Law, Love, and Redemption: Legal Connotations in the Language of Exodus 6:6–8

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We are familiar with the form-critical category of the lawsuit in prophetic literature, so-named because of particular expressions in prophecy which are taken from the courtroom. This determination then serves as an important factor in interpretation, by identifying an additional context for the prophecy. There are other Biblical texts whose style may not cast them fully into the legal genre, but whose language contains enough connotations to support a legal background, undercurrent, or "subtext." I submit that Exodus 6 is one such place and that the legal implications of its language are critical for understanding its contents.

The eloquence of God's speech to Moses in Exod. 6:2–8 has drawn attention from antiquity until modern times.[1] The Midrash derives the central obligation to drink four cups of wine at the Passover Seder from two of the verses (6–7), because they contain "four redemptions: 'I will free you . . . and deliver you . . . I will redeem you . . . And I will take you to be My people'."[2] The rabbis, who associated the rhetoric of this passage with a major religious observance,[3] were not the only ones to be impressed by its style; contemporary Biblical commentators sought the impact of this pericope in various literary features, the most prominent being the arrangement of its ideas in a series of verbs—of which the rabbis stressed four—which are all cast in a single grammatical pattern.

Without doubt, this plethora of first-person verbs, which forcefully herald the Divine action about to come, holds the key to the speech. Many Biblical commentators before us have noted this fact and explained the details of its workings. By grouping these predicates differently and ascribing novel connotations to each of them, and to the groups into which they seem to fall, we may arrive at a new understanding of the verbal series in verses 6–8, which comprise the dynamic section of the speech. I would like to suggest that our observations about the verbs in these

1. The importance of this speech for biblical source criticism is found in its contents, not its literary qualities; it is the latter which concerns us here.

2. TY, *Pesaḥim* 10, 1; Genesis Rabbah 88,5. Mishnah *Pesaḥim* ch. 10 is wholly constructed around the four cups, showing their centrality to the Seder, but does not explain the basis for the custom. *Pesaḥim* 117b notes: "These four cups the Rabbis instituted as a sign of redemption."

3. There is no assurance that the midrashic explanation is the source for the custom; other midrashim offer different derivations, and none of them are necessarily the historic source (see previous note).

three verses imbue the entire section with an additional source of strength that may have gone unnoticed.

Nehama Leibowitz treated this passage extensively on the grammatical and stylistic planes, and we here sum up her analysis as representative of previous scholarship. She noted that not only four but seven consecutive verbs are cast in the *qāṭal* pattern with *wāw conversive*, which renders all of them a single mode of expression, a rhetorical surge of God's redemptive force.[4] In addition to the sequence "free, deliver, redeem, take" cited above, we find "be, bring, give" in the same pattern. However, within this dynamic series one can make internal distinctions. Thus, the fifth verb, **והייתי** "and I will be your God" (v. 7), may be considered the goal of the first four actions. The sixth and seventh forms, **והבאתי**, **ונתתי** "I will bring you . . . and I will give it to you" (v. 8), refer to the entry into the Land subsequent to the redemption and mark the end of the verbal series.

Moving on to the lexical sphere, Leibowitz found further gradations of meaning in each of the first four verbs: *wĕhōṣē'tī* is the actual physical removal from Egypt, to be performed by Moses; *wĕhiṣṣaltī* is God's direct action; *wĕgā'altī* is "an action done by a relative" (Lev. 25:25); *wĕlāqaḥtī* "is more intimate." Benno Jacob, whom she cites in this regard, ranks them emotionally: God's actions are predicated on His sense of justice, mercy, closeness, and love.[5] Following this analysis of the predicates, Leibowitz distinguishes between the prepositions and indirect objects.

והוצאתי	מתחת	סבלות מצרים
והצלתי	מ-	עבודתם
וגאלתי	ב-	זרוע נטויה
ולקחתי	לי ל-	עם

In the first clause, Egypt is directly mentioned; in the second, only the forced labor; in the third and fourth, the indirect objects are God's outstretched arm and finally *lī*—the Lord Himself. The four redemptions thus move away from the threat of an external enemy to focus on God Almighty and the intimacy between Himself and the Israelite people.

