

PART 4 THE MINOR PROPHETS



There are twelve MINOR PROPHETS; so called only because their scrolls were shorter in length than the writings of the Major Prophets. Again, it is advisable to read each book prior to studying it and not restrict readings just to those given in the text. The order of the Books is arranged as in the Bible, although the dates are uncertain for a few of the authors. These prophetic books cover several centuries ranging from the 9th century B.C., when Jonah may have lived, right up to Malachi in the 5th century B.C. Many of these prophets, like the Major Prophets, foretold *The Voice of the Lord* both for the near future and also the distant years of the End Times, when Messiah would return and reign in righteousness.

HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

Alone of the prophets, Hosea came from Samaria in Israel, the capital city. Hosea prophesied to Israel, although his book was probably written in Judah. In the very 1st verse, four Judean kings are mentioned, so Hosea must have pronounced *The Voice of the Lord* in the middle of the 8th century B.C. for about 40 years or longer. He prophesied during or soon after the prophet Amos and was also a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah. Words from the Book of Hosea, (Osee in Romans 9: 25, 26 A.V.), are also quoted in St. Matthew's Gospel and in the Epistles of Paul and Peter. The prophet Amos had foretold the Lord's judgment of Israel's exile, but it was Hosea who named Assyria as the enemy. Hosea saw the final years of the Northern Kingdom. It was a time of useless alliances with Egypt and Assyria, plots and assassinations, when their kings did evil in the eyes of the Lord; two only ruling for just months. Israel was exiled in 722 BC in the early part of the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah.



HOSEA'S FAMILY LIFE AND CHILDREN

Read Hosea Chapter 1

Like the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Hosea's life symbolically conveyed *The Voice of the Lord* to God's unfaithful people. Hosea was directed by God to marry adulterous wife, Gomer. His family life, the birth of three children and their God-given names were all signs of the coming judgement because Israel had broken God's covenant.

Hosea's first son:

Call his name Jezreel or God-sows.

Hosea 1: 4a

The name Jezreel (God sows or scatters) meant initially God's punishment of King Jeroboam¹¹, a descendant of the house of Jehu, founded at Jezreel. Here much blood had been shed, including the slaughter of all the young sons of the family of Ahab.

Hosea's daughter:

Call her name Lo-Ruhamah or Not-pitied.

Hosea 1: 6a

Israel had forgotten the Lord, so there would be no pity or compassion for the Northern Kingdom – unlike Jerusalem, to be delivered from the Assyrian invasion at that time. (Isaiah 31: 8, 9)

I will have love, pity and mercy on the house of Judah and will deliver them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by horses, nor by horsemen.

Hosea 1: 7 (2 Kings 19: 35 – 37)

Hosea's second son:

Call his name Lo-Ammi (Not-my people).

Hosea 1: 9a

GOD'S PROMISE OF HOPE

Nevertheless, Hosea gave God's promise of Hope, for a time would come in Israel when –

Instead of it being said , You are not My people, it shall be said to them, Sons of the Living God.

Hosea 1: 10b, (Romans 9: 25, 1Peter 2: 10)

Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together and appoint themselves one head, and they shall go up out of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel (for the spiritually reborn Israel, a divine offspring, the people whom the Lord has blessed.)

Hosea 1: 11

ISRAEL'S JUDGEMENT AND RESTORATION

Read Hosea Chapter 2

The Voice of the Lord through Hosea gave warning to Israel of His judgement for the people had forgotten the Lord. In serving the gods of other nations there would be no pity for her adulterous children.

Gomer's harlotry illustrated Israel's present unfaithfulness and failure to understand that it was God Who supplied the grain, wine and oil. In judgement these staples would be withdrawn and destroyed, causing Gomer to say –

Let me go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now.

Hosea 2: 7b

Likewise, the people of Israel had failed to acknowledge the Lord, for even their silver and gold were used to make idols for the worship of Baal in the numerous pagan shrines.

Even so, Hosea knew in future times the Lord God would restore the land and people in an everlasting covenant.

Make the Valley of Achor (troubling) to be for her a door of hope.

Hosea 2: 15a

I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will even betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.

Hosea 2: 19, 20



Hosea prophesied that God's promises would be fulfilled according to the names of the three children; becoming opposite in meaning -

I will **sow** her for Myself anew in the land,

and I will have love and **pity** and mercy for her who had not obtained love, pity and mercy;

and I will say to those who were not My people,

You are My people, and they shall say, You are my God!

Hosea 2: 23

HOSEA REDEEMS GOMER

Read Hosea Chapter 3

God told Hosea, the faithful husband, to love unfaithful Gomer again. As God loved the children of Israel, Hosea was directed to buy her back for she had been reduced to being a slave!

