

The Book of Hosea

Background and Introduction

Authorship and Setting

The book is named after its author, whose name means “salvation.”

Hosea was written during Jeroboam II's reign, a time of peace and prosperity for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Combining the territories of Israel and Judah, which would nearly equal Solomon's kingdom, resembling a second golden age. Stability stemmed from God's prophecy to Jeroboam II's great-grandfather, Jehu, who was chosen to eliminate Ahab and Jezebel and end Baal worship. God promised Jehu four sons on Israel's throne (2 Kings 10:30), providing peace until Zechariah, Jehu's fourth son, reigned for just six months. Following his brief rule, Israel faced turmoil until the Assyrians exiled them four kings later.

Hosea prophesies during King Jeroboam's reign, a stable period, as Assyria rises in power and begins conquering nations north of Israel. As they approach Israel's borders, the prophecies of impending judgment by Joel, Obadiah, and Amos become clear, raising the question: **‘How can God do this to me and my children? How can God be loving?’** The book of Hosea addresses God's love amidst judgment. God raises up Hosea not only to proclaim prophecy but also to demonstrate through his life the depth and faithfulness of God's love for His people.

Theological Theme

For this reason, Hosea's theme is *God's saving love for His people in and through judgment.*

Structure

I. God's Judging Love Depicted (1:1-3:5)

II. God's Judging Love Described (4:1-14:9)

I. God's Judging Love Depicted (1:1-3:5)

1. The Purity of God's Love (1:1-11)

At the beginning of his ministry, YHWH commands the Prophet to go and marry a prostitute, verse 2,

Hosea 1:2–5: “2 When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea, Yahweh said to Hosea, “Go, take for yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking Yahweh.” 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and gave birth to a son for him. 4 And Yahweh said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.” 5 “And it will be in that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”

This is astonishing. Why marry someone with harlotry in their heart? Why love someone who could never love you back? Gomer is characterized by harlotry. Why marry someone who will insult and injure you? You will be lonely and abandoned. This isn't Hosea's choice—it's God's. God loved Israel despite their sinfulness, as stated in Deuteronomy 7: ***'It is not because you are more numerous or beautiful, but because He loved you.'*** God's love is selfless and pure, but He must still judge sin. And their first child, named Jezreel, symbolizes this judgment: *'I will visit the bloodshed of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.'* This will bring judgment to Israel, leading to the breaking of their kingdom. This is judgment.

After bearing the prophet a legitimate son, Hosea finds his wife conceiving children that are not his, vs. 6,

Hosea 1:6–9: “6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them.” 7 “and I will have compassion on the house of Judah and save them by Yahweh their God, and I will not save them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen.” 8 Then she weaned Lo-ruhamah. And she conceived and gave birth to a son. 9 And Yahweh said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people, and I am not your God.”

Verse 6 names the next child, a daughter, Lo-Ruhamah, meaning ‘No compassion,’ negatively reflecting a mother’s natural mercy. Yet, compassion can harm, and punishment may be needed. Israel, like an unrepentant harlot, faces God’s declaration: ‘I will no longer forgive the northern kingdom.’ That generation deserves destruction. A third child, Lo-Ammi, meaning ‘not my people,’ signifies total disownment—Israel’s just fate. These children, born of Gomer’s adultery, aren’t Hosea’s, so he owes them no compassion. Similarly, God is justified in denying mercy to Israel, exiling them for their actions.

However, chapter 1 closes with prophetic hope, verse 10,

Hosea 1:10–11: “10 Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And it will be that in the place Where it is said to them, “You are not My people,” It will be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God.” 11 And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will set for themselves one head, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.”

God does exile Israel, casting them out as a lost cause. Witnesses agree they deserve it, yet God says, 'As you go, I will still fulfill every promise I made.' Verse 10 states, 'The sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea,' echoing His promise to Abraham. Even in exile, God declares, 'Where it was said, 'You are not my people,' it will be said, 'You are sons of the living God.''' He assures them, 'I'll bring you back, and our relationship will surpass what it was. You'll be my heirs.' He adds, 'The sons of Judah and Israel will unite under one head in a new exodus, and great will be the day of Jezreel.' Though Jezreel, the first son, once symbolized judgment, God redefines it as acceptance and embrace. He promises, 'You'll forget this judgment, for I'll make it so good the stigma vanishes—because I love you.' To a people who deserve abandonment, God says, 'I'll restore you with blessings beyond imagination—because I love you.' No human love matches this divine, redeeming love that saves the unlovable and undeserving. This love

doesn't erase judgment. Israel's punishment remains deserved. But God's love endures, and He will reverse their exile and restore them to Himself.

