

# Hosea

Hosea 1:1-14:9

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-11-17

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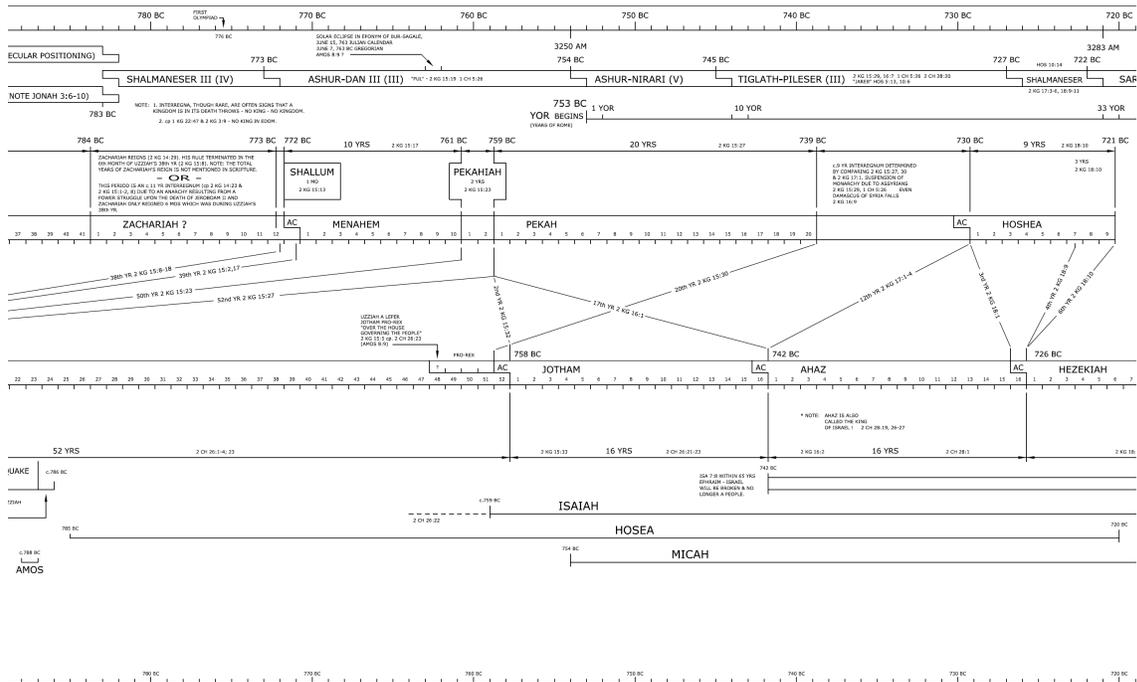
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## **I. A brief biography of Hosea**

Hosea is an amazing book on redemption, and he himself is an amazing model of the love and forgiveness of God. And I am going to spend most of this sermon on the first three chapters because they form the foundation for the rest of the book. What you think about the first three chapters will color your view of the rest of the book. But first, let me give you some background.

Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel, which had pretty much become completely apostate. He prophesied from about 785-720 BC - an astonishing 65 years of ministry. Some of your study bibles may give different dates, having him start in 755 BC (which would be during the reign of Pekah), but Floyd Nolan Jones has done a good job of nailing the Biblical data on this. And really, all you need is verse 1. You don't need to be smart or have Biblical chronology worked out to figure this out. Verse 1 says, "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah" etc. Well, I'm sorry - Uzziah lived long before 755 BC. Verse 1 makes it crystal clear that at least some prophecy had to have happened during the reign of Uzziah. And it goes on to say that his prophetic ministry lasted until the reign of Hezekiah.



So I have included a timeline developed by Floyd Nolan Jones on the backside of your outline that shows that Hosea lived during some of the most turbulent times of Northern Israel’s history. He saw six northern kings being taken out and replaced, four of whom were murdered by the next king, and he saw the overthrow of Israel.

And if you don’t follow Nolan’s dates, there are certain prophecies of imminent fulfillment that you won’t be able to find a fulfillment to. For example, chapter 1:4 gives a prophecy that will be fulfilled very soon on my dating (with King Shallum destroying the line of Jehu), but which is a total mystery if you don’t see this as starting until 755 BC. So the book spans 785-720 BC - 65 years in all. And this makes his ministry come right after Amos, and overlap Isaiah and Micah.

Why was he called by God? Well, I have a bunch of verses here that show that he was called by God to condemn Israel’s idolatry (e.g., 3:4; 4:7-13, 15-18; 5:11; 8:4-6; 9:1; 10:5, 8; 11:2, 7; 13:2; 14:8) and priests who led the people astray (4:4-9; 5:1; 6:9; 10:5), and false prophets who patted people on the back and made them feel nice rather than pointing out sin (4:5; 6:5; 9:7-8; 12:10-13), and political leaders who engage in selfish pragmatism rather than following Biblical law (5:1, 10; 7:3-7, 16; 8:4; 9:15; 10:7; 12:7). So from citizens, to preachers, to politicians, the nation had become utterly corrupt and was in danger of God’s imminent judgment (4:1-6, 14; 5:4-5; 6:8-10; 7:1-14; 8:1; 9:1-3, 7, 15-17; 10:1-2, 9, 13-14; 11:12; 12:8, 14; 13:1-

3, 12-13, 16; 14:1). So his calling was not a pleasant calling. No prophetic calling was.

