part of Hosea's vocabulary.[1]

But could Hosea not have foreseen a catastrophe that would last for a long time? Moreover, how could the lack of sacrifice and ritual paraphernalia be a reflection of the situation in Israel after 721 BC when the Israelite cult, in fact, continued to thrive there under Assyrian rule?[2] Finally, while מצבה, אפוד, and תרפים appear only here within the book of Hosea, such words could hardly be out of place in the overall preaching of the prophet who was deeply concerned about the cultic life of his people.

A more acceptable opinion is that only the references to "David their king" (דוד מלכם) in v. 5b and the phrase "in the latter days" (הימים באחרית) in v. 5c are later additions.[3] "David their king" may have been

[1]K. Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton*, Kurzer Handkommentar 13 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1904), 9; E. Day, "Is the Book of Hosea Exilic?" *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 26:2 (1909–1910): 113; P. Haupt, "Hosea's Erring Spouse," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 34 (1915): 42; L. Batten, "Hosea's Message and Marriage," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 48 (1929): 270–272; R. Wolfe, "The Editing of the Book of the Twelve," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 53:1 (1935): 93. G. Yee (*Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea*: *A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBL Diss. 102 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 57–59) recently revived the suggestion.

[2]According to J. Miller and J. Hayes, "it should not be assumed that either Yahwism, the priesthood, or cult places for worship of Yahweh disappeared from the north" (*A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], 339; see also J. Hayes & J. Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judaean History* [London: SCM Press, 1977], 434).

[3]E. Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, KAT 12/1, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922), 49; A. Weiser, *Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten* I, ATD 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 23; H. Wolff, *Hosea,* Hermeneia, trans. G. Stansell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 57; J. Mays, *Hosea,* OTL (London: SCM Press, 1969), 16; P. Borbone, "Il capitolo terzo di Osea," *Henoch* 2 (1980): 258–259. On the other hand, W. Nowack (*Die kleinen Propheten,* 2nd ed., HKAT III/4 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903], 28), T. Robinson ("Hosea," *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten,* HAT 14, hrsg. T. Robinson & F. Horst [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck,

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one of the pro-Judah glosses inserted by a later redactor (cf. 1:7, 11; 4:15; 12:1); the ideas expressed in them, moreover, are more in keeping with the thought of later Judaic messianism than with that of an eighth century prophet who has largely ignored the southern kingdom.[4] מלכם דוד appears elsewhere only in Jer. 30:9 and באחרית הימים in Jer. 23:30; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezk. 38:16; and in the expressly eschatological passages of Isa. 2:2 || Mic. 4:1; Gen. 49; and Num. 24:14. From a grammatical point of view, moreover, these words are disjointed with the rest of the passage—David can hardly be appropriate as the second object of "seek" (בקשׁ). This verb, with God as the goal of the search, has a religious—even cultic—sense. Finally, the adverb "afterwards" (אחר) at the beginning of the sentence makes the other time-reference "in the latter days" (באחרית הימים) redundant, and the original stress count (3:3:3) is also disturbed by the insertion (3:5:5).

Structure and Genre. Hos. 3:1–5 contains three elements that are inextricably linked with one another: allegory, interpretation, and outcome.

1964], 16), W. Harper (*Amos and Hosea,* ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904], 215), and I. Willi-Plein (*Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments,* BZAW 123 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971], 126) regard the whole of v. 5 as secondary. M. Buss (*The Prophetic Word of Hosea: A Morphological Study,* BZAW 111 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969], 10 and 70) includes v. 4 as a late addition. H. Simian-Yofre thinks that although it is tempting to see a later hand in vv. 4–5, it is possible that these verses may have come from the prophet himself, who rereads the events of his life in the light of other contemporaneous or later occurrences (*El desierto de los dioses: Teología e historia en el libro de Oseas* [Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1993], 60).

