

HOSEA

meaning “help” or “deliverance”

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- The first verse of the book attributes the work to Hosea, son of Beeri.
 - Israel's breach of the "marriage" covenant with Yahweh, coupled with the menacing threat of Assyrian invasion, prompted Hosea to prophesy.
 - Hosea probably began his prophetic ministry shortly before the death of King Jeroboam II (ca. 753 B.C.).
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Writing of the Book

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- Hosea's message was probably put in writing sometime between the date of King Menahem's payment tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria (ca. 739 B.C.; hinted at in 5:13; 8:9; 12:1) and the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. (since Hosea does not mention that event).
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Writing of the Book

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- The **reign of Jeroboam II** is often considered the **northern kingdom's golden age**, with a great **economic and political resurgence**.
 - This stability produced a **wealthy merchant class** in Israel and the increased luxury throughout the nation was evident.
 - However, **God evaluated this age differently**, by different criteria.
 - Amos had boldly warned the nation a generation earlier (760-750) about their violent, unjust, oppressive, and self-indulgent policies
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Background

- His warnings went unheeded; he was ordered out of the country and commanded never again to prophesy in Bethel (Amos 7:10-17).

- So God prepares a lawsuit against Israel, **delivering divine indictment through Hosea**, announcing the certainty of the verdict (4:1-6).

- The **most damning evidence**, however, **was spiritual**, as the nation, instead of following God, multiplied lies (12:1) by turning to Baals, idolatry, and great wickedness (10:15).

Background

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- **The nation declined rapidly after Jeroboam's death**, substantiating Hosea's words.
 - During the 30 years the nation had left, four of the six kings were murdered, and the last, Hoshea, was deported to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6) (cf. Hos 10:7).
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Background

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- I. Superscription (1:1)**
 - II. Hosea's Marriage to Gomer the Harlot**
 - A. Children of Harlotry (1:2-2:1)**
 - B. Gomer's Unfaithfulness (2:2-23)**
 - C. Hosea's Faithfulness (3:1-5)**
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Outline of Isaiah

III. Hosea's Message to Israel

- A. Israel's Ignorance and Unfaithfulness**
 - B. Israel's Judgment (6:4-10:15)**
 - C. Yahweh's Faithfulness and Love for Israel (11-14)**
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Outline of Isaiah

- **Hosea's relationship with his harlot wife, Gomer, typified Yahweh's covenant tie with faithless Israel (1:2).**

- The poignant dramatization of love rejected and love restored in his marriage became the **foundation for his preaching to a "harlot" nation (4:15).**

- The recounting of Yahweh's covenant love to the Hebrew patriarchs (12:2-6) and the infant nation of Israel at the exodus (1:11-4; 12:9; 13:4) **served as strong reminders of God's constancy.**

Purpose and Message

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- **This demonstration of steadfast love for Israel** throughout the nation's history **guaranteed that God would keep his pledge of restoration.**
 - **Mercy and judgment** are also important **themes** in Hosea's message.
 - He was a prophet of **eventual hope** (2:14-23) and **immediate doom** (5:8-9), given his understanding of **covenant blessings and curses** as outlined in the Torah (cf. Lev 26:1-39).
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Purpose and Message

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- **He readily identified with Yahweh** whose heart “recoiled” within him as he wrestled with punishing the child he loved so dearly (11:8).
 - **Hosea has a reputation as the “death-bed prophet of Israel”** because he was the last of the writing prophets to address the northern kingdom before the Assyrian onslaught.
 - Ultimately, Hosea’s personal experience with the “prostituting” Gomer was probably the most profound message the prophet could deliver about **Yahweh’s desire and ability to heal and freely love “adulterous” Israel** (14:4).
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Purpose and Message

Hosea's Marriage

- Hosea's marriage to the prostitute Gomer at the command of God has prompted a variety of interpretive opinions among biblical scholars.
 - The several views concerning the prophet's marriage can be summarized thus:
 1. Symbolic Marriage
 2. One Literal Marriage: Sequential narrative
 3. One Literal Marriage: Parallel narrative
 4. Two Literal Marriages
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Major Themes

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- The best of the interpretive options remains the view that holds to one literal marriage for Hosea to a “prostituting” woman named Gomer (with chapters 1 and 3 treating two separate events in the prophet’s life).
 - Elsewhere, Old Testament Scripture makes it clear that our evaluation of God’s methods is sure to prove erroneous.
 - As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s thoughts and ways higher than ours – and beyond finding out (Job 9:10-12; Isa 55:8-9).
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Major Themes

Baalism

- God's controversy with Israel was **rooted in the conflicting religious ideologies** of Canaanite Baalism and Hebrew Yahwism (Hos 4:4).
 - The god Baal was but one of a pantheon of deities worshipped by the Canaanites.
 - Mot, the god of sterility and death, was Baal's eternal rival.
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Major Themes

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- According to Canaanite mythology, the seasons of rain and plenty and drought and famine were the consequence of the perpetual conflict between Baal and Mot.
 - To aid Baal in his struggle against Mot, Canaanite worship of the storm god included human sacrifice and ritual prostitution (cf. Ps 106:34-41; Deut 23:17).
 - Hosea's experience with the faithless prostitute Gomer **directly paralleled Yahweh's relationship with a people who left their God to play the harlot with Baal** (4:10, 12, 15, 17; 5:3-4; et al.).
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Major Themes

- For Hosea, **Israel's harlotry** had a double meaning.

- The people **were not only committing spiritual adultery** against Yahweh by turning to Baal (7:16), but were also **literally prostituting themselves** in the sex acts associated with the rituals of the Canaanite fertility cults (4:13-15).

- **Unsure if they could trust Yahweh** for the rain necessary for life in Palestine, **Israel chose to mix Yahwism and Baalism** in a syncretistic religion.

Major Themes