Returning to consider the entire chain of seven verbs, she notes that there is an additional eighth predicate in the latter half of v. 7, "And you shall know (**וידעתם**) that I, the Lord, am your God," which differs from the others both in content and form. In content, because it is not an act of redemption by God but rather the response of the redeemed. In form, because it alone is cast in the second person plural, whereas the other seven verbs are in first person singular. In other words, the grammatical subject of the seven—the actor—is God, but the subject and actor of "and you shall know" is Israel. How does this phrase fit in to the entire chain of successive redemptive acts to be performed by God alone?

R. Ḥayyim ibn Atar[6] sharpened the question: If "and you shall know" (**וידעתם**) be regarded as the consequence of redemption, it should appear at the very end of

4. Nehama Leibowitz, *Iyyunim Hadashim besefer Shemot*, 91–94. This comment seems to be based on Cassuto ad loc., for which see later on in this paper.

5. Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus,* trans. W. Jacob (N.J., 1992), 160.

6. In his commentary *Ohr Hahayyim,* cited by Leibowitz (see n. 4 above).

God's redemptive acts, after "I will bring" and "I will give" in v. 8, not after the first five verbs alone. He therefore proposes that "and you shall know" is really a condition for further redemptive acts by God: if you accept that God is the Lord after the first four actions of redemption, then He shall bring you to the Promised Land and give you possession of it.[7] Leibowitz herself rejects this explanation as syntactically untenable, since no particular word or construction signals the supposed change from indicative sentences to a conditional "if you accept . . . then." On the contrary, the thrust of the verbal chain calls for further promises by God. How is this expectation fulfilled by a verb in the second person whose subject is not God but Israel?

At this point Leibowitz abandons literary analysis and attempts a "philosophical" solution to the problem, claiming that "to know" that God is the Lord—to be cognizant of this fact—is itself a divine promise and blessing. True to the verbal chain, וידעתם "and you shall know" is also an act of God, a divinely bestowed consciousness, a gift which even supersedes the previous promise, "and I shall be your God." For to know that God reigns supreme is something apart from the fact itself. Leibowitz bolsters this theology with quotations from rabbinic literature and Maimonides, but not from the Bible.

Further, she finds that the phrase which contains the problematic predicate, "and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God," arouses associations with the Decalogue on Sinai, especially with its opening statement, "I the Lord am your God . . ." (Exod. 20:2).[8] Just as the Ten Commandments were given between the Exodus from Egypt and the entry into Canaan, so too the clause "and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God" in v. 7 was placed between the first five verbs, which describe the redemption from Egypt, and the last two, which speak of the entry into the Land of Canaan. This analogy explains why וידעתם is not at the end of the verbal chain but rather in the middle.

In our opinion, the association with the Decalogue is of interest, since v. 7 reads, "I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians," and the first commandment is "I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" (20:2). But it is difficult to believe that any analogy such as Leibowitz draws between two chapters in Exodus could dictate the placement of the single verb וידעתם within the verbal chain. Frankly, both the philosophical explanation of וידעתם as a divine gift and the use of analogy to explain the positioning of the verb do not even qualify as midrashic homiletics, much less as straightforward Biblical commentary. Further, the allusion to the Decalogue is irrelevant both to the meaning of the verb וידעתם "And you shall know" and its form in the second person, the two points which originally piqued Leibowitz's exegetical interest.

Cassuto portrays the latter part of the pericope (6:6–8) as "seven sentences which open with seven verbs in the first person, connected to each other by *wāw* . . . the first three (v. 6) mark the redemption, the middle two (v. 7) determine the reciprocal relationship between God and Israel; the last two (v. 8) relate to the

7. This is reminiscent of the discussion about the phrase "the Lord shall be my God," in the context of Jacob's vow (Gen. 28:21). Following five conditional phrases, is this clause the result or a further conditional? See N. Leibowitz, *Iyyunim besefer Bereshit* (Jerusalem, 1966), 212–15.

8. Jacob, *Exodus*, 160, also connects to our text the events at Sinai.

conquest of the Land."[9] He links "And I will take you (*wĕlāqaḥtī*) to be my people" with "you shall be My treasured possession (*sĕgullāh*)" in Exod. 19:6 but provides no justification for this particular connection, and he finds in the verb *wĕhāyītī* (v. 7) a hint to the Divine name which is derived from the same root. He does not question the placement or grammatical form of וידעתם but sees in "And you shall know" a contrast to Pharaoh's "I do not know the Lord" (Exod. 5:2).

