

Hosea Chapters 1-3, Micah Chapters 1-2: God Demands Change

The prophet Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel and spoke on God's behalf during the reign of one of Israel's worst kings, Jeroboam II. The nation was descending into chaos, and in the year 722, the Assyrian empire decimated Israel. Hosea saw this coming.

The book begins with Hosea's broken marriage to Gomer. God tells Hosea that, despite her unfaithfulness, Hosea is to find her, pay her debts, and commit his love and faithfulness to her once again. God says that He is like Israel's faithful husband, not divorcing her after she worshiped the Canaanite god Baal.

Israel will repent once again and return to worship their God. Hosea says, God will place over them a new messianic king from the line of David.

Before reading along to a dramatic recording of Hosea, Chapter 1, we will open with Psalm 32 in prayer.

Psalm 32

A Psalm of David. A Contemplation.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You
In a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters
They shall not come near him.

7 You are my hiding place;
You shall preserve me from trouble;
You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will guide you with My eye.

9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule,
Which have no understanding,
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,
Else they will not come near you.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;
But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.

11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous;
And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Hosea 1

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea:

“Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry
And children of harlotry,
For the land has committed great harlotry
By departing from the Lord.”

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 Then the Lord said to him:

“Call his name Jezreel,
For in a little while
I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu,
And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.
5 It shall come to pass in that day
That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him:

“Call her name Lo-Ruhamah,
For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel,
But I will utterly take them away.
7 Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah,
Will save them by the Lord their God,
And will not save them by bow,
Nor by sword or battle,
By horses or horsemen.”

8 Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. 9 Then God said:

“Call his name Lo-Ammi,
For you are not My people,
And I will not be your God.

10 “Yet the number of the children of Israel
Shall be as the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered.
And it shall come to pass
In the place where it was said to them,
‘You are not My people,’
There it shall be said to them,
‘You are sons of the living God.’
11 Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel
Shall be gathered together,
And appoint for themselves one head;
And they shall come up out of the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel!

Hosea 2

Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’
And to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’

2 “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges;
For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!
Let her put away her harlotries from her sight,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;
3 Lest I strip her naked
And expose her, as in the day she was born,
And make her like a wilderness,
And set her like a dry land,
And slay her with thirst.

4 “I will not have mercy on her children,
For they are the children of harlotry.
5 For their mother has played the harlot;
She who conceived them has behaved shamefully.
For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
Who give me my bread and my water,
My wool and my linen,

My oil and my drink.'

6 "Therefore, behold,
I will hedge up your way with thorns,
And wall her in,
So that she cannot find her paths.
7 She will chase her lovers,
But not overtake them;
Yes, she will seek them, but not find them.
Then she will say,
'I will go and return to my first husband,
For then it was better for me than now.'
8 For she did not know
That I gave her grain, new wine, and oil,
And multiplied her silver and gold—
Which they prepared for Baal.

9 "Therefore I will return and take away
My grain in its time
And My new wine in its season,
And will take back My wool and My linen,
Given to cover her nakedness.
10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers,
And no one shall deliver her from My hand.
11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease,
Her feast days,
Her New Moons,
Her Sabbaths—
All her appointed feasts.

12 "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees,
Of which she has said,
'These are my wages that my lovers have given me.'
So I will make them a forest,
And the beasts of the field shall eat them.
13 I will punish her
For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense.
She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry,
And went after her lovers;
But Me she forgot," says the Lord.

14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfort to her.

15 I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope;
She shall sing there,
As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

16 “And it shall be, in that day,”
Says the Lord,
“That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’
And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’
17 For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals,
And they shall be remembered by their name no more.
18 In that day I will make a covenant for them
With the beasts of the field,
With the birds of the air,
And with the creeping things of the ground.
Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth,
To make them lie down safely.

19 “I will betroth you to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me
In righteousness and justice,
In lovingkindness and mercy;
20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you shall know the Lord.

21 “It shall come to pass in that day
That I will answer,” says the Lord;
“I will answer the heavens,
And they shall answer the earth.

22 The earth shall answer
With grain,
With new wine,
And with oil;
They shall answer Jezreel.

23 Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth,
And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy;
Then I will say to those who were not My people,
‘You are My people!’
And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’ ”

Hosea 3

Then the Lord said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.”

2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. 3 And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be toward you.”

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.

Micah 1

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

2 Hear, all you peoples!
Listen, O earth, and all that is in it!
Let the Lord God be a witness against you,
The Lord from His holy temple.

3 For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place;
He will come down
And tread on the high places of the earth.

