

HOSEA

—prophet to Israel, second half of 8th century BC

1. Date

Hosea 1:1 mentions the prophet as ministering during the reigns of the following:

Uzziah, 790-739, sole ruler 767-750

Jotham, 750-731, sole ruler 739-735

Ahaz, 735-715, sole ruler 731-715

—fall of Samaria, 722 BC, in reign of Ahaz of Judah

Hezekiah, 715-686, sole ruler 715-695

and Jeroboam II of Israel, 793-753, sole ruler 782-753

From these we conclude that Hosea has a minimum range of 753-715 BC, which equals at least 38 years. He thus ministered in the second half of the 8th century. Perhaps he lived in Judea after 722 BC; cf. his concern for Judah, 1:7, 11; 4:15.

2. Hosea the prophet

Hosea probably was a native Israelite.

- knowledge of Israel's geography—5:1; 6:8-9; 12:12; 14:6-8
- uses "Ephraim" 37 times
- "our king" for king of Israel, 7:5

Hosea's prophetic CALL is one of the least ceremonial of the prophets. God simply speaks to Hosea, directing him to live out in his home life what God was experiencing in His relations to Israel. Initially, Hosea does God's Word before he is prepared to speak God's Word.

"I have heard, over the years, many preachers and many sermons, and they are almost all forgotten; but on a few occasions I have met men and women of great spiritual stature and profound Christian character, and the memory of them has remained printed indelibly on my mind." —Peter Craigie commenting on Hosea

Hosea had a sad domestic life, marked by his love for his unfaithful wife Gomer.

Hosea's relation to Gomer has caused some to think there was a moral problem (1:2; 3:1). They cite Dt. 24:1-4, and also Lev. 21:13-14 for priests. There is no statement that Hosea was a priest; some have even suggested that he was a baker (cf. 7:4-8). Perhaps this is an illustration of the gospel of love in the OT surpassing the constraints of the ceremonial law.

There are two major questions surrounding the marriage:

- (1) Was his marriage literal or allegorical?

(2) Was Gomer's harlotry before or after her marriage?

Suggested chronological outline of events based on chpts. 1-3

(This outline follows the analogy of God's relation to now harlotrous Israel, 5:4.)

- 1) God instructs Hosea to marry Gomer, without necessarily referring to her character. Hos. 1:2 is understood as an indirect quote, a "proleptic" reference (perspective of hindsight). The final phrase of verse 2 also could be taken to mean that Gomer herself was FROM children of adultery—she could well have been chaste at the time of her marriage (= explicative *waw*, = "viz.").
- 2) Hosea marries Gomer, and has one child.
- 3) The Lord instructs Hosea in naming this child, as he does for the next two children.
- 4) Gomer has two more children, quite possibly from adulterous unions (cf. 5:7; 2:4,5).
- 5) Gomer leaves Hosea for a life of sin.
- 6) Hosea, perhaps at this time, writes parts of chapters one and two, realizing that God in effect commanded him to take an adulterous wife and illegitimate children.
- 7) Gomer sinks into worse adultery and slavery (3:2).
- 8) God instructs Hosea to love Gomer again (cf. 3:1), a cultic prostitute, perhaps as late as 15-20 years after the initial marriage
- 9) Hosea buys Gomer from slavery and takes her again, humbled, to his home.
- 10) Hosea completes his prophecy.

3. Outline of Hosea

(1) Hosea's marriage, ch. 1-3

—Hosea's first stage of marriage—1:1-9

names: "Gomer," no known significance; (possibly "completion")

Jezreel, "God sows" (1:11)

—the place where Jehu killed Ahab's sons (2 Kings 10:1-14, 30; line of Jehu ended in 2 Kings 15:8-12).

Lo-Ruhamah, hm6jgWr al' *lo' ruchamah* <— *racham*, "not having been shown mercy, unloved"

Lo-Ammi, לֹא אִמִּי al' lo' `ammi, "not my people" (ctr. Ex. 6:7)

"And the final terror of judgment is not that of a God active against mankind, but that of a God who has ceased to be concerned with mankind. Hidden within this judgment theme lies the nucleus of the meaning of human life. Life finds its meaning and fulfillment in relationship with God, who is the giver of all life." —Craigie on Hosea

—Hosea's marriage renewal—3:1-3

emphasis on love in vs. 1

15 pieces of silver

1.5 homers of barley (1 homer = ca. 5 bushels); cf. Zech. 11:12 which = price of male slave

—Significance of Hosea's marriage, 1:10 - ch. 2; and 3:4-5

Hosea's marriage and remarriage to Gomer were to illustrate God's relation to Israel:

1) punishment, 2:2-13; 3:4 (cf. v. 3)

—formal divorce declaration in 2:2

"Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!"

