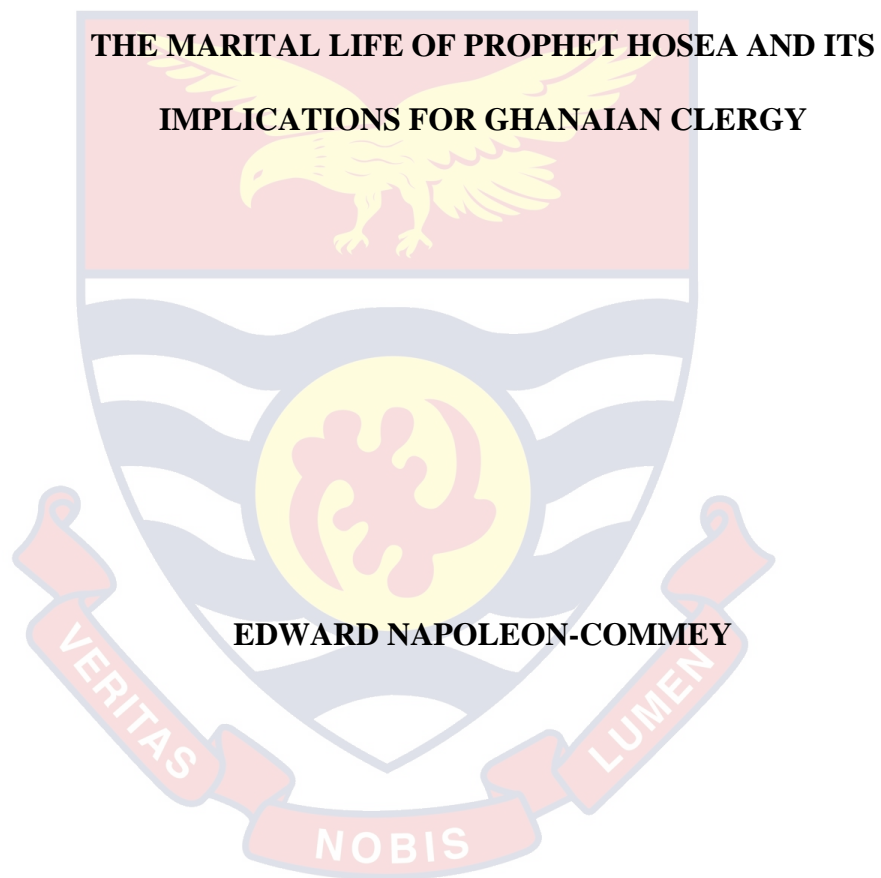


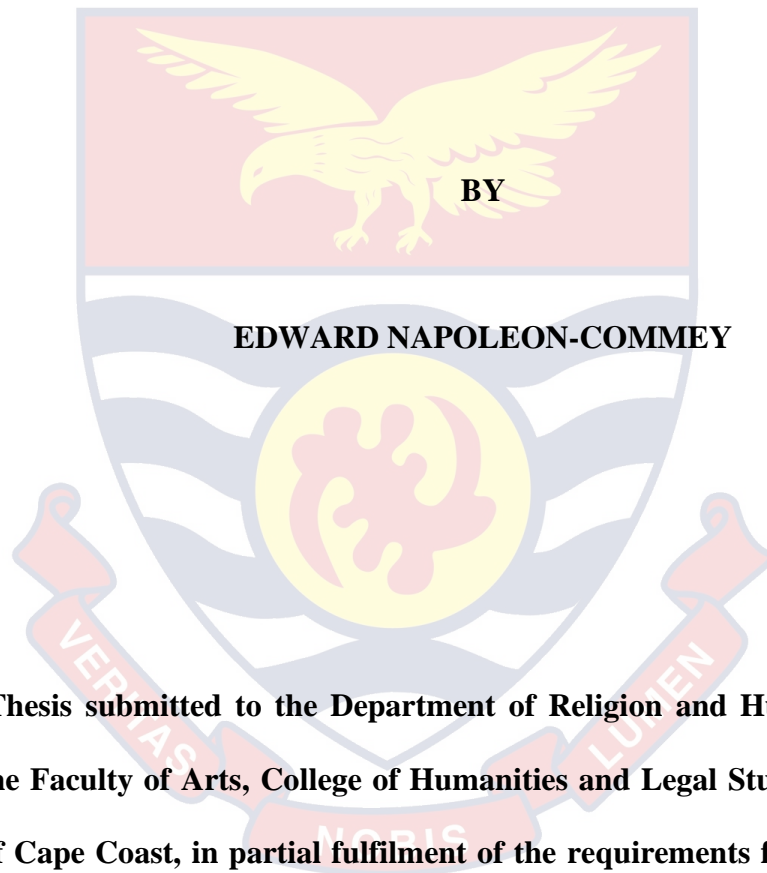
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



2021

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE MARITAL LIFE OF PROPHET HOSEA AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS FOR GHANAIAAN CLERGY



Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Values of  
the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University  
of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
Master of Philosophy degree in Religion and Human Values

MARCH, 2021

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

**Candidate's Signature:** .....**Date:** .....

**Name:** Edward Napoleon-Commey

### Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

**Principal Supervisor's Signature:** .....**Date:** .....

**Name:** Rev. Prof Benjamin Abotchie Ntreh

**Co – Supervisor's Signature:** .....**Date:** .....

**Name:** Dr Augustine Mary Mensah

## ABSTRACT

The study is couched from the biblical perspective and is about the marital life of the Prophet Hosea and its implications for Ghanaian clergy. The purpose of this study is to find out the historicity of the Prophet Hosea, his marital life and how he managed the challenges that came his way and draw implications for the Ghanaian Clergy. I used Hermeneutical method and my Hermeneutical tool which represents my research design is Reader – response criticism. With this design, I was able to read and respond to the issues raised in the text as a real reader and come out with the meaning of the text from my own experiences, values and suppositions. The meaning I derived from the text (Hos. 1:1-3:5), did not suffer much subjectivity because I was guided by the text.

With the Reader – response criticism, I sought to find out what there are for the historical perspective of Hosea, did he really live as a historical being on earth? Did he really marry a prostitute and face some challenges just as people are bound to experience in mundane life situation? How did he manage his marital challenges and what are some of the implications for Ghanaian clergy? The answers to these questions formed the basis of my research work.

I found out that Hosea really lived as a prophet in Israel and that my study can be added to the stock of knowledge. I also found out that Hosea married a prostitute and that his wife, Gomer, was a prostitute before he married. Also, there is a relationship between selection of marriage partner and stability in marriage. Hence, the Ghanaian clergy should be careful who they marry.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profoundest gratitude to the LORD God Almighty whose guidance and protection elicited my success in this study. I am highly grateful also to my supervisors, Rev. Prof. Benjamin Abotchie Ntreh and Dr Augustine Mary Mensah, both of the Department of Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, for their superb supervisory roles, encouragement, support and advice that propelled me to succeed in preparing this Thesis. Thank you so much, Sirs, for your tolerance and the ever-available time you lavished to me.

To my ever ready and competent lecturers of the Department of Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, I say thank you for your generous contributions to make this work better.

I am also grateful to Mr Stephen Baidoo, (C.E.O), Mr Enoch Oppah (Manager) and Miss Millicent Egyir, staff of Chapter One Media, Science Market, University of Cape Coast, for your offer of stenographic assistance and binding of the entire thesis into a complete and presentable work.

Then to the authors whose works I cited, I say a heartfelt thank you for taking the fore-step in academic excellence and making your works easily available for references in academic pursuance.

Finally, to my wife, Mrs Evelyn Napoleon-Commey, I say “ayekoo” (well done), for your prayers, meals, moral and financial support for me, without which the writing of this thesis would not have been possible.

May the Almighty God bless all of you.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my children, Revdaughter, Reverendson and Bevelyn.  
Grow up to become towers in academia and surpass where I could not reach.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the Study

Scholars have debated on how Prophet Hosea was ordered by God to marry a prostitute. Some say there was not such a marriage because such a command to marry a prostitute would not come from God and therefore the marriage is metaphorical. Other scholars think that Hosea married the prostitute in order to use the concerns of the marriage to interpret the theme of his prophetic message to the people of Israel.

This Thesis is to find out whether Hosea's marriage was real or not. It is not to find out whether the marriage was metaphorical because this is already established in the text under study. To this extent, I understand the marriage of Hosea to have both surface and deeper meanings, of which the surface meaning which projects the metaphorical aspect of the marriage is, without doubt, proven in the text. I therefore want to delve into the deeper meaning to find out how Hosea's prophetic life and his marital affairs were influenced by the historical situation of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the period he lived. It was not for nothing that the narrator of the story situated Hosea in the period of the kings of both Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel. The historical antecedence of his prophecies also put him among contemporary prophets of the 8<sup>th</sup> century such as Amos, Isaiah and Micah. Perhaps it was the way of the narrator to tell his readers that Hosea was a historical figure and that his marriage was real. It is this that this study is attempting to probe into.

The work of the prophets in Israel was that they were to be spokesmen of God. This means that their work demanded that they engaged in the

carrying of the message of God to the people in their society, helping the people to know the will of God (Lang, 1983). The fact is that the Old Testament prophets, who were married, were combining marital life with their prophetic duties. Koch (1982) points out to an account in the Bible which shows that Isaiah was a married man and a prophet at the same time (Isa. 8:3). As men who had wives and family, they could experience challenges some times in their marital life. According to Koch (1982), Hosea's audience had seen him unhappy in his marital life (Hos.9:7). Sometimes they felt it in the words he used, the words of prophecy. This also calls for a look into the marital life of the prophet. What was this unhappiness and where did it come from?

The Ghanaian clergy also function as God's spokesmen and shepherds to their congregation. They may also encounter marital problems just as Hosea did, though the nature and magnitude of the challenges they face may vary from that of the Old Testament prophets. Therefore, implications drawn from Hosea's marriage may help them manage their marital life effectively as they carry out their clerical duties. It may also inform them on how to treat those with such problems in their congregation.

### **Problem of the Study**

From the text, when the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, God said to him (Hosea) 'Go and marry a woman of prostitution...' (Hos 1:2). On the contrary, Koch (1982) asserts that it is impossible for God to force anyone into marriage, let alone forcing a prophet to marry no other woman than a prostitute. According to some historical critics such as Koch (1982) and Blenkinsopp (1996), it is not true that Hosea married a prostitute as

some scholars induce from the text. Rather he later found out that his wife was a prostitute. This issue of Hosea's marriage and unhappiness represent the problem of this study.

Sampaio (2004) points out to a social problem when she postulates that Hosea's prophetic ministry encountered conflict with his own marital affairs leading to his being stigmatized. Koch (1982) also argues that the condition into which the challenges in Hosea's marital life thrown him might have resulted in Hosea developing further psychological crisis such as stress, depression and mental disorder. I, therefore, want to look critically at the phenomenon in order to examine the challenges that really faced Hosea in his marital life and how he managed them so that implications can be drawn from it for Ghanaian clergy.

Some of the Ghanaian clergy, just like Hosea, are married and have children and should lead exemplary lives. However, sometimes we hear of the clergy themselves in marital challenges such as adultery, divorce, separation and fight between couples. The clergy in Ghana are not free from marital related challenges, and being leaders of their congregations or denominational institutions their situations often put greater consequences on the society which calls for much concerns. In view of this I assume that the implications of the marital life of Prophet Hosea to Ghanaian clergy can offer if not all, some amount of solutions to the existing problems.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework is a function of a theoretical framework. Theoretical framework, in a study, is based on an existing theory or theories. Conceptual framework, on the other hand, is something the researcher can

develop by himself based on this theory (Imenda, 2014). The conceptual framework of this study is based on Sampaio's concept of Social Power Relationship. Sampaio (2004) is a Brazilian scholar in Biblical Studies. She developed the Concept in order to drive home her contextual studies of Hosea, but she could possibly do that by first constructing the historical perspective of Hosea which saw prostitution in Israel as historically normal way of living by many girls in Israel in Hosea's time.

Sampaio used the theory of social-power relationship to develop his contextual study of Hosea, stating that the book of Hosea can be studied in terms of micro and macro social-power relationship. Based on the same theory, as used by Sampaio, I developed a concept to drive home my study of Hosea as a person who lived in history and had relationship with his contemporaries, some of whom were prophets, kings, relatives and participants of the harvest and cult prostitutions which Hosea vehemently opposed, a relationship I described in my study as micro social-power relationship. I used the concept of micro social-power relationship as against macro social power relationship which focuses on the wider relationship between God and the people of Israel and which is a deviation from my point of departure.

The macro social power relationship means that the marital relationship in Hosea can be explained as a metaphorical relationship between God and Israel in which God is the husband of Israel and the men and women in Israel are their children. However, the concept explains that Hosea as a historical man really prophesied in Israel and used his marital experiences to tell a metaphorical story about God and Israel. In this story, Israel, as stubborn

as Hosea's wife Gomer, was prostituting around other foreign gods even though God was faithful in their covenant relationship, just as Hosea was faithful to his adulterous wife.

The micro social power relationship is also explained in terms of the primary marital relationship between Hosea and his mundane wife, Gomer and their children, all of whose lives were influenced by their relationship with their environment around them. The concept shows that Gomer was not an image of prostitution representing the prostitution of Israel, but one of the many girls in Israel who used prostitution as means of livelihood. The concept also points to the historical study of Hosea which illuminates the fact that Hosea lived as a human being and a prophet in Israel, and that his marriage, the birth of his children and his relationship with the people of his society through his prophecies were all real events that took place in history.

Therefore, according to Sampaio (2004), the two main divisions in the book of Hosea which are Hos. 1:1-3:5 and Hos. 4:1-14:9 should rather be Hos. 1:1-4:19 in the first block and 5:1-14:9 in the second block. Her reason is that Hos. 4:1-19 complements the first block of micro-social power relationship by connecting Hosea's family relations to the men and women of their immediate environment. She explains that most scholarly work on Hosea focuses on the macro-power relationship which mostly talks about the symbolic marriage between God and Israel and which signifies the covenant between them, but the primary or micro social power relationship between Hosea's family and their mundane environment can also be looked at as an area of study.

The concept explains that prostitution in the book of Hosea is presented as a social function performed by women as a means of subsistence



(Hosea 2:4-17), and this is based on the supporting quotation from Hos. 4:14 which says “the daughters prostituted themselves and the bride practiced adultery during the period of the harvest.” For Sampaio, this is an indication that women, and not only Gomer, were in the prostitution business.

Relying on the concept of micro social power relationship as part of the theory of social-power relationship used by Sampaio, assisted me in finding a way of solving the problem of how to study Hosea as a historical being, so that the problems of his marital life, prophetic career and relationship with his contemporary society could be measured, discussed and empirical conclusion drawn. Thus, this concept served as a point of departure for my study and the concept is relevant to this study because it provides a means for looking at Hosea’s marital life, the prostitution of his wife and the call on him by God to marry the prostitute, as historical and actual way of life in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Israel and therefore it follows that a study into the historical and actual marital life of Hosea other than the metaphorical marriage can be possible. Therefore, in this study, prostitution is not a general metaphor; but rather, the prophet sought to confront an actual aspect of Israel’s way of life (Sampaio, 2004).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate into Hosea’s historical life, find out whether he married a prostitute or not, assess how he managed his marital challenges and draw implications for Ghanaian clergy.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute to the stock of Knowledge.

The study will also help Ghanaian clergy in particular, to reflect on their marital relationships and to treat members in their congregation who have similar marital challenges with care by drawing lessons from how Hosea dealt with his.

It will also broaden the horizon of ordinary couples and the clergy alike, with the awareness of the prevalence of issues such as stigmatization, breakdown of family connectivity, mental agony and emotional instability and discomforts which can possibly emanate alongside the challenges of their marital relationships. Awareness of such issues and how Hosea handled them will help the laity and the clergy alike to take proactive steps in managing their marital relationships.

Finally, the study will help counsellors and clients to be aware of biblical foundations for pre-marital and post – marital counselling by making references to Hosea’s marital challenges and how he managed them in the text under study.

I am of the view that the issues enumerated above are liable for making this study very significant.

### **Research Objectives**

This study is being conducted in order to:

- i. Investigate on whether the Prophet Hosea lived as a historical being or not;
- ii. examine whether Hosea married a prostitute or not;
- iii. identify some of the challenges that confronted Hosea in his marriage;
- iv. find out how Hosea managed his marital challenges;



- v. draw implications from Hosea's marital life for Ghanaian clergy.

### **Research Questions**

The study is purported to answer the following questions in an objective manner.

- i. Did the Prophet Hosea live as a historical being?
- ii. Did he marry a prostitute?
- iii. What were some of the challenges that confronted his marital life?
- iv. How did Hosea manage his marital challenges?
- v. What implications can be drawn for the clergy in Ghana?

### **Delimitation**

This study is investigating into the marital life of Prophet Hosea and drawing implications for Ghanaian clergy. The data for analysis in this study is found in the book of Hosea, which has fourteen (14) chapters, but this study was focused basically on the reading and interpretation of chapters 1-3 which was my pericope. The pericope is the confining area of coverage among a larger horizon of focus, work or reading material. Therefore, out of the 14 chapters in the book of Hosea, I worked with the first 3 chapters because it provided the required data for the assessment into the actual marital life of prophet Hosea. However, I occasionally drew references from chapter 4, dwelling on the concept of Social power relationship by Sampaio, to buttress the points about the prostitution of Hosea's wife (Gomer) and the prostitution in Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Even though the reader-response criticism design helped me use my experience acquired in other disciplines such as history and philosophy to

interpret Hosea's historical perspective and his philosophical disposition in his choice of marital partner without the use of historical criticism, it also tended to provide the fear of subjectivity in the interpretation of the text. However, remaining with the text, for the fear of subjectivity, only sought to ensure the uniqueness of my work which is the mark of reader-response criticism.

Also, my inability to type the accentuated marks corresponding with the transcription of Hebrew words and sentences sometimes interfere with the pronunciation of those words and sentences in my work and also blurs the meaning of those words and sentences from the Hebrew reader. However, the transcribed Hebrew materials have been explained in English in parentheses and therefore reading and understanding of my work is much easier to the English reader than to concentrate on the Hebrew words and sentences.

Moreover, my theological background seemed to superimpose on the interpretation with regards to the judgment over God's attitude and actions in the study. However, critical approach to the study and the application of critical analysis was enough to drive me home to the objective discussions and conclusion.

Furthermore, the implications of Hosea's marital life cannot be carried over and concluded that the situation is true for all the Ghanaian clergy. Hosea as a prophet in Israel may have a different sociological context from the clergy in Ghana and so his marital challenges and how he managed them may provide very little basis for establishing generality in the implications to the Ghanaian clergy. Nonetheless, the Ghanaian clergy and Hosea share a common identity as men of God and that helped shape my study of the two

different contexts well and enabled me appropriate the implications of the study from the period of Hosea to the present-day life of the Ghanaian clergy.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to reviewing the ideas of scholars about the study. Attempt will be made to explain the issues about the prophet Hosea's marital life such as Hosea as a prophet, Hosea as a historical figure, Hosea as a married man, Marriage in Israel, Hosea's marital challenges and how Hosea managed his marital life.

I hope the discussion will give a good account of the study, and the academic impact of scholars will widen the scope for further discussion in order to achieve objective and valid analysis, leading to reliable conclusion.

### Prophetic labels in Israel

The general term given to the prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible is "*nabi*". Koch (1982) introduces another term, the '*hozeh*' which, according to him, is synchronic to the role theory. He explains that whereas the '*nabi*' was used to refer to the prophets who belonged to the official personnel associated with the cult, the '*hozeh*' was prominently used to describe the itinerant morality prophets.

On the contrary, some scholars such as Sampaio (2004), argue that the "*hozeh*" and the "*nabi*" did not refer to two different roles but rather they are socio-politically oriented labels. These scholars explain that whereas the "*nabi*" was commonly used to refer to the prophets in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the '*hozeh*' was applied to the same basic role of a prophet in Judah (the southern Kingdom).

I prefer to go with the socio-politically oriented label because it fits the description of the prophets in Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Hosea was a '*nabi*' (Koch, 1982) because he came from the Northern kingdom of Israel, and his prophetic ministry was concentrated there. This means that if he had hailed from the Southern Kingdom, he would have been called "*hozeh*." However, Koch (1982) accepting the role theory, thinks that Hosea resembles a '*hozeh*' owing to his prophetic role and function in Israel. Koch was trying to favour the role theory.

This notwithstanding, I still endorse the socio-political label because even during Samuel's time as the prophet in Israel, he was called a *ro'el* (seer) and sometimes '*Ish ha 'elohim*' (the man of God) for being the spokesman of God and the mediator between God and the people, but Saul's servant told Saul that formerly a prophet in Israel was not called a '*ro'el*' but '*nabi*' (1Samuel 9:9). That was a conversation that took place between people who later became associated with Jerusalem when Saul was the first king and which was found in the Southern Kingdom after the division of the kingdom of Israel. This was Samuel's time as the prophet of Israel which predated the conversation and its setting. The conversation seemed to have been recorded later after the actual event and that the narrator of the story wants to explain that during the time of recording the conversation, the prophets in Israel were called "*nabi*". That was why he used the expression 'formerly.' So, the writer of the story in this later time, postdating the conversation probably was using the tradition of his time to make reference to the former days, a later tradition that might have resulted in heading the prophetic section of the Hebrew Bible as "*Nabi*", which had nothing to do with the role theory and also the socio-

political label. This is the reason I still settle on the use of “*hozeh*” and “*nabi*” as socio-political labels for the prophets in the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of Israel respectively in the time of Hosea.

