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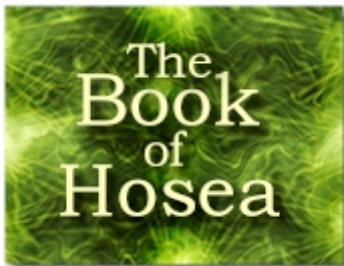
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The Book of Hosea

by Ernest L. Martin Ph.D., 1996

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, October 2012

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for October 2012](#)



Hosea is the first book of the Twelve Minor Prophets. In our King James Version it has 14 chapters. Some of the most significant prophecies in the Bible, about Israel and its end-time affairs, are to be found within this book. Some of those teachings pertain to the role of Jesus Christ in His life here on Earth.

The theme of this Book is that of **“the latter days.”** In Hosea 3:4–5, that statement is made, clearly and plainly.

“[1] For the children of Israel shall abide **many days** without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

[2] **Afterward** shall the children of Israel return,

[3] and **seek YHWH** their God, and [seek] **David** their king; and **shall fear YHWH** and [fear] his goodness **IN THE LATTER DAYS.**”

• Hosea 3:4–5

[1] This has been the situation twice, after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem around 586 BC, and after the Roman destruction of 70 AD.

[2] This has been occurring since 1948.

[3] These events are approaching. They will be fulfilled in the future. We are not yet **“in the latter days.”**

Note the phrase **“in the latter days.”** Those days occur after **“many days,”** during which the children must do without many things that have to do with Israel’s glory. This is when the “seeking” and “fearing” shall occur. Then Hosea proceeds to discuss Israel, the northern nation of Jacob’s sons. Hosea mentions Judah in the south, but the primary message concerns the northern tribes of Israel, at times called Samaria, at other times called the tribes of Joseph, and still at other times named after Joseph’s first-born son (first-born as far as prestige was concerned), Ephraim.¹

¹ Hosea calls the northern kingdom “Israel” in 41 verses; by the name “Ephraim” in 33 verses; and by the name “Samaria” in Hosea 7:1, 8:5–6, 10:5, 7, and 13:16. DWS

Hosea's Background

At the beginning of the book, Hosea is told to marry a prostitute by the name of Gomer. They have children. Specific names are given to these three children. Two are boys, one is a girl. Hosea's name is very close to that of Joshua.² "Gomer" is a foreign word which denotes a non-Israelite people from Japheth.³ Hosea, an Israelite, is ordered by God to marry someone outside of the stem of Israel, a woman with Gentile proclivities. We know from the first two chapters, that this woman produces children who are as rebellious as she is.

Gomer goes after lovers, the people around her, the nations of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and the other nations around. She keeps the days, festivities, ceremonies, religious principles and teachings of these nations which are around the area of Israel called Palestine today.

Hosea is ordered by God to marry Gomer, a prostitute, and to have these children. He also is ordered later to divorce her, and then still later to take her back, believe it or not. The teaching here is clearly shown in the Scripture. This is given as an illustration of what God Himself was doing with the nation of Israel, and to a certain extent with the nation of Judah in the south.

These 14 chapters in Hosea deal primarily with this northern nation of Israel in the Assyrian period of the 8th and 7th centuries BC. But Hosea has a relevance for the future, our time today, the latter days, simply because it speaks of a time when Israel, in all of its sins and transgressions, going astray from God, going the ways of Baal, going after other Gentile gods and their teachings, will come back to God. She will then be faithful to Him in a covenant, a marriage relationship that everyone will be happy about.

This marriage relationship is a contract called a covenant. (All marriages, by the way, are contracts⁴). This particular contract, or marriage between God and Israel, is personified by Hosea's relationship with this prostitute. The prostitute, though she has a Gentile name, in actual fact represents Israel. This prostitute has two sons, and one daughter, who continue in the ways of their mother.

The major theme of this is the modern world which is why I gave the title "Hosea for the Modern World."⁵ The climax and conclusion of this whole story will occur at the end of days. The nation of Israel, the 10 tribes in the north, from the point of view of the 8th to 7th centuries BC, will be scattered into the world and will find themselves wandering as in a wilderness among many nations, wandering from here to there, without any place to put their feet and call home. But they will go home one of these days. Their home will be the land of Canaan, back in Palestine, exactly where Israel is at the present time. In fact, the very reason that Israel today as a nation exists since 1948 is as a prelude to the fulfillment of this prophecy of Hosea.

The Theme of Hosea

Hosea shows what happened to the nation of Israel that caused God to get angry with that nation. The reason Israel in the north was more influenced by the nations around (and God was upset with them also), was because of the geography of the land in northern Israel. If you will look at Palestine on a map, you find that between the Dead Sea and the River Jordan valley, and over on the coast of the Mediterranean, there is a mountain range that goes north and south. This includes the area of Jerusalem in the south.

