

# HOSEA

**The Man:** A contemporary of Amos, Hosea was active in Israel from c. 750-732 B.C. He may have been a cultic prophet or priest at Bethel, but there's no direct evidence. His unfaithful wife Gomer was symbolic of Israel's infidelity to the Lord.

**The Times:** The latter years of Jeroboam II were the Northern Kingdom's greatest time of material prosperity, but social injustice was rampant and Canaanite fertility cult rituals had been incorporated in Israel's worship. Political intrigue was directed against the Davidic royal house in Judah as well as the Assyrians who threatened to overtake Israel, and who did so soon after Jeroboam's death.

**The Message:** Hosea railed against Israel's fealty to the fertility gods (Baals), a spiritual apostasy that he labeled harlotry. He warned of the necessity of God's punishment to bring the nation back to its true lover, the Lord. He presented the idea of a true covenanted union, a need to return to the faithful love of the Lord, beginning a tradition of comparing the Lord's relationship with His people to a marriage. He ends with a promise of a future restoration for the repentant nation.

## Prophetic Themes in Hosea

**Authority:** Hear the word of the Lord: [4:1]  
The Lord directed my family life as a symbol of His people: [1:2-8]

**Covenant Relationship:** The Lord rescued Israel from Egypt, but the people forgot their responsibility to the covenant: [11:1-4; 13:4-6]

**Specific Sins:** false oaths, lying, murder, stealing, adultery, idolatry, bloodshed: [4:1-3; 6:4-10; 7:13-16]

**Judgment:** Assyria will subjugate Israel and Judah: [10:13b-15; 11:5-6; 13:7-11]

**Call to Repentance:** Return to the Lord, seeking forgiveness: [14:2-4]

**Remnant:** the Lord will show mercy to those who return to Him: [2:16-25; 14:5-9; 3:5/2:1-3]

## Readings at Mass

No passage from the Book of Hosea is used as a Sunday reading.

2:16,17,21-22 – I will espouse you to myself forever [Common of Virgins (Outside Easter Season); Consecration of Virgins and Religious Profession]

11:1,3-4,8-9 – “Out of Egypt I have called my son” ... my heart is moved to pity for my child. [Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart (Outside Easter Season)]