[4]For a contrary opinion, see the article of A. van Selms, "The Southern Kingdom in Hosea" (*Studies on the Books of Hosea and Amos,* OTWSA 7 [Potchefstroom, South Africa: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1964], 100–111), which argues that "Hosea knew and honoured a messianic hope connected with the house of David" (110–111). Hos. 3:5 for van Selms thus belongs to the authentic words of the prophet.

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Allegory	v. 1a
Interpretation	v. 1b
Allegory	vv. 2–3
Interpretation	v. 4
Outcome	v. 5

These three components are essential for communicating the integral message of the prophet. Hosea's personal life story, narrated as a first-person account (note the *wayyiqtol* form of the main verbs in the narrative parts [vv. 1a.2–3]),[5] is an *allegory* that is meant to convey a prophetic message to Israel. All his actions have symbolic meanings which are explained in the process of telling the story and interpreted in terms of their significance and import for Israel. The *interpretation* in turn comes in the form of a comparison (v. 1b כ "even as …") or explanation (v. 4 כי "for …") of how God would deal with his people. The *outcome* spells out what is in store for Israel's future: punishment (v. 4) along with its healing effect (v. 5) are thus foretold. The divine strategy of loving Israel despite her infidelity and of divesting the nation of its government and cult for many days triumphs and elicits repentance from the people: "afterwards the Israelites will repent and seek the Lord their God.…"

There is thus a thematic unity in Hos. 3:1–5 even though the alternation of allegory and interpretation creates abrupt shifts in the optics of the text: Hosea and the woman in the allegory, God and Israel in the interpretation. The two levels of meaning are not to be

[5]On the question of the historicity of this account and its relationship to the story in Chapter 1, see R. Gordis, "Hosea's Marriage and Message: A New Approach," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 25 (1954): 9–35, esp. 24–35; reprinted in R. Gordis, *Poets, Prophets, and Sages* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1971), 230–254. G. Tucker considers Hos. 3 to be a prophetic proclamation and not an autobiography ("Hosea," in J. Mays, ed., *HarperCollins Bible Commentary* [New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988], 638).

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taken as two separate stages of literary development[6]—apart from v. 1a where God is quoted to show that the prophetic activity emanates from a divine mandate, the whole chapter is a prophetic speech. Indeed, how else could Hosea's life story be a *prophecy* if it has no message and relevance for his contemporaries? There is no reason to consider the interpretations as the work of a later redactor.[7]

Allegory

ויאמר יהוה אלי עוד לך אהב־אשה	[1a]*The Lord said, "Go again, love a woman*
אהבת רע ומנאפת	*who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress;*

Interpretation

כאהבת יהוה את־בני ישׂראל	[1b]*even as the Lord loves the people of Israel,*
והם פנים אל־אלהים אחרים	*though they turn to other gods*
ואהבי אשישי ענבים׃	*and love raisin cakes."*

In Hos. 3:1, we are told, God commanded the prophet to love a promiscuous woman once again, one who is "beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress" (v. 1a); whether or not the woman here is Gomer is debated by scholars.[8] The Septuagint, however, has "a woman who

[6]Simian-Yofre treats vv. 4–5 "separadamente de los vv. 1–3, porque presentan un proceso similar al que hemos constatado en 1:2–9 y 2:4–15. A los hechos presumiblemente biográficos de Oseas se ha sumado una interpretación histórico en forma fundamentos (kî, porque)" (*El desierto*, 60). The particle כי occurs eleven times in cc. 1–2, with five of these introducing a historical interpretation (1:2, 4, 6, 9; 2:2). Yet verses 1:2, 4, 6, and 9 are not treated separately from their context; only 3:4–5 gets special treatment from Simian-Yofre. Why? Simian-Yofre gives no explanation but offers another reason: 3:4–5 contains terms that are mentioned for the first time. It seems, however, that only the words "David their king" and "in the latter days" could not have possibly come from Hosea.

[7]E. Haag dates what he regards as editorial layers in 3:1b, 4, and 5a to the time of Josiah's reform ("Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 108:1 [1999]: 1–20).