The Pursuit of God's Love (2:1-23)

In chapter 2, Hosea gives us greater detail of how God will aggressively pursue His people. After casting Gomer and her children out because of Gomer's sin (vs 2-5), Hosea then obstructs her ability to return to her lovers. He exposes her shame (vs. 3), and then hedges her in in vs. 6,

Hosea 2:6–7: “6 “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.” 7 “So she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go, and I will return to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!’”

God surrounds her with protection to prevent harmful actions, separating her from those who manipulated and abused her. He draws her to Himself, ensuring she realizes her false lovers' deception. Verse 8 notes, 'Now she does not know that I gave her grain, the new wine, and the oil,' as she believed these blessings were from her lovers. By withdrawing His blessings, God makes her aware they originate from Him. He concludes by revealing the root of Israel's sin: “She forgot me, declares YHWH” (13b). God calls her back, urging, 'Stop forgetting Me; remember I provided all this.' After her realization, He could have said, 'Now that you've come to your senses and left those abusers, it's too late—I'm done—goodbye.'

But that's not what he does, vs. 14,

Hosea 2:14–17: “14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her And bring her into the wilderness And speak to her heart.” 15 “Then I will give her her vineyards from there And the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will 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 will be in that day,” declares Yahweh, “That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali.” 17 “So I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth So that they will be remembered by their names no more.”

In verse 14, God says, 'I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness,' reminiscent of His presence with Israel after they escape from Egypt, as noted in verse 15: 'As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.' God invites Israel to 'start over.' In the end times, Israel realizes her shame and offenses against God and sincerely repents. God reassures them, saying, 'It's okay—let's begin anew, as if this never happened.' His readiness to forgive exemplifies His profound love. Verse 16 states, 'You will call me Ishi, not Baali.' 'Ishi' means 'husband,' while 'Baali' is linked to 'Baal,' the false god. This signifies Israel's rejection of that image, choosing instead to honor Him.

Their renewed love for each other restores the world, leading to a true happily ever after, verse 18,

Hosea 2:18–20: “18 “And in that day I will cut a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky, And the creeping things of the ground. And I will break the bow, the sword, and war from the land, And I will make them lie down in security.

"19 "And I will betroth you to Me forever; Indeed, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, "**20** And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Yahweh."

Did God ever make a covenant with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things on the ground? The next phrase in verse 18 hints: 'And I will break the bow,' recalling the Noahic covenant where God set a rainbow in the sky. 'Noah,' meaning 'rest,' symbolizes the fulfillment of this covenant. In the millennial kingdom, God will bring true rest, transcending merely protecting the earth from destruction, echoing the original Sabbath rest for His people. He will renew the world, cultivating love between Him and His people.

In verse 23, we see the final detail of Hosea's glimpse of restoration,

Hosea 2:23: 23 "And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

This verse is quoted in the New Testament regarding the church, which includes Gentiles. Israel didn't deserve God's love, yet He promised faithfulness to them. Gentiles, however, never received such a promise. We are doubly undeserving. God had no obligation to love us, but He does, simply because He chooses to. In the end times, Israel and the Gentiles of the church will gather around God, loving Him. Our presence now and in the future testifies to the depth of His love, embracing those He was not required to love.

The Price of God's Love (3:1-5)

The story has a beginning and an end, but chapter three, the middle, is crucial. It connects the two, showing how God forgives, secures, accepts, and transforms everything. This requires a price, verse 1,

Hosea 3:1–2: "**1** Then Yahweh said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her companion and is an adulteress, even as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." "**2** So I bargained for her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley."

"This is a heavy price: 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Imagine being at a store owing \$20 but only having \$10; you search for loose change and even offer a stick of gum, but they take all you have. This mirrors Hosea's situation—he says, 'To redeem my wife, I gave everything I had to get her back.'"

However, after buying her back, Hosea interestingly places Gomer on relational probation,

Hosea 3:3–5: "**3** Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." "**4** For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. "**5** Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come in dread to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days."