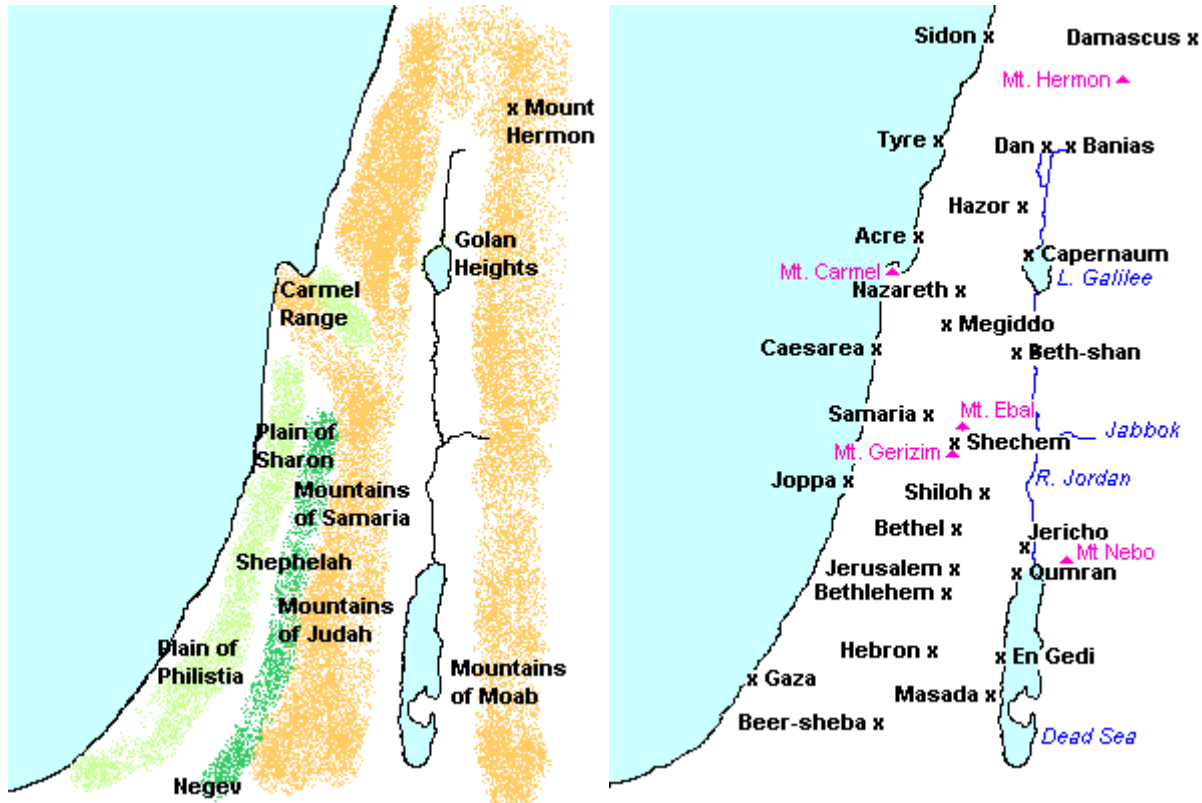
² Joshua succeeded Moses as leader of Israel after the wilderness journeys (Deuteronomy 31:3, 34:9 and Joshua 1:1–2, 6), and here we find this Hosea has a beginning message to the same people of Israel and Judah, but primarily to Israel. *ELM*

³ The name Gomer is identified as a female only in Hosea 1:3. The other occurrences of Gomer all designate a male: Genesis 10:2–3; 1 Chronicles 1:5–6; and Ezekiel 38:6. *DWS*

⁴ This is clear in Scripture. See Dr. Martin's biblical explanation in his article, "[Marriage, Divorce, Living Together and the Bible.](#)" *DWS*

⁵ This was the original title of the tape presentation of 1996. This written transcript and additional material in this present article goes beyond that title designation. *DWS*

Physical Geography and Towns of Israel⁶



Once you get north of Bethel, in the area of Shiloh, into the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, that north-south ridge opened to an east and west orientation. This Mediterranean route from Egypt up to Babylon, was called the “International Highway” at that time. A considerable amount of trading was conducted by that route. Armies as well came and went through from Europe to Asia, and from Egypt to Babylon or Assyria. They would pass along that international route, and these Gentile nations would come in contact with the northern 10 tribes of Israel which were not as protected as Judah in the south. There were high mountain ridges around Judah, and around Jerusalem, but the mountain ridges were much lower around Samaria and the regions up north.⁷

So geography was one reason why the nation of Israel was more prone to Gentile influences than Judah in the south, and why they went into what the Bible calls an adulterous relationship with the nations of the world. It was adulterous in the sense that God was their husband, who gave them the laws of Moses, and told them to stay away from Gentile ways.