[8]L. Dorn, "Is Gomer the Woman in Hosea 3?" *The Bible Translator* 51:4 (2000): 424–430; A. Scherer, "'Gehe wiederum hin!'—Zum Verhältnis von Hos. 3 zu Hos. 1," *Biblische Notizen* 95 (1998): 23–29; B. Kelle, "Hosea 1–3 in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research* 7:2 (2009): 179–216, esp. pp. 187–193; M.-T. Wacker, *Figurations of the Female in the Hosea Book*, HBS 8 (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 110–114; R. Vielhauer, *The Becoming of the Book Hosea:*

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loves evil" or "a woman loving evil" (γυναῖκα ἀγαπῶσαν πονηρα) in place of "a woman beloved of a paramour";[9] the Greek translators as such may have read the Hebrew consonantal text using vowels different from those employed by the Masoretes: *'oheḇeṯ ra'* instead of *'ăhuḇaṯ rēa'*. Nevertheless, the Masoretic reading, which is more consonant with the description of the woman as an adulteress (מנאפת), is preferable.

The meaning of the prophet's action is explained at once by comparing it with God's love for his people Israel "though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes" (v. 1b). Indeed, God was faithful to them despite their many infidelities—in pre-exilic times, the Israelites worshipped many other gods besides their patron God YHWH, and among these were the local Canaanite (*ba'alîm*) and foreign (*'ĕlohê nēḵār*) deities. The delectable "raisin cakes" (אשישי ענבים) were probably offered to the gods as sacrificial gifts.[10] The initial impetus towards strict monotheism thus developed as a result of both the preaching of the eighth century prophets, especially Hosea, and the reforms undertaken by kings Hezekiah and Josiah.

A Redaktionsgeschichte Investigation, BZAW 349 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 130–131.

[9]P. Borbone, who favors the LXX reading "who loves evil," does not offer a convincing argument for his choice. Moreover, his claim that the MT meant to equate *rēa'* with the husband (i.e., Hosea) as attested to by Aquila, Symmachus, and the medieval commentators Rashi and Qimhi is gratuitous ("Il terzo incomodo: L'interpretazione del testo masoretico di Osea 3:1," *Henoch* 7 [1985]: 151–160).

[10]2 Sam. 6:19 (= 1 Chr. 16:3) informs us that David distributed to every person "a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins" when he brought the ark to Jerusalem. That such cakes were delicious can be deduced from a statement in Songs 2:5: "Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love." See G. Driver, "Hebrew Notes on 'Song of Songs' and 'Lamentations,'" in W. Baumgartner, O. Eissfeldt, K. Elliger, & L. Rost, eds., *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), 144.

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Allegory

ואכרה לי בחמשה עשר כסף
וחמר שערים ולתך שערים׃

[2]*So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver*
and a homer and a lethech of barley.

ואמר אליה ימים רבים תשבי לי
לא תזני ולא תהיי לאיש
וגם־אני אליך׃

[3]*I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days;*
you shall not play the harlot, or belong to another man;
so will I also be with you."

Interpretation

כי ימים רבים ישבו בני ישראל
אין מלך ואין שר ואין זבח ואין מצבה
ואין אפוד ותרפים׃

[4]*For the Israelites shall dwell many days*
without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar,
without ephod or teraphim.

Hosea acquired the woman for fifteen pieces of silver plus a homer and a lethech of barley (v. 2). He apparently did not have enough silver and so he had to pay in kind to acquire or redeem her. The word "lethech" (לתך) is *hapax legomenon* and so its meaning is obscure, although according to the Mishnah it means half a homer.[11] The Septuagint has "a flask of wine" (νεβελ οἴνου) in its place, a reading which is not attested to in any Hebrew manuscript. The payment could be either a dowry or a price of redemption from being the legal property of another man or from service as a cult prostitute.

