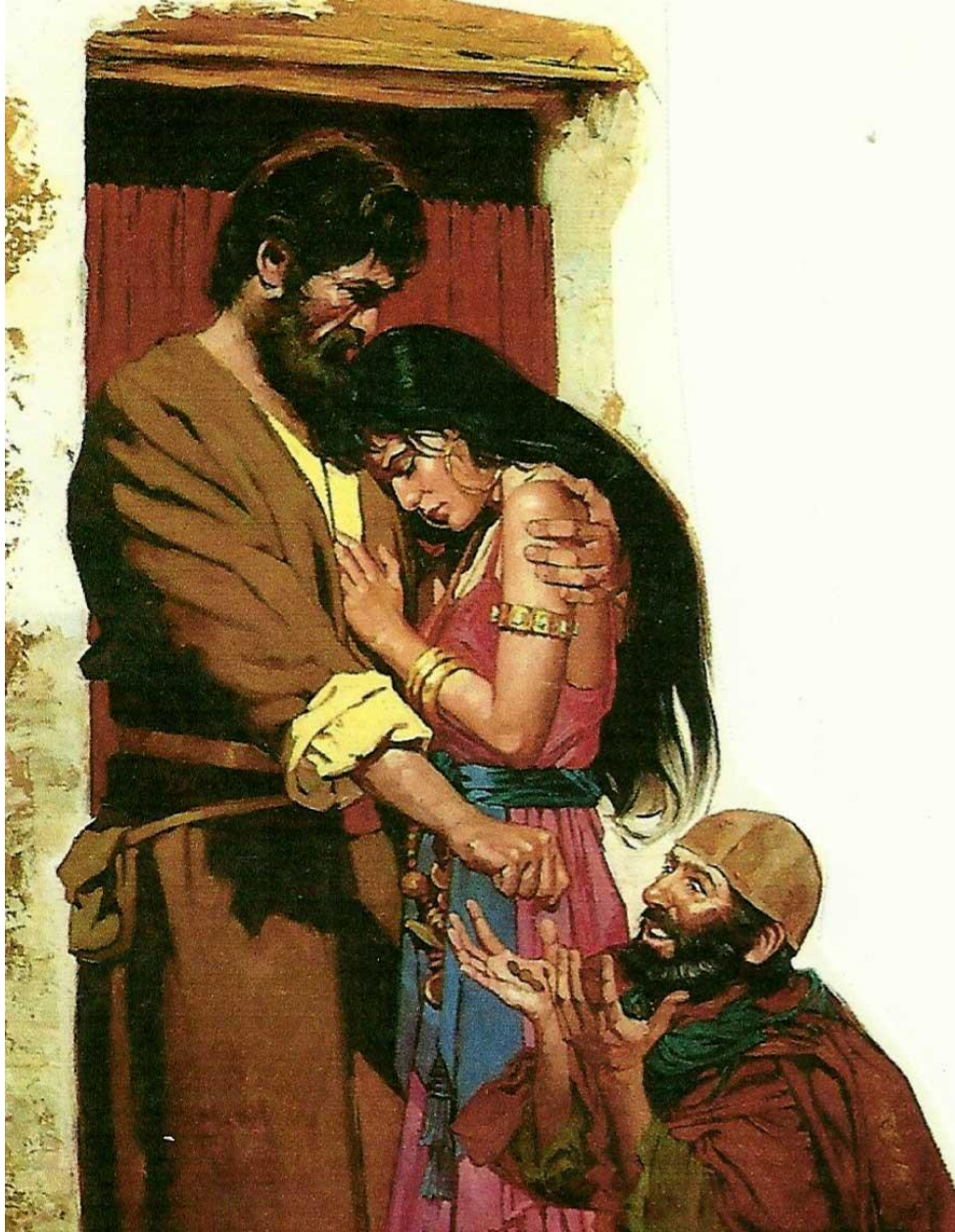


# Hosea



*When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."*

*Hosea 1:2*



Let's talk about life

## Study Booklet

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Hosea highlights the despair and compassion God has for his people which is mirrored in the relationship that Hosea had with his wife. Hosea was called to marry a woman who would end up being unfaithful to him. This meant that Hosea would learn, through his own marriage, the love that God had for his people despite the fact that they prostituted themselves with another god.

