

Yhwh: A Storm-God of Hosea? The Beginning of Yahwism in Light of the Book of Hosea

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ABSTRACT

The original profile of Yhwh is a much-discussed issue of research, Yhwh being defined mostly as either an El-like or a Baal-like deity. Scholars are investigating older texts of the Hebrew Bible that might reflect relevant imagery. The Book of Hosea is a neglected corpus in this discussion. However, the book contains North-Israelite traditions and concepts from the 8th century BCE that preserve and reflect an earlier stage of the Yhwh-cult. If the imagery of the book could be traced back to a single, fundamental god-type, that could be a hint at the original character of Yhwh. This article ventures to catalog, analyze, and evaluate the imagery of the book, to ultimately propose an original god-type for Yhwh.

Keywords: origins, Yahwism, imagery, storm-god, Hosea, bull

1. Introduction

It is a widely accepted view in the history of religion of ancient Israel and Judah that the concept of the one supreme, universal, “monotheistic” God is the result of a very complex and lengthy development.¹ The different characteristics and traits of Yhwh were not attributed to him during

¹ For a survey of the main reconstructions and theories see for example Robert Gnuse, “The Emergence of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Recent Scholarship”, *Religion* 29 (1999), 315–336; James S. Anderson, “El, Yahweh, and Elohim: The Evolution of God in Israel and its Theological

one time or in one region alone, instead they were transferred gradually from other deities over the centuries. As such, one can look for the starting point of this very complex development to shape a fully completed reconstruction of Israelite religion. In the scientific study of religions we often typify the different gods of the different religions according to their areas of responsibility. Hence, we speak about sea-gods, gods and goddesses of love, creator gods, as well as many other types. But what god-type did Yhwh originally belong to at the beginning of Yahwism? In this regard there is no consensus at all. In this paper, after a short sketch of the research history, I will aim to answer this question based on the Book of Hosea.

2. Currents in the research

Until the first half of the 20th century CE, Yhwh had often been held as a special case among the deities of the Ancient Near Eastern religions, to whom a matchless and incomparable profile was ascribed, which made him much more than the other deities of the ANE. Such assertions can be found in many classical works of biblical theology.² These works emphasized the special

Implications”, *ExpTim* 128 (2017), 1–7; Michael J. Stahl, “The historical origins of the biblical god Yahweh”, *Religion Compass* 14 (2020), 1–14; and the articles in the collected volume : Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte (eds.), *The Origins of Yahwism* (BZAW, 484; Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

² William Henry Bennett, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1895), 10–11; Andrew Bruce Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 58–67; Charles Fox Burney, *Outlines of the Old Testament Theology* (New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1906), 78–79; Eduard König, *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1912), 147–174; Walter Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I.* (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz Verlag, 1957), 110–130; Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987), 17–48.

bond and unity between Yhwh and his people, focusing on the Yhwh's encounter with the patriarchs, and later on the covenant with the people of Israel. While the other gods would manifest themselves merely in nature, Yhwh was the lord of history who would save Israel and lead his people out of Egyptian bondage. This would be the so-called *Heilsgeschichte*. This view is based mainly on the biblical depiction of religiosity, in which the "patriarchal" period plays a key role in the reconstruction of Yahwism.³ However, investigations on the Torah have pointed out that the sections in question are not reminiscences of an ancient period of Israel's history, but instead are perceptions and compositions of significantly younger eras, and also showed that the religion of the fathers as the starting point of Yahwism never existed in this form.⁴ This gap between the history of Israel and the story of the Hebrew Bible needed to be reconciled by the real religious context in which Israel indeed existed. Many scholars have sought to find the required references in the Ugaritic texts, which they considered to be the record of Canaanite Religion *par excellence*. In the myths and epics of these texts we can find detailed stories about El, Baal, Ashera and other gods mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and, in the enthusiasm of the discovery, many treated these gods recorded in the Ugaritic texts as identical to those of the Hebrew Bible. So began the so-called "panugaritism" putting forward

³ Albrecht Alt, "Der Gott der Väter", in idem. *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: I. C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1968), 1–78.

⁴ Eward J. Young, "The God of the Fathers", *WThJ* 3 (1940), 25–40; Matthias Köckert, *Vätergott und Väterverheißungen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben*, FRLANT 142 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988); John F. Healey: "The Nabatean 'God of the Fathers'" in *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms*, ed. Katharine Julia Dell, Graham I. Davies and Yee Von Koh, VTS 135 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 45–57; Stahl, "Origins", 2.

the idea that “the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic texts are to be regarded as one literature”.⁵ As a result, Yhwh was brought into association with the Ugaritic “Canaanite” gods and was typified according to the similarity to, and difference from, these gods. Even though over the course of time the understanding of the relationship between the Ugaritic texts and the Hebrew Bible has become better understood and the differences between the two have been better articulated, it has nevertheless become common to define Yhwh’s profile in relation to the Ugaritic gods.

Many have seen in Yhwh a good creator God, similar to El. There are several main supporting arguments for this. He is called El in various texts without any polemic, and furthermore, there is no polemical voice against El at all in the Hebrew Bible.⁶ He is like El, gracious and compassionate.⁷ The name יהוה can be interpreted as a “causative imperfect of the Canaanite-Proto-Hebrew verb *hwy*, ‘to be’,”⁸ which would express his creative abilities, one who causes to be. His name, יהוה יצבאות (1Sam 1:11; 4:4; 1Kgs 18:15 etc.), should be

⁵ Harold Luis Ginsberg, “The Ugaritic Texts and Textual Criticism”, *JBL* 62 (1943), 109. For a fuller discussion of the topic, see Christopher B. Hayes, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*, FAT 79 (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 91–132; Aaron Tugendhaft, “Babel-Bible-Baal” in *Creation and Chaos*, ed. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 190–198; Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 259–260.

⁶ Gunnar Östborn, *Yahweh and Baal*, LUÅ, 51 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1956), 11–16.

⁷ Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic/Apollos, 2007), 157–159.

⁸ Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 57–75; Johannes C. De Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*, BETL 91 (Leuven: University Press, 1997), 223–335.

interpreted accordingly as “he creates the (divine) hosts”.⁹ As a matter of fact, in this case the name Yhwh would be no more than another name of El.¹⁰ In the texts from Kuntillet Ajrud¹¹ Yhwh is paired with Ashera who in the Ugaritic myths is the consort of the high god, El. A slightly different variation of this theory is the claim that Yhwh and El were identified at an early stage, long before the confrontation with Baal emerged.¹²

Nonetheless, there are many biblical motifs around Yhwh that show similarities with the storm-god Baal. First, the Yhwh-name could be derived not only from the “Canaanite-Proto-Hebrew verb *hwy* ‘to be’,” but as Julius Wellhausen and Ernst Axel Knauf proposed, also from Arabic where *hwy* also means “to blow”.¹³ This would express one of the main activities of a storm-god who makes wind and causes rain. Furthermore, there are many theophanies where

⁹ Alberto R. W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, BJS 8 (Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 232.