After acquiring the woman, the prophet forced her to live a life of sexual abstinence for many days (v. 3). Restraint from both legitimate and illegitimate contact is what is meant by the verse "so will I also be with you" (וגם־אני אליך), which parallels the prohibition in "you shall not play the harlot, or belong to another man" (תזני ולא תהיי לאיש לא)—note the reiterative particle גם. The negative particle לא in v. 3b, which serves as a double duty particle, is implied in v. 3c—not only was she banned from having sexual relations with other men, but Hosea himself will also not consummate the marriage with her. Nevertheless, while the deprivation is meant to wean her from promiscuity, the punitive measure is also educative—"For many days" indicates that the punishment is not forever.

Once again, the meaning of Hosea's action is explained in terms of God's chastisement of Israel in denying the people of their government

[11]M. Powell & D. Potts, "Weights and Measures," in D. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. VI (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 904.

https://publications.lst.edu/

and cult: "For the Israelites shall dwell (ישבו) many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim" (v. 4). Here "king or prince" is a metonym for the monarchy.

> Hosea subjects the institution of the monarchy as such to a fundamental political and theological criticism. This is certainly connected with the wretched picture which the northern kingdom presented to its time: becoming totally unstable as a state, in its last twenty-five years the northern kingdom had six regents, four of whom ascended the throne as usurpers.[12]

The "sacrifice or pillar" or "teraphim or ephod" represents the state of the Israelite cult,[13] which has developed into what scholars describe as a "baalized" worship: "Indeed, from reading Hosea we get the impression that in his time many had accommodated themselves to these [Canaanite] practices to the extent that they no longer made a sharp distinction between worshiping the Canaanite Baal and worshiping YHWH (see Hos. 2:18–19)."[14] Moreover, "apart from individual abuses it is above all the externalized unreflecting and mechanical relationship with God that he singles out: he attacks an inflation of cultic practices … which [are] not accompanied by

[12]R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* Vol. 1, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1994), 170.

[13]For Hosea, these cultic items are metonyms for the Israelite religion. Y. Sherwood correctly observes: "Rather than presenting the reader with a list of items that are distinctively Canaanite … Hos 3:4 confronts the reader with a list of items that are by no means foreign to the texts and history of Israel" (*The Prostitute and the Prophet,* JSOT Sup. Ser. 212 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 129). Just like the ephod and the teraphim, the "pillar" or "standing stone" (מצבה) belongs to the cultic paraphernalia of early Yahwistic shrines (A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible,* Anchor Bible Reference Library [New York: Doubleday, 1990], 497, 500) although it is unorthodox from the standpoint of the Bible (G. Barrois, "Pillar," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Vol. 3 [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962], 815–816).

[14]J. Miller, *Meet the Prophets* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 82; J. Krispenz, "Idolatry, Apostasy, Prostitution: Hosea's Struggle Against the Cult," in L.-S. Tiemeyer, ed., *Priests & Cults in the Book of the Twelve* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016), 9–29.

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an acceptance of YHWH's instructions (*tôrāh*)."[15] The "ephod" may also symbolize oracular divination practiced by the priests.[16] Thus, "whether political, military, or cultic, every possible substitute for their dependence on YHWH will be stripped away."[17] The people of Israel will then turn back as a result of the deprivation, seek the Lord their God, and come in awe to the Lord's goodness (v. 5).

Outcome

אחר ישבו בני ישׂראל	[5] *Afterwards the Israelites shall repent*
ובקשׁו את־יהוה אלהיהם ואת דוד מלכם	*and seek the Lord their God, [and David their king];*
ופחדו אל־יהוה ואל־טובו	*and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness*
באחרית הימים׃	*[in the latter days].*

Repentance and Reconciliation. The outcome in Hos. 3:5 must be understood in the context of Hosea's vision of Israel's future. The first word of the sentence, אחר ("afterwards"), is the harbinger that signals the beginning of salvation. It marks an advent of time subsequent to the punishment lasting for a number of days (ימים רבים) and suggests that the new era of healing is the result of the purifying days of having "no king or prince, no sacrifice or pillar, no ephod or teraphim" (v. 4), when Israel would have learned a lesson from the desert-experience lived all over again (cf. 2:16–17).