Israel's current state fulfills this prophecy today. There is a real love story shaping history up to now and into the future. Hosea 3:5 says, 'In the latter days, the sons of Israel will return and

seek Yahweh their God and David their king,' referring to the Messiah. 'Yahweh their God' parallels 'David their king' because the Messiah is God. Additionally, only the Messiah could deliver them by paying the price God set. Finally, redeemed Israel is the Son's reward, given by God because of His supreme love for Him.

Christ Connection

When did God pay the ultimate price? The answer is the cross. The cross represents the highest price because it involved God Himself, His judgment, and His holy justice. God gave His Son, the one He loves most, to pay that price. Some may wonder if God truly loves us. He answers, "I gave you My Son. Of course, I love you." Look at the math: 15 shekels, the value of a homer and a half of barley. 15 plus 15 equals 30—30 shekels of silver. The association is clear. He gave everything He had, His Son, to demonstrate His love for us.

II. God's Judging Love Described (4:1-14:9)

In these chapters, Hosea steps outside the object lesson of his marriage to Gomer and begins prophesying against Israel and Judah. However, the motif of marriage remains. In His accusations, God condemns Israel's adultery in two ways: they failed to love Him, and they gave their love to everyone else instead.

1. First Accusation: Israel's Failure to Know God (4:1-6:3)

In chapter 4, verse 1, Hosea condemns Israel for their failure to love and know Him,

Hosea 4:1–3: "1 Listen to the word of Yahweh, O sons of Israel, For Yahweh has a contention against the inhabitants of the land **Because there is no truth or lovingkindness Or knowledge of God in the land.** "2 There is swearing of oaths, deception, murder, stealing, and adultery. They break forth in violence so that bloodshed follows bloodshed."

Their failure to know God is repeated in verse 6,

Hosea 4:6: "6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from ministering as My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I Myself also will forget your children."

Their lack of knowledge is due to their harlotry and drunkenness -- vs. 11,

Hosea 4:11–14: "11 Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away a heart of wisdom. "12 My people ask their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand declares to them; For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, And they have played the harlot, departing from their God. "13 They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains And burn incense on the hills, Under oak, poplar, and terebinth Because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the harlot, And your brides commit adultery. "14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot Or your brides when they commit adultery, For the men themselves go apart with harlots And offer sacrifices with cult prostitutes; **So the people without understanding are ruined.**"

God requires you to know Him, and without that knowledge, your life is destroyed. As verse 6 states, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Chapter 4, verse 11, warns that ignorance corrupts from within, leading to moral decay. Verse 13 shows how failure to know

God drives people to worship creation instead of the Creator, resulting in spiritual unfaithfulness and moral degradation. The tragedy is that those who should know better ruin their lives.

Their failure to know God led to so much wickedness and idolatry that repenting and returning to God was impossible. The judgment of exile had become inevitable for both Israel and Judah, vs. 4,

Hosea 5:4–5: “**4** Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, And they do not know Yahweh.” **5** Moreover, the pride of Israel answers against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; **Judah also has stumbled with them.**”

Hosea says, ‘Here’s your problem, Israel—you want to know why your love is so corrupt? Do you want to know why your love is so flawed? You don’t know God—and when you don’t know God, you have no relationship with Him.’ This is fundamental to a relationship. You can’t claim to be best friends with someone you don’t know or say you’re married to someone you’ve never met. Similarly, you can’t claim to love God without knowing Him. If you don’t seek to know Him, you reject Him. Hosea repeatedly emphasizes that this was Israel’s core issue—God expects His people to truly know Him experientially.

In chapter 5, Israel sees the impending judgment coming upon them from the north, and instead of repenting, instead of seeking help from the Lord, they sought after other nations, vs. 13,

Hosea 5:13: “**13** Then Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his sore, So Ephraim went to Assyria And sent to King Jareb. But he cannot heal you cure you of your sore.”

They didn’t know whom to turn to in their distress. In their ignorance, they sought the wrong salvation that could never save them. Verse 13 continues: “But he is unable to heal you.” They had no way out of their trouble and were indeed trapped. Now, God uses their ignorance to bring about their downfall.

So then, what must Israel do? Look at chapter 6:1,

Hosea 6:1: “**1** “Come, let us return to Yahweh. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has struck us, but He will bandage us.”