So, Hosea concentrated primarily on the chief instigators of the peoples of Israel or Judah going off into Gentile ways, into the ways of Balaam, the pagan feast days, new moons, Sabbaths, solemn feasts, all called the days of Balaam. They were actually worshipping a god with the name of Baal. At first it was perfectly

⁶ Maps used with permission of Dr. Shirley J. Rollinson from her website “[Geography Pages: How to Draw Israel.](#)” DWS

⁷ See Dr. George Friedman’s article, “[The Geopolitics of Israel, Ancient and Modern.](#)” That article goes into detail about the geographical problems of the State of Israel that relate to its defense in the ancient past and in modern times. Dr. Friedman notes:

“Israel exists in three conditions. First, it can be a completely independent state. This condition occurs when there are no major imperial powers external to the region. We might call this the David model. Second, it can live as part of an imperial system — either as a subordinate ally, as a moderately autonomous entity or as a satrapy. In any case, it maintains its identity but loses room for independent maneuvering in foreign policy and potentially in domestic policy. We might call this the Persian model in its most beneficent form. Finally, Israel can be completely crushed — with mass deportations and migrations, with a complete loss of autonomy and minimal residual autonomy. We might call this the Babylonian model.”

proper to use the name because the term “Baal” only means “lord.” It was also another name for husband. God got so upset with even being called “lord” when Israel was out having adulterous, whoredom relationships with the nations around, that He forbade Israel to use the name “Baal” for god.

“And it shall be at that day, says YHWH, that you shall call me Ishi; and shall call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

• *Hosea 2:16–17*

Content of Hosea

Hosea’s 14 chapters deal with the nation of Israel, and how, because of their adulterous relationships, they were to be scattered into the nations of the world, wanderers throughout all the nations. This is important to understand because this is a consistent theme in Scripture that continues to come up in the early prophets. They show that Israel would be scattered into the nations. They were not to become mighty nations, like Great Britain and the United States, having outstanding power and authority among the other nations.

If you read carefully, you find the punishment primarily on northern Israel, that they were to be scattered and be wanderers in the world. They would have some prestige, as we find in several of the prophecies, but the main thing was, they would not become mighty nations until they came back to the land of Canaan, and more particularly that they would return to God, their husband, and act like a true wife.

The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea” (Hosea 1:2). That statement is really, when you analyze it, a beginning to all the minor prophets.⁸ They have a sequential theme, chronologically arranged to show events leading up to the end time.⁹ The time period was that of the Assyrian hegemony in the 8th and 7th centuries BC. In the interior of the Book of Hosea God is very concerned about the unfaithfulness of Israel and how that nation went almost completely over to the worship of Baalim — the religious gods and goddesses of the nations surrounding Israel. They abandoned Yahweh. They gave up their husband.

To Begin, Hosea Takes a Wife

We find at the beginning an extraordinary commandment from God to Hosea. God Himself is righteous, and holy, as are all His commandments. This first command to Hosea might raise your eyebrows a bit.

“Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms [a prostitute] and children of whoredoms [born of prostitutes] for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from YHWH [Who orders Hosea to marry her]. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.”

• *Hosea 1:2–3*

The name given to this son — Hosea’s first child — was Jezreel. The word “Jezreel” means “God sows,” or broadcasts seeds or plants. It means to take seeds in the hand, and to broadcast them, scatter them out, like wheat, or barley, or oats. Call him the “scattered one,” the “sowing one,” the scattering of seeds.

“For yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu [the current king of Israel], and I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.”

• *Hosea 1:4*

⁸ See Dr. Martin’s presentation “[The Minor Prophets for Today](#).” DWS

⁹ Israel continued to worship YHWH, but Moses commanded Israel to worship exclusively (see Deuteronomy 6:14–16, chapter 13; Exodus 34:14–16; Joshua 24:14, 23; Judges 2:13, 10:6; 1 Samuel 7:3; Matthew 4:10; and Luke 4:8, and many other passages). The leaders and people of Israel thought they could worship YHWH and worship other gods at the same time. Perhaps they were misled by Solomon’s dangerous example told of in 1 Kings 11:1–13. DWS

Israel would cease to be a nation. When this prophecy was given around 785 BC, Israel was indeed a nation.¹⁰ God was ordering Hosea, as a type of Himself, to marry this woman, who was a wife of whoredom, whose first child was to be named Jezreel, because God was going to begin sowing the nation of Israel. The first sowing is in the land of Israel, but the next sowing would be outside the land of Israel. It is surprising where that first sowing will be. Verse 5, **“And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel”** (Hosea 1:5).

That valley is in southern Galilee. In the New Testament, and today, it is called the valley of Esdraelon. At the northern edge of this valley is Nazareth.¹¹ It is a verdant valley, rather flat. The chief area of Jezreel is a place called Megiddo, or as it is called in the New Testament, Armageddon.

So the first sowing will be in the land of Israel, in the area of Armageddon. Jezreel will find a sowing there, but then a disturbance will occur that will send them out into all nations on the surface of this earth.

“And she conceived again, and bare a daughter [named Loruhamah]. ... for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.”

• *Hosea 1:6–7*

They will be taken from that sowing in the land of Jezreel, from the Armageddon area.

“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah [in the south], and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”

• *Hosea 1:7*

In other words, He says that His indignation, at this particular time in history, was not against Judah in the south — yet. That came along about a hundred and fifty years later from the Babylonians. But at this time the northern tribes were under judgment from God. This daughter of Gomer and Hosea was to be a teaching, because of her name, that God would no longer have mercy on the house of Israel.