Like Gomer deprived by Hosea for *many days*, Israel would exist in exile without king or prince, without sacrifices or priesthood for *many days*.
(Hosea 3: 4)

Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and from the line of David, their King of kings; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to His goodness and His good things in the latter days.
Hosea 3: 5

THE VOICE OF THE LORD 'S CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL

Hosea Chapters 4, 5

Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no faithfulness, love, pity and mercy, or knowledge of God.

Hosea 4: 1

Through Hosea, God condemned Israel for all the many sins - cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery, violence and bloodshed. God's severe judgement would cause the land to become impoverished and Ephraim ruined.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you (the priestly nation) have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you that you shall be no priest to Me; seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.
Hosea 4: 6

The Lord reproved the false prophets, especially the priests because they had forgotten the holy law of God and failed to instruct the people.

The more they increased in prosperity and power, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.
Hosea 4: 7

Consequently, the people did not know the Lord and so worshipped foreign deities, calf idols, the sun, moon and stars. They sinned exceedingly and were corrupt, especially in Jeroboam 11's reign, a time of great national prosperity.



And it shall be: Like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their doings.
Hosea 4: 9

Harlotry and wine and new wine take away the heart and the mind and spiritual understanding.
Hosea 4:11

Israel's rulers, princes, priests and people had forgotten the Lord, turning to idols. Instead of relying on God, Israel's kings turned to Assyria and Egypt for help that proved to be useless.

Hear this, O you priests! And listen, O house of Israel! And give ear, O house of the king! For the judgement pronounced pertains to you.
Hosea 5: 1a

I will return to My place on high until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction and distress they will seek Me earnestly.
Hosea 5: 15

Likewise, Jesus in His first coming was rejected by His own people. He has returned to His place in heaven till the time comes when in repentance they will seek His face and cry -

Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.

(Psalm 118: 26a, Matthew 23: 39b)

UNREPENTANT ISRAEL

Hosea Chapters 6

Priests and people were filled with an air of complacency, their repentance being insincere. Both Ephraim and Judah had ignored *The Voice of the Lord* spoken through His faithful prophets, supposing the Lord's anger to be only temporary.

O Ephraim (Israel), what shall I do with you? (says the Lord)

O Judah, what shall I do with you?

For your wavering love and kindness are as the night mist or as the dew that goes early away.

Hosea 6: 4

For I desire and delight in dutiful steadfast love and goodness, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of and acquaintance with God more than burnt offerings.

Hosea 6: 6

These words were quoted by Jesus.

(Matthew 9: 13, 12: 7)

Read Hosea Chapter 7

All their kings are fallen; there is none among them who calls to Me.

Hosea 7: 7b

Robbery and other social crimes prevailed in the land. King and princes engaged in intrigue, violence and drunkenness. Israel was ruled by four kings, all being assassinated, in a period of just over 20 years. Earlier, King Elah had died through drunkenness,.

Woe to them, for they have wandered from Me! Destruction to them, because they have rebelled against Me! Though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against Me. Hosea 7: 13

Hosea Chapter 8



Now the Assyrian enemy, like an eagle, was coming and Israel would be devoured; for the Lord's anger was very great.

They have broken My covenant and transgressed against My law.

Hosea 8: 1b

Israel had forgotten the Lord, built pagan altars and worshipped gold and silver idols of false and foreign deities. Jeroboam had set up the golden calf idol of Samaria at Bethel, the royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom. Their kings did not belong to the Davidic line.

They set up kings, but not from Me, (therefore without My blessing); they have made princes or removed them (without consulting Me); therefore I knew and recognised them not.

Hosea 8: 4a

They sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.

Hosea 8: 7a

The words of this well-known proverb succinctly expressed the consequences of sin and their futile reliance on Assyria and Egypt as allies. Assyria came like a whirlwind to destroy Israel. Israel had forgotten the Sinai Covenant relationship and their great deliverance from Egypt.

Ironically the people were returning to Egypt!

Israel has forgotten his Maker.

Hosea 8: 14a

ISRAEL'S PUNISHMENT

Hosea Chapters 9, 10

They shall not remain in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to (another) Egypt and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. Hosea 9: 3

Israel should have been a watchman to the surrounding Gentile nations but instead king and people had forsaken the Lord. Instead, they worshipped idols and treated His prophets with contempt, hostility cruelty and even killed them.

Hosea prophesied that Israel, once loved by the Lord and delivered from slavery in Egypt, would be punished by rejection for their rebellion against Him.

Throughout Israel's history there had been many instances of disobedience.

After the days of Joshua, the Israelites repeatedly forgot the Lord, but whenever they repented God sent Judges and the blessings were restored.

In the days of Hosea, there would be no relenting for there was no repentance.

Woe to them when I look away and depart from them! Hosea 9: 12b

The people would suffer the bereavement of their beloved children and become scattered wanderers in exile among the nations.

Hosea predicted with these words -

My God will cast them away because they did not listen to and obey Him, and they shall be wanderers and fugitives among the nations. Hosea 9: 17

People and priests would even grieve at the destruction of their pagan altars.