“Let us return”—but to whom? The verse is clear: “Let us return to Yahweh.” This is not a vague call but a focused direction. God wants all of you, not just a part entangled in sin. He also wants you to desire all of him. The danger lies in acquiring knowledge about God without truly knowing him. Learning theological truths is valuable only if it deepens your love and worship of him. Hosea doesn’t call for a return to mere doctrine but to Yahweh himself. You are in danger if your faith is purely intellectual debating, reading, and accumulating facts without prayer, worship, or devotion. Even demons acknowledge God but do not love him. To truly know God, you must give yourself entirely to him. Step one: turn from sin and personally devote yourself to him.

Israel must return and then recognize the power of their God, verse 2,

Hosea 6:2: “2 “He will make us alive after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him.”

Hosea 6:1-2 reveals God's unceasing and resurrecting love: **“For he has torn us, but he will heal us; he has struck us, but he will bandage us.”** This verse answers why we should return to God—because of who he is. His love is profound, compelling, and endless. Even when he disciplines, he also restores. Israel had turned to others for help, but they could not heal them. Only God's love remains steadfast. Unlike false saviors who fail, God's love never ceases—it goes beyond the end. **“He will make us alive after two days; he will raise us up on the third day.”** This points to more than revival; it signifies resurrection. In Hebrew parallelism, the third day intensifies the promise—God does not merely rescue from near death; he raises from actual death. Hosea uses marriage as an analogy for God's love. At its highest, Earthly love is bound by death—**“till death do us part.”** But God's love transcends even this. **“Death will never do us part.”** Nothing, not even death, can separate us from his love. His love is undying, and more than that, it is a love that will not let us die.

In verse 3, we find the climax,

Hosea 6:3: “3 “So let us know, let us pursue to know Yahweh. His going forth is established as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the late rain watering the earth.”

Hosea 6:3 declares the ultimate call: **“Let us know—let us pursue to know Yahweh.”** This is the climax of everything—turn from sin, seek Yahweh, and truly know him. Israel failed to know God, ignoring his law, his word, and his character. So what must they do? **“Let us know.”** Loving God is not just about emotions, singing, or outward actions—those have value—but at the core is knowing him. And not just knowing—**pursuing**. The word “pursue” conveys a relentless chase, an obsession. Knowing God must consume us, driving us to search every word of Scripture, wrestling with it, seeking him in every detail. A true love for God means an unquenchable desire to understand him more. At that moment—when knowing God is your passion, your pursuit, your obsession—you truly love him. Why? Because he is above everything else in your life. You love every detail about him, every action, every nuance. That is real love. The rest of verse 3 assures us: **“His going forth is established as the dawn.”** A relationship with him is as certain as the sunrise. **“He will come to us like the rain, like the late rain watering the earth.”** In Israel's dry climate—much like ours—rain is refreshing, life-giving. That is what knowing God is like. Of course, it's worth it. There is nothing better.

Christ Connection

The word **“raise”** in **Hosea 6:2—“He will raise us up on the third day”**—points to resurrection. In Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19, and Job 19:25-26, resurrection is depicted as awakening from the dust. Job declares, **“I know my Redeemer lives, and I will see Him on the last day.”** The Hebrew text even states, **“God will rise up over the dust,”** signifying His power to raise His people from it. Hosea 6:2 unmistakably refers to resurrection. Hebrew parallelism, the context of Hosea, and the broader biblical narrative all affirm this. **1 Corinthians 15:4** declares, **“He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.”** Where do the Scriptures say this? **Right here.** Christ's resurrection on the third day was not random—it was intentional. His resurrection

signifies **our** resurrection. More than that, it guarantees Israel's future resurrection. One day, God will raise His elect from Israel, transforming them into a resurrected nation with Him forever. The third-day resurrection is not just historical; it is a theological declaration of God's promise—fulfilled in Christ—for both individuals and His people.

2. Second Accusations: Israel's Misplaced Love (6:4-11:11)

A. Israel's Unrestrained Love for Anything and Anyone Else (6:4-7:15)

Israel's failure to know God leads to their unrestrained sin - vs 4,

Hosea 7:4-7: "4 They are all adulterers, Like an oven heated by the baker Who ceases to stir up the fire From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. "5 On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers, "6 For their hearts are like an oven As they draw near in their plotting; Their anger smolders all night; In the morning it burns like a flaming fire. "7 All of them are hot like an oven, And they devour their judges; All their kings have fallen. None of them calls on Me."

