



NORWEGIAN
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God consulting himself

An exegetical analysis of Hos 6:4-7:3 and 11:1-11
with focus on the imagery of God.

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Abbreviation

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament (Wiesbaden)
AB	Anchor Bible
ATD	Da Alte Testament Deutsch
BDB	The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BThST	Biblisch-theologische Studien
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
DCH	Dictionary of Classical Hebrew
ET	English Translation
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	Interpretation
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Language
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHAT	Kurzer Handkommentar zum AT
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic text
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	Oudtestamentliche Studiën
RevExp	Review and Expositor
STK	Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of Old Testament
TT	Teologisk Tidsskrift
TTK	Tidsskrift for teologi og kirke
VT	Vetus testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

INTRODUCTION

0.1. Topic and research question

I have chosen to focus on the imagery of God, because the topic is a fundamental theme in the Jewish and Christian religion. The understanding of who God is has been an essential question asked by the humankind throughout the history. From different aspects and situations the question is a fundamental part of the understanding of monotheistic faith and in human self-understanding. When the imagery of God shows an unknown or different side of him it stirs up an essential part of humans' worldview and faith. As my starting point I have chosen to look into the prophetic book of Hosea.

The book of Hosea gives a unique theological description of God. One of the reason is Hosea is one of the prophets who has the most original use of imagery. In the beginning of the book, Hosea describes God like a husband and lover to Israel (2:16-25; 3:1-5). In this imagery God is described as one who wishes a close relationship instead of a God of distance. Further on Hosea use other imageries, which emphasize this closeness. God is described as a healer (6:1; 11:3; 14:4), and as a caring parent (11:1-4). For this reason scholars often call Hosea "*the prophet of love*", and place Hosea in opposition to the message given by the prophet Amos, who has been seen as the prophet of judgment. However this is a simplified portrayal of the book of Hosea. Even though Hosea is known for his original use of intimate and familiar imagery, the book has just as much as Amos descriptions about wrath and judgment. Nonetheless Hosea has a broader and rounder description of God than that of Amos. In Hosea we get to see what some scholar would call a struggling or doubting God. Mays says that "*Hosea's constant theme is that God in his anger against his people's sin ultimately seeks their reconciliation*".¹The struggle for God is whether it is possible for him to return to Israel and redeem them, and whether he can continue to love Israel even though Israel will not repent. A lot of times this portrayal has created a hermeneutical challenge for scholar. This issue has been highly relevant in relation to the questions voiced out by God himself in 6:4 and 11:8, and in relation to these questions the context 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11 are highly relevant in the understanding of who God is. I have therefore chosen to focus on this thesis:

What kind of god-imagery is portrayed in Hos 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11 and what does the questions in Hosea 6:4 and 11:8 tell us about God?

Before elaborating further on my topic and research question I wish to give a definition of what I mean by the word *imagery*. I follow Kristin Nielsen's definition of

¹ Mays. *Hosea* (London: SCM Press),92.

imagery. She says the only language we can use when we talk about God is through images. No human can fully refine and limit God, because God is not an object.²

As mentioned, the portrayal of God in 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11 are unique both because of the questions asked by God and the use of imagery of God. No other place in OT can there be found a similar presentation of God. Besides the questions in 6:4 and 11:8, the only similarities between the texts is the image of God as a healer (6:1ff,7:1 and 11:3). However, despite the few similarities I believe there is an interrelation between the two texts. First of all the questions cannot be interpreted isolated; hence, it is only together and in relation to the context the best understanding of *who God is* can emerge. Secondly, both of the text belongs to the bigger context of the second part ch.4-11 in book of Hosea, which makes them correlated.³ While Hos 6:1-7:3 stands early on in the section, 11:1-11 stands in the ending of the section. Furthermore there is a progression and development from 6:1-7:3, esp. the question in 6:4, to 11:1-11 and the question in 11:8. In Hos 6:4 God shows for the first time signs of struggle with his decisions and his main issue with Israel arises for the first time to the surface. Then in 11:1-11 the issues has progressed and comes to a concluding ending.

In the debate of the questions scholars have described the questions, either as God's dialog or consultation with himself, or as an inner conflict or struggle of God. God shows publically his dilemma and dialog, which shows an unfamiliar and new description of God. The questions describe an anthropomorphic side of God and thus create a hermeneutical challenge.

In addition to the anthropomorphic descriptions, Hosea uses other anthropomorphic imageries of God. Compared to other prophetic literature Hosea has a unique ability to create original imageries. The anthropomorphic imageries found in the passages are comparison of God as a healer (6:1ff; 7:1; 11:3) and as a parent to Israel (11:1-4). Furthermore Hosea compares God with images from the animal and weather sphere. God is like a lion (11:10); like the spring rain (6:3); God appears like the dawn or a rising sun (6:3); God's judgment comes forth like the light (6:5). Another important feature is the God's otherness from the humankind (cf. 11:9). These descriptions and imageries of God together are essential in relation to the questions (cf. 6:4; 11:8) and understanding of who God is.

Shortly summarized I will in this thesis analyze the imagery of God and the questions voiced by God in Hos 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11, and through this analysis examine who God of

²Kristin Nielsen, "Bibelens Poetiske Sprog," *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 80, no. 2 (2009).

³ It is a general recognition that the book of Hosea has two or three major sections.

Hosea is. Moreover I will use the textual analysis to discuss the correlation between the passages and see whether there is a progression and coherency between them.

0.2. Methodology

For this analysis I have chosen to approach the thesis from on a diachronic and synchronic perspective. The reason for this approach is that the diachronic and synchronic perspectives complement each other and grasps a more comprehensive exegetical analysis of the texts.⁴ Moreover the issue raised in topic and research questions aims in the direction for such a emphasis in the analysis. Through a diachronic reading I will emphasize on the importance of the historical background of the 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11, and the formation of the material and tradition.⁵ By synchronic analysis I will focus on the final form of the text, its syntactical and semantically meaning of important terms and phrases.⁶ I will have an emphasis on the synchronic reading, with focus on the word study and the holistic meaning of the text. However this does not mean the diachronic reading is neglected. The diachronic reading is relevant when it can grasp a better and more comprehensive understanding of meaning of God in 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11.

0.3. Material

I will analyze the passages Hos 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11. As I have mentioned it is essential to have in mind the closer context of the sections to understand the meaning of them. The major section ch.4-11 is important, since 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11 belongs within this section.

There are several reasons for the division of the passage Hos 6:1-7:3. There is an overall agreement among scholar that Hos 6:1-7:3 is thematically part of a broader unit (5:8-7:7 or to v.16). From the former to the latter Hos 6:1-3 there is a clear shift in the addressee, i.e. from God as a speaker (5:8-15), to Israel (6:1-3) and finally back to God as the speaker again (6:4ff). 6:1-3 is a response to 5:15, where Yahweh has gone in hiding. Additionally the speech

⁴ Kakkanattu uses this approach in his work on Hos 11:1-11. Moreover as Kakkanattu mentions there are several others scholars who in the last decade advocate this method, cf. Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of Hosea 11, 1-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 7-8; P. M. Joyce, "Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives on Ezekiel?," in *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 115-28; H. G. M. Williamson, "Synchronic and Diachronic in Isaian Perspective," in *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E J Brill, 1995), 211-26; Joel Edmund Anderson, "The Rise, Fall, and Renovation of the House of Gesenius: Diachronic Methods, Synchronic Readings, and the Debate over Isaiah 36–39 and 2 Kings 18–20," *Currents in Biblical Research* 11, no. 2 (2013).

⁵W. A. M. Beuken, "Isaiah 28: Is It Only Schismatics That Drink Heavily? Beyond the Synchronic Versus Diachronic Controversy," in *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 15-38.

⁶ cf. Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 7-8; James Barr, "The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical : A Triangular Relationship?," in *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E J Brill, 1995), 1-14.

in 6:1-3 requires a response, which is given through the rhetorical question of 6:4. The clear shift between the former and latter verses raised the question whether or not 6:1-3 might be a later edition.⁷ Despite the shift of addressee, the unit is thematically connected to the latter verses and plays an important role in the understanding of 6:4 and following verses.⁸ Further on there are also variations among scholars in relation to the sections ending. Wolff argues the section ends at 7:16, while most other scholars argue the ending is at 7:2. However looking at 7:3 the verses has clearly a thematical relation to the 7:1-2. From 7:4 the accusations of Israel are specified. My emphasis is on the imagery of God and not on the accusations of Israel's evildoings and therefore I have chosen to end the passage at 7:3.

Additionally it must be mentioned that even though I have left out the previous verses (cf. 5:8-5:15) and latter verses 7:4-7(16), the verses are part of the broader context of 6:1-7:3 and therefore relevant in the understanding of 6:1-7:3.

Looking at the next passage, Hos 11:1-11, there are fewer variations among scholars. Wolff sees this unit as “*a homogeneous unit, separate from the previous and following context*”.⁹ The text does not have any catchwords related to the former (cf. 10:9-15). In 11:11 the verse ends with the divine formulaic phrase $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרֵם־יְהוָה־אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל}$, which is a common phrase used as a closure of a section. Furthermore it is clear by the change of theme that 12:1 is a beginning of a new section.¹⁰ Despite Wolff's view that the section is separate from the former and latter unit, the section should not be analyzed in full isolation. It is clear thematically the passage should be read as the ending part of the major section ch.4-11.

0.4. Structure

The thesis begins with the exegetical analysis of Hos 6:1-7:3 in chapter 1 and Hos 11:1-11 in chapter 2. In the analysis I will provide my own translation of the Hebrew text. By the end of ch.2 I will give an excursus on the issue of the questions in 6:4 and 11:8. As my emphasis is on the meaning of the questions, there is a need for a further elaboration of the main arguments in the debate. In chapter 3 I will give a summary and conclusion of my findings in

⁷ I will elaborate more on this in the analysis of the text.

⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 193. Mays, Andersen – Freedman and Dearman do the same dividing of the text. cf. James Luther Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 150-52; Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 42 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 22-23; J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 2010), 18.

¹⁰ Wolff, *Hosea*, 193.

the analysis and what the imagery of God and the questions, says about the understanding of God in Hos 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11.

TRANSLATION AND EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

1. Hosea 6:1-7:3

Hos 6:1 *Come, let us return back to Yahweh.*

For he has torn and he will heal us,

He has struck down and he will bound us.

From v.1 and further on into v.3 there occurs a stylistic change from the previous and latter verses. The verses have been debated because of their stylistic change. On the one hand the unit has been seen as a response to Yahweh's withdrawal in hope of Israel acknowledgement of their sinful ways (cf. 5:15). With this as a background argument the unit has been understood as a penitential or lamentation song. In relation to this perspective there are two main arguments. Firstly, the formal expression is understood as people's repentance uttered by the people themselves.¹¹ Secondly, the language of the vv.1-3 has similarities to liturgical language and therefore can be understood as an utterance given by the priest on behalf of the people during times of danger.¹² Additionally some scholars have argued it was a penitence given by Hosea himself or his redactor on behalf of the people.¹³ Overall scholars agree to the unit understanding as a penitential song. However in relation to Yahweh's response in v.4 this has to be put into questioning.¹⁴ Marti suggest 5:15-6:1-3 to be a postexilic addition because of the stylistically difference. He argues the unit should therefore be interpretation isolated.¹⁵ However the unit clearly relates both thematically in theme and form to the former verses (cf. 5:11ff). Moreover as I will elaborate more on under v.4, the unit is clearly connected to v.4. This argues against an isolated analysis of vv.1-3 cannot be.¹⁶

Let's begin with analyzing the unit. V.1a begins with a cohortative verb *וְנָשׁוּבָה* *let us return*. The verb implicates a response to the former verse. Yahweh has in chapter 5 tried to make the people repent and return back to him, which has a thematical continuation into and throughout ch.6. Yahweh expects a response from his own declaration of his *returning* to his own place until they recognize their own betrayal (5:15). Israel's respond in v.1 is to return to Yahweh. The scholars Andersen – Freedman give a different interpretation, pointing out the

¹¹ According to Dearman "a possible parallel in Jer 14:1-10, where the people's approach to the Lord in prayer and confession is deemed insufficient." cf. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 191.

¹² Wolff, *Hosea*, 116-17.

¹³ Mays, *Hosea*, 93. See also Wolff, *Hosea*, 117.

¹⁴ I will elaborate more on this under v.4.

¹⁵ Karl Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton*, vol. 13 (Freiburg: Mohr, 1904), 54-55.

¹⁶ Cf. Andrew Alexander Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1997), 218.

preceding verb is possibly not a command for motion. Rather, the repetition of the verb emphasizes the counterpoise of Yahweh's action and Israel's action.¹⁷

Further on v.1b Israel declares what Yahweh has been to them. In the text Hosea describes Yahweh as both a destroyer and a physician/healer to Israel. These nouns are paralleled, emphasizing Yahweh's authoritative acts towards Israel. The conjunction clause כִּי shows v.1b is subordinate to v.1a, which purpose is to explain the reason for Israel return. However, surprisingly the destructive acts of Yahweh should imply Israel should not return back.¹⁸ The inflictions Yahweh has done are deadly injuries. The verb טָרַף *to tear/rend/pluck* is normally actions done by a wild beast, i.e. like a lion (cf. 5:14; 13:8b).¹⁹ So what does it mean that Yahweh tears down as well as heals? Before answering this we need to look at Hosea's use of the healer imagery. The imagery isn't new for Hosea. In 5:13 there are found several similarities to v.1, where Ephraim and Judah are described as sick and wounded, and the king of Assyria cannot heal them. The king of Assyria in 5:13 and Yahweh are contrasted against each other. Even though the Assyrian king cannot heal Israel they still turn to Assyria. Now in v.1 they have realized it is Yahweh who is the ultimate healer, which shows signs of a final return to Yahweh. The meaning of these contrasting descriptions of Yahweh shows that he alone is the divine one, with the power to do whatever he is able to. He is the almighty ruler and caregiver. When Israel does not return he is the destroyer, but when he is worshipped he tends Israel's wounds, "*for that is his business and nature*".²⁰

Hos 6:2 *After two days he will tear us down,
on the third he will raise us up again,
that we may live before him*

Verse 2 has been highly debated among scholars. While Targum has understood the verse as an eschatological text about the restoration of the Jewish nation (cf. Ezek 37),²¹ the ancient Christian fathers have interpreted the text as a resurrection text.²² Among modern scholars there have been a diverse amount of interpretations. Some have argued the text is influenced by the context of Canaanite fertility cult²³ or from a covenantal context.²⁴ Others believe the

¹⁷ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 418.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ BDB 2963

²⁰ Mays, *Hosea*, 95.

²¹ cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 222.

²² Tertullian, Augustine, Cyprian, Gregory the Great

²³ cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 420ff.