He was born into a family of nobility, which is interesting in light of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, where Paul says that not many nobles are called.<sup>1</sup> He didn't say, "not any." He said, "not many." But though Hosea was a nobleman, he certainly identified with the down-and-outers of life. And when you see the wife he married, and the children he adopted, you will see that Hosea had God's heart. He was not your typical nobleman.

He was one of the most gifted prophets in literary techniques. Johnson suggested that if you were to adequately explain the power of every metaphor, simile, and illustration in the book, it would basically amount to a commentary on the whole book.<sup>2</sup> You find them everywhere. They are beautifully placed and wrap into each and keep reappearing in the book. I wish I could use picturesque language as well as he did. He was a marvelous communicator.

But back to his life, when you see how God used Hosea's family life to illustrate God's own relationship to Israel, you begin to see that Hosea was a great husband, a great dad, and had a big heart. He married a woman who brought at least two children into Hosea's life - children born out of wedlock. (And I will explain how I come to that conclusion later.)

So this is a book that gives a lot of instruction on how to handle the kind of broken situations that the modern church in America is having to face: situations like single parent homes, adultery, divorce, how to restore people caught in the grip of prostitution and sexual abuse, how to have your children turn their back on an adulterous family member - for that family member's best interests.

And of course there was fallout on that particular action - huge fall out, because the first two adopted kids sided with their mom and thought that Hosea, their adoptive dad, was being way too harsh. And he is thinking, "I

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1 "26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1Cor. 1:26-29)

2 He said, ""Indeed, a thorough treatment of all of these items would practically amount to a commentary on the whole book."6 His use of metaphor is indeed striking." Rick Johnson, "Hosea 4-10: Pictures at an Exhibition," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 36 (1993): 20. For another interesting study of Hosea's use of methaphor, see F. Landy, "In the Wilderness of Speech: Problems of Metaphor in Hosea," *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995):35-39

love you kids, and I want your favor, but I can't go along with your wishes on this matter. You are asking for a false mercy." So in chapter 2:4-5 he says, 4 "I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry. 5 For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. Sadly they are identifying with her. So what's going on here is that the mom had managed to get at least the adopted kids (the children of harlotry) to empathize with her and side with her. You see some of the dynamics of an unhealthy blended family happening here. But Hosea explains things to his kids, saying about their mom (and we are picking up at the middle of verse 5 of chapter 2):

For she said, [So he is going to be giving his kids his reasons as to why he has cut her off - "for she said,"] "I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink." 6 "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, "I will go and return to my first husband, For then it was better for me than now." This was an incredibly tough assignment for Hosea. He is called to prophesy to his children why he is treating his wife the way he is treating her and prophesying that she will eventually repent and come back. Wow! That was tough. Hosea's goal was to let his adulterous wife experience the fruits of her sin and not enable her. He wanted her to turn from her wicked ways, and he was prepared to forgive her if she fully repented of her sins. But he was not going to enable her. Sadly, two of the children wanted him to keep doing nice things to her, but he wouldn't have mercy. It was too early for mercy. Mercy would come in chapter 3, when she hit rock bottom and was willing to fully repent, enter into accountability, start all over, and do things right.

There are too many people nowadays that simply do not understand the gracious purpose of tough love. In fact, they are undermining the purpose of Hosea's true love. They have a false kindness to rebels that is not kindness at all. They try to hold the door open to rebels, but are holding the door open in a lawless way. And as such they become partakers of the rebel's sins. I have commentaries that criticize Hosea because they have bought into our modern culture's insistence on blind empathy and unconditional love. But they need to read 2 John 10-11, which says,

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Hosea's way of holding the door open to rebels is the only Biblical way. And it worked. But it wouldn't have worked if he had had mercy on the first two children and caved into their desires and let the adulterous mom have visitation rights and come and go as she pleased. That would be to allow the rebel to dictate terms and for the rebel to enjoy the benefits of relationship

when such a relationship would be totally fake.

So there are lessons on tough love that are fantastic in this book. In fact, it has helped to refine some of my own thinking. This book corrects the world's faulty views of empathy. There are lessons on what constitutes true love and true forgiveness. It shows how to draw boundaries for straying family members, but how to do it in a way that gives hope for the future rather than cutting off hope. Hosea gave hope to his children - God will work through this. He will work through it if we trust Him. Let's do it His way.