### **Hosea as a historical figure**

Some scholars think that Hosea is a narrative fiction. Others argue that the prophet is a symbolic representation, while others still contend that the book and all about the prophet Hosea are historical narrative. According to Koch (1982), the school of thought that says Hosea is a narrative fiction argue from the point of view of his marriage. For them, the marital life of prophet Hosea did not reflect a real-life situation, because it seemed impossible to them for God to force any man, let alone, a prophet to marry a prostitute. However, Anderson (1979) also postulates that Hosea and his marital life were symbolic. This is because, in Anderson’s view, Hosea’s primary purpose was not to describe his domestic tragedy but to proclaim the work of Yahweh to the people of Israel. I reject the claim that Hosea is a fictional narrative and support the views of scholars who postulate that Hosea is a historical narrative, yet I do not in any way contend against the views in favour of Hosea’s symbolic marriage. The fact of the matter is that for this study, I am interested in the historicity of Hosea ben Beer and his marital life. It is in this sense that the challenges Hosea went through as part of his marital life, and how he managed them can be properly assessed without any symbolic interference.

### **Hosea as a married man**

Hosea as a married man preoccupied himself with the issue of his wife's prostitution. The Knowledge about Hosea's marriage is recorded in the Book of Hosea 1:2, 3 where God ordered Hosea to "Go and marry a prostitute..." and "so Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim..." and began to have children with her from verses 3-9. So from then, Hosea became not only a prophet but also a married man. According to Mair (1951), in *the Notes and Queries in anthropology*, marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to them by the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both parents. For the explanation of this definition, Nukunya (1992,) echoes that it is useful because it recognizes marriage as an institution which helps legitimize children and creates new social relationships and reciprocal rights between spouses, as well as the right of the children when they are born.

Though the narrator in the story of Hosea may be true when he echoed that God told Hosea to go and marry a prostitute, yet in the context of Hosea and even in our contemporary contexts, no one would have understood Hosea when he came and announced to his family that he wanted to marry a prostitute and have children with her because God said so. According to God's law, a priest could not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman (Leviticus 21:7). However, Hosea was not a priest, but as a prophet his role was more or less similar to that of the priests in terms of their call by the same God to discharge ascribed duties on behalf of God to their society. So, some scholars believe it is possible that Gomer was not a prostitute when Hosea married her. Anderson (1979) suggests that Hosea became aware of his wife's prostitution



after they had been married for some time, probably after the birth of the first child. Similarly, Koch (1982) argues that with the conservative nature of the family structure of Israel at the time of Hosea, his family might have had a hand in his marriage and that he might not have been allowed to select a prostitute as his wife. This is reasonable, looking at Nukunya's definition of marriage, that marriage is any union in which the couple has gone through all the procedures recognized in the society for such a purpose (Nukunya, 1992). This definition implies that Hosea's marriage to Gomer, the prostitute could only be possible if the families of both couples were involved. Therefore, according to Sampaio (2004), the mention of the names of Beerli and Deblaim as fathers of Hosea and Gomer respectively is significant. So, in line with the custom of the time, Beerli might have gone to Gomer's father to have taken her in marriage for Hosea (1:3). Sampaio (2004) says that a prostitute was not found in her father's house, but rather in places where she practised prostitution. So far as marriage was concerned, Gomer got married without being excluded from her patriarchal family structure. She was taken in marriage from within her father's house, as echoes by Wolf (1974). Pronouncing the fathers' names within daily relationships upheld the houses and the families into ties of solidarity in the context of marriage, as Sampaio (2004) posits.

Some scholars are of the view that marital couples in the faith-oriented communities ascribe the selection of their spouses to divine influence. Just as Adam in the Genesis story ascribed his wife Eve to the provision of Yahweh Elohim (the Lord God: Genesis 2:23). To this effect, Ntrel (2010) defines marriage as: "an institution that God established." By this ideology of divine

provision or influence, Hosea must have selected a wife and married her by family arrangements and societal custom but unfortunately for him he later realized that she was a prostitute. Then when he realized the immorality of his wife, the explanation he could give to the members of his society was not far from the normal ideas in the faith community who believe that marriages are instituted by God so whatever God has put together, no one should put asunder. On the basis of this, Hosea could not easily divorce his wife but to cling to her despite her immorality. Ntreh (2010) postulates an Akan ideology which says that marriage is a life-long journey, and therefore those who wish to embark upon it must prepare very well before taking that journey. Hosea should have prepared well before marrying Gomer, because the challenges he faced in his marital life began with his prostitute and adulterous wife.

### **The concept of marriage in Israel**

Robison (2012) states that God's original intention was for every man to have a wife and every woman to belong to one specific man for a lifetime. In Genesis, becoming married, is described as a physical action. This means a man taking (*laqach*) a wife (Gen. 4:19; 20:2-3) and a woman being given (*Nathan*) as a wife. Here, the father is responsible for conveying his daughter to a man as a bride (Gen. 29:19, 28).

In the process of getting married in Hebrew culture, no two weddings were exactly alike, since the process was controlled by the parents and the parties but not priests, rabbis, and government (Robison, 2012).

Robison (2012) agrees again that in ancient Israel, marriage often began with a marriage proposal known as match-making (*shiddukhin*). It was the prospective groom or the father of the groom who initiated the proposal



(*chatan*) (Gen. 24:58). He says all the specific arrangements were handled by the parents of the bride (*kallah*) and the groom, signifying the parents' role in the contraction of marriage in Israel. Certainly, parents of the parties had to agree on consensus before the next step could proceed.

The next step in the marriage process after the proposal was betrothal. According to Robison (2012), marriage betrothal had evolved in the history of Israel from Moses' time. The form of betrothal in the wilderness was that, a man could take a wife at will, by obtaining her consent and taking her into his tent or house and having sexual intercourse with her in private. From that point on, she became his wife (Gen. 25:1; 38:1-3; Ex. 2:1). Later on when Israel settled in the Promised Land, a man could acquire a bride of his choice in the presence of witnesses (Ruth 4:9-11). In the 8<sup>th</sup> century during Hosea's time, the betrothal procedure had not changed so much. However, if care was not taken, there could be the possibility of betrothing a girl who was not a virgin, owing to the practice of the defloration of girls at the cults (Koch, 1982) and the prostitution that engulfed the entire harvest season (Miller, 1987). Then in the New Testament times, as posits by Robison (2012), betrothal could be expressed both in the literal sense and also in the symbolic sense as Mary was betrothed to Joseph (Matt. 1:18) and from Paul's theology, the Corinthian congregation could be betrothed to Jesus Christ (2Cor. 11:12).

According to Robison (2012), a woman could be acquired in marriage in three ways – by money or its equivalent (Gen. 29:18; 34:12; Ex. 21:11), by deed (Gen. 24:3-4; Jdg. 4:12; Ruth 4:9-10) and also by intercourse (Deut. 22:28-29). The betrothal stage was also called *kiddushin* (sanctification) which means from that point onwards, the woman belonged to the man. The root

word of *kiddushin* is *kadosh* (holy) or *kodesh* (holy things). This signified that the betrothed bride is forbidden to all, but those for whom they are designated. Betrothal made the woman a legal wife and her status could only be changed by divorce or death. Betrothal was usually accomplished by the groom giving a coin or ring to the prospective bride and her acceptance of the token accomplished *kiddushin* (the betrothal) (Robison, 2012). Boadt (1984) points out clearly that a girl is by Torah, considered as *bat mitzvah* (daughter of the commandment) and is accountable to the Torah when she is twelve years and above. She is, therefore, treated as an adult. Such a girl could qualify to take part in the marriage process if an adult man asked her hand in marriage, but her parents would be responsible for their usual initiative roles and the giving away of the daughter.

Adultery and prostitution, from the point of view of Efird (1982), were prohibited in Israel before the apostasy that set in during the 8<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Canaanite religion and culture. In order to enforce this marriage restrictions, God also decreed that any children of such unions would be prohibited from ever entering the assembly of the LORD (Deut. 23:2).

The priests, particularly, the High Priest, were given specific guidance as to whom they could not marry and to whom they should marry. A common priest might marry a widow but could not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman ((Lev, 21:7). A High Priest was forbidden to marry a widow, a divorced woman and a prostitute (Jagersma, 1983).

I saw from the readings that in the marriage prohibitions, nothing was said about the prophets concerning who they should marry and who they should not. Some scholars are of the view that since the prophets shared a

common identity with the priests as *ish ha elohiym* (man of God), they were also required by their identity to observe the prohibitions commonly meant for the priests, especially, in terms of marriage. However, since some scholars are not in agreement, the whole issue about the prohibition of marriage of prophets has been thrown into debate. I agree with the scholars who think that the prophets were not prohibited in terms of marriage because until they became prophets, they were ordinary people unlike the priests who were by birth designated to belong to a particular tribe with assigned roles depicting their dos and don'ts. Hosea's marriage to the prostitute, claiming to be a command from God could probably be used as a clue to determine that the prophets were not under any prohibition either to marry a prostitute or not to do so. However, no Israelite family would allow their son to marry a prostitute. More so, Hosea was of a levitical family who were part of the marriage prohibitions. So how would Hosea cope with this marriage and what would be his challenges?

### **Hosea's challenges**

Some scholars comment that it was difficult to imagine Hosea's feeling when God told him to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him. According to these scholars, Hosea might not have wanted to marry a prostitute but he probably did so because he obeyed God. His problem therefore began from his unhappiness in his marriage. Koch (1982) points out that Hosea became unhappy when he later discovered that his wife whom he had supposed to be a virgin was a ready-made prostitute. Whereas to Anderson, Hosea discovered the immorality of his wife after the birth of his first child (Anderson, 1979), to Koch (1982), Hosea discovered his wife's immorality after he had noticed that she had broken her virginity before

marriage, due to her participation in the (tus primate noctis) rite for opening the womb. Koch described this rite as a rite in which “the defloration of a girl of marriageable age was undertaken by a priest or his associate in the cult, as a representative of the god, at the sacred place” (Koch, 1982, p. 80). According to Koch the rite of defloration was an ancient Near East rite that had found its way to the Northern Israel and had been conducted for marriageable girls among Hosea’s contemporaries. Hosea abhorred this rite and spoke against it as a prophet that it was a shameful practice and an act of harlotry. It implies that Gomer, as a product of such shameful act attached shame to the prophetic character of Hosea as a husband. Hosea saw that his wife was not the only culprit, but the problem was that girls who were supposed to be married as virgins were breaking their virginity at the cult. Hosea thus used the case of his wife as an example and condemned it.

However, Sampaio (2004) is of a different opinion. According to him the issue of Gomer’s prostitution was not attributed to defloration of girls but to the harvest prostitution. He lamented that daughters, young women of marrying age that were still in their father’s house, daughters-in-law, and brides were involved in prostitution and adultery during the harvest. Sampaio continues that during the harvest, the women of the households were drawn into Canaanite fertility rites promoted by priests (Hosea 4:14, 15). When considering Gomer’s prostitution and adultery in light of the harvest celebration, it becomes evident that she participated in the harvest and its festivities in her role as Deblaim’s daughter and then as Hosea’s wife (Sampaio, 2004). It was in this vein that Hosea saw in his wife the lack of “hezdedh” (love) and serious problems occurred in the marriage and the nuclear

family. Koch (1982) enumerates some of the apparent confusion in Hosea's house when Hosea was found accusing her wife of adultery saying that Gomer was no longer his wife and he was no longer Gomer's husband. Hosea said "let her put away the signs of harlotry from her face, the marks of adultery between her breasts, less I strip her naked and lay her down as in the day she was born," (Hos. 2:2-3).

The problem in Hosea's marital life became aggravated when he transferred his emotional setbacks to his children. Koch explained that one after the other, he gave to all his three children Gomer born to him, names which suggested that their paternity was a matter of doubt. He called the first Jezreel which means "God planted" signifying a desire for vengeance to be planted against the powers that be - those who prostituted his wife and created in his family, children of prostitution. He called the second child "Lo-Ruhamah" (not pitied) showing how he was fed up with the issue of prostitution and so he would not pity anyone including his own wife and children. The third child Hosea called him "Lo-Ammi" (not my people) indicating a total rejection of the wife and the children. Sampaio (2004) asks "what would bring a parent to receive a son or a daughter by giving him or her name that proclaims a curse rather than a blessing?" Sampaio himself answered the rhetorical question. According to him, Hosea cursed and rejected the children because, even before their birth, the children carried the mark of prostitution in their bodies. They were conceived on the wheat threshing floors at harvest time, rather than in the household, where an average span of three years was maintained between pregnancies for the welfare of the woman and of the child (Sampaio, 2004). Hence, they were rejected because they were

children of prostitution (*Zana*), shamefully conceived by their mother (Hosea 2:4, 5a; cf 5:7).

How would Hosea be emotionally and socially affected by these bundles of challenges in his marital life? Sampaio (2004) points out that the issue of prostitution and the paternal status of Hosea's children could affect the relationship between him and the people in his society which could lead to Hosea's stigmatization and the people's lukewarm attitude towards Hosea's message. Koch (1982) also reiterates that the pressure of those problems could lead to further psychological crisis. Psychological problems which originated from social stigma and family disorder could lead to mental agony, depression and traumatic situations. According to Asiedu (2017), victims who seem to lack adequate coping skills to deal with their challenges are often diagnosed with psychological crisis. Asiedu (2017) explains that such victims are prone to frequent manifestations of anxiety, tension and shock. To this effect, Koch (1982, p. 78) highlights one of the situations in which "Hosea's audience had seen him crying out with despair" (Hosea 9:7). This signified that the tension was too much for him, considering the fact that he needed to carry his message across to the people despite any family problem. Therefore, how could Hosea manage all of these marital problems in order to free himself from social and psychological problems and at the same time save his marriage?

### **Did Hosea manage his challenges?**

Management deals with proactive measures to forestall quality in the achievement of expectations within an enterprise (Calson et al, 2008). My understanding is that, to manage is to handle or direct with a degree of skill. The specific objective here is to ascertain how Hosea applied the needed



degree of skills to achieve the needed level of expectation in his marital life. Sampaio (2004) reiterates that, the renewal of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer was due neither to the woman's condemnation nor to her repentance (Hosea, 2:14-23). Sherwood (1996) explains that in any moment of time when a specific problem needs to be solved, one should not use one directional approach but rather, two directional. For her, Hosea's first approach in condemning his wife for her acts of prostitution and adultery (Hosea. 2:1-13) could not work out for him because such one directional approach to problem solving often breeds polarization instead of unity of the contending parties. Therefore, according to Yee (1987), the more Hosea condemned his wife and increased the punitive measures for her, the more she became expelled and polarized from the embracing arms of Hosea. I perceive from the text that Hosea's punitive measures were stretched to the extent that he had nothing more to use in order to secure his marriage than to apply the two - directional approach to problem solving. Sherwood (1996) explains that in the two - directional approach, the one solving the problem foresees both the offender and the recipient of the offence as the sources of the problem. It stands to reason that in the case of Hosea and Gomer, both persons might have contributed in one way or the other, to the reasons for Gomer's unwillingness to abandon prostitution to stay in the husband's house, and so solutions should be sought from both directions. In this way, according to Baah – Yanney (2014), there is no “win-lose,” but “win –win” relationship between the two conflicting parties. Baah- Yanney explained that this involves collaborating and cooperating with the other party in order to understand his /her concerns in an effort to find a mutually and completely satisfying solution.

Probably Hosea approached the issue of his marital challenges with this technique of conflict management. So, instead of holding on to the accusation of her lack of “hesedh” (love), he offered her “hesedh” (love) to replace what she was lacking. In this way Hosea could understand Gomer’s plight as a prostitute, and not only hers but other women who were involved in the prostitution business. Sampaio (2004) writes that prostitution was presented as a social function performed by women as a means of subsistence (Hos. 2:4-17). It was condoned by the priests, in order to extort money and swindle the people (Hos. 4: 4-19) (Sampaio, 2004). Hosea could possibly begin to understand that the prostitution of Gomer happened without any fault of hers but it could be attributed to the status quo. Sampaio (2004) presents the pictorial description of it by saying that the power struggles in the historical context of the northern kingdom indicated that it was urgent for the kingdom to increase procreation; young hands were needed to work on the land to provide the resources needed by the state and to pay the tribute required for foreign alliances. Also, young males were needed in the army.

Thus, it appears that the priests concealed within religious practices the economic and political use of the bodies of women, men and new-born children. For this reason, Sampaio explains that, the harvest festival became the encounter between bodies, which was the pleasure of the shade trees, while resting with good wine generated a crop of new children (Hosea 4:13). For Sampaio, it was an influence of Canaanite fertility rites (Hosea 14:14-15) and who dared refuse to participate in it forfeited his or her livelihood. Sampaio (2004) writes that Gomer’s prostitution was not for luxury items and pleasure, but she brought home the basic necessities of life (Hosea 2:5). Though this



looked like a threat to Hosea's authority as the husband and a bread winner the circumstance in which the women as well as the children found themselves was looked at by Hosea as a matter of urgency which needed to be attended with love and mercy instead of judgement and condemnation. Hence Hosea replaced the condemnation on his wife and children, as well as the other prostituted girls with pity but aggravated the condemnation on the priest who misappropriated the lives of women, men, and children, interfering with the household rules of solidarity (Weems, 1995). In this context "hesedh" has been translated differently to mean mercy, pity or love and the combination of these emotional qualities can create family solidarity.

Hence, according to Sampaio (2004), the technique of "hasedh" as a tool for managing Hosea's marital life was able to create a win-win relationship between Hosea and his wife and brought about family solidarity. For this reason, Sampaio (2004) writes that the new relationship between the woman and the husband occurred when he was no longer called "my Baal" (my owner: Hosea 2:16), but rather "my husband, that is, the man with whom I freely associate myself. A new matrimonial bond was established. However, unlike the first one in the first chapter, this second bond was no longer established through the customary exchange of gifts between two families, but through a covenantal agreement between the woman and the Man (Hos. 2:19, 20).

According to Baah - Yanney (2014), the feelings that worked in both Hosea and his wife throughout the covenant agreement for the renewal of their marriage was accommodation. He explained that in accommodation, an individual or party essentially communicates to the other, as for example, "you

are right,” I agree,” “let’s forget about it.” In this way the party attempts very closely to the needs of the other, ignoring his own needs in order to show love and foster new bond of solidarity. In this context Hosea accommodated his wife and the wife accepted the challenge for renewal.

The renewal of the couples’ relationship also led to the reversal of the names of the children. Therefore “Jezreel” (God plants) will be flourished in the land, he will have pity on “Lo-Ruhamah” (Not Pitied) and “Lo-Ammi” (not my – people) will be called my – people. Hence Hosea’s ability to manage his marital life triggered the reunion of the family and new arrangements that ensures solidarity and stability in the marriage.

## **Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This work is strictly based on the interpretation of Hosea 1:1–3:5, using the Reader-response Criticism. Modern study of the Bible requires the use of the scientific method in interpreting any selected text from the Bible. Scientific method implies being systematic and critical in the approach to the biblical study. Reference to being critical, according to Mensah (2016), boils down to the need for careful and close reading, paying attention to the details in the biblical text, synthesizing and analysing the problematic issues raised, in order to produce an acceptable meaning.

### **Reader-response criticism as a method in literary studies**

Modern biblical scholars have come to appreciate the use of literary oriented methods which were mostly borrowed from profane studies in studying the Bible. This is because the Bible contains literary writings just like the profane disciplines such as Music, the Languages, Literature and other

works of arts (Keegan, 1985). However, Keegan (1985) emphasizes that when these methods are applied to the aspects of biblical texts which are prone to narratives, they become known as narrative methodologies or narrative criticisms.

### **Reader-response criticism as a narrative method**

Reader-response criticism is one of the aspects of literary criticisms that study biblical narratives. As its name implies, this method focuses on the reader's response to literary texts (Tyson, 1999). So Mcknight (1999) asserted that with the use of reader- response criticism the values, attitudes and responses of the reader are important in making meaning from the text. This method has been chosen for this study because it allows the reader to make a distinct interpretation of the text from his or her own competence, values and presuppositions and at the same time producing what looks like objective meaning. He is guided by the text in order not to depart from the acceptable interpretation of the text. It is also an ascertaining fact that with effective use of the techniques of reader- response criticism close reading of the text in question can be performed and be used to identify features such as the narrator, narrative time, character(s), character tension, plot, point of view, dialogue, and setting, all of which will help the competent reader to detect the flow of the text and its meaning (Osborne, 1991).

Therefore, it is also envisaged that as the reader is a product of a community and writes to a community, his/her interpretation of the text will be more relevant to his/her community (Keegan, 1985). To this effect, Tyson (1999) explains that Reader- response criticism helps us to learn about our own

reading processes and how they relate to our life experiences and the intellectual community of which we are members.

### **The application of reader – response criticism to the text under study**

Reader-response criticism can be applied to this study because the Bible is a literature and since Reader-response criticism is valid to be used in any other works of literature, it is valid for use on the Bible too. When it is applied to the Bible, the narrator is seen to be giving information about the appearance, actions and feelings of characters, (Keegan, 1985). According to Gunn and Fewell (1993), we experience biblical characters as mediated through a narrator who selects and shapes what we experience in the narrative.

