

# **Major Lessons from Minor Prophets**

## **Spiritual Adultery (Hosea)**

Lesson #1 for April 6, 2013

Scriptures: 2 Kings 17:5-23; Hosea 1:1-3; 2:12-15,18; 4:1-3; 4:11-16; Ezekiel 4:1-6; James 5:1-7; Revelation 3:14-22; 14:6-12.

1. In order to understand what was going on in Hosea's day, read 2 Kings 17:5-23 and Hosea 4:11-19. About the year 723/722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered as a result of the siege and downfall of Samaria. As a result, the Israelite people were scattered across the Assyrian Empire. As a group they disappeared into history, and we have no trace of them from that day until this. Although we cannot be certain, it is very likely that Hosea lived through the final days of Israel's history. Israel was committed to worshipping Baal.
2. The period of Hosea's prophetic activity is dated according to the reigns of **four kings in Judah** mentioned in Hosea 1:1—**Uzziah** (792–740 B.C.), **Jotham** (750–731 B.C.), **Ahaz** (735–715 B.C.), and **Hezekiah** (729–686 B.C.)—and the reign of **Jeroboam II** (793–753 B.C.) in Israel. Also on the throne during Hosea's ministry were the last six kings of Israel following Jeroboam II—**Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea**—although they are not listed in Hosea 1:1. A dating which satisfies all the demands of the historical notation in Hosea 1:1 is 755–725 B.C., the darkest period of Israel's history.

Following the death of Jeroboam II, the nation was in a state of political anarchy. Of the last six kings of Israel, four (**Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah**) were assassinated, and the other two (**Menahem and Hoshea**) ascended the throne via assassinations. Morally speaking, Israel was bankrupt. Blatant immoralities were practiced openly and unashamedly. The religious life of the people was idolatrous and degenerate. Hosea was an eyewitness to the inward deterioration which eventually led to the collapse of the nation in 722 B.C., at which time Samaria, the capital, fell to the Assyrians. Hosea's ministry overlapped those of **Isaiah** and **Micah** in Judah and of **Amos** in Israel (cf. Isaiah 1:1; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1). **These four prophets of the eighth century constituted the high mark of Hebrew prophecy.** (*Believer's Study Bible* - Introduction to Hosea)

Were there also other prophets of God who did not write books which have been preserved?

3. Baal worship had been introduced into the kingdom of Israel by Jezebel around 870 B.C. One hundred and fifty years later, the nation was destroyed. Without going into great detail, it should be noted that after it split off from the southern kingdom of Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel was on a continual downhill slope until its demise. There was not a single king in the northern kingdom that the Bible describes as "good."
4. So, how should God react to that kind of course taken by His people? Is there a certain point at which God needs to say, "That's enough! I have to take action"? What is that point? Is there ever a point at which God realizes that there is nothing more that even He can do for a group of people? At some point, does He have to "let them go"? (Hosea 4:17)
5. In the story of Hosea as depicted in Hosea 1-3, we see a lived-out parable that God intended to use to awaken the people of the northern kingdom to the seriousness of their condition.
6. Baal worshipers believed that to promote the fertility of their crops and animals one needed to go to the fertility cult shrines and offer the necessary sacrifices and participate in the worship services—including having sexual intercourse with the temple prostitutes—in order to

assure that his crops would do well. Many of the people of Israel soon lost interest in worshipping the true God and focused on Baal worship instead.

