

Hosea

Historical Background

1:1 “In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

- Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26) reigned 52 years and was a good king until he became arrogant due to his military and financial success. He attempted to perform priestly duties and was struck with leprosy. Isaiah wrote his history. The Zechariah mentioned in 26:5 is not the one who wrote the book. That Zechariah lived after the captivity.
- Jotham (2 Chronicles 27) reigned 16 years was also a good king, but the people were still corrupt. He succeeded militarily and financially.
- Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28) reigned 16 years and was a very bad king, worshiping many pagan gods, eventually closing the Temple. So, he lost battles, wealth, and territory to Israel, Edom, Philistia, Syria, and Assyria.
- Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29 – 32) reigned 29 years and was a reasonably good king. His tenure spanned the Assyrian invasion and a visit by Babylonian ambassadors.
- Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:23 – 20) reigned 41 years in the Northern Kingdom and continued the bad ways of his predecessors. He was the second king by that name.

Note: In this period, Israel is the Northern Kingdom, Judah is the Southern Kingdom. Ephraim is the primary tribe in the North. Benjamin is allied with Judah.

Passages seen as Messianic by the ancient rabbis:

- 2:2 – 3 Bring charges . . . lest...
- 2:14 – 18 In that day I will make a covenant for them
- 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return
- 6:2 On the third day He will raise us up
- 13:14 I will redeem them from death
- 14:7 Those who dwell under His shadow shall return

Passages quoted in the New Testament

- Hosea 1:10, 2:23 (Romans 9:26 – 27, 1 Peter 2:10) Paul and Peter confirm that this promise of God was fulfilled in the church, not the return under Ezra.
- Hosea 6:6 (Matthew 9:13, 12:7) Jesus used Hosea’s conclusion twice to reply to legalists whose religion focused on themselves and not the needs of others.
- Hosea 10:8 (Luke 23:30) Jesus used this line on His way to Golgotha to remind those who mourned for Him of the short-term future of Jerusalem.
- Hosea 11:1 (Matthew 2:15) Matthew applied Hosea’s prophecy to Jesus, implying that the life of Jesus was illustrated in advance by the “life” of the nation of Israel that was so often ignored and would end in violence, but then to produce an eternal kingdom.
- Hosea 13:14 (1 Corinthians 15:55) The verses in Hosea are divided badly, breaking a couplet and diverting our attention from the flow of the message. Hosea says that Ephraim should be wise and give birth to something new that breaks the power of death. But because Ephraim does not, God has no compassion for them. Paul uses the passage

identically, that we should turn loose of the natural man and let something new be born so that death will have no power. Ancient rabbis believed this to be Messianic.

- Hosea 14:2 (Hebrews 13:15) The same illustration is used by both authors, suggesting that the later writer did it on purpose.

Basic Outline:

- 1:2 Hosea is told by God to marry a prostitute as an illustration of Israel's behavior.
- 1:3 Their first child, a boy, is named for the place where Jehu killed all the family of King Ahab as he usurped the throne as a symbol of the end of Jehu's line.
- 1:6 Their second child, a girl, was named "No Mercy" (in Hebrew) to illustrate that God would no longer have mercy on the Northern Kingdom. In the same prophecy, God promises to rescue Judah, but not by military might.
- 1:9 Their third child, a boy, was named "Not My People" to illustrate that, although Israel would fall, Israel and Judah would one day be united again.
- 1:10 – 2:23 The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sands of the sea, but I will cause calamity to wake them up.
- 3:1 – 5 Hosea is told to marry an unfaithful woman, again as an illustration of Israel.
- Chapters 4 through 14 are a morality sermon with reminders of God's promises, a reciting of the sins of the people, and dire warnings of disaster to come.

Some pithy lines:

- 4:1 There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.
- 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
- 4:6 Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me.
- 5:10 The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark.
- 5:11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment because he willingly walked by human precept
- 5:15 In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me
- 6:1 Come, let us return to the Lord
- 6:3 Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord
- 8:4 They set up kings, but not by Me
- 8:7 They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
- 8:14 Judah has forgotten his Maker
- 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.
- 11:8 How can I make you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim?
- 13:14 I will ransom you from the power of the grave.
- 14:2 We will offer the sacrifices of our lips