

PROPHET HOSEA

Hosea was a son of Beeri, lived and preached in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He worked during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Hosea worked around the same time of Isaiah and Micah in the south.

Conditions in Israel during the time of Hosea.

- In the North Israel, it was a period of confusion following the death of Jeroboam 11.
- None of the Kings in the north ever tried to promote and uphold the Covenant faith.
- At that time, the priests who were meant to uphold the Covenant faith were themselves evil/ immoral.
- Adultery was at the climax and there was serious lack of trust in God by the Israelites.
- During Hosea's time, cult worship was common i.e involving temple prostitution.
- The Canaanite influence was very strong and Baal worship was the order of the day.
- There was open syncretism i.e worshipping Yahweh alongside other gods.
- During Hosea's reign, the Israelites were dishonest i.e they made promises and never honored them.
- The Israelites committed murder of one another.
- Much as the people repented, their repentance was shallow and insincere and therefore had no positive results.
- Theft of other people's property was rampant among the people at Hosea's time.
- The Israelites were guilty of adultery i.e sexual immorality was rampant.
- The people their own Kings through conspiracy and not the will of God.
- The people made foreign alliances e.g with Egypt when Assyria had become a threat.

Hosea's marriage experience and God's relationship with Israel.

- God commanded Hosea to go and marry Gommah, in the same way God was to enter a Covenant with Israel.

- God went ahead and warned Hosea that this woman could be a prostitute in the same way the Israelites were practicing religious prostitution.
- Later Hosea married the prostitute Gommer just as Yahweh bound himself to Israel in a Covenant even when he knew its potentiality to sin.
- During their marriage, their relationship was cordial in the same way the Israelites' relationship with Yahweh was perfect soon after the Covenant.
- Later, Gommer went into prostitution and ran after many men just as the Israelites started worshipping many gods.
- Hosea pleaded to Gommer to stop prostitution so that they could have a happy marriage just as Yahweh continued warning the Israelites to stop worshipping other gods.
- Hosea's marriage was blessed with three children i.e the first child was called Jezreel which symbolized destruction hence Israel was to be destroyed.
- The second child was named Not loved which symbolized a break in the love of God with Israel i.e God would not have pity with Israelites.
- The third child was named Not my people which symbolized that God had disowned Israel because of her sins.
- Hosea's children also became unfaithful to their father; the same Israel's new generation had been unfaithful to Yahweh.
- Hosea sent his children to go and plead with their mother to come back from prostitution, the same way God sent prophets to tell the Israelites to return to the Covenant.
- Gommer continued with her prostitution so Hosea was going to punish her, the same way Yahweh was to punish Israel for her syncretism.
- Hosea was to send Gommer to a desert, strip her naked, the same way God was to send the Israelites to exile.
- Gommer was to be stripped naked before her lovers, the same way God was to take away Israel's property which they had enjoyed.
- Gommer had been going to her lovers for material benefits just as Israelites had been worshipping other gods to get success, fertility of the land and animals.
- Hosea continued to love Gommer despite her prostitution, the same way Yahweh continued to love Israelites even when they worshipped other gods.
- Hosea was told to go and love the woman again who was committing adultery just as Yahweh was to make a Covenant with Israel.
- Before this, Hosea was to pay heavily to get Gommer from prostitution, the same way Yahweh was to pay heavily to save Israel.

- Gommer had to live in isolation for some time before she could be acknowledged as Hosea's wife just as Israel was to undergo a process of purification.
- The process of isolation would make Gommer hate her lovers; in the same way the period of exile would make Israel hate other gods.
- In the new marriage life, there would be total love between Gommer and Hosea, the same way God was to renew his love for Israel as it was before.
- The names of Hosea's children would be changed symbolizing a new relationship.
- Jezreel would change to prosperity implying that Israel would prosper again.
- Unloved would turn to loved which symbolized that God would love Israel again.
- Not my people would turn to my people which implied that God would Israelites as his people once again.

QNS. Justify the view that Hosea's marriage with Gommer is a key to understanding of how God related with the people of Israel

. Examine the view that Hosea's marriage with Gommer is a dramatization of God's relationship with Israel.

Nature of God from Hosea's marriage experience.

- God always initiates spiritual relationship with mankind i.e God told Hosea to go and marry Gommer the prostitute.
- God is loving as expressed in Hosea's continued love with Gommer.
- God protects mankind i.e Hosea protected Gommer in the desert.
- God is a provider i.e Hosea provided for Gommer in the desert.
- God expects total obedience from mankind.
- God gets angry with mankind when offended.
- God rejects unrepentant sinners like the name Not my people.
- God hates sin but not sinner's e.g he sent prophets to call people for repentance.
- God always gives men time to repent just as Hosea did to Gommer.

Hosea condemns pagan worship / Sins condemned by Hosea in Israel.

- The people of Israel exposed their rebellious nature despite God's love for them.
- They had forgotten God who had taken care and protected them during the time of the Exodus.
- The more God called them, the more they turned against him.

- The people of Israel pretended to repent but their repentance was shallow.
- There was increased worship of idols.
- The Israelites offered insincere sacrifices.
- They were offering pagan sacrifices to Baal and fertility worship.
- The Israelites made promises and then broke them.
- Priests were promoting injustices and misleading the people.
- The priests were practicing apostasy and syncretism.
- They celebrated the religious days like the Passover, the way they wished.
- There was murder, telling lies, stealing, adultery and robbery.
- There was slave trade and slavery activities among the Israelites.
- The rich exploited the poor by selling expensively and sometimes selling worthless products.
- There was extravagance especially among the rich at the expense of the poor.
- There were frequent revolutions and frequent changes of Kings.
- Kings never ruled according to the Covenant demands.
- The Kings made foreign alliances with other Nations which was wrong.
- The people had become unfaithful by worshipping idols.
- The Israelites had become hypocrites and had no love for God.