In the narratives of the selected text (Hos. 1:1-3:5) for this study, just as in many biblical narratives, it is easy to distinguish the narrator from the author, and the work of the narrator is relevant in so far as it brings meaningful interpretation of the text to the critical reader herein described as the researcher. So, I used Reader-response criticism in this study by identifying the pericope, structuring the pericope (Hos. 1:1-3:5), by dividing the story into purposeful and meaningful verses. Then after that I proceeded to interpret the text of the pericope according to the separate verse structure. Then finally, I put the separate interpretation of the structured verses together to form a single unit. Therefore, with the use of reader-response criticism, the text in Hosea 1:1-3:5 was studied under four (4) main themes in this structure: Hosea ben Beeri, (Hos. 1:1), Hosea's marriage (1:2-3), some of the challenges in Hosea's marriage (Hos. 1:4-11, How Hosea managed his marital challenges (Hos. 2:1-3:5), and the implications of Hosea's marital life for Ghanaian clergy. Then at

the end of the study the sub areas of the text were merged into one unit of a finished product, representing a reader's response to the text.

Fokkelman (1999) said a text becomes alive and begins to speak only when we start to read and adhere to the words and structures of the text. Hence, I conducted the study as a Ghanaian reader with historical, theological and philosophical background, and with my reading ability and technique to identify the literary structure of the reading text and confer the right meaning to it, I was able to facilitate the making of a good end - product out of the text.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into seven (7) chapters in the following manner:

Chapter one (1) serves as the introduction and deals with the background to the studies, statement of the problem, conceptual framework, purpose, significance, and objectives of the study, research questions, review of literature, methodology, delimitation, limitation and organization of the study.

Chapter two (2) is allotted to the investigation on the prophet Hosea's historical life. This deals with the historical and symbolical perspectives of the prophet Hosea and his prophetic messages.

Hosea's marriage is discussed in chapter three (3). This includes the discussion about the story, some interpretations and my answer to the question; did Hosea marry a prostitute?

Then chapter four (4) is concerned with challenges Hosea encountered in his marriage. This also explains social challenges, religio-cultural challenges and socio-psychological challenges.

Chapter five (5) discusses how Hosea managed his marital challenges. The details here are basically consisted of family tribunal, entrenched positions, tempering justice with mercy and renewal of marriage vows.

Furthermore, chapter six (6) tries to draw implications from Hosea's marital life for Ghanaian clergy.

Finally, chapter seven (7) reflects on the summary of the findings identified in the study, on the basis of which a conclusion is drawn and suitable recommendations are offered.





## CHAPTER TWO

### HOSEA BEN BEERI

#### Introduction

Some scholars think that Hosea is a narrative fiction. Others argue that the prophet is a symbolic representation, while others still contend that the book and all about the prophet Hosea are historical narrative. Koch (1982) contributes to the argument, pointing out that those who come from the school of thought that Hosea is a narrative fiction argue from the point of view of his marriage. Koch asserted that for most Christians and Jewish interpreters the marital life of prophet Hosea did not reflect a real-life situation, because it seemed impossible to them for God to force any man, let alone, a prophet to marry no other woman than a prostitute. However, Anderson (1979) postulates that Hosea and his marital life were symbolic representation of the covenant between God and Israel. According to Anderson (1979), it is not surprising that Hosea did not provide us with adequate autobiographical details because his primary purpose was not to describe his domestic tragedy but to proclaim the work of Yahweh to the people of Israel. Similarly, Ntrel (2011) posits that the people of Israel had insatiable passion in their desire to go after the foreign gods and this was signified by Hosea's own marital life. So, Israel, like Gomer the wife of Hosea, had gone after foreign gods and would be rejected by Yahweh just as Hosea rejected Gomer for her adulterous life. Even though I reject the claim that Hosea is a fictional narrative and support the views of scholars who postulate that Hosea is a historical narrative, I do not in any way contend against the views in favour of Hosea's symbolic marriage. The fact of the matter is that for this study, I am interested in the historical narrative of

Hosea ben Beeri and his marital life. It is in this sense that the challenges Hosea went through as part of his marital life, and how he managed them can be properly assessed.

### **Hosea in Historical Perspective**

The book of Hosea begins with the narrator's account of the main character, Hosea ben Beeri, his prophetic encounter with God and the periods of that encounter saying, "the word of the Lord that came to Hosea, son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah and during the reign of Jeroboam, Son of Joash, king of Israel" (Hos. 1:1 – NIV). Here, I am interested in the historical context of the Prophet Hosea as echoed by the narrator of the story. The touch of this historical context leaves a gap which needs to be filled by close reading. In filling this gap, the use of Reader – response criticism is pertinent because it allows the reader to apply his presuppositions, values and educational influences to the interpretation, while at the same time, keeping the narrator's voice alive by staying with the text. This helped me to concentrate on the text and to draw information from other portions of the Book of Hosea which even though are beyond the pericope, yet can be helpful to fill the gap. In the confines of the text and sometimes beyond the text in the Book of Hosea, events of historical concerns were identified and examined in line with several scholarly discourse, for their authenticity to help fill the gap created by the narrator's introduction of Hosea ben Beeri with his historical context. Events such as the following were found, identified and examined to see if they are likely to help with the interpretation that can fill the gap:



- a. The mentioning of Hosea's father, Beeri and Gomer's father, Diblaim (Hos. 1:1).
- b. Hosea, having contemporaries among the kings and prophets of Israel (Hos. 1:1).
- c. Hosea's pronouncement against the activities of a host of communities excluding Shechem (Hos. 5:15, 6:10, 8:5).
- d. Hosea, paying his wife's ransom with a homer of barley and a skin of wine Hos. 3:2).
- e. Hosea, criticizing the priests of Northern Israel for their lack of Knowledge (Hos. 4:4-11).
- f. Hosea prophesying about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and living to see its destruction (Hos. 1:4-5).
- g. Hosea, serving as the Prophet who hailed from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- h. Being aware of the political situation, Hosea warned his people about the threat of the Assyrians.

Koch (1982) tries to straighten the historical representation of Hosea, by pointing to his surname, Ben Beeri, which gives an indication that he had a father whose family name was Beeri. Thus, a school of thought traces his ancestral home to the Bethshemesh, and of the tribe of Issachar.

On the contrary, Wolff (1965) contends that Hosea was a Levite and a native of Shechem, the ancient tribal centre of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Wolff's reason for tracing Hosea's home town to a Northern levitical community was that Hosea had spoken against the activities of the people of Samaria, Ephraim, Gilgal, Bethel and a host of communities (Hos. 5:15, 6:10,

8:5), but never was he heard uttering a word against the people of Shechem. His criticism against the priests in 4:4-11 was because they were not of levitical order as he Hosea was, but of ordinary families whom Jeroboam I was said to have installed on the expense of the levitical Priests at the official shrine of the North, to prevent Northerners' allegiance to the south (1Kgs 12:31). That was the plight of the levitical priests during the time of Hosea (Wolff, 1965). Similarly, Miller (1987) says that Hosea did not have enough money to pay for all of his wife's ransom. He could afford what he engaged in for a living to pay for half of the requirement. So he used a homer of barley and a skin of wine from his farm to pay for the ransom. Concerning Hosea's occupation, Miller (1987) may be saying the truth, because if Hosea had been removed from his priestly role, just like the other levitical priests, and for that reason he was no longer part of those in charge of any of the state sponsored shrines, then he needed another means from which he could get his livelihood. Miller (1987) says that Hosea demonstrated what he had more and could be used as his livelihood when he used barley and wine to redeem his wife (Hos.3:2), signifying that he was a farmer of barley and vine, that was his means of living.

As a levitical Priest, Hosea could be imagined as someone who was involved in studying and preoccupying himself with the maintenance of the traditions of his people. He therefore, dedicated himself to the criticism of the priests in charge of the sponsored shrines because in the first place, he thought they were not qualified to officiate, and in the second place, they were misusing the office for their selfish interest to the displeasure of the qualified but deposed levitical priests like Hosea himself and also to the displeasure of

God. So, Hosea described them as people who lack knowledge and were perishing as a result of their lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). According to Hosea, they exchanged a precious value like teaching for sacrifice. It was with this zeal that he was called by God to be a prophet. Miller (1987) says that Hosea prophesied in his youthful age for a long period. He prophesied about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and lived to see its destruction and lamented over it. All of this is to hammer home the point that Hosea was a historical figure who lived once upon a time in the history of Israel, had a vocation first, as a farmer and later as a prophet and participated in marital life.

Scholars such as Miller (1987) and Seow (1952) agree that Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This also affirms the historicity of the Prophet Hosea. According to Seow (1952), Hosea was undoubtedly the only biblical prophet who lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and prophesied there as well. In my understanding, to live is to participate in history. Hence, Miller asserted that Hosea participated in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel when he, like his contemporaries, Amos, Isaiah and Micah, responded with his prophetic pronouncements to the aggregated events in the life of the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom during the rise of the Assyrians to power in the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

To this effect, scholars have seen linguistic particularities in the text of Hosea. Seow (1952, p. 291) contests that “the linguistic particularities in much of Hosea may be explained as dialectal idiosyncrasies, rather than errors or textual corruptions.” This means that as Hosea prophesied to the people of the Northern Israel, he spoke with the Hebrew dialect used in the North and since

scholars are not familiar with the dialect of Hebrew spoken by the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the time of Hosea, they tend to encounter many difficulties reading and understanding the Hebrew text in the book of Hosea.

Wisdom themes and vocabulary were found in the pronouncements of the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets such as: Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea was not an exception despite his linguistic particularities. Like his contemporaries, “Hosea appears to have been familiar with the language and imagery of the sages, and so he uses them in his oracles and disputations” (Seow, 1952, p. 293). That is why Hosea’s central claim was about Israel’s lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). With this claim, Hosea wanted to point out the tradition of the sages as a rich cultural heritage that Israel had to her credit, and yet did not make use of it but rather acted foolishly without understanding by choosing the stupid Canaanite tradition, and so according to the prophet, they (the Israelites) will come to ruin under the Assyrian power (Seow, 1982).

In spite of his familiarity with the wisdom tradition, Hosea, according to Seow (1952), has been placed within the prophetic tradition due to his covenant theology and his proclamations which is constantly certain of divine intervention in history. Wolff (1956) agrees that Hosea was well schooled in the historical traditions of Israel and that he was so well versed in the traditions because of his close associations with the priestly families and Levites. So Seow (1952) asserts that Hosea “was able to use his knowledge of Israel’s history to call his people back to a correct relationship with YHWH.” Why should Freedman believe that Hosea was able to call his people to a correct relationship with God whereas the same people were finally deported

into exile by the Assyrians in 721 BCE. The hearts of the people were far away from God and were not ready to be saved by God's directions declared to them by the prophet? I think that Hosea tried to call the people to a correct relationship with God with his knowledge of Israel's history. All of this is to contest for the historical certainty of the prophet Hosea. His life, His Marriage and the events of his prophecies were all historical truths.

Thus, according to Boadt (1984), Hosea lived and worked as a prophet when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were ruling respectively in turns as kings in Judah the Southern Kingdom, whereas Jeroboam II was also the king of Israel, in the Northern Kingdom. The idea I want to portray here is that Hosea's historical context craftily fashioned by the narrator of his story puts him far away from a narrative fiction. This is because the narrator sees Hosea among a team of contemporaries who contributed to the religio-historical and socio-political life of the nations of Israel and Judah. Therefore, I perceive that Hosea had interactions with these contemporary kings, some hated him and others loved him due to his prophetic message. Ntrel (2011, p. 84) describes the religio-economic situation of Israel in the days of the prophetic ministry of Hosea with the following words. "This was a period of affluence, but it was also a period of great apostasy." He continued that "many inhabitants had mingled the worship of Yahweh with the worship of Baal." Similarly, Anderson (1979) asserts that much of Hosea's preaching was directed against the adoption of Canaanite fertility cult practices including the use of bull images into Israelite religion. Underlying the fertility cult was the assumption that the produce of the land came from the Baal. Therefore, according to Anderson, Hosea came into the picture to declare to the Israelites that it was

Yahweh who had the power to give or withhold. Hence, Hosea's incessant prophetic messages were attempts to combat such apostate practices and to establish true Yahwism in Israel. The involvement of Hosea in the historical events of Israel that linked the ruling kings and other prophets sends messages across that Hosea lived as a historical figure and that both his prophetic and his marital life had a mundane significance.

Shortly after Amos, Hosea ben Beeri took the centre stage of the prophetic activity in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. By beginning the story with "the word of the Lord that came to Hosea..." the narrator wanted to introduce what Hosea saw. He saw *Yahweh*, God of Israel, who gave Hosea something to say and to act upon. In this portion of the text, the narrator appropriately introduces Hosea as a prophet, the one who hears from God and is responsible to convey God's word to the kings and people of that historical context. Then he also saw Assyrian threat which he needed to inform and warn his stubborn people who in the midst of affluence and wealth were lost in social mischief and were unaware of the political situation (Seow, 1952). As Seow (1952, p. 293) put it, "the people were gluttonous, drank and far too complacent, if not arrogant." They were more and more concerned with amassing wealth than appreciating justice and the more they acquired wealth the more they built sanctuaries. These were the same historical situations about which Amos, a contemporary of Hosea, warned the people in the days of King Jeroboam II who ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These, Hosea too condemned and said that God would destroy their altars, pillars and high places. Hosea's prophecy about the "breaking of Israel's bow" at Jezreel (Hos. 1:4-5), was probably referring to the attack on



Israel by the Assyrian war lord, Tigrath-pileser which Israel lost (Seow, 1952). Hosea saw that the Israelites were overly confident in their nation's military might and totally unaware of the Assyrian exploit he needed to prompt them. So, in fact Freedman agrees that the prophetic messages of Hosea are closely in line with the sequence of historical events of Israel. One thing that I have observed from the narrative of Hosea's story is that even though he is a historical figure, sometimes he speaks and acts in symbols.

### **Hosea in Symbolic Perspective**

One issue that raises alarm to reader-response critics in the reading of the story of Hosea is the fact that the narrator presented the story in symbolic genre. According to Alter (1981), narrative symbols are icons that represent realities in the reading text, though they are subject to the author's manipulation and are used to elicit fixed conventions. The LORD, the land of Israel, the people of Israel, Hosea's marriage and the names of Hosea's children were all symbolic icons that represented realities in the text. It can be deduced from the narrative that Hosea's marriage of Gomer and the names of the children were respectively used as symbols to depict the marriage between God and the nation of Israel, as well as the people of Israel. So, for loving another husband (Baal) instead of God, the land had committed adultery and the people were all children of adultery so the LORD their God would reject them just as Gomer conceived her children in adultery and were rejected by Hosea.

According to the narrator, *Jezreel* (seed of God) symbolizes that The LORD would punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at *Jezreel*, and would put an end to the kingdom of Israel after breaking Israel's bow in the valley of

*Jezreel*. Lo-rohamah (not pitied) symbolizes that God will not have pity on Israel while Lo-ammi means that God has rejected Israel and that they are not his people. In this symbolic expression, the narrator projected God's anger against the people of Israel and his consequent rejection of them that they were not his people just as Hosea rejected his Children, and God would not have pity on the people of Israel but would curse their land and destroy it by a defeat at war which Hosea, as a prophet, had seen it coming from Assyrian power.

A survey through some of the prophetic books shows that in the history of Israel, prophets were sometimes asked by God to perform actions that have symbolic meaning to the socio-political life of Israel. For example, Isaiah used Mount Moriah as a symbol of God's future reign over all the nations and not only Israel. Isaiah was an 8<sup>th</sup> century prophet, a contemporary of Hosea (Miller, 1987). In one of his prophetic messages to the Southern Kingdom of Israel, He told the people that he saw Mount Moriah that it was raised above all mountains. It signified God's reign and with time, people from all over the world would throng there to worship (Isa. 2:1-3). The message seemed unreal to the people of Judah but that did not make Isaiah's existence in Judah and his prophetic ministry unreal. The mountain was also a historical feature in the geographical setting of Judah, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The prophet only predicted the future of Judah when the stubborn people of Judah as well as several peoples of the world would come to accept the will and teachings of God.

In similar example, in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah was asked by God to make a yoke with leather straps and put it on

his neck. This was to symbolize a defeat which Judah and her allies were going to suffer in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia (Jer. 27:2). Jeremiah was a contemporary of Ezekiel, Nahum, Zephaniah and Habakkuk by looking at the events that each of them rose to confront (Miller, 1987). The yoke symbolically spoke to the people of Judah that the only means to avoid that defeat was to submit to Babylonia, then chosen as God's servant. The symbols of Jeremiah did not make him ahistorical.

Another example is when Ezekiel was told by God to draw the map of the city of Jerusalem on a clay tablet. The prophet was to build a wall around the city in the map, set up the enemy camp and surround the city with siege and battering ramps. That would symbolize that the city of Jerusalem is under siege and no one can escape. Then Ezekiel was to lie on his left side in front of the map to provide a symbol that the prophet was bearing the sins of the people (Ezek. 4:1-3). Ezekiel, who ministered as prophet among Jeremiah and his contemporaries was historical (Miller, 1987), just as Jerusalem, even though it was a map at that period of Ezekiel's prophecy, was a historical city. All these prophets, showcased in my examples, in some times in history performed symbolic actions to warn their people against the turn of events that led to their homeland being conquered by other nations.

Hosea was one of such prophets. So, the discussions and the examples favour the fact that his marriage to the prostitute, Gomer, was a design by God to warn the people of Israel, with that symbol, against the run of events that could lead to the people of Israel being conquered by the Assyrians who were then wielding world power. Therefore, I see the possibility that the symbolic perspective in Hosea was a design to achieve a historical goal, that is, Israel

should stop prostituting around with other gods in order to attain God's protection against her enemies. This historical antecedence that called for the prophecy involving the symbolic marriage, also seemed to have affected the prophet's marital life and family history

The use of semantic comparison in Hos. 1:6-7 is useful in this text under study because it also brings the understanding of issues clearly. One would ask: what was the reason for mentioning the kings in Judah since the setting of the events in the story was the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah was in the Southern Kingdom? Apart from the fact that it sets the events of Hosea in context, it is clear in this latter part of the chapter that the mentioning of the names of the kings of Judah in the early verses of the first chapter was also for the development of the theme of the story. Therefore, the setting of the story, from the text (Hos. 1:7), was the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but the narrator created a sharp contrast between the people of the Northern Israel and the people of Judah. This reflected in the narrative sequence in the manner that whereas the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom corrupted themselves with the worship of Baal, the people of Judah were safe from prostitution from the Baal. So, whereas God rejected the people of Israel and their land he chose to accept Judah and promised to save their land from destruction. The narrator allowed God to speak in the first person as usual saying "... for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them – not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them." (Hos. 1:6-7, NIV) This implies that even though God would punish Israel with war, the people of

Judah would not be saved through war with their own bow and sword, but by God himself.

The mentioning of God himself coming down to save Judah brings to reconstruction in the Book of Hosea what the prophets, as for instance Isaiah, had said about the “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), a messianic expression which means ‘God with us.’ This portion is also part of the narrator’s symbolic expression. It is simply the clear expression that can relate to the adage that talks about “reaping what you sow.” Israel planted in corruption and reaped in destruction whereas Judah sowed in righteous living and so they would reap the soothing of the Messiah himself. This was also the lot of Hosea’s wife and children - because they corrupted themselves with prostitution, Hosea rejected them just as God rejected Israel.

However, Hosea used his marital life to reconstruct a metaphorical story which portrayed the unfaithfulness of Israel as against God’s unfathomable love which constantly searched for the stubborn Israel due to their covenanted bond (Seow, 1952). Therefore, Hosea began his prophetic proclamations by referring to a call from God on him to go and marry a woman of prostitution (eshet zenuniym). According to Seow (1952), some scholars find the command in the call as offensive and therefore, think that there was no real marriage with such a woman. Such scholars, according to Rowley (1963), insist that Gomer bat Diblaim represents unfaithful Israel personified. Other scholars have accepted that Hosea did marry the woman of prostitution but as a symbolic icon. Still others argue that God did not in fact command Hosea to marry such a woman. Rather, the prophet interpreted his marriage as divinely arranged when he learned of his wife’s adultery and saw in his own

experiences the meaning of God's love and commitment (Seow, 1952). I agree with the second submission which accepts that Hosea did marry the woman of prostitution, but as a symbolic act. This settles on a historical truth about Hosea and yet concedes the fact of symbolical actions and utterances which come to play as part of Hosea's prophetic proclamations and ministry. My reason for using this idea is that it supports the conceptual framework of my thesis. This concept of micro-social power relationship, drawn from Sampaio (2004), shows how the historical truth about the Prophet Hosea can be studied and at the same time maintained the theology of the covenant relationship enshrined in the symbols of actions and language in the prophetic ministry of Hosea.