אחר ushers in not the end of time but the fulfillment of God's plan. The divine purpose is to be achieved within the course of history, not outside of it nor in the eschatological time envisioned by a glossator who appended "in the latter days." God takes the first step towards rapprochement and lets the course of time take its toll on Israel; he is no *deus ex machina*. The nation is to be transformed not with the magic wand of apocalyptic eschatology but with the hard lesson of

[15]Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion,* 173.

[16]The *ephod* was a ceremonial vestment with a pouch containing the *Urim* and *Thummim* which the priest used for divination. In the book of Samuel, whenever Saul or David asked for oracles, they asked the priest for an *ephod*.

[17]B. Gault, "Avenging Husband and Redeeming Lover?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60:3 (2017): 494; D. Hubbard, *Hosea,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Vol. 24 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 102.

https://publications.lst.edu/

history, with the devastation befalling it eventually leading to an inner conversion. Only when Israel herself is able to love in return will the final step to reconciliation have been reached.

There is no word for repentance in Biblical Hebrew; instead, the basic ethico-religious stance of a person/nation is often expressed by שׁוב ("to turn")[18] or other such words that set a direction, e.g., פנה ("to face"), בקשׁ ("to seek"), שׁחר ("to look for, aim at"), and דרשׁ ("to search"). It is the object of these words that defines religious attitude.[19] Conversion is thus articulated as a "turning to God" or as "seeking the Lord." This, in a sense, is a far more accurate way of describing the nature of true repentance, for it involves not just a change of heart and mind (*metanoia*) but also a change in life-orientation towards God.

Hos. 3:1–5 uses three of these words to illustrate the conversion of the people. In v. 1, we are told that the Lord loves them even though

[18]According to W. Holladay, the *qal* שׁוב means "having moved in a particular direction, to move thereupon in the opposite direction, the implication being (unless there is evidence to the contrary) that one will arrive again at the initial point of departure" (*The Root šûbh in the Old Testament* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958], 53). E. Dietrich, on the other hand, argues that שׁוב does not necessarily imply a return to the place of departure (*Die Umkehr, Bekehrung und Buße, im Alten Testament und im Judentum* [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936], 8–10). Quite arbitrary, moreover, is R. Gordis's derivation of secondary meanings of שׁוב as "be at rest/peace" (in Hos. 14:8; Isa. 30:15; Jer. 4:1; 30:10; Ezk. 38:8; 2 Sam. 8:3) and as "trust, be secure/confident" (in Hos. 12:7; Jer. 8:6b; 49:4; Is. 47:10; Job 34:36; Prov. 1:32; Ps. 19:7) ("Some Hitherto Unrecognized Meanings of the Verb שׁוב," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52 [1933]: 153–162).

[19]The verb שׁוב by itself is neutral—it can be used with the preposition מאחרי for turning away from God, i.e., "to apostatize" (Num. 14:43; 1 Sam. 15:11; 1 Kgs. 9:6; Jer. 3:19; cf. the noun משׁבה which means apostasy). Joined to the preposition -אל (Jer. 3:7; 1 Kgs. 8:33, 48; Ps. 51:15), ל (Is. 31:6; Ps. 116:7), or -עד (Am. 4:6, 8–11; Is. 9:12) with God as the goal, however, means to turn or return to God's favor, "to be converted." The verb שׁוב can also be used absolutely in this religious sense: "to repent" (Isa. 6:10; 10:22; Jer. 3:7, 12, 14, 22; 4:1; 5:3). See J. Thompson & E. Martens, *s.v.* "שׁוב," in W. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 55–59.

