

The Way Things Were Hosea 1:1-2 (NKJV)

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.
2 When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the LORD."

The book of Hosea is such a sad book but yet a beautiful book.

He speaks much of the sin of the nation and the coming judgment that will fall upon them.

But he also speaks of the love of God.

A love so genuine that it is beyond human contemplation.

And the tough part for the prophet is that he is called to be a living example to the people of Israel.

And although we might expect Hosea to be the angry prophet God calls on him instead to be the forgiving prophet, the loving prophet.

Some of you may be quite familiar with the book while for others it is a obscure book that you never gave much thought to.

But the book of Hosea without its context is a book of mystery and misunderstanding.

So today we want to give you the context of the book so that we can better get the message that God wants all of His people to receive when they study this Old Testament prophet.

- I. The nation of the prophet.
 - A. David king of Israel rose to power about 1060 B.C.
 1. David rules for about 40 years and then Solomon takes the throne.
 2. Solomon rules for about 40 years and then Rehoboam takes the throne.
 - B. Under Rehoboam the kingdom is divided and Jeroboam takes the throne in about 974 B.C.
 1. Jeroboam set up two golden calves, one in the southern part of the kingdom in Bethel and the other in the north in Dan.
 2. One of the faults of all future kings is that they all continue in the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
 - C. But this Jeroboam is not the one that took over when the kingdom was divided.
 1. He is not even any relation to him.

2. Actually 5 different families or dynasties have ruled from one Jeroboam to the next.
 3. And this Jeroboam is next to the last of his dynasty.
 4. His son with only reign for 6 months.
 5. Since we believe that Hosea began to prophecy toward the end of Jeroboam II time it would be about 774 B.C.
 6. So then Hosea comes on the scene after Israel split off of the united kingdom 200 years before.
- D. So for 200 years God has been pleading and warning Israel to return to him when Hosea begins his message.
1. This would include the days of Elijah and Elisha who witnessed to various kings concerning their sin but none repented, none turned back.
 2. 13 different kings have come and gone but they all continued to worship the golden calves.
- E. But Hosea's prophecy covers the time of the last 50 years of Israel.
1. God has sent prophet after prophet warning of judgment but now the time of judgment has come.
 2. 2 Kings 17:7-18 (NKJV) 7 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, 8 and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." 13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." 14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they

followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. 16 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.

II. The times of the prophet.

A. Through the success of Jeroboam II the nation is the securest it has been for generations.

1. Because of the preaching of Jonah Nineveh is in a time of repentance and thus is not out destroying the world. But this is about to run out.

2. The nation is so very prosperous, at least for most people except the poor.

a. Amos 6:1-7 (NKJV) 1 Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes! 2 Go over to Calneh and see; And from there go to Hamath the great; Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory? 3 Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, Who cause the seat of violence to come near; 4 Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; 5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; 6 Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, And those who recline at banquets shall be removed.

B. Contemporary Prophets.

1. Jonah, Amos, and Joel are already prophesying when Hosea starts.

2. Micah will be prophesying when Hosea is done and will continue.

C. Faith

1. There is still a corrupted worship of the God of Israel.

a. He is not worshiped exclusively but simply as a god among many other gods.

- b. At the exodus from Egypt, the Lord established a covenant with Israel. Hosea told the nation that they had broken not only the covenant but also the Lord's heart. God had loved them from the beginning, still loved them, and would always love them. But the people had spurned His love like an adulterous woman rejecting her husband. *Ted Cabal et al., The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1294.*
2. But there is also the worship of all the false gods of the pagan.
- a. Baal worship which became prevalent in the days of Ahab.
 - b. Molech which required the sacrifice of children by fire.
 - c. Hosea 4:17 "Ephraim [is] joined to idols, Let him alone.
 - d. Hosea 13:2 Now they sin more and more, And have made for themselves molded images, Idols of their silver, according to their skill; All of it [is] the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!

God loves His people. He is patient and works to renew them to Himself.

But there is an end when God finally brings judgment.

