

**A LOOK AT THE BOOK  
HOSEA  
YAHWEH'S LOYAL LOVE FACES ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS**

Ralph Porter

**AUTHOR**

According to the book itself and tradition, Hosea the prophet was the author of the book.

He was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Little is known of his life and background.

He was the son of Beerī, of whom nothing more is known.

His detailed acquaintance with the northern kingdom gives evidence that he was probably born there.

**DATE**

Hosea's ministry *may* have been longer than any other Old Testament prophet.

He began during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (782-753 B.C.) and Uzziah in Judah (767-739 B.C.)

He continued until after the fall of the north and into the reign of Hezekiah in the south (715-686)

<u>Judah</u>		<u>Israel</u>	
Uzziah	790-39	Jeroboam	795-53
Jotham	750-31	[Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem,	
Ahaz	735-15	Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea]	=> 722
Hezekiah	715-686		

He would have been a younger contemporary of Amos.

The book was probably completed during the early years of Hezekiah's reign, perhaps around 710 B.C.

**BACKGROUND**

Like all the pre-exilic prophets,

Hosea wrote in the midst of a context of sin and idolatry.

He wrote in order to get the people to repent and turn back to God.

His message was that God is about to send judgment.

Hosea began his ministry during the reign of Jeroboam II (782-753).

Jeroboam was the third generation of descendants from Jehu.

Jehu was promised four generations of descendants on the throne because of his faithfulness in eliminating the descendants of Omri (Ahab and Jezebel). 2 Ki. 10:28-32

Jeroboam, like his great grandfather, Jehu, and his namesake, Jeroboam I, was one of the "good-bad" kings of Israel (N).

The northern kingdom never had a good king.

The "bad-bad" kings, like Ahab and Jezebel, turned their hearts away from Yahweh and worshiped the pagan gods of the nations around them.

The "good-bad" kings were loyal to Yahweh, but didn't obey His commands about how they were to worship Him.

They set up their own worship center in the north.

They set up "high places" to worship.

Sometimes they made images, and used them as representations of Yahweh.

They worshiped the true God man's way.

But they did it all *in His name!*

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with their worship.  
They are all referred to as evil.

Yahweh demands obedience, rather than sacrifice.

They lived in a time of prosperity and peace.

They were experiencing no oppression from their neighbors (at the time he wrote the warnings!)

As a result of their ease, society became corrupt.

The people followed three different pagan idolatrous religious systems and were led in these by their priests.

Following Jeroboam II came a period of anarchy and murder in order to obtain the throne.

It was not a profitable thing to be king of Israel.

Their reigns were short and marked with violence.

During the latter days of Hosea's lifetime, Assyria became powerful and took control of Israel, forcing them to pay tribute.

Following several rebellions, Assyria moved in to destroy Israel in 722 B.C.

Hosea wrote during this period of moral looseness, religious apostasy, and political destruction.

## **PURPOSE AND THEME**

Hosea wrote to explain the judgment about to come against Israel, the northern kingdom.

The theme of the book is that **Israel has been unfaithful to her Husband, Yahweh.**

She has gone away from Him and sought other lovers.

The result of her unfaithfulness is rejection by Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Yahweh will remain faithful to her!

Because of His abiding love for her, He will purchase her back and restore her to a relationship with Him.

The primary purpose is to warn Israel of coming judgment and call her to repentance.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The theme is repeated twice in the book.

The two descriptions represent the major divisions of the book.

**Illustration 1-3** Relationship between Hosea and his wife

### **THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE**

Chapters one to three describe the prophet's personal experience with a harlot wife.

Her unfaithfulness, as opposed to his love for her and treatment of her, serves as an illustration of the relationship between Israel and her God, described in the second division of the book (4-14).

**Interpretation 4-14** Relationship between Israel and God

### **THE UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE**

While the major structure of the book is simple to observe, the detailed structure in the latter part of the book is more complicated to trace.

The cycle originally presented in chapters one to three seems to be *repeated twice* in the application to Israel (4:1-11:11; 11:12-14:9).

The cycle begins with Israel's unfaithfulness.

Her unfaithfulness causes God to punish her, in love, in order for her to return to Him.

He continues to demonstrate His love and to invite her to come back to Him.

When she returns, she will be restored to the relationship He intended her to have as His wife.

