

The Narrative of Hosea's Marriage to Gomer in Midrash Tradition: An Alternative Interpretation for Relationship and Morality Issues In the Contemporary Era

Jisman Nainggolan¹, Esther Debora Soeoth²

Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Batu Malang, Indonesia^{1,2}

Corresponding author: Jisman Nainggolan (jismannainggolan@stab.ac.id)

Abstract:

This article discusses the narrative of the marriage of the Prophet Hosea to Gomer in the Midrash tradition as an alternative interpretation that offers relevance to issues of relationships and morality in the modern era. Melalui pendekatan hermeneutik Midrash, kisah tersebut ditafsirkan secara alegoris sebagai gambaran hubungan antara Tuhan dan Israel, yang ditandai oleh ketidaksetiaan manusia, namun selalu disertai dengan cinta dan pengampunan ilahi. The research findings indicate that the Midrashic tradition not only conveys theological messages but also serves as an effective medium for moral education and social critique. These findings have theological implications for contemporary relational dynamics, particularly concerning the values of loyalty, forgiveness, relationship restoration, and morality rooted in spirituality. This article emphasizes the urgency of revitalizing the legacy of ancient Jewish interpretations as the foundation for humane relational ethics amidst the increasingly complex global moral landscape.

Keywords:

Hosea, Gomer, midrash, morality, Jewish interpretation.

Article history:

Submitted: 28 Feb. 2025, Revised: 26 June. 2025, Accepted: 28 June. 2025

How to cite this article:

Nainggolan, J., & Soeoth, E. D. (2025). The narrative of Hosea's marriage to Gomer in Midrash tradition: An alternative interpretation for relationship and morality issues in the contemporary era. *TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 5(1), 92–103. <https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v5i1.248>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Authors. Licensee: TELEIOS. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of the Prophet Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a woman of ill repute, is one of the most controversial aspects of the Old Testament tradition. This story is found in Hosea chapters 1–3, where God commands Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman as a symbol of the relationship between God and Israel, who have spiritually committed adultery by worshiping other gods (Hos. 1:2)(Redelinghuys, 2018). This narrative not only serves as a theological discourse on Israel's unfaithfulness but also raises issues of personal relationships, morality, and integrity within a socio-religious context. In the Jewish interpretive tradition, this narrative receives diverse interpretations through the Midrash method, a creative, allegorical, and contextual interpretive approach that developed among the post-exilic rabbinic community. Midrash not only serves to explain the text but also to adapt the meaning of the text to the realities and socio-religious problems of the Jewish community throughout its history.(Neusner, 1990).

In the contemporary context, issues of relationships and morality face significant challenges, both in the realms of family, church, and society. Data from the World Health Organization (2023) notes that the global divorce rate has increased by 251% since 1960, with infidelity and shifting moral values as the main causes. In Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2022) recorded 447,743 divorce cases in 2021, with 17.3% of them caused by infidelity. This figure highlights the urgency of presenting theological discourse that is not only normative but also relevant and solution-oriented to issues of relationships and morality in modern society.

Traditional interpretations of the narrative of Hosea and Gomer often emphasize the allegorical aspects of the relationship between God and Israel, while the socio-psychological dimensions and morality in personal relationships are often overlooked. (Hornsby, 1999). From a Midrashic perspective, this narrative can be interpreted more comprehensively, encompassing aspects of contemporary human relationships, such as the values of loyalty, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the courage to face social stigma. Neusner asserts that Midrash functions as a hermeneutic effort to connect sacred texts with the actual realities of its community. (Neusner, 1990). Therefore, the Hosea-Gomer narrative in the Midrash tradition can be interpreted as a social critique and moral reflection relevant to contemporary relational challenges.