### **Hosea's Role as a Prophet of God**

According to the narrative, Hosea was the spokesman or prophet of God. A prophet is a forth teller and a foreteller of a particular oracle among the people of his society." Lang (1983) states that the prophets of Israel served as the representation of God's voice ruling alongside the kings, guiding them to pursue God's will and good governance. According to Blenkinsopp (1996), Hosea was *ish ha'Elohim* translated in English to mean 'man of God.' The group of prophets known as *ish ha'Elohim* were mostly found in the period of the Former Prophets where they were mostly related to the urban support group. Hosea, being a Latter Prophet, would not fit into this group. If Hosea was described by Blenkinsopp as a man of God then I think it was not because he was related to the group of prophets called *ish ha'Elohim*, but only because he had the word of God, acted on the word of God and spoke the word of God. So Blankinsopp is given the benefit of the doubt because he did not classify



Hosea according to the category Hosea's own contemporaries accorded him but according to how modern people accord prophets. Even up to this period, people refer to prophets, pastors, priests, missionaries, evangelists and those who have any duty relating to the work of God as Men of God. However, Hosea called himself *nabi* (Hos. 7:9) (Koch, 1982). Lang (1983) asserts that if Hosea had hailed from the Southern Kingdom, he would have been called *hozeh*, which means a dreamer or seer. According to Lang, whereas the prophets in the Southern Kingdom of Israel were called *hozeh*, those from the Northern Kingdom were known as *nabi*. It is obvious that Lang (1983) attributes the differences of prophetic names across the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel to a socio-cultural design. Therefore, to Lang, Hosea was called *nabi* simply because he hailed from the Northern part of Israel and a prophet like Amos was *hozeh* due to the fact that he came from the South. On the contrary, Koch (1982) attributes the differences in prophetic names to the Role Theory, in that whereas the *nabi* were associated with the official personnel who belonged to the cult, the *hozeh* were described as the itinerant morality prophets. In this case, while Lang refers to Hosea as *nabi* because he came from the north, to Koch, Hosea was a *nabi* just because he was associated with the official personnel who belonged to the cult. I agree to both of the theories, the theory of socio-cultural design and the role theory. I think that the difference in the rendition of prophetic names across the geographical boundaries of Israel was both due to the differences in the prophetic roles and the socio-cultural design. So the general term for the prophets was *nabi* as in the heading of the section of prophetic writings in the Hebrew Bible, but some prophets were referred to as *hozeh*. For that was how the prophets in the

Southern Kingdom were referred to, that was why when Amos came from the Southern Kingdom to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom, he was described by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, as *hozeh* (seer) and he was charged to go to his own country and make a proclamation there and eat bread there (Amos 7:12). This means that Hosea was called *nabi* not because it was the general name for the prophets of Israel and Judah, but because he came from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

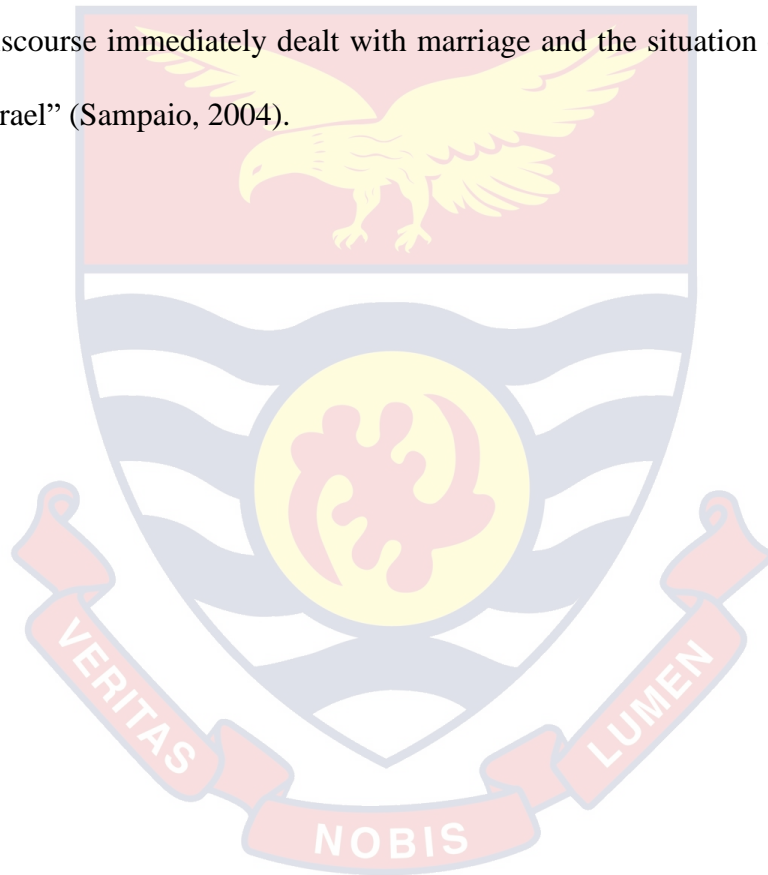
Most of the prophets in the North who were associated with the title *nabi* also functioned as the official personnel who belonged to the cult. Then also most prophets of the Southern Kingdom who assumed the title of *hozeh* usually performed as itinerant morality prophets. Isaiah came from the Southern Kingdom and even though he was married to a *n'bia* (a woman who acted as a *nabi* – Isa. 8:3) and he, himself was associated with the court in Judah, he never presented himself as a *nabi*. Therefore, Koch (1982) is optimistic that he was a *hozeh* (Isa. 29:10; 30:10) since he frequently attacked the *nabis*. Thus, I see that the socio-cultural design seems to have a slight edge over the role theory. Being a *nabi*, Hosea was associated with the cult. This means that he belonged to the prophets whose duty it was to legitimate the central values and structures of the Israelite society, (Koch, 1982).

However, in some occasions, Hosea's prophetic ministry took on an itinerant dimension which made scholars, particularly Koch, think that he resembled a *hozeh* in his duties as a spokesman of God and the one who sanctioned morality in the nation of Israel. However, I still contend that even in his itinerancy, he remained a *nabi* insofar as he was a native of the Northern Kingdom and was also associated with the cult even though as a disestablished

Levitical priest. Therefore, it was the prophetic style of Hosea that makes him look like a *hozeh*. The prophets in the Southern State were known to be mostly inclined in itinerancy, except a few of them like Isaiah of Jerusalem, another contemporary, who were associated with the court at Jerusalem. Probably it was their itinerant style that earned them the prophetic title *hozeh*, because even in Isaiah's case where he had a *nabia* (a woman prophet – Isa. 8:3) as his wife, he was on many occasions found attacking the *nabi* and he rather preferred to be called *hozeh* (Isa. 29:10,30:10). However, the prophets in the Northern State of Israel were mostly fashioned around the cults or shrines and they were known as *nabi* probably because of their association with the cults. So Hosea's *hozeh* style or itinerant style didn't change his prophetic title from *nabito hozeh* because he was found referring to himself as *nabi* probably because he lived in the north and prophesied there.

According to Miller (1987), until he became a prophet, Hosea was a priest and a farmer. Then one day, God called him to "Go and marry a prostitute and have children with her, for the country has become a prostitute by abandoning God" (Hos. 1:2). This was about ten years into Amos' prophetic ministry. Both Hosea and Amos were called by God during the period of Israel's economic prosperity and its corresponding moral decadence under the reign of King Jeroboam II. However, whereas Amos was called to correct the social injustices among the people at that time, Hosea was called by the same God but to correct the people's immoral behaviour, which resulted in their abandoning God and turning away to worship Canaan gods. Then also, both Hosea and Amos prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, yet whereas Amos came from the Southern Kingdom to prophesy in the

North, Hosea hailed from the Northern Kingdom where he prophesied (Miller, 1987). Hosea rose to the occasion with his classical prophetic messages when he saw that even though God had blessed the people of Israel with prosperity, yet morality of the entire people in the Israelite society was declining. He thus rose to the occasion as a prophet in the socio – political context of his time, and he drew implications from his marital life to teach the people in his society to lead religiously and socially accepted life. Thus, “his prophetic discourse immediately dealt with marriage and the situation of prostitution in Israel” (Sampaio, 2004).



## CHAPTER THREE

### HOSEA'S MARRIAGE

#### Introduction

The question this chapter wants to answer is “what is it about Hosea’s marriage?” The narrator began the second verse of the first chapter with the announcement about how God ordered Hosea to “go and marry a prostitute...” For Hosea, God is the foundation of all reality in the nation of Israel. He is the husband of the nation and the people of Israel are the children of the marriage between God and the nation (Koch, 1982).

Hosea saw that the marriage was destroyed by the unfaithfulness of wife and children, because the nation was involved in harlotry, and the Israelites do not love their father, but were adhering to other gods. According to Hosea, Israel preferred raisin cake which was the ritual food of the Canaanite goddess of love. This act, in the eyes of Hosea, was a demonstration of great apostasy. Many natives had blended the worship of God with the worship of Baal (Ntreh, 2011). According to Ntreh (2011), the prophet lamented over Israel’s unquenchable desire for the foreign gods.

It was in this sense that Hosea, professing an encounter with God, declared his intention to marry a prostitute because God had asked him to do so. According to the narrative “when the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him ‘go and marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife, this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.’” (Hos. 1:2 – NIV).

The narrative illustrates how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against God and worshipping other gods. This was the reason why

some scholars like Anderson (1979) explain Hosea's marriage as a symbol of the marriage between the nation of Israel and God. However, the actual marital experience between Hosea and his wife really happened and the truth of the nature of that marriage is known when the narrator of the story speaks about the marriage between Israel and God. This is because the narrator allowed the main character, Hosea, to express his feelings in symbols.

### **The Story**

The story is about mate selection issues of the Prophet Hosea, son of Beeri and the stability of his marriage. It is this story that communicates to readers how God called Hosea to be a prophet. With the setting being the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the story has the theme of Israel's unfaithfulness and God's unfailing love, of which God wanted Hosea to demonstrate to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel with his marriage. Therefore, the story seems to portray a symbolic marriage between God and Israel and how stable the marriage was due to the contributions of the characters that contracted that marriage ("...for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD", Hos. 1:2 – NIV). However, Hosea needed to have a mundane marriage experience, which he would physically use to convey his prophetic discourse to his audience from a known to unknown, simplified to complex and real life to metaphoric situations. This was the period in which King Jeroboam II reigned in the Northern Kingdom of Israel while Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings, one after the other in the Southern Kingdom of Israel called Judah (Hos. 1:1 - NIV). The prophet Hosea, being the mouthpiece of God ("The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri..." Hos. 1:1 - NIV) rose to the occasion in that era with a



prophetic discourse that seemed to alert the people of the Northern Kingdom about their lack of *hezeth* (love) for God, who as a result of his covenant relationship with Israel (both Northern and Southern Kingdoms) was considered as the husband of Israel. Instead of committing to God, in their relationship, the people of Israel were rather committed to the Canaanite idol of worship called Baal. So Hosea saw that practice of shifting from Yahwism to Baalism as a practice of adultery and in his demonstration lesson to the people of Israel, he also opted to marry a prostitute, as a requirement of God, to start the development of his story.

Therefore, in the story, the narrator has *Yahweh* command Hosea “*lek qach leka e’shet zenuniym...*” (“Go and take a wife of prostitution...”) (Hos. 1:2 - NIV). Hosea responded by taking a wife of prostitution. Therefore, the narrator has this to say “*wayilek wayiqach e’th Gomer bath Dibeliyim...*” (“So he went and took Gomer, daughter of Diblaim...”) The same words which God used was repeated in Hosea’s response. “*lek qach leka e’shet zenuniym...*” “*wayilek wayiqach e’th Gomer...*” (“Go and take a wife of prostitution... “so he went and took Gomer...”) Here, it indicates that the prophet is doing the bidding of the deity.

The narrator introduced his characters in a dialogue form, in which God issued commands to Hosea, while Hosea just listened and responded with corresponding actions. Ryle (1963) argues that a dialogue is a literary technique in which writers employ two or more characters to be engaged in conversation with each other. In dialogues, the parties involved exchange ideas or opinions on particular issues with a view to reaching amicable agreements or settlements (Ryle, 1963). Similarly, in this text, the dialogue

was designed by the narrator to establish a convention, guiding the process of Hosea's prophetic activities among his society. God was the invisible character in the dialogue and representing the object of worship by the people of Israel. The narrator in the book of Hosea speaks in the first person, reporting to his listeners, the command of God which he issued to Hosea "go and marry a prostitute..." According to the narrator, "So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son." Then, later, a daughter and another son.

In the time of Hosea, God was known by the traditions of the people of Israel as *Yahweh*. The convention was shaped as Hosea, being the prophet and the spokesman of God, was presented by the narrator before God, to receive words of prophecy. So God spoke again with words of command to the first son, "Call him Jezreel..." (Hos. 1:4 – NIV) and to the second child, a daughter, "Call her *Lo-Ruhamah*..." (Hos. 1:6 – NIV) then also to the third born, another son, God said, "Call him *Lo-Ammi*..." (Hos. 1:9 – NIV). In all cases the narrator introduced God in a third person to indicate the fact that the narrator of the story is neither the author of the story nor a character in the story. Then, God appears in his invisible character to speak in a first person. The narrator allows God to speak and in the first person because he wants to show that he is telling the truth and so God can speak for himself as evidence to the truth. God depicts his usual commanding voice, making the conversation merits its description as a dialogue and expressing the fact that his voice commands action words which need to be symbolically carried out as prophetic messages to the people of Israel.

So what the narrator wants to put across is that God commanded Hosea to go and marry a woman of prostitution. Hosea responded by doing what God asked him to do. So he went and took a woman of prostitution whose name was Gomer. Therefore, according to the narrator, Gomer was a prostitute before Hosea married her.

### **Some Interpretations**

Some scholars, like Koch (1982) and Sampaio (2004), are of the view that in his third person report in the story, the narrator did not say whether Hosea married a prostitute or not, but he only said Hosea married Gomer. Such scholars posit that even though the command is imperative on Hosea, the response is not conjunctive to the command. So the narrator's report about the marriage does not mean that Hosea paid the bride price for a prostitute's hand in marriage. According to these scholars God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute, Then, Hosea married Gomer, but we are not told that during the time of the marriage, Gomer was a prostitute. Perhaps Hosea married Gomer and later realized that his wife has become a prostitute. So according to the scholars such as Koch and Sampaio, the narrator's report on Hosea's marriage may imply that God Commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute because God knows that in future his wife would become a prostitute. Sampaio (2004), for instance, contended that readers of the narrative only got the information about Gomer's prostitution when the narrator broke the news that at the time of giving birth to her second and third children which were a daughter and a son respectively, Gomer was already a prostitute.

Two ideas can be deduced from the scholars' argument. One is that Hosea did not marry a prostitute but his wife later became a prostitute, because

if he had married a prostitute the narrator would have revealed it in the narrative. On the other hand, the command that Hosea as a character professed to have received from God in a prophetic way, might not have been true but when after some time his wife became a prostitute he found explanation in God's command on him to marry a prostitute.

On the contrary, I think the narrator is fair in his judgment by saying that Hosea married Gomer as a prostitute. This is because, in the first place, Hosea obeyed God's command by doing the same thing that God asked him to do and in the second place, the narrator demonstrated this truth by using the same words that God used in the command also in Hosea's response to God's command.

The narrator mentioned the fathers of both couples as Beerli for Hosea and Diblaim for Gomer. The men mentioned were the heads of the respective families (Sampaio, 2004). Pederson (1940) explains how the authority of the family was paramount in Israel during both pre-monarchic and monarchic periods when a bride was to be chosen for the son. He said, not only the father was constantly mentioned but it was not unusual for the mother too to have a say in the matter as in Isaac's marriage to Rebekah in Gen. 24:55 and Samson's marriage in Judg. 14:2. Similarly, Robison (2012) reiterates that in ancient Israel, marriage processes were controlled by parents and the parties involved but not priest, rabbis and governments. Then also the father was responsible for the giving (*Nathan*) of the bride to the bridegroom. National history throws more light on the text under discussion. This is because biblical passages such as Ex 20:12; Deut. 5:16 and Lev. 19:3 talk about parents' obligation towards their children and the requirement on children to fulfil their

responsibilities towards their parents (Kaufman, 1992). Kaufman (1992) reinforces that with regard to how children should honour their parents, it should be in word and in deed. Children should obey their parents so that virtue is not abandoned. However, Kaufman (1992) concludes that if a parent asks a child to do something which is found to be against any of the commandments, the child is not under any obligation to obey the parent, because reason is the determining factor.

This presupposes that Hosea's responsibility to obey his family, was not expected to exact any course in opposition to the family's advice, and therefore presenting a prostitute to the family and going ahead to marry her would have been a serious offence against both his family and the laws of his society, since prostitution was not only prohibited by the family but also by the commandment. Therefore, if such a marriage came off, then probably, the family did not take part. If they took part, then it could be that Koch (1982) was right, Gomer was not a prostitute when she was given (*nathan*) in marriage to Hosea. That is why Sampaio (2004) contends that the mentioning of the names of the parents of Hosea and Gomer by the narrator in the text was significant to emphasizing the unity of the families in the context of marriage, in that Beerli must have gone to the house of Diblaim to have taken Gomer's hand in marriage for Hosea, in line with the customs of the time. Borowski (2003) writes that marriage was one way of protecting the family inheritance among the people of Israel. Therefore, Israelite families commonly promoted arranged marriages particularly, to ensure that royal and affluent families secured their future relationships and maintained the family inheritance. Among the common Israelites, Borowski (2003) explains that arranged

marriages were favourable within the clan (Gen. 24; 28:1-9). According to Borowski (2003), the Bible does not mention anywhere about a particular marriage ceremony to be followed. However, the dowry (sillubiym) was given to the bride by the bride's father (Gen. 29:24,29; 1Kings 9:16) and presents (mobar) were given by the groom to the bride and also to her father (24:53; 34:12; Ex 22:15-16; 1Sam. 18:25). The exchange, according to Borowski were considered a business transaction and that in case of divorce they must be reproduced and that was the reason why divorce was done through writing of divorce papers (seper keritut). So Borowski (2003) contends that with regards to marriage, no Israelite family did business with a prostitute or was ready to arrange for a marriage with a family that is not worthy to guarantee the security of the marriage contract and protect its glorious image. Borowski (2003) emphasizes that in Israel, a woman being married for the first time is expected to be a virgin, even though a second marriage due to divorce or widowhood was recognized (Deut. 22:13-21). He also said that pre-marital and extra-marital sex and adultery were forbidden and punishable by death (Deut. 22:22-26). Therefore, with Borowski's assertion, how could Hosea, a prophet of God who was expected to do and say what God commanded him, go contrary to the commandment and marry a prostitute who was forbidden in the Israelite society by the same commandment? Then also how would Hosea's family vouch for a prostitute as his wife, a woman they could hardly guarantee her ability to secure the stability of the marriage to avoid future payback of the Bride price. Then again, Boadt (1984) has a firm ground when he contends that even though Israelite girls at twelve (12) years old were considered as daughter of the commandment (bat mitzvah) and were treated as



adults yet their parents still were responsible for their usual initiative roles and the giving (*nathan*) away of the daughter. Therefore, to accept the fact that Hosea's parents were involved in the marriage process, Miller (1987) reiterates that since the literary translation of the Hebrew term is not prostitute but a woman of prostitution, and since most girls in the Israelite community were at that time prostituting themselves not as professional prostitutes, but in sexual activities that were a feature of the worship at the Canaanite cults, then when Hosea was asked to marry a prostitute, he was rather meant to marry one of the numerous girls of his time who were worshipping at the Canaanite cults and not a prostitute per se.

#### **Did Hosea Marry a Prostitute?**

The question is; did Hosea really marry a prostitute? In view of the family history provided by Borowski (2003) and Sampaio (2004), it is difficult to accept the argument that Hosea married a prostitute and that Gomer was a prostitute before Hosea married her. However, taking Hosea as a prophet (a spokesman) of God, Hosea's attitude was not different from the other prophets of God who would deem God's command as imperative on them to be totally obedient to God and conform to God's purpose and direction. Therefore, Hosea might have married Gomer, even though she was a prostitute, due to his obedience to God and that was what the narrator of the story was busily communicating to his readers. The cult prostitution pointed out by Miller (1987) is not a strong point to dismiss the argument of Gomer's prostitution before marriage. If the cult prostitution had prostituted the girls who participated in it, and if Gomer was a participant in that cult worship at harvest time, then she was a prostitute even before he was married by Hosea as a

result of her pre-marital sexual activities at the cult. Also, the mentioning of the parental names of Hosea and Gomer by the narrator was not because the narrator wanted to emphasize that the parents played any role in the marriage ceremony as pointed out by Sampaio (2004) and Borowski (2003), but because the narrator wanted to identify the marriage couple by their family names – Hosea son of Beerai and Gomer daughter of Diblaim. I have included this family and marriage history of Israel to test the authenticity of the narrator's story and have found out that despite the strong historical background against adultery and the prophet's marriage to an adulterous wife, the narrator's story of imperative command by God versus conjunctive response by his prophet still holds waters.

As mentioned in an earlier discussion, Hosea is pictured here as a prophet of God. As a prophet he was a spokesman of God. So one would predict that he obeys God and follows exactly what God says. On the other hand, his family influence is also paramount to him. Therefore, it is expected that he becomes reasonable enough to be able to solve his marital issues, either to obey the command of God and marry a prostitute at the expense of his family's guidance, or reason with his family and disobey God's command. To this extent, Hosea's position must be examined. The purpose here is to find out which philosophical positions were likely to have influenced Hosea in his choice of a wife. If Hosea obeys God, he will be described as one who uses his faith (fideism). If he reasons with his family, he will be said to be a man who applies reason and rejects faith (rationalism). Was he a fideist, a rationalist or a critical rationalist – one who uses both faith and reason?