Israel's spiritual adultery is compared to an oven left unattended, which causes the loaf to become leavened. During the Passover, leaven was not permitted in the home as it symbolized hindering sin and a love for the things of Egypt instead of being ready to obey God and leave Egypt.

Israel's hearts were unrestrained like an untended oven, and they became completely immersed in their sin, leading to drunkenness, anger, and political adultery, vs. 8,

Hosea 7:8-11: "8 Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim has become a cake not turned. "9 Strangers devour his power, Yet he does not know it; Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, Yet he does not know it. "10 So the pride of Israel answers against him, Yet they have not returned to Yahweh their God, Nor have they sought Him, for all this. "11 So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without a heart of wisdom; They call to Egypt; they go to Assyria."

Ephraim and Northern Israel placed their trust in politics and foreign alliances rather than God, turning politics into an idol. Their compromise contaminated their integrity, leading to inevitable failure—like a poorly baked cake that collapses. Rather than securing freedom, they secured weakness. Trusting others over God does not strengthen; it leads to collapse. Their downfall is not just a loss of strength but also of wisdom. **Verse 9** states that **strangers devour their power**, and **verse 11** compares Ephraim to a **silly dove**—like a dodo bird blindly walking to its own death. They run to Egypt and Assyria, relying on those who will ultimately destroy them. Sin has made them not only weak but foolish, unable to see their own destruction.

B. God's Certain Judgement (8:1-10:15)

Because Israel sought aid and friendship from Egypt and Assyria, God will give them over to the ruler they seek. They will reap what they sow, vs. 7,

Hosea 8:7-8: "7 For they sow the wind, And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no growth; It makes no flour. Should it make anything, strangers would swallow it

up. **"8 Israel is swallowed up; They are now among the nations Like a vessel in which no one delights."**

God says to them this: "If you want those nations, if you're lusting after them, if you want to depend on them, then just go." People sometimes wonder, "Is the exile God's cruelty to his people?" No. He just gave them what they wanted. But God did not just give them a taste of their own medicine; He made them understand that they had taken His grace for granted.

Notice verse 12,

Hosea 8:12–13: "12 Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law, They are counted as a strange thing. "13 As for My sacrificial gifts, They sacrifice the flesh and eat it, But Yahweh has not accepted them. Now He will remember their iniquity And punish them for their sins; They will return to Egypt."

From where did God first rescue Israel? From the nation of Egypt, in the event we call the Exodus. God says, "You're going right back there."

Israel wrongly thought that they would be secure and even profit from their treaties with Assyria and Egypt, but Hosea tells them to stop rejoicing, vs. 1,

Hosea 9:1–3: "1 Do not be glad, O Israel, with rejoicing like the peoples! For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God. You have loved harlots' earnings on every threshing floor. "2 Threshing floor and wine press will not feed them, And the new wine will deceive them. "3 They will not remain in the land of Yahweh, But Ephraim will return to Egypt, And in Assyria they will eat unclean food."

They acted as harlots, believing they would succeed – it was all a lie. Because they turned their backs on YHWH, they will be returned to Egypt. Since they sought godless pleasures instead of pursuing holiness before God, they will be defiled by the unclean food of Assyria.

E. Israel's Redemption – God's Love for His Son (11:1-11)

Because you loved everyone else, I sent you back to Egypt and into exile. God could have added, **"And I will never intervene in your life again."** He had every reason to abandon them—no one would blame Him. This was the perfect moment for His love to change. But does God's love change? **No.** Look at **Hosea 11:1.**

Hosea 11:1: "1 When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."

This passage speaks of Israel's early days—God's original love for His people. The phrase **"Out of Egypt I called My son"** uniquely expresses this love. If we truly reflect on it, we see that God's love is undeniable and profound. Why? Because it is a **saving love**—a love that rescues His people. **How so?** Look at the phrase **"Out of Egypt."** This saving love is also a powerful **love**—God overpowered the world's first superpower to redeem His people. At the time of the Exodus, Egypt dominated global trade, agriculture, and military power. Its pharaoh ruled with an iron grip, resisting all foreign influence. Yet, God **crushed** Egypt for the sake of His people. But this love is not only powerful—it is also a **calling love**. The word **"call"** signifies not just drawing someone in but choosing them. God **chose** Israel as His son, and He acted on that choice. Those He chooses, He calls—drawing them with strength. His love didn't stop at delivering Israel from Egypt; He preserved them in the wilderness, providing food and guidance until they became His own. Every step of the way, **He called them to Himself with power, endurance, and perseverance.**

But how do we know this saving love is unchanging, vs. 2,

Hosea 11:2: “2 The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to graven images.”