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they *turn* (פנים) to other gods. This present participle indicates the prevailing apostasy/idolatry being committed. V. 5, however, says that the Israelites *shall turn* (ישובו) and *seek* (ובקשו) the Lord their God afterwards, i.e., after dwelling for many years without a king (*sc.* without political sovereignty) and without sacrifice or pillar (i.e., without cult). Notice the change from "turning to other gods" to "turning to and seeking the true God of Israel" in the religious orientation of the people. Indeed, "in the summons to conversion and the description of repentance, that which is done or that which will be done positively, etc. is called 'seeking God.'"[20]

In the absence of any complement that defines the direction of the action, ישובו may be translated by an English verb that does not need an object: "they shall repent" or "they shall return." Neither of these two, however, captures the exact nuance of ישובו—"repent" in modern languages can simply mean to rethink, to reevaluate one's position or attitude, to regret doing something. It loses the important connotation of redirecting one's life toward God. On the other hand, "return" can easily be taken as a physical rather than spiritual movement toward God. Some commentators, in fact, have misinterpreted ישובו here as a prediction of the return of the people from exile![21] It is true that Hosea has sometimes portrayed the coming punishment in terms of captivity in a foreign land, yet nowhere is the exile motif to be found in 3:1–5. The context clearly indicates a religious "return": ישובו stands not only in parallel with ובקשו which has God as its object but also in reversal of the apostasy of the people (הם פנים אל-אלהים אחרים) in v. 1.

[20]S. Wagner, "בקש *biqqēš*" and "בקשה *baqqašah*," in G. Botterweck & H. Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 237. Hos. 5:15 and 7:10 as well as Dt. 4:29, Jer. 50:4, and 2 Chr. 7:14 have "seeking God" in the context of repentance.

[21]In a passage which has an unambiguous reference to the return of the exiles (Hos. 11:10–11), the verb used is the *hiphil* of the root *yšb* "to sit, dwell" (not to be confused with *šûḇ*): "I will make them dwell in their homes" or "I will settle them in their houses."

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The Idiomatic Use of *šûḇ*. The absolute use of the verb שוב in Hos. 3:5 allows it to be construed as an auxiliary verb that has a translation value of "to do again." The whole phrase ובקשו … וישובו may be read as an idiom: "they shall seek *again*…,"[22] with the expression "they shall seek *again* God" (ובקשו את־יהוה) being used here in the context of reestablishing a relationship of love with God. This is strongly suggested by the context of marriage in Hos. 3:1–5 (cf. Hos. 2:9 where בקש describes the search for paramours). Here בקש carries with it an intense kind of inner yearning like that expressed in the Song of Songs: "I sought him whom my soul loves" (Ct. 3:1f; 5:6; 6:1). The direction set by שוב is set in motion by בקש toward an object of love and desire. The idiom "seek again" thus parodies the summons in v. 1 "go, love again.…"

Hosea, moreover, is aware of the rich cultic nuance that undergirds the formula "to seek the Lord" (בקש את־יהוה).[23] This stock phrase in 5:6 specifically refers to offering a sacrifice to God: "With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord."[24] For a more enlightening exegesis of chapter 3, we may note that Hos. 5:15 uses the longer form "to seek the face of the Lord" (בקש פני יהוה or בקש את־פני יהוה) in connection with a penitential rite: "I the Lord will return to my place until they bear their guilt, then they shall seek my face.…"[25] The idiomatic use of שוב in 3:5—"they shall seek *again* the Lord" (ובקשו … וישובו את־יהוה)—may thus indicate a resumption of cultic sacrifice after many years without it (v. 4 *'ên zeḇaḥ*).[26] Only an authentic reconciliation with God will make the future offering of sacrifice possible.

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[22]שוב can be an auxiliary attached to a main verb, thereby modifying the action of that verb as a repetitive act ("to do again"). The idiom can also indicate a regressive sense, e.g., Hos. 2:11 *šûḇ* + *lqḥ* = "to take back."

[23]Wagner, "בקש *biqqēš*," 237–238.

[24]See 2 Chr. 11:16; 15:15. Zech. 8:21–22 refers to seeking God in the Jerusalem sanctuary, as does Ps. 27:7–14.