²⁴ J. N. M. Wijngaards, "Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context Hos 6:2," *Vetus testamentum* 17, no. 2 (1967).

text relates to medical terminology and the recovery from sickness²⁵ or to a cultic life setting where the Lord renews the relationship of the people.²⁶

Looking at the beginning of the verse the meaning of the verb חיה in Piel is *to spare life/preserve life* (cf. Gen 12:12 Ex 1:17; Psalms 119:88; Isa 7:21), *give life* (Job 33:4), *restore/revive life* (1 Sam 2:6; Deut 32:39; Psalms 71:20). Further on the verb קום is paralleled to חיה. קום stands in *hiphil* and means *to cause to arise/raise* from death (cf.) or *raising* someone sick out of bed. This implies the verse is either about resurrection from death or healing from sickness. The word-pair is a *fixed formulaic pair* in Hebrew. In the poetic literature the word-pair חיה and קום are found in Isa 26:14a.19a and Psalms 88:11. Only in 2 Kings 13:21 the pair occur in what is called a *paratactic pair* (not as parallels).²⁷ The context of all the passages is related to life and death, and the returning back from the grave. Additionally to the OT literature the *formulaic verb pair* has been found in Aramaic and Akkadian literature, where the meaning refers to sickness and healing.²⁸

The temporal phrases, בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי and בְּיָמֵינוּ, have to be mentioned in relation to the debate. The phrases refer to a sickness/healing context. The expression is unique for Hosea. It has been claimed the phrase allude to the cult of dying and rising deities.²⁹ The arguments have however no references to OT passages. Most likely the phrase, as the word-pair do, refer to the Akkadian tradition, meaning the phrase might therefore be connected to healing from sickness.³⁰ If the v.2 is related to healing it could fit well to v.1, where Yahweh is described as healer and Israel as the sick patient. However it isn't obvious whether the word-pairs should apply to sickness. Hebrew does not differentiate between death and disease, or resurrection and healing.³¹ In v.1 there lies an expectation that Yahweh will recover the wounded nation,³² meaning v.2 describes such an incidence. Wijngaard suggests the texts language comes from covenantal context. Several of the words are familiar covenantal terminology, i.e. שׁוּב and

²⁵ cf. Göran Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert: Metaphors, Models, and Themes in Hosea 4-14*, vol. 43 ([Lund]: Gleerup, 1996), 95; Wolff, *Hosea*, 117-19.

²⁶ There are several other interpretations of the meaning of 6:2. For a short summary see Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 194-95.

²⁷ "According to Melamed, parallel pairs in Semitic poetry may be formed by breaking up such stereotypes into their two component members, placing one each in two parallel cola. Such prose phrases, then, would be the raw material from which poetic pairs are created". For a more in-depth understanding of *formulaic pairs* see Michael L. Barré, "New Light on the Interpretation of Hosea 6:2," *Vetus testamentum* 28, no. 2 (1978): 131-35.

²⁸ Ibid., 132-36.

²⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 421-22; Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960), 74-86.

³⁰ Barré, "New Light," 139.

³¹ Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 81.; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Hosea* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1966), 136-37.

³² Wolff, *Hosea*, 118.

מִיָּמֵינוּ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי.³³ The covenant reference is clearly shown in the text. However it is unlikely the text mean a resurrection from the dead. For, there isn't a possibility the *tearing down* (v.1 וַיִּתְּבַשְּׁנוּ יְהוָה וַיִּרְפְּאֵנוּ יְהוָה) could result to the fatal faith of death. Whether the language alludes to covenantal or medical terminology the meaning of v.2 alludes clearly to restoration of the people, a healing or *keeping the people alive*.³⁴ Barré says “*The prophet here has taken language that originally refers to healing (from sickness or death) and has applied it to Israel's hope of deliverance from some particular crisis.*”³⁵The need of the people have encountered is life-weakening and the experience of death-intrusion. The verse therefore describes a need of God, who is the ultimate restorer who saves and keeps the people alive (cf. v.1).

6:3 *Let us seek, let us follow the knowledge of Yahweh.
he appearing is as sure as the dawn.
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the spring rain that refreshes the earth.*

In v.3 Hosea introduces the theme *knowledge of God*, and the verse functions as a conclusion of the unit (vv.1-3). The people acknowledge the need of seeking Yahweh's knowledge.

To know Yahweh (לְדַעַת אֶת־יְהוָה) refers to a practical, religio-ethical relationship. Only those who are able to resist from idolatry and sin know God.³⁶ The desire of the people to pursue the knowledge of Yahweh is related to the wish of returning back to him (vv.1-2). Turning away from idolatrous and sinful action, to Yahweh's loyalty and obedience. They realize Yahweh is the healer, not the Assyrian king (cf. 5:13).

Moreover there needs to be taken a notice on the verb רָדַף *to pursue* (or *to chase/persecute*). The verb frequently has a hostile connotation³⁷, however in v.3 the verb is understood in a positive sense (cf. Isa 51:1). In Hos 2:7 the people is like a woman in futile *pursue* of her lover. In Hos 8:3 the enemy of Israel shall *pursue* them, and in 12:2 Ephraim are involved in fruitless pursuits. Eidevall points out that “*the perspective of 6:3a provides a contrast to these depictions of helplessness and folly.*”³⁸

³³Wijngaards, "Death and Resurrection," 236-39.

³⁴ TDOT XII, 601.

³⁵Barré, "New Light," 136.

³⁶ TDOT V, 469.

³⁷ NIDOTTE 3, 1057-1062

³⁸Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 95.

Further on in v.3 Hosea compares Yahweh with the dawn. The noun שָׁהַר *dawn* is used in a reference of a natural phenomenon or to a cultic context, i.e. seen as a divine being.³⁹ The noun is a solar metaphor on Yahweh, which only occurs two other places in OT (cf. Isa 58:8; Mal 3:20). H. G. May suggests the noun refers to the Ugaritic god, who is the symbolism for the resurrecting deity.⁴⁰ However it is unlikely Yahweh is compared to a pagan god. Because looking closer at the noun שָׁהַר could allude to *morning* as the time of divine intervention (cf. Psalms 46:6). The appearing of Yahweh alludes back to the *place* mentioned in 5:15, when Yahweh withdrew himself from the people.⁴¹ Now that Israel has returned they expect Yahweh returns from his hiding place and appear clearly in front of the people. The imagery shows that Israel sees Yahweh as their rescuing savior.

Further on in v.3b Hosea describes Yahweh with a new metaphor. The noun כִּבְשָׁם (*rain*) and כְּמִלְקֹשׁ יוֹרֵה (*spring rain*) are structured in a parallelism. Wolff suggests the images relate to nature-mythical thinking from Canaanite cult.⁴² The image does not connote to the revelation of God through a horrifying thunderstorm as other text do. However it has a positive connotation showing the goodness of Yahweh.⁴³ The imagery reminds of the nature's natural cycle and how Yahweh has the authority over creation. *“As surely as the winter and spring rain return each year to revive the life of the land, so Yahweh’s beneficent presence is sure to be manifested.”*⁴⁴

6:4 *What should I do with you Ephraim?*

What should I do with you Judah?

Your loyalty is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes away early.

There's a clear shift in style and addressee from v.3 to v.4, i.e. from Israel speaking, to Yahweh speaks. The verse begins by two divine questions, which has commonly been understood as Yahweh's response to the people's penitential (vv.1-3). However this understanding questions the understanding of vv.1-3 as a penitential song. Strikingly the answer does not fit into the normal messenger formula, which is expected after a penitential

³⁹ TDOT XIV, 575-582

⁴⁰H. G. May, "Some Aspects of Solar Worship at Jerusalem," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 55, no. 3-4 (1937): 273.

⁴¹Mays, *Hosea*, 96.

⁴²Wolff, *Hosea*, 119.

⁴³Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 424-25.

⁴⁴Mays, *Hosea*, 96.

song.⁴⁵Hence, the formula is however uncommonly for Hosea. What makes v.4 debatable is the absent of similar questions in the cultic, judicial and wisdoms speech.⁴⁶The questions put worded by Yahweh is only found in the book of Hosea (cf. 11:8).

The question is closely related to v.4b. The word *חסד* is especially important in the understanding of the whole verse. The word has received different translations among scholars, which is not surprising. The meaning of the noun is generally understood as *goodness, kindness* or *steadfast love*. The noun has a relational aspect, with an emphasis in familial context.⁴⁷Because *חסד* intends a mutual action, the noun could be translated to *faithfulness* or *loyalty*.⁴⁸In LXX the most common translation for the *חסד* is *ἔλεος* (213 times), meaning *mercy* or *compassion*.⁴⁹ Further on *חסד* is compared with *בֶּעֲנַן־בֹּקֶר* *morning cloud* and *כַּטְל* *like dew*. The two nouns are parallels and stresses Yahweh's message. The people's loyalty to Yahweh is like a morning cloud and dew that quickly drifts away. The images are contrasting to the images of v.3, while Yahweh is like a sunrise rising up, i.e. steadfast in his *חסד*, while Israel is like a vanishing morning cloud and dew, i.e. fleeting *חסד*. Andersen – Freedman emphasize the verb *הלך* *to walk/go* sometimes has the connotation to death, emphasizing that Israel is seen as disappeared, fully gone and dead.⁵⁰ Israel's love is not only fleeting, it is completely gone and in 13:3 Hosea clearly uses the verb this way. The question is whether 6:4 is the imagery describes Israel as just fleeting objects or whether it has completely disappeared. While Wolff and Mays argue Israel only lack *חסד* (cf. vv.6), Lindström argues it is completely gone.⁵¹ *חסד* might be completely gone (v.4a), that its short-lived (v.4b) or long gone (cf. 4:1 and 6:6). Nonetheless whether it is lacking or completely gone it emphasizes Israel's absence of self-awareness over their sin. Their repentance was on the one side full of trust, because they showed they believed in Yahweh's saving and healing power, but without a true conviction of sin. Therefore the penitential song is unacceptable to Yahweh. The questions affirm this. By the questions Yahweh calls out Israel's nonsense. Moreover the question also shows what Wolff would describe as Yahweh struggle with himself.⁵²His struggle is with Israel's failing attempt to repent and what he should do now, as

⁴⁵Wolff says the reason might be that the traditionists seems to have understood Hosea's sayings as a kind of priestly proclamation, to which the messenger formula is unfamiliar with, cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 75-76, 79, 119.

⁴⁶"Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel," *Tidsskrift for teologi og kirke* 33 (1962): 74.

⁴⁷TDOT V, 50-52, 61.

⁴⁸Mays, *Hosea*, 97.

⁴⁹TDOT V, 44.

⁵⁰Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 427.

⁵¹Wolff, *Hosea*, 119-21; Mays, *Hosea*, 96-98; Fredrik Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament*, vol. 21 ([Lund]: Gleerup, 1983), 213.

⁵²Wolff, "Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel," 75.

his call for Israel's return was unsuccessful. Mays does a similar interpretation, saying the questions expresses a *perplexed frustration* at Israel's penitence and inconstancy.⁵³ He says

*“He is the true subject of Israel’s history, but is inextricably by his own free choice a part of the history of which Israel is the sphere of the struggle and dialogue between man and God – and here the dialogue is like that between husband and fickle wife, father and prodigal son.”*⁵⁴

Further on Andersen – Freedman emphasizes Yahweh's inner struggle as his *agony of indecision*,⁵⁵ while Landy says the reason for Yahweh's loss of word and the surprisingly response is to the shocking actions of the people.⁵⁶ Lindström gives different and original interpretations of the questions meaning. He suggests the questions have nothing to do with Yahweh's own doubt. Lindström says the point is Yahweh neither can nor will help a people who lack דָּוָה , he only helps them if their דָּוָה were completely gone. Lindström suggests the meaning of the questions neither emphasizes indecisiveness or inner-frustration of Yahweh, but reads it in a dialogical direction, i.e. *“How can I help you?”* or *“How am I supposed to be able to help you?”*⁵⁷ Fretheim has a similar emphasize, saying the questions functions as a dialog between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh is opening up towards Israel, sharing his decision-making with Israel. The answer to Israel's future lies in the dialog between Yahweh and Israel, and not just in Yahweh's hands.⁵⁸ Lindström and Fretheim emphasize an important aspect. The questions cannot just be read as an inner struggle or inner dialog within God himself. However I suggest the questions should be read in both directions.

Firstly, the questions in 6:4 show Yahweh's way of calling out Israel's nonsense, meaning that through articulating the questions out loud Yahweh opens up for a dialogue with Israel. Secondly, the questions also imply Yahweh's inner struggle and doubt because now he realizes he has failed in getting Israel to return and therefore needs to reevaluate what his next step should be.

⁵³Mays, *Hosea*, 96.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁵Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 426, 30.

⁵⁶Francis Landy, *Hosea* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2011), 89.

⁵⁷Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament*, 21, 213.

⁵⁸Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1984), 55-56.

6:5 *Therefore I (will) strike by the prophets,
slain them with the words of my mouth,
and my judgment breaks forth like light.*

Verse 5 begins with describing the consequences of the disloyalty of the people (v.4b).

Through the prophets Yahweh's shows his divine wrath. Throughout the prophetic literature the prophets are Yahweh's instruments in proclaiming his words to Israel (Jer 1:9).⁵⁹Hosea shows this through using first person singular making Yahweh the one speaking directly.

Yahweh's word in the mouth of the prophets has received the authority to revive life. It must be noticed that there are uncertainties whether Hosea refers to the former prophets in the Northern kingdom, or whether it is about his own work (5:8f, 14). The perfect verbs and the plural nouns in the verse do not indicate either of them.⁶⁰

Through the change of second plural in v.4 to third plural in v.5, the verses are juxtaposed. A similar change is found earlier between 5:13a and 5:14-15. In v.5a Hosea uses the verb *הִצַּב* to *hew/cut* for Yahweh's action. Normally the verb is described in directions of chopping wood or hewing stone. Here the verb is to be taken figuratively as an act of harsh treatment and divine judgment (cf. Isa 51:9).⁶¹Further on the verb *הָרַג* and *הִצַּב* are paralleled. The verb *הָרַג* means to *kill/slay*, and describes God's deadly judgment over the people. Yahweh's words have such a power they can either be life-giving (cf. 5:13 and 6:2) or deadly (cf. Isa 11:4). Wolff points out "*Though Yahweh 'slays' Israel because of her inconstant loyalty, his intention is not to destroy her; rather, he wants those rules for living which he provides again to take effect.*"⁶²The intended result is therefore described by the verb *נִצָּא* *breaks forth*. *מִשְׁפָּט* *judgment/justice*⁶³ together with *the breaking forth of the light* *אֹר* contrasts against Israel's lack of loyalty (v.4 *הִסָּד*), which drifts away like morning cloud. Through Yahweh's judgment there is not only punishment, but also prosperity, restoration, guidance and salvation. No one but Yahweh's words (v.5bβ) and deeds has the authority to reestablish and restore Israel.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 427.

⁶⁰Landy, *Hosea*, 90.

⁶¹TDOT V, 125-127

⁶²Wolff, *Hosea*, 120.

⁶³Most scholars translates the phrase into "*My judgment*" suggesting the MT texts should be rendered the suffix pronoun from second person masculine singular to first person singular. The reason for this rendering is issue of who the addressee would be. Some of the scholars who render the suffix see Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 429; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 189; Wolff, *Hosea*, 105.

⁶⁴Mays, *Hosea*, 97, 120.

6:6 *For I desire loyalty, not sacrifice,
knowledge of God and not burnt offerings.*

In v.6 Yahweh's judgment is furthermore elaborated. What Israel though was the right adoration and worship of Yahweh was not what Yahweh desired. In this verse the sayings that began in v.4 reaches its climax by concluding the criticisms of lacking *הסדר* (v.4) and the judgment of Yahweh (v.5).