To understand the break-down of the relationship between God and his people you must first understand the basis of this relationship which was the covenant made between God and Israel.

It began with God making promises to Abraham of descendants, land, fame, and blessing. Within a few generations, God's people, the Israelites, were living in Egypt and ended up becoming slaves in Egypt. God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt and therefore bring salvation to them. This led to a formalisation of a relationship between God and his people through a ceremony and the reading of the law at Mount Sinai. God would be their God and they would be his people. So, just as a marriage is based upon covenantal promises of an exclusive, one-flesh, relationship between a husband and wife, the relationship between God and his people were based upon a covenant of faithfulness between God and his people.

However, with the split of the kingdom of Israel which came after Solomon's reign, the Northern tribes turned away from God. This was largely a political move, for the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the heart of the Southern Kingdom which also housed the king of the southern tribes. The northern kings didn't want their people heading into the southern territory to worship God and possibly recognise the southern king as being God's king. So, they set up new places of worship inside the northern kingdom and began to worship other gods.

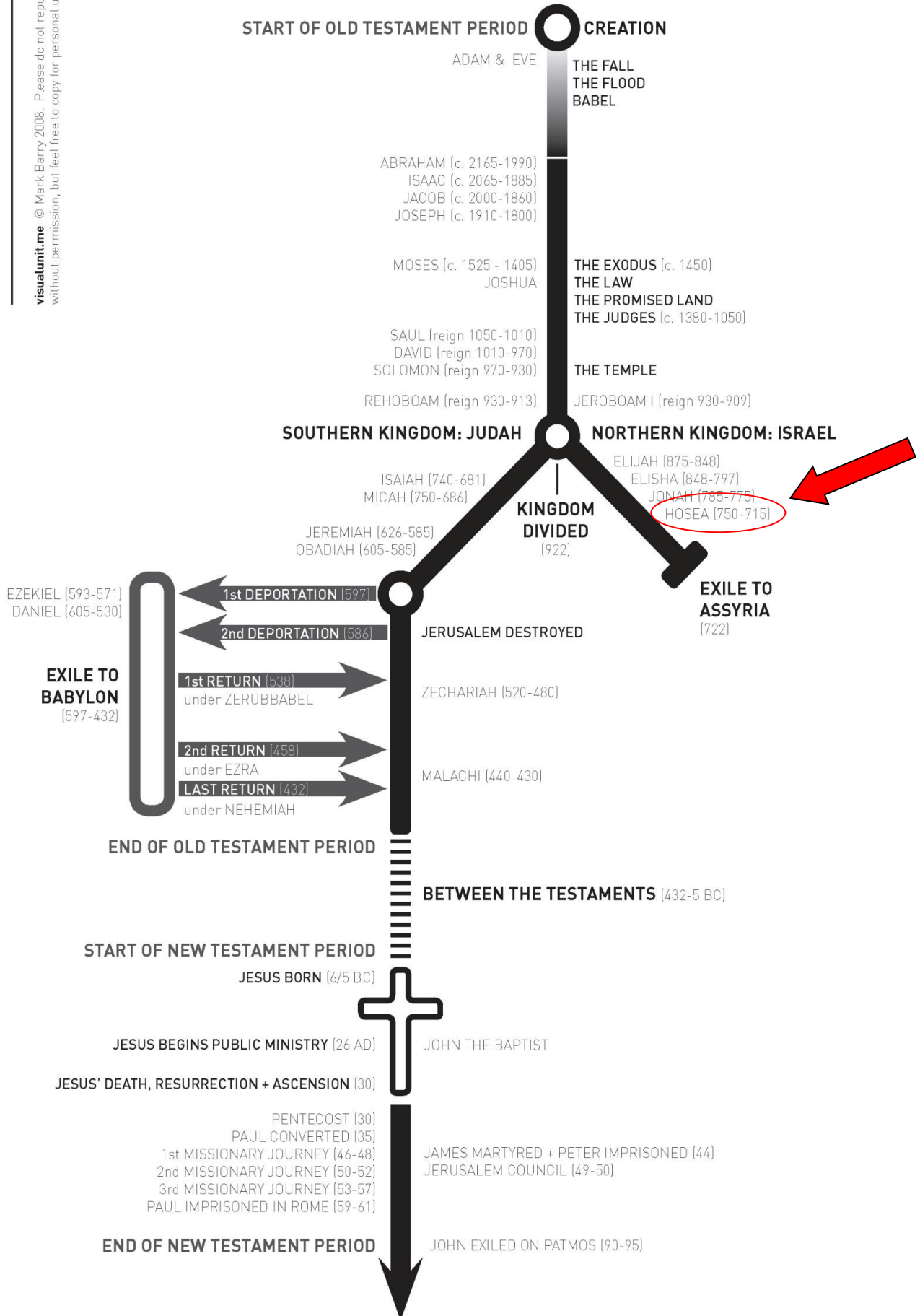
Hosea's prophecy speaks to this betrayal and warns of the coming judgement that is a result of breaking the covenant. But Hosea also speaks of salvation and a restoration based on the love that God has for his people.