¹⁰ Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1904), 26; John H. Hayes, *Interpreting Ancient Israelite History, Prophecy, and Law* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 64; Cross, *Myth*, 66.

¹¹ For these texts see: Ze’ev Meshel (ed.), *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012).

¹² Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, SHCANE 7 (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1996), 220–228; idem, “Yahweh” in *DDD* (1999), 910–917; Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (London/ Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 24–25; William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 254–267; John L. McLaughlin, *What Are They Saying about Ancient Israelite Religion?* (New York: Paulist, 2016), 6; Antti Laato, *The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology*, LHBOTS 661 (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2018), 122. 189–275.

¹³ Wellhausen, *Geschichte*, 25 n 2; Ernst Axel Knauf, “Yahwe” *VT* 34 (1984), 467–472.

Yhwh acts and comes to judgement in ways comparable to Baal.¹⁴ When Yhwh goes out the earth trembles,¹⁵ the heaven drops (Judg 5:4; Ps 68:9). He combats the Sea (Ps 74:13; 78:13; Isa 51:10 etc.) like Baal does Yammu (KTU 1.1–1.2).¹⁶ He is called Cloud-rider in several texts (Ps 68:5*; 104:3; Deut 33:26) similar to Baal in the Baal Cycle (KTU 1.2 IV 8; 1.3 II 40; 1.3

¹⁴ Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie*, WMANT 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977); idem, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen*, FRLANT 141 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987).

¹⁵ Based on the Sinai-pericope and -theophany, just like the image of the smoking and melting mountain, Nissim Amzallag thinks Yhwh was as a deity of metallurgy. Nissim Amzallag, “Yahweh, the Canaanite God of Metallurgy?”, *JSOT* 33 (2009), 387–404; Cf. idem, “The Identity of the Emissary of YHWH”, *SJOT* 26 (2012), 123–144; idem, “Some Implications of the Volcanic Theophany of YHWH on His Primeval Identity”, *AO* 12 (2014), 11–38; idem, “Furnace Remelting as the Expression of YHWH’s Holiness”, *JBL* 134 (2015), 233–252; idem, “Moses’ Tent of Meeting—A Theological Interface between Qenite Yahwism and the Israelite Religion”, *SJOT* 33 (2019), 298–317; Jacob Dunn argued, these motifs would resemble the imagery of a volcano and Yhwh was in fact a “fierce volcanic deity”. Jacob E. Dunn, “A God of Volcanoes: Did Yahwism Take Root in Volcanic Ashes?” *JSOT* 38 (2014), 387–424. Cf. Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus*, OLB IV/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 203–205. However, the melting, smoking and trembling mountain is a common motif of the theophanies of all kinds of gods and it is not specific for volcano- or metallurgy-gods. See e.g. Marduk Hymn K 3351 14–16; VAS 10 213 etc. For these texts see: Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 95. 690.

¹⁶ See for these topics: John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Carola Kloos, *Yhwh’s Combat with the Sea* (Amsterdam/Leiden: G. A. Van Oorschot/E. J. Leiden, 1986); Brian D Russel, *The Song of the Sea*, StBL 101 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Joanna Töyräänvuori, *Sea and the Combat Myth*, AOAT 457 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2018); Paul K. K. Cho, *Myth, History, and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

III 38 etc). Yhwh gives rain, provides fertility and rich harvest (2Sam 22:8–16; Ps 29; 65:10–14; 68:34; 104 passim, 135:7; Job 36:27–37:1). The Psalms and the poetic texts (Deut 33; Judg 5) are especially filled with the storm-god imagery that likens Yhwh to Baal.¹⁷ Based on these observations the theory that Yhwh was originally a storm-god of the Baal-Hadad type has gained ground.¹⁸ However, one aspect that cannot easily be integrated into this theory is that in

¹⁷ Cf.: Oswald Loretz, *Ugarit-Texte und Thronbesteigungspsalmen*, UBL 7 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1988); Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, OBO 169 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, JSOTSup 265 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 91–127; Hendrik Pfeiffer, *Jahwes Kommen von Süden*, FRLANT 211 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Reinhard Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott*, BZAW 387 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Steve A. Wiggins, *Weathering the Psalms* (Eugene: Wimpf and Stock Publishers, 2014).

¹⁸ Manfred Weippert, “Jahwe” in *RLA* (1976–1980), 246–253; idem, “Synkretismus und Monotheismus” in *Jahwe und die anderen Götter* FAT 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 1–24; Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 253–255; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, “The Elusive Essence” in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte*, FS: R. Rendtorff, ed. Erhard Blum – Christian Macholz and Ekkehard W. Stegemann (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 393–417; Reiner Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit 1*, GAT 8/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 80–85; Henry O. Thompson, “The Elusive Essence” in *ABD* (1992), 1012; Christian Frevel, *Aschera und der Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch YHWHs*, BBB 94 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 926; Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, JSOTSup 241 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 196–197; Matthias Köckert, “Von einem zum einzigen Gott”, in *BThZ* 15 (1998), 173–174; idem, “YHWH in the Northern and Southern Kingdom”, in *One God – One Cult – One Nation*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, BZAW 405 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 357–394; Izaak J. De Hulster, “A God of the Mountains?”, in *Image, Text, Exegesis*, Izaak J. De Hulster and Joel M. LeMon, LHBOTS 588 (London/New York: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark,

many theophanies Yhwh comes from the South, from Seir, Paran (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4; Hab 3:3) rather than from the North, where the supposed storm god-type resides. Explanations for this discrepancy include the “Berliner theory”, which claims that these texts are literarily related to each other and the march of Yhwh from the South is a postexilic creation,¹⁹ while Yhwh originates, in fact, in the North.²⁰ Martin Leuenberger tried to enforce the Southern provenance of Yhwh with several publications, mainly analyzing the oldest extrabiblical shreds of evidence of Yhwh.²¹ Others have attempted to find a corresponding god-type in the South. Several

2014), 226–250; Angelika Berlejung, “Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel” in *Grundinformation Altes Testament*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 127. 59–192. Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 283–288; Miller, *Religion*, 233; Pfeiffer, *Kommen*, 268.

¹⁹ Pfeiffer, *Kommen*, 258–260.