Verse 6 is juxtapositions between *זבח* *sacrifice* and *עלה* *burnt offering* to *חסד* *loyalty* and *דעת* *knowledge*. Yahweh states his requirements and they are surprising: Yahweh does not desire sacrifice or burnt offering (cf. 4:8, 13f; 8:13). The list is also mentioned in 4:1 showing Yahweh's consisting requirement towards Israel. There are disagreements on whether or not Yahweh rejects the sacrificial practice or not. Eidevall argues there is a full rejection, saying there is a connection between the breakdown of the sacrificial system and the outbreak of divine violence.⁶⁵ A notice is the texts similarities to the didactic tradition of 1 Sam 15:22-23, which was a radical prophetic speech against the Canaan cult or syncretistic cult.⁶⁶ Despite the similarities the critique in v.6 has nothing to do with Israel's participation in Baal worship, but the faulty emphasis on sacrifice. The main focus should be loyalty and knowledge of God. This is what the people lack (cf v.4). Sacrifices and burnt offerings are invalid if not the loyalty of Yahweh is present. *"Hosea offers here a critique of sacrificial ritual when it is not rooted in a covenantal ethos and where it is seen as a means of inducing a deity to act."*⁶⁷ Without loyalty in their burnt offering they will not find Yahweh (5:6). The critique goes back to Israel's false penitence (vv.1-3). They believed a confession would restore their relation with Yahweh, however they didn't not give their full loyalty to him. The following verses show that Israel kept on being unfaithful to Yahweh. Moreover the loyalty is closely tied to knowledge of God. The noun *דעת* *knowledge* in Hebrew has not only a theoretical but also a practical and relational aspect. This means to know God means ultimately to have community with him, to trust, be loyal and love him.⁶⁸ All these things are also a promise from Yahweh to Israel. This describes Yahweh is the opposite of Israel, because he is the one with steadfast love and faithful (cf. Ex 34:6; Num 14:18a; Neh 1:5). He stands, while Israel fleets (cf. v.4).

⁶⁵Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 101.

⁶⁶Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42.; Macintosh, *Hosea*, 234.

⁶⁷Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 197.

⁶⁸TLOT 2, 508-521.

6:7 *But they transgressed the covenant in Adam,
there they were unfaithful to me,*

From vv.7-10 Israel's sinful transgressions are catalogued, with specific emphasis towards the priests' wrongdoings. Through the word והמה *but they* v.7 is connected back to the previous verse. The verses stresses that Israel is not following God's will (v.6), which emphasizes again that the announced remorse of vv.1-3 is insufficient. Additionally the specific transgression of Israel mentioned in vv.4-6 and the mentioning of בְּרִית shows connection to the former unit. Despite the verses relation to the former verses, it is unclear whether the verses refer to past or present events. Since the perfect form of the verbs doesn't necessary suggest a past or present, they do not help in determining the time of the event. Wolff argues Hosea refers to a recent unfaithful action to the covenant, because the noun בְּרִית *covenant* refers to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and therefore allude back to מִשְׁטַפ in v.5, and חסד and אֱלֹהִים in v.6.⁶⁹

Beginning with v.7 the meaning of אָדָם has been debated. The word is ambiguous in the way it could mean a geographical place, the human race or the first human *Adam*. The most common interpretation is to understand the word as the place Adam, translating to *in/at Adam*. The only time the place Adam is mentioned is in Josh. 3:16 when the people crossed over to Jericho. This interpretation requires a change of the locative aspect of שָׁמָּה *there* and the thematical theme of city names in the following verses.⁷⁰ Several scholars follow BHS suggestion, which reads אָדָם instead of אָדָם, which then could support the meaning of the word to be the place *Adam*.⁷¹ The second interpretation has been to translate the phrase to "*like Adam*", implying to the first human. Landy argues Hosea might have known a version of the Eden story and suggests the verse is a reversal of the Eden story, meaning that through the knowledge of God (v.6) Israel will return to paradise like conditions (2:22-25; 14). This interpretation "*support God's equivocation in v.4: since it is integral to human nature to break covenants, correction is wasted.*"⁷² This could be a good argument in relation to the context of the verse. However several scholars argue the unlikeliness of Hosea's knowledge of the Eden story.⁷³ LXX have understood אָדָם to mean the human race in general, translating ως ανθρωπος. Most scholars understand the noun to relate to place *Adam* because of its connection to the latter verses.

⁶⁹Wolff, *Hosea*, 121.

⁷⁰Ibid., 105, 21.

⁷¹cf. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 197; Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 105.

⁷²Landy, *Hosea*, 92-93.

⁷³ cf. Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 104-05.

What the specific *transgressions of the covenant in Adam* are is uncertain. The only thing one knows from the text is that they acted unfaithfully towards Yahweh, but what kind of action that made them become unfaithful is unknown. In related to the previous verses one can understand what the transgression might have been, i.e. the lack of הִסָּד (v.4) and the falsely trust in sacrificial worship and burnt offering (v.6).

6:8 *Gilead is a city with evildoers,
tracked with blood.*

From v.8 and following the transgressions are specified towards the cities. In v.8 Gilead is addressed as a city with אֲנִי פִּעֲלֵי אֲנִי *evildoers*. *Evildoers* allude to the citizens of Gilead and specifically to the leaders. The phrase is found in the Psalms, often referring to people who oppose Yahweh or the psalmist (cf. Ps 5:5; 6:8; 14:4).⁷⁴ In relation to the verb פִּעַל *to do/make*, this is a fitting interpretation, because the verb is frequently described in relation of evil actions. Just as v.7 the city's transgressions are unnamed. The only thing Hosea mentions is that the transgressions leave *traces of blood* מַדְמָה מְדָמָה. The word דָּם "*blood*" can allude back to אֲדָם in v.7.⁷⁵ The bloodshed alludes back to 4:2ff, where the breaking of the covenant leads to violence and bloodshed. Regardless, there are however difficulties in understanding דָּם, even the ancient Greek translators had difficulties in interpreting דָּם. The translation in LXX differs a lot from the Hebrew, translating the phrase ταρασσουσασα ὕδωρ *stirring up water*, which differs greatly from what the root דָּם means. LXX read מַיִם instead of דָּם.

6:9 *as a robber lie in wait for someone,
so does the band of priest.
They murder on the road to Shechem,
for they commit shameful crimes.*

In v.9 the band of priests are the ones being accused of criminal doings. Who the priests are is not mentioned. Wolff suggest since they are probable the same priest as priests as of v.7 and v.8.⁷⁶ The priests are being compared to robbers גְּדוּלִיִּם who lie in hiding before stealing. These are outrageous accusations against priests. Hosea uses חֶבֶר for describing the smaller sociological group the priests are. The noun is a loan word from Aramaic and Wolff suggests

⁷⁴Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 198.

⁷⁵TDOT III, 235

⁷⁶Wolff, *Hosea*, 122.

that Hosea might have used this in a disparaging sense, i.e. meaning like a *curse* (cf. 4:17; Deut 18:11; Ps 58:6; Isa 47:9).⁷⁷

Further on in v.9b the priest are accused of *murder* רצח. The verb stands in piel, meaning intense *murder* or *assassination*. In Psalms 94:6 and Isa 1:21 it describes the murder as an intentional *assassination*. The same root is found in 4:2. This emphasizes how extreme Israel's violence has become. The same root is found in 4:2, where it is mentioned together with the other transgression Israel committed (cf. 4:1-2). The accusations could be understood as metaphorically connoting to "murder" of orthodoxy, or actual current horrific actions. Anyhow it is uncertain what these murders were.

Further Hosea says the priest murder *on the road to Shechem*. Shechem is the third city mention in the unit. Shechem lies in the opposite direction of Adam and Gilead. The name is associated to sexual and homicidal violence (cf. Gen 34). The phrase could denote to attacks of pilgrims, refugees or Shechemite priests who were attack by illegal cultic priests.⁷⁸

In v.9bβ the word רמא connotes the strongest meaning for human *wickedness*. The word often refers to sexual transgressions (cf. Lev 18:17; 19:29; 20:14; Jer 13:27; Ezek 16:27), such as harlotry and adultery. However there are no references to a sexual crime here, but since the whole unit vv.7-9 mentions the same things as in the list in 4:2, this type of crime could also be expected here. Furthermore adulterous actions were for Hosea idolatry against Yahweh.⁷⁹ According Wolff the transgressions could connect to political or cultic-political actions, meaning the adulterous acts were actually committed within the cultic context.⁸⁰ V.9 and also 7-8 describe a society falling apart. Dearman suggest Adam, Gilead and probably Shechem too; present a type of sectionalism, regional tensions, or geographical specificity to the dissolution of Israel. The unit has parallels with 5:1-7. Here specific places and similar transgressions are named with charges against institutions.⁸¹

6: 10 *In the house of Israel I have seen horrible things,
there Ephraim played the prostitute, Israel becomes defiled.*

From vv.10-11 three names of nations are catalogued; Ephraim, Israel and Judah (v.11). The verses might be structured on purpose in a four lines. However a weakness with this

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Douglas Stuart, *Hosea - Jonah*, vol. 31 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 111-12.

⁷⁹cf. Mays, Hosea, 101; Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 42, 442.

⁸⁰Wolff, *Hosea*, 122.

⁸¹Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 199.

interpretation is that the lines vary in length and the only parallel the lines have are the names of the nations.⁸²

Verse 10a gives a summary of the previous verses (vv.7-9). The phrase בְּבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל “*In the house of Israel*” Hosea refers here to the whole nation Israel (cf. 5:1, 9) i.e. both the Southern and Northern kingdom of Israel,⁸³ hence, the phrase functions as a summary of the former unit.

In v.10b Hosea specifies this mentioning the divided parts of the northern kingdom (Ephraim and Israel) and in v.11 to the nation Judah (cf. 5:5). What is surprisingly is Hosea’s mentioning of first the name Ephraim, which is a different name for Israel, and then mentioning Israel. When Hosea refers to Ephraim he regards Ephraim as having either a tribal connotation, referring to the Northern kingdom of Judah, or as a geographical region, i.e. the core Northern Kingdom, hence a synonym for Israel.⁸⁴ The names Ephraim and Israel are therefore referring to two different parts of the divided Northern kingdom, while Judah refers to the Southern kingdom. Whether Hosea describes a past or recent political or cultic sin is unclear. The perfect use in the previous verses (v.8 and 9), suggests a present use of the perfect but this is uncertain.

The word שַׁעַר יְרֵהָ “*horrible things*” is a rare form of שַׁעַר. The meaning of the root is *city of gates*, alluding to the activity where justice was governed (cf. Jer 1:15; 39:3; Deut. 16:18; 17:5) and punishment were executed (Deut 21:19; 22:15; Prov 24:7; Jer 20:2). Moreover it could also function as a place of God’s judgment.⁸⁵ Therefore it is suiting to translate the word into *horrible things*, because of the allusion to the terrible executions occurring at the gates. LXX does similar interpretation translating to φρικώδη, meaning *causing horrible things*. Further on שַׁעַר can refer back to זָמָה in v.9, alluding to cultic transgression, i.e. cultic harlotry.⁸⁶

In v.10b the transgressions are explicated. Ephraim are described as being *prostitutes* זָנוּת. The noun זָנוּת describes a religious act of fornication and elaborates what the *horrible*

⁸² Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 422.

⁸³ Marti suggests בְּבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל should be read instead. Wolff points out this could be a possibility because of the place-names *Adam* (v.7), *Gilead* (v.8), and *Shechem* (v.9) and because of שַׁעַר in v.10b. “‘Israel’ is therefore thought to be a premature generalization of ‘Bethel’, as in 10:15 and Am 5:6”. Cf. Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton*, 13, 58; Wolff, *Hosea*, 106.

⁸⁴ van Rooy is here referring to Willi-Plein (1971), cf. H. F. van Rooy, “The Names Israel, Ephraim and Jacob in the Book of Hosea,” *Old Testament Essays*, no. 6 (1993): 164.

⁸⁵ NIDOTTE 4, 208-210.

⁸⁶ Wolff, *Hosea*, 122-23.

things are. Israel are נִטְמָא *become unclean/defiled* sexually (cf. 5:3). It is related to idolatrous acts through prostitution.

6:11 *Also you Judah, a harvest has been appointed,
when I will restore my peoples fortunes.*

There have been difficulties understanding v.11. The issue is raised around the phrase גַּם־יְהוּדָה *also Judah*. There seems to be a break in the context, even though one can see a connection between Judah and the names mentioned in v.10. The rhythm of v.10 is the naming of the city together with a transgression. However there is no transgression mention in v.11. Some scholars argue this break indicates the Judean gloss is a later adding during the postexilic period. The addition then made the message more relevant for the Southern Kingdom.⁸⁷

Moreover the issues is raised around the sudden introduction of a new theme through the noun קַצִּיר *harvest*. Harvest can both have a positive and a negative implication, and following the latter chapter both aspects are used (cf. 8:1; 10:12-13). The imagery needs to be interpreted in relation to its context and most likely have a negative connotation. קַצִּיר stands metaphorically for the time of final judgment (cf. Isa 17:5-6; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13).⁸⁸

Despite the negative connotations, v.11b eludes a more positive image, where the harvest has a joyful celebration in mind.⁸⁹ Moreover as mentioned earlier Yahweh's judgment does not necessary cause a negative result (cf. v.5). The judgment could reference to restoration of the people. The phrase בְּשׁוּבֵי שְׁבוּת is a figure of speech meaning a return to a starting point or *to turn fate*. The expression occurs 27 times always with God as the subject.⁹⁰ In the OT the phrase describes when God change from anger to blessing of grace (cf. Lam 2:14; Job 42:10).⁹¹

⁸⁷ Cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 248; Mays, *Hosea*, 102.

⁸⁸ TDOT XIII, 99-104

⁸⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 443-44.

⁹⁰ TLOT 3, 1314-1315

⁹¹ Mays, *Hosea*, 102.

7:1 *Whenever I heal Israel, Ephraim's corruption and the wickedness of Samaria was discovered, for they deal falsely, The thieves break in, And the robbers raid outside.*

As one will see in the following verses in 7:1-3, the verse is thematically connected to the former verses (esp. 6:7-10). There is a word-parallelism between 7:1a where the people *commit falsely* פָּעֲלוּ שָׁקֵר and 6:8 the people are *evildoers* אֲנֹן פְּעֲלֵי אֲוֶן. And in 7:1b גָּדוּדֵי robbers and 6:9 גְּדוּדֵי־יָם are paralleled. Further on v.1a continues the theme of 6:11b through the verb *heal* כִּרְפָאֵי. Moreover this also connects the unit from 6:7-7:3 to 5:8-6:6. The question given in 6:4 is again expounded on in 6:11b-7:1.⁹²

Beginning with the phrase לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כִּרְפָאֵי *whenever I heal Israel* in v.1a scholars have disagreed whether the phrase is a continuation of the sentence in 6:11b or is the beginning of a new sentence. Mays and Andersen – Freedman argue for the former⁹³, while Wolff argues for the latter.⁹⁴ However overall the scholars agree that v.1a belongs to the unit 6:10-11. Further on an interesting note by Macintosh, is the phrase most likely refers to an unfulfilled wish.⁹⁵

The verb *heal* רפא alludes back to 5:13 and 6:1, to redemption and restoration. It parallels with שִׁבְתֵּי שְׂבוּתָה (6:11b). As one can see the verb alludes to more than physical healing, but also to forgiveness and blessings (cf. 14:5). Forgiveness and healing are connected. If healing is not a possibility then forgiveness is neither a possibility (2 Chron 36:16).⁹⁶ Yahweh cannot heal as he once did. Macintosh argues Yahweh's dilemma is resolved by the needs of justice and realism "only when the nation's guilt is exposed and the moral is acknowledged (v.2) does healing become possible."⁹⁷ Hosea's use of רפא is unique, despite all the exposure of evildoings Yahweh wish to bring restoration.