Finally, in terms of the structure of the book, there are a number of theories. Everybody agrees that chapters 1-3 are the first part of the book, which show how Hosea's marriage and prophecies are linked. But the rest of the book are a series of prophecies which have themes repeated throughout. I've decided to follow a very basic structure to the book of Hosea which only has three parts...

<b>Hosea 1-3</b>	Israel's faithlessness, marriage parable
<b>Hosea 4:1-11:11</b>	Judgement on the leaders, people, priests
<b>Hosea 11:12-14:9</b>	Judgement and the promise of new life

# BIBLE TIMELINE

visualunit.me © Mark Barry 2008. Please do not republish without permission, but feel free to copy for personal use.





↪ Lo-Ruhamah

↪ Lo-Ammi (also check out Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 27:9)

- › Whose children were they? Look carefully and see how they were described.
  
- › We are not used to names having significant meaning but even we can imagine that if a child is called 'not my people' it is going to have a fairly heavy impact upon everybody concerned. Discuss how these names may have impacted everyone concerned.

---

BUT WAIT...

HOSEA 1:10-2:1

- › Judgement is foretold in the names of Hosea's children and yet, despite the judgement that was to come, there were words of hope.
  - ↪ Some words recall previous times and promises (Gen 22:17; Judges 19:30)

↪ Some words reverse the judgement

↪ Some words predict restoration



### INTRODUCTION

Today's study is a continuation of the first part of Hosea (1-3). Chapter 1 is mostly describing the events of Hosea's marriage and how it relates to the northern kingdom, chapter 2 are prophecies about the relationship between God and the northern kingdom (which is pictured through Hosea and Gomer's marriage), and chapter 3 returns to describing the events of Hosea and Gomer's relationship.

The prophecies are hard to read and understand. The thing about reading prophecy in Hosea is that you need to be thinking about both Hosea's marriage relationship and the relationship between God and the northern kingdom at the same time, for the writings often have both things in mind. As Christians, we must also have a third thing in mind, and that is how these prophecies are fulfilled through Jesus.

Lastly, it's important to understand the basic beliefs of the false religion that the northern kingdom had turned to. The worship of Baal was all about fertility. Baal was the god of rain, wind, lightning and thunder. His wife was the land and he would fertilise her with rain. One part of the worship of Baal was the use of temple prostitutes. Through the practice of 'sacred sexual rites' the worshipper would encourage Baal to make the land fertile and they would therefore receive the gifts and benefits which the land produced. Hosea takes some of this imagery and says that Baal worship has it wrong. God is the husband and the people of Israel is his wife. By worshipping Baal they commit adultery and break the marriage covenant. More than that, by seeking gifts from Baal, they prostitute themselves to him hoping that he can provide what they desire.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BROKEN

### HOSEA 2:2-13

The passage seems to begin with the threat of a divorce proceeding. The husband then sights the wife's bad behaviour as evidence of the broken relationship and also sets out what the husband will do because of this bad behaviour. The outline might look something like this...<sup>1</sup>

- Vs 2a: The threat of divorce and the need for rebuke
- Vs 2b: **The wife's behaviour:** appeal to change
- Vs 3-4: **What the husband will do:** discipline the wife
- Vs 5: **The wife's behaviour:** Prostitution
- Vs 6-7: **What the husband will do:** force his wife home
- Vs 8: **The wife's behaviour:** no recognition of her husband's goodness
- Vs 9-13: **What the husband will do:** expose her in judgement

- Verse 2 seems to start off with a threat of divorce. Why wouldn't there simply be a declaration of divorce?
  