There are lessons for single parents. For an undefined period of time Hosea was a single parent having to care for very young children while his wife irresponsibly left the home and slept around and tried to have fun the world's way. And it broke Hosea's heart. So Hosea is not just a model of how to navigate the tough waters of a blended family (that's tough enough), but it is also a model on how to be a single dad in a way that will enable the kids to flourish. For example, I see the imagery in chapter 11 of God's gentleness with his son, cords of love, teaching them to walk, etc as having being prefigured by Hosea's own relationship to His adopted children.

I see Hosea as being a prophetic symbol of God's fatherhood and God's marriage to Israel throughout the whole book. Even Hosea's cutting off contact between Gomer and her children is a mirror image of God later telling the remnant children of Israel to leave the abusive relationship of adulterous Northern Israel and to move south to Judah where a revival was happening. And by the way, in 2 Chronicles 30 King Hezekiah joined in that call to believers in the north to leave and join Judah. So there are a lot of cool prophetic things happening just in his own biography.

## **II. Overview of the book**

Of course, not everybody agrees with my interpretation. I ran across two feminist commentaries that made Gomer out to be the free-love hero and Hosea to be the abusive, patriarchal, fuddy-duddy husband. He was the kill-joy. He was the bad guy in these commentaries. It's obvious that they do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.

### ***A. Chapters 1-3 - Hosea's family life as a prophetic image of Israel's adultery and later restoration***

But even among evangelicals there are at least seven different views of what is going on in chapters 1-3. Some seem to be embarrassed by these chapters

and are trying to explain away the obvious in chapters 1 and 2. Others think that Hosea could not possibly take a Gomer back in chapter 3 because they have a faulty view of divorce and remarriage.<sup>3</sup> Though she was sleeping around, she had not remarried after Hosea had divorced her, so she does not fit the prohibition in Deuteronomy 24. Fornication does not make you married or a Jesus would not have told the woman at the well that she had had four husbands and that the man she was currently living with was not her husband. But let me at least list some of the different views that evangelicals have taken.

- First, John Calvin (much as I love him and greatly respect) was absolutely wrong when he took this as merely a vision and not as the real wife of Hosea.<sup>4</sup> He thought it was like a bad dream that didn't correspond to reality. There are several indicators within the text that make this extremely unlikely. For example, if it was merely a vision, why does God make it sound historical - like calling Gomer the daughter of Diblaim? Why that little detail? It sounds like she is the literal daughter of a historical figure. Or verse 8 - "Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son." These and other things are indicators of real history. But a number of people have followed Calvin on this because of how embarrassed they are by chapters 1-3 and it contradicts their legalistic theology. But to me it is not embarrassing at all. It is very encouraging because it shows that the Bible gives us instructions and blueprints for not just the ideal situations of life, but also for the broken and the messed up situations of life. It's an incredibly realistic book for modern times. We need to be prepared to minister to broken and messed up families in our culture. Anyway, the first interpretation is that this isn't real history. Wrong; it is.
- Second, some take Gomer in chapter 1:3 as being Hosea's faithful wife, and the remainder of that chapter as simply being a vision that shows Israel being unfaithful, but not his wife. They then take the prostitute of chapter 3 as not being married to Hosea, but simply Hosea showing kindness to that immoral woman.<sup>5</sup> To them the command, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery" is a command to just be nice to her; to be kind; to show compassion. No - that is the opposite of Hosea's tough love. And furthermore, I fail to see how it would be honoring to his faithful wife to compare her to unfaithful Israel - which they have to do. On many levels I find this interpretation to be troubling and to be exegetically unfeasible. It is eisegesis, not exegesis.
- Third, still others take chapters 1 and 3 as being actual history, so that is good.

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3 They misinterpret Deuteronomy 24 and Jeremiah 3:1. Those passages deal with divorce and remarriage and then divorcing the second partner and remarrying the first. They in no way forbid a husband taking back a promiscuous wife or even taking back a divorced wife who is promiscuous but not remarried. It is the remarriage that closes the door to remarriage to the first husband.

4 Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.) 1:43-45 Calvin thinks that marrying her would have disqualified him from ministry: "How could he expect to be received ... after having brought himself such a disgrace?" However, Old Testament priests and Levites corresponding to New Testament pastors and elders have stricter criteria than did prophets who had not authority within the church.

5 R H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941) 567-70.

But they see the two chapters as describing two totally different women. So he married a prostitute named Gomer in chapter 1 and he later married another prostitute in chapter 3.<sup>6</sup> I can't get into all the exegetical reasons why that is not feasible either, but one is that the comparison to God and Israel makes it clear that Hosea already had a previous marital relationship with the woman of chapter 3. He had divorced her; now he is remarrying her.