Fideism is derived from the Latin word '*fides*' meaning faith and can be rendered literally as faith-ism. According to Plantinga (2012), a fideist is someone who urges reliance on faith rather than reason in philosophical and religious matters and who may go on to disparage and denigrate reason. The fideist claims that truth can be grasped by relying solely on faith. Hosea was a prophet of God. Therefore, it is expected that he obeyed God and married a prostitute as he heard from God. That would mean that he used his faith and in that case, he would be described as a fideist. If on the other hand, he did not marry a prostitute then he would be described as one who failed to apply his faith. This would lead to his disobedience to God's command. In that case, his not marrying a prostitute would be due to a certain reason either coming from the influence of his family or any other reason. In such a situation, then he might be said to have taken a rational decision.

Rationalism is a theory that has to do with reliance on reason alone as a basis of establishing religious truth. A rationalist is a person who depends on reason alone as a source of knowledge and independent of experience. Krey (2004) cites W. K. Clifford, a rationalist, who asserts that "it is always wrong anywhere any time for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." This is an assertion against fideism. It presupposes that it would have been wrong for Hosea to marry a prostitute just because God said so without examining the consequences of such a marriage. On the contrary, Eaton (2000) cites Muhammad Azam who argues that reason is not higher than Divine guidance. Going by this argument, Hosea would not have been wrong if he had been guided by his faith to marry a prostitute. Koch (1982) posits that with the conservative nature of the family system in Israel, Hosea

could not marry a prostitute because his family would not allow him. So for Koch, Hosea might have married a decent woman and later his wife might have become a prostitute.

I think Hosea, being a man of God was not without faith in the God he professes to serve. However, he was also not without reason by taking a decision for the good course of his own marriage and acting in consonance with the customs of his extended family and of the society in which he lived. To this effect, I would like to contend that Hosea did not only use faith and disregarded reason from his parents neither did he only apply reason and disregarded faith in God. He might have appealed to the use of both faith and reason which lead to critical rationalism in making a decision with regards to his marriage.

Critical rationalism is a theory propounded by Karl Popper (1963) for the purpose of subjecting scientific theories to experimental tests which could refute the theory tested though they could never prove it. Critical rationalists hold that scientific theories and any other claims to knowledge, can and should be rationally criticized, and (if they have empirical content) can and should be subjected to tests which may refute them. With the use of critical rationalism Hosea would want to combine both faith and reason to guide his decision – making process, regarding his selection of a wife. If he did, there was no way Hosea would have disregarded the family’s arrangements concerning his marriage and there was no way he would refute God’s order either.

I think he married one of the women who were affected by the cult prostitution and since the family understood that religious phenomenon, they assisted Hosea to marry according to his choice. That phenomenon was so

contagious that it affected almost every woman of marriageable age in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Therefore, when God told Hosea to marry a woman of prostitution, God was referring to such women who had been sexually polluted by the cultic practice as Miller (1987) posits. However, Miller was wrong when he said that Gomer became a prostitute after Hosea married her. By the practice of that era, she was a prostitute even before Hosea married her and the family was aware before assisting Hosea to contract that marriage because it was as if they were contented with that marriage and would only have problem when the already made prostitute becomes adulterous even after marriage. So I postulate that the prophet used critical rationalism for marrying Gomer as a prostitute by obeying God's command, and winning his family's support as well. This clearly shows that he did not marry an adulterous woman because one should marry before the one could become adulterous, and he did not complain of his wife's attitude until she became adulterous. That is why Sampaio (2004) contends that Hosea began complaining about his wife's attitude at the birth of her second and third children. At that point, Gomer has transformed from prostitution to adultery.

I can emphatically state from this development that Hosea's attitude does not give the cause to think that he was solely a fideist just because he expressed his faith in the obedience to God's command. I think he used both faith and reason here and so would be described as a critical rationalist. Since it was God who gave the command and God is seen in Israelite society as higher than humans, Hosea reasoned critically by choosing to do what God commanded. So I see from this discussion that Hosea really married Gomer as

a prostitute because as a spokesman of God, it was imperative on him to obey God.

In many biblical narratives, it is easy to distinguish the narrator from the author. Whether the narrator is easily seen or not, the work he/she does is relevant in so far as it brings meaningful interpretation of the biblical text, (Gunn and Fewell, 1993). There are two main types of narrators in Biblical Studies – the one who speaks in first person and the other one who speaks in the third person (Mensah, 2016). According to Mensah (2016), the narrator who speaks in the first person, like in the book of Nehemiah, is difficult to be distinguished from the author. As a result, he may not be reckoned as reliable in terms of telling the truth because he speaks for himself and acts as one of the characters in the story. However, the narrator who speaks in the third person as in many of the biblical stories including Hosea is always reliable for the truth since he is not part of the characters but is responsible for giving information about the appearance, actions and feelings of characters exactly as they appear in the narrative world. According to Gunn and Fewell (1993), a reliable narrator always gives readers accurate information. Similarly, Sternberg (1985) says that the Bible always tells the truth because its narrator is absolutely reliable. Therefore, in agreement to the afore - mentioned views, the narrator in this text at our disposal appears to be reliable in releasing information about the appearances, actions and feelings of characters such as Yahweh, the God of Israel and Hosea. We experience biblical characters in this text as mediated through a narrator who selects and shapes what we experience. In this story, for example, the narrator introduces his characters, and allows them to speak as evidence to the truth in the narrator's introductory



speeches. Therefore, God gave the command by himself according to the narrator, but Hosea's response to the command was the narrator's reporting speech in which the narrator adopted the style of the subject's obedience to his deity in the Hebrew text to show evidence of complementing the demand of the command. However, the question now is "is such a marriage, the marriage to a prostitute, going to prosper and maintain a family – that is, husband, wife, children and their other relatives - without any challenges?"



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHALLENGES HOSEA ENCOUNTERED IN HIS MARRIAGE

#### Introduction

This chapter is a response to the debate that I mounted in chapter three about whether Hosea married a prostitute or not. Upon following the arguments propounded by scholars, I made a decision to agree to what the text says that Hosea married a prostitute by being obedient to God who commanded him to do so and I accepted this as a true fact because the narrator of the story is an omniscient narrator and so he always tells the truth. If Hosea, a prophet of God, really married a prostitute as I agree with the narrator, then he is bound to face some challenges in that marriage. That is why I am trying to explore with the text in this chapter in order to find out what some of the challenges may be and where would they emanate from.

In the narrative of the story, Hosea's wife, Gomer, started giving birth. According to the narrator, Hosea gave birth to two sons and one daughter – the first was a son, the second was a daughter and the third was also a son. Was Hosea happy with his wife who was a prostitute and the children she begot for him? The question needs to be answered because Hosea did not live by himself; he had a family who brought him into being and nurtured him and would want him to be responsible by taking good decisions that would benefit both him and the family. Would the family accept his wife and allow him to go ahead and marry a prostitute? Would the children born in prostitution be accepted into Hosea's *beyth 'ab* (Father's house), which was the main marital residence for Israelite couples and their children? How would Hosea feel about the social status of his wife and children among his family and the

responses of the people of his society towards his message as a prophet? These questions are enough to create alarm to readers of this text under discussion the fact that Hosea might have had some challenges in his marriage to Gomer, the prostitute. Looking at these questions and the possibility that Hosea's marriage to the prostitute might affect the relationship between him and his family as well as the entire Israelite society where he served as a native and a prophet, I think that it is very prudent to begin the exploration to find out some of the challenges of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, the prostitute, from his family and the Israelite society.

### **Social Challenges**

In every society under the sun, the family consists of nuclear and extended types (Nukunya, 2003). Burgess and Locke (1961) define the family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood and adoption, constituting a single household, interacting and inter communicating with each other in their respective roles as mother and father, brother and sister, husband and wife. Similarly, Mair (1972) refers to the family as a domestic group in which parents and children live together, and in its elementary form, consist of the couple and their children. In the same manner, Colson (1975) says the family is a group, sharing a common residential space and cooperating for the purpose of daily life. All the definitions above lack the tenacity to appropriately define the family in general terms. They rather define nuclear family than family. The definition by Burgess and Locke is nearer to the task but the additions of ...mother and father, brother and sister, husband and wife, sways off the general sense of the term 'family' to the subset of the family – the nuclear family. Therefore, I prefer that the family should be referred to as a

group of people who are related to each other by blood, marriage or adoption. This definition brings to board other members of the family such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews through ties of consanguinity with fathers and mothers who are affine and who add their children except adopted children, to the bond of consanguinity. With regards to the purpose of this portion of the chapter, I try to identify the challenges that are likely to emerge from Hosea's extended family and nuclear family as a composite of his social make up.

### **Challenges in the nuclear family**

Borowski (2003), who authors the book entitled *Daily Life in Biblical Times* notes that the nuclear family was the cornerstone of every Israelite society in general, and of village society in particular. However, since the economy demanded large human resources, the nuclear family joined with others in a larger unit.

The nuclear family consists of the father, mother and their children. In Ghana the nuclear family was more prominent in the urban societies as against the extended family system which was mostly practiced among rural folks, (Nukunya, 2003). In modern Ghana, social change as a result of rural – urban drift and its consequent creation of urbanization has focused more attention of marital couple on the nuclear family system due to virilocal type of marriage residence established by couples in the urban societies of which only the couple and their children live in a house acquired by the husband (Abotchie, 1996). This has led to the gradual collapse of the extended family system due to the fact that couples in urban areas mostly afford to cater for their nuclear family – husband, wife, and children - because of high cost of living, high

utility bills and low income (Abotchie, 1996). According to Borowski (2003), Israelite couples, even after the return from exile, lived in the *beyth'ab* (the father's house) which consisted of a number of nuclear settlements by different couples or singles found in a common residential abode.

Hosea denied his children his paternity and dissociated them with his father's house (*beyth'ab*) because of the bad circumstance attached to their birth. Their mother was seen as an adulterous woman and so Hosea would not receive her unto his house. It is not explicit in the text, but implicit in the names Hosea gave to his children. The first born was named *Jezreel*, meaning planted (Hos. 1:4), the second born was called *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning Not loved (Hos. 1:6) and the third born was *Lo-Ammi*, meaning Not my people (Hos. 1:8). The names suggested that Hosea had rejected the paternity of his children, raising alarm of marital challenges in his nuclear family. Pedersen (1940) observes that children of marriages in which the wife is not received into the house but who lived in another town and remained among her own family, naturally, must come to stand in a somewhat close relationship to the mother than those born in normal marriages. In this case the children were not reckoned as members of the family of the father.

The challenges of Hosea from his nuclear family were expressed mostly in semantic connotations. According to Barr (1961), Semantics is a branch of Linguistics, and Logic, concerned with meaning. Osborn (1991) emphasizes that word studies has become the most popular aspect of Biblical interpretation. The use of symbolic language in explaining Hosea's displeasure in Gomer's immorality and his refusal to take responsibility for the paternity of his children has a link to logical semantics, which explains his

presupposition and implication. The presupposition was reiterated by Kaufman (1992) that in Hosea's time, children were considered to be a source of joy to their parents. They were to be disciplined and kept at a distance by the father. Children were also a reflection of their parents. Therefore, bad children reflected poorly on their parents and good children reflected well on their parents.

Yarbrough (1993) writes about the obligations of parents in the rearing of their children and about the responsibilities of children towards their parents. According to him, in the rabbinic tradition in Israel, having children is in itself an obligation derived from the Commandment "to be fruitful and multiply," (Gen. 1:28). A debate was between the schools of Shammai and that of Hillel that to fulfill the Commandment, a man must have two sons (school of Shammai) or a son and a daughter (School of Hellel). Yarbrough (1993) identifies three commandments in the Torah spelling out obligations parents should have towards their children. The father should redeem his son, circumcise him, and teach him the commandments. The first of these concerned only the first born and the others had to do with all male children. Yarbrough (1993) reiterates that outside of rabbinic literature, the obligation to redeem the first born and to circumcise male children received little attention, but the obligation to teach the commandments received favourable attention. In this way, Yarbrough (1993) points out that there were indications that a grandmother or a mother was to provide instruction, and that occasionally, a daughter would receive instruction as well. As a mother, the woman had her share in the authority of the husband over the children.



This bothers on the implications of Hosea's challenges with his wife. Pedersen (1940) writes that the position of the wife in the household was that of the husband's helpmeet, and first and foremost her duty was to give him children, assist him in creating a house and uphold him within his family. According to Yarbrough (1993), motherhood, in Hosea's time, was the patent of nobility of a woman. Through it, she acquired her place in life and a share in the family. Pedersen (1940) makes reference to how even the slave woman felt so exalted when she had become a mother that she could look down upon her childless mistress. Pedersen (1940) stresses that the wife was a sexual being and as such she entirely belonged to her husband. Thus, according to the legislation (Num. 30), she could not by vowing a sacred vow without the will of the husband, refuse her duties towards him; there was always a capital offense for her unfaithfulness towards her husband. Regarding her obligation to multiply her husband's family, the Old Testament knew no mercy. Wives who committed adultery were punished by death as found in Lev. 19:20; Deut. 22:22ff. The implication for Hosea's wife was not different. If Hosea confirmed her moral status to be that of an adulterous woman, she was tantamount to suffer a capital punishment of not less than stoning to death. Then also should Hosea freely reject the paternity of his children, how would he demonstrate his obedience to the Biblical law which commands persons to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:8) and "train up the child the way he should go so that when he grows up he would not depart from it (Prov. 22:6)?" This also raises a challenge.

According to the narrator, Hosea once again responded to God's command to take an action about his own nuclear family which was for a

purpose and meant for the people of Israel, showing how God had rejected them due to their waywardness from God, using Hosea's adulterous wife and rejected children as symbols of that broken relationship between God and the people of Israel. After the birth of the first born son, Hos. 1:4-9 reads: "then the LORD said to Hosea, 'Call him *Jezreel*, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at *Jezreel*, and I will put an end to the Kingdom of Israel...Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, 'Call her *Lo-Ruhamah* (which means "not pitied"), for I will no longer show mercy to Israel...After she had weaned *Lo-Ruhamah*, Gomer had another son. Then the LORD said, 'Call him *Lo-Ammi* (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people and I am not your God.'" So in his response to the commands of God, Hosea gave names to his children that demonstrated that he failed to accept the paternity of his children on the basis that his wife was an adulterous woman and the children were each born in the process of adultery.

The rejection of the children symbolically corresponded with the rejection of Israel. Even though Hosea's action was a symbolic reflection of Israel's relationship with God, scholars like Koch (1983) and Anderson (1979) say that not only did Hosea take a symbolic action that showed the rejection of Israel by God, but Hosea as well rejected his own children. Koch's explanation of the rejection of the children finds expression in the fact that Hosea encountered a real challenge from his nuclear family due to the social status of his wife and children leading to the instability of the marriage and the breakdown of the nuclear family in the sense that he charged his wife of adultery and threatened her with a divorce saying "...she is not my wife, and I

am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise, I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born” (Hos. 2:2-3a, NIV, cf. Hos. 2:4-5a, MT). He also transferred his anger to the children declaring that he would not love the children because they were children of adultery conceived during the unfaithfulness of their mother in disgrace (Hos. 2:4-5, NIV, cf. Hos. 2:6-7, MT).

### **Challenges in the extended family**

Even though each settlement in a *beyth 'ab* (father's house) had its own compound, the house could be described as an extended family house because it consisted of people who related to one another in extended family way except as a father, mother or a child. The father's father who was the grandfather of the children, as well as the father's brothers also serving as the children's uncles might be there. The head of the family was usually the head of the house. Where would Hosea and his family live? Would they also be accepted by the extended family to live in the *beyth 'ab* - the father's house like Hosea did?

According to Borowski (2003), the extended family sometimes included up to three generations. It included the father, grandfather, mother, grandmother, their unmarried daughters, their sons (married and unmarried), their sons' wives and children as well as their great grandfather, great grandmother and their great grandchildren. All of this lived in one four-room house known as father's house *beyth 'ab* or in a complex place made of several attached houses. Borowski (2003) explains further that in addition to the consanguine and affine, the compound of an Israelite extended family

housed several unrelated people who were considered part of the extended family, including slaves, hired hands and others as in (Judg. 17:18). One *beyth 'ab* or more can make the population of a village which was a social unit referred to as *mishpaha* (the clan). A person was identified by his father's lineage, going back as far as five generations as King Saul's lineage was traced in 1Sam. 9:1. Hosea's children born to him by his wife (Gomer) were to be identified by Hosea's lineage, and they, together with their mother, should live in their *beyth 'ab* (father's house) which referred to Hosea's family house according to Israelite tradition. The unexpected incidence that happened was that Hosea's challenges with his wife and children influenced the members of his extended family, as a result of which they were not accepted to reside in the *beyth 'ab* (Father's house) (Koch, 1982). *Lo-Ruhamah* which means "not loved" and *Lo-Ammi* which means "not my people" (Hos. 1:6 & 8, NIV) are names which give alarming indication that Hosea's children were not considered part of his extended family or *beyth 'ab* (father's house) and they were not in any way loved by that family or expected to be one of them because of the status of their mother which affected them - she conceived them in adultery (Hos. 2:4, NIV, cf. Hos. 2:6, MT). The implication was that Hosea should choose one out of his extended family and his children. He could choose his extended family and deny his own children or he could choose his children and break up with his extended family due to how the family looked at the social status of the children and their mother. This could have been a very serious challenge coming from the extended family because Hosea could have been in dilemma as to which entity to choose and which one to let go. However, the names given to the children from the text, is a

reflection that Hosea chose his extended family on the expense of his children born to him by the prostitute and the only explanation he could give as a prophet was that he did what he did because God commanded him to do so to show a lesson to the people of the society in which he lived that God was not pleased with their sinful ways. But whatever be the case his relationship with his own extended family and his children were at stake.

### **Religio-Cultural Challenges**

These are challenges from the religio-cultural practices of the Israelite society, such as the defloration rite and the harvest prostitution that posed challenges to Hosea's marital life.

#### **Challenges from the rite of defloration**

The reality on the ground was revealed by the meaning of *Jezreel* – “to plant,” indicating that Hosea had failed to plant his son *Jezreel* in his (Hosea's) family *beyth'ab*. Consequently, he was going to plant vengeance on those who perpetrated evil on his wife, making her become a prostitute. Koch (1982) explains that after the birth of his first born, Hosea discovered that his wife Gomer was a partaker in the defloration rite (*tus primate noctis*) practiced by the cults in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the rite of which young girls of marriageable age were taken to the cult for the resident priest to have sexual intercourse with in the pretext of opening their wombs. By that rite the virginity of many young girls religiously got broken. According to Koch (1982), Hosea disliked that rite and so he rose to the occasion to condemn it as a prophet. So when he noticed that the rite has affected his wife's moral status, to the extent of making her an adulterous woman even after marriage, he decided on not only condemning the rite but planting

vengeance against the powers that be in Israel. This reflected in the name of the child – *Jezreel* - meaning to plant. His response to these challenges made him alien to his own wife and children, lost his identity with his extended family who would not accept him with his wife and children, and had face to face confrontation against the priests and the political leaders of the nation (Hos. 4:6-7 ; 6:9).

### **Challenges from the harvest prostitution**

Sampaio (2004) is of a different opinion. For him Gomer's immorality was as a result of the harvest prostitution, He lamented that during the harvest, young women of marrying age and brides were initiated into Canaanite fertility rite by the priests and they indulged themselves in prostitution and adultery as in Hos. 4:14. I am in support of both Sampaio's and Koch's opinion because it is evident in Hosea chapter 4 that the narrator addressed the actual issues of harvest prostitution and shrine prostitution (what Koch referred to as defloration of girls) as a canker in Israel. Sampaio (2004) submits that Gomer was involved in the festivities at the harvest as daughter of Diblaim and wife of Hosea and through that she prostituted herself, making herself an adulterous woman. It was by virtue of this reason that Hosea called Lo-Ruhamah, "not loved" because her mother had lost her *hezeth* (love), and yet the narrator communicated this in a symbolic style as part of the LORD's message through Hosea to the people of Israel. The message brought to bear the fact that the LORD would not love the people of Israel and would not also forgive them. The symbolic language continued during the birth of Lo-Ammi. According to the narrator, the LORD told the Israelites that they were not his people and that he was not their God. However, the real understanding of this



symbol is that Hosea was at that point of his marital life desperate about the adultery of Gomer, so he rejected the last born son too as he had done with the rest of his children and would not take responsibility as their father.

The reality of Hosea's marital life situation, concerning his wife and children can be derived from semantic comparison of the activities of characters (Cruse, 2000). In this regard, Alter (1981) emphasizes that historical fictions are composite of narrative criticism. This is true because the former provides a means for doing semantic comparison between historical antecedence and on-going developmental character presuppositions and imprecations. The historical antecedence in this story is the prevailing harvest prostitution and the defloration of girls by the priests of Israel. These were participated in by brides and women of marriageable age. It affected the moral status of Hosea's wife, leading to her adulterous life even after her marriage. It also caused her children's exclusion from Hosea's father's house (*beyth ab*). The harvest prostitution and the defloration of girls have been used in this thesis as historical antecedence because according to Sampaio (2004), it was prevailing in Israel before all the characters, including Hosea's wife and children as mentioned by the narrator in the Book of Hosea Chapter 4, were born into it. The harvest prostitution was historical antecedence also because Hosea's wife got herself involved in it before marrying Hosea and as a result of her addiction in sexual activities, she became transformed into adultery after her marriage. Comparatively, this historical antecedence vis-à-vis Hosea's marital experience with his wife and children ran parallel with the metaphorical or symbolical event of Hosea's prophetic preaching about the lack of love by the people of Israel for the LORD their God because in

promoting and participating in the Harvest Prostitution, they rather tend to honour the god of Canaan, Baal, other than the God of Israel. In parallel with the Historical antecedence of harvest Prostitution, the land and the people of Israel were not at any means part of the narrator's symbolic expression and metaphorical approach. This was because the rejection of the people and the curse or punishment of the land to destruction, were all the result of mundane practices of the historical antecedence which, according to Sampaio (2004), corrupted not only Hosea's wife, but a lot more brides and women of marriageable age at the Harvest fields. The prostitution of women at harvest time presupposes that there were also men who were trained to entertain the audience at harvest grounds. These men might have been fixed by the priests at vantage spots for the mating with the women in the harvest grounds to signify expansion in the production of harvest crops.