- Verse 2b is hard to understand in the NIV and different translations say slightly different things. What was God asking his 'wife' to do?

---

<sup>1</sup> I have heavily borrowed the substance of this outline from Michael Eaton, *FOTB: Hosea*, 37.

- Verses 3-4 speak of God’s discipline of his wayward wife. What ironies can you see in these disciplines?
  
- Verse 5 tells us how ‘the wife’ will respond. What does this tell us about Israel? (note that the word translated as ‘unfaithful’ in the NIV can also mean ‘harlot’ or ‘prostitute’).
  
- Verses 6-7 speak of blocking the wife’s path. Why would the husband do that?
  
- Verse 8 tells us of what the wife does with the good things her husband gives her. What does she do?
  
- Verses 9-13 outline God’s judgement. What would he do?

---

#### THE RELATIONSHIP RESTORED

#### HOSEA 2:14-23

When you come to the end of the previous section you would expect Hosea to say that God rests his case and threat of divorce should be enacted. But what we find is the exact opposite.

- It seems that God wants to restore Israel by returning her to a previous time. When was that time? (2:14-15)
  
- “‘In that day,’ declares the Lord.” are words of prophecy. Something is going to happen by the hand of God. What will finally happen? (2:16-20)
  
- Having renewed his relationship with Israel, what else will he restore? (Note: check out the footnotes of your bible in this passage as they will help you understand some double meanings that are lost in translation) (2:21-23)





**BLIND LEADING THE BLIND – HOSEA 4**

**INTRODUCTION**

The first three chapters of Hosea have been dominated with Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and how it was much like the relationship the northern kingdom had with God. There was a short story line and some prophecies to read in chapters 1-3 but the rest of the book of Hosea is only prophecy, there is no more storyline to follow (though Hosea’s marriage remains in the background of these prophecies). Therefore, it is important to remember the context in which Hosea was prophesying so that we can understand his prophecies as bit more.

After the reign of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split into two. The northern kingdom was larger as it had 10 of the 12 tribes but the southern kingdom had Jerusalem, the temple and kings from the line of David. To stop people returning to the southern kingdom to worship God, the northern kingdoms set up other temples and shrines with a new priesthood. This allowed other religions to take hold, especially the Canaanite religion of worshipping Baal. Baal was the god of thunder, wind and rain and was often pictured holding a lightning bolt. The word Baal means ‘master’ but could also mean husband. His wife was the land which he fertilised through rain so that she could produce crops. This brought prosperity to the land and the wealthy enjoyed life.

So, Hosea’s prophecies of coming judgement, desolation and exile were spoken to a kingdom that was enjoying prosperity, security and relative peace. They had worshipped Baal and were seemingly rewarded for it. However, God saw it differently as the people refused to recognise him as their saviour and provider.

**THE CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL**

HOSEA 4:1-3

The charges have two aspects to them. Firstly, God highlights the qualities that the Israelites did not have and then the negative qualities they do have after which he speaks of the outcomes from these actions.

Vs 1. What they lack	Why is that an issue?

Vs 2. What they do	Why is that an issue?


- › What were the consequences of their ways and why would this be surprising?

---

#### THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

HOSEA 4:4-9

- › Despite all the atrocities that these people did, God told them that they could not bring a charge against each other. Why?
  
- › Who are worse; the people, prophets or priests?

---

#### CORRUPT WORSHIP

HOSEA 4:10-14

- › In their worship, what do they engage in and not have enough of?
  
- › What is the significance of engaging in prostitution but not increasing?
  
- › What do they consult? Why would that be an issue?
  