²⁰ Pfeiffer, *Kommen*, 268; idem, “The Origin of YHWH and its Attestation”, in *The Origins of Yahwism*, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte, BZAW 484 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 115–144. Cf. Müller, *Jahwe*, 72; Matthias Köckert, “Wandlungen Gottes im antiken Israel” *BThZ* 22 (2005), 20 n 43; Christoph Levin, “Das vorstaatliche Israel”, in *Fortschreibungen*, BZAW 316 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 146.

²¹ Martin Leuenberger, “YHWH’s Provenance from the South” in *The Origins of Yahwism*, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte, BZAW 484 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 157–179; idem, “Noch einmal: Jhwh aus dem Süden”, in *Geschichte und Gott*, ed. Michael Meyer-Blanck VWGTh 44 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 267–287. Recently Daniel E. Fleming emphasized the connection of Yhwh with the the Shasu-land in Egyptian texts, however, he sees a localization of this region in the South as unproven. Daniel E. Fleming, *Yahweh before Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 23–66.

scholars propose the correlation with the Edomite Qos,²² or with a Southern inland deity of precipitation, Athtar.²³

Recently many scholars are restraint in terms of the reconstruction of Yhwh's original character. Theodore J. Lewis states, "We simply do not know the historical origin of the deity Yahweh", but he admits, Yhwh "shares many qualities of a storm god".²⁴ Similarly states Daniel E. Fleming that, "conclusions about Yahweh's first profile seem highly tentative" and argues that Yhwh was a name of a political entity near to the Ephraimite highlands, and "If we must imagine early Yahweh to have had a profile, this should follow the pattern of the Sabaeen Almaqah and the Qatabanian 'Amm. These do not appear to have been defined first of all by a place in the natural world, as storm gods or as celestial gods of moon or stars. In their political function, binding people to kings, they became divine leaders, yet they were not intrinsically the primary authorities or patriarchs in the divine world".²⁵ James S. Anderson and Michael J.

²² Theodorus C. Vriezen, "The Edomitic Deity Qaus", *OTS* 14 (1965), 353 n 1; Martin Rose, "Yahweh in Israel – Qaus in Edom", *JSOT* 4 (1977), 28–34; David Noel Freedman and Patrick O'Connor, יהוה in *ThWAT* (1982), 553; Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 69. For a comprehensive study of Qos see Andrew J. Danielson, "On the History and Evolution of Qws: The Portrait of a First Millennium BCE Deity Explored through Community Identity", *JANER* 20 (2020), 113–189.

²³ Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2001), 145–146; idem, "YHWH's Original Character", in *The Origins of Yahwism*, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte, BZAW 484 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 40–41.

²⁴ Lewis, *Origin*, 282. 223.

²⁵ Fleming: Yahweh, 235. 209–210. 274.

Stahl show even more skepticism and do not venture to draw Yhwh's early profile, holding it for obscure.²⁶

As can be seen, there is no consensus about this fundamental question of which god-type Yhwh would have belonged to. For some, it is the etymology of the Yhwh-name which is most important, for others, it is the poetic theophany texts, and each theory has some conclusive points. For many a reconstruction of Yhwh's early profile remains a mystery. In this paper I would like to contribute towards solving this issue by putting together a collection of the imagery found in Hos, and at the end adhere to a theory mentioned above. But first, I will address the question, why and how does the Hos help us to identify the original profile of Yhwh?

3. Hos as a religious-historical source

The Book of Hosea contains many metaphors, allusions, images, and several mentions of Baal (Hos 2:10.15.18.19; 11:2; 13:1), the god-type Yhwh probably belongs to. It is appropriate thus, to take this book as a case study and evaluate it from the point of view of Yhwh's origins. Moreover, the book contains North-Israelite traditions that reflect an older form of religiosity than that of Judah. According to the biblical texts, the Northern cult was a restoration of an earlier form of Yahwism,²⁷ and as such, a North-Israelite prophetic book could

²⁶ James S. Anderson, *Monotheism and YAHWE'S Appropriation of Baal*, LHBOTS 617 (London/New Delhi/New York/Sydney: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2015), 102; Michael J. Stahl, "God's Best 'Frenemy': A New Perspective on YHWH and Baal in Ancient Israel and Judah." *Semitica* 63 (2021), 45–94.

²⁷ Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte*, 190–226; Köckert, "YHWH", 357–394; Berlejung, "Geschichte", 133–149; Römer, *Invention*, 104–140.

afford much interest concerning the construction of an archaic profile of Yhwh.²⁸ However, the question of dating is crucial.

Nowadays there is no consensus about the dating of any biblical text. This means that in the case of Hos there are different theories about the provenance of the book. Some hold it as a completely postexilic work,²⁹ others as a documentation of the oral prophecies of the prophet Hosea from the 8th century BCE,³⁰ and many works are positioned in-between these two interpretations.³¹ In light of this controversy, many scholars regard themselves as agnostics considering the redactional history of Hos.³² Although it is not possible to date all the relevant

²⁸ Anderson and Stahl plea as well for the priority of North-Israelite sources in the reconstruction of Israelite religion. Anderson, *Appropriation*, 110–111; Stahl, *Frenemy*.

²⁹ James M. Bos, *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea*, LHBOTS 580 (London/New Delhi/New York/Sydney: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2013), 164–170.

³⁰ Walter Gisin, *Hosea*, BBB 139 (Leipzig: Philo, 2002), 289–300.

³¹ Gale A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea*, SBLDS 102 (Atlanta: Scholars Press); Marti Nissinen, *Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch*, AOAT 231 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991); Susanne Rudnig-Zelt, *Hoseastudien*, FRLANT 213 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Roman Vielhauer, *Das Werden des Buches Hosea*, BZAW 349 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007). Szabolcs-Ferencz Kató: *Jhwh: der Wettergott Hoseas?*, WMANT 158 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019).

³² Gregory Goswell, “‘David their king’: Kingship in the Prophecy of Hosea”, *JSOT* 42 (2017), 217. The book is evaluated similarly by Jakob Wöhrle who contributed much to the right understanding of the Book of the Twelve as a unity: “[...] angesichts der besonderen Gestalt dieses Buches und der damit einhergehenden Schwierigkeiten innerhalb der alttestamentlichen Forschung [ist] eine Bearbeitung des gesamten Textbestands nicht realisierbar.” Jacob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetensbuches*, BZAW 360 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 229.

texts,³³ one can make use of Hos without a thorough literary analysis. If we analyze the imagery of God in the whole book, the reconstructed profile, which contains many motifs of many god-types, is likely to be dominated by the characteristics of only one god-type. If we accept that, and if we further assume that some layers of the book go back to the 8th century BCE, according to the principle of deductive reasoning the imagery of the book as a whole has to correspond to the imagery of the oldest literary layers, even if we don't detect them explicitly. Additionally, the catalog of concepts about Yhwh from whole book also must represent 8th century imagery from the Northern Kingdom, which again reflects archaic features of early Yahwism. In this way, through Hos, we have a tiny window into the early conceptualization of Yhwh. Accordingly, the next task is to put together the catalog of this book and evaluate it alongside a consideration of the dominant characteristics in the profile of Yhwh.