7. In Hosea 1&3, we see that God asked Hosea to marry Gomer a woman who may have already been a prostitute. Together, they had a child. Then, Gomer had two more children, presumably with other men. Finally, Gomer abandoned Hosea completely and apparently was selling her body for a living. She apparently “belonged” to another man. Hosea was then asked by God to go find her and bring her back. How many people knew Hosea’s story?
8. Hosea’s story was a parallel to the story of the children of Israel who were supposed to be married to and in a faithful relationship with the God of heaven. Was this shock therapy?
9. Would God really ask a prophet, priest, or pastor to marry a prostitute? (Leviticus 21:7; Ezekiel 44:22) Is it possible that Gomer was the best wife Hosea could find under the circumstances? (Hosea 4:11-19) When God chose Abraham and his descendants as His chosen people, were they the best people He could find under the circumstances? Or, did He choose them because they would demonstrate both the good traits and the bad traits that needed to be exhibited in the great controversy?
10. Considering the history that we have talked about so far, what would you have done with the northern kingdom of Israel if you had been God? Did Hosea really develop love for Gomer? What did his neighbors and friends think when she left him? Did Hosea’s experience with Gomer help the nation of Israel to understand God’s challenges in dealing with His children?
11. Does God ever ask prophets to get involved in lived-out parables? (Hosea 1-3; Isaiah 20:1-6; Jeremiah 27:1-7; Ezekiel 3:26,27; 4:1-3; 4:4,5; 4:6-8; 4:9-17; 5:1-4; 12:1-6; 12:17-20; 21:6,7; 21:18-23; 24:15-26; 37:15-23; Micah 1:8) Might God do something like that today?
12. What is your life saying about God to those around you? (Matthew 5:16) Are you a good person? Do people like you? Do you represent the truth about God?
13. We know almost nothing about Hosea’s surroundings. In a world with no mass communication and especially if one lived in a rural area, how many other people would even know that person? And how many of them would know that person well enough to understand what was going on in his family? Consider an even more challenging question: How many of them would see any connection between Hosea’s personal problems and their own spiritual adultery? How many of them do you suppose ever heard or read what Hosea had written? Did Hosea go to the temple and read his book out loud to those who were in attendance at the temple? If you were Hosea, would you have done so?
14. Read Hosea 2:8-13. In this passage was God trying to bribe Israel to be good? When Hosea began his ministry, Israel was near the end of Jereboam II’s reign. He had been fairly successful as a military leader, and the country was relatively prosperous. But, spiritually, they were about to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire! Within a few years, God had to let them go, and they were killed or scattered among the peoples of the Assyrian Empire. Very few of even those who survived ever went back home. As a nation, the people of Israel were forever lost to history.
15. In Hosea’s day, the offerings and sacrifices and money that should have gone to the Levites in the temple in Jerusalem were going to the fertility cult shrines and temples on the hilltops. (But, remember the Levite in Judges 19.) What would be an equivalent today? How different would be our situation as a church if every church member were paying a faithful tithe? What if each church member were correctly representing God? If every church member were just like you, how soon would the gospel be finished?
16. The book of Hosea presents an incredible contrast. On the one hand, we read about God’s appeal to Hosea for the people to stop and think about what they were doing and to return to Him and He would take them back. On the other hand, we read about the dire consequences

of not doing so.

17. At what point should God say: "I'm sorry. There is nothing more I can do for you"? God is always ready to take us back, but are we willing to come back? Or, are we too attached to our sins? God will never force us to come back?
18. Read Hosea 2:12-15. If Israel had returned to God, there would have been a marvelous coming together—a kind of atonement or "at-one-ment"—and God's blessings would have flowed out to them once again. But, what really happened? Was God actively punishing Israel?
19. Read Hosea 3:1-5. What do you think was happening? Had Gomer left Hosea completely? Was this after her second and third children were born? Those two were apparently not his children; the children were hers by another man! Was she attached to one of the fertility cult temples? Was that religion? Or, were the children the result of a private arrangement with one man? Was she—or someone else—selling her "services" for a profit? What would you think if you found your "pastor" searching around in the "red light" district to find his wife?
20. In Hosea's day, men had all the authority. Women were often considered nothing more than property. In that light, what did the neighbors and friends think of Hosea's act of going after Gomer? Why didn't Hosea give up on Gomer and look for another wife? He certainly had biblical grounds for divorce. At that point in time, who do you think was caring for the children? Were they with Gomer in a brothel?
21. So, what are we supposed to learn about God from this lived-out parable? Read Hosea 4:1-3,6,17,18. Compare Hosea 6:6. If you read the rest of Hosea 4, you will recognize that the so-called spiritual leaders of Israel were taking the people away from the truth about God and away from a correct relationship with Him as fast as they could.
22. Was God threatening them with drought if they did not behave? Does God do that?
23. Read Hosea 12:7,8. Those who were in positions of authority were cheating the poor. What is the relationship between their "spiritual adultery" and their exploitation of the poorer classes?

