

### **SBL 2000 Seminar Papers**

engendering of children who are a sign of an accusation: “for the land commits whoredom away from Yahweh.” The second oracle is a command to name the firstborn son “Jezreel.” The symbolic significance of the name is explained by another accusation: the house of Jehu is accountable for the “bloodshed (*dmym*) of Jezreel.” The name is further utilized in the sentences of judgment: the house of Jehu will experience a divine visitation, and God will put an end to the dominion of the House of Israel by breaking its military power (bow) in the valley of Jezreel (1:3-5). The next two oracles are sentences of judgment symbolized by the names of the last two children. Israel is declared “Not-Found-Compassion” and “Not-My-People (1:6-9).” Yahweh is rejecting Israel as a parent would disown an unwanted child.<sup>8</sup>

The first two oracles raise questions that are only answered elsewhere in Hosea, the Book of the Twelve, and the Hebrew canon. Concerning the first, in the past most attention has been focused on what “woman of whoredom” means, resulting in much speculation about the character of Gomer and the nature of Hosea’s marriage. A more important question, however, is what does it mean to accuse the land of whoredom? If *land* is really meant here, in what sense can the land be guilty of offense? A related issue is the meaning of “children of whoredom” and their connection with the land.

The second oracle also occasions reflection. “Jezreel” is unlike the other names in both form and function. First, it lacks the negative particle prefixed to the other names, and is therefore directly amenable to a positive interpretation.<sup>9</sup> Second, although it comprises a short self-contained sentence—“God sows”—its significance is not immediately borne out in a sentence like the other names, or as is usual in symbolic namings in the Hebrew Bible. It appears that the name carries more significance than

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<sup>8</sup> For the disownment language in Hosea 1-2 see Laurie J. Braaten, “Parent-Child Imagery in Hosea” (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1987) 220-72.

<sup>9</sup> “Jezreel” may portend either judgment or salvation, yet the other names only symbolize salvation by dropping the prefixed “not,” see 1:7; 2:1-3[1:10-2:1], 24-25[22-23].