2) restoration and blessing, 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:5; prob. preached after 732 when judgment appeared imminent

—1:10 promises future fulfillment of Abrahamic promise (Gen. 32:12; 22:17) of a multitudinous seed when the population of Israel was about 150,000; also, not just "people," but "sons of God"

1:10 "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'"

—ctr. historical perspective of Neh. 9:22-24, 2Chron 1:9

—2:14-15 = CRUX of chpts. 1-3 where Yahweh woos Israel again

a) = new marriage (2:16,17); cf. Mal. 2:14-16; Prov. 2:17

b) = new covenant (2:18-20)

2:16 "And it shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,' 17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more.

19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; 20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.

c) = new names of hope (21-23)

—2:18 = return to peace in creation

18 In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely.

(2) Hosea's messages, ch. 4-14

The arrangement of the remaining chapters has appeared disconnected to western students. David Dorsey (*Literary Structure of the OT*, p. 265), believes “The book appears to comprise seven larger units arranged in an overall symmetry, with each of these units, in turn, exhibiting its own artful internal organization.”

Dorsey's Chiastic Outline of Hosea

- a Israel is God's wayward wife, but he will cause her to return home (1.1 – 3.5)
- b Condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (4.1 – 5.7)
- c Condemnation for social corruption and vain sacrifice (5.8 – 6.11a)
- d CENTER: Israel has not returned at God's call (6.11b – 7.16)
- c' Condemnation for social corruption and vain sacrifice (8.1 – 9.7b)
- b' Condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (9.7c – 10.15)
- a Israel is God's wayward son; God invites his return home (11.1 – 14.9)

4. Predictive prophecy in Hosea

Hosea contains an abundance of predictive prophecy. Many of the isolated prophecies and statements in Hosea are here arranged topically.

1) A test case: the downfall of the house of Jehu, fulfilled when Shallum assassinated Zechariah in 752 BC (2 Kings 15:8-12)—Hosea 1:4

2) General prophecies of judgment, cursings for breaking the covenant—e.g., 6:7; 7:5,7; 8:1,12

6:7 “But like men (viz., “like Adam”) they transgressed the covenant; There they dealt treacherously with Me.”

3) Specific prophecies of Israel's judgment

the nation's fall predicted, after losing battles and a siege—e.g., 3:4; 11:5; 13:16 (Hebrew 14:1)

dispersion—9:17; 12:9

4) Restoration predicted

Lord redeems—6:2; 13:14; cf. 3:2 and 7:13

6:1 “Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.”

13:14 “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!”

national repentance—5:15; 10:12

5:15 I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

return to land—1:11; 11:10-11

Davidic kingdom reestablished—3:5; cf. 1:11

Israel to flourish—14:6-8

permanent faithfulness to Yahweh—2:16-25

5) Predictions concerning Judah

sin—5:5

judgment—12:2 (last longer, 1:7)

punishment similar to Israel’s—8:14

reunion with Israel—1:11

6) Primary passages predicting the **restored theocratic kingdom** and blessing in the coming age:

1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:4-5; 6:2; 11:10-11; 13:14; 14:4-8

5. NT use of Hosea

Hos. 1:10 and 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:25 and 1 Pet. 2:10. These passages state that those who are not God's people will be God's people.

Most commentators say the NT reinterprets these passages to refer not to the northern tribes, but to the Gentiles. But the NT passages can be better understood when the same meaning is given to the verses there as they have in the OT. Paul and Peter can be speaking of the conversion of Israel at the last day, with the "vessels of mercy" being Israel, and the "vessels of wrath" being her historical enemies and oppressors. See Battle, "Paul's Use of the OT in Rom. 9:25-26," *Grace Theological Journal* 2:1 (Spring, 1981), 115-29.

Hos. 10:8, quoted in Lk. 23:30; Rev. 6:16. The cry that the mountains would cover the wicked to hide them from God's judgment.

Hos. 11:1, quoted in Mt. 2:15. This quotation takes the statement of God that he took "his son" out of Egypt, referring to Israel under Moses, and applies it to Jesus coming out of Egypt as a young boy. This quotation requires Israel to be understood as a type of Jesus, as the "son" of God, Ex. 4:22. It is a case of historical "corporate solidarity," not explicit Messianic prediction.

Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

Matt. 2:14 "When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Hos. 13:14, quoted in 1 Cor. 15:55. This is the promise that God will be the plague of death and the destruction of Sheol. Paul links it to the resurrection in the last day.

13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!"

1 Cor. 15: 54-57 "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hos. 6:2, possibly alluded to in I Cor. 15:4

6:1 "Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight."

1 Cor. 15:3 "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..."