### **Social-Psychological Challenges**

What I want to find out here as a researcher is how Hosea is socially and psychologically affected by the numerous challenges that immersed in his marital life? His first shock would come from his extended family. That was when he realized that his own family had refused to accept his children and had denied them residential status into the *beyth'ab* (Father's house) (Koch, 1982). That challenge would have to do with the relationship between Hosea and his extended family and also between him and his wife and children. Regarding this challenge with Hosea's extended family, the narrative is silent. There was nowhere in the narrative Hosea was seen having a confrontation with his extended family. However, ideas are formed from his confrontation with his own nuclear family when in Hos. 2:2, NIV (cf. Hos. 2:4, MT), he is

heard saying about his wife "...she is not my wife, and I am not her husband," and to her children "I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery." Here, it can be deduced that the conservative nature of Hosea's levitical family would not have it easy accepting such a bundle of adulterous family as their own (Koch, 1982). How would this conservative family treat Hosea for bringing such a shame to the family? I can sense ostracizing here against Hosea which could result in a barrier between Hosea and his extended family.

In another development, Sampaio (2004) has already pointed out in Chapter One that the issue of prostitution and the paternal status of Hosea's children could affect the relationship between him and the people in his society which could lead to Hosea's stigmatization and the people's lukewarm attitude towards Hosea's message. Hosea as a prophet of God should be known to be a man who leads a holy and decent life. On the contrary, the indecent and adulterous nature of his wife and children could become a public ridicule even though Hosea might have explained the metaphoric implication about that, and could affect the relationship between him and the people of his community – they could despise him and reject his message.

Looking at the psychological effect of Hosea's marital challenges, Koch (1982) reiterated that the pressure of those problems could lead to further psychological crisis. Psychological problems which originated from social stigma and family disorder could lead to mental agony, depression and traumatic situations. According to Asiedu (2017), victims who seem to lack adequate coping skills to deal with their challenges are often diagnosed with psychological crisis. Asiedu explained that such victims are prone to frequent

manifestations of anxiety, tension and shock. To this effect, Koch (1982, p. 78) highlighted one of the situations in which “Hosea’s audience had seen him crying out with despair,” (Hosea 9:7). This signified that the tension was too much for him, considering the fact that he needed to carry his message across to the people despite any family problem. Therefore, how could Hosea manage all of these marital problems in order to free himself from the social, religious and psychological problems and at the same time save his marriage? The next chapter will tell.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOW HOSEA MANAGED HIS MARITAL CHALLENGES

#### Introduction

The question this chapter seeks to answer is, how did Hosea manage the challenges in his marital life? When people are faced with difficult situations, they adopt reliable ways of overcoming them. Carlson et al (2008) notes that to manage one's problem, one needs a degree of skills. In the case of Hosea, his challenges had to do with his adulterous wife, his children who were born in adultery, and his status in the community in which he lived. To overcome these challenges, Hosea needed some skills and directions. Did he have them? If he did, how did he employ them? These are the issues this chapter strives to find out.

#### The Family Tribunal

When Hosea accused his wife of adultery, rejected the paternity of his children and refused to stay with them in his father's house, tension in the marriage became high. In that case, where would Gomer, the wife of Hosea, take the children to? Since she was given in marriage by her father, she could take her three children to reside in her own father's house. Once Gomer, a prostitute and adulterous woman, had left her husband's house, then one can predict that she might go back to continue her adulterous life. The thought of this promiscuous wife did not go down well with Hosea. Thus, the first step Hosea took to resolve these marital challenges was that, he referred the matter to the family tribunal where he charged his wife of adultery and threatened her with a divorce saying "...she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between

her breasts. Otherwise, I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born” (Hos. 2:2-3a, NIV).

This tribunal could just necessarily be in the mind of Hosea, judging the case all by himself, or he might have informed Gomer’s family about her attitude and warned them of the consequences she could suffer, or better still, he might have referred the case to both families of the couples and family tribunal might have been constituted between the two families (Koch, 1982). In the trial, Gomer was found guilty. Hence, Hosea decided to withdraw his responsibility over her saying that “I will leave her to die of thirst, as in a dry and barren wilderness” (Hos, 2:3b NLT). Such approach, as exhibited by Hosea, could be likened to what Sherwood (1996) describes as one – directional approach to conflict resolution. Sherwood is an educationist and a social scientist who wrote about how to resolve conflicts with two-directional approach and not one directional. For her, both the complainant and the accuser work together to bring lasting solution to their problem in a two-directional approach but one – directional approach often leads to polarization instead of bringing the contending parties together. It stands to reason that when Hosea became very angry with Gomer and judgmental against her to such an extent that he started withdrawing his responsibilities from Gomer, he was using the one-directional approach. . Up to this time Hosea was not sure if the children were his or had been fathered by other men. Borowski (2004) reiterates that even if the father acknowledges that the children are his, he can justifiably reject them because of the behaviour of the mother. So in Hosea’s case, he judged Gomer to be guilty of adultery and withdrew his responsibilities over her. Gomer, in response, repelled from Hosea instead of



admitting her fault and coming closer to him for the renewal of their relationship. In applying Sherwood's (1996) theory of conflict resolution to Hosea's situation, one gets to understand that Hosea needed a two – directional approach to enable him reason with Gomer and to help her develop the willingness to abandon adultery and stay at her husband's house. However, Hosea's approach put his wife in an entrenched position. For Hosea heard her say that "I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink" (Hos. 2:5b NIV).

### **Entrenched Positions**

My interest here is to find out whether or not the positions taken by both Hosea and his wife can be described as entrenched positions and whether or not such positions are favourable or beneficial to couples who are trying to patch up their marital challenges. In Hos. 2:5, Hosea's wife, Gomer, is described by her husband as one who cannot be persuaded and so no matter what instrument of threat Hosea uses to prevent her from going farther from her marital home, she still goes wayward and Hosea is presented as one who has exhausted all his plans to call her to her senses. Therefore, in Hos. 2:6, Hosea issues series of punishment. He says "therefore, I will block her path with thorn bushes; I will wall her in, so that she cannot find her way" (NIV).

Other punishments follow from verse 9 to 13 which deny her of economic and social pleasure in so much that she will, because of severe hunger which she will suffer, come to the realisation that her wayward lovers have nothing to help her neither do they have economic and legal power to win her from him. So, Hosea will strip her naked and shame her before her wayward lovers until she realises that all what she can boast of are supplied by

Hosea, her legal husband. According to Yee (1987), the more Hosea condemned his wife and increased the punitive measures for her, the more she became distanced and polarized from the embracing arms of Hosea. Therefore, Sherwood's (1996) advice has a relationship here. He advises that punitive measures should not be stretched too much, else the one being punished would rather become more stubborn and incorrigible than submit themselves to be corrected.

An examination of Hosea's attitude reveals that all his actions toward his wife suggested that he took an entrenched position, because of which he did not sound convincing enough to his wife. One can deduce from Hosea's attitude and actions that, he loved his wife and even though he was in an entrenched position, he was looking forward to his wife to have a change of mind and to come back to him. According to Baah-Yanney (2014), the feeling that can best work for conflicting parties to be able to patch up their differences is Accommodation. He explained that in accommodation, an individual or party can say to the other, "you are right," "I agree," "let's forget about it," just to ignore his own needs and attend to the need of the other. This was not so with Hosea, instead, in Hos. 2:7, he continued to give severe punishments to his wife so that "she will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first...'" (NIV).

It is clear that all that Hosea was doing was to try and bring his wife back into his bosom. However, he did not have a good method to attract his wife's attention to come back to him. For how can one convince a troubled wife with a punishment, and how can one attract a runaway wife to come back

with such harsh sanctions? Instead of the win-win situation proposed by Baah-Yanney (2014) for resolving conflicts, Hosea was applying win-lose situation which, according to Baah-Yanney (2014), is repulsive, and also to Sherwood (1996), is one directional and subject to condemnation instead of acceptance and embracing. Therefore, the more Hosea punishes his wife, the more she runs away to his other lovers. Yet Hosea continues to use punishment as his main tool to reform his wife. He says “I will punish her for the days she... went after her lovers, but me she forgot” (Hos. 2:13, NIV).

In verse 8, the narrator allowed Hosea to speak symbolically when he mentioned Baal, who Hosea complained that Gomer, instead of wasting her belongings to please Hosea, who actually supplied them, had used them to please Baal. Baal represented an object of worship for the Canaanites whose culture had some influence over the Israelites, but Gomer, being an Israelite, was expected to worship Yahweh, who was the God of the Israelites (Anderson, 1979). Hosea, being the spokesman of God, abhorred anyone who gave any kind of worship to Baal. Hence, in Hos. 4:12 he says “my people consult a wooden idol, and a diviner’s rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God.”

The mentioning of Baal is symbolic because it does not mean an idol of worship per se but it is a reference to the other lovers of Gomer. Just as Baal receives the sacrificial materials meant for God, so Gomer’s other lovers received the attention of Gomer meant for Hosea (Anderson, 1979). Therefore, in the words of Hosea “I will stop all her celebrations... (Hos. 2:11, NIV). These celebrations are organized by the partakers in the worship of Baal, which usually took place at the grain field during the harvest season when

trained prostituted males performed sexual intercourse with their female counterparts with the intention of multiplying harvest produce (Sampaio, 2004). The usage is symbolic because it is in reference to the pleasantries Gomer had with her other lovers who are represented by Baal. By means of punishment, Hosea will destroy all the situations in Gomer's life that will create a course for celebration with her other lovers which, according to Sampaio (2004), normally occurred under the light of the new moon. Similarly, Koch (1982) points out that the purpose of Hosea for destroying the happiness of Gomer is to force her to come back. However, Gomer did not come back. If Hosea loved his wife and wanted her to come back to him, and if the method of punishment used for reconciliation could not unite them again, then what kind of method should Hosea adopt in order to get his loving wife back?

### **Tempering Justice with Mercy**

In Hos. 2:14, Hosea speaks of a new approach to adopt in dealing with his wife: tempering justice with mercy. He thought this approach would better win his wife back than the previous one of punishment which rather turned to be repulsive, driving her away. In this verse, Hosea said "therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her – ESB." "I will punish her..." in verse 13 is in opposition to "... I will allure her..." in verse 14, signifying a change of mind and direction. He now changes from what Sherwood (1996) describes regarding conflict resolution as one-directional to two-directional, which is result oriented.

The one-directional is selfish, self-centred and egocentric because it leads to win-lose situations. In such situations, one party will consider itself

right and the other party wrong. Then the relationship turns to blame games until both parties withdraw from each other (Baah-Yanney, 2014).

The case of Hosea and his wife during their unforgiving situations was not different. Formerly, Hosea thought he was right and Gomer was wrong. So he decided to punish her for her waywardness in order to bring her back to his embracing hands, but to no avail. He considered himself a winner of the issue between them and Gomer, a loser. So Hosea could not win her back, but now he would allure her in order to win her back. Hosea might have known better. Therefore, after stretching his punitive measures against Gomer to the extent that there was nothing more to apply to win Gomer back, he resorted to a method similar to Sherwood's two-directional approach.

In the Two-directional approach according to Sherwood (1996), the one solving the problem foresees all the parties involved as the sources of the problem and co-providers of its solution. Similarly, Baah-Yanney (2014) explains that there is no win-lose between persons resolving their conflict, but win-win, which involves collaboration and cooperation between the parties engaged in conflict. In this way, the complainant tries to understand the defendant, and together, the two resolve their differences in a mutual and completely satisfying way (Baah-Yanney, 2014). Similarly, in resolving the conflict between him and his wife, Hosea has this to say "I will allure her, bring her to the wilderness, speak comfortably unto her..." (Hos 2:14, NIV). By saying "I will allure her," it seems that Hosea wanted to meet Gomer face to face, appeal to her with love and glamorous words, words that had pulling effect like a magnetic charm, to draw her towards his unfading love. Then Hosea wanted to bring Gomer to the wilderness.

The ‘wilderness’ literally means wasteland, desert, and rough country. Such a place would actually prevent many people from developing interest and desire to visit. Therefore, it can be posited that Hosea aimed to send Gomer to the wilderness because he thought the wilderness would offer a solitary environment for just the two of them so that they would be able to concentrate on their words and feelings. In this way, Hosea would be able to win her with his sweet, attractive and soothing words. Therefore, he says “I will speak comfortably unto her,” meaning that his words at the lonely place would be able to put Gomer at ease and cause her to be contented and happy.

This verse brings to mind that Hosea was no more calling for justice, though the wife was indeed guilty of adultery and needed to face the penalty, if justice was to be applied. He had learnt that it was because of the application of justice that he had suffered separation from his wife. Also having a second thought that his unfathomable love for his wife could not wait any longer to see her falling far apart from him, he saw the need to temper justice with mercy. This, he thought, would be the best way to persuade his stubborn wife, so that he would demonstrate his love towards his wife for the renewal of the relationship between husband and wife. Sampaio (2004) thinks that Hosea was able to manage the challenges in his marriage and re-establish family solidarity through his use of the instrument of love.

I embrace Sampaio’s idea because Hos. 2:15, NIV, reads as follows “There, I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.” This is the time for making amends. The valley of Achor was a long, wild pass up through the Hills notable for its constant



trouble for those who found themselves there. Hosea made mention of it in one of his usual metaphoric pronouncements, comparing the troubles emerging in his marriage with that which is likely to be experienced at Achor. Then he was optimistic that even if his marriage had encountered severe troubles to that extent, the encounter between him and his wife in that lonely place will stand the test of time by doing away with their troubles and opening a door of hope for their reconciliation.

Hosea thought that the new way of dealing with the marital situation between him and his wife was the lonely couple's arbitration, designed in love rather than blame games. This, he thought, had win-win verdict and could bring complete satisfaction to both himself and his wife, Gomer. Hence, he gave back the vineyard he seized from Gomer with gladness and she collected it with singing as she openly expressed her positive response towards the new love Hosea offered her. Now from this time onwards, the two agreed to accept each other and came to understanding to stay together again as husband and wife. So in Hos. 2:16, Hosea prompted his wife to call him "my husband" and no longer call him "my master," since the woman had also agreed to do away with all the other men who misled her into adultery.

Sampaio (2004), in his comment on Hos. 2:16, writes that the new relationship between Hosea and Gomer occurred when he was no longer called "my *Baal*" (my master) but rather, "my husband" showing that a new matrimonial relationship had been established which, unlike their initial marriage rite, did not depend on customary exchange of gifts, but on a covenant agreement between a woman and his husband. The word translated 'master' is *Baal*, which, other translators think, gives Hosea and Gomer's

relationship a symbolic colour to signify the relationship between God and Israel, of which God was waiting to claim Israel as solely his own and the need for Israel to respond to God's love by denouncing all engagement with Baal and leaping into the loving hands of God. Master, translated from Baal in the Hebrew Bible, connoting the distance and formality between master and servant, is hereby broken by sincere love into a new bond that can only be shared by husband and wife. What happened to Hosea and his wife after the wilderness arbitration and reconciliation was the celebration of love which became give and take affair. This kind of love offered a bond which did not permit Hosea to give to Gomer as a master gives to his servant and takes back from the servant whenever he wishes but as a husband gives to his wife in an unconditional way.

At this point, Hosea managed to accommodate his wife by paying a closed attention to the needs of his wife, ignoring his own needs in the midst of love and mercy in order to achieve a new bond of solidarity. Baah-Yanney explains that in accommodation, an individual essentially communicates with the other party, accepts that she is right and forgets about her wrong. Therefore, right from the place described as wilderness, Hosea came with Gomer to her Father's house, where his children were residing, for a family reunion. At this time, Hosea could admit the paternity of his children and could express his affection for his children saying "say of your brothers, "My people," and of your sisters, "My loved one" (Hos. 2:1, NIV; 2:3, MT).

There is no perfect order in the sequence of events as the selected text for discussion (Hos. Chapters 1:1-3:5) unfolds. Perhaps this is attributed to the writing style of the author. I think Hosea's pronouncement in Hos. 2:1 "say of

your brothers, “My people,” and of your sisters, “My loved one” should be the end verse of Hosea chapter 2 and not the first verse. However, it is rather there in the first verse of chapter 2 as the introduction to the episode of reconciliation and redemption in chapters 2 and 3 which dictate the climax of Hosea and Gomer’s marriage story. Like most narrative stories which are good for dramatization, and in which a middle or concluding episode can be acted as the introduction to the drama, so was the story of Hosea written. The narrator opened the curtain to the episode of reconciliation as a form of introduction which was aimed at whetting the appetite of audience and readers to wish for more. Then, right after it, the normal development of the story was unfolded, leading to Hosea’s charges against his wife which called for her punishment, before Hosea’s self - orientation and desire for reconciliation that precipitated the remarrying of the come-back wife. Otherwise, how could Hosea begin a reconciliation message in verse 1 of chapter 2 (NIV; 2:3, MT) and in the next verse the same wife who enjoyed reconciliation is rejected as a wife, as Hosea called on his children to rebuke her because she was not his wife and he was not her husband. Likewise, in verse 4, (NIV, 2:6, MT) the same children who were reconciled were rejected because they were the children of adultery. Then, reconciliation began again from 2:14, NIV; 2:16, MT, to the end of chapter 2 and continued from Chapter 3 where Hosea remarried his wife. This does not follow any sequential order and as such cannot represent the actual event of Hosea’s marital life, except if it is only to be described as a style of writing, usually suitable for dramatization. This literary style of writing is popularly known as ‘in medias res.’ It is used by

beginning a story in the midst of the action at some crucial point when a good deal has already happened.

### **Renewal of Marriage Vows**

Hos. 2:23, NIV; 2:25, MT says, “I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called “Not my love one” I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’ and they will say, ‘You are my God’” (NIV). The reconciliation in the wilderness which might have precipitated in Hosea visiting Gomer’s *beith ’ab* (father’s house), where their children were residing with her, might have yielded a good result. “I will plant her for myself...” is referring to Hosea’s first born (a son) whose name in Hebrew is *Jezreel* which etymologically comes from *jezre* (seed of) and *el* (God). The name literally means ‘the seed of God’ In Hos. 1:4, the name signifies God’s seed of vengeance planted against the house of Jehu which represented the powers that be in Israel in the time of Hosea, but in Hos. 2:23, NIV; 2:25, MT, the same name (*Jezreel*) signifies God’s seed of reconciliation planted in the house of *Diblaim* where Hosea’s children resided during their challenges of their paternal status. This seed of reconciliation is to be uprooted from the house of *Diblaim* and replanted in Hosea’s *beith ’ab* (father’s house). Likewise, “...I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my love one...’” is also referring to Hosea’s second born (a daughter) who is called *Lo-Ruhamah* in Hebrew, which means “Not loved” (cf. Hos1:6). After the reconciliation, the children who once were not loved by their father, were loved by the same father. Then “...I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people...’” is pointing to *Lo-Ammi*, the third born of Hosea (a son) whose

name in Hebrew means, ‘Not my people’ (cf. Hos. 1:9). The children who once were not loved, were this time loved by their father.

Looking at the affirmative way Hosea spoke to them, it is easy to infer that Hosea has accepted the responsibility of fathering the children and was ready to take them to his own *beith 'ab* (father’s house) and nurture them by himself as a father (“I will plant...for myself,” 2:23, NIV; 2:5, MT). He thus promised the children of his love by way of comforting them for the mercy and love they had lost in the past and made them benefit from the inheritance of his external family (“...You are my people...,” 2:23, NIV; 2:25, MT). The children he had earlier rejected, he now called them his own. Thus he announced with joy, ‘say of your brothers, “My people,” and of your sisters, “My loved one” (Hos. 2:1) and proceeded to remarry their mother.

Hos. 3:1 reads, ‘The LORD said to me, “Go, love your wife again, though he is loved by another man and is an adulteress”’ (MT). Here, the prophet did not only speak to his nuclear family, but also to the people of Israel in a symbolic term (Miller, 1987). He fashioned his prophetic message to portray that the reconciliation between him and his nuclear family was also a renewal of the covenant between God and the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Miller, 1987). Just as Hosea’s wife, Gomer, began as a prostitute and grew into an adulterous woman and begot children of adultery, so did the nation of Israel, being the wife of God according to the covenant between them, polluted herself with the influence of the Canaanite Worship of Baal (Sampaio, 2004). That influence, masterminded by the nation’s leaders especially, the priest, who led many men and women of Israel into the practice of cult prostitution which reached its peak at the Harvest time and which

precipitated in the children of Israel, losing their love for God and turning to the worship of the Baal. Sampaio (2004) points out that Hosea's critique of this practice by the nation of Israel indulging in Baal Worship was that the nation was practising adultery and as a result, the nation and her children, being the people of Israel, had been rejected by God. However, in Hos. 2:23, NIV; 2:25, MT, the prophet portrayed God's unfathomable love still lingering to accept Israel as the people of God even in their apostate situation. Hence, according to the story, the LORD says, "...Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites. Though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cake."

