

I Will Allure Her! (Hosea Chapters 1-3)

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The prophetic Hebrew Scripture Hosea opens up with scandal,

“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.’”¹

Historical and Theological Setting of Hosea

Hosea was a prophet in Israel, the northern ten tribes, from 760-722 B.C., right up until the time the Assyrians conquered Israel and scattered her among the nations.

There were two covenants prevailing over Israel at the time of Hosea's prophecy:

1. The Abrahamic Covenant: God unconditionally promised Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel, “I will make you a great nation...I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed...to your descendants I will give this land [Israel].”²
2. The Mosaic Covenant: The Lord's blessings or cursings on Israel were conditioned on her obedience or disobedience to the Law of Moses.³

Marry a Prostitute? Hosea Chapter One

Hosea's wife Gomer bore three children. The first child was conceived from Hosea “she conceived and bore *him* a son,”⁴ but the next two children were “children of harlotry.”⁵ The Lord used Hosea's marriage with Gomer as a direct parallel, a visual reminder to Israel of the Lord's love and commitment to her in the midst of her unfaithfulness. In every way the parallel holds, from the beginning of the relationship that the Lord had with Israel to the end some time in the future.

The Lord was initially pleased with Israel, though her faithfulness vanished quickly like the morning dew exposed to the desert sun.⁶ Like a jilted husband of an adulterous wife clinging to honeymoon memories, the Lord pined for Israel, “She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot...Therefore, behold, I

¹ Hosea 1:2, Scripture quotes taken from two versions of the Holy Bible: New International Version, 1984, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI and New King James Version, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN.

² Genesis 12:1-7, cf. Genesis 13:14-17, 15:4-7,16,18, 17:2-8,13,15,16,19-21, 18:18, 21:18, 22:17-18, 24:7, 25:5-6, 26:3-4,24, 27:29, 28:3-4,13-15, 31:12, 35:11-12, 48:4, 49:9-12, 50:24-25

³ Deuteronomy 28:1-68, 30:1-8, Leviticus 26:1-46

⁴ Hosea 1:3

⁵ Hosea 1:2

⁶ Hosea 6:4-5, cf 13:3

will allure her...and speak comfort to her...she shall sing there...*as in the days of her youth...as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.*"⁷ The Lord reminisced about how He found Israel "Like *grapes* in the wilderness [so refreshing!]; I saw your fathers as the *firstfruits* [representing the best of the crop] on the fig tree in its *first season* [representing purity]."⁸ How the Lord longed for Israel to once again pursue Him and His blessing. Thus in parallel, we must assume that Gomer was at first a faithful wife. As Hosea preached to the Israelites about their unfaithfulness, there must have been constant questioning, "Where is your wife?" There were the mockers, "Hey, Hosea, Gomer looked mighty fine last night!" Imagine the shame- how could Hosea go on preaching the message of the Lord? Imagine the tears at night, imagine the longing, the struggle with bitterness and anger, the desire just to get it all over and done with, to divorce her, maybe the desire to run away as the prophet Jonah ran away. In the midst of it all, the Lord was there with Hosea, anointing him with love and endurance to bear the shame and grow in love for his wife. He continued in the calling of a prophet before the people and learned to love his own rebellious people the way the Lord loved them. What could have been a stronger message for Israel than to see this man day after day cry out about their unfaithfulness and to know he knew exactly what unfaithfulness was all about?

Hosea's life and words were a symbol and a witness to Israel. The Lord proclaimed, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given *symbols* through the *witness* of the prophets."⁹ We see in Hosea a man who had an easy time visualizing through his marriage what the Lord was trying to show Israel. Could any prophet symbolize and witness God's love and Israel's unfaithfulness better than Hosea?

The Lord's Indictment of Israel: Chapters 4-14 of Hosea

The last chapters of Hosea stress the Lord's indictment of Israel, His pleading for them to repent, and His promise (prophecy) of a future day when she will repent and truly be married to the Lord. The indictment sounds a bit like a hostile divorce case in court, with the husband laying out charges against his adulterous, prostituting wife. "Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land. There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint...For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God."¹⁰

The Lord's Strategy to Win Israel back from Her Harlotry (Hosea 2:6-3:5)

1. The Lord Will Restrain Israel in Her Sin: (Hosea 2:6-13)

"I will hedge up your way with thorns and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but

⁷ Hosea 2:15

⁸ Hosea 9:10, cf 6:1-2, 11:7, 12:3-4, 6, 14:1, Jeremiah 3:22

⁹ Hosea 12:10

¹⁰ Hosea 4:1-2,12, cf. 9:1

not find them.”¹¹ This strategy didn’t seem to work too well at first, for Israel easily found her lovers- she chased after everything she could contrary to the Lord’s commands to the point where she was barely recognizable as God’s people, distinct from the idolatrous nations around her.¹²