- There are four interpretations that take chapters 1 and 3 as both referring to the same woman, Gomer. I hold to the fourth one. The first of these four interpretations says that God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute. OK, I agree with that. She gave him one son (I disagree with that figure), but turned to her old ways and bore two children of doubtful paternity (1:2-9). I also question that. Hosea then separated from her or (some say) was abandoned by her (2:2a). Well, that's a little bit late for the separation. Anyway, this view says that she then fell into poverty. Hosea then bought her out of slavery and restored her to the family.<sup>7</sup> Now, some of that is correct, but the relationship of the children is not, the time frame is not, and the number of children is not, and even his putting up with things so long is not.
- Fifth, Archer, Anderson, and Freedman, all take a similar view to the one I just outlined, but they say that Gomer was not yet a prostitute in chapter 1:2, and that this was Hosea realizing later that God had commanded him to marry someone who would eventually become a prostitute.<sup>8</sup> But chapter 1:2 definitely says that Hosea knew he was marrying a prostitute at the time. There is no way you can twist the Hebrew into saying, "a woman who is going to commit fornication." No, she already had. Some people wonder, "How could God allow and even command a prophet to marry a prostitute?" The key thing is that she was repentant (and I will prove that in a bit) and stayed faithful for the next several years, as I will show later. She was starting a new life.
- A sixth interpretation says that chapters 1 and 3 are just variant accounts of exactly the same event with no sequence intended. However, there are differences between the accounts, there is indication of sequence, and thirdly, this requires the word "again" in 3:1 to be an editorial insertion into the text.<sup>9</sup> My high view of Scripture does not allow me to do that.

So let me give you the view that I have adopted. And we are going to take a tour of chapters 1-3. Hosea's relationship with Gomer started when she was already a prostitute and had at least two children out of wedlock. She had basically become a slave to a pimp. Chapter 1:2 says,

2 When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry..."

He is taking both wife and children at the same time. Though there is debate on this, I don't see how any other interpretation is exegetically feasible. It

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6 G. Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 420-21.

7 J. Limburg, Hosea-Micah, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988) 8-15.

8 G. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 323. E. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, Hosea, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 155-170

9 Bullock says that Gordis holds to this view. See C. H. Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books (Chicago: Moody, 1986) 91.

just arises from people's embarrassment. I believe McComiskey is absolutely correct when he says that the most natural reading of this is that she was already a prostitute and already had children (plural) from her life of prostitution. They are clearly called "children of harlotry," and Hosea's children are not children of harlotry. His three were legitimate children.

This interpretation is confirmed by chapter 2:1 which speaks not only of brothers, but also sisters (plural). Later in this chapter we are told that Hosea only had one daughter of his own (and all agree on that point). But that means that the word "sisters" (plural) being in the home in chapter 2:1 means that Hosea had adopted at least one girl when he married Gomer. She is going to be a step-sister to Hosea's daughter and sons.

There is a hint from chapter 2 and from chapter 11:1 that at least one of the children (plural) that came into the family at the time of the marriage was a boy that became the symbol of Jesus. Let me build the case, and then I'll explain later why it is hugely significant. It answers a huge conundrum in Matthew 2:15.

Andrew Dearman points out that Gomer must have been taken into sexual slavery in Egypt before chapter 1.<sup>10</sup> How does he arrive at that conclusion? Chapter 2 jumps ahead by 6-8 years to when she started sleeping around with other men again. In the first part of chapter 2 Hosea cut off visitation rights and had to explain to his kids why this really was the loving thing to do. He tells them that he can't subsidize her evil and he wants God's providence to bring her to repentance. In chapter 2 Hosea tells the kids prophetically that she will indeed repent (and chapter 3 will later record that repentance and return). And when that happens, he will take her back, but not before. But look at the words in chapter 2, verse 15.

I will give her her vineyards from there, [she used to have the vineyards, but she has been cut off from them. Prophetically he prophesies that when she repents he will give them back - "I will give her her vineyards from there"] And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

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10 "In her role as Israel in the wilderness, Gomer also came up from the land of Egypt in the days of "her youth," *nē'ûreyhā* (2:15 [MT 17]), a plural form derived from the noun *na'ar*. Both Jeremiah (2:2) and Ezekiel (16:22, 43, 60) use the same plural term to describe YHWH's prior dealings with Jerusalem, who personifies and thus represents his people. As with Hosea and the portrayal of Gomer, the prophetic texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are based on a narrative of God's choice of Israel, entering into a covenant relationship with "her" like that of a marriage, and bringing her to the promised land. What sets 11:1 apart from these other references is the gender of Israel as metaphorical son. Both Gomer and Jerusalem are female. The exodus and wilderness traditions being rendered, however, are essentially the same." J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 277.

She stands as an image of Israel. So if Dearman is correct when he says of this verse, “Gomer also came up from the land of Egypt in the days of “her youth,” *ně'ûreyhā* (2:15),” then it means that her children (plural) of harlotry also came up from Egypt with her.