The “**they**” in verse 2 refers to the prophets: “**The more the prophets called them...**” What did God originally do with His son? **He called him out of Egypt.** Now, in Hosea 11:2, God recounts Israel’s history. He sent prophets to do what? **Call them.** The same word is used. Why does this matter? Because it proves **God’s love never changed.** What He did in the past, He continues to do. There is no difference—Hosea deliberately uses the same word to show that God’s love remains constant. **Even when Israel insulted Him—turning to Baals and graven images, rejecting Him—did His love change?** Look at verse 3.

Hosea 11:3: “3 Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.”

God took Ephraim and taught him to walk—even after they abandoned Him, He carried them in His arms. This is a parental metaphor. Teaching a child to walk is an act of **constant saving.** At first, you might think, *Kids need to fall to learn how to get back up.* But soon, you realize some falls are too hard—they **won’t** get back up without help. That’s God’s point: **He continually saved Israel, over and over, helping them grow and stand on their own.** Why did He take them in His arms? **Because that’s what parents do when their children fall.** But it’s more than that—what did God say in Exodus? “**I will deliver you with an outstretched arm.**” This is the same phrase. God’s message is clear: “**What I did in the Exodus, I kept doing—over and over. I saved you, again and again.**”

Sadly, Israel failed even to realize that without God, they would be dead—they would be dead. And yet He continued to lead them with love, vs. 4,

Hosea 11:4: “4 I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down and fed them.”

God leads His people “with cords of a man, with cords of gentleness,” drawing them away from danger and toward Himself. He lifts the yoke from their jaws and feeds them—He alone sustains them. His love does not bend, change, compromise, or waver. Over and over, He saves—delivering them from Egypt, rescuing them like a parent guiding a child, healing them like a wounded animal. His love remains unshakable. It is impossible for His love to end, verse 8,

Hosea 11:8–9: “8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I give you over to be like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me; All My compassions are stirred. ”9 I will not execute My burning anger; I will not make Ephraim a ruin again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.”

God cannot change His love—every part of His nature rejects the idea. He cannot betray His people, sever His relationship with them, or utterly destroy them. Our love would have broken long ago if it were up to us. After centuries of betrayal, adultery, and ingratitude, we would have given up. But God declares, “I am no man.” His nature is not like ours. His holiness sets Him apart. He is perfect and committed to maintaining that perfection. Change would mean deviation from that perfection, making Him no longer holy. God’s love cannot bend or break.

If He will not bend, then everything else must, verse 10,

Hosea 11:10–11: “**10** They will walk after Yahweh; He will roar like a lion; Indeed, He will roar, And His sons will come trembling from the west. ”**11** They will come trembling like birds from Egypt And like doves from the land of Assyria; And I will settle them in their houses, declares Yahweh.”

Israel will walk in the way of Yahweh. They will bend, but God’s love will not break. His unwavering love will transform His people, ensuring they return to Him. Because His love does not waver, He will move nations. Verse 11 declares, “They will come from Egypt; they will come from Assyria; they will return to Him.” Just as He once led His people out of Egypt during the Exodus, He will do so again. This is not the first Exodus, but the second. And with this, God makes His love unmistakably clear: “The love I had at the beginning is the same love I have at the end. What I did then, I will do again, proving my love is truly irrevocable.”

Christ Connection

Hosea 11:1 reveals God’s original love—a love that remains unchanged from the past into the future. This is why Matthew quotes this verse in Matthew 2:15 when Jesus, as a child, is taken to Egypt to escape Herod. The parallel is unmistakable: Just as God delivered Moses when Pharaoh sought to kill the baby boys, He delivers Jesus from Herod. This perfectly sets up Matthew’s message—Jesus is the one who will lead the second Exodus. He is Israel’s new and final Moses. And who better to lead God’s people than His true Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? His deliverance from Egypt guarantees that He will secure deliverance for God’s people, Israel. But it’s not just Israel that bends to God’s love—it’s the nations and history itself. God arranges every event so that His love is fulfilled. He doesn’t save at the last minute; He orchestrates everything to accomplish His purpose. Even the way He sends His Son into the world is an act of love for His people. His love is unbreakable, and it bends everything else to accomplish His will.