Have you ever seen a husband attempt to restrain a rebellious wife? It doesn’t work too well! “A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike; whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand.”¹³ Can you hear in the background of Hosea the Lord’s weeping? It agonizes Him to have to take such extreme measures, just as it agonizes a father to have to bring out the belt for a good whipping after catching his son stealing from the neighbor. The Lord promised that one day His wife Israel will come to her senses and see the end result of this chastisement: “Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.’ For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold- which they prepared for Baal.”¹⁴

Moses prophesied seven hundred years earlier what would happen as a result of Israel’s rebellion and the Lord’s restraint of her: “If you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes...I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you ...I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies...after all this, if you do not obey Me...I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation...I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste... You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.”¹⁵

2. Strategy Number Two: I Will Buy Her Back (*Hosea 3:1-2*)

This strategy is illustrated in chapter three as we parallel Hosea’s marriage with the Lord’s marriage to Israel: “Then the Lord said to me [Hosea], ‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods...So *I bought her for myself* for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.”¹⁶

Charles Feinberg commented on this passage, “To what depths this led Gomer is clear from the price to be paid for her redemption. Fifteen pieces of silver. The price of a common slave was thirty pieces of silver according to Exodus 21:32. She had lowered herself to such a plane where she was worth but half the price of a common slave. The homer and lethech of barley speak of her utter worthlessness, for this was the food of animals.”¹⁷

¹¹ Hosea 2:6-7

¹² Hosea 2:9-10

¹³ Proverbs 27:15-16

¹⁴ Hosea 2:7-8

¹⁵ Leviticus 26:3-7,11-21,27-34,36-37

¹⁶ Hosea 3:1-2

¹⁷ The Minor Prophets, page 24, Charles L. Feinberg, Moody Press Paperback Edition, Chicago, 1990.

How did the Lord buy Israel back? Isaiah prophesied from 740-700 B.C., “He [the Messiah] is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth...He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”¹⁸

While Hosea bought Gomer back, he told her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man- so, too, will I be toward you.”¹⁹ In this we see that though Hosea offered to buy Gomer back, she still had a decision to make- she had to forsake her old life of idolatry/adultery and cling to her new life in marriage. Likewise, Israel has been bought back with a price: the shed blood of her Messiah. She has to come to a place of repentance and faith in her Messiah.

3. Strategy Number Three: Leave Israel in Desolation: (*Hosea 3:4*)

After telling Hosea to buy back Gomer as He would buy back Israel, the Lord prophesied, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.”²⁰ When Israel was invaded by Assyria, and Judah by Babylon, this partially came true- Israel was taken from her temple. However, they still engaged in their idolatry (their sacred pillar, their teraphim) in the land of Babylon. After their return from exile, Israel abandoned physical idolatry. In 70 A.D. the Romans marched in and destroyed the rebuilt temple. Since then Israel has been without both idolatry and sacrifice (at the temple in Jerusalem), without ephod (the high priest of the Lord's temple wore an ephod) and kings, and she hasn't yet recognized her King, the Messiah. Thus this verse is the condition of Israel in this present age. The Jews have maintained their culture and identity but have lost their relationship with the Lord. We are seeing that this age is drawing to a close as once again the Lord is regathering the Jews to His land of Israel, fulfilling many prophecies.²¹ She has been bought through the sacrifice of her Savior, but she is abandoned until a future day when she will receive the free gift of her salvation by faith.

¹⁸ Isaiah 52:13-53:12, cf. Psalm 22:1-24, Isaiah 42:1-4, 50:4-10, 49:1-9, Zechariah 3:8, Daniel 9:24-27, Genesis 3:15.

¹⁹ Hosea 3:3

²⁰ Hosea 3:4

²¹ Deuteronomy 4:29, 30:1-8, Jeremiah 16:14-15, 23:7-8, 30:8-31:37,33:25-36, Ezekiel 28:25-26, 36:1-37:28

The Messiah prophesied later in Hosea, “I will return again to my place [heaven] till they acknowledge their offense [their unbelief in Me and unrepentant hearts]. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”²² Israel indeed has been a nation of affliction, but all the affliction of Israel to date will not compare to her affliction in the end times. This affliction will take place “in the wilderness”...