In sum, "the entire speech, in its elevated style which is close to metric poetry, in its triple repetition . . . of the formula 'I am the Lord', in its seven languages of promise which come in sequence like hammerblows . . . makes a very strong impression, as befits the serious nature of the matter at hand."[10] Cassuto has in mind the entire speech, vv. 2–8. As for the verses on which we are focusing, 6–8, Cassuto saw significance in the number seven; but why were these particular verbs selected, and in this particular order?

I would like to suggest that the second part of this speech (vv. 6–8) contains not seven significant verbs, but nine, and that these are divided equally over three verses and fall into three distinct groups. This structure is analogous to the so-called "Ten Plagues," which actually fall into three groups of three each, the tenth being in a class by itself.[11] There is a common background to all these verbs, and it is this common motif which provides the justification for the redemption. Within this rubric, however, each distinct group has a different emphasis. The three groups are: free-deliver-redeem (v. 6); take-be-know (v. 7); bring-swore-give (v. 8). I proceed to explain each grouping and its components.

Free—Deliver—Redeem

The first group of verbs relates to the emancipation of slaves. The verb, יצא "to go out" of slavery, is the standard Biblical and rabbinic idiom; e.g., ובשביעית יצא לחפשי חנם (Exod. 21:2), ויצאה חנם אין כסף (21:11), שהוא עובד שש ויוצא בשביעית (Mekhilta *Neziqin* 1 [p. 248]).

The second verb, *nṣl*, in the *Hifʿīl* stem *hiṣṣīl*, generally means "to save," but has a particular meaning: "to remove, take back," i.e., to regain possession and thereby legal ownership. This meaning for *nṣl* is found in the Bible in texts with a clear legal background, such as Gen. 31:9, *wayyaṣṣēl ʾĕlōhīm ʾet miqnē ʾăbīkem wayyitten lī* "God has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me." The common meaning "to save" has no place here. Since Jacob felt that the flocks were his by prior agreement with Laban, God was simply righting a wrong and "taking back" the sheep on behalf of Jacob.

Similarly, Jepthah the Gileadite's claim before the king of Ammon: "Why have you not tried to recover[12] them [the cities] all this time?" (Judg. 11:26). The Hebrew

9. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem, 1965), 52 [in Hebrew]. An English translation (we give our own) by I. Abrahams was published in 1967. This passage appears on p. 80. In fact, the seven verbs appear in three verses, not in seven; we presume Cassuto meant seven phrases.

10. Ibid., 53 (our translation); English version, 81–82.

11. See Rashbam's commentary to Exod. 7:26; Abarbanel to 7:14, question 3, and his answer, 60–61.

12. So in JPS *Tanakh* (Philadelphia, 1985). "Why did you not liberate them" in the Anchor Bible (Garden City, 1975), 204, is inexact and does not convey the legal sense of *nṣl*.

reads *hiṣṣaltem* and the entire context is that of a legal argument; if you have not reclaimed these cities in the past three hundred years, says Jephthah, then you have forfeited your right to them.

This usage of *nṣl* is further attested in Aramaic texts from Egypt, particularly in the Elephantine texts.[13] Of particular interest to us is *BMAP* 2, a marriage contract which speaks of the manumission of a slave-woman, Tamut, in order to marry one Ananiah. Tamut had previously borne a son, Pilṭi, whom she brought with her into the marriage. The agreement between her former owner, Meshullam, and the groom Ananiah stipulates that in no event may Meshullam "be able to snatch Pilṭi away from under your [Ananiah's] heart."[14] The Aramaic reads: לא אכל אנצל לפלטי מן תחת לבבך.

Several features here demand our attention. First, "to snatch" has as its object a person. Secondly, note that the preposition required by *nṣl* is *mn tḥt*, "from under," the very expression used with our first verb, והוצאתי אתכם מתחת, "and I will free you from [under] the burdens of Egypt." Thirdly, the context is one of slavery. All these features are to be found in Exod. 18:10, "Who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians," אשר הציל את העם מתחת יד מצרים, which employs *nṣl m*[*n*] *tḥt*. It is clear that the entire phrase carries, besides the obvious meaning "to save," also the legal connotation that God "repossessed" that which was rightfully His. Note that the subject of this sentence (Exod. 18:10) is the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt. Returning to our verse, though the obvious meaning of *wĕhiṣṣaltī* is "to save," in light of the parallels just cited the legal connotation of *nṣl* as repossessing in order to regain ownership is also present by allusion.