The Third Child, a Second Son

“Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, ‘Call his name Loammi: for you [Israel] are not my people, and I will not be your God.’”

• *Hosea 1:8–9*

So Loammi means, **“not my people, and I will not be your God any longer.”** That is a severe judgment upon the land of Israel; upon the people of Israel, and it all happens in the first chapter.

The whole of Hosea is about the scattering of Israel into the world, and how God will woo her back step-by-step, until she finally comes to her senses, and returns to the land of Palestine, to the land of Canaan. There she will finally put down her roots and be the type of a wife that God wants her to be.

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, you are ‘not my people,’ there it shall be said unto them, you are the sons of the living God.”

• *Hosea 1:10*

¹⁰ God would sow Israel. Where will God sow Israel? This theme of sowing is found also in the books of Amos (9:13–15) and Zechariah (10:9). This theme of sowing is even in the New Testament, mentioned by James and also by Peter. Even the apostle Paul mentions it. *ELM*

¹¹ At the southern part you have Mount Gebal where Saul was killed. It is a beautiful valley that reaches from the Sea of Galilee on the south, and goes west over toward Mount Carmel by the Mediterranean Sea where Elijah was in this period of time. *ELM*

That is future. I will tell you when in the future, how far it is to the very end of the latter days. It is our time today we look forward to, because you have to take this Book of Hosea here and compare it to Amos, and carry right on through the minor prophets, until you get to Zechariah, which also has information about this scattering of Israel, just like you scatter wheat and barley, into all areas of the known world.

At that time, when Israel is brought back and becomes **“My people”** once more, **“Great shall be the day of Jezreel, ...”** This means a great sowing will take place in the world.

“Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”

• *Hosea 1:11*

Chapter 2 continues without a break:

“Say you unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband ...”

• *Hosea 2:1–2*

This is what Hosea was commanded to say, speaking in God’s name, that God was giving up Israel and letting her go her own way with her children. He says,

“... let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts.”

• *Hosea 2:2*

Israel Sent Away and Scattered

In other words, YHWH will get rid of her, put her out of his presence. He says if I (through Hosea) would not send her out ...

“Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up the way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them [they will not help her] then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”

• *Hosea 2:3–7*

In the future she will want to return to God. But before she does she will commit crimes against God. He shall put her away first, and when she gets to the place that it is not as pleasant as she thought it was going to be, then she and her children will say **“I will go and return to my first husband.”**

Once in the world, well away from the land of Israel and from the plenty they had before, then Israel will begin to repent and come back to her senses. God says He will lead her back and marry her again. Once she finds herself in the wilderness without food and without raiment, and her lovers would not give her anything, she says:

“I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, ... “

• *Hosea 2:7–8*

And what did they do? (Now I am adding this here.) **“... they prepared it for Baal.”** God blessed Israel tremendously, and Israel turned around and goes the way of the Gentiles. (When we look at our society

today, there is a relevance to Hosea's message, Christianity is filled with the teachings of Baalim — the teachings of the solstices, astrology, things of that nature, and we call it Christianity.)

“And now I will discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.

And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim [that she was keeping], wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, says YHWH.”

• *Hosea 2:10–13*

Israel (the Northern Kingdom) Returns

It goes on to say that He will take her (Samaria, Ephraim) from the land of Israel into the wilderness, and take her where she will have none of those things. Once she gets there, God says, He will begin to deal with her, and she will want to return to her first husband. In Hosea chapters 2 and 3, God will (believe it or not) take her back. You wonder why I make a statement like that? Because it is against the laws of Moses for a man who divorces his wife (as He said here **“you are not my people”**), if she then carries on with her lovers, to come back to her first husband. Read Deuteronomy 24:1–4. It is absolutely forbidden.

In this case, God has a right to change even His own laws if He wishes to do so because He loves Israel so much. He will take the woman back. But she will have to go through lots of trouble and turmoil. She will first experience the day of Jezreel, which means a “sowing” into the land called the world, the whole earth.

“And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel [they will hear the sowing going on]. And I will SOW her [Israel] unto me in the earth ...”

• *Hosea 2:22–23*

God goes on to say, I will give her mercy but not until she finds herself in the extremities of the earth.

This theme just carries right on. The “A” part is judgment, the “B” is mercy. The “A” is judgment again, and then the “B” is mercy. We keep coming to that theme, and we find the sowing, the scattering, is the major judgment that Hosea is talking about here. Note:

“My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.”

• *Hosea 9:17*

That is what the scattering will do. Later, they will come back, but not until they have experienced, outside the land of Israel, what the Gentiles can really bring to them. They will be scattered as wanderers. These are the 10 tribes being talked about here. They will not be mighty nations in the world, powerful, and full of authority. They will be wanderers amongst the nations.

This theme, as I said before, is taken up in Amos. In actual fact, you almost must look at Amos to understand what Hosea was talking about. Hosea establishes the theme. Amos, and others, carry it out. Amos 9:9 speaks of the same type of thing that God was prophesying through Hosea.

“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift [or sow] the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in the sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”

• *Amos 9:9*

That means to germinate there, they will want to stay there in that land. They will be scattered into all nations, wanderers in all nations.