The consequences of Israel's healing are that their transgressions and wickedness are exposed. Ephraim's *corruption* עֲוֹן and Samaria are *wicked* רָעָה. These transgressions are that Ephraim and Samaria still *deal falsely* פָּעֲלוּ שָׁקֵר. The verb פִּעַל describes evil and hostile actions towards Yahweh. In the context the verb describes in 6:1-4 the deceptive repentance of Israel and the falsely political alliances the commit in 5:11b and 5:13. The exposure of the transgressions is necessary for Israel's healing process. And even though Israel is doing

⁹²Wolff, *Hosea*, 123.

⁹³Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 432-33; Mays, *Hosea*, 102-03.

⁹⁴Wolff, *Hosea*, 106.

⁹⁵Macintosh, *Hosea*, 250.

⁹⁶TLOT 3, 1257-1258

⁹⁷Macintosh, *Hosea*, 251.

wrongful things they are still Yahweh's people (cf. 6:11b). That is how the God of Hosea is. He is trustworthy and steadfast in his loyalty.

Moreover in v.1b Israel's transgressions are further emphasized. Just like in 6:9 Israel is again accused of being like *thief's* גַּנָּב and *robbers* גַּדְדִּיר.

7:2 *But they do not consider that I remember their wickedness.*

Now their deeds surround them,

they are before my face.

Again Israel's forgetfulness and failure is emphasized. They do see Yahweh sees through their false pretenses (6:1-3) and their wrongdoings.

The noun לֵב heart alludes to various things. In Hebrew the heart is seen as the place where wisdom dwells. In v.2 it describes Israel lack of wisdom. They are *folly* and the ability of genuine devotion is absent.⁹⁸ The literary translation of the sentence would be "*But they do not speak honestly in their heart*".

In v.7b it becomes clear Israel can no longer escape from Yahweh's presence. Their *transgressions* עֲלֵל are impossible to hide away. Israel has "*become what they have done*".⁹⁹ Macintosh gives a translation that well describes Israel's situation "*Now their wicked deeds have trapped them*".¹⁰⁰ Not only Israel can avoid the consequences of their actions, Yahweh himself is surrounded, they literally stand *before his face* בְּפָנֵי הָיְיָ. They are unavoidable (cf. 6:5). Mays' says: "*When they (Israel) return to Yahweh in worship and stand in his presence, he is ready to heal and restore. But when he looks upon them he must see the reality before him – the evil, the iniquity, the sin (cf. 5:14).*"¹⁰¹

7:3 *with their wickedness they make a king glad,*

and with their lies the officials

Again the theme of Israel wickedness proceeds. It is clear from the former verses Yahweh is not pleased with Israel. Viewed from another Israel's wickedness makes apparently *the king*

glad יִשְׂמְחוּ-מֶלֶךְ. Throughout chapter 6 this has been the case. Israel has followed what they

believe was the will of Yahweh, which rather turned out to be the will of the king and the

⁹⁸ TDOT VII, 419-430

⁹⁹ Mays, *Hosea*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Macintosh, *Hosea*, 252.

¹⁰¹ Mays, *Hosea*, 103.

political leaders. Rather than pleasing Yahweh they now make the king *glad* יִשְׂמְחוּ.¹⁰² Further on the absent of article of the noun מֶלֶךְ makes it uncertain whether Hosea is referring to a specific king or “kings” in general. Most scholars agree מֶלֶךְ alludes possible to the present unstable situation in the Northern kingdom, to one of the many fallen kings, and probably Hoshea ben Elah in 732 BCE.¹⁰³ Also the *officials* שָׂרֵר were pleased with Israel’s actions. The *officials* שָׂרֵר here refers to the civil leaders who were subordinate to מֶלֶךְ.¹⁰⁴ Additionally the verse does not refer to Baal and cultic worship, both the context and reference to מֶלֶךְ and שָׂרֵר assure this.¹⁰⁵

The *wickedness* רָעָה of the people is a central theme in the former verse vv.1-2, and later on in Hosea as well (cf. 9:15; 10:15; 12:2). The *wickedness* רָעָה and the *lies* כְּהַשׁ of the people endures through the collapse of the kingdom. V.3 emphasizes that Israel still continue to refrain from returning to Yahweh (cf. 6:6; 7:1), and rather wish to proceed with the manipulating national policy (cf. 5:11b, 13).

1.1. Summary of 6:1-7:3

As we have seen, Hosea 6:1-7:3 depict Israel who hasn’t returned back to Yahweh. Israel, a misguided people lacking loyalty and love for Yahweh (cf. 6:4b). Who thought they had returned to God, but fail because they haven’t understood severity of their transgressions. In their penitent Israel has a positive imagery of God. He is the healer who cures the sick, who restores and helps his people (vv.1-2). The nature imageries describes that Yahweh is the one with the authority over the creation, and that he brings goodness and blessings with his presence (v.3). But this is only if Israel returns and that is what they expect of Yahweh in their penitential song. Because Israel describes him also as the destructor who tears down. They know that these two sides are part of Yahweh’s divine nature, but since they will return they know his goodness will come forth. However Israel is blinded and their actions turn out to only a facade. Yahweh sees past the façade, because that is part of his divine nature. He is frustrated with Israel and their incompetence. As a result Yahweh speaks up asking two questions:

¹⁰² MT suggests וְהִשְׂמְחוּ. Wolff, Mays and several other scholar have gone away from this reading. cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 106; Mays, *Hosea*, 103; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 202. Macintosh suggest the verb should be translated into *rise*, which he loans from the Arabic cognate verb *smh* ”to be high”, ”lofty”, ”to tower up” cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 255.

¹⁰³ Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 124; Mays, *Hosea*, 103; Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 109.

¹⁰⁴ TDOT XIV, 196-197

¹⁰⁵ Wolff, *Hosea*, 124.

What should I do with you Ephraim?

What should I do with you Judah (v.4)

As the analysis elaborates the questions describes Yahweh's response to Israel. Yahweh has tried to get his people's attention and tried to get them to truly return back to him, hence it has not worked. As we have seen the question describes Yahweh in a new way. With the questions Yahweh calls out Israel's nonsense. In many ways he is addressing Israel directly, like a parent who is mad at his child's wrongdoing. Moreover they describe Yahweh in a doubting or struggling situation. Yahweh might be asking himself: Is it possible for Israel to ever return to him (cf. 5:15b-6:3, 7-10a; 7:2)? And is it possible for him to return to redeem Israel (cf. 5:15a; 6:4a, 5-6; 11b-7:1a)? Even though it seems like Yahweh does not know what to do, the question might be an attempt to help Israel again. However following into v.5 Yahweh explains the lack of *חסד* was what made him in the first place come with judgment. But the next thing Yahweh tells Israel is what his desires and wishes from Israel are (6:6). He explains to Israel again what their wrongdoings are. Instead of *sacrifice זבה*, Yahweh wishes *loyalty חסד*; instead of *burnt offering עלה*, he wishes *knowledge דעה*. Further on Yahweh reveals what the transgressions of Israel have been (vv.7-10). The purpose of the explanation is because it is clear Israel does not know their transgressions. Since Israel was not able to confess their sins, Yahweh reveals them for them. Yahweh knows and remembers all of their transgression and wickedness (7:2). When he interacts and heals Israel the wickedness becomes exposed (cf.7:1). What is the purpose of Yahweh's elaboration? Looking closer Yahweh seems to be described like a parent who teaches his children from right and wrong. He explains what the rightful actions, i.e. *loyalty חסד* and *knowledge דעה*, and also shows what the wrong actions are (vv.7-10). These actions depict Hosea's God as caring, steadfast and compassionate. Hosea juxtaposes Yahweh against Israel. While Yahweh is like the coming dawn (v.3), Israel disappears like the morning cloud and dew (v.4b).

The passage show that Yahweh has to continue out the judgment, hence, without Israel's real return there cannot be a fully new beginning, because that fresh beginning will only be fatal and temporary. He has to continue to threat them and teach them, so they might finally listen and return.

2. Hosea 11:1-11

11:1 *When Israel was young, I loved him,
from Egypt I called my son.*

Hosea begins chapter 11 by referring back to the first period of Israel's history. The verse gives a reminiscence of the time of exodus, when Yahweh chose Israel and helped her out of slavery in Egypt. Further on the name *Israel* itself has a reference to the exodus tradition, and not to the people in present time.¹⁰⁶ However, the noun נֶעַר is rarely relation to Israel's early history. In the context of the noun the best translation of the noun is *young/child* and not *servant*. One of the reasons for this is the parallel to *my son* בֶּן in v.1b. The words then allude to Ex 4:22-23, where Israel is metaphorically Yahweh's firstborn son.¹⁰⁷ Hosea has created a parental imagery with the words נֶעַר and בֶּן. This imagery is important in relation to understand who God is. The image shows Israel as a depending, vulnerable and helpless child, and God is her parent who guides Israel to adolescence to adulthood, to the becoming of a nation (cf. Deut 1:31, 32:1).¹⁰⁸ It alludes to the time when Israel was a small and insignificant nation (cf. Deut 7:7) and her dependence of Yahweh (cf. Gen 21:18; Judg 13:18; 1 Sam 1-3; 1 Kings 3:7; Jer 1:4).¹⁰⁹ Moreover the parental imagery describes the nature of Yahweh and Israel relationship. It illustrates the exclusive covenantal bound Israel has to Yahweh. This exclusive relationship is emphasized by two things. First it is Yahweh's *love* אהב (v.1a), and secondly it is Yahweh's *calling* קרא of Israel (cf. 11:1b, 2).¹¹⁰ These two words אהב and קרא are placed as parallels.¹¹¹

The root אהב occurs 19 times in the book, where four refers to Yahweh's love of Israel (3:1; 9:15; 11:1; 14:5).¹¹² The word is significant in the theology of Hosea. In v.1a Hosea uses אהב for the first time in describing the election of Israel as God's people. Usually אהב allude to the government's legal relation. Therefore the use of the aspect in Hosea is rare, only similar aspect is found in Deuteronomium (Deut 7:8, 13).¹¹³ In the two verses in Deuteronomium the verb allude to God's love, blessing and care for Israel. The verb therefore refers to the exodus tradition, and of God's election and covenant with Israel (cf. Ex 4:22-

¹⁰⁶ Van Rooy, *The names Israel, Ephraim and Jacob in the book of Hosea*, 138

¹⁰⁷ Macintosh, *Hosea*, 251. 32

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Emmanuel O. Nwaoru, *Imagery in the Prophecy of Hosea* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 148.

¹⁰⁹ Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 33.

¹¹⁰ See the footnotes in Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 147-148

¹¹¹ Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 39-40.

¹¹² Additionally in 11:4 the root is found in noun femininum, and has the aspect of God's love for Israel; cf. *Ibid.* 33-40

¹¹³ Wolff, *Hosea*, Mays, *Hosea*, 97.197

23).¹¹⁴ This gives clearly connotations back to נָעַר. Moreover the verses between 6:4 and now 11:1 show that there is a development of Yahweh remembrance of the tender care he had for Israel from the beginning (cf. 7:15; 9:10; 10:1). As Kåre Berge puts it “*there is a growing awareness in God that sexual fantasies of possession through repression has to be replaced by a return in the person of Yahweh to his tender care and original love for his son Israel.*”¹¹⁵ The point Berge is emphasizing here is closely related to the tension that began in the questions in 6:4 and develops to the questions in 11:8. Moreover Berge relates this whole tension of Yahweh back to the beginning of marriage imagery of ch.2-3.¹¹⁶

Looking at use of the word elsewhere in the book of Hosea could help understanding the depth of the meaning of the word and what it says about Yahweh. A similar description could be in 3:1, where Yahweh’s אֱהָב is described in the relation of Hosea and Gomer’s marriage. Kakkanattu says:

*“The buying back the woman, who abandoned him, manifests the difficult aspect of Yahweh’s love, i.e. to continue to be faithful and constant in his love towards Israel, even when she rejected his love and gone after other gods seeking gratification in their raisin cakes (cf. Hos 11:8-9).”*¹¹⁷

In 9:15 this struggle continues. Here Yahweh even ends up saying he will not love Israel anymore. Yahweh drives Israel *out of his house*. In this text the house alludes to the land (cf. Hos 8:1) and *out of his house* to the promise land (cf. Deut 21:15; 22:13).¹¹⁸ Finally in 14:5 Yahweh is able to love Israel freely, which again alludes to election of and covenant with Israel. 14:5 correlates closely to 11:1, where also אֱהָב refers to Yahweh’s love for young Israel. Further on as I mentioned the word קָרָא is connected to אֱהָב and the parental imagery as a whole. As mentioned, קָרָא alludes back to the time of exodus when Yahweh delivered Israel out and to his covenant. His love for Israel goes so deep that he did everything he could to get them out of Egypt. The covenant illustrates Yahweh’s close relation to Israel. Hosea’s God is like a parent who loves his children unconditional and permanent (cf. 3:1; Jer 31:3).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ cf. Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 147-48; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 369-70.

¹¹⁵ Kåre Berge, "Victim and Victimizer: Plotting God in the Book of Hosea," *Tidsskrift for teologi og kirke* 1, no. 2 (2001): 79.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 36.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁹ Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 148.

11:2 *Yet the more I called them¹²⁰, the more they went away from me.*

They scarified to Baal and offered incense to idols.

In v.2 the issue of Israel and Yahweh's relationship is revealed. Israel is unfaithfully and deceitful. While v.1 described Yahweh's loving care for Israel, v.2 describes Israel as unloving and rebellious child. The two verses are juxtaposed.¹²¹ V.2 describes an ongoing issue that has been there from the beginning of Yahweh and Israel's relation, i.e. Israel failure to response to Yahweh's faithfulness.¹²² The expectation of the calling was Israel's response to follow Yahweh. This has been an ongoing issue from the beginning of the book of Hosea (cf. ch.1-2) and as emphasized in the response in 6:4 to the falsely return in 6:1-3. Because of the juxtaposition between v.1 and 2 there have been questioned whether v.2 refers to same incident as v.1, i.e. whether it connotes back to the exodus-story or to the conquest period when Israel worship of Baal (cf. 9:10).¹²³

As mentioned Yahweh's *call* קרא on Israel is related to Yahweh love for Israel (v.1). קרא alludes back to the covenant and to parental imagery. Nwaoru points out Yahweh's call made Israel to a people, just as a parent begetting makes a child. He says:

"The 'call' is YHWH first expression of love, and it lays the foundation for his subsequent care and guidance. The circumstances in which YHWH called Israel to sonship indicates the depth of his love. The key word that defines the circumstances is נער."

