

Hosea

Chapter 1

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, 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.

1:1 *word of the LORD.* A claim of authority paralleling that of Joel (1:1), Micah (1:1) and Zechariah (1:1, 7). (CSB)

Refers to the total message of Hosea. (TLSB)

Hosea. Means “salvation.” (CSB)

Means “salvation” or “he has helped/delivered.” The names of Hosea’s children also play an important role in his prophecy’s rhetoric. See notes, vv 4, 6, 11. The manner of God’s revelation to Hosea is not given in detail. He simply states that his prophecy came by God speaking (v 2). (TLSB)

Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom Israel. His preaching extends over forty years or more, from the glory years of Jeroboam II until after the fall of Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, in 722 BC. (PBC)

son of Beeri. A prophet typically introduces himself with the name of his father (Jl 1:1; Jnh 1:1; Zep 1:1; Hg 1:1; Zec 1:1). *Beeri.* Means “my wellspring” or “my well” and likely reflects the family’s joy at the birth of a child. (TLSB)

the days of ... kings of ... Israel. This mention of kings Uzziah (792–740 BC), Jotham (750–735 BC), Ahaz (735–715 BC), and Hezekiah (715–686 BC) makes plain that Hosea had a lengthy ministry and prophesied at the same time as Isaiah, Amos, and Micah. (TLSB) Only ruler of the northern tribes listed here (793–753 BC). (TLSB)

Uzziah. Reigned 792–740 B.C. (CSB)

Jotham. 750–732. *Ahaz.* 735–715. (CSB)

Hezekiah. 729–686. Some of the reigns overlapped, the co-regency of Ahaz and Hezekiah being the longest (see note on Isa 36:1). (CSB)

Jeroboam. Jeroboam II, 793–753. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Micah (see the similar first verse in their prophecies). (CSB)

Only ruler of the northern tribes listed here (793–753 BC). (TLSB)

Hosea's Wife and Children

2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.” 3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him

a son. 4 And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” 6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. 7 But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.” 8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the LORD said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.” 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

1:2 spoke through. Hosea was the conduit of God’s message, not its source. Iren: “It was not by means of visions alone which were seen, and words which were proclaimed, but also in actual works, that He was beheld by the prophets, in order that through them He might prefigure and show forth future events beforehand” (ANF 1:492). (TLSB)

wife of whoredom. Whether Hosea’s wife was actually a prostitute/adulteress or whether this characterization is merely a figure of speech is a matter of debate. Luther favored a symbolic understanding (see pp 1427–28). Many modern commentators hold that Hosea’s wife committed adultery; this is the simplest understanding of the text. Either way, the troubled marriage of Hosea and Gomer underscores the prophet’s message of God’s judgment against Israel for her unfaithfulness. On a related issue, the importance of women in Israelite society and in biblical literature is demonstrated by the way the Lord describes His relationship to Israel as being like the relationship between a husband and a wife. (TLSB)

By their names the sons signify below what sort of people the Israelites are going to be. I think we must say the same thing about the harlot, because she was called a “wife of harlotry” to signify that the people now were committing harlotry and would do the same by forsaking God in the future. So also the sons born of her are called “sons of harlotry.” Do not take this to mean, then, that harlotry is charged to the wife, that is, do not take this in the active sense, but understand that the wife has allowed herself, her sons, and her husband to be so named because of the people and against the people, as if she were saying: “I am called a harlot and my husband is called a whoremonger because you are harlots and whoremongers.” Oh, how great a cross they suffered with those insulting names for the sake of the Word of God! He prophesies not only with words but with things which the senses feel. (Luther)

forsaking the Lord. The one great sin of which the Lord (through Hosea) accuses Israel. (CSB)

the land. Though directed primarily at Israel (the Northern Kingdom), the judgment announced by Hosea extends to all those included in the covenant relationship with the Lord. (TLSB)

forsaking. The people no longer followed after the Lord or walked in His ways. Instead, they abandoned Him and followed after pagan gods. Cf Dt 31:16; Hos 3:1; 9:1. (TLSB)

1:3 Gomer. Not mentioned outside this book. (CSB)

Unlike the names of his children, the name of Hosea’s wife appears not to have symbolic meaning. (TLSB)

Diblain – Geographic reference unclear; perhaps an undiscovered village. (TLSB)

him. The omission of this word in vv. 6, 9 may indicate that Hosea was not the father of Gomer's next two children. (CSB)

1:4 *Jezeel*. Means "God scatters," here used to reinforce the announcement of judgment on the reigning house. Jeroboam II was of the dynasty of Jehu (841–814 B.C.), which was established at Jezreel by the overthrow of Ahab's son Joram (2Ki 9:14–37; cf. 1Ki 19:16–17). Jehu's dynasty ended with the murder of Zechariah in 753 (2Ki 15:8–10). (CSB)

"God sows"; has a double meaning. On the one hand, it recalls that God caused the people of Israel to multiply into the uncountable seed of Abraham (Gn 12:2; 15:5). It also brings to mind God's judgment against Ahab and the house of Jehu. (TLSB)

Each of Gomer's three children receives a symbolic name. The first son is called Jezreel. This was the name of a city north of Mt Gilboah. To the west and northwest the rich Valley of Jezreel, including the Plain of Esdraelon, leads toward the Mediterranean. To the east the valley narrows as it descends to the Jordan. Jezreel was a residence of Israel's kings (1 Kings 21:1). (PBC)

house of Israel. King Jeroboam II, king of the northern tribes at the time, sprang from Jehu's family tree. The end of this royal line is an important focus of Hosea's prophecy. (TLSB)

blood. Much blood was shed in Jezreel, including that of Naboth and his sons (2Ki 9:26), King Ahab (1Ki 22:38), King Joram (2Ki 9:24), and Jezebel (2Ki 9:33). (TLSB)