This theme carries right on. We find in the Book of Zechariah (the next to last book, occurring near the end of the age) it speaks about Ephraim and how it has been sown among the nations.

“[And] I **will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again** [to Me, YHWH].”

• **Zechariah 10:9**

But this will not occur until they were sent into the far countries. Even in Zechariah it says “I **will sow them.**” This theme continued in the New Testament. There was a word used in New Testament times, in Greek, which designated these Israelites who were scattered into the nations of the world. It was called the “Diaspora.” *Dia* in the Greek is a preposition. It means “through.” “*Spora*” means seed. It means scattering seed through the lands of the earth, to wander from place to place, not gathering root. That is where God was to take them.

Go back to Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and the prophecies given in the time of Moses; it says that they would be scattered into all areas of the world. The people who would be there, finally, would become the people of God. They would finally wake up, and want to return to Israel, to their first husband.

In this Zecharian prophecy, it actually says in chapters 9 to 14, how Ephraim and Judah will come back together as one group, to the land of Canaan in Palestine — not in Great Britain, not in the United States. In fact, when these people who are sown throughout the earth, do come back, it says,

“I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt [not out of the United States of America], and will gather them out of Assyria [not out of Great Britain]; and I will bring them **into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.**”

• **Zechariah 10:10**

Gilead, by the way, is on the east side of the Jordan River. They will actually come back and settle there. They will be in Lebanon. This was understood by the apostles.

The Epistle of James

Turn to James, the leader of the *ekklesia* at Jerusalem, who wrote an epistle, a letter, in our New Testament.

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are **scattered abroad, greeting.**”

• **James 1:1**

See the word “scattered”? In Greek it is “diaspora” — scattered, dispersed, throughout the lands. That is exactly where those 12 tribes were, including Judah — scattered, even in the time of James. James wrote about 60 AD. Paul and Peter were around at the time. James is writing from Jerusalem. To whom does he write? He writes five chapters to those meeting in synagogues, away from Judea.

The northern Israelites, many of them became known as “Jews” simply because of their attachment to the land of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. They were the ones taken out of the land of Palestine in “**the day of Jezreel**” (Hosea 1:11).

Who introduced all of this? It was the prophet Hosea. It lasted to the time of the apostles. They were still in the dispersion and had not yet congregated to return to the land of Israel. So James wrote his letter to the twelve tribes that were scattered just like Hosea, and Amos, and Zechariah said they would be.

Peter and the Diaspora

But that does not end it. Turn to Peter’s writing. He also writes to these people. He does not write to all twelve tribes, but to a group of them in Galatia, Pontus, Cappadocia, the Roman province called Asia, and also Bithynia. And you know what he says these people are?

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to **the strangers scattered**” (1 Peter 1:1). That is, “**the strangers**” in the diaspora, scattered as seeds, exactly as Hosea said. Here is the Jezreel punishment upon them from the area of Armageddon. They were to be taken out of the land of Israel, and scattered into all nations. James

was writing to all twelve tribes, while Peter writes to those in the area of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. He knew these people. In fact, it says he went up and talked to these people outside of Palestine. People knew where the twelve tribes were. They were scattered throughout the whole of the Roman Empire at the time, over into India, and to China, even in the 1st century AD.

What has happened since that time? Once Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, the surviving Jews themselves scattered. The people in and around Israel fled, as well as those gentiles who always wanted to be connected with Judah and Jerusalem. Not until 1948 were they able to come back and start a nation once again in the land of Canaan, called Israel today. That nation is a prologue to the fulfillment of these prophecies in the Book of Hosea dealing with modern times.

Remember, the “A” part of the prophecy is judgment. The “B” part of the prophecy is mercy. The “A” part is scattering. The “B” part is bringing back together. The “A” part is sending them into all the world. The “B” part is to return and establish them in the land of Israel. We find that theme throughout Hosea, we find it through Amos, and we find it through Zechariah.

These Israelites, people knew them. They may have been lost spiritually, but they were not lost physically, because God knew where they were. They were a people when they went out from the land and one of these days in the future they will again be **“my people.”** I (God) will bring them back into the land of Gilead, into Lebanon, into Israel. That is where they will be coming back to, as the prophecies make quite clear.

Paul and Hosea

The apostle Paul, in Acts chapter 26, was being tried before Agrippa, the king (who was not an Israelite), he was of Herod, an Idumean. We find Agrippa saying to Paul, **“You are permitted to speak for yourself.”** Here was the apostle Paul, being tried for his life in Caesarea,

“Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: ‘I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before you, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews [the Jews in Palestine]. Especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech you to hear me patiently.

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews [they are aware of it]; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly [constantly] serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.”

• **Acts 26:1–7**

What was that **“hope to come”**? That hope was redemption, a re-gathering. That hope was a re-covenanting with God to marry them again, and bring them back into the land, and let them take root, garnering them from all over the world.

The apostle Paul understood the history of Israel very well. He came from the university system of his day. As one of the greatest of the people in Jerusalem, he had a great knowledge and understanding of where the Israelites were. He was testifying to king Agrippa, who, Paul said, was a man who understood the customs. He was an expert.

