

# HOSEA

## STUDY GUIDE

### AUTHOR & DATE

The first verse of Hosea gives much information about the author and time period. **Hosea**, which translates as “Deliverance” or “salvation,” is identified as the author of the book. Hosea mentions the reigns of Israel’s King Jeroboam and Judah’s kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This information allows us to date the book to be around **755-715 B.C.**, making Hosea a slightly older contemporary of Isaiah.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

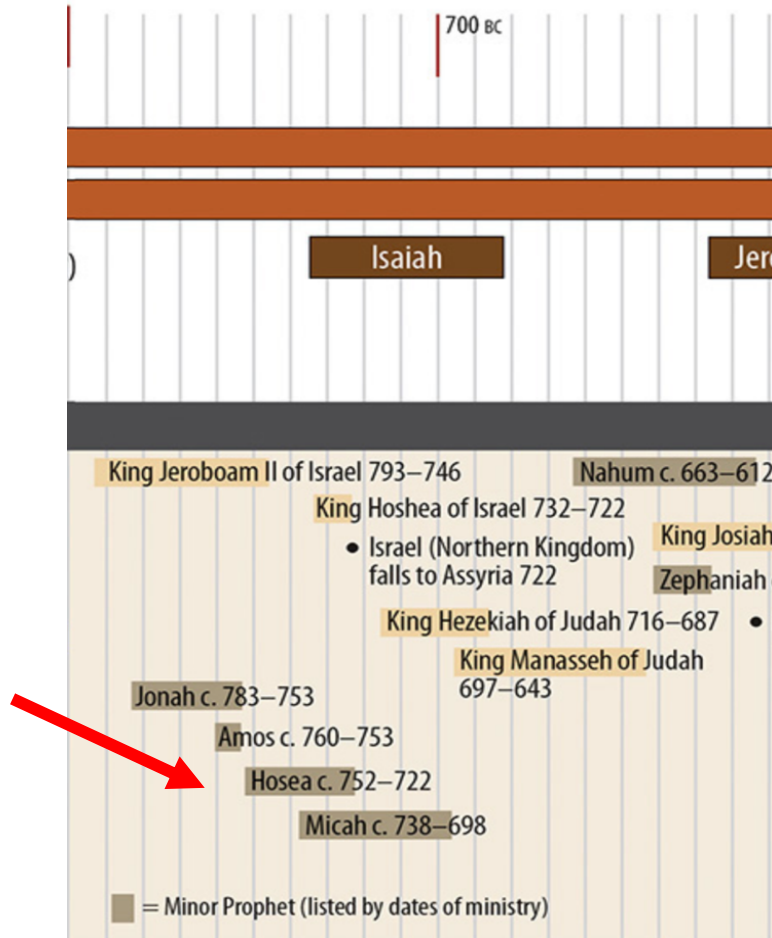
Remember that Israel used to be one nation, then later divided into two: Northern Kingdom (Israel) and Southern Kingdom (Judah). Hosea is speaking to the northern kingdom, Israel. A quick review of what led to that division will prove helpful in understanding more about Hosea’s situation.

**Look up 1 Kings 11:29-40 and 12:12-33. Take note of:**

1. **What caused the division**
2. **The promise given to Jeroboam**
3. **Jeroboam’s worship solution for a divided kingdom and the reason behind the solution**

After King Jeroboam II died, Israel was ruled by 6 different kings over 25 years, 4 of whom were assassinated! Individual and corporate sin, along with internal strife from weakened political leadership, led to Israel’s final collapse in 722 B.C. to the Assyrians. Hosea was likely an eyewitness to God’s fulfillment of prophesied judgment upon Israel.

### HOSEA TIMEFRAME



Source: Blue Letter Bible, "Old Testament Timeline"

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As you read, **put yourself in Hosea’s shoes**. Keep in mind that he was a real man with real emotions, called to live out a dramatic picture of the relationship between Israel and the Lord God.

### **Names**

Names had great meaning in Hebrew culture. The names of the main characters in Hosea all communicate part of the larger message being preached throughout the book.

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- **Hosea – “Salvation.”** The Hebrew root word is also used for Joshua and Jesus. In fact, Joshua was originally called Hosea (Num. 13:8, 16).
- **Gomer – “Completion.”** Here “completion” is used in the sense of abrupt and final termination.
- **Jezreel – “God scatters/sows.”** Represented the geographical town and valley located between Galilee and Samaria, a place of many significant and violent battles in Israel’s history (Judges 4-7; 1 Sam. 29:1; 2 Sam. 2:8; 1 Kgs 21:1; 2 Kgs 9:24-10:11). To the people of Hosea’s time, Jezreel would signify bloodshed and violence.
- **Lo-Ruhamah – “Not loved.”** Jewish culture looked favorably upon children, so this would be a scandalous and offensive name. The name implied rejection.
- **Lo-Ammi – “Not My people.”** Again, implies rejection with an even greater sense of abandonment.

In Hebrew, “lo” put before something means “no” or “not.” Two of Hosea’s children have this prefix “lo” in front of their name. However, in Hosea 1:10-11 and Hosea 2:23 a reversal takes place and the negative meanings are changed to positive.