- › How does a 'spirit of prostitution' lead them astray?
  
- › Why won't God punish the daughters?

In this passage we see the name 'Ephraim' appear. The names of the kingdoms can be confusing but it is important we get a good understanding of them. When God brought the people out of Egypt, there were 12 tribes who came from the 12 sons of Israel (originally known as Jacob but became known as the man Israel). So, the 12 tribes were united as one nation under the name of Israel. However, when the kingdom split into two, the 10 northern tribes were often known as Israel and the southern kingdom was known as Judah (named after the larger of the 2 southern tribes). The name Ephraim is also used of the northern kingdom because it was the largest of the northern tribes. Of course, the northern kingdom was lost in about 721 BC and so if you are speaking to a person of Israel today then you are speaking to someone who is a Jew (which comes from Judah) and is a descendant of the southern kingdom. So, when the Bible talks about 'Israel' you have to consider the particular time in history to work out which people it is talking about.

- › Who is the Lord wanting to protect and why?

---

**TODAY**

- › Today, there are parts of our society that still worship 'sticks of wood' but the biggest threat to the people of God's church is secularism. What kinds of things are people enticed by and may even end up craving so that they leave God behind altogether?
  
- › Can we quarantine our children, our people, from these things? If not, how do we help them combat the ways of this world?

## DISCIPLINE AND FALSE REPENTANCE – HOSEA 5:1-6:3

### INTRODUCTION

In chapter 4 we saw how the priests were leading Israel astray and though the priests were responsible for the false worship, the people followed, and so everyone was going astray, 'prostituting' themselves, and breaking the covenant with God.

**Hos 4:9** And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

### JUDGEMENT AND BAD LEADERSHIP

HOSEA 5:1-7

- What do you think stops people from turning to Jesus and to his church today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- The previous prophecy (chapter 4) was mainly directed to the priests. Who was Hosea addressing now? (5:1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Hosea 5:1b** 'This judgement is against you'. What were they being judged for? (5:1-3)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Some more detail about what they were being judged for is seen in 5:4-7. We have just heard that they were corrupt (Vs 3), what made them that way? (5:4-7)

### SOUND THE ALARM!!

HOSEA 5:8-12

- Hosea 5:8 refers to trumpets, horns and battle cries. What were these kinds of alarms used for?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Despite the alarms warning them of what was coming, what was the fate of Ephraim? (5:9)

- Suddenly Judah comes into focus. What was the issue here? (5:10)
  
- So, now that the alarm has sounded, what should the people expect? (5:11-12)

---

#### THE WRONG SAVIOUR

HOSEA 5:13-15

- When disaster falls on Ephraim (the northern kingdom – Ephraim was the largest tribe) who will they turn to for salvation? Why will they be the wrong Saviour? Why will this be ironic? (5:13)
  
- How serious will this Judgement be? (5:14)
  
- This section finishes with a strange verse. We are told that Israel will all but be destroyed and yet God will 'go back to his place' and leave them alone. Why would God do this? (5:15)

---

#### REPENTANCE???

HOSEA 6:1-3

- What does true repentance look like? Can you think of ways in which people think they are being repentant but aren't in reality?
  
- Hosea 6:1-3 may sound like real repentance but Israel is not truly repentant. What clues can you see that demonstrates their lack of real repentance?







- Why was Ephraim like a dove? (7:11-12)
  
- Why was Israel like a faulty bow? (7:13-16)
  
- Having now looked at all these analogies and word pictures, how would you sum up Israel's condition before God according to Hosea?

---

TODAY

- There are so many analogies in this passage. Which ones do you think might relate to the church today?

## BROKEN COVENANT – HOSEA 8

### INTRODUCTION

In the last study Hosea chose a number of analogies and word pictures to describe Israel's true condition before God. Chapter 8 is a little bit different. As I look at the structure of this passage, I can see the ideas of God bringing a charge against Israel, giving evidence and making a verdict. However, we must be careful not to impose the idea of a courtroom setting on this passage. We may not want to go that far but there is obviously a charge, evidence and a verdict at the end.