The reason this topic is raised is because there is a gap in research that explicitly discusses the Hosea-Gomer narrative through the lens of Midrash in the context of contemporary relational and moral issues. The majority of existing research tends to focus on the allegorical aspects or the social history of ancient Israel (Andrew Dearman, 2010), while the hermeneutic dimension of Midrash as an alternative approach is still rarely explored, especially among Indonesian theology academics. In Jewish literature, Midrash can provide dynamic and contextual interpretations, thereby connecting ancient texts with contemporary issues (Boyarin, 1994). The urgency of this research lies in its relevance to issues of relationships and morality that are experiencing value deconstruction due to the currents of modernization, individualism, and secularization. Taylor, in his book *A Secular Age*, explains that the modern era brings humans to a crisis of meaning and traditional moral values, including in aspects of personal relationships and family institutions (Taylor, 2007). In such a situation, ancient interpretations like the Midrash can become a source of fresh values and ethical reflections for contemporary

society. By re-reading the Hosea-Gomer narrative through Midrash, it is hoped that an alternative theological discourse that is critical, contextual, and grounded will be created.

The novelty offered in this research is the Midrashic interpretation approach as an alternative hermeneutic method in reading the Hosea-Gomer narrative, not merely as an allegory of the Divine and Israel relationship, but also as a reflection on the dynamics of modern human relationships. Unlike classical interpretations that emphasize prophetic or normative moral aspects, this study seeks to present an interpretation that connects the text with current issues of personal relationships, such as loyalty, forgiveness, social stigma, and the role of women in patriarchal relationships. In addition, this research is expected to enrich the study of Old Testament hermeneutics and Midrash interpretation discourse in the realm of Indonesian theological academia, which has so far been minimally studied systematically.

Based on that background, the research question posed is how the Midrash tradition interprets the narrative of Hosea's marriage to Gomer, and how its relevance serves as an alternative interpretation for issues of relationships and morality in contemporary society. "This question is expected to open a dialogue space between the Old Testament text, Jewish interpretive tradition, and modern social realities, thereby producing significant academic and pastoral contributions.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a textual hermeneutic method derived from the Jewish Midrash tradition. The choice of this method is based on the fact that this research focuses on the narrative of the biblical text (Hosea 1–3) using the classical Jewish exegesis approach, and relates it to the context of modern relational and moral issues. Creswell states that a qualitative approach is suitable for interpreting the meaning of texts, symbols, and religious social actions within a specific context. Meanwhile, the hermeneutic method allows researchers to see how texts are interpreted contextually and creatively from their original context to that of modern readers. (Snelson, 2016). The hermeneutic method used refers to the concept of Midrashic hermeneutics, which is a way of interpreting biblical texts creatively and contextually according to the needs of the community, as explained by (Neusner, 1990) and (Boyarin, 1994). The research procedure is carried out through several stages. First, the researcher conducts a textual-descriptive analysis of the Hosea 1–3 narrative by examining its structure, symbols, and narrative motifs. Second, the researcher identifies several Midrashic interpretations related to the Hosea-Gomer story found in works such as Midrash Rabbah, Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, and several Targumim as primary sources of Midrashic interpretation.

Third, a comparative analysis is conducted between the results of Midrash readings and contemporary issues of relations and morality, particularly those related to the values of loyalty, social stigma, gender roles, and forgiveness in modern relationships. Gadamer in *Truth and Method* refers to this method as the fusion of horizons, which is the meeting between the horizon of meaning of the original text and the horizon of the present reader's reality (Gadamer, 2004). The validity of the data is obtained through the technique of source triangulation by comparing classical Midrash interpretations, modern biblical literature, and contemporary social data related to issues of relations and morality. This is done to maintain the validity of the analysis

and ensure the connection between the text, interpretative tradition, and contemporary context (Patton, 2002). Thus, this research is expected to produce an alternative interpretation that not only relies on classical textual traditions but also responds to social-religious relational issues in the modern era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation Debate on Hosea's Command to Marry a Prostitute (Hosea 1:2)