Well, this suddenly gives new significance to Hosea 11:1, which says,

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

What commentators have puzzled over is how Matthew 2:15 could say this is a prophecy of Jesus coming out of Egypt. The reason they are puzzled is that they see Hosea 11:1 as exclusively referring to history - to Israel coming out of Egypt in the book of Exodus. But if at least two children of Gomer came out of Egypt with her just prior to his first marriage to her, then everything is resolved. We know from chapter 1 that all three of Hosea’s own children became prophetic symbols of Israel’s history and its future. If this was one of Gomer’s children of harlotry who came up out of Egypt, he too could stand as a symbol of Israel’s history as well as Israel’s future in Christ. The individual child could stand as a prophetic symbol of Jesus. Each child prophesied concerning the future. So I believe God is using Hosea’s adopted child as a prophecy of Jesus coming out of Egypt.

In any case, all of chapter 11 shows what a great Father’s heart God has, and I believe God’s Father’s heart is symbolized by Hosea’s father-heart. So this chapter is a marvelous statement of the kind of love that Hosea showed to the children of harlotry that had been adopted.

So going back to chapter 1, my view is that God commanded Hosea to marry a repentant prostitute who had at least two children who were born out of wedlock. This would have been no different than the new beginning that Rahab the harlot had in the book of Joshua when she married Salmon, the father of Boaz. Just as Rahab had done, Gomer was supposed to abandon her lifestyle and enter into a faithful relationship with Hosea - which she did for at least seven years. Verse 2 goes on to show how this would all be a prophetic symbol.

...for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.”

So this is the first of several references to Gomer being a symbol of Israel.

Verse 3:

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Each of the children that Hosea has by her become prophetic symbols themselves. Hosea’s first child is named “Jezreel” in verse 4 because God was about to judge the house of Jehu and slaughter them in the Valley of Jezreel for all the idolatry that those descendants of Jehu had engaged in.

And it would be done in much the same way that Jehu had originally slaughtered the house of Ahab for its idolatry. And indeed (as Duane Garrett says), “Shallum killed Zechariah at Ibleam, a town located in a southern part of the valley of Jezreel.”<sup>11</sup> There is a perfect fulfillment.

The next child was a daughter, and in verse 6 he names her the prophetic name, “Lo-Ruhamah,” which means “No Mercy,” because Israel was about to be conquered by the Assyrians. God was not going to have mercy on them.

After weaning (verse 8 - probably 2-3 years later) she conceived again and he named that son “Lo-Ammi,” which means “Not-My-People,” a prophetic statement that Paul picks up on in Romans about the remnant of Israel being saved and God going to the Gentiles.

If there was two years between children, Gomer stayed faithful to Hosea for a minimum of 7 years. If there were three years between births and conceptions (as was common for breast-feeding women in Israel), then it would be longer. So for at least 7 years Gomer was a faithful wife just like Rahab the harlot had been.

But in chapter 2:2 and following we see Hosea accusing his wife of sleeping around with other men. And he asks his children to join him in the divorce court. They must have had plenty of evidence. So he tells his children, Bring charges against your mother, bring charges. For she is not My wife. He is going to divorce her.

But he holds out hope in the rest of the chapter. Of course, she is not repentant, so Hosea is forced to kick her out of the home. In effect he was saying, “You cannot be in this home if you are going to be sleeping with other men.” And he cut off her funds, because to do otherwise would be to finance her rebellion and immorality. There was no such thing as “no fault divorce” in the Old Testament. And he has to tell his children to turn their backs on her and to have nothing to do with her. This was an act of discipline.

As I’ve already mentioned, that’s where more trouble begins. His two oldest adopted children (the children of harlotry) don’t agree with this tough love. And Hosea has to navigate some pretty troubled waters. But he sticks to his guns and it appears that the children eventually come along side of him. He tells his children at the end of chapter 2 that his whole purpose in doing this is to bring her to repentance. And once his wife repents, he will start over

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<sup>11</sup> Duane A. Garrett, Hosea, Joel, vol. 19A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 58.

with a betrothal and a period of wooing her heart. But that cannot happen until she repents. He is not going to pretend that nothing is wrong.

In any case, Hosea prays that God will severely discipline her for all of her licentious living. Some commentators think this prophetic behavior on the part of Hosea is grossly unloving and ungracious - one commentator even said “abusive.” But they are downplaying the seriousness of adultery. It is so serious in its destruction of family and culture that God made adultery a capital crime - in other words, worthy of the death penalty. Hosea is being responsible and is actually engaged in a form of tough love. He could have been much more severe. The law allowed him to take her to the court and have her stoned to death. He chose not to. He had a heart of forgiveness, but it didn’t look anything like the humanistic forgiveness of some who empathize with rebels while they are still rebels. That does not reflect the heart of God at all.

