

Marriage between the prophet hosea and gomer religion essay



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At the centre of the Hebrew Bible in the book of Hosea chapters one and three, lays a controversy about the marriage between the prophet Hosea and Gomer the harlot. But Hosea 3: 1 seems to be an interpretation of Hosea 1: 2. Taking these passages as historically true may defeat the nature of the righteousness of God. Moreover, the name, ' Gomer,' also seems to be not historically true because of its being both a masculine and feminine.

Therefore the narratives may not be a real historical reflection of the marital unfaithfulness but it may have meant to convey the message of Yahweh. The discussion of this subject will therefore, include; who was Hosea, who was Gomer, the metaphor for the unfaithful marriage and then conclusion.

HOSEA:

Hosea (Hoshea-saviour) was an eighth century prophet -a mouthpiece of Yahweh. He prophesied in the Northern Kingdom, which was under King Jeroboam II (Hosea 1: 1). The reign of Jeroboam was characterized by material prosperity but it was morally reeking and rotten due to idolatry as <https://assignbuster.com/marriage-between-the-prophet-hosea-and-gomer-religion-essay/>

attested in Hosae 4: 2 and 2 Kings 14: 23-29 (Halley, 1957: 321). Israel had “committed great harlotry by forsaking the Lord” (Hosea1: 2). The great sin that Israel had committed, compelled God to command Hosea to demonstrate it through his personal life.

Hosea, a prophet and a staunch patriot of Yahwhism, received the message from Yahweh. The prophet was commanded to go and marry Gomer, a prostitute (Hosea 1: 2). The marriage between the prophet and a prostitute is surrounded by controversies as recorded in Hosea chapters One and Three. The controversies include the doubtful possibility of Yahweh to expose Yahweh’s prophet to a prostitute. However, scholars have said that the drama between Hosea and Gomer is a metaphor that demonstrates the unconditional love of God for Israel and humanity at large. The message was complex as Hosea spoke both of disaster and hope for restoration. By disaster he warned that the Assyrians would come to invade them.

The demonstration involves the unfaithful marital drama between Hosea and Gomer his wife. This is seen in Hosea 1: 2 and 3: 1-2 where God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute and he repeated the command saying ‘ go again’ and love a prostitute. From these two texts, Gomer is seen as a prostitute before marrying Hosea. And she continued being unfaithful to her husband to the extent of defecting him for other men. Speculatively, the harlot in chapter three whom God commanded Hosea to marry again may be Gomer though the Bible does not mention the name ‘ Gomer.’

GOMER:

The name seems to be masculine (Genesis 10: 2), but Hosea depicts it as a feminine name. Gomer was the wife of Hosea. She had three children and only the first-born is portrayed as a legitimate child of Hosea. The other two children were born out of wed log. The scripture records that Gomer left her husband-Hosea for other men. Therefore, the Bible depicts Gomer as a prostitute.

Therefore, it is vital that the type of prostitution she indulged in is stressed precisely from scholarly point of view. Scholars have interpreted the first three chapters of Hosea in different ways (Hinson, 1992: 168). However, James Hastings suggests that Gomer was a temple prostitute (Hastings 1963: 398). This type of prostitution was common in Canaan as Werner Keller puts it;

“ In Canaan in those days the cult of sensuality was regarded as the worship of the gods, temple took the place of brothels, men and women prostitutes ranked as sacred to the followers of the religion, their rewards for their services went into the temple treasuries as an offering for the god” (Keller, 1956: 262).

From this understanding, it is possible to conclude that Gomer could have been a temple prostitutes as Hastings puts it, “ Gomer was, before marriage, a temple prostitute” (Hastings, 1963: 398). Further, it is uncertain that Yahweh, who is worthy, could allow his prophet to marry a prostitute.

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Prostitutes or adulterous women were deserved to be stoned to death and not to be take back to their marital homes (Psalm 85; Deuteronomy 22: 20). Nevertheless, it has been the nature of God to reveal His plan in both words and actions as seen in Isaiah 20: 1-6 and in Jeremiah 28: 10f. Therefore, the metaphor could mean that Yahweh was transmitting his message through this drama.

THE METAPHOR FOR THE UNFAITHFUL MARRIAGE:

In this drama, Hosea is the representation of God who loves both the righteous and the sinner but hates sin. Gomer represent the Israelites who became broke the covenant made between them and God. The names of their children signify the attitude that God had developed against Israel due to idolatry (Hosea 1: 4, 6, 9).

Meanings of the names;

The names of the children born in this unfaithful marriage show that the time of God (kairos) to punish Israel had come (Jezreel). Lo-ruhamah meant that God had no longer mercy for Israelites and Lo-ammi meant that Israel had rejected God. But later, Yahweh changed His mind and decided to forgive Israel (Halley, 1957: 317) as demonstrated by Hosea who redeemed his wife from playing harlotry. Hosea also is depicted as having accepted to keep the two illegitimate children. This shows how inclusive the love of God is.