One of the most controversial parts of studying the Old Testament is the text that reads, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." (Hosea 1:2). Many biblical interpreters have long debated this command, both in terms of its literal meaning and its theological and moral consequences. One group considers it literally-historically, and the other considers it allegorically-symbolically. They form two major groups in this discussion. The literal-historical interpretation is the first perspective of the pro side. According to this group, God's command to Hosea is entirely literal, and Hosea married a woman with a background as a prostitute or harlot. According to Stuart in *Commentary on the Word of the Bible: Hosea–Jonah*, there is no strong evidence in the text indicating that the command is allegorical. (Stuart, 1987). For example, the symbolic commands to the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 20:24) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 4–5), he says that the personal lives of the prophets were often used as a way to convey God's message directly in the real world.

Dearman also supports this opinion by stating that Hosea's marital life was a prophetic act, or a real action of the prophet, intended to demonstrate the direct relationship between God and Israel. Although the command was morally shocking in ancient Hebrew culture, the purpose of the command was to show how Israel was spiritually unfaithful (Andrew Dearman, 2010). According to Andersen and Freedman, the term "eshet zenunim," which means a promiscuous woman, describes Gomer's morality both before and during the marriage (Andersen, F. I., 1980). They claim that Hosea's act of redeeming Gomer after she was caught in adultery reinforces the literal reading of this story.

Meanwhile, the opposing views or those with allegorical and symbolic interpretations. The opposing group argues that God's command in Hosea 1:2 should not be understood literally because it contradicts the moral principles of the Torah (Lev 21:7, 9, 13–14). Therefore, they interpret this story as an allegory or prophetic parable. Keil & Delitzsch in *Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets* state that the story of Hosea and Gomer is not a historical event, but rather a prophetic symbolism. According to them, Israel was in a state of moral decay so severe that God used extreme parables to convey His message (Keil & Delitzsch, 2014). They support the view that the term *eshet zenunim* can be interpreted as the nation of Israel spiritually committing adultery through the worship of Baal. Mays even stated that a literal reading would create serious ethical and theological problems because it is impossible for God to command His prophet to do something forbidden in the Torah (Mays, 1969). Therefore, according to Mays, this narrative is purely a prophetic allegory, with Gomer as the personification of Israel. In Jewish tradition, Targum Jonathan on Hosea 1:2 also avoids the literal mention of Gomer as

a harlot (Hornsby, 1999). Neusner notes that the Midrash and Targum traditions place greater emphasis on the moral-spiritual value of this story rather than its historical facts, to maintain the moral consistency of the Torah (Neusner, 1990).

The third view is from the group of moderate perspectives with a combinative approach. Some scholars attempt to bridge both poles with a moderate approach. Yee in *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea* states that even though Hosea truly married a morally problematic woman, the story has been shaped and arranged in such a way within the literary tradition to convey an allegorical message. (Yee, 1996). According to Yee, the historical events that may have occurred have been transformed into a theological narrative that emphasizes the meaning of the relationship between God and His people. Chisholm also offers this approach, suggesting that it is highly likely that Hosea married Gomer, who later fell into unfaithful behavior. (Chisholm, 1993). Thus, the text of Hosea 1–3 contains both historical and allegorical dimensions. God's command can be understood as an extreme prophetic action to convey a message about divine faithfulness that transcends the people's transgressions. The significance of this interpretative debate is important because it concerns not only the interpretation of the text but also the understanding of God's character and the ethics of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Can God command actions that are ethically questionable according to the Torah? Or, do prophetic narratives often use extreme symbolism to convey theological messages? This question remains open in biblical studies. Goulder assesses that this tension becomes a distinctive characteristic of the early prophets' books, which often use symbolic actions to criticize the people's disloyalty both socially and religiously. (Goulder, 1983). Therefore, the discourse on the interpretation of Hosea 1:2 remains relevant for contemporary ethical and theological readings.

