

## HOSEA

All comments by Gale Yee unless otherwise noted.

Chapters 1-3 -- Hosea and Gomer -- husband to wife

Chapters 4-11 -- God and Israel -- father to child

Chapters 12-14 -- Journey metaphor

- 1) -- Hosea was the only "minor" prophet to come from Israel, not Judah. He lived and taught during the 40 years of turmoil, from 750-724, so three years before the fall of Samaria to Sargon II of Syria, in the 8th century BC. All of the "Book of Twelve" probably collected about 400 BC. /// The book is the first to employ the metaphor of husband for the deity, casting Israel as God's adulterous wife, interpreting the divine as male and the sinful as female. /// Some scholars (e.g. David Levy. Director of foreign Ministries for the Friends of Israel) believe that Gomer was not yet unchaste when they married, but became promiscuous afterwards. Therefore she was not a professional prostitute nor a temple prostitute. /// The marriage metaphor for the God/Israel relationship is used (esp. by Catholics) to prohibit the ordination of women. The God/man Jesus was male and his bride, the church, is female. Therefore the priest, representing Jesus, must be male. /// Canaanite deities and practices (the Baals, high places, pillars, etc.) were woven into the Yahwist religion up to the time of Hosea. So he was not a reformer but an innovator when he championed the one-God religion. /// There was much redaction of the book in the two centuries after Hosea lived. /// Hoses doesn't prophesy, he acts. Other examples: Isaiah is commanded to walk naked for three years through Jerusalem as a sign against Egypt; Jeremiah is ordered to wear a yoke around his neck for a year to symbolize the Babylonian yoke of slavery to come.
- 2) 1:1 – The first three chapters are probably autobiographical, in which Hosea found a symbolic reference to God's love for Israel. /// Jereboam was not the only king who reigned during the reign of the kings of Judah listed. There were six (five?) others: Zechariah, Shallum, Menelem, Reha, and Hoshea. This may have been a deuteronomic redaction.
- 3) 1:4-9 – Each child represents the deteriorating state of the nation. Jezreel ("God sows") is the name of the valley where Jehu's brutal massacre of the corrupt house of Omri occurred. (See 2 Kings 9 for the story of Jehu and Jezebel in the valley of Jezreel.) The daughter Lo-ruhumah ("She is not pitied") picks up the threat of desolation in the north, and God will not care. Lo-ammi ("Not my people") declares God's intent to nullify the covenant with Moses.
- 4) 1:10-11 – The judgment against Israel in vv 4-9 is dissolved in v.10 and reinstated in v 11. God will eliminate the vestige of war and bring a new peace.
- 5) 1:11 – Begins the story of God and Israel
- 6) 2:1-15 – Katherine Sakenfeld in BRE, Feb 2004: A complex poetic speech by *God* who speaks metaphorically, as addressing first his children about their mother and then other people about his wife and children. "God is really talking about his relationship with Israel." /// K. S.: Scholars have long debated whether Gomer and her children were real historical people or whether Hosea's marriage was only an allegory. "God would not require a good man to marry a whore."
- 7) 2:2-3 – As if she wore some sign that she was a whore, but Gale Yee says this is incorrect! She just adorned herself for lovers when Hosea didn't fulfill her material and sexual needs. (Hosea speaking to his children!)

- 8) 2:19-23 – The journey into the wilderness is crucial to the wife’s spiritual and physical journey because it is here that God and Israel pledged themselves to the covenant. Jews recite these vss as they put on a phylactery and wrap leather thongs around a finger as though a marriage ring. The crucial question of paternity is resolved in v 23 when God claims the people as his own.
- 9) 3:1-2 – Hosea has stripped Gomer of clothes, deprived her of food and drink. He buys her for 6 ounces of silver and 10 bushels of barley. Now he gives her money to buy clothes, barley and wine, called “buying her back” in the text. And raisin cakes as an offering to the Canaanite fertility goddess Ashera. He is probably not buying her from another person.
- 10) 3:5 – May be the return from exile, or return spiritually to God. The reference to David probably means that it originated with exilic redactors. (David was not from the northern kingdom.) The gender-specific imagery of Hosea 3 throws up obstacles for women in listening to God’s word
- 11) 4:4-6 – “O priest” refers to the priesthood, not an individual. Priests and prophets share in the current deterioration of Israel’s religious life. /// The “mother” is Israel, personified by Hosea’s mother. /// “My people” refers to Ammi, who will reappear in vv 8 and 12.
- 12) 4:10 – The literal and symbolic are completely intertwined in this complex of images, making interpretation uncertain. Are the priests actually fornicating or just involved in the cult of Baal which Hosea condemns as unorthodoxy?
- 13) 4:15 – A warning to Judah not to emulate Israel/Ephraim by worshiping at the northern shrines at Gilgal and Beth-el (House of God – here written sarcastically Beth-aven, House of Evil).
- 14) 4:17 – Ephraim was the dominant tribe under Joshua at the time of the conquest – one of three Rachel tribes ( with Benjamin and Manasseh). Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, who was son of Rachel. /// “Let him alone is better translated “Yahweh will provide rest for him.”
- 15) Better translated: “A spirit of lust is in her skirts.”
- 16) The geography is not important, chosen for word play:  
 Snare (Hebrew:pah) at Mizpah  
 Net spread (rešet p\_rû\_á) upon Tabor  
 Pit (šâhâtâ) dug deep at Shittim
- 17) 5:7b – Meaning not clear. May mean that God will devour the new moon and the fields. Or, a figurative reversal of 4:8 where the priests devour the sin of Ammi.
- 18) 5:8 – Judges 5:14-22 lists the tribes that went to war against Sisera. One of them was Benjamin, so this is probably an “order” for Benjamin to see who is with him on the Syro-Ephramite war.
- 19) 5:10 – Judah annexes Benjamin by “removing the landmark.” But it will suffer the same fate because Deut 27:17 says that anyone doing so becomes accursed.
- 20) 5:11 – “Vanity” is “filth” in the New American, “idols” in NIV.
- 21) 6:6 – See Matthew 12:7, Jer 8:20, Amos 5:21, Psalm 51:18, 40:6.
- 22) 5:13 – Could be: 1) Menahems’ tribute to Tiglath-peleser III (2 Kings 15:19-20, 738 BCE). Or 2) Hosea’s tribute to Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:7). Or 3) Ahaz’s appeal to Tiglath-peleser to intervene in the Syro-Ephraimite war (2 Kings 16:17).
- 23) 6:1-3 – Four interpretations – see NIB, p. 249-50. Yee thinks these verses refer to a return to the covenant with God, and v 2 is messianic.

