

# The Prophetic Wisdom of Hosea

## Lesson 1

## An Introduction to Hosea

Forum



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# The Prophetic Wisdom of Hosea

## Lesson One: An Introduction to Hosea

### Forum

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Dr. Gregory R. Perry  
Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.  
Dr. Charles L. Quarles

Dr. Mike Ross  
Dr. Seth Tarrer  
Dr. Larry Trotter  
Dr. Miles Van Pelt  
Dr. Daniel B. Wallace

### Question 1:

**How did the Holy Spirit inspire biblical writers like Hosea to write down what he wanted them to say?**

#### **Dr. Brandon D. Crowe**

How should we understand inspiration and the way it works? In other words, how does the leading of the Holy Spirit and the possible contribution of the actual author, how do those things relate, and *do* they relate? Well, I think the best answer to that is a term that has been called “organic inspiration.” This means that the Holy Spirit most certainly led the biblical authors to write what they wrote and superintended all that they did write, ensuring that it is the very truth of God. But at the same time, as he did this, he did not bypass the individuals who were writing. Therefore, what we find is the education, the personalities, the language of choice, and the situations to which the authors are writing, all of these things come through in our biblical text. So for example, Ezekiel the prophet inspired by God, and Hosea the prophet inspired by God, they sound a little bit different... The role of the Holy Spirit and the role of the human author, they are not in tension with one another but they coalesce organically, as the term goes, to create what we call “organic inspiration.”

#### **Dr. Daniel B. Wallace**

One of the things that we wrestle with when we think about the Holy Spirit inspiring Scripture is, well, how exactly did he do this? Really, in many respects, it's a mystery, but there are some things we can say he didn't do. One of the things we know he didn't do is he did not dictate the words to these authors. The Holy Spirit was not looking for good stenographers, but holy men to write Scripture. How do we know that? Well, you can compare the Hebrew, say for example, of Isaiah and Hosea. Isaiah is kind of like the Shakespeare of the Old Testament. Some have estimated that he had a vocabulary of something approaching thirty thousand words. That's just unbelievable. Hosea, vocabulary of maybe five hundred words. I mean, these are wide differences in the variety of how they wrote... These authors used their own

personalities fully in the writing of Scripture. They used their own skills in writing... The author is involved in the learning that God has taken him through for years, and you don't have these authors writing down what God is dictating, except of very few occasions like when Moses wrote down the Ten Commandments. But they're using their personalities, their gifts, their talents, their backgrounds, their language skills, their research skills. When they write the gospels, they're not sitting down in a room saying, "Okay, Spirit of God, tell me what Jesus did, and I'll just copy down what you tell me." That's not at all what happened.

### **Question 2:**

### **Why does the Old Testament refer to Israel and Judah as two different kingdoms or nations of God's people?**

#### **Dr. Mark Gignilliat**

Judah and Israel are referred to as two kingdoms because of, really, a travesty that happened within the history of Israel. You had the initial king, that was King Saul, and which got dramatic in its own way, and following King Saul then you had King David. And then after King David, there came King Solomon, and that was really at the height of Israel's monarchic tradition within their history. I mean, the Solomonic era was the golden age. And after the Solomonic era, there was a split between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom was referred to as Israel, and they had their own central place of worship as well, and then the southern kingdom was referred to as Judah. And after the split of the kingdoms, you'll often see prophets who go to different places. Like they'll be, Hosea was a prophet to Israel, and you'll have Isaiah who's a prophet to Judah, and so there's respective realms of ministry that are related to these split kingdoms of the north and the south.

#### **Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim, translation**

The nation of Israel divided into two nations: the northern kingdom, called Israel, and the southern kingdom, called Judah. This division took place because of two historical events. The main reason was because of Solomon. Solomon had gone astray from worshiping the living God. He married many foreign women who worshiped other gods, and they turned Solomon's heart away. God told him, "I will divide your kingdom for turning away from me. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son."

The second clear reason the division took place was in the days of Rehoboam, historically in the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Rehoboam was a young king when he succeeded his father. Solomon had wearied the people with taxes, so the people complained to Rehoboam. They said, "Your father wearied us with taxes. Make them lighter." The elders of Israel said to Solomon, "They are right. You have to make the taxes lighter." Rehoboam did not, however, listen to the elders' advice,

and he went with the advice of his friends, the young men he'd grown up with. They advised him, "You have to show them that you are tougher than your father." And this was exactly Rehoboam's response. He said to the people, "I am stronger than my father, and I will weary you more than my father did." As a result, the people rebelled against him, and the kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom, which included the ten tribes that left Rehoboam to be governed by Jeroboam, and the southern kingdom, which included two tribes — the tribes of Judah and Benjamin — governed by Rehoboam.