“Unto which promise [the promise of God] our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.”

• **Acts 26:7**

The apostle Paul said they were still hoping, all of them, to come back to the promise, and to inherit the promise that Hosea said they would receive.

You know, most of them to this very day are still in the nations of the world. In actual fact, Zechariah chapters 9–14 give a prophetic scenario, in a chronological sequence, describing events of today as clear as anyone could get. It says that these northern tribes of Ephraim will be brought back to Palestine.

When we look at Israel today, since 1948, many have gone back. There are over five million Jews or Israelites now living in the land of Canaan they call Israel. But there are still many more from the tribes of Israel, scattered in almost every nation of this world.

The fulfillment of the prophecy of Hosea is coming to pass! They will be as wanderers. They will not put down roots, not really. They will stay from generation to generation, but their heart will be back in the holy land. They will want to go back to the land of Canaan. When they find themselves out in the extremities of the world, at the end of the age, in the latter days, God will bring them to their senses. They will accept Him as a proper husband. He will take them back, call them **“my wife,”** and they will call Him **“my husband.”**

A re-marriage will take place, contrary to the law of God in Deuteronomy chapter 24. But God makes the laws; He decides what to do. In this case, He will bring back the people of Israel, scattered into all of the earth. Jezreel will find a conclusion, and I will tell you where the conclusion will finally be.

In the Book of Revelation it was from the area of Jezreel, the valley of Esdraelon in northern Israel, where the mountain of Megiddo was. The final gathering for the battle to come to Jerusalem at the end of the age, where do the armies congregate? They congregate in the valley of Jezreel. This sowing will come back, and all focus of Israel and Judah, and all the rest of the nations, will be upon the land of Palestine.

The armies will gather as it says in the valley of Esdraelon (which is just a take-off from the name Jezreel). In the near future this scattering of Israel will be thwarted and they will begin to return en masse to Israel. They will go back even to the land of Gilead and Lebanon. Since 1948, we have had the nation of Israel, as I have said before, but — and this is important — the prophecies of Hosea have not yet seen their completion.

Read those 14 chapters. When you do, remember, He sent them away from the land of Israel for their unfaithfulness. But He said when they get to the extremities of the world, at a time in the future, He will call them back, and call them **“my people.”** They will come back to this land here. They will marry Me once more, and be faithful to Me. **“They shall say, ‘you are My God’”** (Hosea 2:23). He will be faithful to them. That is known as the covenant relationship renewed, or, the New Covenant. A New Covenant will I make, a new marriage agreement will I make with Israel. And that is what the whole of the Book of Hosea is about.

It starts out with the “A” part—that is, Jezreel, the scattering. Then there is the “B” part. Coming up consistently, you have “A,” then “B,” then “A,” then “B.” The last part is “B.” The final point is this:

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for my anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily ...”

• *Hosea 14:4–5*

This is not just a scattering of the seed, but, **“he shall grow as the lily,”** with the roots in the ground of Israel, **“... and cast forth his roots as Lebanon,”** as the great fir trees of Lebanon with deep roots into the ground.

“His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree [firmly anchored to the soil of Israel], and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell shall dwell under His [God’s] shadow [of His wings] shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say [these northern peoples, the ones in Jezreel, scattered],

‘What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is your fruit found.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? [and be] prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of YHWH are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.’”

• *Hosea 14:6–9*

Ephraim will soon give up the idols. Ephraim will soon be rescued from the Jezreel. Ephraim and Judah are soon to be re-established in covenant relationship with God. That is what Hosea says for our modern times.

Ernest L. Martin, 1996
 Edited by David Sielaff, October 2012

Skeletal Outline of the Book of Hosea

Below is an outline of the Book of Hosea. It is from *The Bible Remembrancer: Containing an Analysis of the Whole Bible* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1848). This book is widely attributed to Rev. Ingram Cobbin, although it was published without author attribution. Besides outlines for every book of the Bible, it contains several interesting Bible lists and articles.

Outlines that accept the Bible as inspired are particularly useful. Such outlines fill in details of the general skeleton of the Bible. Cobbin's outline does not try to determine what God's thoughts are, but it describes the obvious topics that are in each chapter. Here is Cobbin's introduction to Hosea:

“The name Hosea (*Hebrew, Hoshea*) means ‘*God is help.*’ Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, makes an important quotation from this prophet, under the somewhat modified name of Osee (*compare* Romans 9:25–26 and Hosea 2:23). Peter, in his First Epistle, evidently refers to this same passage of Hosea (1 Peter 2:10). This prophet was eminently Jewish: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel deal not only with Israel, but also with Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Tyre, Assyria, Babylon; but the vision of Hosea is limited to the people of the land of Israel.

His testimony chiefly deals with the ten tribes, to whom he sometimes refers as Ephraim; sometimes as Israel; sometimes as Samaria. The apostasy (which began among those tribes when Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who “made Israel to sin,” set up the golden calves at Dan and Bethel), had deepened and widened; and now, in the time of Hosea, the prophet has not simply to testify against one or two centers of idolatry, but against a number [of them] — Bethaven, Ephraim, Gibeah, Gilead, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah, Samaria, Tabor.