*The repetition of the cycle may be intended to emphasize the repetition of the offense and the continuous offer to return.*

### **THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE 1-3**

The personal marital experience of the prophet is presented as an object lesson for Israel.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1:1**

### **THE FAMILY 1:2-2:1**

His wife's unfaithfulness to him is described.

She was found to be unfaithful and was judged and rejected by him (1-2:13).

While she was separated from him, he continued to supply her needs, even though she didn't know he was doing it.

#### **His marriage 1:2-3**

#### **His children 1:4-2:1**

Present condition 1:4-9

Jezreel, because they will be scattered 1:4-5

Lo-Ruhamah, because he is not loved 1:6-7

Lo-Ammi, because he is not my people 1:8-9

Future condition 1:10-2:1 What they will become, . . .

Increased and reunited 1:10-11

My people 2:1a

My loved one 2:1b

## **THE WIFE 2:2-23**

### **Condition and correction 2:2-13**

Adultery 2:2-7

Condition 2:2-5

Correction 2:6-7

Ingratitude 2:8-13

Condition 2:8

Correction 2:9-13

### **Restoration 2:14-23**

After the period of chastening, he seeks her anew, buys her for himself and restores her, showing his love once more (2:14-3:5).

The intimate relationship between the picture from the prophet's life and God's relationship to Israel is seen throughout the story by his recurring references to Yahweh and Israel.

Courtship 2:14-16

Betrothal 2:17-23

## **THE HUSBAND 3:1-5**

**Past love demonstrated 3:1-3**

**Future love promised 3:4-5**

## **THE UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE 4-14**

Exactly the same theme is repeated in chapters 4-14, but the application of the prophet's message to Israel is revealed.

*Just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea, so Israel has been unfaithful to Yahweh!*

*Just as Hosea continues to love Gomer, in spite of judgment, so Yahweh continues to love Israel!*

Yahweh loved Israel and treated her as an ideal husband would treat his wife.

## **FIRST CYCLE OF WARNING 4-11:11**

### **Her sinful condition presented 4-7**

Israel was repeatedly unfaithful to Him

Condition described 4:1-19

Accusation 4:1-5

Voluntary ignorance 4:6-11

Idolatry 4:12-14

Example to Judah 4:15-19

Condition judged 5-7

Cause for judgment 5:1-7

Warning of judgment 5:8-15

Rejection of temporary repentance 6:1-4

Absence of true repentance 6:5-11

Presence of injustice and immorality 7:1-7

Dependence on foreign nations 7:8-11

Resultant guilt and judgment 7:12-16

### **Her judgment announced 8-10**

He finds it necessary to judge and reject Israel 8-13

Even while Israel is separated from Yahweh, He continues to watch over and care for her, even though she doesn't recognize His care.

Alarm sounded 8:1a

Causes of judgment 8:1b-14

Broken covenant 8:1b-2

Rejection of God's king 8:3-4a

Idolatry 8:4b-7

Alliances 8:8-10

Establishment of national religion 8:11-14

Description of judgment 9-10

Lacking provisions 9:1-6  
Lacking prophets 9:7-9  
Lacking progeny 9:10-17  
Lacking altars 10:1-2  
Lacking kings and idols 10:3-10  
Lacking defense 10:11-15

**His faithful love extended 11:1-11**

Love demonstrated 11:1-4  
Love rejected 11:5-7  
Love continued 11:8-11

**SECOND CYCLE OF WARNING 11:12-14:9**

**Her sinful condition presented 11:12-13:6**

Persistent sin in spite of appeals 11:12-12:11  
Persistent rebellion in spite of loving care 12:12-14  
Persistent idolatry in spite of greatness 13:1-3  
Persistent ingratitude in spite of deliverance and provision 13:4-6

**Her judgment announced 13:7-16**

Announcement of attack 13:7-8  
Removal of king 13:9-11  
Death and desolation 13:12-16

**His invitation to return 14:1-3**

After Israel's period of judgment, Yahweh promises to seek her out and buy her back with a price and restore her to Himself. (14:1-9)

He will once again display His love for her.

The book concludes with a picture of the millennial estate, a fitting climax to such a display of love.

**His promise to restore 14:4-8**

Restoration of blessing 14:4-7  
Restoration of relationship 14:8

**His warning to the wise 14:9**

*What do we learn about God from this book?*

*What do we learn about our life today?*