### **Question 3:**

#### **What was the prophet Hosea's message to the northern kingdom of Israel?**

##### **Rev. Michael J. Glodo**

While the book of Hosea has a significant portion of its message directed toward the southern kingdom of Judah, it's also directed substantially to the northern kingdom of Israel, or we might say Ephraim. And the message is, "You have been unfaithful to the covenant." And there are a series of vivid metaphors where we can see this — an unfaithful wife, an illegitimate child, an uncaring mother — there are all these vivid metaphors, and the charges are particularly piled up there in chapter 4. And in spite of their disobedience, God was still going to pursue them, such as Hosea did through his object lesson of marrying Gomer, the prostitute, or the unfaithful wife. But exile was going to happen. That was an inevitability... They had leaned upon a relationship with Syria ... to help protect themselves against the empire of Assyria, and when they did that, they had depended upon human strength rather than on God as their king and defender. And as a cruel irony, the curses of the covenant would lead them into exile in Assyria. So, that exile was inevitable because their covenant-breaking was gross, and it was deep, and it was prolonged, but there is still this message of hope because Hosea says that God says that "I will take you into the wilderness, and there I will speak kindly to you." That is, even in bringing his people, bringing about the circumstances of exile, seeing them off into the Assyrian captivity, even still, God had purposes for them, that it was going to be in captivity where they would become receptive to hearing of God's faithfulness, to turning back to him, and to praying for his salvation and mercy. And so, this is why the book ends so prominently on a note of hope, offering the opportunity for restoration in spite of all that they had done to break God's covenant.

##### **Dr. David Correa, translation**

The prophet Hosea's message to the northern kingdom of Israel, was that all these calamities — the suffering they were experiencing from the Assyrian invasion — were well deserved because of their disobedience, their unfaithfulness, and their idolatry, just as it's described in his book.

**Dr. Larry Trotter**

Hosea's message to the northern kingdom of Israel was very simple: "I love you, but you've been disobedient, and so I want to bring you back, and I need to discipline you to bring you back to myself." That was the basic message, but the message was, throughout the book, the struggle within God, presenting God as having the passions of a betrayed lover who can't give his beloved up but needs to do something to get his beloved's attention and bring his beloved back to him.

**Question 4:**

**How do we know that Hosea and other Old Testament prophets were under the authority of Moses' covenant when they delivered their prophecies?**

**Dr. Carol Kaminski**

When we look at the message of the Prophets, we don't want to think of a prophet as bringing out a lot of new ideas, right? They're not creative. They're going back to the Mosaic covenant, and they're going back to the terms of the covenant. And so, what's very interesting is when you look at certain prophets you will find certain terms only appear in an Old Testament book and then in the prophet. For example, in the prophet Ezekiel, he will use language from Leviticus 26 to describe the coming judgment. And some terms are only in Leviticus 26 and in Ezekiel, and it's showing that clear connection between the two, and really saying, for Ezekiel, Leviticus in particular was the grid — of course, Ezekiel is a priest — so it's the grid through which he's describing both the judgment and the hope of restoration. You could look at Jeremiah. Jeremiah's going back to Deuteronomy often, and he's appealing, I mean, he quotes Deuteronomy 27 in one of his classic passages, in Jeremiah 11. He quotes it directly, and he says, you know, "The law says cursed is anyone who does not keep all the things written in the law," and he is reading this and says, "Remember what Moses had commanded you." And so, their vocabulary is coming from the Mosaic covenant, their categories about how they're describing it.

And in order to understand the role of the prophet, we need to remember, again, they're under the Mosaic covenant: "If you obey me and keep my commandments then there's going to be blessing, but if you disobey my commandment then judgment is coming." And the role of the prophets really is a sign of God's grace and his mercy to his people because he uses the prophets to warn them of the judgment that's coming, and he's using the prophets to call them back to the Mosaic covenant and saying, "Look, go out there and tell my people that judgment is coming if you don't keep the commandments." And so, you have prophets like Jeremiah who has to go out into the public place. You have prophets like Ezekiel that's meant to turn over, and there's a visual aspect. Why? Because they're trying to call God's people back to the covenant, and thereby they're wanting to prevent the judgment that's coming.

**Dr. Todd Borger**

The Old Testament prophets had a good view of time so that they were able to look to the past, they were able to live in the present, and then look ahead to the future. The prophets depended on God's covenant, in particular, I'll say the Mosaic covenant... So, if we're talking about God's law that he gave at Sinai, for instance ... that law that he gave provided the basis, the foundation for everything that the prophets were teaching the people. One of the problems that we see in the Prophets — and this has been a problem with critical scholars for, you know, well over a hundred years — is the fact that many of the prophets don't refer specifically to specific laws. We get some of that in Jeremiah where he seems to list off some of the Ten Commandments at times. But we don't get them just having these explicit discussions about the law at Sinai. And so, for many liberal scholars ... that has created problems. But if we look at it instead that they have the law at Sinai, that they assumed that all of their readers, all of their listeners, knew that, then we can look at this in a bit of a different light because now we have the prophets speaking to the people. They've got God's covenant. It's assumed that this was their basis for life. This was their basis for understanding the relationship with God, for instance. They can then preach to the people about the present situation, having that foundation in the past. This past, present and future terminology, I think, is helpful also with the prophets because what we're seeing is that the prophets were not just future fortunetellers. They didn't just tell things that happened in the future, but instead they were looking to the past. They saw God's acts — the things that he did on behalf of Israel in the past — they had that as a foundation for what they then preached to the people about their present situation. But then also, they were always looking ahead to the future to what God was going to do in the future, perhaps through judgment, more often through restoration, through salvation of his people... This view of the prophets as having a past perspective to the covenants, a present perspective on where they preach to the people, to that age, and then a future view, to what God was going to do in the future is very important to understanding the prophets.