The calf idol at Bethel would be taken as tribute to Assyria.

King and Samaria would no longer exist because of the two major sins -

- * Rebellion against the Lord
- * Idol worship

The Voice of the Lord spoke, through Hosea, these words -

Sow for yourselves according to righteousness; reap according to mercy and loving kindness. Break up your uncultivated (unploughed) ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and teaches you righteousness and rains His righteous gift of salvation upon you.

Hosea 10: 12

Israel failed to heed these words, trusting in themselves rather than God; and suffered the consequences.

At daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off. Hosea 10: 15b

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

Hosea Chapters 11, 12

When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt.

Hosea 11: 1 (Matthew 2: 15)

At *The Voice of the Lord*, before the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, Moses had spoken these words to Pharaoh –

Israel is My son, even my firstborn. (Exodus 4: 22)

Hosea's words were fulfilled when Mary and Joseph returned with Jesus to Israel from Egypt after the death of Herod.

The Lord had always been so gracious to His people even though they habitually turned away from His loving care and provision.

They shall not literally return into (another bondage in) the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be their king because they refused to return to Me. Hosea 11: 5

Although unrepentant Israel would be punished by the horrors of war and exile, the nation would not be completely destroyed but would return to live in the land.

How can I give you up, O Ephraim!

How can I cast you off, O Israel!

Hosea 11: 8a

For I am God and not man, the holy One in the midst of you.

Hosea 11: 9b

ISRAEL'S SIN

Ephraim surrounds Me with lies and the house of Israel with deceit, and Judah is not yet steadfast with God, with the faithful Holy One. Hosea 11: 12

In the words of Hosea, they were the seed of Jacob, the Supplanter and Deceiver; but whose name was changed to Israel, because he prevailed with the Angel and so found favour with God.

Therefore return to your God!

Hold fast to love and mercy, to righteousness and justice, and wait for your God continually.

Hosea 12: 6

Instead, self-sufficient Ephraim trusted in his wealth and not in the God of Israel.

Ephraim and Judah were idolatrous and had ignored God's messages through His prophets.

Hosea's marriage to adulterous Gomer was an enacted parable of God's love to unfaithful Israel.

I have spoken to you by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions for you and have appealed to you through parables acted out by the prophets.

Hosea 12: 10

By the hand of the prophet Moses, the Lord brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt at the crossing of the Red Sea; and cared and provided for His Chosen People in their wilderness wanderings.

The tribe of Ephraim had become powerful in the land of Israel but now God's coming judgement and consequent punishment were fully deserved.

The prophet, Hosea recounted and repeated over and over again Ephraim's many sins - rebellion and unfaithfulness, idol worship, deceit, lies, violence and bloodshed that included human sacrifice.

Ephraim has provoked most bitter anger; therefore shall his blood (guilt) be left upon him, and his disgrace and reproach shall his Lord return upon him. Hosea 12: 14



THE LORD'S WRATH AGAINST ISRAEL

Hosea Chapter 13

Yet I am the Lord your God, from the time you became a nation in the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me, for there is no Saviour besides Me. Hosea 13: 4

God's anger is now set against His people for the end of Samaria and the golden calf idol were soon to come. Although God lovingly cared for the children of Israel, the people had not returned to Him, so the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom was inevitable.

It is your destruction, O Israel, that you have been against Me, for in Me is your help. Hosea 13: 9

I have given you a king in My anger, and I have taken him away in My wrath. Hosea 13: 11

*Should I ransom them from the power of Sheol (the place of the dead)?
Should I redeem them from death? O death, where are your plagues?
O Sheol, where is your destruction?
Relenting and compassion are hidden from My eyes.* Hosea 13: 14 (1 Corinthians 15: 54, 55)

Samaria shall bear her guilt and become desolate, for she rebelled against her God. Hosea 13: 16a

HOSEA'S PLEA FOR ISRAEL'S REPENTANCE

Read Chapter 14

Hosea concluded by pleading that Israel should return to the Lord with words of true repentance -
*Assyria shall not save us; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands (idols)
You are our gods.*

For in You, O Lord, the fatherless find love, pity and mercy. Hosea 14: 3

Then Israel will receive His gracious promises and abundant blessings –

I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away. Hosea 14: 4



Israel will then no longer be – (*Not-pitied Lo-Ruhamah*)
(Hosea 1: 6a)

I will be like the dew and the night mist to Israel; he shall grow and blossom like the lily and cast forth his roots like the evergreens of Lebanon. Hosea 14: 5

Hosea's last words concerned the wisdom of knowing the righteous ways of the Lord in which the godly walk and the ungodly stumble.

The ways of the Lord are right and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall stumble and fall in them. Hosea 14: 9b

Hosea gave the choice of obedience or disobedience!

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