The Marriage of Hosea and Gomer in Midrash Tradition

The marriage of the prophet Hosea to Gomer is a symbolic narrative rich in theological meaning in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the Book of Hosea, chapter 1. In the Midrash tradition, this event is not merely understood literally, but as an allegory of the relationship between God and the people of Israel. Midrash Rabbah emphasizes that God's command to Hosea to marry a harlot is a response to Hosea's hard-heartedness towards the sinful people of Israel. (Subramani, 2022). Thus, this marriage becomes a concrete symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness and simultaneously a manifestation of God's love that continuously strives for restoration. (Neusner, 1990). Midrash also expands this narrative by stating that Hosea's actions were not merely ordinary prophetic acts, but rather forms of existential participation in divine suffering. Hosea 1:2 states that Gomer is not merely a symbol of sin, but also a pedagogical tool that demonstrates God's emotional attachment to His people, despite their guilt (Hosea 1:2). Thus, through this marriage, Hosea becomes an extension of God's paradoxical love, loving despite being betrayed. (Fishbane, 1985).

The Midrash tradition also examines the names of Hosea and Gomer's children, which were designated by God as representations of symbolic punishment. However, rabbis such as Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel observed that the change in the meanings of these names in Hosea 2 signifies an impending process of restoration. These names are not merely historical markers,

but become part of the prophetic narrative that depicts the dynamics of the relationship between judgment and forgiveness in the history of God's people's salvation (Moon, 2015). Finally, Hosea's marriage to Gomer is understood in the Midrash as a profound form of theological communication between God and His people, transcending moral and social boundaries. This prophetic action indicates that divine love can penetrate the realm of human fallibility and generate new hope through restoration. Greenberg states that the relationship between Hosea and Gomer demonstrates that divine loyalty is redemptive, not transactional (Greenberg, 2001). Therefore, from the Midrash perspective, this marriage serves as a symbol that evokes the theological awareness that God remains faithful even though His people are unfaithful.

Characteristics and Theory of Midrash Exegesis

Midrash is a form of rabbinic exegesis that developed from the first century to the Middle Ages, which seeks to address textual issues using a hermeneutic method based on oral tradition. According to (Neusner, 1990) Midrash combines literal, allegorical, and homiletic approaches that aim not only to explain the text but also to make it relevant to the context of the Jewish community at that time. In terms of methodology, Boyarin mentions that Midrash operates on the principle that biblical texts are polysemous, meaning they have multiple valid meanings, and interpreters have the authority to creatively explore these meanings while remaining rooted in the framework of Jewish theology. (Boyarin, 1994). The marriage of Hosea and Gomer in the Midrash is viewed not as a literal story, but as a prophetic drama that depicts the symbolic relationship between God and Israel. In Midrash Rabbah (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:1) and Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, Gomer is not seen merely as a harlot, but as a personification of unfaithful Israel. (Neusner, 1990). The Midrash avoids a literal reading because it contradicts the norms of prophetic sanctity and the Torah law that prohibits a prophet from marrying a harlot (Leviticus 21:7, 9). Neusner explains that the rabbis read this marriage allegorically to convey the message of God's faithful love, even though His people commit spiritual adultery. In the Midrash Tanhuma Buber, God is depicted as a husband who continues to love and forgive even though His wife, Israel, commits adultery with idol worship.

In theory, Midrash interpretation is based on the concept of PaRDeS, an acronym for Peshat (literal meaning), Remez (implicit hint), Derash (homiletic interpretation), and Sod (mystical meaning). Fraade notes that in the case of Hosea, Midrash interpretation primarily operates at the Derash level, which involves developing meanings behind the literal text (Fraade, 2011). Meanwhile, Sperber emphasizes that this method allows the rabbis to address the tension between the Torah law and the problematic narrative by making the event a spiritual symbol. (Sperber, 1998). Thus, Hosea's marriage is not understood as a problematic ethical action, but rather as a metaphor for the divine relationship with His people. In Midrash Rabbah Hosea 1, Gomer is often identified with Israel. The name Gomer itself is interpreted to derive from the Hebrew word *gamar*, which means "to complete" or "to do fully," symbolizing the nation of Israel that completely engages in idolatry. On the other hand, Goodman explains that in the Midrash, Gomer is made a symbol of a nation that frequently changes its gods, yet remains within the grace of God. The story of Gomer's redemption in Hosea 3 is interpreted as a prophecy about the restoration of Israel after the exile. (Goodman, 2007).