Hosea is obviously heartbroken over this turn of events, and God’s prophetic words come to him in the remainder of chapter 2 that this is exactly what Israel had done to God. Israel had broken God’s heart with her idolatry and violations of His covenant. If you can imagine the pain you would feel if your spouse started sleeping around, transfer that to God. When you willfully sin, you are breaking God’s heart in the same way. In any case, God holds out hope that He will forgive Israel if she repents, and he will start a new relationship with her if she will turn to him. So it is a book that shows redemption.

And that neatly transitions into the third stage of Hosea’s relationship with Gomer. Even with his tough love, he prays for restoration. And God brings Gomer to the end of her rope, just as Hosea had prophesied would happen in chapter 2. She had fallen so low that she had sold herself into slavery and was in abject misery. Commentaries point out that the price he paid was the price of slave. God had prepared her to repent. Until that had happened, there was no point in stopping the tough love. And this is where chapter 3 comes in. Let me begin reading at verse 1.

1 Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.” 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. 3 And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man — so, too, will I be toward you.”

So he promises to be faithful to her and makes her promise to be faithful to him. And then the next two verses speak of its prophetic significance.

Beginning to read at verse 4:

Hos. 3:4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

The New American Commentary gives many reasons why evangelicals have insisted that “David their king” in verse 5 is a reference to Jesus, the Messiah, and why the earlier verses absolutely must refer to the inter-testamental period of history from Malachi to Jesus.<sup>12</sup> I wish I had time to go over this prophecy. It’s amazing. But I’m going to skip over the notes that I have taken.

[Skip notes in the rest of this point.]

First, what happens “afterward” in verse 5 has to be Messianic because seeking Yehowah is said to be equivalent to seeking “David their king.” It is not simply seeking a son of David, because this person is both Yehowah and “David.” And the Hebrew could be rendered, “seek Yehowah their God, even David their king.”

Second, verse 1 shows that Gomer leaving Hosea symbolizes northern Israel being cast into exile in 722 BC because of her unfaithfulness. So verse 1 should be anchored no earlier than 722 BC.

Third, the whole point of Hosea restoring Gomer to himself and ensuring that she remain faithful to him was a prediction of God restoring the scattered tribes of Israel to the land and ensuring that they remain faithful to Him. When did the tribes get restored? The restoration occurred in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the post-exilic prophets. So verse 2 should be anchored in approximately 537 BC.

Fourth, Hosea speaks in verse 3 of Gomer being faithful to Hosea for “many

<sup>12</sup> The New American Commentary says, “The prophecy that they would seek ‘David their king’ is messianic. The phrase does not mean simply that the Israelites would again submit to the Davidic monarchy and so undo Jeroboam’s rebellion. Had that been the point, we would expect the text to say that they would return to the ‘house of David.’ Instead we see ‘David their king’ set alongside of Yahweh as the one to whom the people return in pious fear. This ‘David’ cannot be the historical king, who was long dead, but is the messianic king for whom he is a figure.” Duane A. Garrett, Hosea, Joel, vol. 19A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 104. After quoting Keil - “Seeking Jehovah their God is connected with seeking David their king. For as the apostasy of the ten tribes from the kingdom of David was only the consequence and result of its inner apostasy from Jehovah, so the true return to God could not take place without a return to their king David, since God had promised the kingdom to David forever in his seed (2 Sam. 7:13, 16); thus David is the only true king of Israel—their king” (Keil). Lange agrees and says, “The family of David is probably primarily meant, and more strictly, a king of that family. The conclusion, ‘at the end of the days,’ alludes to the Messianic period, according to prophetic usage elsewhere; hence we are justified in assuming the Messiah to be also meant here.” John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, et al., A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Hosea (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 47.

days” and in verse 4 says that this is a prophetic symbol of Israel’s future faithfulness to God for “many days.” The fact that Zechariah (in 520 BC and after) prophecies against people who were still using teraphim household gods,<sup>13</sup> shows that the period being anticipated as without teraphim must be somewhat later than Zechariah’s prophecy. But was there a time when at least outwardly, the use of idols was completely rejected by Israel? Yes. The restored Israel did remain faithful to God for most of the time between 400 BC until the time that Jesus was born.

Therefore verse 4 has to occur some time after the post-exilic prophets and sometime before 5 BC (when Jesus was born).<sup>14</sup> This window of time is what has been traditionally spoken of as the “four hundred years of silence,”<sup>15</sup> and the silence being referred to is the silence of no prophecy being given. But it was also a time when Israel was very faithful to God in many ways. So let me read verse 4 again, and I will stop after each couplet to comment on why that happened in the intertestamental period.

Verse 4 says, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince...” It is a matter of record that there were no Davidic kings of Israel during the four hundred years of intertestamental history. And so this couplet contrasts that situation with Jesus being the final King.

Next, verse 4 says, “without sacrifice or sacred pillar.” Commentators point out that this refers to the total absence of pagan worship and pagan idols. So this couplet contrasts with Jesus being the final Priest. And there were four hundred years when Israel rejected idolatry.

