

Handout 7-H

## Reading the Prophet Hosea

Little is known about the prophet Hosea except that he appeared during the reign of Jeroboam II about the year 750 BC. He may have been a priest, but little else is known about his life except his unhappy marriage. The Book of Hosea contains symbolic prophecy: there is a similarity between Hosea's love for his unfaithful wife, Gomer, and YHWH's love for his unfaithful nation, Israel. In the book, Hosea will take his wife back, and even though Israel committed many betrayals that are listed in chapters 4 through 7, God will take them back if only they will be faithful.

*Read Hosea 1.*

In chapter 1 Hosea is told by God to marry a prostitute "for the land prostitutes itself" (1:2). They had two sons and a daughter together.

1. The book opens by identifying the kings of both Judah and Israel during the time of Hosea's prophecy. Who were these kings?
2. What are the names of the three children of Hosea and Gomer and what is the meaning of their names? (*Check the footnotes for this.*)

*Read Hosea 2.*

Chapter 2 takes place in a divorce court where Hosea testifies to Gomer's unfaithfulness. He is angry and plans for a harsh punishment. But as this story goes on, he tells of the desire to forgive Gomer and be reunited with her. Suddenly, *his* voice is replaced by *God's* voice. God speaks hopefully of the future.

3. What are the signs of wealth that detract Gomer away from her husband in verse 7?
4. In what verse does Hosea intend to take back what he gave?
5. Why does the Lord want to lead Israel into the desert?

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*Read Hosea 4.*

In this chapter the prophet lists Israel's infidelities.

6. What infidelities does the prophet list in the first verses?
7. Who is Hosea upset with in verses 4–6? Why? (*See footnote.*)
8. Verse 12 addresses one of their sins. Write this verse below.
9. What is the message of the final verse of this chapter? (*See the footnote.*)

*Read Hosea 11.*

Chapter 11 is a kind of poem reflecting God's love for Israel and his pain at their rejection.

10. What images does Hosea use to compare YHWH's love for Israel in verses 1–4?
11. What reason did God give for not destroying Ephraim?

*Read Hosea 14.*

Chapter 14 ends the book on a hopeful note with Hosea urging a return to YHWH.

12. According to the first verse, what will happen to Samaria's children?
13. What does God call for in verses 2–9?
14. The book ends with a challenge. Write this epilogue below.