

HOSEA

This IS a LOVE story.

The drama and the issues in Hosea are so personal and timeless that you can read this book without a lot of background information. You can understand the main message of God's love. Here are some questions, insights and additional information for more understanding.

Hosea's first prophetic act is to marry an unfaithful woman. Their relationship becomes the illustration of God's covenant of love for unfaithful people.

How long does love last?

When do you give up on someone?

Can you keep rejecting God until God rejects you?

Hosea and Gomer have three children. God tells Hosea to name them. The oldest boy is "Jezreel" (God sows) because he will bring punishment for Israel's past deeds. The girl is called "Not Pitied" (Lo-ruhamah). The youngest boy is Lo-ammi, "not my people."

Hosea's life was a testimony to God's determination to love and save. He had the hard task of showing others how they had been unfaithful to God. His family life became the drama paralleling God's relationship with unfaithful Israel. God seems to be threatening to abandon his people.

Gomer continues to have lovers and liaisons. Yet God tells Hosea: "*Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.*" So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine. (Hosea 3:1,2)

Do Hosea and Gomer live happily ever after?

Does Hosea ever divorce her?

Part of Hosea's message is that God is angry, God will bring judgement. God seems to be threatening to abandon his people. And, yet, the love does not end. God's desire for God's people never ends.

Another expression of God's love in Hosea is that of a mother for her children: In Hosea 11: 3, we hear God, the sorrowing mother, say:

*It is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, . . . how can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?*

From what dangers, foolishness and sin will God rescue you?

Does God still love me and want me back?

In 1 Peter, the words of Hosea, the names of his children, come back with the message of love and reconciliation:

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[d] in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*¹⁰ Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.*

Two names are helpful to know: Ephraim and Benjamin are two of the twelve tribes descended from Jacob who was renamed Israel. Ephraim is a northern tribe. Benjamin is in the South. When these names are used, it implies Northern Kingdom (Israel) and Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Hosea is a prophet to the Northern kingdom of Israel. Amos preached in Israel shortly before Hosea, but during the same time period. Isaiah's ministry in Jerusalem overlaps with Hosea.

The southern kingdom, Judah (where Jerusalem is located), maintained worship in the temple in Jerusalem. On that basis, Judah is "more faithful," although Idolatry, corruption and other sins are found in both Israel and Judah. Israel established other places of worship, included the gods of other peoples, made more alliances with other countries, and did not follow God's laws as carefully.

PS: Watch out for raisin cakes.