

The Word of the Lord to Hosea
Lesson 1
Hosea 1:1 – 3:5

Introduction

Hosea is the 28th book of the Old Testament but in the Hebrew Bible, it is the first of the Book of Twelve, that is, the 12 prophetic books known as the Minor Prophets. In the Hebrew Bible they are bound together in one section. These twelve books are not insignificant by any means; they are called the Minor Prophets because of the brevity of their books. Combined, all 12 books contain only 67 Chapters and 30,422 words compared to the 5 books of the Major Prophets which contain 178 chapters and 135,500 words. ¹

Hosea is not the earliest of the prophets for whom a book was named; Joel holds that honor. The ministry of Hosea is one of the longest, rivaling those of Daniel, Jeremiah and Isaiah. Hosea's ministry began when the Northern Kingdom was flourishing and prospering for all practical purposes, but at the end of Hosea's ministry, the people of the kingdom saw its demise. His message to repent and turn away from all forms of idol worship was a tough message for the people to accept. To complicate the validity of the message delivered through Hosea, the Lord instructed him to marry a certain woman and have children. Hosea's marriage and family resulted in the leadership of Israel having little respect for him or his message and Hosea endured great heartache for obeying the Lord during his life.

The Prophet and His Time

Hosea 1:¹ The word of the Lord which came to Hosea the son of Beer, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Hosea means salvation and it appears only in Hosea 1:1-2 and Romans 9:25. The verse from Hosea repeated in Romans can be considered the theme of the Lord's message through the prophet.

Romans 9:²⁵ As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

Hosea, the son of Beer of the tribe of Issachar, was born in Beth-shemesh in the northern portion of the Northern Kingdom. His Hebrew dialect recorded in the Scripture reflects that of the northernmost tribes.

His ministry spanned more than 60 years, beginning in the days of the concurrent 38 year reigns of Judah's King Uzziah and Israel's King Jeroboam II.² We can only assume that his ministry ended before the fall of the Northern Kingdom on 722 BC. His prophecy warned of that calamity but did not mention its fulfillment.

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¹ The Major Prophet books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel.

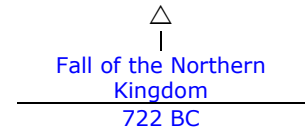
² Hosea's ministry began sometime after 810 BC with the coronation of Uzziah in the south and the death of the Northern King Jeroboam II in 722 BC. (38 years)

Southern Kingdom Judah

Uzziah (52 years) ³	Jotham (16 years) ⁴	Ahaz (16 years) ⁵	Hezekiah (29 years) ⁶
810 BC - 758 BC	758 BC - 742 BC	742 BC - 726 BC	726 BC - 697 BC

Northern Kingdom Israel

Jeroboam II (41 years) ⁷
813 BC - 772 BC



Gomer, A Harlot for a Wife

Hosea 1:² When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and *have* children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord."

Hosea's family was a visual picture of the relationship between the chosen people and God the Father, a symbol for Israel and her relationship with God. God selected Gomer, a harlot, to be Hosea's wife. She symbolized the Northern Kingdom of Israel which constantly worshiped other gods although she had been properly wed to Jehovah. God would be faithful to Israel but she would not be faithful to Him. Hosea would be faithful to Gomer, but Gomer would not be faithful to him. Hebrew names are important because they give a snapshot of the person's character in the story. Gomer's name means burning coal and her father's name means completion, meaning that she was a woman given completely to her adultery with the intensity of a burning coal. She would forsake her husband, disgrace him and embarrass him with her flagrant lustful desires.

Jezreel, Punishment for Bloodshed

Hosea 1:³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴ And the Lord said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. ⁵ "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

Gomer gave Hosea a son whom the Lord named Jezreel after the Valley of Jezreel where more blood had been shed in battle than in any other place in the world. The Lord names him Jezreel because of the bloodshed in that valley by Jehu, the northern king who reigned for 28 years from 874 BC to 846 BC. In that valley, Jehu dispensed his cruelty as recorded in 2 Kings. Its bloodshed is not over because it will be the battlefield of both Armageddon and the final battle at the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth.

2 Kings 9:¹⁶ Then Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was lying there. Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram. ...²⁵ Then *Jehu* said to Bidkar his officer, "Take *him* up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth

³ 2 Kings 15:1-2

⁴ 2 Kings 15:33

⁵ 2 Kings 16:1-2

⁶ 2 Kings 16:19-20

⁷ 2 Kings 14:15 & 23

the Jezreelite, for I remember when you and I were riding together after Ahab his father, that the Lord laid this oracle against him: ...³³ He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her (Jezebel) down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot.