This indicates v.2 closer relation to v.1 and that the verse alludes to the same incident of v.1. And as I have mentioned the calling of Israel failed. Israel went astray and turned idolatrous acts. Wolff suggest בעל here refers to the same Canaanite god as in 9:10 Baal-Peor,¹²⁴ while Andersen - Freedman disagrees and argue בעל stands as a general reference to other deities than Yahweh and not to a specific Canaanite god.¹²⁵ However, despite the disagreement there is a consensus the Baal(s) worship stand as an opposition to the worship of Yahweh. It is common of Hosea only mentions the name Baal when he refers Yahweh rival. Moreover בעל could give connotations to marriage imagery in ch.1-3 (cf. 2:16-17). Just as Israel is unfaithful and sacrifices to Baal(s), so were Gomer unfaithful to her husband through the sacrifice to

¹²⁰ One issue in the text is the change of the 3 person plural use in v.2. The change from singular to plural makes it difficult to make the object to be Israel (who was called "him" in the previous verse), Andersen & Freedman, *Hosea*, 577. A reason for this is the relationship has changed from a familiarity, to a ruptured relationship." *Yahweh's "I" speaks coldly only of "them"* Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*.362

¹²¹ Kakkanattu, God's enduring love, Kakkanattu, God's Enduring Love. 45

¹²² Ibid. 280

¹²³ Macintosh, *Hosea*.199

¹²⁴ *Hosea*, 38-39, 165.

¹²⁵ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 578.

Baal. Israel's action made them transgress their sonship.¹²⁶ Again the God of Hosea is the faithful and steadfast, while Israel is not (cf. ch.6).

11:3 *And I taught Ephraim to walk and took them in my arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.*

Verse 3 is closely connected to the previous verses. Grammatically v.3 is related to v.2b, through the antithetically placement of the pronoun suffix **הֵם** *they* (v.2b) and **וְאֶנְכִי** *but I*(v.3). Moreover the first person usage alludes back to v.1. Additionally to the grammatical link the parental imagery continues. V.3a begins with describing of Yahweh as a parent who nurtures and protects its child. The imagery describes Yahweh as a parent who teaches his child to walk and nurtures her in his protective and caring arms. This emphasizes what I talked about in v.1, i.e. Yahweh guiding Israel from her adolescence to her adulthood (cf. Deut 1:31; 32:11; Isa 63:9).¹²⁷This fits with the symbolism the word **זְרֹעַ** (*arm*) has, i.e. (*divine*) *strength*. The phrase *Yahweh's outstretched arm* is commonly used as reference to the exodus and how Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (cf. Exod 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19 etc.).¹²⁸

Hosea often switch between the names *Israel and Ephraim*. A couple of places in Hosea, like here in v.3, one would expect Hosea to use *Israel* rather than *Ephraim* (which Hosea did in 11:1). In v.3 Israel and Ephraim allude to two different parts of the northern kingdom.¹²⁹

From v.3b it is still clear Israel do not understand Yahweh's love and care for them. They are ignorant to Yahweh's acts. This ignorance explains why Israel acting the way they do in the former verses i.e. continue with idolatry and do not return. As in 6:6 the theme of "*lack of knowledge*" is brought up again. The root **יָדַע** *to know* has been debated, because of the broad semantic meaning in OT. Besides the three occurrences in the two unities (cf. 6:3, 6 and 11:3) the root occurs eight times in Hosea (2:10, 22; 4:1; twice in 4:6; 5:4; 8:2; 13:4). Because Israel *lacks knowledge* they are unable to differentiate between Yahweh and other gods, therefore it refers to their idolatrous acts.¹³⁰ They do not see the true healer and saviour.¹³¹In 6:3 Israel think they know Yahweh, and in 6:6 Yahweh reveals their lack of knowledge. In v.3b the situation has not changed. The *lack of knowledge* is actually Israel's

¹²⁶Wolff, Hosea. 47-49

¹²⁷Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 148.

¹²⁸Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*. 54

¹²⁹ Van Rooy, The names Israel, Ephraim and Jacob in the book of Hosea, 138

¹³⁰Nwaoru, *Imagery*. 84

¹³¹Wolff, *Hosea*.55, 125

fundamental sin, because this is what eventually makes them not *return* שׁוּב to God (11:5; cf 5:4; 6:1, 3).¹³²

Further on in v.3b the image of Yahweh as a *healer* רפא is used. The image is similar to the parental image and has several similar characteristics. Just as the parental imagery the imagery connote back to the wilderness time, when Yahweh took care of Israel. Previously the imagery was used on Yahweh in 6:1-3. The imagery of God as healer is also seen in Hos 14:5. In the OT it is found among others in Ex 15:26, Deut 32:39 and Is 57:18f. The verb רפא means *to heal* and has generally been understood to mean Yahweh who “*takes care of*” Israel. In v.3b the verb is understood figuratively and not a literary healing of physical sickness. Yahweh wishes to restore and forgive the nation. The sickness Israel needs healing from is their broken relationship with God.¹³³ Yahweh is the only one who can restore this. This is emphasized in the former verses and in 7:1 and 14:4-5.¹³⁴

11:4 *With human cords I drew them out like bonds of love.*

I was to them like one who lifts up a small child to their check.

I bent down and gave him food.

V.4a has been a debated a lot among scholars, because of the only occurrence of the phrase אָרָם בְּתַבְּלֵי אָדָם *human cords*. The phrase is best understood in relation to אֲהַבָה עֲבֹתוֹת אֶהְיֶה *bands of love*. By *human* it is probably meant as “*humane*” *cords*, referring to people who easily gets lost.¹³⁵ In relation to “*bands of love*” one can interpret it figuratively, where Yahweh is the one who leads Israel with love and care (Jer 31:3).¹³⁶ The phrase alludes to parental imagery, i.e. Yahweh, the parent, who guides his child. Moreover this again shows Yahweh’s true covenantal promise to Israel, meaning Yahweh will never let Israel go. He is the steadfast and loyal to the promise he gave to Israel. That is the nature of who God is. However, in relation to this there are disagreements whether v.4a allude to animal imagery, rather than parental.

In v.4b there are some textual challenges, which give interpretational difficulties. The main issue is whether to understand the root עַל to be mean עָל *yoke* or עוֹל *infant*.¹³⁷ The first interpretation “*yoke*” sees Israel as a plowing animal and Yahweh as the one who lifts a yoke

¹³²Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love.*, 125

¹³³James M. Ward, *Hosea: A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). 56

¹³⁴Nwaoru, *Imagery*. 112

¹³⁵TDOT IV, 177.

¹³⁶Wolff, *Hosea*, 199., 58

¹³⁷LXX says ὡς ῥαπίζων ἄνθρωπος, translating “*And I will be to them like a person slapping his cheeks*”. This does not make the understanding of עַל any more understandable, which makes it clear that also the Greek translator have had difficulties understanding the word.

from the animal.¹³⁸ A translation would be “*I was to them like one who lifts the yoke on their jaws*”. The imagery refers then back to the imagery in 10:11. Macintosh argues the plural form fits better to this interpretation, rather than the latter definition, where the plural does not fit the singular form of child.¹³⁹ The second interpretation translates the word to *infant/child*, which makes it a parental imagery.¹⁴⁰ Yahweh is like a parent who lifts up a *child* and Israel is the *child* who Yahweh takes care of. This interpretation creates a continuation of the parental imagery of the previous verses. Moreover this also gives the verse connotations to the Israel’s time in the wilderness (cf. 2:10, 16f; 13:5f).¹⁴¹ Therefore there is an unlikeliness of animal imagery suddenly appearing in the context. Moreover it is difficult to argue for the translation *yoke*, when a yoke usually is put on the animal’s neck or shoulder, and not as v.4b then would imply on the cheek/jaw.¹⁴² Within the context a parental imagery is a more fitting interpretation. Nevertheless, despite the interpretation of v.4b, the following sentence in v.4bβ fits both interpretations of the root עָל. Moreover if one look at the meaning of both imageries they both describe Yahweh as a caring person who feeds and takes care of his offspring/child.

11:5 *they will return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king, for they refuse to return.*

Again for the third time is Israel turning away from Yahweh’s love for them. Israel’s apostasy becomes more clarified. Hosea again alludes to the exodus-story, where Israel seems to have a desire to again *return* (שָׁב) back to Egypt (Nu 14:4). The verse is a continuation of the historical narrative of vv.1-4, and v.5 emphasizes Israel’s refusal to return (v.5b). The meaning of *return to Egypt* might allude to Yahweh’s wish to free Israel from Assyrian domination after Tiglath-Pileser’s death (2 Kings 17:4).¹⁴³ According to Ward the phrase “*return to Egypt*” could be about a future punishment and not just presence policy.¹⁴⁴ In the book of Hosea phrase only occurs in relation to judgment oracles (cf. 8:13; 9:3). If Hosea were to be referring to present political problems, he might have phrased it differently (cf. 7:11; 8:9-10; 12:2). The reference to the Assyrian king could indicate a present situation, i.e. the king Hoshea’s loyalty to Assyria. It alludes to Israel’s misguided trust in believing the

¹³⁸ See e.g. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 446-47; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 275, 82-83.446-7; Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 172-73.

¹³⁹ Macintosh, *Hosea*, 447.

¹⁴⁰ See e.g. Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 88; Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 20-22, 57-58; Wolff, *Hosea*, 199-200.

¹⁴¹ *Hosea*, 200.

¹⁴² Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 20-22.

¹⁴³ Wolff, *Hosea*, 200.

¹⁴⁴ Ward, *Hosea*, 202-03.

Assyrian king will come to her rescue (cf. 5:13; 8:9; 10:6).¹⁴⁵ Despite this present reference there is a possibility to understand v.5 in both directions. Because, whether the reference is to past, present or future, what Hosea wishes to emphasize is the lack of loyalty *חסד* to Yahweh (cf. 6:4; 11:1). No matter when or where *the return to Egypt* happens this is always the consequence of Israel's refusal to return and rejection of Yahweh's love (cf. v.1). It is a reversed exodus.¹⁴⁶

11:6 *The sword will whirl through their cities,
and consume their oracle priest and destroy their plans*

In v.6 the theme of punishment is stated. The punishment of the people is that their city will be ruined. The verse does not refer to a specific incident, but by looking at other references in the book of Hosea (cf. 10:1; 14:1) it could point to either the coming Assyrian conquest under Tiglath-pilser III in 734-732 or during the time of Hoshea's reign.¹⁴⁷

The use of *הֶרֶב* "sword" together with the verb *הוּל* is rare. The meaning of the verb *הוּל* could be to *whirl, dance* or *writhe*. The verb is to be understood metaphorically, where the "raging sword against the cities of Israel is conceived as a dance".¹⁴⁸ The verb is used similarly in Jer 23:19 and 30:23, where it storms through the people as a punishment. The sword represents Assyria and is an agent of divine punishment.¹⁴⁹

Further on there have been some difficulties in understanding the word *בָּרִיו* in relation to the sword. Two of the main arguments is whether *בָּרִיו* parallels *עָרִיו* *the city*, translating *bars, village* or *fortification*¹⁵⁰, or *בָּרִיו* allude to a human category, meaning *warriors, braggarts, strong men* or *oracle priest/diviner*.¹⁵¹ The latter argument has become the most common interpretation. This meaning better fits the use of the third person plural suffix and the noun *מַעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם* *their plans* in v.6c.

¹⁴⁵Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*. 67

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 66-67.

¹⁴⁷Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 286.

¹⁴⁸TDOT IV, 261

¹⁴⁹ cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 585; Mays, *Hosea*, 155; Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 70.

¹⁵⁰ cf. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 276.

¹⁵¹ cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 585; Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 24-25, 70; Wolff, *Hosea*, 192.

11:7 *And my people will hang on turning away from me.
They shout out with him from the high,
But he will not raise them up.*

In v.7a them emphasis is on that Israel does *still* not return to Yahweh. Even though the people's cities are shattered and destroyed (v.6) there is no change of attitude. Again Hosea mentions *return* שׁוּב. This time Israel is described as turning away from Yahweh towards other gods.

In v.7b the understanding of אֱלֹהֵי-עַל has important in the understanding of v.7a. The word עַל *high* alludes to an expression for a cultic god.¹⁵² Wolff suggests the word refers to Baal and that the text might have been a corruption of בַּעַל into עַל.¹⁵³ In both readings it shows Israel idolatry. V.7bβ describes Israel's cry for help to the wrong place. Again as the former verse emphasized, Israel misplaces her trust and loyalty. Ward point out there is a hint of irony in the verse. He says:

*"The god they imagine to be their god is their own creation – a Baal – and not Yahweh. Their true enemy is not the one they see, but themselves, and, therefore, God. Their cry is futile, for Baal cannot save them from themselves, from Assyria, or from God. This is the end of their "fox-hole" Baalism."*¹⁵⁴

Israel does not see who their actual helper is. Their *lack of knowledge* (cf. 6:6) makes them look at the wrong place. This makes them unfaithful to Yahweh (5:7; 6:7). They might even believe that they are addressing Yahweh, but ironically they are turning to Baal (cf. 6:5-10) and to the Assyrian king (cf. 5:13; 8:9; 10:6), when it is Yahweh who is actually rescuing them (cf. 2:16). Israel has forgotten Yahweh (2:15; 13:6) and does not know him (5:4). Therefore cannot Israel see that only Yahweh is the one who rescues and restores them (cf. 2:10; 6:11).

¹⁵² cf. Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 27; Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, vol. 24:1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 144.

¹⁵³ Wolff, *Hosea*, 192-93. Mays does the same interpretation, cf. Mays, *Hosea*, 156.

¹⁵⁴ H. S. Nyberg, *Studien Zum Hoseabuche: Zugleich Ein Betrag Zur Klärung Des Problems Der Alttestamentlichen Textkritik*, vol. 1935:6 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1935). 203-204

11:8 *How can I give you up, Ephraim?*
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart turns inside me,
All my compassion grows warm.

From v.8 an unique shift in form and theme occurs. The verse begins with four questions in voiced by Yahweh. The verse reveals a lamenting Yahweh, which is an uncommon aspect of God. Previously such lamentations were rather addressed from humankind to God (cf. Psalms), and not the other way around.¹⁵⁵ For this reason v.8 has long been debated among scholars. The main debate has been on the meaning of the questions and how this shows an original portrayal of Yahweh.¹⁵⁶ I will in this analysis only give a brief analysis of the questions. In the excursus I will give a more in-depth elaborate of the issue of the questions. Here I will focus mainly on the understanding of the verse as a whole and in relation to its context.

From vv.1-7 Yahweh has been described as the faithful one, while Israel is the betrayer. The complaints against Israel have been spoken, and punishment is anticipated. Up until now Yahweh has been the speaker (1st person) addressing Israel in third person singular. From v.8-9 there occurs a shift where Yahweh is addressing Israel directly in second person. The text from vv.8-9 is framed by alliteration or a parallelism, which emphasizes v.9 role in the interpretation of v.8.¹⁵⁷ Moreover an interesting notice is that twelve of sixteen verbs in vv.8-11 stand in Qal future, denoting to an eschatological time for Yahweh and Israel's parental relationship. Because of the shift of style in these following verses, Nwaoru suggest v.8 together with either v.9 or vv.9-11 is a separate oracle and latter addition to ch.11.¹⁵⁸

V.8a begins with an interrogative adverb $\eta\aleph$, which is commonly seen in a lamentation. Several scholars argue therefore the questions for being a rhetorical question.¹⁵⁹ The adverb introduces the first of four divine questions. It debated whether these questions

¹⁵⁵Wolff, *Hosea*.139

¹⁵⁶ The rhetorical questions give connotations to Hos 6:4, where similar questions are asked.

¹⁵⁷ According to Nwaoru the sound of η at the end of seven words there is created a pathetic motion. Moreover he says this is emphasized through the repetition of the particle $\eta\aleph$ at each question and use of singular suffix η . Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 51.

