

LESSON 1 ~ HOSEA

The book of Hosea was written to a Northern Kingdom of Israel on the brink of disaster. Outwardly, the nation was enjoying a time of prosperity and growth; but inwardly, moral corruption and spiritual adultery permeated the lives of the people. The prophet Hosea was instructed by God to marry an unfaithful woman, and he found in his own life a vivid illustration of the unfaithfulness of God's people and the faithfulness of God. Hosea repeatedly echoes his threefold message: God abhors the sins of His people; judgment is certain; but God's love stands firm.

Hosea, whose name means "Salvation," has the same name as Israel's last king, Hoshea, even though the English Bible spells them differently.

Author

Aside from his calamitous marriage, little is known of the life of the prophet Hosea. His place of birth is not given, but his familiarity with and concern for the Northern Kingdom indicates he lived in Israel, not Judah. He was the son of Beeri (1:1), husband of Gomer (1:3), and father of two sons and a daughter (1:4, 6, 9).

Hosea had a real compassion for his people, and his personal suffering because of the behavior of his wife gave him insight into God's grief over Israel's sin. Thus, his words of coming judgment are passionate but tempered with a heart of tenderness.

Date

Hosea evidently compiled this book during the early years of Hezekiah, and his ministry stretched from about 755 B.C. to about 710 B.C. When Hosea began his ministry, Jeroboam II (782–753 B.C.) was still reigning in Israel. Hosea's ministry spanned the reigns of the last six kings of Israel from Zechariah (753–752 B.C.) to Hoshea (732–722 B.C.).

When Hosea began his ministry, Israel was enjoying a temporary period of political and economic prosperity under Jeroboam II. However, the nation began to crumble after Tiglath-Pileser II (745–727 B.C.) strengthened Assyria. The reigns of Israel's last six kings were relatively brief since four were murdered and a fifth was carried captive to Assyria. Confusion and decline characterized the last years of the Northern Kingdom, and her people refused to heed Hosea's warnings of imminent judgment.

Themes and Literary Structure

The book of Hosea is a story of one-sided love and faithfulness that represents the relationship between Israel and God. As Gomer is married to Hosea, so Israel is betrothed to God. Both relationships gradually disintegrate—Gomer runs after other men, and Israel runs after other gods. Israel's spiritual idolatry is illustrated by Gomer's physical adultery. The development of the book can be traced in two parts: the adulterous wife and faithful husband (chs. 1–3), and the adulterous Israel and faithful Lord (chs. 4–14).

Hosea's message reflects the terrible fascination of Israel with Baal worship. Baal means "husband" or "lord," and his worship involved fertility rites that included ritual prostitution. Baal was the other lover to whom the unfaithful Israel often turned.

Hosea provides one of the Old Testament's most eloquent expressions of God's mercy. It is embodied in the Hebrew word *hesed*, variously rendered "mercy," "loving-kindness," or "steadfast love." It involves loving loyalty to covenant commitments, well illustrated by the marriage vow. But from Hosea's perspective, God's faithful love would not permit Him to easily divorce His people.

What's in a Name?

(Hosea 1)

Names play a significant part in understanding Hosea, as the chart describes:

Name	Meaning
Jezreel (Hos. 1:4)	God Scatters
Lo-Ruhamah (Hos. 1:6)	Not Pitied
Lo-Amni (Hos. 1:9)	Not My People
Hosea (Hos. 1:1, related also to <i>Joshua</i> , Num. 13:16, and <i>Jesus</i> , Matt. 1:21)	Yahweh Is Salvation

Outline of Hosea

I. The Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband 1:1–3:5

- A. The Introduction to the Book of Hosea 1:1
- B. The Prophetic Marriage of Hosea to Gomer 1:2–2:1
- C. The Application of the Adultery of Gomer 2:2–23
- D. The Restoration of Gomer to Hosea 3:1–5

II. The Adulterous Israel and Faithful Lord 4:1–14:9

- A. The Spiritual Adultery of Israel 4:1–6:3
- B. The Refusal of Israel to Repent of Her Adultery 6:4–8:14
- C. The Judgment of Israel by God 9:1–10:15
- D. The Restoration of Israel to the Lord 11:1–14:9

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Understand The Background

1. Read the background for this period. 2Kings 14 – 17; 2Chron 26 – 2Chron 29.

¹*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts : Old and New Testaments.* electronic ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996.

Study Questions For Hosea Chapter 1

1. Name the last six kings of Israel not mentioned in verse 1 during the time Hosea prophesied.
2. How do we know Hosea prophesied while these kings reigned?
3. Why does God command Hosea to take a wife who is a harlot?
4. Does it seem harsh that God would purposely put Hosea through this adultery?
5. Why was Hosea's first born son named Jezreel?
6. What significance is there in the name of Hosea's daughter?
7. What was supposed to be learned by the name of Hosea's last son?

LESSON 2 ~ HOSEA

Study Questions For Hosea Chapters 2&3

1. Why is Israel not God's wife nor God their husband?
2. What did Israel do to commit adultery against God?
3. What is God going to do to Israel?
4. Why is God going to remove Israel's food, clothing, and feasts?
5. How is God going to bring Israel into the wilderness as in the day when they came up from Egypt?
6. What does the Valley of Achor refer to and how will it be a door of hope?
7. How did God say the relationship would change?
8. What would happen to Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi (the names of Hosea children)?
9. Why did God tell Hosea to go get his wife who was committing adultery?
10. Why was Gomer to have no man, including Hosea, for many days?

LESSON 3 ~ HOSEA

Study Questions For Hosea Chapters 4 - 7

1. What charge does God bring against Israel?
2. Who's responsible for the lack of knowledge of God's people?
3. Why will the prophets and priests be punished with the people?
4. Why has the LORD withdrawn himself from Israel and Judah?
5. What will it take for Israel to acknowledge their sin and seek God?
6. Who is going to call for a return to the LORD?
7. When is God going to raise the repentant back up?
8. What did God desire from His people? What was He receiving instead?
9. What was making the kings and princes of Israel glad?
10. How had Ephraim mixed itself with the peoples?
11. Who does Ephraim call to for help? Who should they have called to?

LESSON 4 ~ HOSEA

Study Questions For Hosea Chapters 8 - 10

1. What does it mean that Israel sowed the wind in 8:7?
2. What would Israel reap because they sowed the wind?
3. Why was Israel told “do not rejoice”?
4. Where will Israel eat unclean food?
5. What does it mean that Ephraim was supposed to be a watchman? What was he instead?
6. Why was God casting Israel away?
7. What does the days of Gibeah refer to in 9:9 and 10:9?
8. What was it time to do for Ephraim?

LESSON 5 ~ HOSEA

Study Questions For Hosea Chapters 11 - 14

1. Why would God not execute the fierceness of His anger?
2. What did Ephraim feed on and pursue?
3. Why did Ephraim think they had no iniquity?
4. Why did God speak by the prophets and multiply visions?
5. How was Ephraim sinning more and more?
6. What conditions led Israel to forget God?
7. God's wrath would be like what three wild beasts?
8. Why did God give Israel a king and then take the king away?
9. What words did God want Israel to return to Him and say?
10. Describe the ways of the LORD for the righteous and the transgressor?