The last verb in the triad, *gʾl*, is also drawn from legal terminology and indicates the redemption of close relatives sold into slavery. "If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your brother, being in straits, comes under his authority . . . he shall have the right of redemption . . . One of his brothers shall redeem him" (Lev. 25:47–48). In this pericope, the root *gʾl* appears eight times. Of special interest are vv. 54–55:

> ואם לא יגאל באלה ויצא בשנת היבל הוא ובניו עמו: כי לי בני ישראל עבדים. עבדי הם אשר הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים
>
> If he has not been redeemed in any of those ways, he and his children with him shall go free in the jubilee year. For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants; they are My servants. . . .

In other words, when *gĕʾullāh* is not feasible, the mode of redemption signified by *gāʾal* is to be replaced by that of *yāṣāʾ*, which is the verb used for the general emancipation of slaves. Further, the justification given for redeeming close relatives from foreign ownership is that the children of Israel are slaves of the Lord, "whom I freed

13. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Aramaic *hnṣl* and some Biblical Passages," *Meqor Hajjim: Festschrift für Georg Molin zum 75. Geburtstag* (Graz, Austria, 1983), 115–19; idem, "*našû-nadānu* and its Congeners," M. de Jong Ellis, ed., *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of J. J. Finkelstein* (Hamden, 1977), 87–91.

14. This is the translation given by Bezalel Porten, *Jews of Elephantine and Arameans of Syene: Aramaic Texts with Translation* (Jerusalem, 1974), 38–41. Done in collaboration with Greenfield, the translation "to snatch away" was later objected to by Greenfield as "exaggerated" in the first article cited in the previous note (see there, 118, n. 4).

from the Land of Egypt" (loc. cit.). If legal redemption of an individual is explained in Leviticus by the historic redemption from Egypt, in Exodus 6 the historic context of the Exodus is given a legal basis by using three terms of individual emancipation from servitude: *yṣ᾽, nṣl, g᾽l.*[15]

Take—Be—Know

Lāqaḥ, the first verb in the second set, is used hundreds of times for taking of any sort. But when the verb *lqḥ* is followed by the direct object after the particle *᾽et* (or suffixed to it), the indirect object *lī*, and second indirect object preceded by *l-*, it indicates the marriage relationship: קח לי את הילדה הזאת לאשה (Gen. 34:4); ואקח אותה לי לאשה (Gen. 12:19), ועתה קחו אותה לי לאשה (Judg. 14:2). This expression, which is virtually a marriage formula, is to be found in verse 7: ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם—save that *lĕ᾽iššā*, "(take) as wife," has been replaced by *lĕᶜam*, "(take) as a people."

The second verb, "and I will be (והייתי) your God" (v. 7), is the complement to *wĕlāqaḥtī* and indicates the marriage relation as well. We find the predicate "to be" at the heart of the Jewish marriage formula in the opening statement of the traditional marriage contract (*ketubba*), הוי לי לאנתו, "Be mine in marriage." Like *wĕlāqaḥtī*, "and I will take," the verb *wĕhāyītī* is also followed by the indirect object *lī* and the second indirect object with *l-*, making it an exact parallel to the first formula with the verb *lāqaḥtī.* The two formulae are complementary: the first contains the groom's words to the father of the bride, and the second, addressed to the bride, expresses the groom's "being" or "belonging to" his betrothed. In the context of redemption, God as groom announces His intention to "take" His bride from those who control her, in this case the Egyptians.

At first blush, the analogy to the actual marriage formula הוי לי לאנתו requires, in place of והייתי, the verb והייתם in second-person, which is what we find in Lev. 26:12: "I will be your God, and *you shall be* My people"—והייתי לכם לא-להים ואתם תהיו לי לעם.[16] However, brief reflection will indicate that our formula ולקחתי-והייתי

15. We are thus in full agreement with scholars who have identified *gā᾽al* in our passage with the legal and social realm of slavery. These studies are listed in J. Unterman, "The Socio-Legal Origin for the Image of God as Redeemer גואל of Israel," in D. Wright et al., eds., *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies . . . in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Indiana, 1995), 401, nn. 1–5. So, for example, H. Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the O.T.*, 2: 354: "The association with the 'secular' release from the duty of slavery is evident." Unterman himself rejects this association, on the grounds that והצלתי has nothing to do with slavery (ibid., 403).