4. Strategy Number Four: Allure Her in the Wilderness (*Hosea 3:5, 2:14*)

Just as Hosea won Gomer back through first purchasing then alluring her, so Israel has been purchased and will be allured back to her Lord. Hosea prophesies, “*Afterward* the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and *David their king*. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the *latter days*.”²³ “*Afterward*” and the “*latter days*” give us clues to the timing of this allurement- it would be a time after the “many days” of 3:4, the time of Israel’s desolation during the present age. “*David their king*” is none other than Israel’s Messiah born of the lineage of King David- the final King prophesied about repeatedly in the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁴ In days to come there will be a tremendous turning of Israel toward her Messiah-King. In chapter two of Hosea, after Israel decked herself with jewelry, the Lord reveals His plans to woo her back... “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the *wilderness*, and *speak comfort* to her.”²⁵ The wilderness experience is prophesied by Ezekiel, Zechariah and Jeremiah as happening during the Great Tribulation spoken of by Daniel.²⁶ A few events must take place before this wilderness experience of spiritual renewal:

1. Israel must be regathered from the farthest corners of the earth to her land²⁷ (which is being fulfilled before our eyes- Israel became a nation once again in 1948 and nearly half the Jewish population in the world is now in Israel. Jews have been streaming into Israel at a rate of one million a decade for the last several decades.
2. The nations must conspire against Israel.²⁸

“Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of *Jacob’s trouble*, but he shall be saved out of it. ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the Lord, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and

²² Hosea 5:15

²³ Hosea 3:5

²⁴ Genesis 49:10-11, Numbers 24:17-19, 2 Samuel 7:12-13, Psalm 2:6, 9, 45:6, 72:1-19, 89:35-37, 110:2, Isaiah 9:7, 11:1, 16:5, 53:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 30:8-9, 33:15, Zechariah 3:8, 6:12, 9:9, Micah 2:12-13, 5:2

²⁵ Hosea 2:14

²⁶ Daniel 9:26-27, Matthew 24:15-35, Revelation 6-19

²⁷ Ezekiel 37, 39:21-29, Jeremiah 24:6-7, Isaiah 37:31-32, 49:13-16, Micah 5:3, Zechariah 13:8-9.

²⁸ Ezekiel 38

be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you.'"²⁹

“‘It shall come to pass in all the land [of Israel],’ says the Lord, ‘that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”³⁰

“I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,’ says the Lord God. ‘I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me.’”³¹

God will protect Israel from the wrath of the nations in the second half of the great tribulation "in the wilderness" and plead His case with her: she is sinful and must bow the knee to her Messiah and repent of her unbelief. Each person will be inspected for their faith as they "pass under the rod"- a term used for shepherds inspecting their sheep one by one. The rebels will be cast out and the true Israel of faith will enter into the Messiah's Kingdom. This Messiah was prophesied earlier by David, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah as the Son of God³² who was God become man³³, born of a virgin³⁴ at Bethlehem.³⁵ The Apostle John wrote about Israel and her Child, the Messiah, born out of Israel, "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

5. Victory: The Marriage of Israel: Messianic Kingdom *(Hosea 1:10-11, 2:15-23, 3:5)*

There is more prophecy about the Messianic Kingdom in the Hebrew Scriptures than any other period of time. In the book of Hosea there are ten separate passages of prophecy about the Messianic Kingdom,³⁶ with chapter 2 being the largest one. After the wilderness experience, Hosea prophesied, "‘I will give her her vineyards from there...She shall sing there, as in the day of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. And it shall be, in that day,’ says the Lord, ‘That you will

²⁹ Jeremiah 30:7-11

³⁰ Zechariah 13:7-9

³¹ Ezekiel 20:33-38

³² Psalm 2:7-12

³³ Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:6

³⁴ Isaiah 7:14

³⁵ Micah 5:1-4

³⁶ Revelation 12:6

call Me 'My Husband,' and no longer call Me 'My Master,' For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more."³⁷ Once again there will be prosperity in the land of Israel, but this prosperity will be far greater than anything yet seen. Her relationship will be intimate with her King and Lord- her Messiah, and she will be called His bride. No longer will the Jews enslave themselves to idolatry- neither the physical idolatry of the olden days of worshipping Baals, nor the spiritual idolatry during this present age- the pursuit of cravings of this world instead of pursuing the Lord.

Not only will Israel's relationship with her Lord be changed, but nature itself will be changed during this glorious Messianic Kingdom- it will once again be like it was in the Garden of Eden, "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground."³⁸ Wars that have ravaged the nations will cease during this Messianic Kingdom as the Messiah makes His reign over all the earth, "Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down in safety."³⁹

The Lord will transform the very heart of His precious children through a spiritual marriage. Jeremiah prophesied that a new covenant was coming that would be different than the Mosaic Covenant which Israel couldn't keep: "I will put My law in their *minds*, and write it on their *hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people...they shall all *know* Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' says the Lord. 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'"⁴⁰ The word "know" here refers to the intimacy of marriage.