Next, verse 4 says, “without ephod or teraphim.” The ephod was a God-given special garment worn by the High Priest that had stones embedded in it (Ex. 28:12, 39:7,21) including the Urim and Thumim (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8), which somehow gave detailed prophetic guidance from the Lord (see 1

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13 Teraphim were household idols that were consulted by people for guidance/revelation. The New Bible Dictionary states, “These objects are mentioned in every OT period: the Patriarchs (Gn. 31:19); the judges (Jdg. 17:5–18:30); early and late Monarchy (1 Sa. 15:23; 19:13–16; 2 Ki. 23:24; Ho. 3:4; Ezk. 21:21; and post-exile (Zc. 10:2). When mentioned in Israelite contexts they are almost always condemned, directly (1 Sa. 15:23; 2 Ki. 23:24) or indirectly (Jdg. 17:6; Zc. 10:2). In their use, they are mostly associated with \*DIVINATION: note the pairing of ephod and teraphim in the idolatrous religion of Micah (Jdg. 17:5, etc.); the association with divination by arrows and hepatoscopy (Ezk. 21:21), and with spiritist practices (2 Ki. 23:24). Nowhere are we told how they were consulted, nor even what their appearance was.” J. A. Motyer and M. J. Selman, “Teraphim,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., New Bible Dictionary (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1163.

14 For an extended discussion of the dating of Jesus’ birth, see Phillip Kayser, December 25 Jewish Style (Omaha: Biblical Blueprints, 2018), available as an ebook at <https://leanpub.com/december-25-jewish-style/>

15 F. David Farnell, “The Gift of Prophecy in the Old and New Testaments,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (October-December 1992): 389.

Sam. 23:9-12; 30:7-8 for examples). The post-exilic community did not have access to the Urim and Thumim (Ezra 2:61-63).<sup>16</sup> But this verse indicates that even with the absence of prophetic activity (something that Amos 8 also predicted to occur during that time), these Jews would not turn to alternative demonic revelation. God's people would be sola Scriptura believers for four hundred years. So this couplet contrasts with Christ's office of Prophet - one who would be the fullness of God's revelation.

So commentators show that verses 4 and 5 together show that the future Messiah would be Prophet, Priest, and King in one Person. And just as this section ends with a prophecy of Jesus being the solution, each of the following two sections ends with the prophecy of Jesus being the solution.. And I can be quite speedy in giving an overview of the rest of the book.

### ***B. Chapters 4-11 - Accusations and warnings, ending with future hope***

In your outline, the Messianic sections are in bold letters.

In chapter 4 God brings rebuke over myriad sins - lying, lack of mercy, rejecting the knowledge of the Bible, swearing, killing, stealing, adultery. Basically, as you go verse by verse through the passage, you see violations of all ten commandments. And he blames the sin on a number of things. For example, verse 6 says,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

When you don't know the Bible, you can easily fall into sin. In contrast, Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." If you aren't motivated to memorize Scripture and study Scripture, keep that verse in mind - " My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

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16 Schoville states, "The reference here (and in the parallel passage in Neh 7:65) suggests that a high priest and sacred breastplate were lacking when the list was made. Since no further reference is made to Urim and Thummim in the Bible, we are left to wonder if or when these unrecognized priests ever had the opportunity to be proven legitimate." Keith N. Schoville, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2001), 61. John Gill states, "...as yet there was not any priest that had them; they were not to be found at the return from Babylon; the governor might hope they would be found, and a priest appear clothed with them, when it might be inquired of the Lord by them, whether such priests, before described, might eat of the holy things or no; but since the Jews acknowledged that these were one of the five things wanting in the second temple; it is all one, as the Talmudists express it, as if it had been said, until the dead rise, or the Messiah comes; and who is come, the true High-priest, and with whom are the true Urim and Thummim, lights and perfections to the highest degree, being full of grace and truth; of the Urim and Thummim, see the note on Exod. 28:30." John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, The Baptist Commentary Series (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 106.

But verse 12 says that demons can also lead us to sin and take advantage of our sin nature. If we are not fighting against demons, demons don't stop fighting against you - which means you are probably losing.

And of course, he points out that our sin nature can also lead us to sin. So there is a theology of sin all through Hosea, and a theology of man, and a theology of demons.

Verse 11 says that certain sins can be enslaving and completely controlling. "Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart." When people are addicted to sexual sins it can be just as enslaving as if they are addicted to chemicals. In fact, scientifically they have been able to prove a similar impact on the brain from addictions to porn as you have from addictions to chemical drugs. They have been able to map that on the brain.

But verse 12 shows that when you give Satan legal ground, demonic spirits can be just as enslaving to sin. It says, "For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray..." There was a demonic spirit that they needed to be freed from.

Anyway, verses 11 and following outline sexual immorality, addiction to alcohol, seeking counsel not from God, idolatry, stubbornness, self-will, rebellion, and hardness of heart as things that have brought offense to God.