The Relationship of Midrash with the Social Context

Midrash in the rabbinic Jewish tradition is understood not only as a literal interpretation of the Scriptures but also as a hermeneutical tool closely related to the social dynamics of the Jewish people throughout various historical periods. One of the most interesting examples is how the Midrash depicts the story of the prophet Hosea's marriage to Gomer as a representation of the socio-religious issues of the people of Israel, especially after the Babylonian exile. (Liang, 2009). Graves emphasizes that many Midrash interpretations were created in response to the actual social situations of the Jewish community. Midrash becomes a tool for creative dialogue between text and reality, where stories from the Scriptures are used to express moral and ethical values relevant to the social situations being faced. (GRAVES, 2011). In this situation, the story of Hosea is considered not only as a prophecy about Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh but also as a symbol of the identity and moral conflicts of the Jewish community during the diaspora. Midrash is very important for preserving religious values and enhancing the social awareness of the community. According to Kalman, Midrash is a discursive space where rabbis transform sacred texts into useful messages in terms of theology and social ethics. *Pesikta Rabbati*, a homiletic book written around the 9th century CE, is a relevant Midrash in this regard. It interprets the story of Gomer's infidelity as a warning to the people of Israel not to get caught up in contemporary idolatrous practices. After reading the Midrashic texts, idols are no longer just statues or pagan gods. They are now symbols of greed, wealth, and the desire to control worldly power, all factors that can hinder the faithful from being loyal to God. (Elman, Y., & Gershoni, 2016). In his homily on Hosea, *Pesikta Rabbati* warns that Gomer's infidelity illustrates the danger of moral deviation that occurs when people love wealth and social status more than their relationship with God. In addition to preserving the prophetic meaning of the original text, this reading provides a moral and instructional message for the Jewish community struggling to maintain its identity in a foreign culture. As shown by Rubenstein (2018), Midrash not only helps preserve tradition but also helps culture adapt to changing social challenges. (Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 2002).

The relationship between Midrash and the Jewish social context becomes increasingly evident when the rabbis use symbolic stories like Hosea-Gomer to teach the importance of spiritual loyalty and community solidarity. In the post-exilic situation, the Jewish community experienced significant identity pressure due to the influence of foreign cultures and the dominating political system. Through Midrashic interpretation, religious leaders sought to reframe biblical narratives to provide moral fortitude and spiritual strength to a community experiencing social and spiritual disorientation. (Fonrobert, 2020). Furthermore, Midrash is not only didactic but also participatory. Rabbinic interpretations of the story of Hosea often involve collective interpretations that voice the community's concerns and hopes. According to Halbertal, Midrash functions as an arena for dialogue between text, tradition, and social reality, allowing the Jewish community to construct new narratives about its identity and existence amidst the challenges of the times. (Halbertal, 2021).

Moreover, the allegorical reading of Gomer's infidelity serves as a reflective instrument that encourages the community to reevaluate their life priorities. In a modern context as well, this Midrash message remains relevant. Idolatry no longer takes the form of statues, but rather worldly values that displace the role of God in human life. Midrash reminds us that greed for

material wealth, power, and popularity is a form of contemporary idolatry that can undermine the moral order of the faithful community (Schäfer, 2022). Thus, the relationship of Midrash with the Jewish social context is not only textual but also transformative. The story of Hosea and Gomer, reinterpreted in the Midrash, becomes a pedagogical tool to build community morality while maintaining spiritual integrity amidst social change.

