In a contract, two or more individuals, each pursuing their own interest, come together to make an exchange for mutual benefit. So there are commercial contracts that create the market, and the social contract that creates the state. A covenant is something different. In a covenant, two or more individuals, each respecting the dignity and integrity of the other, come together in a bond of love and trust, to share their interests, sometimes even to share their lives, by pledging their faithfulness to one another, to do together what neither can achieve alone.

A contract is a transaction. A covenant is a relationship. Or to put it slightly differently: a contract is about interests. A covenant is about identity. It is about you and me coming together to form an 'Us'. That is why contracts benefit, but covenants transform. Covenant is about the logic of cooperation. That is what differ-entiates marriage and the family from economics and politics, the market and the state, which are about the logic of competition.

To be sure, a marriage may have the external form of a contract, but its inner logic is that of covenant. That is how Israel in the biblical era understood its relationship with God, as a covenant. The Hebrew word *emunah*, often translated simply as 'faith', really means faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, steadfastness, not walking away even when the going gets tough, trusting the other and honouring the other's trust in us. The prophets understood the relationship between humanity and God in terms of the relationship between bride and groom, wife and husband. Love thus became the basis not only of morality but also of theology. Faith is like marriage. This is what Hosea meant when he said in the name of God:

I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,