[25]See also Hos. 7:10; Jer. 50:4.

[26]R. Törnkvist interprets v. 5 as a reference to a "restored cult" (167), even if Hosea's end vision unfortunately "excludes the symbolic wives and sisters

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In some contexts, the theological jargon "to seek the Lord" or "to seek the face of the Lord" can also mean to ask for an oracle, probably through the medium of a priest in a cult.[27] It is similar to the expression שׁאל יהוה ("to inquire of the Lord") used for the rite of divination, which is sometimes done with the help of an ephod.[28] This makes it reasonable to assume, then, that the idiom in Hos. 3:5 also implies the reopening of the channel of communication between God and his people after a time of rupture (v. 4 *'ên 'ēphôḏ*).

There is thus a legitimate place for cult in Hosea's vision of the future.[29] The suppression of cult foretold in v. 4 is probably due more to the fact that Hosea's contemporaries were not properly disposed

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from 'seeking' Yahweh" (169) (see *The Use and Abuse of Female Sexual Imagery in the Book of Hosea* [Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1998], 167–169).

[27]Ex. 33:7; 2 Sam. 21:1.

[28]It is clear that the ephod is used for consulting an oracle (1 Sam. 14:3, 18–19; 23:9; 1 Kgs. 2:26); indeed, its association with the *Urim* and *Thummin* may further suggest its use in divination (1 Sam. 23:2–4; 30:7–8; cf. Jgs. 18:5). And while there is obviously a very close connection between ephod and teraphim in the few passages where the ephod is not a cultic garment (Jgs. 17:5; 18:14, 17–18; Hos. 3:4), the nature of the relationship between them remains obscure. See C. Meyers, "Ephod," in D. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. II (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 550; G. Davies, "Ephod," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 118–119.

[29]J. Lecureux minimizes the place of cult in Hosea's vision of future restoration:

> what are noticeably absent are sacrificial offerings and other cultic items, including a specified location for this liturgical act.… Nowhere in this repentance statement do priests, altars, temples or burnt offerings appear. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case—the prophet has intentionally gone out of his way to offer an opportunity to engage with YHWH in a circumstance that purposefully avoids the cult and cultic instruments (see "Restored Hope? The Function of the Temple, Priest, and Cult as Restoration in the Book of the Twelve," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 41:4 [2017]: 497).

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to approach God than to an outright rejection of rituals as such.[30] In similar fashion, the cultic aspect of "seeking the Lord" in Hos. 5:4, 15 is, for Hosea, clearly subordinate to the internalized search for reconciliation and relationship with God based on *steadfast love* and *real knowledge* of him.

Indeed, the description "they shall come in dread to the Lord and his goodness" (ופחדו אל-יהוה אל-טובו) is another indication of the internal disposition that would characterize the people's reconciliation with God. As a verb or noun, פחד is often used in religious parlance to illustrate a reverent and submissive attitude toward God while the preposition אל- implies a movement toward the Lord and his goodness and further defines the goal of *yāšuḇû* which otherwise has no explicit object.

The parallel words יהוה ("the Lord") and טובו ("his goodness"), on the other hand, are hendiadys which may be translated as "the good Lord" or "his divine goodness."[31] The reference to the Lord's goodness is important in Hosea's concept of repentance—as another word for God's *ḥeseḏ*[32] which figures prominently as a covenant term of fidelity, *ṯûḇ* reminds Hosea's audience that the sinner's recourse to God is nothing else but a response to the faithfulness or goodness

[30]A. Moenikes ("The Rejection of Cult and Politics by Hosea," *Henoch* 19 [1997]: 3–15) tends to absolutize Hosea's rejection of the cult. Wagner's observation, however, is more nuanced:

> A cultic rite cannot be excluded a priori in Hos 3:5 (cf. v. 4!) and Jer 50:4 … even though these texts use the idea of conversion to express an internalizing of man's relationship with God. The much-discussed phenomenon of the criticism of the cult in ancient Israel (e.g., by the prophets) does not necessarily have to be understood in the sense of a rejection of the cult. ("בקשׁ *biqqĕš*," 237f)

[31]Cf. *ṯûḇ yhwh* in Ps. 27:13; Jer. 31:12–14.