**Dr. Douglas Gropp**

Probably the most important passage for understanding the role of the prophets in the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 18:15-18, where Moses, reminiscing with the Israelites on the making of the first covenant at Mount Sinai, which he mediated, says that the Lord will raise up a prophet "like me" — like "me," Moses — who will proclaim my words.

**The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him" (Deuteronomy 18:15-18, NIV).**



And he's saying that future prophets are going to be in this same mediatorial role in relationship to this covenant that was made at Horeb, or as it says in the book of Exodus, the covenant made at Mount Sinai. The shape of the prophetic speeches, particularly the judgment speeches, which have often been called ... "covenant lawsuits," are bringing to bear on Israel the actual terms of the covenant that the Lord made with Israel at Mount Sinai and renewed after Israel broke the covenant immediately with the sin of the golden calf.

### **Question 5:**

**How was Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria, connected to events described in the book of Hosea?**

#### **Dr. Larry Trotter**

After the days of Hosea, the four powers, the four kingdoms that are in view are Assyria, with Tiglath-Pileser III being the king, and then next to Assyria was Syria; Rezin was the king. And then next to Syria was Israel; Pekah was the king. And then south of Israel was Judah, and Ahaz was the king. Now, Assyria was by far the strongest, and so the weaker powers wanted to align themselves with each other to form an alliance to protect themselves against the aggressions of Assyria. And so, Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel formed an alliance, and they wanted Judah to join that alliance. Judah didn't join the alliance, and so what they did is they attacked Judah somewhere around 735 B.C. And what they did was force Judah into the arms of Tiglath-Pileser III. Judah appealed to Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria for help. Tiglath-Pileser came to the aid of Judah and took Damascus and killed Rezin, king of Syria. And then Ahaz became a vassal, became subjugated to Assyria, and so the intent of the alliance was to protect the zone from Tiglath-Pileser III and Assyria, but the effect of it was to bring him into their area and to bring further domination by the Assyrians.

### **Question 6:**

**What was the Syrian-Israelite coalition, and why was it formed?**

#### **Dr. Chip McDaniel**

The Syrian-Israelite coalition was an agreement between Syria and Israel, the northern kingdom, to try to fend off the Assyrian Empire that was encroaching on its territory. Sometimes because Israel is also known as Ephraim, you'll see it in the literature as the Syro-Ephraimic alliance. To get a handle on this, we really need to look at the geography of the Holy Land. The Holy Land is called "the land in between," and it's between three continents. You have Asia. And then the Fertile Crescent goes up and goes into Egypt. But then you also have Europe. And so, it

served as a major trade route, and all of the big dogs in the neighborhood wanted to control those trade routes because they would generate wealth from that. Earlier on in Israel's history the "big guns" were the Hittites to the northwest and the Egyptians to the southeast. But by the time we get to Jonah, for example, the major player is Assyria. The Syro-Ephraimic alliance or the Israelite-Syrian alliance was from 735 to 722 B.C. We know these because of the chronological markers that are in the text; we can date these very precisely. So it lasted about 13 years... And the Syrian-Israelite alliance was an attempt to join forces to keep Assyria from gaining hegemony over that region. The way that played out is seen too for us in Isaiah 7–8 where the king of Judah is concerned because the king of Israel and the king of Syria have allied themselves together against Assyria, and they want Judah to join them. And Isaiah would come to Ahaz and say, "Don't worry about these kings or these kingdoms; God's going to take care of it." The way that played out chronologically is in 735 Isaiah says to King Ahaz, the king of the south, "Don't worry about these kingdoms because a child is going to be born, and before that child can, with discernment, say 'my father and my mother' the tribute is going to have to be taken from ... Syria and Israel and is going to go to Assyria." And so, it's a way of saying they're going to be humbled. They're going to be — the two kingdoms that are in agreement here — they're going to be humbled, they're going to be impoverished by the king of Assyria. He also says in chapter 7 that before a child is born and reaches the ability to make moral categories, moral decisions on his own, the kings are going to be gone, they're going to be out of there, meaning that there's no more kingdoms to worry about. So, the message to Ahaz that Isaiah gives is, "You trust God. Don't worry about these kingdoms. Don't join them against Assyria. Don't worry about them because God's going to take care of them." And how that played out historically is that in 735 the alliance was made between Israel and Syria. In 732 Assyria came in and took Syria into captivity and received tribute from Israel. And 10 years later, about 13 years after the time of the agreement, the king of Assyria comes in and takes the northern kingdom. And so, it only lasted from 735 to 722... It had a major role in helping us to understand Isaiah 7–8 where Isaiah is dealing with King Ahaz and saying, "Don't worry about this alliance, God's going to take care of it."