Banyah (2014) uses the Hebrew word *dabaq* (to cleave), as found in Deut. 10:20, "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve him and cleave to Him" to show how God expected the people of Israel to be committed to the covenant between God and Israel (cf. Deut. 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). According to Banyah (2014, p.120), *dabaq* "suggests the idea of being permanently glued or joined together" and is the word used to describe Ruth's refusal to leave her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her determination to cleave to her unconditionally. Hosea, being a man of God and a Prophet whose duty it was to speak for God regarding this issue of commitment, knew how to demonstrate commitment in his own marital relationship as an example for the people of Israel to follow in their covenant relationship with God, hence his decision to buy his wife back and remarry her in order to foster the continuity of their marital relationship, despite Gomer's unfaithfulness, just as God requires the covenant between Him and Israel to continue, despite Israel's unfaithful love.



Here, I do not want to describe the prostitution of Gomer as imagery, because as described by the narrator in Hos. 2:14, NIV; 2:16, MT, she was practising adultery as a result of a mass prostitution which was on-going in her time in the cult of Israel (Sampaio, 2004). To fit into a description of an adulterous imagery, she should not be an adulterous woman per say in the narrative, but should reflect a symbol of an adulterous woman representing the nation of Israel. However, this was not the case, because the narrator describes her as a person who was rather affected by the adulterous practice in her fatherland and as Sampaio (2004) puts it, herself and her children suffered rejection by her husband for some time, before by virtue of her husband's unflinching love for her, she and her children got reunited to her husband and marriage vows were set to be renewed.

As Robison (2012) puts it, a woman could be acquired in marriage by money or its equivalent, by deed and by intercourse. Hosea needed to satisfy the most prominent one in his 8<sup>th</sup> century era among the three ways that had adaptably evolved with time in the history of Israel. . So he substituted money with its equivalent. In Hos. 3:2, therefore, Hosea tells his audience “So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine.” Why should Hosea buy his own wife whereas he had earlier on married her and paid her bride price? I think that the answer is inherent in the narrator's choice of words and phrases in the unfolding story.

I can only start answering this question by firstly, making an assumption based on the text as revealed by the narrator, that because Gomer was a wayward woman who broke loose out of wedlock, left the home and sold herself into adultery (Hos. 2:5, “...for she said, I will go after my lovers,

that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink” - KJV), she might have fallen into the hands of another lover who might have accepted to stay with her and be responsible for her upkeep.

Secondly, we can take a clue from the period of entrenched positions and postulate that in those periods, the other lover might have mistaken the temporary separation between Hosea and his wife due to their entrenched positions as a divorce between them, or he might have thought that Gomer was completely not married and thus, he was taking a husband’s responsibility over her.

Thirdly, it is possible to think that because Hosea collected everything he had given to Gomer, including food, clothing, shelter and economic oriented or profit oriented assets (Hos. 2:9, “Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness” - KJV), the woman was in dire need of them. So she might have sold herself into slavery to a slave owner and the owner or the man involved had decided to turn her into a sex commodity to compensate the amount and property that Gomer had benefited from him. Hence, the reason for Hosea to pay the price of redemption to be able to get back his wife now that the two had agreed to stay together again, renew their marriage and make it work.

Again, why the fifteen pieces of silver, five bushels of barley and the measure of wine as the ransom price? Exodus 21:32 states the redemption price of a slave to be thirty pieces of silver and so much barley. Miller (1987) postulates that fifteen pieces of silver and very little barley paid by Hosea as Gomer’s ransom was just half of the traditional arrangement. This was why I

said earlier that Hosea was a farmer of barleys who desired to pay the ransom of his wife with his own farm produce, but did not have enough to pay the full price. From the narrative, it could be understood that he was not rich enough to be able to afford the full price.

On the contrary, Miller (1987) posits that the one to be redeemed, but not the redeemer, might be the reason for paying just half and not the full price. According to Miller (1987), Gomer, being an adulterous woman who had been moving about from man to man, plying her adultery in order to make ends meet because Hosea had stripped her of all that she could boast of and could call her own, might have as a result, become wretched and very poor and for that matter she might not be worth the sort of that full price for her redemption. In any case, Hosea paid the price to take back his wife, and so looking at Hosea's love for Gomer that led to the wilderness reconciliation (Hos. 2:14, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her" - KJV), through the reunion and acceptance of his children to the redemption of his wife, I come to observe that it would not be appropriate to think that Hosea would consider Gomer as an unworthy slave who did not merit a full price for her ransom. Therefore, I think Hosea's love for Gomer was enough to make Gomer worthy in his eyes, even though in the eyes of some other men, she might look unworthy. It is therefore, very appropriate to assume that Gomer was worthy to Hosea and he would have loved to pay any price to redeem her if and only if he could afford.

Upon such analysis, I think Hosea paid half of the price required to redeem his wife because as a priest who was not functioning at the cult of Yahweh and a prophet who was not supported economically by the cult, as

well as a farmer with a divided attention due to his marital challenges, Hosea might have been facing economic constraints and also, he must have been earning only a little from his farming activities. For this reason, it would have been impossible for him to be able to pay the full price for the redemption of his wife. That was why he redeemed her with fifteen pieces of silver and five barley, instead of thirty pieces of silver and much more barley. Once Hosea had redeemed his wife, renewal of marriage vows had to follow, so that they could resettle down as husband and wife. As part of the marriage vows Hosea said to his wife, "...you are to live with me for many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you" (Hos. 3:3 - NIV).

According to Miller (1987), Hosea's redemption of his wife and their consequent remarriage, is part of Hosea's metaphorical representation of his own marital experience, in the sense that the redemption which is a historical narrative also represents the restoration of the Davidic dynasty which the prophet predicted in Hos. 3:5, "Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their King, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days" (RSV).

Miller (1987) points out that just as Gomer's waywardness separated her from her husband, leading to the loss of certain basic and socio-economic gains, so will the unfaithfulness of Ephraim, representing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, be punished and be made to lose their ruling king, prince and certain cultic materials, Hos. 3:4, "For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim" (RSV). Then latter, Ephraim will be restored again just as Hosea

redeemed Gomer, and this will also bring about the unity of Ephraim and Judah as a united nation of Israel, under one king (Miller, 1987).

However, according to Miller (1987), this feature of restoration in Hosea's prophetic discourse, might not have come from the prophet himself, as it could sound strangely that he, being a resident of Ephraim, would develop such future hopes of Davidic dynasty which favoured Judah and discredited Ephraim. Therefore, for Miller (1987), this turning point in Hosea's prophetic discourse might have been attributed to the work of certain Judean readers who were also influential in the additions of certain oracles of hope in the Book of Amos (cf. Amos 9:11-15).

It is therefore clear that the symbolic features in the Book of Hosea are very important, but so far as this study is concerned, they only add up to the beauty of the prophetic pronouncements and to what extent those pronouncements could reach, but the main concern here, is the historical narrative which reveals the marital life of prophet Hosea and how he managed to solve his marital challenges.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IMPLICATIONS OF HOSEA'S MARITAL LIFE FOR GHANAIAN CLERGY

#### Introduction

As I stated in the section of the research methodology, I am conducting this research as a Ghanaian reader, even though I am dealing with data that belong to the Ancient Israel and her marriage and cultural institutions in the days of Hosea. After analysing the data at my disposal in the form of the text or the pericope, I now set off on a journey to draw implications from Hosea's marital life for the Ghanaian clergy. By clergy, I mean all who are into pastoral ministry, believed to have been called by God. Some have titles such as Bishops, Apostles, Pastors, Reverend and Prophets. In this research, titles are not important; what matters here the most is the call, and the leadership orientation of that person who serves as the spokesman of God to the people of God.

#### The Concept of Marriage in Ghana

Nukunya, a Ghanaian sociologist and one-time senior lecturer at the University of Ghana, defines marriage as any union in which the couple has gone through all the procedures recognized in the society for such a purpose (Nukunya, 1992). Nutsuako (1977) contributes to the definition of marriage by asserting that the performance of the marriage rite truly signifies that a woman is legally married to a husband. In Ghanaian societies, marriage is treated with much importance that every man and woman who reaches adulthood is expected to marry and bear children (Gyekye, 1998). Gyekye (1998) continues by saying that marriage and family life as well as child bearing are considered



as the most important institutions to ensure the continuity of any society. Similarly, Ott (1974) argues that the primary purpose of marriage is the generation and upbringing of children, the mutual help that couples offer to each other and the morally regulated satisfaction of the sexual urge. Therefore, Mbiti (1999) asserts that in African societies [just as in Ghana], marriage is seen as a duty, a religious obligation and a requirement from the corporate society in which everyone must partake.

Hence, in traditional and contemporary Ghanaian society, a man or a woman who is married is highly respected. In the same way, a man or a woman who has reached the age of marriage and refuses to marry is regarded as wicked, weakling, irresponsible, witch or wizard, for failing to give birth to perpetuate society and for ignoring his duties as an ideal man or woman (Magesa, 1998). Magesa (1998) continues that this singular obligation to marry and to give birth to children is instilled in all members of the society from childhood onwards and nobody is allowed to shirk his/her responsibility.

Ntreh (2010) touches on preparation in marriage by saying that marriage is a life-long journey and therefore, those who want to embark on this journey, must prepare very well before taking that journey. Marriage preparation includes a broad and thorough process of formation for marriage life which must be considered in its totality. Marriage preparation represents an audios and urgent need in the contemporary society (Silliman and Schumm, 1999). According to Silliman and Schumm (1999), marriage preparation may include temperament analysis of the proposed man and woman, compatibility test, traits and attitude examinations, commitment to the marriage and good parenting style. They argue that one of the main essences of marriage

preparation is for the proposed couples to get to know each other well. Similarly, Abotchie (1997) reiterates the importance of the preparation for marriage in the Southern Eweland of Ghana, pointing out that it is the choice of a partner and investigations about his/her family background. He says, among the Southern Eves of Ghana, though the task of finding a partner for marriage now largely lies in the hands of a young man or a woman, yet, the final parental care cannot be ignored. Parental approval in the choice of a marriage partner signifies parental blessing and the support of the entire family. To this extent, Nukunya (1992) affirms that marriage is usually a group affair which involves distant kinsmen together with the couple and their immediate relations. He continues by saying that marriage in contemporary Ghanaian societies is still considered as an institution between families and not an affair between two individuals who are in love. The preparation for marriage and its requirement for family involvement has led to two forms of partner selection which Abotchie (1997) describes as arranged marriage and preferential marriage.

Arranged marriage is the situation whereby the family of the boy arranges with those of the girl to initiate a marriage proposal on behalf of their son. In this instance, the family informs their son about the proposed marriage, after completing all investigations and becoming satisfied about the suitability of the proposed bride for their son. The girl's family also do the same for the verification of the suitability of the proposed groom for their daughter (Abotchie, 1997).

Abotchie (1997) laments on the effects of marriage markets in the contemporary Ghanaian situation. He says a marriage market is the place

where men and women who are of marriageable age meet and consciously or unconsciously initiate moves with the opposite sex which eventually result in partner selection. According to Abotchie (1997), a marriage market can be a restaurant, hotel, beach, 'chop' bar, drinking bar, church, school, workplace, etc. I cannot pinpoint any of these places as a good place or bad place for selecting a marriage partner from. However, it is obvious in the research by Abotchie (1997) that marriages in which partners were selected from places that were later realised by the couple or one of them to be the worst form of marriage market, failed to achieve stability. Instead, sexual permissiveness, decrease in marriages, increase in divorce, violence and suicide are the prevailing canker that are destroying most families that are suffering from the effects of marriage markets. Also, with the promotion of new forms of lifestyles by the mass media, the beauty and essence of family life and life in general has been eroded. It is in this vain that most families in Ghana prefer arranged marriage to preferential marriage.

According to Abotchie (1997), preferential marriage is a situation where an adult male, attracted to an unbetroth girl, informs his parents about his interest and persuades them through the family head to initiate consultations with the girl's parents over marriage. In traditional Southern Eweland of Ghana, such a request, coming from a young man, is usually considered to be an infringement of parental prerogative, and is sanctioned only after the head of the family is satisfied with the suitability of the girl after discreet background check (Abotchie, 1997). Gyekye (1998) gives the Akan version of the choice of marriage by explaining that the purpose of these private and secret checks before marriage proposal is approved is to determine

whether the girl is worthy of their son or not. The girl's family would also want to satisfy themselves about the suitability of the proposed groom before approving the marriage. Once the marriage is contracted, the attention is shifted to the first sexual intercourse.

The first sexual intercourse between married couples, according to Abotchie (1997), is of great importance among the traditional Ghanaian society. The marriage bed is spread with a clean white bedsheet. The proof of the girl's virginity is when the sheet becomes stained with blood after the first sexual intercourse. In the statement of Abotchie (1997), the proof of a bride's virginity is held in high esteem and it is often accompanied with a public declaration by the husband and a token of appreciation to the bride's parents for the proper upbringing of their daughter. The proof of virginity is almost absent in modern day societies in Ghana due to early sex among adolescents and the desire of some individuals to have sex before marriage. However, it could be argued on that a few men are still keen on marrying a virgin (Abotchie, 1997)

### **The Ghanaian Clergy and Marriage**

Some of the Ghanaian clergy, just like Hosea, are married and have children. The clergy, their wives and children are expected by the Ghanaian society to lead good lives befitting their call by God and even serve as living examples to the people in the society in general and their congregational members in particular.

The priest in Hosea's time were prohibited from marrying prostitutes and even, divorced women (Jagersma, 1983). In Ghana, even though prostitution is illegal, no one is prohibited from marrying a prostitute. A pastor

may choose to marry a prostitute. The problem he might face might come from his family members who might not allow him/her to marry a prostitute because they might think that marrying a prostitute would bring shame to the entire family. Similarly, Koch (1982) gives a hint about Hosea that with the conservative nature of the family structure of Israel at the time of Hosea, his family might have had a hand in his marriage and that he might not have been allowed to select a prostitute as his wife. In fact, even in the contemporary Ghanaian culture, if any family member who is a clergy wants to marry, the family would still want to conduct a secret investigation in order to guide the clergy to be careful who he/she marries and where he/she selects her/him from, so that the negative effect of marriage market, as reiterated by Abotchie (1997) can be avoided.

The Ghanaian clergy, most commonly known in public affairs as pastor or Father, by Catholic parishioners or 'Papa,' by members of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, are leaders of the Christian societies or churches in Ghana. They teach about marriage, offer counselling services to marriage couples and bless couples in marriage. They really need to be careful about who they marry and where they select their life partners from. Marriage in the modern Ghanaian Church is for the life time of the spouses. It is 'till death do us part.' It does not allow any other relationship in addition to the marriage. A prominent Ghanaian clergy, known as Rev. Prof. B. A. Ntreh, writes that marriage is an institution created by God (Ntreh, 2010). By this he wants to say that marriage must be kept holy and must be seen as one man for one woman, for better, for worse. Hence, most Christian Churches adopt ordinance marriage which recognizes one man, one wife for their church

members and for themselves. If such is the type of marriage the Ghanaian clergy are eying for themselves, then why is it that sometimes some of them can go extra mile to have extra marital affair with other women? Some of these women who indulge in extra marital affair with the clergy have husbands. Sometimes, these clergy go to the extent of sleeping with prostitutes at the blind side of their wives. Considering the attitude of some of the Ghanaian clergy, one would ask whether it would be of any use to blame the prostitutes in Ghana because they are prone to entertaining multiple sex partners? Since some of the Ghanaian clergy share common attitude with the prostitutes when it comes to sex partners then, is it advisable for them to marry a prostitute or a woman who finds it difficult to stay with one man? I asked this question considering the fact that there is no law in Ghana forbidding marriage to prostitutes unlike in Israel where the priests are not allowed to marry prostitutes.

Silliman and Schumm (1999) agree that even though most Christian Churches in Ghana prescribe ordinance of matrimony for their members, yet, they recognise the performance of traditional marriage and that it must be done before the ordinance of matrimony. In traditional Ghanaian marriage, just as marriage preparation is established for couples to know themselves before marriage, so is bride grooming administered for newly married girls to help them know what they are expected to do in marriage. Nutsuako (1977) speaks about the period of the grooming of the bride, which to him, takes place after the final marriage rites and older close relatives of the bride are responsible for the rite associated with the period of grooming. According to Abotchie (1997), during this period the bride is reoriented to the duties and



obligations of a married woman. The virtues of obedience, humility, industry and fidelity are reaffirmed to her. A bride who does not go through this period may find it extremely difficult to adjust to the challenges of married life (Nutsuako, 1977).

Similarly, in the modern-day Ghana, counselling has replaced both the preparation and grooming for church goers. Silliman and schumm (1999) write that most premarital counselling is provided by the clergy. Unfortunately, the clergy receive little training in marriage preparation programmes. They are expected to offer counselling services to their congregations and the society in issues related to marriage and stability in marriage. However, when it comes to the marriage involving a pastor as a partner, who counsels the pastor? The pastors who sleep with prostitutes behind their wives, are they not counsellors themselves? Who counsels them? The above discussion shows that in order for a pastor to maintain a spouse devoid of infidelity, care must be taking in selecting a marriage partner and pastors must also go through counselling before they marry.

### **The Attitude of the Ghanaian Clergy on Prostitution**

Some of the Ghanaian clergy most often tend to deny the prostitutes found in their churches the Holy Communion (Sampaio, 2004). They refer to the prostitutes as sinners and call them names - such as the ungodly, the lustful, and the worldly, to mention but a few – without thinking about their plight. Ironically, some of these clergy patronize the prostitute's trade. A critique of the Attitude of these clergy by Sampaio (2004) describes prostitution as means of livelihood for the prostitutes but the clergy seem to be unconcerned about the plight of these prostitutes. In fact, some of the

prostitutes Sampaio had opportunity to interview confessed that they became prostitutes because they were raped by their uncles, fathers, family members or unknown persons, which Sampaio agrees that it was not any fault of theirs.

According to Sampaio (2004), the wife of Hosea, Gomer, also used prostitution as her livelihood just like the other prostitutes in Israel and after Hosea rejected her as his wife, till he remarried her, that was how she lived. Hosea's first step towards her wife was not commendable because it followed the blame games of the Ghanaian clergy. So, the wife was not motivated to put a stop to the so-called illegal business, but when he showed love and concern towards her, she stopped the prostitution and came back home (Sampaio, 2004). One could imagine how long she stayed home without prostitution. However, Sampaio (2004) wants to use Hosea's case to address the men of God in modern times to stop denying the prostitutes in their congregation the Holy Communion, but rather, embrace them with love and concern, for this will help rehabilitate them.

I think if Sampaio accepts the fact that prostitution is a means of livelihood, then he is not right. The girls cannot be right just for the fact that they bet their livelihood through prostitution. Prostitution is illegal and a national canker. They only need to be made to smile and remove their shame and longstanding trauma from their lives. So, for me it is reasonable that a Ghanaian pastor by name Rev. Tetteh Djagma opposed legalization of prostitution on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and the news was brought to the public domain by myjoyonline.com.

### Some Marital Challenges of the Ghanaian Clergy

However, sometimes we hear of the clergy themselves in marital challenges such as adultery, divorce, separation and fight between couples of whom at least one is a clergy. For instance, the Prophet Obinim nearly divorced his wife, and Pastor Chris and wife have divorced already. Both ‘men of God’ were accused by their wives on cases of adultery. Nii Smiley Byte, the managing editor of Ghana Celebrities editorial, published a periodical on Bishop Obinim’s adulterous case in the September 16, 2016 website edition. The periodical captioned as its heading “We Thought He Said It Didn’t Happen?? Diamond Says Obinim’s Adulterous Case Was Long Ago And Ghanaians Should Stop Judging Him Based On That.” In this periodical, the editor offers a rejoinder against Diamond Appiah, the lady, who appears to be defending Bishop Obinim by saying that Obinim is not the only ‘man of God’ who is found guilty of extra marital affairs, but other pastors, church elders and even fathers of the critics have also cheated on their spouses before. Therefore, she argues that the critics should shut up and stop judging Bishop Obinim on his past sin because no one is holy. In another development, a glimpse at Anita Schafer’s website reveals that ex-wife Anita, on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2016, finalised her divorce from Pastor Chris Oyikhilome and dropped her surname to Ebhodaghe and later, to Schafer, after remarried. Pastor Chris is the founder and head pastor of Believers Loveworld INC, also known as Christ Embassy, based in Lagos Nigeria. Anita and Pastor Chris divorced after she claimed he was involved in illicit affairs with a female member of the church. Anita also explains on her website that she (Anita) tolerated abuses for so long and subsequently, the church pulled down her profile from the

church's website, a development that confirmed that all was not well with the family.