4 The mountains will melt under Him,
And the valleys will split
Like wax before the fire,
Like waters poured down a steep place.

5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what are the high places of Judah?
Are they not Jerusalem?

6 “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field,
Places for planting a vineyard;
I will pour down her stones into the valley,
And I will uncover her foundations.

7 All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces,
And all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire;
All her idols I will lay desolate,

For she gathered it from the pay of a harlot,
And they shall return to the pay of a harlot.”

8 Therefore I will wail and howl,
I will go stripped and naked;
I will make a wailing like the jackals
And a mourning like the ostriches,
9 For her wounds are incurable.
For it has come to Judah;
It has come to the gate of My people—
To Jerusalem.

10 Tell it not in Gath,
Weep not at all;
In Beth Aphrah
Roll yourself in the dust.
11 Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir;
The inhabitant of Zaanan does not go out.
Beth Ezel mourns;
Its place to stand is taken away from you.

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth pined for good,
But disaster came down from the Lord
To the gate of Jerusalem.
13 O inhabitant of Lachish,
Harness the chariot to the swift steeds
(She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion),
For the transgressions of Israel were found in you.

14 Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth Gath;
The houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.
15 I will yet bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Mareshah;
The glory of Israel shall come to Adullam.
16 Make yourself bald and cut off your hair,
Because of your precious children;
Enlarge your baldness like an eagle,
For they shall go from you into captivity.

Micah 2

Woe to those who devise iniquity,
And work out evil on their beds!
At morning light they practice it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.

2 They covet fields and take them by violence,
Also houses, and seize them.
So they oppress a man and his house,
A man and his inheritance.

3 Therefore thus says the Lord:

“Behold, against this family I am devising disaster,
From which you cannot remove your necks;
Nor shall you walk haughtily,
For this is an evil time.

4 In that day one shall take up a proverb against you,
And lament with a bitter lamentation, saying:
‘We are utterly destroyed!
He has changed the heritage of my people;
How He has removed it from me!
To a turncoat He has divided our fields.’ ”

5 Therefore you will have no one to determine boundaries by lot
In the assembly of the Lord.

6 “Do not prattle,” you say to those who prophesy.
So they shall not prophesy to you;
They shall not return insult for insult.

7 You who are named the house of Jacob:
“Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted?
Are these His doings?
Do not My words do good
To him who walks uprightly?”

8 “Lately My people have risen up as an enemy—
You pull off the robe with the garment
From those who trust you, as they pass by,
Like men returned from war.

9 The women of My people you cast out
From their pleasant houses;
From their children
You have taken away My glory forever.

10 “Arise and depart,
For this is not your rest;
Because it is defiled, it shall destroy,
Yes, with utter destruction.

11 If a man should walk in a false spirit

And speak a lie, saying,
'I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,'
Even he would be the prattler of this people.

12 "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob,
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together like sheep of the fold,
Like a flock in the midst of their pasture;
They shall make a loud noise because of so many people.
13 The one who breaks open will come up before them;
They will break out,
Pass through the gate,
And go out by it;
Their king will pass before them,
With the Lord at their head."

God Demands Change

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Hosea 1-3, and Micah 1-2

God puts the blame for Israel's corruption on the people as a whole. They have abandoned God's covenant, which both breaks their connection with God and breaks the just social structures of God's law, leading directly to corruption and economic decline. "Whoredom" is the term the prophets often used to describe Israel's breaking of the covenant. To dramatize the situation, God takes the metaphor literally and commands the prophet Hosea to "take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord" (Hosea 1:2). Hosea obeys God's command, marries a woman named Gomer, and has three children with her (Hosea 1:3).

Although the prophets use the imagery of prostitution and adultery, God is accusing Israel of economic and social corruption, not sexual immorality, as here in Micah 2:1-2:

"Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power. They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance."

This makes Hosea's family situation a dramatic example for those who work in corrupt or imperfect workplaces today. God deliberately put Hosea in a corrupt and difficult family situation. Could it be that God deliberately puts people in corrupt and difficult workplaces today? While we may seek a comfortable job with a reputable employer in a respectable profession, perhaps we can accomplish far more for God's kingdom by working in morally compromised places. If you abhor corruption, can you do more to fight it by working as a lawyer in a prestigious firm or as a building inspector in a mafia-dominated city? There are

no easy answers, but God's call to Hosea suggests that making a difference in the world is more important to God than keeping our hands clean. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it in the midst of Nazi-controlled Germany, "The ultimate question for a responsible man to ask, is not how to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation is to live."

How does this apply to your work?