4. Motifs of the storm-god in Hosea

If we list all the characteristics of Yhwh from the book it is clear, first of all, that Yhwh appears as the God of Israel, as their “national god”. Similar to other ANE texts, in this writing the “national god” controls the history, and all events happening to the people. Yhwh is responsible for the kingless phase of Israel's history (Hos 3:4–5), he criticizes the illegitimate king making (Hos 8:4), brings up Assyria against Israel, and threatens exile (cf. Hos 9:3; 10:5–6; 11:5; 12:2). The attack from the enemies is the punishment of Yhwh on Israel, and the restoration is his mercy. However, these functions of Yhwh originate not from a god-type but

instead from the structure and inner dynamic of the religion. It is always the “national god” who arranges the fate of his people, and these actions do not indicate the type of the deity.³⁴

When looking for hints of a certain god-type, much attention should be paid to the chapters where Baal is described alongside Yhwh. Primarily, ch. 2 is particularly important as it contains a lawsuit³⁵ of Yhwh against his unfaithful wife Israel who betrayed him with Baal, or subsequently, with the Baals (plural). The first question to be addressed is who this Baal is. Some interpret the name, and its occurrence in plural, as a cipher for a compromised Yhwh worship in which Baal is the name of the illegitimate cultic elements of the religion.³⁶ In

³⁴ The “national god” of the Philistines is Dagan, of Moab it is Chemosh, of Ammon it is Milkom, of Edom it is Qos etc. Even in the biblical texts they are Yhwh’s counterparts (Num 21:29; Judg 11:24; Jer 49:1.3*) whereas in the extrabiblical evidence they seem to play the same role in the life of the people as Yhwh for Israel. Cf. Reinhard G. Kratz, “Reste hebräischer Heidentums am Beispiel der Psalmen”, *NAWG* 2 (2004), 36; Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 119–130; Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nation* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 35–74.

³⁵ Hos 2:4 begins with the imperative רִיב. In earlier studies, based on the semantics of the Hebrew verb, scholars assumed a prophetic genre, the “covenant lawsuit”/ “ריב pattern” that can be also found in Am 3:1–4:3; Mic 1:2–7; Jer 2:1–37 etc. Nowadays, this label is used more carefully because these texts could simply reflect the concept of Yhwh as a judge, or as a king. Cf. Christian Stettler, *Das letzte Gericht*, FAT 2/299 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 32–34.

³⁶ Jörg Jeremias, “Der Begriff „Baal“ im Hoseabuch und seine Wirkungsgeschichte”, in *Hosea und Amos*, FAT 13 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 89–90; Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea*, FAT 2/14 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 49; Caitlon Hubler, ““No longer will you call me ‘my Ba’al’”: Hosea’s polemic and the semantics of “Ba”al’ in 8th century B.C.E. Israel”, *JSOT* 44 (2020), 610–623; Rudnig-Zelt, *Hoseastudien*, 12–13; Jutta Krispenz, “Idolatry, Apostasy,

contrast, Alice A. Keefe and Brad E. Kelle propose that the Baals here are none other than the political alliances of Israel whom the people trusted more than Yhwh.³⁷ However, there is also a possibility that the Baal of Hos stands for the storm-god and 8/the local forms of this deity as well.³⁸ In order to determine the identity of the hoseanic Baal, three observations could help us: 1. these Baals have days and feasts (Hos 2:15); 2. incense is burnt for them (Hos 2:15);³⁹ and 3. the gifts received from these Baals are literarily attested in the religious field of the storm-god. These observations all point in the same direction, that is that the text could be interpreted more easily when Baal stands for the storm-god.

The plural form of the proper noun Baal is unusual, but if we look at the Ugaritic rituals, it becomes clear that many Baals receive sacrifice. In the god list of KTU 1.47 and 1.118 there

Prostitution: Hosea’s Struggle against the Cult” in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, ANEM 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 9–29; 28.

³⁷ Alice A. Keefe, *Woman’s Body and the Social Body in Hosea*, JSOTSup 338 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 122–134; Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2*, SBLAcBib 20 (Atlanta Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 164–166. 199–200.

³⁸ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 52; Yuon Ho Chung, *The Sin of the Calf*, LHBOTS 523 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 168; John Day, “Hosea and the Baal Cult”, in *Prophecy and the Prophets in the Ancient Israel*, LHBOTS 531 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 206. 202–224.

³⁹ Brad E. Kelle reads the whole chapter politically. While the Baals would be political alliances, the verb קטר + ל would express, as part of the suzerainty relationship, the gift of the vassal to the suzerain’s gods for maintaining good relations. Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 261–264. However, קטר + ל in the OT occurs always with a deity as the object of the action. Cf. Ex 20:30; 2Kgs 18:4; 22:17; 23:5 etc.

are seven *b'lm*⁴⁰ and according to the ritual KTU 1.148, they receive as sacrifice an ox and a sheep. The identity of these Baals is clarified by KTU 1.130, where Baal of Ugarit (*b'l ugri*) and Baal of Aleppo (*b'l ḥlb*) are mentioned. In light of these texts, it is very likely that many local manifestations of Baal were worshipped and they derived their power from the same storm-god, probably from the Baal of Zaphon.⁴¹ If Ugaritic texts contain more Baal-deities, it is very likely that Hos uses the name of Baal the same way when it mentions Baal in plural form.⁴²

If we look at the gifts of the Baals/Baal in Hos 2 we can catalogize several agricultural products that come from him: לֶחֶם (bread); מַיִם (water); פִּשְׁתָּה (linen); צֶמֶר (wool); שֶׁמֶן/יִצְהָר (oil); שִׁקְוִי (drink); תֵּבַל (corn); תִּירוֹשׁ (new wine). All of these, except for linen and wool, are literarily attested in the Ugaritic corpus as originating from Baal, either as the sign of the storm-god's providence (KTU 1.4 V 6–9; 1.16 III 5–9) or as objects that are withheld during times of drought/winter, when Baal stays in the netherworld (KTU 1.5 V 6–11 14–16). In these texts, the rain of the storm-god is presented as “a source for the earth” (*'n l arš mtr*) and “delight [...]