2 Kings 10:¹¹ So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests, until he left him without a survivor. ...¹⁴ He said, "Take them alive." So they took them alive and killed them at the pit of Beth-eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them. ...¹⁷ When he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke to Elijah.

Jehu had killed the king of the south and the north as well as Jezebel and all the family of Ahab. Jehu did not ascend to the throne of the north immediately; he did so when no one else would accept or oppose him. He allowed Athaliah to be queen of the Southern Kingdom until the baby Joash grew old enough to become king with the help of the high priest.⁸ Jehu's killing field was Jezreel and the first son of Hosea was named after the valley, but later Hosea 2:5 reveals that the boy Jezreel was not the son of Hosea, but the son of another man conceived while his wife was flaunting her harlotry.

Hosea 2:⁵ "For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully.

Lo-ruhamah, No Compassion or Forgiveness

Hosea 1:⁶ Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the Lord said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them."⁷ "But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the Lord their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."

The second child was a girl and the Lord named her Lo-ruhamah which means an object without mercy or gracious favor. The Northern Kingdom was doomed to be unforgiven by the Lord because of her stubborn heart, but not the Southern Kingdom; she will be forgiven. The prophecy in the name of Lo-ruhamah was not for all eternity, but for the coming calamity at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC. The Bible and history record that Assyria tried to overtake the Southern Kingdom, but Hezekiah was able to hold them off, thus fulfilling this prophecy.

Lo-ammi, Not My People and Not Your God

Hosea 1:⁸ When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.⁹ And the Lord said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."

The third son was another boy whom the Lord named Lo-ammi which means "not my people." The 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom had forsaken the Lord and they were not His people because they had chosen not to make Him their God and this son symbolized their attitude.

⁸ 2 Kings 12:20

One Day One Leader Appointed

Hosea 1:¹⁰ Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "*You are* the sons of the living God."¹¹ And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

With the birth of the third child, the picture of Israel's doom was set, yet the Lord followed that prophecy with a promise that will be fulfilled in our future. When Israel falls to the Assyrians in 722 BC, only 10% of the people will go into exile; the other 90% will die by the sword.⁹ The last great slaughter of the northern fall occurred in the valley of Jezreel, just north of Jerusalem, and it was there that the Lord confirmed that those who died from the Northern Kingdom were not His people because they did not call upon His name for salvation., There is no record that they returned to reestablish the Northern Kingdom once they were in exile in Assyria as there is for the Southern Kingdom under Cyrus the Great in 536 BC. Nevertheless, over the next thousands of years, the 10% that were scattered among the nations of the worlds would multiply to an uncountable number. One day in the future, those Israelites will be called back to Jerusalem along with the Jews of the Southern Kingdom to be reunited, sought-after, premier nation of the world and there in the valley of Jezreel, they will pledge their loyalty and love to the Lord as their King of kings forever. Just prior to the pledge, the battle of Armageddon will take place in that same valley.

To explain the Lord's position, Hosea retraces the sin of Gomer, fills in the details and restates His promise to bless her in the distant future in chapter 2. It is directed to the oldest son, Jezreel, who is to deliver the Lord's message.

No Compassion for Hosea' Wife and Children

Hosea 2:¹ Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah."² "Contend with your mother, contend, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; and let her put away her harlotry from her face and her adultery from between her breasts,³ or I will strip her naked and expose her as on the day when she was born. I will also make her like a wilderness, make her like desert land and slay her with thirst.⁴ "Also, I will have no compassion on her children, because they are children of harlotry.^{5a} "For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully.

Jezreel was instructed to gather the support of his brother and sister to contend with their mother, Gomer. It is a picture of the Lord calling for each individual to gather the support of their Jewish neighbors to contend with their governmental and religious leadership to reestablish their faithfulness to the Lord. Even in their attempt to persuade their leaders, they would not be successful. The ultimate result of the leaders' sin would be removal from the land without seeing the compassion of the Lord. All those people who followed the sinful leaders would experience the same tragedy. The Northern Kingdom was a shameful entity. It should have loved the Lord with all its heart, but it refused, loving other gods instead.

⁹ Amos 5:1-4; Amos 6:9-14

Love for Other Lovers

Hosea 2:^{5b} For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

Just like many modern perceptions, Gomer's perceptions were wrong. She thought her bread, water, wool, flax, oil and wine were provided by her gods. She could not see that it was the Lord who provided each for her, refusing to recognize the true source of her daily supply. The Northern Kingdom had the same problem; it was a mirror image of Hosea's wife. The Lord decided to bring wrath upon her because she refused to listen to His prophets and change her ways just as Gomer would not listen to Jezreel and his siblings.

Therefore, Hedged Up

Hosea 2:⁶ "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. ⁷ "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!' ⁸ "For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, *which* they used for Baal.