The Meaning of Hosea's Marriage to the Prostitute in Midrash Commentaries

The narrative about God's command to the prophet Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman (Hebrew: *eshet zenunim*) in Hosea 1:2 is one of the most controversial parts of the Hebrew Bible text. In rabbinic Jewish tradition, particularly through Midrash, this event is not understood literally, but as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. Midrash plays a crucial role in shaping the theological, moral, and social meanings of this story for the ancient Jewish community and has become part of the Jewish hermeneutical heritage to this day. First, in Midrash Rabbah Shir HaShirim 1:1 and Hosea Rabbah, Hosea's marriage is interpreted as an allegory of the relationship between God as the husband and Israel as the unfaithful wife. (Neusner, 1990). Israel's unfaithfulness is manifested in idolatry and disobedience to the covenant. He emphasized that the Midrash interpretation views Hosea's actions not as a literal command that violates the Torah, but as a prophetic dramatization of Israel's moral condition. Both are related to the midrashic interpretation in the case of Hosea, where the harlot woman is interpreted as a symbol of the infidelity of the people of Israel. In Pesikta de-Rav Kahana and Pesikta Rabbati, Gomer is depicted as a representation of Israel "committing adultery" with foreign gods. The name Gomer itself, in the Midrash, is linked to the root word *gamar*, which means "to complete," symbolizing that Israel has fully engaged in idol worship. Goodman mentions that in this tradition, Gomer's infidelity is a metaphor for Israel's dire spiritual condition, but God still opens a path for selection. (Goodman, 2007). Then thirdly, as a Symbolic Prophetic Act. The rabbis interpret Hosea's act of marrying a harlot as *ma'aseh navi* (the symbolic act of a prophet), a prophetic action that symbolizes the divine message to the people. (Fraade, 2011). Fraade explains that in rabbinic tradition, symbolic actions like this are commonly practiced to concretely illustrate the spiritual condition of Israel.

Fourth, to emphasize how God's Faithful Love. The Midrash emphasizes that although Israel is unfaithful, God's faithful love (*chesed*) remains eternal. In Midrash Tanhuma Buber Hosea 1, it is emphasized that just as Hosea continues to seek the unfaithful Gomer, so does God continue to seek Israel. This is in line with the concept of *teshuvah* (repentance) in Jewish tradition. Sperber asserts that this narrative is used by the rabbis to demonstrate the values of forgiveness and repentance within the Jewish community (Sperber, 1998). Fifth, as Social and Religious Critique. Midrash also uses this story to criticize the moral decline of the people of Israel, particularly in terms of idolatry and social injustice. Heinemann (1970) notes that the rabbis used this story as a mirror for the people living in the tension of Hellenistic-Roman culture and beginning to abandon the values of the Torah (Mitsumoto & Chad, 2012). Sixth as a Tool for Moral Education. The rabbis used this story for moral education. Levine (2000) notes

that the story of Hosea and Gomer in the Midrash is often used in synagogue teachings as a moral reminder about the consequences of turning away from God's law and the importance of repentance (Levine, 2013).

The Theological Implications of Hosea's Marriage to Gomer in Midrash Tradition on Issues of Relationship and Morality