### CHARGE: BROKEN COVENANT

HOSEA 8:1-3

- The passage starts with a trumpet and an eagle. What point is Hosea making by using these two images?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Why is the breaking of the covenant so significant?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Is it enough to simply acknowledge God?

### EVIDENCE: POLITICS

HOSEA 8:4A

- Why would setting up a king without God's consent by such a problem?

### EVIDENCE: RELIGION

HOSEA 8:4B-6

- Israel acknowledged God but they also made idols out of silver and gold. Why was having these idols such a problem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- "They make idols for themselves." Why was it wrong for them to be so self-sufficient?



- › What was the verdict?

---

TODAY

- › How do we presume upon our relationship with God? What do you think God thinks about that?

## GRIEF AND BARRENNESS – HOSEA 9-10

### INTRODUCTION

Israel are going to reap what they have sown and they have sown into the lives of their nation the sin of following false gods and corrupting the worship of the one true God so that it had become a sin to even worship at the temples. This meant that judgement was coming their way.

### RETURN TO EGYPT

HOSEA 9:1-9

- › “Rejoice”, “be jubilant”. How do people rejoice or be jubilant today? Is there a difference between the way the world rejoices and the way that God’s people should rejoice?

- › Many commentators believe that Hosea may have spoken this prophecy around the time of the religious festival called Sukkot or the feast of Booths which was to commemorate the sheltering of Israel when they were in the wilderness. The northern kingdom would have the celebration a month after the time that the Lord had directed them in Leviticus 23:39-43. It was meant to be held not long after summer harvest and was a time of rejoicing and festivity. So, why would God tell them to not rejoice or be jubilant?

- › What would happen to the northern kingdom because of what they had done?

### GRAPES IN THE DESERT

HOSEA 9:10-17

- › Why was Israel like finding grapes in a desert and early fruit on a fig tree? (v10a)

- What had changed God's view of them? (v10b)
  
- Ephraim's glory will disappear like a bird flying away. What will disappear and why? (v11-14)
  
- What would make their infertility even worse? (v13)
  
- How would God respond all of this? (v15-17)

---

#### A SPREADING VINE

HOSEA 10:1-10

- Once again, Israel was likened to a vine but what did this analogy illustrate? (v1)
  
- Yet there was a problem for Israel. Hosea summed it up in one word, what was it? (v2)
  
- What would God destroy because of their guilt? (v2b-3)
  
- Their false religion led them to bad ways of living. What kind of things were they doing to each other? (v4)
  
- What will happen because of what the people did? (v5-10)



INTRODUCTION

“Out of Egypt I called my son”. These words were applied to Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel but initially they referred to Israel, to God’s chosen people. Collectively, as a nation, they were the son of God. However, this phrase would later focus on one particular person, the king of Israel. The Kings were figure-heads, a representative of the whole nation. So, if the nation was the son of God then the king was known as the son of God as he represented the whole nation. After both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom had been captured and destroyed, the people waited for a new ‘son of God’, a new king, who would come and save them. This new king came in the form of Jesus; he is the long awaited Son of God and he is the king of kings who defeated the great enemy of sin and death.

MY SON

HOSEA 11:1-4

- › Israel was called “God’s son”. How did Hosea picture this son? What kind of age would you give the “son”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- › How did God treat his son?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- › How did the son treat God?

RETURN TO EGYPT

HOSEA 11:5-7

- › How sure is God about Israel’s refusal to repent?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- › What did this say about how well he knew them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- › How does this remind you of a relationship of a parent and a rebellious child?



---

## THE LORD RELENTS

HOSEA 11:8-9

- God could see the direction they were going because the people refused to repent. In fact, he could see what was going to happen hundreds of years before. Read Hosea 11:8-9 and then compare this to Deuteronomy 29:22-28.
  - ↪ What happened at Admah and Zeboiim?

- ↪ Why would God treat his people this way?

- What emotions were portrayed in God here?

---

## THE PEOPLE RETURN

HOSEA 11:10-11

- Why would God picture himself as a roaring lion just after picturing himself as a compassionate father?
- Would they still have to face judgement?
- So, what positive outcome could there be for Israel?

