

Assignment Title: Essay #3

“God used theater to send message to his people”

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God sometimes has a sense of humor. Even in his seriousness he used drama to relay messages he wanted to get across to his people. In examination of the Prophet Hosea in chapter 1:1-11, it becomes evident of this precise point. God uses theater to get his message across to Israel through the prophet, pantomimes and verdict.

The Prophet's job in the was to be the buffer between God and the people of Israel to make sure that state of Israel operated according to the covenant God made with them. Matthews states it from his book the Social World of Ancient Israel, like this,

“Prophets thought of themselves as sentries, doing for the state as a whole what the lookouts on the wall did for their cities, English uses “watchdog” rather than “watchman” to refer to those who monitor the performance of officials the way the prophets monitored the performance of their monarchs.” (Matthews 213)

Here we can see that the prophets of the bible had the task of overseeing the royal officials of Israel in order to make sure that the covenant of God was not broken with Israel. Matthews further adds to this notion by making clear that the Monarch and the Prophets were both concerned with fulling God's covenant with Israel. He states,

“The world of the bible was not divided into sacred and secular realms. Monarchs and Prophets were both committed to fulfilling Yahweh's covenant with Israel. They shared the traditions which stressed that ultimately only Yahweh fed and protected Israel.” (Matthews 213)

Hence, we see that the Prophet and the Monarch understood that God was in covenant with Israel and he was to be the provider and protector. It was when the Monarch would covenant with another nation for these things rather than God that the Prophets would be sent to the Monarch and at times directly to the people of Israel to bring correction and often times pronounce judgement upon them for breaking this covenant with God.

In bringing a word or message to his people, God, would use his Prophets in theatrical ways. We see in the story of the Prophet Hosea, God instructs Hosea to take a prostitute for his wife and essentially have 3 children with her and each child would represent the three phases of God's message and judgment to Israel. He ends up with not being in covenant with Israel by ultimately saying to them they were not his people and he was not their God. Hosea 1:1-11 states,

“The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, [departing] from the LORD. “(KJV Hosea 1:1-11)

So, clearly God has instructed Hosea to take this wife of whoredom as an act displaying Hosea like God himself and the people of Israel as his wife of Whoredom. This of course to give imagery to the message he want to give to the nation of Israel and how their monarch has covenanted with another besides God in order to feed and protect Israel. Furthermore, Matthews states,

“Prophets were masters of both the silent and the sounded arts.” (Matthews 215)

Hence, Prophets were used by God in imagery ways in the bible to help convey his message or point to the people of Israel and their monarch.

The use of Prophets as actors, like Hosea in Hosea 1:1-11 can be said to be called Pantomime. Matthew defines pantomime as,

“...the ancient and universal art of gesture, an expression of social interaction... technically pantomime is theater without script.” (Matthews 215-216)

So, here Matthews is saying that pantomime was theater without a script! In the case of Hosea the Prophet God uses him to act without a script in marrying this woman who is called a prostitute in order to give imagery to Israel of their act of committing adultery against God himself because marriage symbolized a covenant agreement. The covenant was between himself and Israel, but they had broken their covenant with him as being their provider and protector by covenanting with another nation for this purpose. Furthermore, he then tells Hosea to have three children with his wife the prostitute. He tells him to name the first Jezreel because he is going to bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. Hosea 1:3-9 states,

“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little [while], and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

Then said *God*, Call his name Loammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*.”

( KJV Hosea 1:3-9 )

So, starting with the first child he begins to pronounce judgement on the land of Israel. He continues in like manner with the next two children named “Not Pitied” which meant he would no longer have pity on Israel. He would now detest Israel. He however, would have pity for Judah and save them. The last child was named “Not-My-People. He proclaims at this point that Israel is not his people and he is not their God. Seeing the wife of the Prophet and their children showed Israel the visual in action like theater actors to drive home his message by the Prophet Hosea. Matthews states the allegory of Hosea’s marriage representing the covenant God has with Israel Matthews states,

“Because marriages between covenant partners ratified the negotiations for food and arms, “marriage” was a synonym for covenant” in the world of the Bible.” (Matthews 217)

So, the marriage of Hosea the prophet was representative of the covenant with God and Israel.

Consequently, we see the theater aspect in Hosea 1:1-11 being played out in a verdict of judgement on Israel, because they have broken this covenant with God. So as the children of Hosea represent by their names the judgement God gave Israel. One he would cause the house of Israel to cease as indicated in Hosea 1:4. Two he would have no pity on them as we’ve seen in Hosea 1:6. Three he proclaims they are not his people and he is not their God in Hosea 1:9.

God uses stories all throughout the bible. He even uses the parables in Jesus day but in the day of the prophets of Old we can see prophets like Hosea were used like actors in theater to show by pantomime and verdict the land of Israel is message and judgement.

# **Bibliography**

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