16. E. L. Greenstein, in Wayne Meeks, ed., *HarperCollins Study Bible*, (New York, 1993), 88, saw the reciprocal phrases in v. 7 as a formula of legal adoption, adducing proof from Lev. 26:12, "I will be your God, and you shall be My people," and from 2 Sam. 7:14, "I will be to him for a father, and he shall be to Me for a son"; however, while the two prooftexts are similar to each other, our verse which opens with the predicate *wĕlāqaḥtī* is different. Further, I believe that the third verb in our verse, *wiydaᶜtem*, is intimately connected to the first two predicates and determines what sort of formula the verse refers to, on which see below. Finally, Lev. 26:12 itself can be adduced as proof for the expression of Israel's relation to God in terms of marriage, as its wording is the reversal of Hosea's כי אתם לא עמי, which we have explained as a divorce formula. On this point as well, see further below. F. I. Andersen, D. N. Freedman, *Hosea*, Anchor Bible (New York, 1980), 197–98, also cite Hos. 1:9, Lev. 26:12, and 2 Sam. 7:14 together, but mention neither marriage nor adoption as the legal link between them. The word they use for all three

likewise expresses the reciprocity of marriage by use of the first person, in the same way that the ancient Aramaic formula found at Elephantine, הי אנתתי ואנה בעלה, "She is my wife and I am her husband," is symmetrical and reciprocal, even though the bride is referred to by the groom in the third person (הי) rather than the second.[17] In point of fact, all these formulae combine first-person and second-person (והייתי ואנא - ואתם תהיו, הוי לי לאנתו-) or first-person and third-person references. Our verse has a second-person element as well, in the form of the objects אתכם, לכם. If the marriage formula which we have identified in our text seems to be overbearing in its use of first-person predicates, "I will take, I will be," this is in keeping with the entire speech, which stresses God's solo performance as Redeemer through first-person verbs. He is the groom who turns to Israel, the bride, and actively commits Himself to her in marriage—והייתי לכם לא-להים—rather than using the more conventional, but more passive, "she is (or 'you are') my bride (or 'people')."[18]

Further support that *wĕhāyītī* indicates the parallel marriage vow to *wĕlāqaḥtī*, is to be found in the expressions for divorce cited by Hosea—not the much-discussed formula in 2:4 but rather the earlier phrase which indicates God's displeasure (1:9): כי אתם לא עמי ואנכי לא אהיה לכם. In the context of the formulae discussed above, this divorce formula doubly negates the "being" of the marriage relationship. The first phrase, "For you are not my people," negates the "being" of the traditional formula "Be mine in marriage,"[19] while the second phrase can be viewed as the linguistic reversal of the formula in our text (v. 7): "And *I will be* your God," והייתי לכם is replaced in Hosea by לא אהיה לכם, lit., "and *I shall not be* to you."[20]

The two verbs in v. 7 of our text, *wĕlāqaḥtī, wĕhāyītī*, are climaxed by the third verb *yāda*ᶜ, "to know," which distinctly connotes sexual union (also in marriage). To cite two examples among many, "Now the man knew (*yāda*ᶜ) his wife Eve" (Gen. 4:1); returning to Hosea, we find: "I shall betroth you to me in faithfulness.

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verses is "covenant." In fairness to Greenstein, we note that "the set of contrasting marriage and divorce formulas finds an analogue in the positive and negative formulas of adoption and repudiation of adoption"; S. Greengus, "The Old Babylonian Marriage Contract," *JAOS* 89 (1969): 517; cf. R. Westbrook, "Old Babylonian Marriage Law" (University Microfilms, 1982), Abstract (unnumbered): "Marriage is a legal status . . . [it] should be compared to other forms of status such as adoption . . ." Hosea, from whom we draw many parallels in this paper, makes explicit reference to the Exodus as based on the father-son relationship: "And out of Egypt I called My son" (Hos. 11:1). This is in addition to the dominant metaphor of marriage which he uses. See also Y. Muffs, *Love and Joy: Law, Language, and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York, 1992), 49–50. The upshot of all this is that the formulations in both areas are very similar.