At Jezreel Jehu, great-grandfather of Jeroboam II and the founder of his dynasty, murdered Ahab's son Joram, his predecessor on the Israelite throne. He ordered the queen-mother Jezebel thrown down from her window into the street below. At the gates of Jezreel Jehu piled up the severed heads of Ahab's seventy princes. "So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his chief men, his close friends and his priests, leaving him no survivor" (2 Kings 10:11). Although God made Jehu king in Joram's place, He did not sanction such bloodshed.

an end to the kingdom. Unfortunately, the royal house of Jehu turned out to be no better than its predecessors. This line ended when Zechariah was murdered (2Ki 15:10). (TLSB)

1:5 *bow of Israel*. Israel's military power, broken in 724 B.C., though Samaria held out under siege for some two years longer (2Ki 17:5–6). (CSB)

Figurative for the destruction of an opponent's military strength (e.g., 1Sm 2:4). Assyria destroyed Israel's military power and devastated its land in 723/2 BC (2Ki 17:5–6). (TLSB)

Valley of Jezreel. Triangular valley southwest of the Sea of Chinnereth, with Mount Tabor at the northeast point. Owing to its adequate rainfall and rich soil, and its location on the main roads running east/west and north/south, it was an important part of Israel's territory. (TLSB)

1:6 *No Mercy*. Symbolic name emphasizing that, due to Israel's persistent unfaithfulness, God will withdraw His compassion. Such threats of judgment are not Hosea's final word, however; 2:23 promises a future love for the people. (TLSB)

1:7 *mercy on ... Judah.* God's covenant with Abraham's descendants will continue through the remnant of Judah. Though the Babylonians did in fact take the Judeans into exile in 587 BC, the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem 70 years later. (TLSB)

Judah ... I will save. They were saved from Assyria by the Lord in 722–721 B.C. and again in 701 (see 2Ki 19:32–36). (CSB)

save them by the LORD. God pledges to save Judah by His own hand rather than by their armaments. This reminds the northern tribes as well that their military strength, even if multiplied, is worthless (10:13). A fulfillment of God's promise to deliver Judah from the Assyrians miraculously is recounted in 2Ki 19:32–36. (TLSB)

1:8 *weaned.* Occurred by age 2 or 3. Normally a time of celebration for the family and community (cf Gn 21:8; 1Sm 1:24). No Mercy's weaning coincides with the conception of Not My People and so reinforces that the distance between God and His children is steadily increasing. (TLSB)

1:9 *Not My People.* The naming represents a break in the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel (see Ex 6:7; Jer 7:23), which later, however, would be restored (v. 10; 2:1, 23). The warnings became more severe in moving from the first to the third child. (CSB)

Breach between God and Israel continues to widen. It can still be restored, however, through the people's repentance and God's restorative action (2:1, 23). (TLSB)

1:10 Cited in Ro 9:26; 1Pe 2:10 and applied to the mission to the Gentiles. (CSB)

Yet. The threatened punishment (vv. 4–9) would be for only a limited time, and a period of blessing would follow. (CSB)

sand on the seashore. See the promise to Abraham and Jacob (Ge 22:17; 32:12; cf. Jer 33:22; Heb 11:12). (CSB)

Recalls the covenant God gave to Abraham, whereby his descendants are promised to become as numerous as the sand and the stars (cf Gn 32:12). (TLSB)

Children. Contrasts with "children of unfaithfulness" (v. 2; 2:4). (CSB)

living God. Contrasts with idols—"which are not God" (Dt 32:17). (CSB)

Even amid an announcement of judgment, God promises to spare man. Later, He extends His covenant promises to all peoples, so that "all Israel" might be saved in Christ (Rm 1:25-26; cf Eph 2:12-15, 19-20). (TLSB)

1:11 *gathered together.* Israel and Judah would become one nation again. (CSB)

Anticipates a day when tribal divisions will end. (TLSB)

We necessarily take this to mean the kingdom of Christ. After the division of the kingdom after Solomon, they never had one head, that is, a temporal king. (Luther)

up from the land. Possibly the land of exile (cf. Ex 1:10). Another interpretation is that they would spring up from the ground as plants do. (CSB)

Depicts seeds growing up into an abundant harvest (cf v 10). (TLSB)

one head. A single king over a united nation is predicted in 3:5. There, the head is foreseen as belonging to the house of David. This promise of a single head over a unified body is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus (Eph 1:22; 4:15–16; 5:23; Col 1:18). (TLSB)

Jezreel. Here “God scatters” (see note on v. 4) refers to sowing or planting, indicating a reversal of the meaning of the first child’s name (see 2:21–23). (CSB)

1:2–11 Hosea’s tragic marriage and the suffering it inflicts on his children dramatically depict the wretched condition of God’s people at that time. Sadly, the waywardness exhibited by God’s people still happens today; unless the Spirit continues to grant us repentance and faith, we fall into the same kind of unfaithfulness and apostasy. Through Hosea’s ministry, God shows mercy, pledging to gather, restore, and lead His people into a better future. • Heavenly Father, through Your beloved Son, You have forgiven all unfaithfulness and restored Your people to wholeness. May we be gathered under this Son, who gives us new birth and restores us as Your children. Amen. (TLSB)