---

## TODAY

- How did Jesus fulfil the role as the Son of God? Why was this important for the northern kingdom and for us?
- Should we “fear” the Lord if he is our loving Father?

### INTRODUCTION

This study is rather large and should probably be done as two separate studies. However, due to the limitation of the number of weeks in a term, we will look at this in the one week.

The first half of this study relies on your knowledge of Jacob and his family. Hosea, used their personal stories to outline the nation's story. I will refer back to Jacob's story by citing relevant passages in the questions but the simple outline begins by recognising that Jacob was a twin (Genesis 25:21-26). Esau was the first born but Jacob was "grasping" his heel on the way out, which meant that they came out together as "one birth" rather than two. Jacob didn't like coming second and so coerced his older brother into selling his birth-right (Genesis 25:27-34). When it came time to claim his birth-right and the blessing from his father Isaac, Jacob was able to fool his father and in essence, steal the blessing reserved for the first born. Later, Jacob became known as Israel (Genesis 32:27-28).

### DECEITFUL FROM BIRTH

HOSEA 11:12-12:14

- Our world champions tolerance in the hope that we all will get along but even the "tolerant" become intolerant at some point. What kinds of things make you think, "That person should not be allowed to get away with that!"
  
- Who was the Lord upset with? Who did he want to "bring a charge against"? (11:12; 12:2) And how did this outline the characters in this chapter?
  
- What was Jacob renowned for, whether it was with his brother Esau, with an angel, or even with God? (Genesis 25:21-26; 32:22-32)
  
- So, the nation of Israel, whether the northern kingdom or the southern, were much like their forefather. What were they guilty of? (12:1; 12:7-8; 12:14)
  
- What had God done for them? (v9-10; 13)
  
- What did they need to do? (v6)







› What makes a person wise?

› What do the wise do?

---

**TODAY**

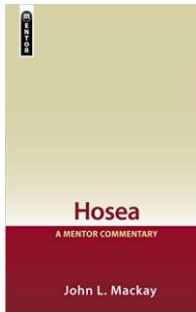
› In this chapter there is a picture of repentance, forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation. Hosea gave a full description of the reconciliation process that they ought to go through. Can you give a full description of the reconciliation process we should go through to be right with God today?

› Why do you think people find it hard to be reconciled with God?

› How could we help them?

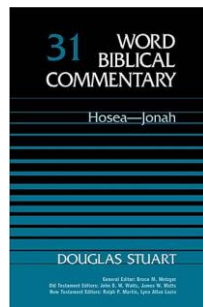
## COMMENTARIES

I found all these commentaries helpful but here are some thoughts on each.



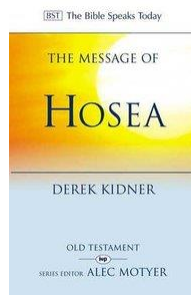
Mackay, John. L., *Hosea*, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2012

A good middle of the road commentary. Not too technical but covers everything. Has some good 'reflection' points for you to think through how this applies today and is my favourite.



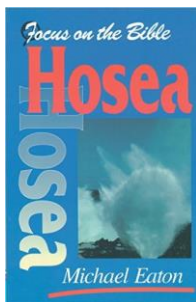
Stuart, Douglas., *WBC vol. 31: Hosea-Jonah*, Mexico: Thomas Nelson, 1987

Rated as the number 1 Hosea commentary on the Best Commentaries website. This is a technical commentary and often refers back to the original language.



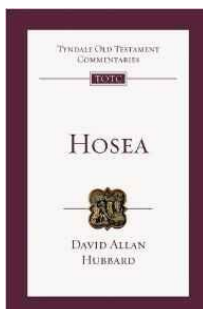
Kidner, Derek., *BST: The Message of Hosea*, Leicester: IVP, 1976

I have found this commentary very helpful. It is more section by section rather than verse by verse but it is good at getting the point of the passages across.



Eaton, Michael., *FOTB: Hosea*, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1996

Again, I have found this commentary to be very good. The commentary is simple, clear and easy to understand. However, there is a newer edition in this series by Tim Chester and so you might not be able to easily pick up this particular commentary anymore.