17. For example, *AP* 15:4.

18. However, one can also make a case for a certain softness in this expression, as if God were committing Himself to Israel in this verse both in the language of the groom and the bride, "and I shall be your God" meaning "I shall belong to you," cf. Song 6:3. On the use of feminine metaphors in this verse, see further, n. 21.

19. We do not assume that the traditional Jewish Aramaic formula was in use in Hosea's time, but possibly there was a Hebrew equivalent. Hosea himself suggests such a possibility in 2:25: ואמרתי ללא עמי עמי אתה which indicates that "You are My people" was modeled on a current marriage formula. Indeed an identical formulation is to be found in the Elephantine Aramaic papyri, as cited above: הי אנתתי ואנה בעלה, "she is my wife and I am her husband".

20. If the entire point of Hosea's לא אהיה לכם is the reversal of the formula, clearly there is no need to emend *ʾhyh lkm* to *ʾlhykm* "your God," as did *BH* 3. See Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 198.

Then you shall know (*wĕyādaʿat*)[21] the Lord" (2:22). The metaphor of marriage serves the religious relationship well, the verb "to know" expressing both tenor and vehicle in its double entendre of cognition and congress. In our verse as well, after God's relation to Israel is stated in terms of betrothal and marriage, "knowing" the Lord—וידעתם—cannot mean cognitive knowledge alone.[22] It certainly implies the consummation of the relation in love.

Consequently, we do not find the change of voice in the form "and you shall know" (Exod. 6:7) from first to second person to be a problem, as it was for Leibowitz, but rather an affirmation of our thesis: just as the groom's "I shall betrothe" (Hos. 2:22) is matched by "Then you shall know", so too "I will take you" in verse 7 is matched by "And you shall know." As we have seen, reciprocity, including grammatical symmetry, is the very essence of the marriage relationship in its various formulae.[23]

Bring—Swore—Give

Admittedly, this last group is at best a mixed bag. The words *wĕhēbēʾtī, wĕnātattī* in first-person *qāṭal* with *wāw* conversive conform to the earlier verbs in the speech, while *nāśāʾtī* does not. Further, as opposed to all previous verbs, *nāśāʾtī* appears in a subordinated relative clause. For this reason, it did not affect Cassuto's significant count of seven predicates and Leibowitz, who dealt with the exceptional form and meaning of *wiydaʿtem*, did not discuss the form *nāśāʾtī* at all. Nevertheless, we will argue that all three verbs in this group add substantially to the web of legal references while further echoing the marriage metaphor.

The first verb in the series, *wĕhēbēʾtī ʾetkem ʾel hāʾāreṣ*, "I will bring you into the land," continues the connotation of marriage begun in the previous set by using the phrase "to bring *x* into." To bring into, more specifically, into one's home, is a reference to marriage: "And you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her and would take her to wife, you shall bring her (*wăhabēʾtāh ʾel*) into your house . . ." (Deut. 21:11–12). "Bringing into" one's house is thus the following stage in the marriage.[24] After taking Israel unto Himself in the second group of verbs, God now promises to bring her into His household, the land which He swore to her fathers.

In the Babylonian Code of Hammurapi, ca. 1750 B.C.E., the phrase "to enter someone's home" seems to mean to marry him:[25]

> ¶151 If a woman who is residing in a man's house should have her husband agree by binding contract that no creditor of her husband's shall seize her (for his debts)—if that man has a

21. "The idiom does not describe sexual intercourse, although the verb is so used elsewhere in the Bible, since in that usage the subject is male"; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 284. In the metaphorical sense we are suggesting for our verse (Exod. 6:7), the subject, Israel, is also "female." Certainly marriage is the relationship intended in both Exodus and Hosea, and without doubt the sexual connotation is also present.

22. And therefore not solely a philosophical idea, as Leibowitz supposes.

23. The parallel between Exodus and Hosea in the matter of second-person *YDʿ* is another reason, if one were necessary, to reject H. L. Ginsberg's emendation of *wĕyādaʿat* in Hos. 2:22 to *u-wĕ-daʿat* 'and with devotion to', "since the second person [for the first] appears wrong anyway"; "Hosea, Book of," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 8:1011.