¹⁵⁸ Nwaoru argues vv.8-11 is a separate oracle which later was joined to vv.1-7 during the process of compilation. The common catchwords and the rhetorical function and motif of vv.8-11 argues for this, see *ibid.*, 89.

¹⁵⁹ This will be further elaborated over in the excursus.

imply a threat or an oracle of salvation.¹⁶⁰ Further on as I have mentioned previously the question is similar to 6:4. In 11:8 the questions are more intensified because the issue of Israel's ongoing transgression has increased and become more problematic. The questions are part of Israel's futuristic outcome. Kakkanattu points out "*the question at v.8 shows that Yahweh is placed before an impasse in his relationship with Israel.*"¹⁶¹ As Yahweh voiced out the issue for the first time in 6:4 and now further development in v.8. The anticipating punishment is not a wishful outcome for Yahweh. Yahweh expected Israel in the end to return. However what Yahweh hope would be avoidable is now inevitable! Can Yahweh give Israel up or is he actually able to forgive them? And could there ever be a possibility for Israel to return to Yahweh? And again as in 6:4 the questions shows either Yahweh's dialog with Israel, Yahweh's inner-dialog or inner-conflict.

An interesting notice is the verb *to deliver/hand over* יָדָה in piel used in the second question. This verb only occurs three times in piel in OT (cf. Gen 14:20; Prov 4:9; Hos 11:8). Just as Gen 14:20 the verb connotes in v.8 to military conquest. In Gen 14:20 God delivers Abraham's enemies to him, while in Hos 11:8 Yahweh delivers Israel, i.e. making Israel the enemy who is to be handed over.¹⁶² This is note makes it clear Yahweh now sees Israel as a betrayer. The transgressions have violated Yahweh so deeply that Israel has now become the enemy. Following the previous imagery Yahweh is like a heartbroken parent who has lost his son, while Israel is *the prodigal son*.¹⁶³ Or to follow the marriage imagery Hosea uses in the beginning of the book, Israel is the adulteries spouse who has committed fornication against her husband Yahweh (cf. 2:9, 18).¹⁶⁴

In v.8b the cities Admah and Zeboiim are mentioned. While Admah is a Canaanite city, Zeboiim is an unknown city.¹⁶⁵ In OT the cities refer to Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen 10:19; 14:2, 8; Deut 29:22). Wolff says "*Hosea refers to a tradition attested in Deut 29:22, which tells how Yahweh's burning anger overcame these cities, totally destroying all life and the possibility of renewed life.*"¹⁶⁶ The alluding to the cities might allude to Yahweh's frustration and anger. Moreover they show what should be the coming result of Israel, i.e. Israel will become like the cities of Admah and Zeboiim. However, turned into questions they seem to indicate Yahweh's wish to not conduct this kind of punishment.

¹⁶⁰ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 589.

¹⁶¹ Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 77.

¹⁶² HALOT 2, 545

¹⁶³ Mays, *Hosea*, 156.

¹⁶⁴ Wolff, "Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel," 81.

¹⁶⁵ HALOT 3, 997

¹⁶⁶ Wolff, *Hosea*, 201.

In v.8c one sees Yahweh's doubt or struggle clearer. There has been given several interpretation for how the phrase *עָלַי לְבַבִּי נִפְתָּר* should be translated. The verb *נִפְתָּר* means *to change, turn or overturn*. The phrase could be translated with a hostile aspect, as God being against God.¹⁶⁷ Wolff suggests this and translates the phrase to "*My heart turns against me*". He says: "*Yahweh's will is directed against himself, i.e. against his wrath (v.9a)*".¹⁶⁸ Lindström has also a hostile understanding of the verb and connects it to the Sodom tradition (cf. Deut 29:22; Jer 49:18). To preserve this understanding he suggest the translation "*My heart is reversed, destroyed within me*".¹⁶⁹ Jeremias does a similar translation of the phrase: "*Gegen mich selbst kehrt sich mein Hertz*". Jeremias emphasizes that Yahweh's heart goes against himself and his own anger, as in a conflict. His anger does not disappear.¹⁷⁰ With this as background one could understand the questions as Yahweh being in conflict with himself.¹⁷¹ Janzen suggests "*My heart changes itself upon me*". Here Janzen renders the particle *עָלַי* to mean "*upon*" instead of "*against*". He says the meaning of the verb describes a kind of change. He says: "*In such instances, the verb describes a qualitative change affecting the totality of the entity to which it refers*".¹⁷² By this Janzen means that Yahweh has gone through a transformation. He goes on and says the change could refer to various changes, cf. physical awareness (1 Sam 4:19); a pervasive emotional change (cf. Jer 31:13); a change in attitude towards another person (cf. Jer 13:23; 1 Sam 10:6).¹⁷³ In Mays commentary on Hosea he translates the phrase into "*My heart has turned itself against me*", which is similar to Wolff and Jeremias understanding. He has however later rendered his translation into "*My mind had changed*" following Janzen's semantic view. Mays agree with the word means *a change*, however he disagrees the change goes as far as a transformation.¹⁷⁴

Looking further on at v.8c, Yahweh is showing his deep care for Israel. The verb *נִבְמָרָר* in niph'al occurs only four times in niph'al in OT. The verb means *to grow warm*. The verb is an idiomatic expression, describing a deep emotional feeling (cf. Gen 43:30, 1 Kings

¹⁶⁷ TDOT III, 426-427

¹⁶⁸ Wolff, *Hosea*, 202.

¹⁶⁹ "*Mitt hjärta omkastas, ödeläggs i mig*", Fredrik Lindström, "«Jag Är Gud Och Inte Människa» (Hos 11:9) - Kan Guds Medlidande Besegra Våra antropomorfa Gudsbilder?," *Teologisk Tidsskrift*, no. 02 (2014): 143-44.

¹⁷⁰ Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, 24:1.

¹⁷¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 201.

¹⁷² J. Gerald Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," *Semeia*, no. 24 (1982): 28.

¹⁷³ Ibid. Rudolph translation is similar to Janzen's: "*Verwandelt ist in mir mein Herz*". "*Verwandelt*" translated in English means *transform/change*, see Rudolph, *Hosea*, 217-18.

¹⁷⁴ James Luther Mays, "Response to Janzen: "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11"," *Semeia*, no. 24 (1982): 46-47.

3:26).¹⁷⁵The root נחם has received various translations in OT. The noun alludes to a covenantal context. The most common translation has been *comfort* or *compassion*. The root mainly involves an emotional realm, where something has happened, which cannot be changed, and where one is comforting someone one cannot help.¹⁷⁶Mays translates the noun to *compassion* and relates it to parental imagery: “*Compassion, the tender emotion which parent feel toward the helpless child, grows increasingly strong and displaces wrath (cf. Jer 31:20)*”.¹⁷⁷By emphasizing on the parental imagery, Mays looks at the words relation to the context, which is an important aspect to keep in mind. Dearman translates also the word to *compassion* and connects the understanding to the v.8b. He points out the in within the *change of heart* Yahweh’s compassions also arises. He says: “*One could just as easily say that the rose of compassion in YHWH led to his change of heart (mind)*.”¹⁷⁸Wolff translates נחם to mean *remorse* (cf. Isa 57:18; Zech 1:13), which emphasizes his view of Yahweh’s struggle with himself (cf. v.8a) and Yahweh’s turning point in the verse. Wolff says: “*His remorse (over his wrathful intention to judge) ‘grows hot,’ i.e. it provokes and dominates him.*”¹⁷⁹Janzen translates to “*my change of mind grows fervent altogether!*” He sees a process of change within Yahweh, “*a change in which the dilemma is dealt with in such a manner that the outcome is an undivided feeling and attitude and purpose, a change in which Yahweh is both initiator and outcome.*”¹⁸⁰Janzen says the change occurring in Yahweh decides what element of God’s wrath or love will dominate and overrule the other.¹⁸¹

Whether it is a change that is occurring is a hostile battle within God, a transformation, or an expression of God’s suffering, it is clear these scholars agree that there is occurring some sort of change or change of mind in God. Yahweh is having some sort of conversion. The understanding of v.8c is important in relation to the questions in v.8a. Whether the questions are an expression of Yahweh’s struggle between his wrath and love, or whether it is Yahweh struggle in finding an answer, v.8c could interpret in both directions.¹⁸²An important aspect here is how one understands God’s nature and the relation between God’s wrath and love, and whether he is able to change his mind or not. As we will see in the excursus this is an important aspect in the discussion.

¹⁷⁵ NIDOTTE 2, 662.

¹⁷⁶ TDOT IX, 342.

¹⁷⁷ Mays, *Hosea*, 157. See also Macintosh. He understands the noun meaning both *compassion and remorse*, cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 459.

¹⁷⁸ Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 289.

¹⁷⁹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 201.

¹⁸⁰ Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," 30-31.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁸² As Janzens points out: “*This process of ‘choosing’ involves struggle.*”, *ibid.*, 33.

11:9 *I won't act out my burning wrath,
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I am God, not human,
Holy one in your midst.
I will not come with wrath*

Now regarding v.9, it is clear this verse is part of the change Yahweh began to express in of v.8. The verse is important in the understanding the meaning of v.8. The struggle Yahweh had in v.8 has now turned into a choice, a choice to not to punish Israel, to not let his burning wrath influence his compassion and love for Israel.

Looking closer to v.9 the verse is structured in a semantic parallelism, beginning each four lines with the negative particle אֵלֵּי. According to Kakkanattu the negative particle implies Yahweh's change of heart. His burning wrath won't rule over Israel history.¹⁸³ Andersen – Freedman understands אֵלֵּי + verb (v.9a) as an asseverative of Yahweh's determination of the punishment of Israel. According to them this interpretation correlates to the context. Vv.8-9 is then understood as an oracle of threat.¹⁸⁴ However looking at the context this is a thin argument and few scholars agree with them.

What does it mean Yahweh will not act out his *burning wrath* אֵלֵּי תִרְוֶן? The noun חֲרָה *burning/fury* describes divine wrath toward his people's unacceptable actions, i.e. commit idolatrous acts, fornication or other acts that break the covenant.¹⁸⁵

Further on the noun נֶסֶם *nose* often describes divine wrath and anger. Divine wrathfulness against Israel's unfaithfulness seems to have been a known and expected action in OT (cf. Mic 7:9; Ezra 8:22). Likewise, there are examples where God is praised for restraining his anger away from his people (Psalm 78:38). This restraints show the possibility of God to have a change of heart.¹⁸⁶ The portrayal of Yahweh's change of heart is a unique description of God and important in the understanding of Yahweh and Israel's relationship. If Yahweh's punishment had taken place, it would mean the destruction of Israel and the end of Israel's salvation story and relation between Yahweh – Israel.¹⁸⁷

Further on v.9aβ has some interpretational challenges. The sentence seems to indicate that Yahweh has destroyed Ephraim once before. This interpretation indicates the verb שָׂרַב emphasizing the repetition of the previous destructive event. Bons suggests an interpretation

¹⁸³Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 85.

¹⁸⁴Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 589.

¹⁸⁵TDOT V, 173-175.

¹⁸⁶TDOT I, 356-360.

¹⁸⁷Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 86; Fredrik Lindström, "Guds Långa Näsa Och Blödande Hjärta: Gränser För Guds Makt I Gamla Testamentet," *Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift* 77, no. 1 (2001): 8-9.

in this direction. He says the phrase alludes back to Yahweh's fierce anger in v.9a. Even though Yahweh's anger has the upper hand, Yahweh will not reconsider the decision to not execute his anger upon Israel (cf. v.8).¹⁸⁸ This interpretation is similar to Andersen – Freedman understanding of v.9 as being an oracle of threat. However the verb could also allude back to v.1 and v.8, meaning the phrase has a restorative tense, and not a return of annihilation. Kakkanattu points out:

*“Return to destruction then refers to a nullification of the election or a restoration of the conditions before exodus. Not returning to destruction, accordingly, means Yahweh, who called Israel into life, does not intend to exterminate him.”*¹⁸⁹

This is a more likely interpretation, since it is clear from v.8 Yahweh is having a change of mind towards Israel.

Further on in v.9b an interesting theme occurs. Hosea has earlier in the chapter described Yahweh with anthropomorphic imageries, and now Yahweh says *“For I am God and not human”* כִּי אֵל אֲנִי וְלֹא אִישׁ. As Lindström points out this phrase seems to be a *metaphor-killer*. He says, *“the prophet deliberately leaves all speech of metaphors of God and proclaims the end of all humanly analogies”*¹⁹⁰ Why does Hosea do this? For, if this were to be a metaphor-kill of some sort, the previous descriptions are still important and relevant in understanding Yahweh's nature. They cannot be overlooked just because Yahweh is divine and goes beyond all imageries.

Back to the phrase, the noun אִישׁ most often translates into having gender specific connotation, meaning *man*. However there is also a possibility the noun has a more universal reference to *human* (cf. Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:28-29; Isa 31:1; Ezek 28:2).¹⁹¹ Scholars therefore translate the noun in both directions. One would ask why isn't Hosea using the more common noun אָדָם for *human*, if he meant human. However, by looking at the context, the meaning of the phrase is to emphasize the distinctiveness of Yahweh's nature from humans, and not just to that of man. It is therefore most suitable translating אִישׁ to the general meaning *human*.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸Eberhard Bons, "Zwei Überlegungen Zum Verständnis Von Hosea Xi," *Vetus testamentum* 45, no. 3 (1995): 290-93.

¹⁸⁹Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 87., cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 201-02.

¹⁹⁰“Profeten lämnar medvetet allt metaforiskt tal om Gud och proklamerar slutet på samtliga mänskliga analogier.”, cf. Lindström, “«Jag Är Gud Och Inte Människa» ” 139.

¹⁹¹ TDOT I, 224

¹⁹² cf. Lindström, “«Jag Är Gud Och Inte Människa» ”; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 575, 89-90. Dearman does an interesting translation, translating אִישׁ to *“mortal”*, emphasizing the distinction nature of Yahweh as the immortal divine and the humans as perishable and deadly, cf. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 290-92.

From a human point of view one would expect Yahweh in this situation to have acted out his wrathfulness. However as the phrase emphasizes since Yahweh is divine, his nature is distinctively different from humans. Therefore his moral actions are consequently different from the humans. As Landy says “*to be divine is to have self-control, while humans are creatures of impulse, or, alternatively, God admits second thoughts, while humans are inflexible.*”¹⁹³ So even though the phrase in some way is a metaphor-kill of the former imageries, they say something about Yahweh. Yahweh has some of the characteristics of humans, but for Hosea it is important to emphasize he is not the equal of human. Yahweh has a different ethical stance than the human being. The limit that qualifies humankind does not apply Yahweh. As Mays puts it like this:

*“The actions and feelings of Yahweh can be translated into representations of human, and even animal, life. In the dramatic metaphor the personal reality of Yahweh’s incursion into human life and history is present and comprehensible. But he transcends the metaphor, is different from that to which he is compared. And free of all its limitations. He is wrathful and loving like man, but as God.”*¹⁹⁴

Further on in v.9ba Yahweh’s distinctiveness is accentuated. The phrase *קֹדֶשׁ קִרְבָּנֶיךָ* “*Holy one in your midst*” emphasizes Yahweh’s superiority and otherness to humankind. This phrase interestingly occurs only once in Hosea.¹⁹⁵ Wolff points out that:

*“It is important to note that the concept of Yahweh’s holiness, appearing only once in Hosea, provides the foundation not for his judging will but for his saving will, to which he had committed himself from very beginning of Israel’s salving history.”*¹⁹⁶

Instead of interpreting holiness to have a negative and destructive meaning, holiness has a positive connotation. Wolff says it has not been until the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah that Yahweh’s unique saving restoration has been based on his holiness (Isa 40:25ff).¹⁹⁷ However, although Yahweh’s otherness makes him incompatible to human, he is a God who lives in the midst of his people. Wolff and several other scholars understand that this means Yahweh will not let his wrath release upon Israel.¹⁹⁸ However some scholars understand v.9b as having a negative connotation. They argue this confirms Yahweh’s continuing plan of punishment over Israel.¹⁹⁹ This understanding is related to the understanding of the word *בְּעִיר*. Macintosh and

¹⁹³Landy, *Hosea*, 165.

