

## **47). November 16-22—Hosea and Joel**

### **1) Hosea 1-3—Gomer ~750 BC**

Gomer was the daughter of Diblaim and the wife of Hosea, a prophet to the northern tribes of Israel (and a contemporary with Isaiah in the south). Gomer is one of the more well-known wives of the prophets—but not because of her virtue. She is known for her adultery, for being rejected, and for returning to the prophet Hosea. The couple lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during its last years before the Assyrian attack and subsequent exile in 722 BC. They lived during the reign of Kings Jeroboam II and Hoshea in the North.

Many details in Gomer's story are allegorical and speak to the relationship between God and the disobedient children of Israel. Does that mean it really happened? Would God tell a prophet to marry a wanton woman? Possibly. God explained to the prophet, "I have spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets" (Hos 12:10). This suggests the lives of prophets sometimes include symbolic details pointing to God's work. Hosea's marriage to Gomer shares allegorical elements similar to Moses's healing through the brazen serpent, Israel's wandering in the wilderness, and Joshua leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

### **Hosea 1**

God arranged Gomer's marriage to the Prophet Hosea: "Take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD" (Hos 1:2). Gomer was not necessarily a prostitute at the time of their marriage, but clearly wanton and unfaithful. Her children's names are divinely assigned to represent the broken state of Israel before its destruction.

First, her firstborn son, Jezreel, means "God sows." The Lord also explains that the name points to a future war: "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" (Hos 1:4-5). Second, they have a daughter, Lo-ruhamah, meaning "not loved" (Hs 1:6, NIV). With her birth, the Lord warns, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away" (Hos 1:6). Third, another son, Lo-ammi, means "not my people." When giving his name, God prophesied the dire consequences of Israelite behavior: "I will not be your God" (Hos 1:9).

Across many OT texts, we find the metaphor of prostitution representing idolatry. Israelites who left the worship of Jehovah to worship false gods are likened to prostitutes. The Book of Hosea uses this familiar allegory with one unique detail: everywhere else, God is married to Zion or Jerusalem, and their son is Israel. Here, though, the unfaithful wife Gomer represents Israel.

### **Hosea 2**

Gomer left her husband for others and is now worse off. Hosea asks his children to plead with their mother to "put away your whoredoms" (Hos 2:2). Hosea stated, "she is not my wife, neither am I her husband," because she had broken her marriage covenant and left him and their children.

Allegorically, Gomer's lovers represent false gods—anything valued more than God, including wealth: "she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and . . . forgot me, saith the LORD" (Hos 2:13). God condemns Israel's dishonoring the Sabbath as a sign of leaving Him (Hos 2:11).

Hosea's response sounds harsh: "lest I strip her naked" (Hos 2:3). The prophet speaks shockingly to jolt Israel into understanding their sins' seriousness. God prophesied He would publicly expose Israel's unfaithfulness for violating covenants—fulfilled when Assyria took Israel captive in 722-721 BC because Israel "played the harlot" and left God (Hos 2:5).

Gomer's words carry deeper meaning: "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" (Hos 2:5). These represent powerful temple symbols of God's eternal nourishment and holy garments (Ex 28:2; 29:4-6; 31:10-11; Lev 6:26-27; 24:8-9). The bread is the shewbread or Bread of the Presence (Ex 25:30). Flax made linen temple clothes for priests. Oil consecrated priests, kings, and temple structures in sacred anointings (Ex 29:7; 40:9-13).

Gomer sought good things but accepted counterfeits from the wrong source. She realized her life was worse with her lovers and decided to "return to my first husband" (Hos 2:7, 2:16). Her return is possible only through our Redeemer's Atonement—symbolized by His "vineyards" (Hos 2:15). God promised: "On that day I will make a covenant for them . . . I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in loving devotion and compassion. And I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD" (Hos 2:18-20, BSB).