- 24) 6:7 – “At Adam” is translated in the NIV “Like Adam,” and in the New American, “In their land.”
- 25) 6:11-7:1a – Should read, “For you, O Judah, a harvest is appointed, when I would restore the fortunes of my people, when I would heal Israel. “My people” again refers to Ammi in the parent/child motif.
- 26) 7:1b- 3 – Obscure text. The antagonists are probably the priests of 6:8-9, responsible for the deterioration of the royal court.
- 27) 7: 4-7 – Probably refers to the 20 years of decline, from Jereboam II to the Assyrian invasion, when four kings ruled and all were murdered.
- 28) 7:8-9 — A shift from internal to external politics, from priestly conspirators to politically rash Ephraim who mixes with Syria, Egypt and Assyria. The “gray hairs” refers not to wisdom but decreased strength.
- 29) 89:1 – “One like a vulture is over...” is “You who watch over” in the New American, and “An eagle is over...” in the NIV.
- 30) 8:5 – Jereboam I set up golden calves in the temples at Bethel and Dan, *the sin* leading to Israel’s destruction (1 Kings 12:25-13:34).
- 31) 9:1-6 – The festival is Sukkot, or Succoth, Festival of Booths, a fall celebration of harvest time. The “return to Egypt” is the enslavement in Assyria, reversing the exodus. The question in v 5 is rhetorical: they will do absolutely nothing. The tents of the pilgrims gathered to celebrate will be taken over by prickly weeds.
- 32) 9:10 – Recounts how the Lord found Israel in the desert like grapes which rarely grow in the desert. They came to Baal-peor, in Moab, and not only had shameful sex with the Canaanite women but began to worship their gods (Numbers 25:1-5).
- 33) 9:11-12 – By going to the fertility god, Ephraim (Israel) causes the true God of fertility to leave them.
- 34) 9:14 – Some scholars: barrenness better than having their children butchered. Yee: a curse that God will cause the wombs to empty and the breasts to dry up.
- 35) 10:1-2 – See 2 Kings 23:14-15 where a century later Josiah tore down the altar at Bethel, etc..
- 36) 10:6 – A reference to the loss of the Ark to the Philistines, and Phineas’s wife naming her newborn Ichabod (inglorious), for now honor/glory has left Israel (1 Samuel 4:21).
- 37) 10:14 – Shalman and Beth-arbel are not identified anywhere in the Bible. Shalman may have been the Moabite king mentioned in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III. There were several Beth-arbels; this one was probably in the Transjordan.
- 38) 11:8-9 – It was deuteronomic law (Deut 21:18-21) that parents had the right to condemn stubborn and/or rebellious sons and have them stoned. God, not being mortal, does not enforce this law.
- 39) 12:4a – Jacob’s struggle with God caused an attitudinal change which allowed him to weep; and implore Esau’s favor (Gen 33:4-10). So here we should read, “He wept and sought Esau’s favor.”
- 40) 12:10 – NIV: “...and told parables through them.” The Hebrew word “ädammeh” can be translated either way, so is probably intended to be double entendre.
- 41) 12:11-12 – See Genesis 29:1-30 where Jacob flees to Gilead to escape Laban. A week later when overtaken by Laban, he makes a covenant with him by means of a stone heap; he promises to treat Rachel and Leah fairly and not marry anyone else.
- 42) 12:13 – Another parallel between Jacob and his flight from Aram, with Moses and his flight from Egypt.

- 43) 13:2b – The MT and NIV read, “they who sacrifice people speak to idols.”
- 44) 13:12-13 – Yee: Ephraim is conceived in the sexual union of Jacob and his wife, tries to supplant his brother in the womb, and is too witless to appear at the cervix in order to be born. (This doesn’t make sense to me because Ephraim was Joseph’s son, not Jacob’s. Jacob had 12 sons, one of whom was Joseph. So Ephraim was Jacob’s **grandson**. Furthermore, it was Jacob and Esau who were born “out of order.”)
- 45) 13:14 – (One of the most difficult passages in the book): Each question can also be read in a positive way: “I shall ransom...” can be “I shall redeem...” Other ambiguities: “your plagues” can be “your words,” “compassion” can be “revenge.”
- 46) 13:15-14:1– “flourish among the rushes” is in the NIV “even though he thrives among his brothers.” Joseph named his son Ephraim because “God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.” Vv 8-9 could then be rendered, “He shall be (sexually) wild among his brothers.” Hosea is notorious for his symbolization of the nation’s sin as a sexually defiant woman who will suffer a brutal fate. Ephraim, who refused to be born, will be ripped from her belly.
- 47) 14:3 – Recited in synagogues on the first Sabbath of the New Year, between Rosh Hoshana and Yom Kippur, along with Joel 2:15-17. The orphan is Lo-ruhamah and/or Ammi.