Hosea's message of Doom or Punishments of Israel.

- God promised the Israelites a second exodus.
- God also promised fire upon their cities and towns.
- Hosea said that there would be mourning, starvation and suffering.
- The names of Hosea's children symbolized destruction or punishment to Israel.
- Jezreel was to show destruction, unloved was to symbolize the loss of God's love to the Israelites and not my people showed loss of God's protection to his people.
- God was going to allow a foreign nation to enter their land.
- There was slavery among the fellow Covenant people.
- God was going to destroy all the grapes and turn them into wilderness.
- The priests were doomed because they failed to acknowledge God and his teaching.
- The Egyptians and Assyrians would enslave the Israelites.
- That they would look for God but all in vain.
- That the Israelites were to be ashamed by their enemies.
- That God would not defend and protect them but instead he would abandon them.
- There would be loss of land, property and a great humiliation to the chosen people.

- God was going to send drought and everyone on earth would die.
- The golden bull that was being worshipped would be destroyed.
- That their women would become barren.
- That God was going to destroy their sacred pillars and even break down their alters.
- The people of Bethel were to face death because of their evil doings.
- Israel would be kept without a King, leader and sacrifice.
- The glory of Israel would fly away from them like a bird that does not lay eggs.
- There would be laughter's in the foreign lands against Israel.

Hosea's teaching about God's unending love for Israel.

- Hosea said that despite people's rebellious nature, God had strong love for Israel.
- He said that when the Israelites were still young, God loved and took care of her.
- He said that God's love was different from human love i.e God's love has no limits.
- Hosea said that God would come to Israel in gentleness because of his love.
- He said that God was not far away from the Israelites because of his love and that he had concern about them.
- Hosea said that after exile, God would bring his people back to their land because of his love.
- He said that God would re-unite Judah and Israel because of his love.
- Even when his wife Gommer ran into prostitution, Hosea continued to follow her up just as God continued to look for Israel despite their sins.
- Out of love, Hosea undertook a price to pay in order to get Gommer from prostitution just as God paid heavily to bring back Israel from sin.
- When Hosea changed the name of his children, it meant God's love to make Israel prosper again.
- The name of the second child changed from unloved to loved to prove that God's love was going to make Israel to be loved again.
- The name of the third child was changed from not my people to my people which meant that Israel would again become God's people.
- The new covenant that would be made by God and the Israelites would be based on love.

Hosea condemns the Priests of Israel (Religious leaders)

- The priests of that time blundered so much and they could not see what was right and wrong.
- The priests of that time failed in their duties as they could not acknowledge Yahweh i.e they were worse than the people they led.
- The priests violated the laws regarding sacrifice by fattening themselves on the people's sacrifices and offerings.
- The priests had rejected God's teachings and that's why God rejected them too.
- The priests had lost the covenant track and wanted the people to sin more and more.
- The priests worshiped Baal, the fertility God of the Canaanites.
- The priests practiced syncretism which was against the covenant laws.
- The priests murdered and killed innocent people which was against the covenant.
- The priests were unrepentant and therefore could not stop people from sinning.
- They were not exemplary thus they could spend all the day drinking.
- The priests were in most cases proud and arrogant and this made the people to suffer.
- The priests had ignored God's message and his teachings.
- They had failed to guide the people to the covenant way of faith and teach them the ways of God.
- They mishandled the sacrifices that belonged to God and were still not satisfied.

Evils of the present religious leaders.

- They ignored ordered from superiors.
- They are growing rich by getting involved in other projects.
- While preaching, emphasis is put on the offerings instead of the word of God.
- Some are guilty of sexual immorality e.g homosexuals.
- Some are involved in politics.
- Some preach false message e.g about the end of the world.
- Some misuse the church funds.
- Some use demonic forces to perform miracles.
- Some are untrustworthy and unfaithful.
- Some practice tribalism in their churches.
- Some promote class divisions in the church.

QN. Account for Hosea's continued conflict with the priests of the time.

Which peculiar evils of religious leaders would Hosea condemn if he came to Uganda today?

Lessons that present religious leaders learn from the above condemnation.

- Religious leaders should glorify God other than committing blasphemy.
- They should worship only one God other than other cults.
- They should condemn evil instead of condoning them.
- They should encourage people to repent instead of ignoring them.
- They should direct people's offerings to do God's work instead of personal use.
- They should first re-examine themselves before they reprimand others for the sins committed.
- They should prepare for the judgement by repenting off their sins.
- They should live morally upright lives.
- They should guide God's people in the right way.
- They should be mediators between God and the people.

Relevance of the book of Hosea to the Christians today.

- They should love one another since God loves them.
- They should call God father as they Pray.
- They should have trust in their God instead of trusting other things.
- They should repent off their sins as God is ready to forgive them.
- They should worship only one God instead of other gods.
- They should condemn evil instead of condoning it.
- They should ask for God's blessings as God is the source of blessings.
- They should guide others in the rightful way instead of misleading them.
- They should help the poor in society by giving them the basic needs of life.
- They should thank God for whatever they get in their lives.
- They should serve others instead of being served.