### **Hosea 3**

Hosea 3 includes an unnamed wife that most scholars interpret as Gomer. Like a captured wife or runaway slave, Gomer needs to be redeemed. Hosea paid fifteen shekels of silver and fifteen more shekels in barley—totaling 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave and the amount Judas received for betraying Jesus (Ex 21:32; Lev 27:4; Mt 26:15). By redeeming Gomer, Hosea stipulated a faithful relationship to "abide many days," just as God does (Hos 3:3-4).

Gomer's story has intrigued readers into various theories—perhaps she is only allegorical, or Hosea's second wife, or the children were adopted, or Hosea hired her as a prostitute but didn't marry her—but none are substantiated in the text. Unfortunately, we never hear Gomer's voice. She is known best as a metaphor of God's covenantal love.

#### 2) Hosea 1:6, 8; 2:1, 23—**Loruhamah**, ~750 BC

Lo-ruhamah was the second of three children and the only daughter of the Prophet Hosea and his wife, Gomer. The Lord chose her name to teach the children of Israel their fate: "Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away" (Hos 1:6). The family lived in the northern kingdom of Israel shortly before the Assyrians came and destroyed their land and took them captive. Their family experience was a metaphor for Israel's relationship with the Lord. The prophet explains that the lives of the prophets are used as types of his people (Hos 12:10). God also promised to keep His door open for the Israelites to return to the covenant. The Lord promised, "Say of your . . . sisters, 'My loved one.' . . . I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one'" (Hos 2:1, 23).

Lo-ruhamah suffered the loss of her mother when she left the family for other lovers. Her father asks for her help, "Plead with your mother" in the KJV, or more literally from the Hebrew, "Bring charges against your mother" (Hos 2:2, NKJV). The children are asked to "judge" and "rebuke" the evil ways of Gomer so that she may return (ABPE, BSB). The Lord promises the Prophet that Gomer will become reconciled to her family, just as the story foretells the return of the children of Israel and promises that they "will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days" (Hos 3:5, NIV). (*See \*Gomer*)

3) Hosea 3:1—**Hosea's Wife an Adulteress** ~750-725 BC

The Lord commanded Hosea to “love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods.” This woman, likely Hosea’s wife Gomer whom he had married earlier (Hos 1:2–3), had abandoned him for another man. God’s command to redeem and love her again despite her adultery made Hosea’s marriage a living parable of God’s relationship to unfaithful Israel.

The phrase “beloved of her friend” suggests she had a lover or paramour, yet Hosea was to pursue her with steadfast love. His wife’s attraction to “flagons of wine” (Hos 3:1), may refer to alcohol, or as other translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV) render the Hebrew “*ashiyshey*/raisin cakes” as found in 2 Samuel 6:19 and 1 Chronicles 16:3. The raisin cakes were associated with pagan worship (e.g., *see \*Jer 7:18*; 44:19 about cakes for the “queen of heaven”). The Canaanite god Baal’s fertility cult celebrated with raisin cakes, linking her adultery to Israel’s spiritual adultery in worshipping Baal. Hosea’s costly redemption of this adulteress from her degraded state (Hos 3:2) mirrored God’s relentless love for His wayward people. (*See \*Gomer*)

4) Hosea 4:5—**Mother of Priest** ~750-725 BC

Hosea prophesied that both priest and prophet would fall, and “I will destroy thy mother.” This judgment targeted either the priest’s literal mother, the symbolic nation, or the priestly lineage. In ancient Israel, a priest’s mother held significant status as the one who raised him in religious understanding and early training. Her destruction alongside her son emphasized the totality of God’s judgment on a corrupt priesthood that had rejected knowledge, forgotten God’s law, and broken their covenants (Hos 4:6).

5) Hosea 4:13–14—**Daughters and Daughters-in-Law of Priests** ~750-725 BC

The daughters and daughters-in-law of priests found themselves caught in the spiritual corruption that engulfed Israel’s religious leadership. These Israelites from the northern kingdom had abandoned Jehovah to worship with Canaanite fertility cults. As these daughters’ fathers and husbands “sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms,” they followed into the same sins: “your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery” (Hos 4:13). The shaded groves where their priestly relatives led worship became sites where the men and women participated in Canaanite fertility rituals and cultic prostitution.