Where did Gomer gather the resources to flaunt before her lovers as she practiced her lustful trade? Her garments were provided by her husband, Hosea, as well as her sandals, jewels, hair braids, grain, wine, perfume, silver and gold. So too, the Northern Kingdom did not consider that all her wealth came from the Lord which she squandered on her god, Baal. How difficult must it have been for God to provide a gift that would not be shared with Him in worship, but offered to an imaginary god instead? For her sin, Israel would be walled up and hedged in with thorns so that she could not overtake or find her gods. It is not a new message; Amos, Hosea's contemporary, was proclaiming the same message at the same time in the southern part of the kingdom. Amos says:

Amos 8:¹¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. ¹² "People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find *it*. ¹³ "In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst. ¹⁴ "As *for* those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,' They will fall and not rise again."

Therefore, Punished

Hosea 2:⁹ "Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time and My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax *given* to cover her nakedness. ¹⁰ "And then I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will rescue her out of My hand. ¹¹ "I will also put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her festal assemblies. ¹² "I will destroy her vines and fig trees, of which she said, 'These are my wages which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them. ¹³ "I will punish her for the days of the Baals when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the Lord.

In 1405 BC, the 40 years of the wilderness journey for Israel were over and the Lord went before them as they proceeded to conquer the Promised Land. This gift had been promised in the Lord's words to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In 722 BC, just 683 years after receiving the land from the Lord, those living in the northern 10 tribal regions would lose their land to hands of the Assyrians, revealing God's way of taking the land back from the Israelites. With Assyria in control, the gaiety, feasts, new moons, Sabbaths and assemblies were terminated. Amos spoke of these events in his prophecy.

Amos 5:²¹ "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.²² "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*; and I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.²³ "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.

Therefore, Promised

Hosea 2:¹⁴ "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her.¹⁵ "Then I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.¹⁶ "It will come about in that day," declares the Lord, "That you will call Me Ishi and will no longer call Me Baali.¹⁷ "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more.¹⁸ "In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety.¹⁹ "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion,²⁰ and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the Lord.²¹ "It will come about in that day that I will respond," declares the Lord. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,²² and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel.²³ "I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

Once the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria in 722 BC, she would be led into the wilderness where the Lord would speak kindly with her. At that point, only the 10% who called upon His name would escape death at the Assyrian hands. History proved the truth of this prophecy with the refugees gaining great respect and even great power and prestige among the Assyrians. She will not come back to the Northern Kingdom until she is called back after the seven years of tribulation before Armageddon. Hosea mentions the "valley of Achor as a door of hope." The valley was the place near Jericho where Achan and his family were destroyed during the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua. Achan hid a golden idol from the city and it displeased the Lord so much that his life and the lives of his family members were required as payment for their sin. Throughout Hebrew history, the valley was referred to as a time and place of tribulation, a symbol of hope and a door to an incredible future. It is a reference to the coming seven years of tribulation for Israel and her ultimate hope and destiny in the Lord's 1,000-year-kingdom. When that time comes, all of Israel and Judah will join together and call the Lord, Ishi, meaning husband. Only at that time will Israel change her heart and as a nation look upon God as her Husband. She will be faithful to Him and Him alone, leaving all her past lovers behind. Baal will never be mentioned again. Her marriage to the land, also referred to as Beulah land, will be a perfect one and the Lord will have compassion upon her, forgetting all her past sins. Israel will be

planted back on the land that was promised and that she had once possessed but lost because of her harlotry. At that time the Lord will say, "You are My people!" The people will say in return, "You are my God!" Finally, this promise and prophecy will be fulfilled.

Get Your Wife

Hosea 3:¹ Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."² So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver and a homer and a half of barley.³ Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you."⁴ For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols.⁵ Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.

Gomer was living in the home of another man. The Lord sent Hosea to purchase her for 15 shekels of silver, a homer and a half of barley which amounted to about 6 ounces of silver and 10 bushels of barley. The price was about half that of a slave so it could not have been a dowry. Amounting to about half the cost of housing a slave, the bushels of barley showed that Gomer had been enslaved in the service of her lover by some other means. Hosea had to redeem her and he did. Once he had her back home, he gave her the specific instruction to stay with him, an instruction which she did not follow. Her lust for the flesh, her addiction as it may be called, would not allow her to stay at home in Hosea's care. It was a picture of Israel's spiritual famine and coming loss of her nation. Many days have passed since she was taken off the land in 722 BC, 2733 years to date.¹⁰ Even though she was able to return to the land in May of 1948 AD, she still has not called out to the Lord and accepted Him as her Messiah but she will, in the last days.

¹⁰ In 2011 AD, 2733 years have passed since the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722BC.