24. Cf. Ruth 4:11; Song 3:4.

25. A full discussion of *in domum deductio* and its place in marriage can be found in Westbrook, "Old Babylonian Marriage Law," 2: 127.

> debt incurred before marrying that woman, his creditors will not seize his wife; and if that woman has a debt incurred before *entering the man's house*, her creditors will not seize her husband.

The relevant line in Akkadian is: *šumma sinništum šî lāma ana bīt awīlim irrubu*, using a form of the verb *erēbu*, "to enter," which is the cognate of Hebrew *bw'*, "to come in." Further, we find the *šafʿēl* form of this verb, which corresponds exactly with Hebrew *hifʿīl wăhabētāh*, "and you shall bring her in," used in the same sense:

> ¶145 . . . that man may marry the *šugītu* and *bring her into* his house;

In Akkadian: *awīlum šû šugītam iḫḫaz ana bītišu ušerrebši*.[26] Moreover, in Ugaritic, we find an even more striking parallel to the verb forms ולקחתי, והבאתי in our verses. In the Kirta epic, the pair *lqḥ/ʿrb*, identical to Hebrew *lāqaḥ/hēbīʾ*, connotes marriage. Here too, a cognate of the verb *erēbu* appears in the *šafʿēl* stem:[27]

> *hm. ḫry. bty / iqḥ.*
> *ašʿrb. ǵlmt / ḥẓry.*
> If I take Huraya into my palace,
> And have the girl enter my court.

In addition to the formulaic expression of marriage, the term "bring you into the land" connotes physical union *with* the land, in the sense that Isaiah said, "For as a young man espouseth a virgin, so shall thy sons espouse thee; And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, So shall thy God rejoice over thee" (62:5). Our phrase *wĕhēbēʾtī . . . ʾel* rings closely to *wayyābōʾ ʾēleyhā*, "slept with her" (e.g., Gen. 38:18). Both connotations of *wĕhēbēʾtī*, that of a formal stage in marriage and that of sexual intimacy, continue the marriage metaphor begun in the middle triad of verbs, while the second connotation also transfers the sense of intimacy from the people to the land.

Having seen that *wĕhēbētī,* though said of the land, remains well within the sphere of marriage, we now turn to the last verb in the series, *nātattī*. The simple meaning of this verb introduces the legal sphere of property ownership: God "will give" the land "to you for a possession" (v. 8). Across the ancient Near East, the verb *nātan* and its cognates had the legal sense of conveyance or transfer of property, particularly in the coordinate use of the verbs *našû-nadānu*, presented here in their well-attested Akkadian forms. This Akkadian formula has its parallels in several Semitic languages.[28] Among the West-Semitic cognates, of particular interest to us are Biblical *lāqaḥ-ntn*, Aramaic *hnṣl-ntn*, Mishnaic Hebrew *maśśāʾ umattān*, Midrashic *ntn-nṭl*. Greenfield and others have written extensively about these terms;[29] our pericope, not cited by them, adds a dimension to the discussion.

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26. The laws and their translations are from Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta, 1995), 110, 109.

27. I thank Prof. Greenstein for the references to the Akkadian and Ugaritic literature. The Kirta epic is cited from his translation in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta, 1997), 20 (CAT 1.14, col. iv:40–42).

28. Greenfield, "*našû-nadānu*"(see n. 13).

29. In addition to the articles in n. 13 above, see J. C. Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies and the Bible," *VTS* 32 (1981), 129–30; C. J. Labuschagne, "The *našû-nadānu* Formula and Its Biblical Equivalent," in

If we ignore the spheres of slavery and marriage and focus only on the area of property ownership, it is remarkable that our speech contains four of the verbs that appear in the various conveyance formulae described above: *nṣl, lqḥ, ntn*—and *ns'*.[30] It is true that the formula *našû-nadānu* or its cognates as such do not appear, but that is exactly the point—the legal background to the historical events of the Exodus and the possession of the Land are herein implied, rather than explicitly stated. This situation is once again paralleled by Hosea, where we find *ʾanōkī nātattī lāh ha-dāgān* (2:10), *wĕlāqaḥtī dĕgānī bĕʿittō wehiṣṣaltī ṣimrī wĕfištī* (v. 11). Israel having been unfaithful to the legal institution of marriage, God is within His rights to repossess, take back, that which He had given her as part of His marital obligations. The concepts of marriage and law are intertwined and implied in the prophetic idiom of Hosea; they also color the background of our text, which is primarily a narrative, not a legal tract.[31]