The narrative of Hosea's marriage to Gomer in the book of Hosea 1–3 becomes one of the prophetic stories that contains a profound theological message about God's relationship with His people. In the Midrash tradition, this story receives allegorical and symbolic interpretations that not only reflect the spiritual situation of Israel in the past but also provide a hermeneutic legacy relevant to the context of human relationships and morality today. First, the implications of Hosea's marriage in the Midrashic interpretation about contemporary moral issues of fidelity in relationships despite infidelity. In Midrash Rabbah Shir HaShirim 1:1 and Hosea Rabbah, the marriage of Hosea and Gomer is understood as an allegory of God's unwavering love despite Israel's spiritual infidelity. This message offers an important theological reflection for human relationships today, where the value of loyalty in personal and communal relationships is often fragile. Neusner states that through this story, the Midrash emphasizes that true love is not measured by the perfection of the partner, but by the sincerity and steadfastness of commitment, both in the bond of marriage and social-religious relations. (Neusner, 1990). The two theological implications of the Hosea narrative on contemporary moral relations are Repentance as the Path to Reconciliation. Midrash emphasizes that forgiveness and reconciliation are the main principles of the relationship between God and Israel. Hosea, who accepted Gomer back after her unfaithfulness (Hos. 3:1-5), symbolizes that a broken relationship can still be restored through repentance (*teshuvah*). In the contemporary context, this serves as an important reflection in various forms of relationships—marriage, friendship, or social connections—that the opportunity for reconciliation remains open. It emphasizes that Midrash positions repentance as an integral element in human relationships, not merely a spiritual concept. (Sperber, 1998).

The three theological implications of the Hosea marriage narrative about current moral issues include a form of critique against Social Moral Deviance. In Pesikta Rabbati, Gomer's infidelity is not merely interpreted as a sexual transgression, but as a symbol of Israel's collective moral deviation. This serves as a relevant socio-religious critique of the current situation, where public morality is often degraded by materialism, individualism, and abuse of power. Heinemann (1970) stated that the Midrash interpretation makes the story of Hosea a social critique that reminds the people not to turn away from true ethical values. Fourth, the Value of Restoration and Hope. The Midrash tradition views Hosea's action of buying back Gomer (Hos. 3:2) as a depiction of God's restoration of His people. This restoration is not only spiritual but also social. In the context of contemporary relational issues, this message teaches that broken relationships do not have to be ended, but can be repaired with moral awareness and repentance. Fraade mentions that Midrash interpretation always opens a space for hope even in conditions of moral decline, which is highly relevant for the modern world filled with fragile relationships (Fraade, 2011). Fifth, related to the Metaphor of Divine Relationship in

Human Relationships. Midrash uses the relationship between Hosea and Gomer as a metaphor for divine relationships that can serve as a model for human relationships: that love, forgiveness, and commitment are the foundations of true relationships. Boyarin argues that this reading conveys a universal theological message about relationships based on spiritual values, rather than merely material or emotional aspects (Boyarin, 1994).

CONCLUSION

The marriage of Hosea and Gomer in Midrash tradition is not merely a story from the past, but a theological message that continues to live on and remain relevant. The issues of loyalty, repentance, social criticism, restoration, moral education, and divine relationship become timeless messages that transcend the boundaries of time, highly significant for contemporary human relations and morality. The study of the narrative of Hosea's marriage to Gomer in the Midrash tradition shows that this text is understood symbolically and allegorically, not merely as a literal historical account. Through the Midrashic approach, the prophetic marriage is interpreted as a depiction of the relationship between God and Israel, where Gomer's infidelity becomes a metaphor for idolatry and Israel's moral transgressions, while Hosea's faithfulness reflects God's unwavering love. The Midrashic tradition not only interprets this story theologically but also uses it as an instrument for moral education and social critique. Hosea's act of redeeming Gomer becomes a symbol of divine forgiveness and restoration for the repentant, while also affirming the value of teshuvah as a fundamental principle in the relationship between humans and God, as well as among themselves. The rabbis used this story to educate the ancient Jewish community to uphold the values of loyalty, forgiveness, and repentance. Theologically, this story becomes a strong statement about the divine relationship that is full of steadfast love despite being faced with the betrayal of the people.