⁴⁰ The *-m* ending is an enclitic particle here with the meaning “also, yet, again, even” (cf. Joseph Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, AOAT 273 (Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), § 89.27 b. In this way the different Baals are listed and connected in the rituals. However, there are some texts in which the form *b'lm* stands, probably, for the plural. In KTU 1.39 9; 1.87 20 and 1.41 18 the *b'lm* are likely the group of the Baal deities. Cf. Kató: *Jhwh*, 80–82.

⁴¹ Daniel Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies: Part II”, *JANER* 8 (2008), 11. Mark S. Smith, “The Problem of the God and His Manifestations”, in *Die Stadt im Zwölfprophetenbuch*, ed. Aaron Scharf and Jutta Krispenz, BZAW, 428 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 230. Cf. for a slightly different understanding of the notion: Spencer L. Allan, *The Splintered Divine*, *SANER* 5 (Boston/Berlin/München: De Gruyter, 2015), 200–246.

⁴² Day, “Hosea”, 206.

for the grain” (*n'm l htt*), but a few lines later, during the time of drought, the grain workers complain they have run out of bread (*lhm*), wine (*yn*), oil (*šmn*), and even Baal is powerless. The abilities of Baal are further highlighted by the names of his messengers, who are called *gpn w ugr* (KTU 1.3 III 36; VI 6), vineyard and field. If they are serving Baal, it is obvious that these areas are controlled by the storm-god as well. Wool and linen occur in the Ugaritic texts only outside the mythical corpus, not associated with Baal, even though their quality and quantity were strictly dependent on agricultural production, and thus they are indirectly dependent on optimal weather and rain provided by the weather god.⁴³

When we use the Ugaritic background to understand Hos 2, it is very likely that the name Baal is understood as the storm-god with many manifestations. However, it is not only Baal who appears in the role of the storm-god. After the gifts of Baal have been presented, Yhwh claims that these gifts come, in fact, not from Baal but from him: אֲנִי נִתְּנִי לָהּ הַדָּגָן וְהַתְּיָרוֹשׁ וְהַיֶּזֶר. In the narrative discourse Israel is misled because they think it is Baal who takes care of their needs, but in reality Yhwh is the one who provides Israel with these agricultural goods. If we translate this in terms of comprehension of god, the message of Hos 2 seems to be obvious: it is not Baal, but Yhwh who is the real storm-god. In the other instances (Hos 11:2; 13:1) the antagonism between Baal and Yhwh becomes more evident. Many times,

⁴³ The Gudea Cylinder A. XI 16–17 mentions wool as a gift of Ningirsu: “Under your rule [Gudea] more fat (than ever) will be poured, more wool (than ever) will be weighed in Sumer.” See the text in: Dietz Otto Edzard: *Gudea and his Dynasty*, RIME 3/1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 76. This text does not speak explicitly about the storm-god, however, it is clear from this text that it is Ningirsu who takes over the roles and characteristics of the storm-god. Cf. Sebastian Grätz, *Der strafende Wettergott*, BBB 114 (Bodenheim: Philo, 1998), 25; Claudia E. Suter, *Gudea's Temple Building*, CM 17 (Groningen, Styx, 2000), 109. This text can be seen as indirect evidence for wool as a gift of the storm-god.

Israel sought Baal instead of Yhwh, though in fact it was always Yhwh who was on his peoples' side. Albeit in these verses there is no explicit characteristic of the storm-god, the fact that Baal could overtake the function of Yhwh in the life of Israel may hint to some common traits their profiles, which could include the control over the rain and weather. This, however, needs to be proven with a wider range of hoseanic texts.

The next important section in terms of the imagery of Yhwh is in chapter 6, where Yhwh “comes to us like the rain, and waters the land like the late rain” (יָבֹא כַגֶּשֶׁם לָנוּ כַמְלִקוֹשׁ יוֹרֵה) (אֲרָץ), an idea appearing similarly in Hos 10:12. This is a theophany, which resembles without doubt the realm of the storm-god. Since Baal travels on the clouds bearing the name Cloud-Rider (*rkb 'rpt* – KTU 1.2 IV8; 1.3 II 40; 1.4 III 11 etc.),⁴⁴ and he provides the precipitation on the land, we can understand the epithet as a mythological expression of the meteorological phenomenon, whereby the clouds bring the rain and water the fields. If Yhwh comes like the rain, we can assume he comes on his cloud-chariot, imagery also found in other texts, e.g. in Ps 104:3 he makes the clouds his chariot (הַשָּׁמַיִם-עֲבִים רִכּוּבָיו).⁴⁵

The image of the warrior storm-god on his chariot goes further in Hos 6:5, where Yhwh “hews” (חָצַב) Israel for their unfaithfulness through his prophets. חָצַב designates here the act of judgment, but as Mason Lancaster and Adam E. Miglio point out in a recent study,⁴⁶ the verb seems to be used in a mythological context as *terminus technicus* for the combat of the storm-

⁴⁴ On this epithet see: Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*, HdO 93 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 288–291.

⁴⁵ Cf. Römer, *Invention*, 121.

⁴⁶ Mason Lancaster and Adam E. Miglio, “Lord of the Storm and Oracular Decisions. Competing Construals of Storm God Imagery in Hosea 6:1–6” *VT* 70 (2020), 3–4. Cf. Wolfgang Schütte, “Hosea 6,5–eine Revision und eine ikonographische Deutung”, *BN* 111 (2002), 40–43.

god with the sea (cf. Isa 51:9; Ps 29:7). When the judgment is also expressed with בצח , this implicitly resembles the power of the storm-god destroying and killing the sea.⁴⁷ This choice of words reflects the ancient motifs that originated in the tradition of the storm-god as well.

Hos 8:1–6 provides us with other important data. This section deals with the calf of Samaria that is rejected by Yhwh. The standard interpretation of this text is that Yhwh is angered by the Baal-cult for having a calf-idol at its center⁴⁸, and therefore Israel must perish. However, for this interpretation, we must assume implicitly that Yhwh could not have calf symbols in the cult. Nonetheless, the bull/calf was, among others⁴⁹, the storm-god’s “attribute animal” in the ANE. Therefore, if we can establish a connection between Yhwh and the calf, that could be another hint at his original character.