Whilst Isaiah was witnessing for God in Jerusalem, Hosea, under greater difficulties, was through a long course of years bearing faithful testimony in corrupt and idolatrous Israel.

‘I called my son out of Egypt’ is a quotation from Hosea which is applied in the New Testament to Christ (Hosea 9:1; Matthew 2:15). The remarkable passage, ‘In the third day He will raise us up,’ points to the resurrection of Christ, and appears to have been so understood in apostolic times (*compare* Hosea 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 15:4 — ‘according to the Scriptures’).”

• *Bible Remembrancer*, p. 70–71

Outline of Hosea

Reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah	Ch.	The prophet marries Gomer.			
	1	Her children — Jezreel, a son; Lo-ruhamah, a daughter; and Lo-ammi, a son.		6	priests, people, and princes for their sins. A call to repentance. A complaint of Ephraim's inconstancy.
	2	Israel's way hedged up. Her idolatries reprov'd.		7	The sinful state of Israel.
	3	The adulteress purchased. Israel's days without a king, prince, sacrifice, image, ephod, teraphim.		8	Destruction threatened for their wickedness.
	4	Idolatries of Israel. Judah warned.		9	Distress and captivity of Israel for iniquity.
5	Judgment denounced against		10	Israel an empty vine. Exhorted to repentance.	
			Call to repentance		
			Israel's distress		

Vain hopes	11	Ephraim's ingratitude and disobedience.
	12	Ephraim's vain hopes. Judah threatened.

	13	Ephraim's aggravated sins.
	14	Israel exhorted to repent. God promises healing.

David Dorsey, The Literary Structure of the Old Testament

In his book Professor David Dorsey shows how difficult it is to decipher the structure of the Book of Hosea. Nevertheless there is merit in presenting his Hosea outline:¹

- a. Israel is God's wayward wife: He will cause her to return home (1:1–3:5).
- b. condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (4:1–5:7).
- c. condemnation for political faithlessness and corruption and empty sacrifices; YHWH's efforts to bring Israel back (5:8–6:11a).
- d. **CENTER:** Israel has not returned to YHWH, though He has called it to return (6:11b–7:16).
- c' condemnation for political faithlessness and corruption and empty sacrifices: YHWH's efforts to bring Israel back (8:1–9:7b).
- b' condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (9:7c–10:15).
- a' Israel is God's wayward son: God invites him to return (11:1–14:9).

In fact, the entire Bible has a structure, as Dr. Martin shows in his book [*Restoring the Original Bible: The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures*](#). Always remember, however, that the chapter divisions in the Bible are not divinely inspired, so feel free to draw your own conclusions regarding structure within any Book of the Bible.

The Role of Prophets

The prophets of the people of Israel functioned as (1) divinely appointed preachers; they (2) predicted future events; and they were (3) watchmen over the affairs of God's people. As preachers they interpreted the Law of Moses, somewhat duplicating the function of the priests, who also taught the people. When they predicted the future (from God's communications to them) they announced coming judgments, deliverance, and events about the future coming of the Messiah and His kingdom. The purpose of predicting the future was **"to demonstrate that God knows and controls the future, and to give some purposeful revelation."** As watchmen the prophets were to give warning about religious apostasy, idolatry, and warning against religious and ritual formalism.

One additional role of prophets was that as royal diplomat and a type of prosecuting attorney on behalf of God against the king, religious hierarchy, people, or the entire nation. In fulfilling this function they used legal terminology of the time within a covenant background. Hosea does this also.²

The Covenant that the people of Israel made with God had provisions that allowed either party to bring a grievance against the other. Scholars have identified several different types of covenants between individuals and between nations. One type is a marriage agreement or covenant between a proposed husband and the proposed wife's family. Solomon's marriage agreement in 1 Kings 3:1 was both a personal and international

¹ David Dorsey, "Chapter 27: Hosea, Come Home Unfaithful Israel," in *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grant Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1999), pp. 265–272. Again, I highly recommend this book for your personal study library.

² J. Carl Laney, "The Role of the Prophets in God's Case Against Israel," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 138, 552 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981), pp. 315–317.

covenant, as was Hosea's marriage agreement with Gomer. Another type of covenant was that between equals in business. Today we call such a covenant by the term CONTRACT.

There are also treaties between kingdoms. Today we call such an international covenant by the term TREATY. On the international scale there were covenants between nations of equal status (such as between Solomon, king of Israel and Hiram, king of Tyre).³ There were two kinds of covenants.

The biblical covenant between God and Israel was the kind of covenant in which the power relationship was heavily weighted to one party. This was a covenant or treaty between a suzerain (God) and a vassal (Israel). Another example of an international treaty or covenant between sovereign and vassal is shown in the relationship between Assyria and the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah⁴:

“And YHWH was with him [Hezekiah]; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.”