### **Question 7:**

#### **How did prophets like Hosea function as God's emissaries or ambassadors?**

##### **Dr. David Correa, translation**

Similar to what happened in the ancient Near East, where great kings sent their emissaries to their vassal nations to warn their subjects about the consequences of their disloyalty, or to speak some word of blessing in the name of the king, we find that the prophets of the Bible, the prophets of the people of Israel, served the same function. A clear example of this is when Isaiah had his vision of the throne of God, and the Lord said, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for me?" And Isaiah said, "Here

I am! Send me.” To differ with the popular interpretation of this text as a text that speaks of evangelism, Isaiah, in reality, responded to the call of the Lord to be his emissary, to be his mouthpiece, to speak on his behalf to his vassals, to the people of Israel, and, in that case, to let the people know that they had been unfaithful to the covenant, that they were violating the covenant terms, and that they would suffer the consequences of that disobedience and disloyalty.

### Question 8:

#### How was the prophetic office related to God’s covenant with Israel?

##### Dr. Seth Tarrer

Thinking about the Prophets, the prophetic literature, in relation to the covenant, it needs to be said, off the bat, the word “covenant” appears very rarely in the prophetic corpus. The primary place in which we see the motif of covenant, however, is in the book of Hosea in which God calls upon the prophet to enter into a covenantal relationship with a woman of questionable character. And we see modeled perhaps most clearly and dramatically later in Hosea ... in Hosea 11, we see God at pains to preserve this covenant relationship he has instituted with his people Israel. So when we think about the prophets in relation to covenant, we need to understand them in their function, their office, and that is, they were called by God to be keepers, watchers, ones who are continually calling the king, calling the priests, calling the general public at large to remember the covenant of their forefathers...

There’s another component of covenant when we think about and read the Prophets, and that is, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel there’s this forward thrust, that the covenant sort of becomes the mechanism by which Jeremiah talks about the way in which God is going to not only continue and perpetuate his relationship with his chosen people, but in some sense, it’s going to take on a new and dramatic shape or form, as we see inaugurated by Christ in the New Testament... Jeremiah has told us early on in the book that the sin of Judah and Israel is engraved on their heart. Yet, when we come to chapter 31 — Jeremiah’s famous passage regarding the new covenant that he’s going to bring about with his people — the law replaces the sin that’s been engraved on our heart. And so, in this way, covenant not only is the thing to which the prophets are calling for fidelity among the Israelites, covenant is also the thing that’s thrusting Israel forward into their further-realized relationship with God.

##### Dr. Mike Ross

The prophets and their prophetic office is directly connected to the covenant of grace that God made with his people, with Israel. One scholar calls them, “God’s covenant prosecutors.” They are like lawyers, attorneys whom God contracts with to represent his covenantal interest with his people, Israel. So, they are prosecuting attorneys. That’s why they’re so polemical and sometimes even accusatory. They are bringing a case against Israel. Some of them will even use that language — God has an argument, or a case, against Israel. They will assemble, in their imagery, the people

before some divine court where a judge is listening to what they say and the people's defense to make a rendering of innocent or guilty. And this has been a history of them throughout the Old Testament. If you talk about Moses, he was the first great prophet. One scholar calls him the "pool" or the source out of which all the other prophets flow. Samuel would be the rapids of that stream, and all of the preaching prophets like Nathan and Gad who came out of that. And then there's this great school of writing or classical prophets with Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Daniel, and finally, culminating in this last great prophet who was the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist. They are all covenant prosecutors. They are bringing repeatedly before Israel their covenant-breaking. The book they refer to the most in their prophecies is the book of Deuteronomy. That's their covenant treatise, that covenant agreement, that's the thing they keep pointing back to and calling Israel and the New Testament church to be faithful to. So they, perhaps more than maybe any other writers or speakers in the Bible, really understand not just what the covenant is but how it relates to God's church, God's people, and how we live as the people of the covenant of grace.

### **Question 9:**

#### **How do all biblical covenants display God's benevolence?**

##### **Dr. David Correa, translation**

All biblical covenants display God's benevolence in several ways. One simple way we can see this is that God, without having any obligation, decides to enter into a relationship with his people. So then, God, out of his own grace, out of his own mercy, chooses for himself a people without having to do so. Also, divine benevolence is displayed in how God gives many blessings for his people to enjoy. In the case of Adam and Eve, in the first covenant, divine benevolence was shown in how the Lord put at their disposal all that he had created. The Lord gave them permission to eat freely of all the trees except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Also, when he made restitution in the covenant with Noah, God once more displayed his benevolence by not only preserving the human race, but also guaranteeing them a stable world so that human beings would have the opportunity to be faithful to the Lord. And so, by the way, we can see this throughout the whole Bible... God shows his benevolence in many ways, arriving, of course, at the new covenant when the Lord, by grace, grants that the Lord Jesus Christ will carry, on himself, the punishment that belongs to his people. And, in turn, the Lord, by grace, grants his people forgiveness of sins and bestows on them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