⁴⁷ Mason Lancaster and Adam E. Miglio want to follow the motifs of Baal in the next sentence as well (“I have slain them by the words of my mouth”) as/for the “depiction of the storm god’s voice as a metonym for the destructive forces of the storm is common in the literature from Ugarit”. Although the violent influence of Baal’s voice is well attested in the Ugaritic corpus, the motif is also common for royal and divine figures, and therefore it does not belong exclusively to the imagery of the storm-god. E.g. Naram Sin is similarly extolled: “your voice is thunder, You are become like a roaring lion, Your mouth is a serpent”. Foster, *Muses*, 116. Similarly, Nebuchadnezzar “would roar like a lion, would rum[ble] like thunder. His illustrious great men would roar like lions.” Foster, *Muses*, 385.

⁴⁸ Albertz suggests that לָאֵל , the diminutive of a bull, is used in a pejorative sense to denounce the cult in the Northern Kingdom. Cf. Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2012), 265. However, instances such as Ps 68:31 and Jer 46:21 show that לָאֵל is associated with aggressiveness and power as well, and, accordingly, it could be used without any irony for the bull-cult image as well. Kató, *Jhwh*, 257–258.

⁴⁹ For other gods and goddesses who were connected with bovine figures, see Kató, *Jhwh*, 114–116.

Firstly, in Hos 8:1–6 there is no divine name other than Yhwh, and this makes it difficult to determine to which god the calf-statue mentioned above is properly attributed to. Even Yhwh seems to have nothing to do with the bull, since he rejects it. However, the verb used here, נָזַר, is a neutral term, and it is not necessary polemic. In instances where Yhwh is the subject of a predicate expressed with נָזַר, the verb actually expresses a change in the relation to Yhwh, a deterioration of a positive relationship: 1Chron 28:9; Ps 43:2; 44:10.24; 60:3.10; 74:1; 77:8; 88:15; 89:39; 108:12; Lam 2:7; 3:17.31; Zech 10:6.⁵⁰ In these instances, it is not an ontological rejection that is expressed, but a temporary one and with the intent that thereafter the rejected object/person cleanses himself and will return to Yhwh. In the Ps, the righteous can rely on the hope that after the time of rejection they will be accepted again by Yhwh. In Lam 2:7 Yhwh “has rejected his altar”, but it is clear that this idea does not mean that Yhwh requires a cult without altars, instead only that Judah contaminated the cult and is punished by the rejection, and by the destruction of both the temple and the altar. Restoration also means the installation of a new altar. Bearing this in mind, Hos 8 does not explicitly express the refusal of a foreign cult-object, quite the opposite, Yhwh refuses his own calf-statue due to the inappropriate attitude of Samaria. This interpretation fits better within the context, which deals with rejection twice. In 8:3–4 Israel rejects the good (בַּשְׂרָאִל טוֹב), inaugurates kings without Yhwh, whereas in 8:5–6 Yhwh rejects *his* bull breaking it into pieces.⁵¹ If we can assume that one or

⁵⁰ Kató, *Jhwh*, 113.

⁵¹ In this sentence Yhwh does not appear explicitly. Macintosh therefore assumes an intransitive meaning of נָזַר: the calf “is clean gone”. Andrew A. Macintosh, *Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2014), 297–300. But even in this case the sentence announces the judgement of Yhwh for the calf-statue and Yhwh is the logical subject of the action. I assume the sentence is part of the Yhwh-speech continuing from verse 4.

more bull-statues were involved in the official Yhwh-religion of the Northern Kingdom – a conjecture supported by the DtrH as well, cf. 1Kgs 12:28–29 – this symbol is very useful in order to determine the profile of the god who was worshipped at that cult-image.⁵²

However, there are more gods linked to bovine imagery,⁵³ especially El, who is called in various Ugaritic texts as “the bull (*tr*) El”,⁵⁴ as well as the storm-god, who is depicted as a bull, or atop a bull, across the ancient cultures. As such, how should we interpret the motif around Yhwh? In the case of El, the epithet emphasizes his royal dignity and abilities in procreation. As Alberto Green has summarized, based on the various contexts of the motif around El, the “bull since earliest times carries with it the implication that he was probably conceived of as fulfilling certain fertility functions. Under his bull identity he represented the most archaic symbol of fecundity and fertility known in the ancient Near East.”⁵⁵ At the same time in the case of Baal the bull imagery is associated with aggressiveness and bellicosity.⁵⁶ If we look at Hos 8 or 1Kgs 12:28–29 it is clear that it is not fertility but warrior skills that are

⁵² Cf. Martin Leuenberger, “Der Jungstier Jhwh als aus Ägypten befreiender Gott Israel” in *Bestimmte Freiheit*, ed. Martin Bauspieß, Johannes U. Beck and Friederike Portenhauser, ABG 64 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020), 269–287.

⁵³ For a list see. Kató, *Jhwh*, 114.

⁵⁴ KTU 1.1 III 26; 1.2 I 16.33.36; III 16–17.19; 1.3 IV 54; V 10.35; 1.4 II 10; III 31; IV 1.39; 1.6 IV 10; 1.14 I 41; II 6.23–26; 1.16 IV 2; 1.17 I 23; 1.92 15.

⁵⁵ Green, *Storm-God*, 207. Cf. Martin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, VTS 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), 35–42; Rahmouni, *Epithets*, 318–319; Day, *Yahweh*, 34–39; idem. “Hosea”, 215–216.

⁵⁶ Izaak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al*, OBO 140 (Freiburg Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz/ Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Freiburg/Göttingen 1994), 262; Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole* (Freiburg: Bibel+Orient Museum/ Academic Press Fribourg, Freiburg 2010), 147.

implied in the concept, as Yhwh raises up the enemy against Israel or, in contrast, brought Israel out of Egypt. In light of these observations, it seems a very likely interpretation of the bull imagery connected to Yhwh is that the motif originates from the concept of the storm-god.

Based on the insights gained from the analysed hoseanic texts, we can firmly claim that there are observably many traits of the storm-god in the portrait of Yhwh. Nevertheless, before we formulate a final conclusion, we must search for motifs of other god-types in Hos.

5. Motifs of other god-types in Hosea

Aside from the storm-god motifs in Hos, we can also find several sun-god motifs. It is a widely accepted view that the analyzed text of Hos 6:5–6 combines the image of the storm-god with concepts of the sun-god,⁵⁷ because it describes the judgment of Yhwh that “goes forth like the light”.⁵⁸ In the ANE the sun-god grants righteousness and maintains justice, therefore the light-metaphors in the context of dispensing justice can be traced back to the imagery of the sun-god. Accordingly, Hos 6:5 portrays Yhwh with the motifs of the sun-god. This occurs also in Hos 10:15 where after the rain of righteousness comes the time of punishment in the dawn (רַחֵשׁ)⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Juliane Kutter, *nūr ilī. Die Sonnengottheiten in den Nordwestsemitischen Religionen von der Spätbronzezeit bis zur vorrömischen Zeit*, AOAT 346 (Münster Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 373; Römer, *Invention*, 121; Lancaster and Miglio, “Lord of the Storm”, 6.