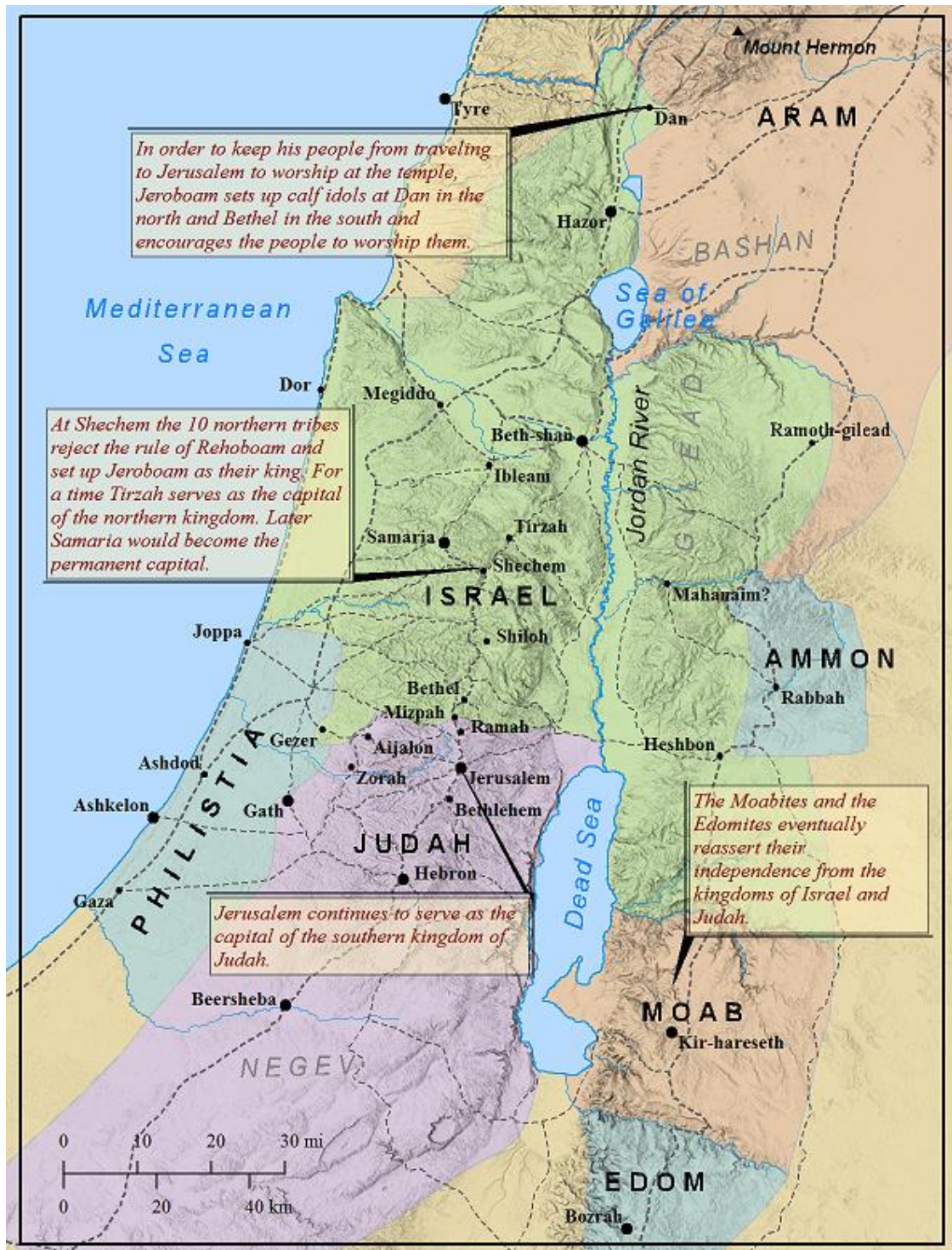


Hubbard, David A., *TOTC: Hosea*, Leicester: IVP, 1989

A good sturdy and cheap commentary. It runs verse by verse and is easy to use.

## MAPS

### THE DIVIDED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH





## THE FALL OF SAMARIA AND THE MIXING OF THE RACES

