



Hosea
**Jesus Christ,
Healer of the Backslider**

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Meaning of the Name

The name *Hosea* means "Salvation."

The last king of the northern kingdom, Israel, bore that same name. But the standard practice of English translations has been to distinguish them by calling the prophet *Hosea* and the king *Hoshea*.

In the actual Hebrew, they are both spelled as *Hoshea*.

F-L-I-G-H-T

F – Hosea the prophet, the son of Beeri, wrote the book named after him (1:1). At God's instruction, Hosea married a harlot named Gomer. Their marriage came to symbolize God's relationship with Israel, as Hosea was troubled by her constant infidelity.

Hosea wrote the book during the reigns of several kings of Israel and Judah, covering the years 755 to 715 BC. He died in 713 BC.

F-L-I-G-H-T

L – The book of Hosea is a bittersweet journey through the nature of human infidelity. Hosea was called to prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II (and during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah). His message was clear: God's people had rejected him, so they would be sent into exile and become wanderers in other nations.

F-L-I-G-H-T

- I** – A Faithless Wife (1-2)
- A Future Restoration (3)
- A Fickle Nation (4-10)
- A Faithful God (11-14)

F-L-I-G-H-T

- G** – The message of Hosea is the message of the gospel: God has gone to the utmost lengths to offer us an exchange for pain, suffering, and death. Just as Hosea was to be forgiving and willing to receive his adulterous and wandering wife, God will forgive and restore those who have drifted from him. So many people think God wants to take the joy out of life. But people who think that way have it backward: Sin is the root cause of the suffering in the world, not God's rules. Jesus came so that, in his own words, we *"may have life, and that [we] may have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). Jesus died so that he could give us something we could never attain on our own: eternal life – life to the full!

F-L-I-G-H-T

- G** – And that's the offer of the gospel: an overflowing life of love and grace here in this life, and eternal life with God in the next. The book of Hosea shows all the ugliness of a people abandoned to the consequences of their selfish desires, but their situation was only temporary. Yes, God promised that he would *"punish [Israel] for the days of the Baals"* (2:13), but in the very next verses he promised he would *"allure her...and speak comfort to her...I will betroth you to me forever"* (2:14,19). Hosea's marriage was a model of redemption, revealing God's justice and kindness, his holiness, faithfulness, and deep, abiding love.

F-L-I-G-H-T

- H** – Hosea was born in the northern kingdom of Israel toward the end of the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753). He grew up and ministered under the rule of several other kings of Israel (Zechariah, Shallum, Menaham, Pekah, Pekahiah, and Hoshea). Jeroboam's rule was one of political and economic prosperity, but the underlying spiritual decay in the nation eventually became manifested during the reigns of his successors.

F-L-I-G-H-T

H – These kings brought with them political unrest and spiritual chaos, culminating in the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 BC. Many Jews turned to the idolatry and other practices of the Assyrian religion, further rebelling against the Lord.

F-L-I-G-H-T

H – Hosea ministered and prophesied to the people around the same time as the prophets Amos and Jonah. This was some 250 years after the time of David and Solomon and about 650 years after the twelve tribes of Israel first entered the Promised Land. At this point in its history, civil war had divided God's covenant people into 2 nations: the 10 northern tribes made up the kingdom of Israel, and the other 2 tribes, Judah and Simeon, became the southern kingdom of Judah.

F-L-I-G-H-T

T – **Your relationship with God centers on his faithfulness, not yours.** He guides and disciplines you as a father does a child, but he loves you sacrificially the way a husband should his wife. The only appropriate response to such a loving caring God is to fear him – having a healthy respect and awe for him – and to love him by doing what he says (John 14:15).

F-L-I-G-H-T

T – **Sin is sin is sin.** Hosea didn't hesitate to call sin what it was, calling out Israel for its disobedience and rebellion. Because he first proclaimed this hard truth, his words of encouragement resonated even more later on – after all, truth begets truth. *"I will heal their backsliding,"* God said of the people of Israel, *"I will love them freely"* (14:4). When we confess and repent of our sins, turning our hearts back to God, then he can begin to heal and bless us.

Gomer, the Unfaithful Wife

Was Gomer, the wife of Hosea:

- symbolic/allegorical/visionary?
- a prostitute *before* she married Hosea?
- unfaithful *after* she married Hosea?
- the same person as the woman in chapter 3?

Children of Hosea and Gomer

- **Jezreel** (son): “God Will Scatter/God Will Sow/God Will Plant”
- **Lo-ruhamah** (daughter): “Unloved/Not Pitied/No Mercy”
- **Lo-ammi** (son): “Not My People”

Hosea in the NT

- “*Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people.’*” (Rom 9:25)
- *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people.* (1 Peter 2:10)
- “*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*” (1 Cor. 15:55)
- *This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”* (Matt. 2:15)

Divine Covenant/Human Marriage

The idea that the divine-human covenant is mirrored by human marriage extends from Hosea through the other prophets (Jer. and Ezek. in particular) and into the NT.

The most explicit development of this theme from a Christian perspective comes in Eph. 5:22-33: *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*