⁵⁸ For this reading another word-division and punctuation are assumed as the one in the MT: אֶרֶץ יִצְחָק, which is supported by G, S, V and T. Cf. BHQ.

⁵⁹ Shahar and Shalim in the Ugaritic corpus are, like Shapshu, astral deities. Their connection to the sun is shown in KTU 1.23 54–55 where Shahar and Shalim receive the order to present themselves before the sun-goddess and the stars directly after their birth. Gregorio Del Olmo Lete name them avatars of

Furthermore, the punitive acts of Yhwh show similarity with the inventory of characteristics of the solar deities. Hos 7:11–12 says Ephraim will be caught by a net like a dove. The imagery of bird trapping as a metaphor for catching the sinner is well attributed to the sun-god in the ANE, and is likely to have influenced the imagery in Hos 7:11–12.⁶⁰

The next important theme of Hos is divine healing. In Hos 5:8–6:3; 7:1–7; 11:3; and 14:5 Yhwh heals his people and restores them. Although we know some “healing specialists” among the deities of the Levant, it is often the territorial deities (“national gods”) and the solar deities that are associated with healing and well-being, and they are often invoked in therapeutic incantations.⁶¹ It therefore seems logical to seek the root of the hoseanic motif of divine healing in the descriptions of these territorial and solar deities. To identify, however, the true archetype of the concept, we should again return to the texts. The common thought of these texts is that Israel is sick and the illness has been caused by Israel’s unfaithfulness and immoral behavior against Yhwh. As a matter of fact, the symptom of this sickness is the judgment, or more specifically in the context of the 8th century BCE, the Assyrian expansion to which Israel has

the ambit of Shapshu. Gregorio Del Olmo Lete, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts from Ugarit*, SANER 4 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 90.

⁶⁰ Kutter, *nūr*, 379; Angelika Berlejung, “Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Israeliten. Ein ausgewählter Aspekt zu einer Metapher im Spannungsfeld von Leben und Tod” in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Beate Ego, FAT 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 465–502; 491.

⁶¹ Del Olmo Lete, *Incantation*, 18–23. 53; Seong-Hyuk Hong, *The Metaphor of Illness and Healing in Hosea and Its Significance in the Socio-Economic Context of Eighth-Century Israel and Juda*, SBLit 95 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 53; Markham J. Geller, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons. Canonical Udug-hul Incantations*, BAMTU 8 (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 8.

fallen victim to.⁶² This means that the sickness and healing are no more than metaphors for Israel's broken relationship with Yhwh that led to the Assyrian threat, which then must be cured. In that sense, the divine healing is related to the political events of the time of Hos and shows Yhwh in his function as "national god" of Israel, who guides his people. Thus, the healing motif seems to be rooted in the function of Yhwh, rather than in the adoption of concepts from healing deities or from the sun-god, even if the latter cannot be ruled out completely.

In Hos 11:3 Yhwh's healing act is in relation to God's fatherhood to Israel, who, like a parent, taught Ephraim to walk. This could be easily connected with El, who is the father of the Ugaritic divine family (KTU 1.40 33.41), is addressed as *ab*, *ab* ("father, father": KTU 1.23 32.43), and bears the titles *ab adm* ("father of Man": KTU 1.14 I 37.43; III 32.47), *ab šnm* ("father of Shanuma": KTU 1.2 I 10; 1.4 IV 24; 1.6 I 36; 1.17 VI 49)⁶³. However, we must be cautious when we depict Yhwh in Hos 11 as an El-type god, because the text itself calls Yhwh neither father nor mother.⁶⁴ If the father concept originates in the royal ideology rather than in the imagery of El, we should pay attention to the fact that the texts speak about the king as mother and father at the same time (CTH 372 20–21; Gudea Cyl A III 6–7)⁶⁵, therefore it is

⁶² Daniel F. O'Kennedy, "God as Healer in the Prophetic Books of the Hebrew Bible", *HBT* 27 (2005), 87–113; 108.

⁶³ Occasionally, this title is translated as "father of years". Nevertheless, it is a problem that the noun for "year" is feminine and thus the pl. would be *šnt*. Furthermore, KTU 1.114 18–19 attests a son of El named *šnm*, so most likely the title refers to this divine son of the supreme god. For further discussion see: Rahmouni, *Epithets*, 18–21.

⁶⁴ The feminist exegesis wants to detect motherly motifs in Hos 11. See: Marie-Theres Wacker, "The God-Identified Man and Woman (Woman) Israel" in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 371–385; 380–382.

⁶⁵ Kató, *Jhwh*, 142–143.

more appropriate to use the label *parental* for the motif in question⁶⁶ and leave the link to El open.

El-motifs can be found in 9:14–16, where the prophet is asking for a “miscarrying womb and dry breasts”. Here it is clear that Yhwh is the one who can make someone fertile or fruitless according to his divine power. Ugaritic myths and epics highlight the similar role of El in the life of the royal family by granting offspring to Kirta (KTU 1.15) and Danil (KTU 1.17). In Hos 9 Yhwh seems to act like El in Ugarit, with the difference that Hos 9 depicts the negative side of the same coin.

The last important question, which is raised again and again in connection to the imagery of Hos, is whether Yhwh takes on some traits from a goddess or not. The first textual note hinting at this is the lion-motif in Hos 5:14; 11:10; 13:7–8, where Yhwh roars and attacks Israel like a lion. Since in iconography, especially in the so-called Qudshu-representations, the lion is mostly the attribute animal of the goddess, the leonine imagery of Yhwh could be traced back to feminine concepts of the divine.⁶⁷ A hint at the origins of the feminine motifs could be

⁶⁶ Kakkanattu, *Love*, 127–129.