• 2 Kings 18:7

Hezekiah, king of Judah, was a vassal, a servant, of the king of Assyria (Hezekiah's suzerain). Hezekiah rebelled. Later Hezekiah changed his mind and asked to again be the vassal of Assyria:

“And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, ‘I have offended; return from me [stop invading my country]: that which you put on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto [demanded from] Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.”

• 2 Kings 18:14

King Hezekiah had to pay tribute of gold and silver to again restore himself as a vassal to the king of Assyria. If Hezekiah had not done so, the king of Assyria would have issued a threat that a treaty violation was in effect and Assyria had a covenant right to attack and take what Judah had agreed to in the covenant.

Prophets as God's Messengers

Israel's covenant with God was also a covenant similar in many identifiable respects to a suzerain-vassal treaty in international relations. This has long been recognized by scholars. The Old Testament prophets were YHWH's messengers representing the sovereign to warn and threaten Israel about violations of their Covenant with YHWH. Hosea was one of the earlier prophets to perform such a function as a messenger and a prosecutor. These contracts, treaties, and covenants contained cursings if they were not adhered to by the weaker party. They also contained blessings and obligations on the part of the stronger party.

In the Book of Hosea, after the first three chapters identifying and pointing out the serious nature of the sins of Israel (presented in the guise of Hosea's wife's infidelities), Hosea the prophet speaks for God as a messenger, an accuser, and prosecutor of the Israel's sins against their suzerain YHWH:

“Hear the word of YHWH, you children of Israel: for YHWH has a controversy [a *rib*, a lawsuit] with the inhabitants of the land, [why?] because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.”

• Hosea 4:1

The northern kingdom of Israel was violating the legal covenant with YHWH, so He had His messenger Hosea make a public accusation in a court-like setting. YHWH was both the plaintiff bringing suit, and He was also the judge. Israel had agreed to this situation in the covenant with YHWH at Sinai. The term for this type of accusation is the Hebrew word *rib* (pronounced *reeb*). The characteristics of a *rib* are as follows:

³ The several agreements between the two had many manifestations: Tyrian help building the Jerusalem Temple, including supplies of precious cedar wood for the interior and metals, as well as skilled artisans (1 Kings chapter 5). Mutual economic assistance and expeditions for ocean trade were also done (1 Kings 9:26–28).

⁴ This happened after Hosea's prophecies of destruction were fulfilled. Assyria then looked to rule over the kingdom of Judah.

- “1. The summons to the heavens and the earth.
2. The reference to the historical benefits conferred by YHWH on Israel.
3. The accusation against the covenant-breaker.
4. The reference to the futility of an appeal to other gods.
5. The warning or sentence of judgment.”

• Lancy, “*The Role of the Prophets*,” p. 322

Each element of a *rîb* follows a formula. Lancy notes this about the accusation part of the *rîb* (#3 above):

“Hosea 4:1–3 also reflects the international treaty form. This passage focuses on the loyalty and faithfulness the people of Israel (the vassals) are to demonstrate to YHWH (the Suzerain). The passage can be outlined as follows:

1. The call for attention: The prophet invokes the name of the Great Suzerain as he begins his message and speaks for YHWH [Hosea 4:1].
2. The Suzerain’s complaint
 - a. The reason for the complaint: No faithfulness, loyalty, or acknowledgment of YHWH as Suzerain [Hosea 4:1b].
 - b. The breaking of the covenant stipulations: the violations center on the Ten Commandments [Hosea 4:2].
 - c. The announcement of a curse: judgment because of breach of covenant [Hosea 4:2].”

• Lancy, “*The Role of the Prophets*,” p. 323

In Hosea 4:3–5, the prophet describes what will be the end result of God’s punishment for Israel’s disobedience and covenant violation if Israel does not repent. Hosea later levels charges against the kingdom and people of Judah, but this appears to be for the purpose of a preliminary warning, for them to take Israel’s punishment as an example of what could happen to their kingdom of Judah:

“YHWH has also a controversy [a *rîb*] with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his [Judah’s/Jacob’s] doings will he recompense him.”

• Hosea 12:2

Conclusion

Another well-known passage in Hosea also applies to Israel today — and I would add, applies to the churches of this world, and even to many in the *ekklesia* of God (the Body of Christ):

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: [Why?] because you have rejected knowledge, [Therefore,] I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. As they were increased [in number], so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.”

• Hosea 4:6–7

In Hosea 4:1 above, Hosea said there was “**no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.**” Why was this? At that time there Samaria was prosperous. As their population increased, so did sin. Because the people “**rejected knowledge**,” therefore, God said “**I will also reject you.**” The phrase “**you shall be no priest to me**,” reminds Israel that God intended His people to be a kingdom of priests to teach the nations about God (Exodus 19:6). They rejected knowledge of God and forgot His Law, therefore God rejected Israel. Their prosperity and increase failed, and their end was shame. Desolation and destruction soon followed.

For us members of the Body of Christ (the *ekklesia*), the law we must live by is that of love (Romans 13:8–10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8, etc.). Love fulfills all law. Do not “**reject knowledge**,” but do the opposite, “**study to show yourself approved unto God**” (2 Timothy 2:15).