##### **Dr. Gregory R. Perry**

God speaks in a language that his people can understand, and in the ancient Near East one of the languages was the international language of diplomacy, of how kings would make covenants with one another. And so, we see references to land grant treaties like in Genesis 12 and 15 and this emphasis on how God will give a land to his people, to Abraham's family. And so, the land grant treaty is there. But we also

see references, especially in the Mosaic covenant, to the form of what's called a suzerain-vassal treaty. Suzerain is just a big word that means a "great king," and a vassal would be a "smaller king," a "lesser king," who is in relationship with this great king. Every one of the covenants of Scripture begins with God's gracious initiative, that a great king is giving protection, giving land, giving benefits to a less powerful partner, and is establishing this relationship — not the junior partner but the great partner — the great king, God, is establishing this relationship, first with creation, then we see it with Noah and the renewal of that. We see it also with Abraham. And so, God is the beginning, the one who initiates this relationship, and he gives gifts and benefits in that covenant relationship to carry out what he wants his reign to do, his business in the world. So, it's really interesting because the land really corresponds to the initial commission to Adam to subdue the garden, to subdue the earth. The promise of children in the covenants refer back to "multiply and subdue the earth." And so, the covenants restore the original pattern of how man should show forth God's reign in the world and bear God's image.

### **Question 10:**

**What evidence do we have that Hosea intended his book to be read in the southern kingdom of Judah?**

#### **Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

It's certainly true that most of what Hosea said throughout his entire ministry, and most of what is written down in the book of Hosea, has to do with the northern kingdom of Israel. There can be no doubt that's the case. If you look and see just how many times he mentions the northern kingdom, you can tell that that's true. But the fact is, is that the book of Hosea itself, which was written after the time that Hosea completed what he had written down in his book — in other words, it's after the main body of his prophetic ministry — that book that he wrote has a definite focus on the kingdom of Judah... Now, the reason for this is fairly obvious. When this book was put together and the title was put at the front of this book, there was a focus on the line of David, the kings of Judah, the king in Jerusalem. And that gives us an orientation then toward the entire book, that it was written under the authority of the house of David, or the kingdom of Judah. And so, it's very interesting, when you take that orientation from the very first verse of the book, to notice where Hosea does actually mention Judah, and the progress of thought as he talks about what was going on in Judah during various periods of his ministry. I mean, in 4:15, he says Ephraim, or Israel, is guilty, but don't let Judah become guilty. But by the time you come to 5:5, he says Israel, or Ephraim, has stumbled into sin, and Judah has also stumbled into sin. Then in the rest of chapter 5 and 6 he actually equates the sins of Israel and the sins of Judah together. So, all through the various chapters, as we read through the book of Hosea, we discover that he actually does bring up Judah, sometimes just a small little note, but then sometimes, especially as Judah declines into further and further sin, more and more focus on Judah... And the reason for all of this is rather

easy to understand. Hosea came from the north. He ministered there in the beginning, but when he came down to Judah, his heart was still with the northerners. He was concerned with what was going on in the north, but he wanted those around him in Judah, especially in the days of Hezekiah, to learn lessons from what was going on in the northern kingdom. He wanted them to gain wisdom — 14:9 — he wanted them to gain wisdom from the history of the northern kingdom so that they could avoid the same fate that the kingdom of Israel had endured... Hosea was concerned that Judah continue in the ways of God and avoid the judgment of God.

**Dr. Larry Trotter**

Hosea primarily directed his prophecy to the northern kingdom of Israel. However, you'll see at the very beginning of it, where he mentions the time period in which he was prophesying, he mentions Judean kings as well as the Israelite king. Also, you find seventeen references, direct references, to Judah throughout the book. So, the preponderance of references are to the northern kingdom, but the southern kingdom is compared to the northern kingdom because the southern kingdom was going the way of the northern king in its unfaithfulness. So, more directly to the northern kingdom, but the southern kingdom was following in the northern kingdom's path, and so the same message was being extended to it.

**Rev. Michael J. Glodo**

There is evidence in the book of Hosea that it's partly directed toward the southern kingdom of Judah, and this is particularly mentioned in chapter 6. Judah is named in very first verse or two there, and then later on down about verse 11, Judah is addressed directly. And the principal reason for this is that, even though the exile of the northern kingdom, Ephraim, is a *fait accompli*, that is, a fact that is sure to happen, Judah can learn from that example. Judah should look at what's happened to Ephraim and themselves purge their sanctuary of false worship, restore justice and generosity in the midst of Judah so that what happened to Ephraim doesn't also happen to them.