Poor rich men, professing to serve God, are objects of pity. While they profess to know God, in works they deny Him. How great is the darkness of such! They profess faith in the truth, but their works do not correspond with their profession. **The love of riches makes men selfish, exacting, and overbearing. Wealth is power; and frequently the love of it depraves and paralyzes all that is noble and godlike in man.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 682.

24. Has the love of money become a major issue in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our day?
25. Read Hosea 6:6, *GNB*. "I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me." To understand this verse, one needs to understand Hebrew parallelism. Clearly, "animal sacrifices" and "burn offerings to me" are talking about the same thing. It is also true that "your constant love" is equal to having "my people know me." If we really knew the truth about God, would we love Him more? Do we know God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as we should? Do we know the truth about God as presented by Jesus when He was on this earth? (Exodus 33:12,13; Jeremiah 9:23,24; Daniel 11:32; 1 John 2:4; John 17:3; 14:9)
26. Does knowing the Lord equate to knowing the truth about God? What is the truth about God? Who was/is determined that we not know the truth about God? Who has misrepresented God in every way possible to prevent us from knowing the truth about God? Do we ever suggest that God is arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe? Or, do we believe that He

has the right to do whatever He wants because He is Sovereign?

27. Is God intolerant of sin? Why? Can we learn to love sinners while we hate sin as God does? Do we really believe that sin is deadly? Could we become intolerant of sin?
28. Between 760 and 600 B.C., there were four prophets presenting very serious messages. Two of them were in the northern kingdom, Hosea and Amos; and two of them were in the southern kingdom, Micah and Isaiah. What was their role in Hebrew society? What was the relationship between these prophets and the priests? Considering what we have already learned from Hosea 4, does God need a prophet once again in our day? How did our church leaders relate to Ellen White when she was our prophet?
29. Seventh-day Adventists believe that we are living in the times of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) and the three angels' messages. (Revelation 14:6-12) How would you compare the appeals in the book of Hosea with these two final end-time messages for the world as given in Revelation? Which is more impressive to you?

© 2013, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know. [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: March 10, 2013

Z:\My Documents\WP\ISSTG-Hart\Minor Prophets\SS-1-MinorProphets-2013\_04\_06-Fin+.wpd

| Prophet   | Dates  | Kings   |
|-----------|--|---|
| Hosea     | ca. 755 - 725 B.C. ?   | Jereboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea of Israel; Uzziah and Hezekiah of Judah |
| Joel      | 9 <sup>th</sup> Century B.C. - possible<br>7 <sup>th</sup> Century B.C. - probable | Joash - Child king<br>Josiah - Child king - 640-609 B.C.  |
| Amos      | 767 - 753 B.C.   | Jereboam - Israel<br>Uzziah - Judah   |
| Obadiah   | 9 <sup>th</sup> Century B.C. - possible<br>6 <sup>th</sup> Century B.C. - probable | Jehoram - Judah<br>Gedaliah - Judah - 586 B.C.  |
| Jonah     | 793 B.C.   | Jeroboam II - Israel  |
| Micah     | 740-700 B.C.   | Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah - Judah  |
| Nahum     | 640 B.C.   | Manasseh ?? - Judah - 697-642 B.C.  |
| Habakkuk  | 630 B.C.   | Josiah - Judah - 640-609 B.C.   |
| Zephaniah | 630 B.C.   | Josiah - Judah - 640-609 B.C.   |
| Haggai    | Aug. 29, 520 - Dec. 18, 520 B.C.   | Darius I - Persia   |
| Zechariah | 520 - 510 B.C. ??  | Darius I - Persia   |
| Malachi   | 425 B.C. ?   | Artaxerxes I - 465-424 B.C. or<br>Darius II - 424-404 B.C. - Persia   |

Compiled from various sources