¹⁹⁴Mays, *Hosea*, 157.

¹⁹⁵*קֹדֶשׁ* occurs in Hos 4:14 and 12:1. The former refer to temple prostitution and the latter to Canaanite worship, cf. TDOT XII, 539.

¹⁹⁶Wolff, *Hosea*, 202.

¹⁹⁷Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 202; Landy, *Hosea*, 165-66; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 290.

¹⁹⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 589-91.

Andersen – Freedman reads the word literary to mean “city”. MT, LXX and Vulgata do the same.²⁰⁰Lindström gives an interesting perspective. He says the *city* could allude to the Sodom tradition. The prophet often used Sodom as an illustration for evil and sin of their own time. Israel is the second Sodom. Lindström says the presence of Yahweh, in opposition to the human presence, saves the second Sodom, because “*Yahweh is not a Sodom-human*”.²⁰¹The verb בּוֹא is important in the understanding of the meaning of בְּעִיר. The verb means *to come/go, come/go in* used in different context. However, the translation of בְּעִיר into *city* does not fit well in the context. Most scholars today read the בְּעִיר meaning *in wrath/terror* (cf. 7:4; Jer 15:8).²⁰²The phrase function alludes back to v.9a and v.8, i.e. Yahweh will not punish and come with wrath. The most likely interpretation is that *Holy one* has a positive connotation. God will not come with wrath, because he is not just *holy*, but he is the Holy One *in the midst*. This is an important understanding of who Yahweh is, because like Mays points out “*The future of Israel rests wholly on the identity of Yahweh – that he is God (‘el) instead of a man, and that he is the Holy One (qados) in their midst.*”²⁰³As Landy puts it “*If God is in our midst, he cannot come back to destroy us, at least not without destroying himself. The furious energy he holds back with the warmth of compassion is then in us also.*”²⁰⁴Landy points out an interesting aspect in understanding the meaning of both v.8 and v.9, and also for that matter 6:4. The best way to understand this relationship is again best explained with the parental imagery. What Landy emphasizes is the unconditional love and bondage Yahweh has with Israel. To destroy a child as a parent, must be the most destructive and gruesome action towards of course the child, but also to on oneself.

11:10 *They shall follow Yahweh,*

like a lion he will roar.

When he roars shall his children come trembling from the west.

There occurs a shift in style and vocabulary in vv.10-11. Now Hosea addresses Yahweh in third person singular instead of first person singular.²⁰⁵ Some scholars have argued the shift in vv.10-11 means the verses are non-Hoseanic text, probably added during the post-exilic

²⁰⁰Cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 464; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 591.

²⁰¹“*JHWH är ‘inta en Sodomänniska’*”, Lindström, “*«Jag Är Gud Och Inte Människa»*” 148-51.

²⁰²HALOT 2, 822, cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, 193; Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 276; Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love*, 29-30.

²⁰³Mays, *Hosea*, 157.

²⁰⁴Landy, *Hosea*, 165-6.

²⁰⁵ Andersen – Freedman argue that even though there is a shift of addressee, it does not mean there is a shift of speaker, Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 42, 591.

period.²⁰⁶The shift illustrates a beginning of a new era, where the relationship of Yahweh and Israel has changed. Their relationship will be harmonious; they will follow Yahweh and act differently towards him.

The phrase *to follow after* אַחֲרַי יִלְכוּ “is immediately and fully comprehensible to Israelites conversant with nomadic life and can consequently be used to describe the totality of the communal and individual life-style.”²⁰⁷The phrase in OT is most commonly found in descriptions when one follows and commits to a god in cultic worship (cf. Deut 4:3; Jer 7:9; Ezek 20:16). A few places the phrase is found in the context of to follow Yahweh (cf. Deut 13:5; 1 Kgs 14:8; 2 Kgs 23:3; 2 Chron 34:31; Jer 2:2).²⁰⁸ In 11:10 the phrase gives a reminiscence of exodus and the time when Israel followed Yahweh out of Egypt. Kakkanattu says:

“Except in 11:10 Hosea employs the construction to show Israel’s going after other gods (cf. Hos 2:7,15; 5:11). In the context of Hos 11:1-11 Hosea portrays Israel’s following Yahweh as a counter movement of 11:2. It implies a change of Israel’s attitude and adherence.”²⁰⁹

What Kakkanattu points out is that there has occurred a change of allegiance in v.10 from following and worshiping Baal (2:7, 9, 15; 5:11; 11:2; cf. 6:7-7:3) to being loyalty to and following Yahweh instead (v.10)

The image in v.10aβ differs from the former images in ch.11. Hosea describes Yahweh with animal imagery, i.e. Yahweh is like a roaring lion. The phrase is unique, both the verb שָׁאג *to roar* and the noun אַרְיָה *lion* does not occur elsewhere in Hosea. However there are similar use of the imagery *lion* in Hos 5:14 and 13:7-8, but these verses use different nouns than v.10 (שָׁחַל in 5:14; 13:7; קַפְיִר in 5:14; לְבִיָּא in 13:8).²¹⁰The imagery juxtaposed to the animal imagery צִפּוֹר *bird* and יוֹנָה *dove* in v.11.

The noun אַרְיָה *lion* has normally an aggressive connotation, but in v.10aβ the imagery has a salvific connotation. The image does not as Am 3:8 talk about judgment and destruction.²¹¹ Eidevall says the image shows in a similar way how a flock of sheep would have responded to their shepherd. The flock is Israel, and the lion is Yahweh who has the role

²⁰⁶ cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*.91. Mays and Wolff argue that only v.10 is later addition, cf. Mays, *Hosea*, 158; Wolff, *Hosea*, 203.193ff

²⁰⁷ TLOT 1, 360

²⁰⁸ TLOT 1, 369-370

²⁰⁹ Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love*, 94.

²¹⁰ The nouns stress different aspects, i.e. שָׁחַל means “lion”; קַפְיִר translated to “young lion” and regarded as more brutal in OT; לְבִיָּא is mostly recognized as “lioness”.

²¹¹ NIDOTTE 1, 516

of a shepherd.²¹²In this way the parental imagery could be seen hidden behind the lion-imagery. Wolff says the use of parental imagery explains that Yahweh's wrath has ramifications for Israel. "*The calling father (vv 1f) now roars like a lion, with a voice that cannot be overheard. Though he does not call Israel to judgment (cf. Am 1:2; 3:4; Hos 5:14; 13:7; Jer 25:30), Israel returns home only in terror (cf. 3:4f).*"²¹³The parental imagery shows a parent who is angry with their child and the child hears this and runs home because they know anything else will cause more server damage.

Following v.10b the verb *tremble* קָרַד describes the people's reaction to Yahweh's roar. The reactions to a lions roar are fear and terror in dangerous events or from shocking news (cf. Gen 27:33; 42:28; 1 Kings 1:49; Am 3:6). However the verb does not necessary wish to create fear and terror. Most likely it is a response to Yahweh's holy presence (cf. Ex 20:18-20; Deut 5:23-27; 18:14-20; Joel 4:16) and an annunciation of his salvific time.²¹⁴

The meaning of the word מִן־הַיָּם in the end of v.10b is unclear. The phrase is usually translated "*from the west*", however literally it means "*from the sea*". The phrase "*from the west*" is strange and difficult to relate to the rest of the verse, since Ephraim and Assyria are located in the south and east of Israel. Kakkanattu says: "*What was possible to think of was a return from east to south, as Assyria and Egypt lay to the east and south of Israel respectively, if the reference in v.10 is to those mentioned in v.11 as coming from Assyria and Egypt.*"²¹⁵However it was only during post-exilic time (Joel 4:6) that one spoke of a western Diaspora.²¹⁶And thus can argue for v.10 being an addition.

11:11 *They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like a dove from the land of Assyria.
I will make them dwell in their houses,
says Yahweh.*

In v.11a Hosea continues the animal imagery. The image has the same positive nuances as the lion-image. The bird imagery has previously occurred in Hos 7:11-12, 8:1 and 9:11. In these passages the imagery has different connotations. A striking note Nwaoru gives is Hosea only uses similes in all the bird images, showing that Hosea avoids associating Yahweh and Israel

²¹²Eidevall, *Grapes in the Desert*, 43, 181.

²¹³Wolff, *Hosea*, 203.

²¹⁴NIDOTTE 2, 263-265; TDOT V, 166-170.

²¹⁵Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 97.

²¹⁶Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, 24:1, 147.

with a bird.²¹⁷In 7:11 Hosea compares Ephraim to a *dove* יֹזֵבָה who are senseless and easily deceived, and in v.12 Yahweh is the one who compares the people to birds עוֹרֵי are those who are caught by Yahweh in a net. Further on in 8:1 Yahweh compares the enemy with an eagle נִשְׂרָר. This is the only place where Hosea refers the bird image to someone besides Israel. Lastly in 9:11 Hosea compares Ephraim's glory like a bird עוֹרֵי flying away.

The two bird similes in v.11aα and in 11aβ are paralleled. The meaning of צִפּוֹר refers to a small bird that is easily caught (cf. Am 3:5), but also manages to easily escape (Ps 124:7; Prov 6:5; 27:8). One has often understood it to be a *sparrow*.²¹⁸Further on the noun יֹזֵבָה means *dove*. *Dove* in the OT has mostly a positive connotation: The dove is bringing the message of god news (Gen 8:8-12); is given as a sacrifice (Lev 1:14; 5:7); as a symbol of love and faithfulness (Songs 2:14; 5:2; 6:9). The imagery describes the people of Israel who were in the beginning a small population who are just like small defenseless birds.²¹⁹The similes depict the character of the returning people and their admiration towards Yahweh.²²⁰In relation to the imagery in v.10, the lion and the bird images stress the distinction between Yahweh and his people (cf. v.9). Moreover it emphasizes also an eschatological perspective, meaning the diverse animal imagery illustrates a paradisiacal existence, where different animals are living harmoniously together. The imageries turn things upside down. Nwaoru says

*“An image that would depict the crushing of a simple dove or small sparrow by a carnivorous lion turns into one in which the former is restored by the latter. The birds now depend solely on the lion's roar for their safety and home-coming.”*²²¹

The imageries in vv.10-11 illustrate just like the parental imagery the people's connection and dependency to Yahweh. Now the relationship of Yahweh and his people is renewed, because Israel sees the need they have for Yahweh. This is emphasized through the returning from Egypt and Assyria.

The final phrase נִאֲמַר יְהוָה says *Yahweh* is most likely a later addition by the redactor. The phrase does not occur anywhere else within the transmission that begins at Hos 4:1. The phrase functions as a closure of the oracle.

²¹⁷Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 165-68.

²¹⁸TDOT XII, 443-449.

²¹⁹TDOT XII, 449.

²²⁰Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 97-99.

²²¹Nwaoru, *Imagery*, 133.

2.1.Excursus: The issue of the divine questions in 6:4 and 11:8

In the analysis of the text several textual issues occur in relation to the questions in 6:4 and 11:8. The main debate has been whether the questions conflict with the essence of God's nature. Scholars have tried to answer these questions in different ways. The first issue of the debate is about the hermeneutical understanding of the questions, whether the questions are understood as rhetorical or existential questions. The second issue, which relates to the first part, is how the questions are to be interpreted. The main debate among the scholars is whether the questions are an inner conflict or a dialog between God and himself or with Israel.

I will first begin with elaborating on J. Gerald Janzen view. He has been an important voice in this debate elaborating some interesting perspectives, which are important when meeting the texts. According to Janzen the main focus of the questions asked in 6:4 and 11:8 is to see them as existential questions, while Wolff, Mays and several other scholars have understood the questions to be rhetorical questions. Janzen emphasizes an important point to the debate, saying:

“The issue toward which this whole discussion has been moving is this: Can God entertain existential questions? Or is God, by virtue of being God, restricted to the entertainment of rhetorical questions only? For classical western thought, including Christian thought generally, the dominant answer is clear: Divinity can ask itself no existential questions. Still less can it share such questions with others. Any questions it may pose to itself or to others are rhetorical. As posed, they may enter into the becoming of others, but not into God's own. For God does not become; God just is.”²²²

Janzen emphasizes the main challenge in the debate, which is what does these questions really say about God and his nature. However one might ask how significant is it really to talk about the questions as rhetorical and existential questions? Despite whether or not the questions are rhetorical they will still say something particular about God.

Before elaborating further on Janzen's interpretation I will look first at Wolff and Mays interpretations, as their interpretations have been the main line in the debate. According to Wolff the first question 6:4 needs to be seen in the context of the former penitential song 6:1-3. The questions are an unexpected answer to the people's penitent. The God of Hosea shows God as one who is struggling with himself and his fight with his people. The question shows God against God. According to Wolff the struggle of God is *“How can God refute this penitential song that is full of trust?”* and *“How can God accept this penitential when it is*

²²²Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," 16-17.

without any confessions of guilt?"²²³ The decision lies within God himself and not the people of God. The issue of the question becomes clearer in 11:8. Wolff explains the context of the verse is part of accusation speech against Israel (cf. Deut 21:18-21). The accusations against Israel are that they do not return back to Yahweh and their failing reaction to Yahweh's good acts towards them. The concluding accusation is in v.7: "*And my people will hang on turning away from me.*" According to Deut 21:21, the sentence is death. Wolff says the transition from the different style of speech is similar to a court trial and could therefore be explained from this type of context. In 1 Kings 3:17-21 in story of where one of the two women accuses the other for stealing her child a similar way of speech occurs. Wolff says that just in the same way as in ch.11 the shift to direct speech occurs when the judgment is pronounced. Further on Wolff suggest the questions of 11:8 sounds like God's own warning to himself. The question switches place with the annunciation of judgment, which makes it seem like God waves the penalty (cf. v.9). Wolff points out that through the questions the listeners are allowed to see how God doubts his own decisions. In the questions God realizes that Israel's future lies not within Israel but within God's own decision. To do so God redirects his own wrath, so that the people of God are able to return back to God. Wolff says:

*"11:8f reveals that the basis of his love is the holiness of God himself, so that man's unfaithfulness and obstinacy cannot change Yahweh's love into anger. The struggle between God's love and his wrath takes place in God himself, in that the destructive 'overturning' and 'burning' of judgment against Admah and Zeboim now takes place in God's heart instead of in Israel."*²²⁴

Further on Wolff points out that previously God's judgment stood in the service of his love, but now his mercy and judgment stand in conflict.²²⁵ Wolff characterizes this action in 11:8 as God's passion for Israel. The passion is humanly, but it doesn't contradict God's divine nature (cf. v.9b). Moreover Wolff says God lashes out his wrath, so that Israel won't become annihilated. And through this God actually still stand true to his divine nature. God announces his unconditional love for Israel.²²⁶

Just as Wolff, Mays understands 6:4 and 11:8 as God's inner struggle with himself. Mays understand the questions, esp. 6:4 and the two last questions of 11:8 as rhetorical questions. He has later on nuanced some of his interpretations in response of Janzen's critique, but holds on to the understanding of the questions as rhetorical and not as existential.