The only perfect example of love is found in God Himself. When God enters into marriage with His people, He recites vows that promise permanence, a right relationship, fair treatment, love unending, tenderness, security, and continuing self-revelation (2:19, 20). Our love must drink from this spring; then draw for others, offering to them, not the best form of human love we can give, but the pure, undiluted love of God in Christ. *Jack W. Hayford, ed., Spirit Filled Life Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Ho 1:1.*

Amos 2:6-7 (NKJV)

6 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals. 7 They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, To defile My holy name.

Amos 5:21-24 (NKJV)

21 "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. 22 Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. 23 Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. 24 But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.

Amos 7:10-17 (NKJV)

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, And Israel shall surely be led away captive From their own land.' " 12 Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, And there prophesy. 13 But never again prophesy at Bethel, For it is the king's sanctuary, And it is the royal residence." 14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.' 16 Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD: You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, And do not spout against the house of Isaac.' 17 "Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; Your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; Your land shall be divided by survey line; You shall die in a defiled land; And Israel shall surely be led away captive From his own land.' "

JEROBOAM II. This Jeroboam was the son of the successor of Jehoash and the fourteenth king of Israel, c. 793-753 b.c. Even though he followed the example of the first Jeroboam in keeping up the idolatry of the golden calves, the Lord had pity upon Israel. Jeroboam brought to a successful end the wars that his father had undertaken and delivered Israel from the Syrian yoke (cf. 2 Kings 13:4; 2 Kings 14:26-27). He took the chief cities of Damascus (2 Kings 14:28; Amos 1:3-5) and Hamath, and he restored the ancient eastern limits, from Lebanon to the Dead Sea, to Israel (2 Kings 14:25; Amos 6:14). He reconquered Ammon and Moab (Amos 1:13; Amos 2:1-3) and restored to the trans-Jordanic tribes their territory (2 Kings 13:5; 1 Chron. 5:17-22). But it was merely an outward restoration. The sanctuary at Bethel was kept up in royal state (Amos 7:13), but drunkenness, licentiousness, and oppression prevailed in the country (Hosea 4:12-14; Amos 2:6-8; Amos 4:1; Amos 6:6). Idolatry was united with the worship of Jehovah (Hosea 4:13; Hosea 13:6). Amos prophesied the destruction of Jeroboam and his house by the sword (Amos 7:9, 17), and Hosea (Hosea 1:1) denounced the crimes of the nation.

Excavations at Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, have confirmed its popularity and splendor in the eighth century b.c. Jeroboam II refortified the city with a double wall. In exposed sections, this reached as much as thirty-three feet in width, constituting fortifications so substantial that the mighty Assyrian army took three years to capture the city (2 Kings 17:5). The splendid palace of limestone with a strong rectangular tower and extensive outer court, hitherto assigned to the Ahab era, almost certainly belongs to Jeroboam II (J. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* [1946], p. 55). The jasper seal discovered by Schumacher at Megiddo and inscribed “Shema, servant of Jeroboam,” is to be connected with Jeroboam II rather than Jeroboam I, as is now epigraphically certain. The blossoming of art in this prosperous era is demonstrated by the lifelike and magnificently executed lion that appears on the seal.

Amos’s prophecies shed light on the increase of commerce and wealth in Jeroboam’s realm and its consequent luxury and moral deterioration. Increased tribute poured in, creating a wealthy class that was utterly selfish and unscrupulous (Amos 2:6; Amos 8:6). Simple dwellings of unburned brick gave way to “houses of well-hewn stone.” Ahab’s ivory palace (evidently referring only to decorations) was imitated by many of the wealthy landowners (1 Kings 22:39; Amos 3:15; Amos 5:11). Loose feasting was the order of the day (Amos 6:4-6). Religion degenerated into mere ritualism devoid of righteousness and morality (Amos 4:4; Amos 5:5; Amos 8:14). The evils of the time called for divine retribution. Jeroboam’s house was to be visited with the sword (Amos 7:9). Somewhere around 753 b.c. Jeroboam died a natural death, but his son and successor, Zechariah, after a six-month reign, was assassinated by a usurper, inaugurating a period of decline and civil strife.

Merrill Unger, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), s.v. “,” WORDsearch CROSS e-book.