Secondly, in addition to its place in the area of legal conveyance in the phrase *našû-nadānu*, the significance of the verb *nātan* for marriage in the form of (a) Akkadian *nadānu*(*m*), which indicates that the parents relinquish control over the bride to the groom,[32] (b) Biblical Hebrew *mattān*,[33] and (c) Aramaic and late Hebrew *nĕdunyā* "dowry," all from the same root *ntn/ndn,* hardly needs mention. Thus the last set of verbs introduces terminology from the realm of property conveyance while reinforcing the connotations of marriage begun in the previous triad.

In sum, the common motif for all nine verbs in the speech is to be found in their legal overtones. Together they provide a multitude of reasons for God's right to redeem His people: they are His slaves or relatives held in bondage by another, and are therefore entitled to emancipation; He is a groom who announces His intentions of marriage to His fiancée's guardians and then to her; He comes as a king who by dint of His power can convey possession of land and people at his discretion.[34] Within the marriage metaphor, not only do the verbs recall traditional marriage formulae, they also evoke the range of emotional and physical bonds which tie husband and wife through the equivocal expressions "and you shall know" (v. 7), "and I shall

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M. S. Heerma van Voss et al., eds., *Travels in the World of the Old Testament, Studies Presented to Prof. M. A. Beek* (Assen, 1974), 176–80.

30. The verb *nāśāʾtī*, whose obvious meaning is "swore," stands with *nātattī* in the same verse to connote the *našû-nadānu* formula. In addition, the relative clause itself reads: אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אותה, thus compounding this wordplay.

31. In light of the evidence adduced in this study, there is room to reinvestigate the parallel expressions in Hosea and the Pentateuch regarding the Exodus. Such a study was done by U. Cassuto, "The Prophet Hosea and the Books of the Pentateuch," *Biblical and Canaanite Literature* (Jerusalem, 1983), 118–34 [in Hebrew]. We would examine the phrase אני ידעתיך במדבר, "I did know thee in the wilderness" (Hos. 13:5) in relation to Exod. 6:3, 7 נודעתי, וידעתם; Cassuto, ibid., 132, did not make this association.

32. The corresponding biblical expression is: *ʾet bittī nātattī lāʾiš hazzeh*, "I gave my daughter to this man" (Deut. 22:16).

33. As in Gen. 34:12: "Ask of me a bride price (*mōhar*) ever so high, as well as gifts (*mattān*). . . ."

34. The *našû-nadānu* formula, in the form of *išši-iddin*, is used for the royal grant. In the biblical parallels with *lqḥ-ntn*, "God's sovereign power is expressed" in transferring the wives of X to Y (2 Sam. 12:11), the kingdom to another (1 Kgs. 1:35), and in God's absolute power over human life (Job 1:21). See Greenfield, "*našû-nadānu*," 88–89.

bring . . . into" (v. 8) which connote legal, cognitive, and sexual nuances simultaneously. The power of this speech thus lies not only in the flurry of divine activity indicated by the four redemptions or the seven promises made by God, but in the underlying conviction of this text that the redemption from Egypt was an inalienable right of God and Israel together by virtue of law and love, once He chose Israel to be His own.[35]

35. Is it too much to hazard that this speech is really the *verba solemnia* of God? On the entire concept, see Greengus, "Marriage Contract," 515ff.; speaking of oral formulations for marriage, he notes: "This suggested use of *verba solemnia* . . . agrees with the recognized use of oral formulas in archaic legal systems. The purpose of these formulas would be to pledge a mutual 'troth', a promise of mutual fidelity and regard . . . " (520). Expressions of mutual pledge are found elsewhere, such as Deut. 26:17–18: "You have affirmed this day that the Lord is your God. . . . And the Lord has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you, His treasured people . . . " If we take the Divine speech in Exod. 6:2–8 as God's pledge or oral contract, there is a particular poignance to the continuation of the Biblical narrative: "But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses" (Exod. 6:9)—the pledge went unrequited.