²²³ Wolff, "Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel," 75.

²²⁴ Hosea, 204.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ "Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel."

He argues there are no expected verbal answers from the listeners, and the only one who can answer the questions is God himself. According to Mays, the purpose of the questions is “*a way in which the Lord says that, faced with the consequences of enacting his burning anger, he chooses not to carry through.*”²²⁷ However, an issue with understanding the questions as rhetorical is that the context of the questions shows that there isn’t an obvious answer within the context. From the first questioning in 6:4 Yahweh is clearly struggling until 11:8. After the questions in 11:8 Yahweh shows signs of having made a decision. Mays points out there is a possibility of “*a response from Israel to the saying as a whole is surely sought. Perhaps hearing the record of the Lord’s electing and nurturing love will turn Ephraim from its devotion to ruin, be a healing of their faithlessness (cf 14:5).*”²²⁸ But he has problems in seeing the questions as being existential. Mays argues that Yahweh possesses or already is the answer to the questions. He says: “*The Lord’s answer to the question he poses is an announced decision which is an expression of himself.*”²²⁹

Looking into Janzen and his view on the questions as existential questions, says the existential question means the questions are either addressed to oneself or in a dialog with another person. The answer to the existential questions decides the future of Yahweh and Israel covenantal relation.²³⁰ Janzen says: “*So understood, the dialogical character of true covenant relations consists in the sharing of personal power in risk and vulnerability through the mutual disclosure of existential questions.*”²³¹ Janzen criticizes the understanding of seeing the questions merrily as metaphors or anthropomorphic descriptions, which is what he criticizes by the understanding of seeing the questions as rhetorical ones.²³² The questions have to be understood as real questions. Janzen says the question in 6:4 follows only by a references to God’s judgment over Israel, i.e. to a divine action which brings a determined change in Israel’s own experience, while 11:8ff still leaves room for a judgment. He says: “*this time there also occurs a form of divine action which transpires completely within Yahweh and which has the character of “intra-mural” change or transformation.*”²³³ By this Janzen means God is *self-questioning* himself, i.e. he is figuring out what his decision will be. Here it seems to be Janzen is agreeing with Wolff and Mays. But what Janzen mean by *self-questioning* is not an inner battle of God’s divine nature. It is only a struggle in his decision-

²²⁷Mays, "Response to Janzen," 48.

²²⁸Ibid.

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰J. Gerald Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," *ibid.*: 10-14.

²³¹Ibid., 16.

²³²Ibid., 18.

²³³Ibid., 11.

making. Janzen criticizes Wolff for opposing God's love and wrath and Wolff's view of the only way of overcoming the conflict Yahweh stands in is by setting his wrath aside. *"To set aside wrath is as essentially problematical for Yahweh in the OT as to set aside love."*²³⁴ Janzen emphasizes an important point here in the understanding of God. Wolff and Mays argument seem sparse and does not really solve the problem of Yahweh's doubting or struggle in the questions he asks in 6:4 and 11:8. How can God just give up his wrath? Janzen points out the two sides have to be seen as integrated part of God, this is what Janzen calls the passion of God. Through this God is able sustains his relationship to Israel and his divine purpose.²³⁵ However Wolff does also understand this as God's passion towards Israel. He argues this passion occurs as humanly, but this humanly side of God is not an opposition to his divinity, on the contrary it is part of God's divinity Wolff says.²³⁶ Mays questions Janzen questioning of Wolff. He says: *"But is it the case that "the two feelings are not upon a different basis within the divine nature" and that "to set aside wrath is as essentially problematical for Yahweh in the OT as to set aside love?"*²³⁷ Further on Mays criticizes Janzen and says:

*"If I understand correctly, Janzen does not wish this aboriginal vision, this divine aim, to be understood as determinate in any sense. It is difficult for me to see how that can be congruent with Old Testament thinking. But, be that as it may, the very language of the paper itself implies that the wrath of God is on a different basis in the divine life in comparison with the aboriginal divine aim. And this would, it seems, mean that in the event described by Hosea 11:8 God is sovereign over his own "emotions."*²³⁸

Mays emphasizes an important aspect here. How is it possible for God to be sovereign over his own emotions? This seems to imply that God is not influenced by his own emotions or for that matter passion. The covenant is a relationship where both God and Israel are influenced by each other. It is not only Israel who is affected by God, but God is also affected by Israel. This is what God is doing in his encounter with Israel. This is what is emphasized by 11:9 that God is in *the midst* of Israel.

Lindström argues the questions in the two passages 6:4a and 11:8a doesn't correspond. He argues 6:4a is not about God's inner struggle and doubt of how to deal with his people. According to Lindström the point is that Yahweh neither can nor will help a people who lack סד . While Wolff and Mays believe there is only a lack of סד , Lindström believes it

²³⁴Ibid., 27.

²³⁵Ibid., 31-36.

²³⁶Wolff, "Guds Lidenskap I Rettstriden Med Israel."

²³⁷Mays, "Response to Janzen," 48-49.

²³⁸Ibid., 49.

completely gone.²³⁹ He therefore reads the questions dialogical, i.e. "*How can I help you?*" or "*How am I supposed to be able to help you?*"²⁴⁰ In relation to the questions in 11:8a Lindström argues the questions are about God's unconditional love to Israel. Yahweh is trapped in this love, which makes him utter the questions. "*The self-respect, God's glory requires Israel's burnt offering. But JHWH chooses the road of self-limitation, the God of Israel can't do anything else.*"²⁴¹ Lindström points out this emotional language shows Yahweh's inability to act according to what he ought to have done. The conversion can only come from God himself and not from Israel.²⁴² Heschel interprets similarly. He suggests the text is about God's *pathos*, but also about the cardinal, fundamental emotion. He says Hosea has a unique way of expressing God's love as compassionate in v.8.²⁴³

Further on Lindström questions the idea of this ongoing struggle, between the counterforces of God's wrath and love, isn't necessary what the issue of the text is. With this in background Lindström agrees with Janzen. However instead of talking about God's passion, Lindström believes it is more adequate to talk about God's inner pain. Lindström believes, just as Wolff and Mays do the questions are rhetorical. He argues the purpose of the questions is to make God's acts understandable to the readers.²⁴⁴

Brueggemann does also talk about God's pain in relation to the questions in 11:8. However, unlike Lindström, Brueggemann follows Janzen and interpreters the questions as real questions.²⁴⁵ Brueggemann says that God takes on the pain of his own People. "*What had been done to Sodom and Gomorrah is now done to God's own person.*"²⁴⁶ Further on Brueggemann says that God assumes a new posture toward the covenant partner, meaning he is recalculating his acts towards Israel. With these questions Hosea able to say what is unsayable, which is the "*complex life of interior life of YHWH*".²⁴⁷ Brueggemann says God has broken all conventions. Additionally Brueggemann, just as Wolff and Mays, talks about Yahweh's conflicting life, Brueggemann says this conflict needs to be seen in relation of the parental imagery (as well as the marriage imagery in Hos 2:14-23), where Hosea shows what

²³⁹Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament*, 21, 213.

²⁴⁰Ibid.

²⁴¹"Guds Långa Näsa Och Blödande Hjärta," 8.

²⁴²Ibid.

²⁴³Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 48-49.

²⁴⁴Lindström, "«Jag Är Gud Och Inte Människa»" 144-45.

²⁴⁵Walter Brueggemann, "The Recovering God of Hosea," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 30, no. 1 (2008): 17.

²⁴⁶"A Shape for Old Testament Theology, Ii: Embrace of Pain," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 412.

²⁴⁷"The Recovering God of Hosea," 6.

this conflict means. These images illustrate relationships where damage and fractures are inescapable.²⁴⁸

“The utilization of these familial images is crucial for Hosea’s characterization of YHWH, for it is the durability of the relationship that impact the character of YHWH in demanding ways and that summons and propels YHWH to a fresh resolve and alternative position.”²⁴⁹

Therefore Brueggemann does not understand the questions as God’s hostile struggle with himself, but rather as a process of change of heart. Nonetheless Brueggemann points out the *“utterances of judgment and rejection continue to linger and echo as a part of the relationship.”²⁵⁰*

2.2.Summary of Hos 11:1-11

Chapter 11 begins with Yahweh remembering his love and care for Israel (v.1), but also remembering their failure to come back to him (v.2). The chapter shows a unique imagery of Yahweh, who is described as a parent who cares for his children (11:1-4). Despite their previous transgressions God shows unconditional love and loyalty towards Israel. He guides, nurtures and heals her (v.3). The verses as gives allusions back to 6:5-7:3 occur, because these verses show times when Yahweh was guiding and trying to help Israel back on her feet. With the clear parental imagery in ch.11 Hosea gives a newer the meaning of the covenantal relation by showing that the covenant is to be an intimate and close relationship between Yahweh and Israel. However, Israel still does not turn back to Yahweh (v.2, v.7; cf.), despite Yahweh’s ongoing calling for them. And this is Yahweh’s pain: The more he called for them the more they went away (11:2). The verses allude back to the question in 6:4, because only a caring parent in pain asks *“What should I do with you?”*. From v.5-6 the anticipated punishment over Israel is described. As a whole the vv.1-7 describes Israel as the betrayer, while God as the faithful one (cf. 6:4b). Yahweh is heartbroken and an anguished parent, while Israel is the prodigal son. And the climax reaches in v.8 where the divine questions are voiced out. While he expected Israel to turn, he is the one having the conversion. From the first time Yahweh asked the questions in 6:4 and now here in 11:8 there has occurred a development. 6:4 follows by a reference to Yahweh’s judgment over Israel, an act that renders Israel own experience and gives a clear room for judgment in 11:8. This time the questions seem to show that

²⁴⁸Ibid., 16-20; "A Shape for Old Testament Theology, Ii: Embrace of Pain," 412-13.

²⁴⁹"The Recovering God of Hosea," 18.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

Yahweh actually has had a decision in mind, i.e. giving Israel up and destroy them, hence the questions:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?

How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

Yahweh's decision has made his heart turn inside him. To put it in a different way; Yahweh has repented or changed his mind. There has been an inner tension, struggle of choice or struggle between Yahweh's wrath and love. Either way, Yahweh is having a change of heart of some sort, because he is driven by his passion and love for Israel. An important question is; has Yahweh actually ever determined a decision in the former verses and in 6:4-7:3? The exposure of Israel's transgressions could have indicated a decision of helping Israel back and therefore Yahweh's decision was never to punish them. But then again the questions of 11:8a and the threat of judgment of 11:6 indicate punishment. 11:9 shows clearly Yahweh's decision:

I won't act out my burning wrath,

I will not again destroy Ephraim.

And how come Yahweh suddenly now won't act out wrath and destruction? He concludes by saying:

For I am God, not human,

Holy one in your midst.

I will not come with wrath

Yahweh's nature is not that of humans. Even though he could be described with humanly feature (cf. parent, healer) it doesn't mean the same pattern of behavior alludes to him. While Yahweh just as the human is angry, he can choose to not let his wrath affect Israel into the destruction of Israel. It is the result of Yahweh's unconditional love to Israel. Israel is depended on Yahweh, because he is always in control and takes care of her. For he is like a parent who cannot abandon his children alone, and Israel is like the child who will always turn back home (cf. 11:10-11).

3. Conclusions

The analysis of Hos 6:1-7:3 and 11:1-11 has focused on three main aspects:

- The imagery of God
- The understanding of what the questions say about God in 6:4 and 11:8
- The similarities and development from 6:1-7:3 to 11:1-11.

As I have shown through my analysis, the imageries Hosea uses to describe God are unique descriptions of God. The imageries are an important aspect in the understanding of the questions and of the understanding of Hosea theology of God.

Regarding the debate of the questions we have seen that scholars have different ways of formulating the understanding of the questions. Looking closer at what the scholars say they seem to have a tendency to use different words for what actually could connote to similar meaning. The overly focus on the function of the question as rhetorical or existential has sometimes overshadowed a more holistic reading of the questions meaning and its relation to the context. What the questions emphasize is that Hosea has clearly used these questions with a specific purpose, which is to be able to describe a difficult situation. Hosea describes God in an original and unconventional way, which emphasizes a new side of God compared to the OT. However this should not frighten our understanding of God, especially when God is depicted as doubting or struggling. Behind this duality of God Hosea is able to give a richer and complex understanding of who God is.

So what does the questions say about God in especially relation to context? The divine nature is probably best described as what Wolff, Janzen and Mays, among others, call the passion of God, or as Brueggemann and Lindström call the suffering or pain of God. Both views emphasize two important sides of the understanding of God and especially the God of Hosea. Within these descriptions lies the issue of the relation between God's wrath and God's love. These two sides of God are not in opposition, however we cannot disregard the issue they bring in understanding who God is. Both descriptions illustrate a God who cares, is influenced by and wishes to be involved in the life of his people, but at the same time struggles with Israel's transgressions. Hosea emphasizes that God is a God who does not stand in isolation. He is a relational and a counseling God. Hosea illustrates this side of God through especially the imageries as God as a healer (cf. 6:1-2; 7:1; 11:3) and as a parent (ch.11). Here Hosea shows God nurtures and teaches, steadfast and loyal towards Israel. Because of the covenant and God's election of the people, God lets himself be influenced by the people, drawn by his compassion for them. This is the passion of God and at the same time also the pain of God. As Hosea emphasizes Israel has through the history been disloyal

to God. This hurts God, because he does not wish his people to perish. Therefore God always seek reconciliation so that Israel will not end in destruction. What kind of God would he be if he didn't let his compassion influence him when Israel is on their way to be destroyed? To make use of Hosea's imagery: What kind of parent would God be, if he just let his prodigal son disappear? This is the God of Hosea, a loyal God who fights for the return of his children; a God who is fighting to sustain a close relationship with Israel. This is a God who ends up being the one who convert when Israel did not. A self-sacrificing God so that Israel could keep on being his people. The questions together with the imageries emphasize the length God is willing to go, to keep the covenant with his people. The covenant is a sealed settlement, which cannot be broken. It is as strong as familial love, where God is the responsible and steadfast parent who keeps the covenant. This continuous loyalty and passion of God is illustrated from 6:4 to ch.11. As 6:4 illustrates the "method" God has us, i.e. the threat of punishment to make Israel return does not work. Therefore a change is needed and we see the beginning of this change in the questions in 6:4. The change is that God understand he has to act differently and is the one in charge of making Israel return. The questions in 6:4 are the beginning of the process of change. Whether the questions are meant to only be rhetorical and as only to show the process of God's inner struggle, they do something to us as readers. Meaning the question becomes a dialogical function between God and the readers. The questions show a God who opens up showing his passion and affection to Israel. From 6:4 and into ch.11 there is a progression where God keeps on pointing out to Israel their transgression and disloyalty. He is here like a parent who teaches his child Israel what she has done. Then by 11:8ff it is finalized what the outcome will be. God has chosen to let his passion and love for Israel stand steadfast, instead of releasing his wrath. And God is able to do so, because as Hosea concludes God is *God, and not human, Holy one in the midst.*

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