Hosea explained what changes the Lord would bring on the heart of the Jews due to this covenant, "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord."⁴¹

This is an eternal covenant of marriage in which God has bestowed on His believing children His righteousness, justice, loving kindness, mercy and faithfulness. We will know the Lord- we will have an intimacy with Him far more intimate than any marriage that has ever existed on earth. This relationship begins the day a believer comes to faith in the Messiah, but won't reach its' climax until that Day we see Him face to face. For Israel in the end times, that Day will be the Day of the Messiah's coming in power, when all wickedness will be destroyed and He will set up His Messianic Kingdom on earth. What a glorious day that will be!

Though we are unworthy, He has bestowed on us His righteousness- through the Messiah's sacrifice. Have you come to realize yet who the Messiah is? He is none

³⁷ Hosea 1:10-11, 2:15-23, 3:5, 5:14-6:3, 6:14, 10:12, 11:11, 12:9-10, 13:9, 14:4-8

³⁸ Hosea 2:16-17

³⁹ Hosea 2:18, cf. Isaiah 11:6-9

⁴⁰ Hosea 2:18, cf. Isaiah 2:1-4

⁴¹ Jeremiah 31:31-34

other than Jesus Christ! He longs to bring you into an eternal relationship with the Lord through His death on the cross. We who were not righteous have become the righteousness of God through Him! “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets [such as we are witnessing in Hosea!], even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”⁴² In Christ we have also been given the justice of God: God sees us justified and cleansed, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴³

Through Christ we have received God’s love poured out in our lives, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God...God is love.”⁴⁴ In Christ we have received mercy! Indeed, we deserved judgment, just as Gomer deserved divorce and condemnation, but in Christ, “Mercy triumphs over judgment!”⁴⁵ In Christ we have also received faithfulness, for He has become our faithfulness.

The prophecy in Hosea chapter two continues, “Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are my people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’”⁴⁶ Though Israel in rebelling against the Lord had become “not My people,” consider what a desperate condition we Gentiles [non-Jews] were in before we came to Jesus Christ. The Bible states our condition apart from Him in these sober words, “At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”⁴⁷ I pour out my heart in thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus for taking this lost alien and ingrafting⁴⁸ me into the promises of God given to Israel. Indeed, through faith, I have become a spiritual Jew, a child of the Father, through Jesus Christ my Lord!

The Lord bought Israel back through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for her sins, by which He bought us Gentiles back as well. In our sinful estate we are like Gomer- lost and without hope. In the nation of Israel we see a representation of all mankind- our waywardness and our desperate need. Isaiah declared, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags [used menstrual rags]."⁴⁹ The Apostle Paul summarized our condition outside of faith in Christ, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”⁵⁰ and “The wages of sin is

⁴² Hosea 2:19-20

⁴³ Romans 3:21-22

⁴⁴ Romans 5:1

⁴⁵ 1 John 4:7-8

⁴⁶ James 2:13

⁴⁷ Hosea 2:23

⁴⁸ Ephesians 2:11-13

⁴⁹ Romans 11:11-24

⁵⁰ Isaiah 64:6

death.”⁵¹ We’re all in the hopeless state of Gomer before being bought back. She was worn out for her work as a temple prostitute, without hope, broken, no longer fit for a whoremonger or for God, yet she was bought back by Hosea.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ for "the Jew first and then for the Gentile"⁵² is that “When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁵³ The wonderful news of the gospel is that this gift of salvation is a free gift: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵⁴ Just as Gomer could not win back the right to be Hosea's wife, but rather received it as grace, so we too cannot earn God's favor and eternal life.

My friend, have you come to a point in your life where you acknowledged the Lord’s truth about your spiritual condition, that like Gomer you are lost and without hope, in need of a Savior to buy you back? Have you received the free gift of eternal life? A heart felt prayer such as the following would bring you into an eternal marriage with God through Jesus Christ: “Lord, I confess my sins to You and believe that You sent Your Son to die on the cross for my sin. Forgive me of all my sin and give me the free gift of eternal life. Please come into my heart now, In Jesus’ Name Amen.”

Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for taking this Gomer who was worthless, spent, worn-out and hopeless, even unaware of my condition and impending disaster, and purchasing me back and bringing me into an eternal marriage with You. It is so good to be married to You and know that there is indeed nothing that can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. I eagerly look forward to the day I will see you face to face. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

In Christ's Love,

Mike Porter

⁵¹ Romans 3:23

⁵² Romans 6:23

⁵³ Romans 1:16-17

⁵⁴ Romans 5:6-8