**Question 11:****What is the overall purpose for the book of Hosea?****Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

Any time you deal with a book that is as complex as the book of Hosea, you have to start off by simply admitting that there are far too many purposes or intentions or goals that that book was written to have than we could possibly list. I mean, they can be very minor things like informing people of things that had happened in the past. Or they can be things like praising God for the good things that he has done, and even in the case of Hosea, for many of his judgments in the past. They can be theological lessons that certain people in the audience need to have, certain corrections of their theological views. It can also be moral considerations, things that are directing people



to live in certain ways. Particular verses or even phrases can do that for people. You also have in a prophetic book like Hosea the purpose of showing how prophecies are fulfilled. That's another thing that goes on in the book of Hosea... But while there are many ways in which you can summarize all these details of the book of Hosea, the reality is, is that what we need to do to have an orientation toward the book as a whole is to come up with a way of summarizing it in a package. And I suppose that if you were to take all those various details, in addition to many others because they go on and on and on, I suppose you could put it this way: the book of Hosea was written to give wisdom — 14:9 says that, to lead people to wisdom — to learn lessons of wisdom, as it were, from the history of Hosea's ministry... Hosea had given prophecies to the northern kingdom and had given details of what was going to happen to the northern kingdom, and he also had threatened Judah with great judgments to come, and what he wanted his audience to take away on the whole was the lesson of those historical prophecies. And the reality is, is that what he wanted his Judahite readers to get from his book was that they must do all they can do under the law of God to avoid the judgment coming on them as it had come on the northern kingdom because when this book was written in Judah, great threats had come against the people of God in Judah. Sennacherib was invading the land. Sennacherib and the Assyrians, and then even after the Assyrians, the Babylonians were threatening the Judahites, that the kind of judgment that the northern kingdom had experienced was now being threatened to the kingdom of Judah. And Hosea was writing this book to teach the people of Judah how to avoid those judgments and how to receive the blessings of God instead.

**Dr. David Correa, translation**

The overall purpose of the book of Hosea was to encourage the people despite the fact that he tells them the exile was well deserved because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness. He shows them that God remains faithful despite their having been spiritually adulterous. God remains faithful to his covenant, and so he encourages them, telling them that after this great suffering would come a great restoration for the people of God.

**Question 12:****What is the role of a covenant lawsuit in biblical prophecy?****Dr. Michael J. Glodo**

The idea of covenant lawsuit actually exists outside of the Bible in the political treaties of the day. The suzerain king, when he hears the vassal king is not obeying, he sends an emissary, he sends an embassy to deliver the bad news that, "If you don't change your ways, the curses of the covenant are going to become operative." ... And it begins by the calling of divine witnesses. This is part of the covenant lawsuit, the calling of heaven and earth to witness as the jury, if you will, and the prophet brings the charges. And so, the charges will list the sins of God's people, and that will

usually be accompanied by reminders of God's faithfulness. So, you have the sins of God's people as the evidence for the prosecution, the faithfulness of God for evidence for the prosecution. In the end, the people of God are called, normally, to turn back and repair their ways and repent and return to God.

**Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

Whenever we deal with prophetic lawsuit in the book of Hosea, we have to remember that what form critics say about this genre of prophetic speech is somewhat artificial. Form criticism was created and was developed at a time when the thought was that you could identify specific characteristics or ideal characteristics for this kind of speech or that kind of speech. And when form critics talked about a "*rib*," or a lawsuit, they had in mind these kinds of elements: a summons to court; they had accusations against the defendants that were in the court given by God; sentencing that was given; sometimes interaction or complaints. At other times they would also add things like witnesses that stood against the defendants, all sorts of things like that. There were a variety of things that were put into these lawsuits, these ideal lawsuit genres. But the reality is, is that when Old Testament prophets spoke, they did not speak with these kinds of genre in mind. They are not specific or detailed ideal types of literature that prophets were imitating in their books. And that becomes very clear in the book of Hosea, because what he does throughout his book is he breaks every rule that form criticism ever brought up about prophecy, and he mixes this type of speech with that type of speech, or this element with that element. He leaves out this element, puts in this element, and so on and so forth. So, when we speak of a lawsuit, or a heavenly lawsuit, in the book of Hosea, or for that matter any other prophetic book, basically this is what we have in mind: that prophets often spoke in terms of visions or insights they had into the court of heaven and the proceedings that took place there. And they would often involve elements that form critics identified with prophetic lawsuit, but they would also, at times, only pick certain of those elements, or use different sorts of elements and insert them in and modify it this way and that way...

What we have to keep in mind as evangelicals is this: prophets were not making up what they prophesied, and when they received visions or auditions of heaven, when they were involved with insights into what was going on in the heavenly court, as in a prophetic lawsuit, they were actually reporting what had taken place in heaven, and God himself in the heavenly court did not follow the strict rules of the forms of prophetic speech. And so, oddly enough, when the true prophets of God reveal what God actually said and did in the heavenly court, their speeches don't follow these idealized forms either... As you deal with the book of Hosea, and you notice all these different sorts of speeches that form critics have identified, and you see that they're mixed together, remember that Hosea is revealing what actually took place in the heavenly court, and as God spoke, Hosea reported.

