

Introducing the Prophets and the Book of Hosea

Introducing the World of Biblical Prophets																						
A Biblical Prophet	One of the great features of Judaism/Christianity is how different it was from other religions in the ancient world around the Promised Land. Those surrounding Israel (Midianites, Ammonites, etc) had "seers." Seers were "supposedly" revealers of hidden truth. Prophets, however, were unique to Israel and revealers of known truth.																					
How a Biblical Prophet Functioned	It's a mistake to label prophets as just "seers" of hidden truths concerning things to happen in the future. Daniel was certainly that. It's better to see them as "enforcers" of known truth about what God has already spoken/revealed. Think of them as policeman: (1) Here's what God has said; (2) Here's what you are doing now; (3) Here's what's going to happen if it doesn't change.																					
Who they Were	In light of their unique calling and anointing, the prophets were often loners who stood out from the crowd in extreme ways. For example, Isaiah preached in the nude. Jeremiah wept and wore a yoke as he preached. Ezekiel ate scrolls. Balaam rode a talking donkey. And Hosea married a harlot and named his children.																					
Some Wrote and Some Didn't	<p>(1) Many prophets we see in the Bible who played major roles were <i>not</i> writing prophets. Here are some examples: <i>Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Nathan, Ahijah, Azariah</i>.</p> <p>(2) Many prophets we see in the Bible did write. The grouping changes depending on tradition. But Protestants usually assign two divisions of the writing prophets:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Major Prophets</th> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Minor Prophets</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Isaiah</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Hosea</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Nahum</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Jeremiah (*Lamentations)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Joel</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Habakkuk</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Ezekiel</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Amos</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Zephaniah</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Daniel</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Obadiah</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Haggai</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Jonah</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Zechariah</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Micah</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Malachi</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets		Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum	Jeremiah (*Lamentations)	Joel	Habakkuk	Ezekiel	Amos	Zephaniah	Daniel	Obadiah	Haggai		Jonah	Zechariah		Micah	Malachi
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Major vs Minor	What made a major prophet a "major" one and a minor prophet a "minor" one has <u>nothing</u> to do with significance. They were <u>all</u> significant. It has to do with <u>volume</u> . In other words, Isaiah is a major prophet and Hosea is minor because Isaiah is longer than Hosea in chapters. But not in significance.																					

Introducing Hosea	
When Hosea Prophesied	<p>(1) Hosea prophesied during the 8th century BC. That was a time when Israel was <u>divided into two Kingdoms</u>: Israel in the North and Judah in the South.</p> <p>(2) In Hosea 1:1, he tells us that he ministered during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Jeroboam II. That translates to a 60/70 year ministry, thereby making him <u>the longest serving active prophet</u> in the Bible.</p> <p>(3) He was a contemporary of the <u>Prophet Isaiah</u>. Isaiah prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.</p>
Central Theme of Hosea's Prophecy	The Divided Kingdom was one of the worst periods of Israel's history. There were only 5 righteous kings during that time and <u>none of them</u> ruled in the Northern Kingdom. Therefore, as a prophet to the Northern Kingdom, Hosea's primary message was that <u>Israel had been unfaithful to the covenant God made with them</u> .
How God Called Hosea to Prophecy	The prophets in the Bible were often called by God to do drastic things. Of all the prophets, Hosea's calling was the most drastic. God told him to marry a harlot named Gomer. Their marriage was a visual representation of what was true in Israel at the time.
The Prophet and His Harlot	As a result, Hosea and Gomer serve as <u>allegorical</u> figures. Hosea represents God. Gomer represents Israel. Hosea pursues Gomer and keeps pursuing her with unconditional love. But Gomer keeps playing the role of the harlot.
There's Something About that Name	The name Hosea means "the Lord has rescued/the Lord is salvation." His ministry was consistent with his name. God is the rescuer/salvation of unfaithful Israel. Even when Gomer was unfaithful, Hosea provided a way for her rescue/salvation.

Chapters 1-3: Hosea's Personal Relationship with Gomer that Prepares the Way for National Prophecy

The Breakdown of Hosea	The content in chapters 1-3 is personal (minus chapter 2) and related to Hosea and sets up the national message to Israel in 4-14.
Marriage	² <i>When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord."</i> ³ <i>So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son (1:2-3)</i> *The marriage command denotes the relationship between God and Israel. The command to conceive denotes the consequences.
Children	(1) Jezebel . ⁴ <i>Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezebel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel."</i> ⁵ <i>In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel.</i> (1:4-6) (2) Lo-Ruhamah . ⁶ <i>Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them."</i> ⁷ <i>Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them.</i> (1:6-7) (3) Lo-Ammi . ⁸ <i>After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.</i> ⁹ <i>Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God. (1:8-9)</i> *Jehu massacred the Omride Dynasty in Israel in Jezreel. The first son signifies the same thing will happen to him and his dynasty. The next two sons indicate names of judgment.
Separation	⁷ <i>She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, "I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now."</i> ⁸ <i>She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal.</i> (2:7-8) *What Gomer does is what Israel does
Reunion	<i>The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."</i> ² <i>So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek⁽⁹⁾ of barley.</i> ³ <i>Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."</i> (3:1-3) *The way Hosea pursues Gomer is the way God pursues Israel.

Chapters 4-8: The Courtroom of God's Judgment Against Israel

Indictment (4:1-19)	There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land
Verdict (5:1-15)	They are unfaithful to the Lord. They give birth to illegitimate children
Plea (6:1-11)	Unrepentance. Israel given to prostitution and remains deluded.
Crimes (7:1-16)	<i>Israel's arrogance testifies against him, but despite all this he does not return to the Lord his God or search for him.</i> (7:10)
Judgment (8:1-14)	<i>Israel has forgotten their Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses.</i> (8:14) *Hosea prophesies the fall of Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom) here. It occurred in 722 BC.

Chapters 11-14: God's Message of Restoration

⁴ <i>"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, or my anger has turned away from them."</i> ⁵ <i>I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots;⁶ his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. ⁷ People will dwell again in his shade; they will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine— Israel's fame will be like the wine of Lebanon (14:4-8)</i> *Hosea prophesies the return of Israel from Babylonian Captivity in 539 BC. (Some 250/300 years before it occurred)
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Major Takeaway from Hosea: Grace greater than all our sin.