These priestly daughters and daughters-in-law represented a generation raised without God’s laws (Hos 4:4, 6, 9). When the very households responsible for teaching God’s law abandoned it for Baal worship, the women had no foundation for faithfulness. The prophecy that “the people that doth not understand shall fall” (Hos 4:14) proved tragically true when Assyria conquered the northern kingdom just a few years later in 722 BC, scattering these women and families into exile.

6) Hosea 4:14—**Wives Turn to Cultic Prostitution** ~750-725 BC

Hosea condemned Israel's participation in cultic prostitution, yet God will not single out the daughters and daughters-in-law for punishment either because they were forced into prostitution or because the men were hypocritically engaging in the same sins. The leaders and fathers should have protected and taught them, but instead modeled unfaithfulness, for "the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes" (Hos 4:14, ESV). The women's sin mirrored the hypocrisy of their male relatives.

The phrase "sacrifice with harlots" is translated in the NIV as "sacrifice with shrine prostitutes" and refers to ritualized sexual acts performed as worship at pagan altars, supposedly ensuring agricultural abundance and divine favor. These "*qedeshah*/temple prostitutes" (ironically meaning "holy" or "consecrated"), served at shrines throughout the northern kingdom of Israel, revealing how deeply Canaanite religion had corrupted Israelite worship.

Hosea's point was devastating: the men had no moral authority to condemn their female relatives when they themselves participated in the same pagan rituals. God held everyone accountable for their shared guilt. The warning that "the people that doth not understand shall fall" applied to all who engaged in these practices. These temple prostitutes represented not just sexual sin but spiritual adultery. It represents Israel's extensive abandonment of their covenant with God to pursue idols.

7) Hosea 10:14—**Mothers Killed in War** ~750-725 BC

Hosea prophesied the horrific fate awaiting mothers in Israel's coming destruction, warning that "the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children" (Hos 10:14) and "their women with child shall be ripped up" (Hos 13:16). These graphic images described the brutal Assyrian warfare tactics that would devastate Samaria when the northern kingdom fell in 722 BC, just a few years after Hosea's prophetic service.

The prophecy recalled an earlier atrocity when "Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle" (Hos 10:14), using past horror to warn of future judgment. These mothers and their unborn children became the ultimate victims of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness; even the unborn suffered the consequences of their nation's rebellion against God through the merciless violence of ancient Near Eastern conquest. (*See \*2 Kgs 8:12; \*Amo 1:13*)

8) Hosea 11:3-4—**God as Nurturing Parent** ~750-725 BC

God described His relationship with Israel using maternal imagery: "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them" (Hos 11:3). The tribe of Ephraim was the largest in the northern kingdom and is used to represent all Israelites living in Samaria. The image of teaching a child to walk by holding their arms evokes a mother's patient guidance with a toddler, catching them when they stumble and healing their scrapes.

God continued with nurturing metaphors: "I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them" (Hos 11:4, NIV). This is clearer than the KJV, that lifts a yoke from the jaws. This maternal or nurturing portrayal of God countered the surrounding cultures' worship of female fertility goddesses through sex, by revealing that the true God embodied both masculine and feminine attributes of divine love. For Israelite women hearing Hosea's prophecy, these images affirmed that God understood and valued the nurturing work they performed daily, elevating motherhood as a reflection of divine character rather than mere domestic duty.

9) Hosea 12:12—**Wives of Jacob** ~750-725 BC (*see \*Leah; \*Rebekah*)

10) Hosea 13:16 **Pregnant Women Ripped Open** ~750-725 BC

Hosea delivers one of scripture's most horrific prophecies against Samaria: “their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up” (Hos 13:16). This graphic imagery describes the brutal reality of ancient Near Eastern siege warfare, where conquering armies committed atrocities to terrorize populations and ensure complete destruction of enemy lineages. Pregnant women became particular targets because they carried the next generation.

The prophet's stark language served to warn Israel of the devastating consequences of rebelling against God. These weren't empty threats. The Assyrian annals document such practices, and this prophecy literally fulfilled when Assyria conquered Samaria in 722 BC (2 Kgs 15:16).