- **Jacob, Israel, Ephraim** – Hosea uses these names interchangeably to refer to the northern kingdom of Israel. First, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Gen. 35:10). However, Ephraim becomes an important synonym of the northern kingdom as well for a variety of reasons.
  - Ephraim was Joseph’s youngest son, but given favor over his older brother, Manasseh (Gen. 48:14).
  - The tribe of Ephraim settled northwest of the Dead Sea and became the leading tribe in the northern kingdom and contained the northern kingdom’s capital, Samaria.
  - Jeroboam I, an Ephraimite, led the revolt and became the first king of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 11:26).
  - The northern kingdom consisted of 10 tribes. When the Assyrian king came against Israel in 733 B.C., he took most of the tribes captive, except for Ephraim and Manasseh. Hosea speaks to Ephraim, the larger and stronger of the 2 remaining tribes – in essence, the remainder of the nation of Israel. Ten years later, the Assyrians would finish the destruction of the northern kingdom – Ephraim and Manasseh.

## Places and Concepts

- **Covenant vs. contract** – Marriage is often referred to as both a covenant and a contract. Biblically, marriage is to be a lifelong covenant (not a contract) between a man and woman – a perpetual pledge of love and fidelity to the other until death of one of the partners. Covenants outline the minimum expectations. Contracts, on the other hand, define minimum and maximum expectations. They are written in such a way to specify what constitutes

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breaking of the agreement and associated consequences. In other words, unlike contracts, covenants are not to be easily broken and provide the basis for demonstrating love which goes above and beyond.

- **Gomer's redemption** – Hosea paid 15 shekels of silver plus grain to purchase Gomer (Hos. 3:2). There is debate as to whether the combination of silver and grain equaled the necessary amount of 30 shekels for redemption of a slave (Exod. 21:32), or constituted a bridal gift in demonstration of Hosea's love for her. Either way, the message is clear: Gomer – undeserving of Hosea's love and in a "worthless" state of bondage to her other lovers – is shown a loving act.
- **Gilgal** – Important for the Hebrews militarily and religiously, it represented God's deliverance from Egypt and future in the Promised Land. It was the first campsite after crossing the Jordan River where Hebrew males born in the wilderness were circumcised (Josh. 4:19-20, 5:7-9) and where the first Passover in the Promised Land was celebrated (Josh. 5:10). It was a place of worship (1 Sam. 10:8) and where Saul was crowned king (1 Sam. 11:14-15). Yet Gilgal also represented the declining loyalty of the people toward God and His role as their divine King and Lord. What was once a city of God's favor had become a place of idolatry and rejection of God by His people.
- **Beth Aven** – Hosea uses a play on words to refer to Bethel ("house of God"), which he now refers to Beth Aven ("house of evil") in Hos. 4:15 and 5:8. To Israel and Judah, the mention of Bethel would bring to mind Abraham's camping there (Gen. 12:8), Jacob's vision of the stairway to heaven, and giving of the name Bethel to that spot (Gen. 28:11-19). So, the reference to Beth Aven emphasizes that in the place where God should be found, evil has instead taken hold.
- **Shechem** – A designated city of refuge (Josh. 20:7), mention of Shechem brought to mind Judah's crowning of evil king Rehoboam's (1 Kgs 12:1) and even more likely the slaughter by Simeon and Levi over their sister Dinah's rape (Gen. 34). Hosea now accuses the priests of similar treachery and violence. It is speculated that a band of priests were acting as road thieves, controlling the roadways, robbing, and killing those who chose not to worship the false gods of Israel, but instead were traveling to Jerusalem to worship the One True God.
- **Dove** – In Hosea 7:11-12, Israel is referred to as a "silly dove, without sense," where the Lord gathers them with a net and send them off to Assyria for discipline. In Hosea 11:11, Israel is again referred to as a dove, only this time coming out of Assyria to be settled into their future home by the Lord.



- How did you see the Holy Spirit in this book? What did you learn?
  
- Put yourself in Hosea's shoes. What is he feeling? In light of what you've read in Hosea, what does 2 Cor. 11:2-3 mean to you?
  
- Describe briefly the sins of Israel. What accusations is the Lord making against them?
  
- What do you see as idols and "lovers" today which draw you from the Lord? How can you apply Hos. 10:12 in your life to combat these idols?
  
- Make note of the "I will / I will not..." statements. What will God do or not do? What can you learn from these statements? *(Use a separate sheet if needed.)*
  
- Read Hosea 5:13-15 again. What speaks to you? Will God relent or carry out His judgment to the fullest? What do you learn about troubles in life?
  
- Look at Hosea 6:6 in a couple different translations. What does this verse mean to you? What does it look like to live this out in your life?

- Hosea uses symbols from nature to describe how He will restore His people (Hos. 14:4-7).  
What do you think each of these represents?
  - Dew
  - Lily
  - Cedars of Lebanon
  - Olive Tree
  - Grain / Vine
  - Wine of Lebanon
  
- What does this book teach about God's judgment and our repentance?

**KEY WORD:**

**KEY VERSE:**

**KEY CHAPTER:**

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