Hosea's attitude towards Gomer;

Though with great pain and love of losing her in such a dramatic way, Hosea followed, called and redeemed his wife to himself. This is the exactly picture

of God who is constantly mindful of human kind as portrayed in Psalm 8: 4. This is also depicted in the incarnation of Christ in the dispensation of salvation for humanity. As Hosea redeemed his wife, so is God ready to redeem humanity from any apostasy life as well as the bondage of sin despite being sinful (Romans 5: 8). In this view, the marital unfaithfulness represents how Israel became unfaithful to God by broking the Sinai covenant that was made between them and God as seen below.

Defection and restoration of the covenant;

The drama was the reminder to the Israelites that they were a holy nation. They were unique by having entered a relationship with God through a Sinai covenant. John Miller states that God, in the wilderness, initiated the covenant after the Israelites escape from Egypt. God showed the tender love for Israel. And this love is likened to the love for an infant who is dearly loved by the parent (Miller, 1987: 80). In this exclusive covenant, Israel is seen as a wife while Yahweh is the husband (Hastings, 1963: 506).

But Israel broke this covenant and became unfaithful to God by indulging in idolatry. This departure from worshipping Yahweh to other gods is likened to prostitution, which was rampant in temples (Miller, 1987: 82). And of course sexual activity is a natural pattern of humanity. From this explanation, sacred prostitution implanted a belief of increasing prosperity and fertility, for example, agricultural product, as Israelites were an agrarian people. They depended on agriculture. Therefore they could not avoid adopting worshipping of Baal; a fertility god as Israel pursued material goods from other gods (Hastings, 1963: 506).

Attached to this worship was the belief concerning the “ cycle of growth and decay, birth and death” and success in war. “ But in Canaan, they were openly shameless such that mother goddesses were branded as whores.” (Keller, 1956: 262-263). This worship was connected to everyday life to ensure that by having sex in the temple; success was certain. As sex was performed in the temple, the god of fertility was impregnating the earth for farms to have good produce and success in trade.

This is seen in how trade was conducted as goods probably food was sold by the rich to foreigners like Tyre; neglecting the fellow poor Israelites who could have worked for it. The seller-buyer relationship is also viewed as prostitution. These were the activities that penetrated Yahwism. And it was at this that the prophets were raged with patriotism zeal to fight the survival of Yahwism.

The metaphor also refers to alliances with other nations on political basis. These alliances are likened to lovers whom Isaiah condemned. These foreign alliances brought idolatry into Israelites' faith. Thus the depiction of Israel's unfaithfulness to God (Jeremiah 2: 18, 36-37; Hosea 5: 13; 7: 11-12).

That is the breaking of covenant or the seal of salvation. As seen in this way, Israel committed adultery by being idolatry. Israel also followed the gods of violence, assassination and injustice. They totally rejected the precepts of Yahweh as stipulated in the Decalogue- Ten commandments (Hosea 4: 2).

Miller also points out that” When the austere worshippers of Yahweh entered Canaan from the wilderness of Sinai and first encountered such practices at

Baal Peor, they were both shocked and intrigued.... numbers 25: Hosea 9:
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10" (Miller, 1987: 82). Miller clearly states that Israel was a monotheistic nation. But the influence of the Canaanites swayed her away from Yahweh like a woman who leaves her only husband for other men. I am therefore contend with the drama itself that demonstrates how loving Yahweh is. Yet even the changing of the names of Hosea's children from abandonment to embracing from not being my people to being my people is also a good honour to show that God cares. (Halley 1957: 317). This shows that there is no slave or free person in the sight of God (Galatians 3). Though the children had no paternal inheritance because they were born out of wed log, they were also given access to inheritance in the house of Hosea. This is how God's nature is (Hastings, 1963: 506).

God wants a relationship between Godself and human beings. That is why God instituted the covenantal law to be the cord of bondage in this relationship. But this bondage has been weakened due to sin (Isaiah 59: 2). The sending of Hosea to remarry his wife demonstrates the concern of God for liberation of humanity. On the other hand God is reminding the people to return to God as Revelation 2: 4-5a attests. This was the desire of Hose to see the salvation of Israel. He wished that Israel would be reconnected to the covenant.

CONCLUSSION:

The unfaithful marriage between Gomer and Hosea represents the broken Sinai covenantal relationship between Israel and God. The Sinai covenant was meant to be a practical, functional and a permanent-self definition and self-understanding of Israel as a chosen nation. But they forgot that God had entered into a covenant with them in the wilderness, which was their guide
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in political, social and religious spheres. Israel lost the morals. This resulted into idolatry, oppression and injustices. They forgot that they were a chosen nation that was required to live an exemplary life to the surrounding nations. It was the neglect of this covenant that God was displeased with the Israelites that his wrath raged against them. Yet, he brings word of compassionate hope for restoration and encouraged Israel to uphold the covenantal law, as Israel was a chosen nation who should have lived exemplary life.