11) Joel 1:8—**Young Woman in Mourning** (Fictional) ~835-800 BC

The Prophet Joel commanded the southern kingdom of Judah to “Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.” This image portrayed a young bride whose betrothed husband died before their marriage was consummated, leaving her in devastating limbo—legally bound yet tragically widowed before truly becoming a wife.

Her grief was especially profound because she mourned not only her beloved but also her lost future: the children she would not bear, the household she would not establish, the security and identity marriage provided in ancient Israel. Girded in sackcloth, the coarse goat-hair garment of deepest mourning, she embodied inconsolable loss.

Joel used her anguish as the standard for how Israel should mourn their lost relationship with God. Just as this young woman's sorrow was intensely personal and utterly consuming, so Israel's repentance must be genuine and heartfelt. The girl's mourning for her broken relationship with her provider and protector, can be healed through returning to God with a soft heart.

12) Joel 2:16—**Bride Called to National Repentance** (Fictional) ~835-800 BC

Joel called for total national repentance, declaring “let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” This command interrupted a sacred moment in ancient Israelite life—the wedding night when the newly married couple withdrew to consummate their marriage. For the bride, this meant forsaking what she had anticipated since childhood to join the community in fasting and mourning instead. Joel's message was clear: when God's judgment threatened the nation, no personal happiness, however legitimate, took precedence over corporate repentance. The bride's willingness to leave her chamber before consummating her marriage symbolized Israel's need to prioritize their covenant relationship with God above even the most precious human relationships and celebrations.

13) Joel 2:28—**Daughters Who Prophecy** ~835-800 BC

Joel prophesied a future outpouring of the Spirit that would transcend traditional boundaries: “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” This promise of daughters exercising prophetic gifts, places them on equal footing with sons in receiving revelation. In ancient Israel where prophecy was predominantly associated with male prophets, Joel’s vision was revolutionary. Peter declared this prophecy fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell upon both male and female disciples gathered in the upper room (Act 2:16–18). John the Revelator defined “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10).

In Restored scripture, the Book of Mormon confirms this pattern, teaching that “the Holy Ghost . . . is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men” (1 Ne 10:17), making no distinction between male and female recipients. The Doctrine and Covenants reaffirms that spiritual gifts, including prophecy, are given “to some . . . and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:12), distributed according to individual faithfulness rather than gender.

The Restored Church recognizes many forms of prophecy beyond formal priesthood pronouncements. According to the *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, mothers who receive revelation for their families exercise prophetic gifts (Chapter 4: “The Influence of Mothers”). Emma Smith was called “an elect lady” and promised she would “expound scriptures, and to exhort the church” (D&C 25:7), demonstrating women’s prophetic roles.

Throughout LDS history, women have blessed, healed, spoken in tongues, and received personal revelation—all manifestations of Joel’s promise that daughters would prophesy. The gift of the Holy Ghost, available to all baptized members regardless of gender, fulfills Joel’s prophecy that God’s Spirit would be poured out upon “all flesh,” enabling covenant daughters to receive divine communication and spiritual gifts for the blessing of all children of God.

#### 14) Joel 3:3—**Girls Sold for Slaves and Prostitutes** ~835-800 BC

The prophet Joel condemned the nations surrounding Judah for their brutal trafficking of Israelite captives: “they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.” These girls, likely captured during Philistine, Phoenician, and Edomite raids on Judean villages (Joe 3:4–6), were valued so cheaply that enemy soldiers traded them for wine to fuel their celebrations. Young girls were particularly prized in slave markets for domestic service, sexual exploitation, and sale as concubines, yet these captors treated them as disposable commodities worth less than temporary pleasure.

Joel prophesied divine retribution: “I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off” (Joe 3:8). The Sabeans (Sheba) lived in southwestern Arabia, representing the farthest reaches of the known world. God’s judgment would reverse the oppressors’ crimes. God promised their own children would experience the same terror, separation, and slavery they had inflicted on Judean girls. This measure-for-measure justice demonstrated that the Lord would defend His people, particularly those victims of human trafficking and war.