⁶⁷ Previously, the lion and the Qudshu-representations were clearly linked to the goddess Ashera. This assumption is supported by some Ugaritic texts (KTU 1.14 IV 34–35; 1.2 I 21) where *qdš* was an attribute of Ashera. The interpretation is, however, not without problems, and even if these texts would attest *qdš* as an epithet for Ashera, this epithet is a common attribute of many Ugaritic gods, among others of El. Cf. Rahmouni, *Epithets*, 208–209. Nowadays, in lack of clear evidence, the research tends to leave the goddess standing atop a lion unidentified, and to accentuate her association with fertility. Cf. Frevel, *Aschera*, 825–830; Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, OBO 204 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 99; Brent A. Straw, *What Is Stronger than a Lion?*, OBO 212 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 252–255; Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, “Finding Asherah. The Goddess in the Text and

conveyed by Hos 14:9 where the sentence *אני ענתי ואשרתי*, – since suggested by Wellhausen – , is often emended to *אני ענתו ואשרתו*, “I am his Anat and his Asherah”.⁶⁸ But even if someone does not accept this emendation, for which there are both contextual and grammatical arguments,⁶⁹ the chapter still contains floral motifs applied to Yhwh, who is like a luxuriant cypress and nourishes Israel. These topoi also belong to the imagery of the fertility goddesses.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, due to the lack of any direct reference to a goddess, any assumed link to a specific deity remains hypothetical. Furthermore, even a connection between the motifs of the lion and the tree with a fertility deity seems to be uncertain.⁷¹ If we look at the other animal metaphors of Hos, it becomes clear that for describing Yhwh’s punitive actions, metaphors of other animals are also used, even in parallelism. In Hos 13:7–8 it is described in parallelism how Yhwh attacks Israel like a lion, a bear and a panther. This observation leads us to the idea that the lion metaphor does not come from a specific goddess, even if this possibility cannot be fully

Image” in *Image, Text, Exegesis*, Izaak J. De Hulster and Joel M. LeMon, LHBOTS 588 (London/New York: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2014), 72–74.

⁶⁸ Julius Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt, mit Noten* (Berlin: Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1893), 134. His suggestion is followed by many scholars, cf. Day, *Yahweh*, 58; Römer, *Invention*, 222; Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59.

⁶⁹ Cf. Frevel, *Asherah*, 332–352.

⁷⁰ Day, *Yahweh*, p. 58; Moughtin-Mumby, *Metaphors*, 53–54; Wacker, “Woman”, 383–384; K. Arvid Tångberg, “I am like an evergreen fir; from me comes yourfruit”, *SJOT* 3 (1989), 81–93.

⁷¹ The rabbinic exegesis understands the sentence “I am like a luxuriant cypress” as a declaration of Israel and not that of Yhwh, and so avoids the problem of the floral imagery of Yhwh. Cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, 576–577; Mayer I. Gruber, *Hosea* (London/New York: T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2017), 592–593.

excluded, but belongs to the inventory of the general literary topoi for describing threat and violence.⁷² The same could be true for the tree metaphor as well. In the closer context of Hos 14, it is not only Yhwh who is portrayed as a cypress (שׁוֹרֵק), but also Israel who will blossom like a lily (שׁוֹשַׁן) and will be abundant like an olive tree (תׁיֵן). In a mechanical linking of the motifs this would mean that Ephraim, like Yhwh, takes over motifs from the fertility-deities. Of course, these motifs have much in common with the imagery of the female deities, but in this case we cannot assess any direct syncretism or dependence, rather a general similarity without any specific allusion to a goddess.

6. Evaluation of the imagery in Hosea

As we have seen, the Book of Hosea presents many different motifs originating from different types of gods. As such, how can we deduce the desired original profile? First of all, it becomes clear that, beyond some specific individual motifs, there are three main types of gods that can be recognized in the imagery of the book: the storm-god, the sun-god, and the El-type god. If we assume that the ratio of their presence in the book proportionally represents the perception of the Northern Kingdom of the 8th century BCE, we can affirm, on one hand, that Yhwh mainly unified the concepts of these three god-types, but on the other hand, although the El-type motifs are present they are not nearly as prevalent. The other two god-types became evident more clearly. Which one was the original though? Since we have already reduced the number of the options to two, we can raise the question as follows: which is more plausible, the baalization of a solar deity or the solarisation of a Baal-type deity? In order to evaluate both of these options, we do not have to define all their aspects, except from some basic developments which highlight their relative probability. To my knowledge, we do not have examples of a sun-god

⁷² Cf. Göran Eidevall, "Lions and birds as literature", *SJOT* 7 (1993), 78–87.

transforming into a storm-god. In contrast, the solarisation of the supreme gods in the ANE is well attested, and is a general phenomenon meaning the accentuation of the universality and the righteousness of the high god.⁷³ A similar process is also assumed in the case of Yhwh, even if the beginning of this long-enduring process stays hidden.⁷⁴ According to these arguments, and in the wider context, the solarisation of Yhwh as a supreme god is more plausible than the other option. He was the territorial god of the Northern Kingdom who gradually took over the functions and the characteristics of the sun-god, as this occurred in many other cases in many other religions. If we can determine the solar profile of Yhwh as a later secondary profile, only one original option remains open: the basis of the development was the storm-god character. If we accept that the Northern cult preserved an ancient form of Yahwism, and we assume that Hos represents *pars pro toto* the conceptualization of Yhwh from this time, we have thereby a window into the older layers of Yahwism. Hos demonstrates firstly that Yhwh has the

⁷³ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (Orlando: Harvest Book, 1987), 156–158; Herbert Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, BZAW 190 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 141–147; Kurt L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity* (London: Sheffield Academic Press/Continuum, 2001), 247; Beate Pongratz-Leisten, “Divine Agency and Astralization of the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia” in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 158–175. Cf. Stahl, “Origins”, 2–3.

⁷⁴ Two main standpoints can be detected among scholars. Some see the root of the solarization in the premonarchic cult of Jerusalem, where probably the sun-god, Salem, and his entourage were at the centre of the cult, others emphasize the influence of the Assyrian astral cult on Yahwism from the 8-7th century BCE and regard this as the main reason for the solarization of Yhwh. See among others: Niehr, *Gott*, 147–163; Keel, *Geschichte*, 273–286; Kutter, *nūr*, 363; J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the sun*, JSOTSup 111 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997); Steve A. Wiggins, “Yahweh: the God of Sun”, *JSOT* 21 (1996), 89–106; J. Glen Taylor, “A Response To Steve a. Wiggins, “Yahweh: the God of Sun?” *JSOT* 21 (1996), 107–119; Steve Wiggins, “A rejoinder to J. Glen Taylor”, *JSOT* 22 (1997), 109–112.

agricultural gifts (chap. 2) that are the standard goods of the storm-god. Secondly, his theophany is comparable to Baal's cloud-riding (Hos 6:5; 10:12), as is his veneration in a bull-statue (Hos 8:1–6). Lastly, Baal can overtake his functions in the daily life of his people, which means that there are some overlaps between the responsibilities of the two. Yhwh has in Hos the clear basic profile of a storm-god. Considering all these observations, we can venture to claim that Yhwh was originally a storm-god of the Baal-Hadad-type.