

19. The illustration is summed up in chapter 2:

Hosea 2:2 - Plead with your mother [citizens of the nation of Israel]. Plead! For she is not my wife, neither am I her husband [Hosea, has disowned Gomer as the Lord has disowned Israel]. Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts [sultry temptations toward her heathen admirers].

Hosea 2:3 - Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a desert/wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst [the five cycles of discipline].

v. 4 - And I will not have mercy upon her children for they are the children of adultery [the succeeding generations continued in the immorality of their mother].

NOTE: Parents of our present generation have passed along their perversions. They allow not only specific details of heterosexuality to be taught at ages far too young, but also allow instruction of perverted sexual acts as if they were normative. Decades of this have resulted in the lowering of standards and the destruction of the family.

Hosea 2:5 - For [causal indicating the reasons for the punishments that follow in verse 6] their mother [Israel] has played the harlot. She who conceived them [Gomer & the citizens of Israel] has done shamefully for she said, "I will go after my lovers,⁷ who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink [logistical grace support is provided by God, not idols]."

v. 6 - Therefore [the reasons for the discipline are given], behold, [purpose] I will hedge up your way with thorn bushes, and [result] make a wall, that she shall not find her paths [inability to defend herself against predator nations, i.e., Assyria].

v. 7 - And she shall pursue after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then shall she say, "I will go and return to my first husband [attempts to return to YHWH] for then was it better with me than now [national discipline causes thoughts of orienting to the justice of God]." (NKJV)

20. What occurred over the next quarter century puts in focus the danger a client nation confronts when it deviates from divine standards. This excerpt summarizes the point:

⁷ "This statement alludes to the practice of sexual rites in the Canaanite fertility cult which attempted to secure agricultural fertility from the Canaanite gods" (*The NET Bible* [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001], 1611,sn11).

Hosea: Historical Background. During the reign of Jehoahaz \jē-hō'-ā-haz\, the strength of Israel's army had fallen to only "fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers." The king of Syria had "destroyed the rest, and made them like the dust at threshing time (2 Kings 13:7). Recovery from this low state had begun with Jeroboam's \jer-ō-bō'-am\ father, Jehoash \jē-hō'-ash\. He had defeated the Syrians on three different occasions (2 Kings 13:25). Jeroboam had then been able to continue this resurgence and bring the country to (a) strong position.

Because of this recovery, Hosea's generation ... knew of humiliating defeat or foreign oppression only through the memories of their fathers. By this time there had been peace for many years, and this led to a widespread feeling of pride (Amos 3:15; 5:11; Isa 9:10). Though people are pleased with conditions of this kind, seldom does prosperity lead to behavior that pleases God. This was true at this time in Israel. Social and moral conditions developed that were wrong and degrading. Side by side with wealth, extreme poverty existed.

Religious conditions were no better. Though the pagan cult of Baal, brought into the land during the dynasty of Omri \ōm'-rī\ (1 Kings 16:29–33), had been brought to an end (2 Kings 10:19–28), many of its offensive features continued under the guise of the calf worship at Bethel and Dan. For this reason, Hosea, speaking against this kind of idolatry, referred to it as a worship of Baal ([Hosea] 2:8; 11:2; 13:1). Apparently sacred prostitution, common in the fertility rites of the Baal cult, was still practiced (4:10–18). Also, the people still built "high places" and set up images and Asherah \a-shē'-ra\ poles "on every high hill and under every spreading tree" (2 Kings 17:7–12).

Amos had preceded Hosea in preaching against the idolatry and sin, but the people had clearly paid little attention. Now it was Hosea's turn, and the fact that Amos had not met with greater success did not make Hosea's task any easier. Yet he went on with it courageously and spoke out strongly against the evils of the day. He also warned of ruin and disaster if his message was not heeded. (pp. 161–62)

Theology of Hosea. The central thought of Hosea concerns God's covenant with Israel that the people had broken. The covenant had been made at Mount Sinai \sī'-nā\ in the wilderness, at which time God found the people like "grapes in the desert" and "early fruit on the fig tree" (9:10). God "loved" the people and called them his "son" (11:1; cf. Exodus 4:22). Through the passing years, however, they had wandered away from him (11:2). They fell into deep sin, breaking the covenant so graciously made with them. (p. 166)

Hosea repeatedly described this sin, committed by both people (4:1–2, 9–19; 6:4–11; et al.) and religious leaders (4:5–10). Because Israel's sin constituted the breaking of the covenant, Hosea gave more attention to this matter than any other. Along with these descriptions, however, he told also of God's love and patience with Israel in her sin (11:1–4; 14:1–9) in wanting Israel to return to him. (pp. 166–67)

Hosea employed the forceful illustration of the unhappy marriage relationship he experienced with his own wife, Gomer \gō'-mēr\ (1:2–3), to impress these truths on the minds of his readers. She proved unfaithful to him, and he told Israel that the people had been unfaithful to God. Hosea's taking Gomer back after she had left him (3:11) further parallels God's frequent taking Israel back after her many occasions of waywardness. (p. 167)

Hosea not only described Israel's sin but also warned of the people's coming punishment. Israel's reprimand for breaking God's covenant was long deserved, but he had thus been far patient. The time would come, however, when patience would no longer be appropriate and punishment would be necessary. The punishment would come in the form of desolation for the land (4:3; 5:1–15) and exile for the people. The country of exile is sometimes identified as Assyria (9:3, 6). The reference to Egypt reminded the people of their father's experience there and thus dramatically foreshadowed the future exile in Assyria.

The prophet included a note of joy in this otherwise somber picture. Israel's future punishment would not spell the end; it would be followed by a glad time of restoration. Hosea characterized this time as one of true repentance on the part of the people (6:1–3) and of rich blessing at the hand of God.⁸ (p. 167)

21. Ancient Israel provides the historicity and the example of divine discipline that is administered to Israel when its people lost the thought.
22. The recent terrorism unleashed upon St. Louis County was the direct result of the loss of thought of by national, state, and local citizens and politicians.

⁸ Leon J. Wood, "Hosea" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 7:161–62; 166–67.