**Dr. Miles Van Pelt**

Oftentimes in our modern world, when we think about prophecy or biblical prophecy, we are mostly thinking about talking about the future, and what the future holds, and



how history will unfold in the future. Now, there is some of that in biblical prophecy, but it's actually one of the smaller portions of what's contained in our Old Testament prophetic books, let's say. So, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve Minor Prophets, these prophets are fundamentally covenant lawyers. Their job is to execute Yahweh's lawsuit against his people... The prophets announced that the people of God have disobeyed and, therefore, curses are coming. But after the curses, there's always this notion of hope where the lawsuit is broken, and the Lord through his prophet offers the possibility of renewal, a new covenant, or a new temple, or the remnant returning, or things like this. And so, they do more than talk about the future, although that's a part of it. Their main point, however, is to show the people how, over the last several hundred years, they have fallen away from Yahweh, how they have broken his law, and how they have not loved him with all their hearts and souls and minds.

### **Question 13:**

**How did the personal faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the kings of Israel and Judah affect the nations under their rule?**

#### **Dr. Mark Gignilliat**

The kings of Israel and the kings of Judah were the representative of the people to God, so in many ways they had a sacramental presence there, both as the representative of God on earth and the representative of the people to God. So, that particular swing status that they had was significant in how God responded to both the king and then ultimately how that fell out onto the nation as a whole. And you had this whole history, I think, within Israel and Judah. There are no good kings in Israel. They were all bad. And then, they fell first in 722 B.C. But then within Judah, you had this sort of back and forth, where you'd have a good king, he did right in the eyes of the Lord, and then a bad king who did evil in the sight of the Lord. But when the bad kings did evil in the sight of the Lord, there were major repercussions that came from that. This was where the divine "No" of God's judgment would be heralded against both the king and then also the people as well. And it seems to be that there was a, there's an organic relationship between the status of the king and the way in which the people followed in that. If the king was setting up high places and worshiping foreign gods, the people were as well. And then vice versa; when there were reforms like we had with King Josiah, that had huge national repercussions for the way in which the people responded to God and his Law. So, the king had a major role in representing both the people and God to the people.

#### **Dr. Frank Barker**

The personal faithfulness of kings of Judah or Israel made a tremendous difference to the entire nation. They would influence the nation. The kings of Israel, of course, continued to get into worshiping false gods like Baal, and you had Ahaz and Jezebel and the worship of Baal under them, and of course Elijah confronted them and the

prophets of Baal there. But then the good kings, you think of a king like Josiah. Well, when he became king, the Bible had been lost, the Old Testament, for a number of years, and it was rediscovered, and they brought it to him, and then he wanted them to make sure this was the Word of God, and they checked with the prophetess and said it is, and so he said, “Wow, we’ve got to implement all of these things.” And he began to try to do it, and it influenced the whole nation. Now, the problem was that it didn’t reach the grassroots, but he did everything he could. It made a huge difference who was king.

### **Question 14:**

#### **Why did God allow his people Israel to fall to the pagan Assyrians?**

##### **Dr. Carol Kaminski**

Yeah, it’s very troubling when you think about what happens to this northern kingdom because in 722 the Assyrians come against the north. And of course, the Assyrians are one of Israel’s enemies. You see this in the book of Jonah, in the eighth-century prophet. In Jonah, the last thing he wants to do is go to Nineveh, which is the major Assyrian city. We also know from the Assyrians. There are some incredible wall reliefs. One good example is the Lachish reliefs, and they depict the Assyrians as, they were taking, they’re conquering people. They skin people alive. In the city of Lachish, they beheaded people and had their heads hanging around. They’re beheading people, some of them cut off hands, impaling people. So, a hideous kind of situation, and it raises the question, why on earth does God use the Assyrians to bring judgment against his own people? Again, if you look at the history of it with the northern kingdom, they’d been worshiping idols for 200 years. This is contrary to the Ten Commandments, it’s contrary to the Mosaic covenant, and one of the things God had promised in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27, 28 — these blessings and curses — one of the curses is “You’re going to go into exile, and you’re going to be defeated by your enemies.” And so, this really is in fulfillment of those promises and the curses of the covenant because of their disobedience. And what it really does is it underscores the human problem and the problem of sin, and Israel’s inability to really keep God’s commandments. So, God raises up the Assyrians. They come in; 2 Kings 17 describes this and gives a long, long list of why God brought the Assyrians, and it’s not a pretty picture. So, clearly placing it on their own actions for several hundred years.

##### **Dr. Russell T. Fuller**

Israel fell — and we’re talking about the northern half of Israel — fell to Assyria in the year 722, and the reason why they fell was because of their sin. If you look at 2 Kings 17, it goes right into detail, at the end of the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel, it goes into great detail of why God took them into exile. And again, it starts out right off that they forsook the Lord, they went into idolatry, and they wanted to go in the custom of the nations. They wanted to live just like all the

other nations lived. And so, they went off into sin. They went off into idolatry. And then, the special sins that are mentioned are, again, this notion of like, again, an ancient abortion practice where they caused their children to pass through the fire. And this was especially something that God was very displeased with and something that God brought his wrath and judgment upon the northern tribes for this. But yet, the Lord at times, for the northern tribes, offered them very much grace and mercy if they would turn to him. Even at the beginning of their dynasty under Jeroboam I, God said, “If you’ll obey me, I will establish you a house much like I did David” — again, not eternal and so forth, but God was offering them a great reward there. He made the same offer to Jehu, but again, both of them rejected God’s offer of mercy, of grace, and so did all of the kings of the north, and so it was their apostasy, it was their sin that ultimately led to their destruction in the year 722.

**Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim, translation**

God allowed the people of Israel to fall into the hands of the pagan Assyrians. By “Israel” here we mean the northern kingdom, the ten tribes of Israel who were exiled by the Assyrians. Indeed, this was a very difficult matter because the wars launched by the Assyrians were extremely harsh and aggressive. They cruelly destroyed the northern kingdom and the ten tribes. The reason for this, in one word, was sin, all sorts of sin. The people of Israel in the northern kingdom lived in sin from the division of the united kingdom until the exile. There was no time when the people had a good king. All the kings of the northern kingdom were evil, even though God had sent them prophets like Hosea and Amos, and there were prophets who ministered among them like Elijah. Elijah tried to call them to reunite with the southern kingdom and return to Davidic rule. They refused and lived in sin and worshiped foreign gods. As a result, their judgment came sooner than the southern kingdom, and they were exiled by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

**Question 15:**

**What does Hosea mean when he says “out of Egypt I called my son” in Hosea 11:1?**

**Dr. David Correa, translation**

When in 11:1 of the book of Hosea he says, “out of Egypt I called my son,” in the first instance, this is referring to the people of Israel, to the people that God redeemed from the slavery of Egypt and whom he adopted as his children at the foot of Mount Sinai. Well, this same declaration ultimately found its completion in Christ, who is the true Son, who is the true Israel. This is what Matthew says when he speaks of the return of Jesus with his parents after having fled to Egypt because of the threat from Herod. He clearly says that this happened to confirm what the prophet said, “out of Egypt I called my son.” Well, Hosea in the first instance was referring to the people of Israel, but Matthew shows us that the true Son is none other than Jesus Christ.

**Dr. Charles L. Quarles**

Hosea 11:1 says,

**When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son  
(Hosea 11:1).**

A number of different interpretations of that text; some have suggested that the son is a clear and direct reference to the Messiah himself. But I'm convinced that in context this is actually a reference to the historic exodus. Even in the law of Moses, God had warned that if his people broke covenant with him that they would return to Egypt — a reference to exile — and they would ultimately be restored from that exile, which was portrayed as a new exodus. We see that in the Pentateuch in texts like, "I will take them in ships back to Egypt," "They'll be covered with the boils of Egypt," and so forth. And Hosea picks up on this theme to describe the Assyrian exile that God's people suffered because of their sin. Examples of this go all through Hosea. In Hosea 2 we read,

**I am going to persuade [Israel by leading] her [in]to the wilderness ...**

This return to the wilderness theme is a reference to a repeated exodus with wilderness wanderings.

**she will respond as she did in the days of her youth ... in the day she  
came out of the land of Egypt (Hosea 2:14-15 (CSB)).**

So, there's a return to the wilderness and there is a new exodus that's coming on the back of this new Egyptian captivity, which is really a reference to the Assyrian exile. And once Hosea introduces that, he reiterates it again and again. An example would be in 7:16:

**They will be ridiculed ... in the land of Egypt (Hosea 7:16, CSB).**

And 8:13:

**He will remember their guilt and punish their sins; they will return to  
Egypt (Hosea 8:13, CSB).**

When we get to chapter 9, though, Hosea makes it very clear that this return to the Egyptian captivity is a symbolic reference to the Assyrian exile, for he says,

**They will not stay in the land of the Lord... Ephraim will return to  
Egypt ... they will eat unclean food in Assyria (Hosea 9:3, CSB).**

Notice how Egypt parallels Assyria. So, Egypt is functioning like a code word for Assyria and the exile there. Similarly, in 11, we read:

**Israel will ... return to the land of Egypt and Assyria will be his king, because [he] refused to repent (Hosea 11:5, CSB).**

So, there'll be a return to Egypt because of Israel's sin. This reference to the historic exodus in 11:1 is using the historic exodus to picture an eschatological exodus. God goes on to say that he will return his people to the Land of Promise, and he'll do so in much the same way that he delivered them from the Egyptian captivity in the first place. And this is where it gets really interesting. He says,

**I will make you live in tents again (Hosea 12:9, CSB).**

Like the tabernacles they lived in in the wilderness wanderings, and then adds,

**The Lord brought Israel from Egypt by a prophet, and Israel was tended by a prophet (Hosea 12:13, CSB).**

The prophet with the historic exodus is Moses, but the prophet that will lead the eschatological exodus is the prophet like Moses, or the new Moses, the Messiah. So, I would argue that Hosea 11:1 is messianic, even though the "son" is not to be baldly equated with the Messiah. This is a description of the historic exodus that is being used to portray the eschatological exodus that will be led by Jesus, the new Moses, the prophet like Moses himself.

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