In chapter 5 God outlines more evils in Israel, including sexual immorality (v. 3), pride (v. 5), lawlessness (v. 5), unfaithfulness (v. 7), eminent domain (v. 10), and oppression of citizens. He likens all of that to spiritual adultery and once again points out in verse 4 that an evil spirit of harlotry had been moving them into these sins. Don't be surprised when nations, churches, and individuals do irrational things if they have given legal ground to the demonic to be at work. There is much in Hosea that explains the irrational hatred for God that is gripping parts of our nation.

He begins chapter 6 by pointing to a solution - Christ corporately bearing the death they deserve and after three days raising His people from this death. This is one of the two Old Testaments verses that Paul was referring to when he said that Jesus was predicted to rise after three days according to the Scriptures. Anyway, that resurrection frees His people in verse 3 to pursue the knowledge of the Lord and to experience New Covenant rain "like the latter and former rain to the earth" (v. 3). So the kingdom of Christ follows the first century AD resurrection.

With that New Covenant vision in mind, he proceeds to bring more rebuke

in the rest of chapter 6. They were not even remotely living in light of what the Messiah could bring them. Verse 7 says that like Adam they transgressed the covenant - one of several verses in the Bible that show that Genesis 1-3 contain a covenant made with Adam and a covenant broken by Adam. So its a verse you need to memorize if you want to prove that covenant theology began in Genesis 1.

Chapter 7 gives more accusations, and just like the previous chapters, punches them home with amazing metaphors and similes. I love the metaphor of Israel being like a pancake unturned in verse 8. One side is burned and the other side is white and gooey and not very nice. He likens how sin keeps gaining an upper hand in their lives to how we tend to get more and more gray hairs appearing on our heads without our even noticing them. He likens them to a silly dove that is so easy to shoot.

In chapters 8-10 he speaks of political idolatry with powerful image after image of their unfaithfulness and what their judgment would look like. I won't get into the substance of those chapters, but there are numerous applications that could be made if I were preaching to legislators, judges, or the executive branch. I would be hitting those chapters hard.

But he ends the second section of the book with chapter 11's promise of hope. It is an image of a loving father who was so nurturing and caring for his adoptive children, but they take sides against him. And he thinks to himself, "So you want to be with your mom? You are going to end up in absolute misery. You are going to end up in slavery with her. No, I can't let you go." Look at the language of verses 8-9.

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror.

So it shows God's forgiving heart. And he ends that section by pointing out that God would be in their midst despite their sins - another Messianic promise of God With Us. In verse 12 our unfaithfulness is answered by His faithfulness.

### ***C. Chapters 12-14 - More accusations and warnings, ending with future hope***

Unlike the previous section that had dozens and dozens of images, metaphors, and similes, the third section of the book (which is chapters 12-14) has three main images that are followed by yet another picture of

Messianic hope. And these three images weave into each other.

The first powerful image is surprisingly taken from Genesis 27-28. He likens the Israel of his day to Jacob's lying to his dad and treachery with his family that had so backfired on Jacob, and that had brought Jacob and his family so much pain. But Hosea does a masterful job of showing how it would be much better for Israel to trust God than to try to fruitlessly manipulate life like Jacob did. He is in effect saying, "Don't be like Jacob. He was a manipulator par excellence." But Jacob eventually learned that he could not manipulate God. So that is the first metaphor.

The next metaphor borrows from Numbers 12-20, where Israel's rebellion against God in the wilderness led to so much death, suffering, and needless pain. You may remember the rebellion of Korah. And by using the wilderness generation as an illustration, Hosea was basically saying, "You are acting just like the wilderness generation that God almost destroyed." Again, he seeks to convince the Israel of his day to learn from history - it just isn't worth it to rebel against God.

The third metaphor that is used throughout these chapters is Israel's bad choice of King Saul in 1 Samuel. The kings that Israel was trusting would let them down and hound the righteous just as much as Saul did - and more. God rejects the kings of Israel just like God had rejected Saul.

But he ends the whole book with chapter 14, a chapter of hope once again. In addition to calling the nation to repentance - a call that he knows will be ignored, he speaks of the remedy to their sin. It is a Messianic promise that "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (verse 4). To love freely is sovereign love; it is not merited. God would supply the remedy that they could not provide.

And He goes on to use a marvelous image of how God would bless all the nations through Abraham's seed. It would be an incredible tree of life that would provide fruit and shade for all and that would be the solution to Israel's failures. It is a marvelous Messianic image.

And then the last verse of the book is a note to the wise to apply this book at all times to their lives and to walk in God's ways. Where the first verse of the book was God's Word to a nation. This last verse is an admonition to pay attention to God's Word that has just come to Israel. I'll just read it and close with prayer:

Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in

them.

May we be wise like Hosea and not foolish like Gomer. Amen.