REFERENCES

- Andersen, F. I., & F. (1980). *Hosea: A New Translation*. https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Hosea.html?id=D0rvxqeaaj&redir_esc=y#:~:text=Penerbit,-Doubleday%2C,-1980.
- Andrew Dearman. (2010). *The Book Of Hosea*. Eerdmans. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0922.2012.01599_7.x
- Boyarin, D. (1994). *Intertextuality And The Reading Of Midrash*. Indiana University Press.
- Chisholm, R. B. (1993). *Interpreting The Minor Prophets*. Zondervan.
- Elman, Y., & Gershoni, H. (2016). *The Cambridge Companion To The Talmud And Rabbinic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fishbane, M. (1985). *Biblical Interpretation In Ancient Israel*. Oxford University Press.
- Fonrobert, C. E. (2020). *Jewish Hermeneutics In Late Antiquity: Midrash And Its Cultural Context*. Brill.
- Fraade, S. (2011). *Legal Fictions: Studies Of Law And Narrative In The Discursive Worlds Of Ancient Jewish Sectarians And Sages*. Brill.

- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth And Method* (2nd Ed.). Continuum.
- Goodman, M. (2007). *Judaism In The Roman World*. Brill.
- Goulder, M. D. (1983). *The Psalms Of The Sons Of Korah*.
- GRAVES, M. (2011). Scholar And Advocate: The Stories Of Moses In Midrash “Exodus Rabbah.” *Bulletin For Biblical Research*, 21(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26424411>
- Greenberg, M. (2001). *Biblical Prose Prayer*. University Of California Press.
- Halbental, M. (2021). *The People Of The Book And The World It Made*. Harvard University Press.
- Hornsby, T. J. (1999). Israel Has Become A Worthless Thing’: Re-Reading Gomer In Hosea 1–3. *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament*, 24(82), 115–128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929902408207>
- Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. (2002). *Rabbinic Stories*. Paulist Press.
- Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2014). *Commentary On The Old Testament*. Titus Books.
- Levine, A.-J. (2013). Reflections On Reflections: Jesus, Judaism, And Jewish-Christian Relations. *Studies In Christian-Jewish Relations*, 8(1).
- Liang, W.-H. (2009). Is She Not My Wife, And Am I Not Her Husband? *Horizons In Biblical Theology*, 31(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187122009X419916>
- Mays, J. L. (1969). *Hosea: A Commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Mitsumoto, H., & Chad, D. A. (2012). Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. In W. G. Bradley, R. B. Daroff, G. M. Fenichel, & J. Jankovic (Eds.), *Neurology In Clinical Practice* (6th Ed., Pp 2071–2088). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Moon, J. (2015). Honor And Shame In Hosea’s Marriages. *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament*, 39(3), 335–351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089215577592>
- Neusner, J. (1990). What Is Midrash? (Guides To Biblical Scholarship: New Testament Guides). *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament*, 15(47), 119–119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929001504715>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research And Evaluation Methods* (Vol. 3). Sage.
- Redelinghuys, C. J. (2018). Interpretation, Ethics, And The Complex Relationship Between A Prophet And An אֲשֶׁת זְנוּיִם. *Acta Theologica, Supp*(26), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/Actat.Supp26.6>
- Schäfer, P. (2022). *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism And Christianity Shaped Each Other*. Princeton University Press. Princeton University Press.
- Snelson, C. L. (2016). Qualitative And Mixed Methods Social Media Research. *International Journal Of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1), 160940691562457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915624574>
- Sperber, D. (1998). *The City In Roman Palestine*. Oxford University Press.
- Stuart, D. (1987). *Hosea-Jonah: Word Biblical Commentary*. Word Books.

- Subramani, R. D. N. (2022). The Imagery Of Love In The Book Of Hosea (Hosea 3:1-5): A Word Study. *BIBLICAL STUDIES JOURNAL*, 04(01), 33–59. <https://doi.org/10.54513/BSJ.2022.4103>
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A Secular Age*. Harvard University Press.
- Yee, G. A. (1996). *Composition And Tradition In The Book Of Hosea*. Scholars Press.