Another case of much concern happened when on March 23, 2015 at 1.12p.m., Joy 99.7 FM broadcast an interview with a Ghanaian prostitute who reveals how she slept with prominent pastors. The interview can be retrieved at Joy FM's website. She disclosed that she takes pleasure in sleeping with the pastors because they pay better than ordinary men who are not pastors. She added that one of the pastors even told her that his wife makes him unhappy, hence, she prefers the 'ashawo' prostitute to his wife. Hosea had some challenges because he married a prostitute (Sampaio, 2004). Does it mean if a clergy in Ghana also has a relationship with a prostitute, he is going to face the same challenges? Koch (1982) writes that as a result of having a relationship with a prostitute, Hosea had it difficult to carry his message to the people of Israel to the extent that in Hos. 9:7, he even spoke out of despair. Are the clergy in Ghana who are married but are seen in other relationship, especially, those whose affairs involve prostitutes, are they socially and psychologically free of any consequences? What causes the divorce, threats of divorce and the fights we hear about the families of some Ghanaian clergy, aren't these the consequences of their actions in so far as marital relationship is concern? Aseidu (2017) is write when he says that victims who seem to lack adequate coping skills to deal with their challenges are often diagnosed with psychological crisis such as anxiety, tension and shock.

The Ghanaian clergy are renowned personalities whose issues are broadcast in the national news bulleting. What about the cases of the great many of those who do not catch the glimpses of the national media? These

examples are indications that the clergy in Ghana are not free from marital related challenges, and being leaders of their congregations or denominational institutions their situations often pose greater consequences on the society which calls for much concerns.

### **How the Ghanaian Clergy can Exemplify Hosea in Managing their Marital Challenges**

From the result of the research I think, the Ghanaian clergy can use the case of Hosea to manage not only their own marriages, but also the marital issues of church members that are brought to them. These include the plight of the prostitutes because they need love and affection to secure their survival.

Hosea's wife, Gomer, has been identified to be a woman of prostitution when in chapter 3 of this study, the narrator gave the news of her marriage to Hosea (Hos.1:2-3). In that case, the narrator made audience aware that Hosea, a prophet, married her because God told him to do so. The marriage saw many challenges. In trying to manage his challenges, Hosea committed a mistake by divorcing his wife and taking from her all the things he had given her. Many marriage couples who have challenges rush in making decisions which normally end up collapsing the marriage. We do not know how Pastor Chris, a Ghanaian clergy, managed with the marital challenges that arose between him and Anita. However, we are privy to the news about their divorce. Baah-Yanney (2014) advises that people who are at logger heads must not use the one- directional method in solving their problems but must rather use the two-directional method of conflict resolution. The two directional method ensures win-win situation instead of win-lose of the one-directional method. When Anita showed in her website, the news about how

Pastor Chris allowed his Church elders to remove her from the Church's website, one could clearly decipher that Anita saw the opportunity to repel from the marriage, just as Gomer went out of her matrimonial home the more Hosea accuses her of adultery.

When Hosea realised that his attitude was rather separating Gomer from him instead of coming back home, he adopted a new strategy by calling Gomer to a meeting at a place that the narrator of the story described as a wilderness. The wilderness has a connotation to a lonely place. The narrator used the wilderness to describe how Hosea won his wife back. They met at a place where the two of them alone could feel for each other, share their common thought and reflect on their past love experience. and come out with a better solution that had the potency to save the one time lost marriage so far as Hosea chapters 1-3 is concerned. Couples whose marriages are at the verge of divorce are advised to use this strategy as an antidote to revive their marriage. No one knew which strategy Bishop Obinim used, but the marriage that had threatened to collapse for many times still stands alive. He must have probably adopted the win-win strategy. With this strategy, the angry person always resolves to accommodate the offender (Baah-Yanney, 2014). If the Ghanaian clergy are able to solve their own marital problems, they will know how to help their members to resolve their numerous marital problems. In that case, many families in Ghana will live in peaceful atmosphere, single parenting will be minimized, if not completely eliminated and maladjusted children in many home and schools will be very well adjusted.

This is the reason why this research offers greater importance to marital challenges and how they are resolved. In view of this I assume that the



implications of the marital life of Prophet Hosea to Ghanaian clergy, can offer, if not all, some amount of solutions to the existing problems.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### Introduction

This chapter seeks to summarize the entire research, presenting the major findings and drawing the conclusion from them. In addition, the chapter attempts to make recommendations that seek to draw implications from the marital life of Prophet Hosea to the clergy in Ghana. Then again, the chapter also tries to give suggestions for further study in other areas.

#### Summary

This study was conducted to examine the marital life of Prophet Hosea and draw implications for Ghanaian clergy. I used Narrative criticism as my research method and reader-response criticism as my research design. The latter is a literary oriented method which centres on the reader and the text and allows the reader to make a distinct interpretation of the text from his or her own competence, values and pre-suppositions, though guided by the text for the sake of a more acceptable interpretation. Even though it is a method, I used it as a research design. In a null shell, the design served as my hermeneutical tool for interpreting Hosea Chapters 1-3.

My conceptual framework underlying the entire work was to study the story of Hosea in the perspective of a historical narrative in order to enable me handle the historical aspects of the marital life of Hosea ben Beeri, such as the issues concerning his selection of a marriage partner, the challenges he went through in his marital life and how he managed them.

Before Hosea ben Beeri was called to be a prophet, he was a levitical priest but he was not functioning at the cult of Yahweh owing to the fact that

during the reign of King Jeroboam I, the legitimate priests who were Levites were put aside and instead, some Israelites who were not Levites were illegitimately appointed to officiate at the cult of Yahweh. This was in order for the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to win the allegiance of their people who, hitherto, would prefer to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem in Judah in the Southern Kingdom of Israel, to worship in the cult there. As a levitical priest, Hosea identified mediocrity in the cultic functions of the priests of Israel and criticized them of having inadequate Knowledge in the Worship of God, leading to the diversion of the heart of the entire nation from God. Hosea saw that the lack of Knowledge in God could cause the destruction of the nation (Hos. 4:6). This was the period of which the worship of the Canaanite deity (Baal) had prominently influenced the cultic activities in Israel and the worship of God was gradually going down.

During the reign of King Jeroboam II, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah also ruled one after the other in Judah. In these periods, the influence of Baal in Israel had led the priests to legitimate prostitution at the cult and as a result, girls of marriageable age had to satisfy cultic demand of defloration. Prostitution in Israel reached its peak at harvest time, when many girls who came to the harvest ground in search of take-home food were forced to surrender to prostitution by the priests before they could get something home, all with the idea of increasing harvest produce.

The defloration of girls and the harvest prostitution resulted in producing more prostitutes, especially among girls of marriageable age and gradually, people's love (*hezeth*) for God shifted to the Baal, who was hailed for being the harvest god. It was in that period that God called Hosea to be his

prophet and to marry a woman of prostitution and have children with her because the whole land of Israel had become a prostitute (Hos. 1:2). Therefore, Hosea, being the mouthpiece of God, in proclaiming the message of God to the people of Israel, should use the on-going events between him and his prostituted wife to establish the fact that Israel, the wife of God, was a prostitute and the people of Israel were God's illegitimate children because they were born in prostitution, and that their lack of love for God would lead them into future destruction. However, what this research strives to highlight is not the relationship between Israel, the wife and her husband, God, but to focus on the issues surrounding Hosea's mate selection according to God's command and whether that selection was favourable to establish stability of marriage or not.

Hosea began his prophetic ministry in his response to God's call on him to marry a prostitute. Some scholars postulate that Hosea did not marry a prostitute as God commanded him because the conservative nature of Hosea's family would not allow him to do that. Therefore, according to these scholars whose names I have mentioned in chapter 3, at the time Hosea was marrying Gomer, she was not a prostitute, but she later became one. On the contrary, the narrator of the story, describes how the same words that God used to command Hosea to marry a prostitute (*"lek qach l'ka e'shet z'nuniym..."* - "Go and take a wife of prostitution... Hos. 1:2 - NIV) was used in Hosea's response to choose a wife (*"wayilek wayiqach e'th Gomer bath Dib'liyim.. "So he went and took Gomer, daughter of Diblaim..."*). The narrator, thus, explained that Hosea, being the prophet of God and the one to carry God's message across the length and breadth of Israel, did the bidding of the deity.

Therefore, this discovery, led me to posit that Hosea married a prostitute and that at the time of marrying Gomer, she was already a prostitute. This finds expression in the fact that scholars agree that the third person narrator of biblical stories always tells the truth.

Hosea's marriage with Gomer was blessed with three children, a son, a daughter and another son, but just after the birth of the first born, challenges set into the marriage. The relationship between selection of marriage partner and stability of marriage assumed its clear significance, for how could a person select a prostitute for a wife and stay without any unforeseen event in the marriage? Having a prostitute as a wife itself, is a marital challenge. Therefore, when Gomer, the prostitute, could not change for the better, but became worse than she used to be, by transforming from a prostitute to an adulterous woman with different sexual partners, there was another form of challenge aggravating in Hosea's marital life. This unchangeable attitude of Gomer, rolled out some unforeseen incidences in the marriage, leading to their challenges day in and day out.

It was for a purpose that the narrator mentioned Beerli and Diblaim as the names of the fathers of Hosea and Gomer respectively and the family heads of their various father's house. As family heads, they must have taken significant roles in the contraction of the marriage. Even though Hosea's family, coming from the levitical priesthood, was conservative, they accepted Gomer as a wife to Hosea, despite her status as a prostitute. They must have thought that prostitution as a canker in Israel at that time, promoted by no other than the priests and which had affected many girls of marriageable age, could be whipped out of Gomer after marriage. Hardly did they think that

Gomer would continue seeing other men even after marriage. Therefore, after marriage, when they realized that the wife was still seeing other men, they could not contain it any longer. That was how I found out that Hosea's marital challenges emerged from his family too. It is not explicit in the text, but implicit in the names Hosea gave to his children. The first born was named *Jezreel*, meaning planted (Hos. 1:4), the second born was called *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning Not loved (Hos. 1:6) and the third born was *Lo-Ammi*, meaning Not my people (Hos. 1:8). The names suggested that Hosea had rejected the paternity of his children, raising alarm of marital challenges in Hosea's nuclear family.

These challenges became much more manifested when Hosea was found making charges against his own children and their mother – “Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. I will not show my love to the children, because they are the children of adultery” (Hos. 2:4, NIV). This challenge, even though, was within the nuclear family, had something to do with marriage residence and the extended family. In Israel, the main residence for married couples is the *beith 'ab* (father's house). After knowing that Gomer was still seeing other men, and Hosea himself rejecting her and the paternity of the children born to him by the prostitute wife, he must have driven them away from his Father's house. “Not my people means the children were not considered to belong to Hosea's family and for that matter, they were not allowed to stay in the *beith ' ab* (father's house), because they were not loved (see *Lo-Ruhamah* in Hos. 1:6).

Hosea's family, on the other hand, would not want to accept them any longer into the *beith 'ab* (father's house). So, then they would have to find



another place of residence where they would be accepted. This would probably be Gomer's own *beith 'ab* (father's house), because after the wilderness experience, the reconciliation that followed indicated that Hosea wanted to bring both his wife who was away in the prostitution business and his children back into his *beith 'ab* (father's house). Thus, Hosea declared "I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called not my people, 'You are my people...'" (Hos. 2:23, NIV) "You are my people" means that Hosea's children, whom he rejected, would now be part of his family and could stay with him in his *beith 'ab* (father's house) because this time around, they were loved. In the same way their mother was to stay with him in his *beith 'ab* (father's house), because Hosea told her, "...you are to live with me for many days..." (Hos. 3:3, NIV).

Not only did Hosea encounter social challenges in his nuclear and extended family, but he also happened to face Religio-social and psychological challenges. Religio-socially, how would a prophet whose main focus was to convince the people to come out of adultery, have an affair with an adulterous woman and still expect the people to accord him with respect and honour and to accept his message without sending out any stigma against him? Then psychologically, how could such a prophet be free from being stressed up, depressed, worried and traumatized, seeing that the people were ostracizing him and slighting his message, despite the fact that it held credence in the sight of God and the people themselves, all because of his infidel wife. Hosea's audience saw him cry out of despair as he pondered on why his messages were slighted by his audience. Here, Hosea was religio-socially

caught up with the stigma from his hearers and the effect was the psychological expression of despair and anxiety that came from him.

As Hosea's challenges gathered momentum, the only option for him was to find solutions to the challenges. In attempt to do that Hosea charged his wife of adultery, confronting her to remove the adulterous look from his breast, else she ceased to be his wife and he ceased to be her husband (Hos. 2:2). Hosea confronted his wife in that manner thinking that the approach of lifting a punishment against her would help him to change the attitude of his wife. To manage any conflict between two or more parties, the two directional method of resolution appeared to be preferable to the one directional method. Since Hosea initiated the management of his marital challenges with a one directional approach, he could not find any headway. The parties involved in the conflict rather resorted to entrenched positions, making it impossible to resolve the marital challenges.

A change of style by Hosea, this time with the use of the two directional method was able to lure Gomer to meet Hosea at a lonely place which was described in the text as a wilderness. The two directional method uses love, instead of punishment, understanding instead of entrenched positions and accommodation instead of blame games. Thus, it leads to win-win situation instead of win-lose situation. With this formulae, Hosea lifted up love and not punishment again, in search of his wife and the two were able to resolve their marital problems this time. The two were able to reconcile and Hosea was happy to reunite with his children whom he earlier on rejected. This time, he could accept parental responsibility of his children and allow them to stay in his father's house (beith'ab) (Hos. 2:23). He was so much in

love with his wife and happy to have found her that he was ready to buy her and redeem her from where her adulterous life had enslaved her in the hands of another man (Hos. 3:2). So, after redeeming her, Hosea told his wife to live with him forever, signifying that she was found with a price of love and was bought with a price of his occupational produce, the fruit of his labour. Hence, the study found out that Hosea's wife was not as unworthy as some scholars thought she was, but worthy in the sight of her husband and their coming together again was as a result of a win-win affair which was initiated and achieved by both parties. Thus, Hosea was able to manage his marital challenges from the discussion of the text in Hos. 1:1-3:5, but was he able to achieve a permanent reconciliation? Further research on Hos. 4:1 – 14:9 will show.

Finally, some of the Ghanaian clergy are sometimes heard or seen with marital challenges such as adultery, divorce, separation and fight between couples. Being leaders of their various congregations and mentors for several individuals in the Ghanaian society, their situations often pose greater consequences for the society which calls for many concerns.

### **Findings of the Study**

After critical study on the thesis topic, the following findings came out:

- i. The prophet Hosea has a historical background which can only allow his story to be described as a Micro Social Power Relationship between him, his family and the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- ii. Sometimes, the narrator allowed prophet Hosea, the main character and God, his deity, to speak and act symbolically to depict the

breakdown of covenant relationship between the people of Israel and their God in Hosea's time, a relationship that is described as macro power relationship.

- iii. Hosea's wife (Gomer) was a prostitute before he married her.
- iv. There is a relationship between selection of marriage partner and stability of marriage.
- v. It is very difficult to change the attitude of a spouse after marriage.
- vi. Hosea experienced social, religious and psychological challenges due to his marriage to a prostitute.
- vii. Hosea managed his marital challenges by loving his wayward wife unconditionally, buying his wife from another man and remarrying her.
- viii. Some Ghanaian clergy have issues of marital concerns which call for implications from Hosea's marital life to help address them and prevent further such incidences from happening.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study helped me to come out with the following conclusion:

The study showed that the story of Hosea can be read as metaphorical story about the covenant between God and Israel. This points to the fact that Hosea's marriage to the prostitute Gomer symbolically showed how Israel, as God's wife, became immoral and broke the covenant between them by worshipping Baal, the Canaanite god. However, the story had a deeper meaning when the gap created by the narrator about the Historicity of Hosea was closely responded to and attempt was made to filled. This historical

perspective of Hosea is authenticated by how the narrator tells the story in a historical context in which the Prophet Hosea is described to have contemporaries among the kings of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel and also among the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets whose prophetic activities centred around the attitude of the Israelites during their economic prosperity in the reign of King Jeroboam II. From the historical perspective, the study brought to light the real events that happened between the prophet Hosea and his wife and their children and how their relationship with their extended family and the immediate social environment looked like.

The study revealed that Hosea ben Beerī was a levitical priest but he was not functioning at the cult of Yahweh because during his time, King Jeroboam I had appointed priests who were not Levites to officiate at the cult of Yahweh, instead of the levitical priests. The reason was to enable the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to win the allegiance of their people and prevent them from making pilgrimages to Jerusalem, which is in the Southern Kingdom of Israel (Judah), to worship in the cult there.

It became obvious in the study that Hosea was a Northerner who was cut off in the swirl of events that led to his homeland being conquered by the Assyrians. As a prophet, his job was to warn his countrymen to amend their ways, but God devised an unusual way for him to do this and that is the story when you read Hos. 1:2-3.

Also, in the study, we saw that for a long time, readers have been puzzled by the story. The puzzle is, did God really tell Hosea to marry a prostitute, or was this just a pious man's way of explaining retroactively, a

marriage that went bad, or was it a visionary message on something that never occurred in facts?

The current consensus among scholars, as revealed by the study, seem to be that Hosea must indeed have married such a woman, perhaps as he said, after God told him to do so. After all prophets are sometimes made to perform symbolic actions of one sort or another. In Isa. 2:1-3 the prophet Isaiah saw a symbolic mountain and directed the Israelites to exhort it. Also, in Jer. 27:2 Jeremiah put a symbolic yoke on his neck to depict the burden of slavery the people of Israel would suffer after being conquered by Babylonia led by Nebuchadnezzar. Then Ezek. 4:1-3, shows how Ezekiel lied on his left side besides a miniature city of Jerusalem drawn on a piece of clay tablet to symbolize his bearing of their sins.

Against such a background, it certainly will not be difficult to imagine that God had commanded Hosea to marry the prostitute Gomer, as a similar symbolic message. That is for the Israelites to stop prostituting around with other gods. As for the children of this union, the study showed that, God instructed Hosea to give them names that would, like the marriage itself, symbolize something. The first son was, thus, named Jezreel where a bloody coup d'état took place (Hos. 1:4). The second, a daughter was a still more symbolic name, Lo-Ruhamah (Unloved) because God used her to explain the disconnection between God and the people of Israel (Hos. 1:6). The third child, another son, was called Lo-Ammi (Not my people) (Hos. 1:9). Therefore, the study discovered, that Hosea's wife, Gomer, was a prostitute before he married her because as a prophet of God, he could not do otherwise than to do the bidding of the deity and the narrator of the story said it all.



The relationship between mate selection and stability of marriage assumed its clear significance in the study when Hosea's marriage with Gomer, a prostitute, brought about some unforeseen circumstances that challenged the stability of the marriage.

The study also revealed that it is very difficult to change a prostitute. That was why Gomer, the prostitute, could not change for the better, but became worse than she used to be, by transforming from a prostitute to an adulterous woman with different sexual partners.

It was, once again discovered in the study that Hosea experienced marital challenges which emerged socially, from the wife he selected to marry and extended to his nuclear and extended families, leading to serious religio-social challenges of ostracizing, stigmatizing and slitting his message by the people, developing further into Socio-psychological challenges of mental agony, depression, despair and trauma.

Moreover, the study revealed that to manage any conflict between two or more parties, the two directional method of resolution is preferable to the one directional method. Therefore, when Hosea initially decided to manage his marital challenges with the one directional approach, he could not find any headway. The parties involved in the conflict rather resorted to entrenched positions making it impossible to resolve the marital challenges. However, when he changed his formulae and began to use the two directional method, the marital challenges were resolved and he was able to reconcile with his wife.

Furthermore, it was discovered in the study that Hosea was able to manage his marital challenges by redeeming his wife with a price of silver and

barley and remarrying her. Even though they were not enough to pay the full price, the most important thing was that, he gave all he had to show that his wife was worthy to him and not as unworthy as some scholars thought she was.

Finally, the study revealed that the implications of the marital life of Prophet Hosea to Ghanaian clergy, can offer, if not all, some amount of solutions to the existing marital problems among pastors and even the members of their congregations.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made in order to draw implications from the marital life of prophet Hosea for Ghanaian Clergy and even for all marital couples:

- i. The Ghanaian Clergy Should be careful about the spouse they marry because the kind of spouse they marry will determine the stability of the marriage everywhere and the resultant challenges can damage the credibility of the Clergy's personality and their message among their congregation and the surrounding environment.
- ii. Moreover, the study recommends the use of the two directional approach to problem solving over the one directional method because whereas the one directional method with its selfish and judgmental attitude, leads to win-lose situation and repel the parties involved from one another, the two directional method with its characteristics such as love, accommodation and forgiving spirit ensures win-win situation and brings the parties together.

- iii. The study, furthermore, recommends to Ghanaian Clergies to treat members of their congregation who are nursing marital challenges with care and avoid ostracizing, stigmatizing or excommunicating them either by the clergies themselves or by other members of their congregation, because in many cases, it is not the fault of theirs but a mere ignorance in the premarital process which aftermath is the post marital challenges.
- iv. Finally, I recommend that the clergy in Ghana use the story of Hosea as a biblical foundation for premarital counselling to prevent future couples from getting mental agony, depression, despair and trauma after marriage. They can also use the same for doing post marital counselling to help those already with marital challenges to cope with their situation or resolve them amicably.

#### **Suggestions for Further Study**

- i. I hereby suggest specifically that future study should use Hosea 4:1-14:9 to find out whether Hosea achieved permanent reconciliation or not with regards to his management of his marital challenges.
- ii. I recommend again that future research should focus on the macro power relationship which has to do with the covenant relationship of God with Israel and should investigate on how God managed the challenges of his covenant relationship with Israel.

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