[32]H. Stoebe, "חסד *ḥeseḏ* Bontà," *Dizionario Teologico dell'Antico Testamento* Vol. 1 (Torino: Marietti, 1978/82), 520–540; also "טוב *ṭôḇ* Buono" on pp. 565–575 of the same. See also G. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible,* JSOT Sup. Ser. 157 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 259–260.

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which the Lord himself has always shown to his people.[33] By "turning to God's goodness," the nation comes to be nourished once again by his fruit (cf. 14:9) and commits itself to do that which is good (cf. 14:3 as a reversal of 8:3!).

Hosea's Vision of Israel's Future. Hosea envisions a two-stage future for the nation: a) an indeterminate period (3:3 ימים רבים) of educative punishment followed afterwards (3:5 אחר) by b) repentance and reconciliation with God. This basic outline is easily recognized in the programmatic second chapter where the prophet allegorizes the history of God's relationship with Israel in terms of broken marriage (2:4–7 "harlotry"), forced isolation (2:8–9a "hedge"), deprivation/infertility (2:11–15), repentance (2:16–17), and restoration and reconciliation (2:18–25). The vision of the future for Israel as sketched by the prophet in Hos. 3:1–5 has a similar outline:

Present Sin:	• God's love for Israel despite its infidelity/apostasy (v. 1)
Punishment:	• forced isolation (vv. 2–3) and deprivation (v. 4)
Reconciliation:	• return to the Lord (v. 5)

Hos. 3:1–5 and the first two chapters preceding it exhibit many similarities as well as differences between them that have exercised the mind and imagination of exegetes and redaction critics.[34] One

[33]Just how central the covenant idea is in Hosea can be debated. M. Fox, however, sees *ṭûḇ* here as well as in Hos. 8:3 and Jer. 33:9 as a covenant terminology ("*Ṭôḇ* as Covenant Terminology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 209 [1973]: 41–42). He argues on the basis of W. Moran's identification of *tbt'* in the Sefire treaties (1B 2, 1C 19-10, 1C 4-5) as a legal term for the amity established by the treaty. Moran notes similar usage of Akkadian *tubtu/tubu/tubutu* ("A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22:3 [1963]: 173–176).

[34]B. Renaud, "Le livret d'Osée 1–3. Un travail complexe d'édition," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 56:3 (1982): 159–178; B. Renaud, "Osée 1–3: Analyse diachronique et lecture synchronique, problèmes de méthode," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 57:4 (1983): 249–260; R. Gordis, "Hosea's Marriage and Message," 9–35; L. Ruppert, "Beobachtungen zur Literar- und Kompositionskritik von Hosea

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thing is clear, however, regardless of how one explains their origin and interrelationship: Hos. 3:1–5 reiterates the fundamental insight propounded in the earlier chapters, namely, that punishment is part of God's plan to win back his people, and that his consummate love for an erring nation will ultimately elicit a response.[35] "She shall say, I will go and return to my first husband …" (2:9). "She shall answer as in the days of her youth …" (2:17). "Afterwards the Israelites shall repent and seek the Lord their God … and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness" (3:5).

1–3," *Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten,* Fs. J. Schreiner, hrsg. L. Ruppert, P. Weimar, & E. Zenger (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1982), 163–182; L. Ruppert, "Erwägungen zur Kompositions- und Redaktionsgeschichte von Hosea 1–3," *Biblische Zeitschrift Paderborn* 26:2 (1982): 208–223.

[35]K. Weingart, "Eine zweite Chance für Israel? Gericht und Hoffnung in Hos 3,1–5," *Biblica* 97:3 (2016): 342–359.

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