3. A Final Tale: God’s Love (11:12-14:9)

A. Remembering God’s Everlasting Love (11:12-13:16)

In Hosea chapter 12, God immediately pushes us back in time. We have a flashback to Israel’s past, vs 3,

Hosea 12:3–4: “**3** In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his maturity he wrestled with God. ”**4** Indeed, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel, And there He spoke with us,”

God will bring everything back to Himself according to His deeds. Why? Because He has been with Israel from the very beginning. He reminds them, “In the womb, Jacob took his brother by the heel.” God was with them even before they were called Israel, before Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord. The word “wrestle” in Hebrew, *yasar*, is the root of the name *Israel*. Why is Israel called Israel? Because Jacob spent his life wrestling—struggling with people, circumstances, and even God Himself. He thought he was self-sufficient, but his success was never his own because God was with him. That is why his name was changed from Jacob to *Israel*, meaning “God fights.” Israel exists because God fights for them. That is the only explanation for their survival. Since God has been their only protector, He calls them back to

Himself and condemns them for believing they could be independent of Him. Their very existence is proof that they cannot stand without Him.

In verses 12 and 13, we see another flashback demonstrating Israel's dependance on YHWH,

Hosea 12:12–13: “**12** Now Jacob fled to the field of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep.” **13** But by a prophet Yahweh brought Israel up from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept.”

Notice the wordplay in verse 13. In verse 12, it says, “And for a wife he kept sheep,” and in verse 13, “But by a prophet Yahweh brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was kept.” Jacob kept sheep, but Israel was kept by a prophet. The emphasis is straightforward—just as God had to sustain Israel during the Exodus, He also had to sustain Jacob. Israel was weak, enslaved, and powerless, so God intervened. And just as Jacob had to be kept like a lamb, Israel could never have overcome Egypt alone. But God sent a prophet, brought them out, and sustained them. God's message is unmistakable: He loved Israel from the womb, from the time of their forefather's youth, from when Jacob sought a wife. He has been there every step of the way. Without Him, they would not have survived.

Which is why it is so insane that Israel would reject her God and instead kiss her idols (13:2). They were saved by YHWH alone out of Egypt and commanded by YHWH at Sinai to know no other God but YHWH (13:4). Yet Israel has set themselves against their God, vs. 9,

Hosea 13:9: “**9** It is your ruin, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help.”

By choosing their Baals and their golden calves, Israel is choosing their own ruin. They are choosing to be the enemy of their only Savior. They chose suicide rather than repentance and a relationship with YHWH.

If Israel chooses death, how does God's everlasting covenant love live on? Look at verse 14 of chapter 13,

Hosea 13:14: “**14** Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.”

The ultimate power is the ability to overcome death and the afterlife, bringing someone back in resurrection. No human possesses this power. We long to halt or reverse death for our loved ones, but only God can do that. “Shall I redeem them from death?” Redemption requires a price—it demands payment. To redeem is to pay out, to sacrifice something valuable. “God, will you pay the price for your people?” It will cost you someone. It will cost you your Son. Will you pay that price? Beyond power and price, redemption also involves pain. “O death, where are your thorns?” Death is painful—it brings suffering to those who experience it and those left behind. If you truly love someone in death, you would take that pain away. “O Sheol, where is your sting?” The sting of death is tied to God's wrath, his curse, and his punishment for sin. To redeem someone from death is to bear that punishment, to take on God's wrath, so the pain is removed. This is the ultimate power—to undo death, to overcome it completely. Those whom God loves will not suffer eternal punishment or separation. Instead, they will be with him forever because death will never part them from his love.

Human love, even at its greatest, has limits. In marriage, it lasts “till death do us part.” But God’s love has no such boundary. He declares, “Death shall never do us part.” He pays the price, takes the punishment, and ensures that while death has a sting, it is not final. His power overcomes death so that his own will remain his own forever. Why? Because he loves you. His love never bends, never breaks. Everything else will yield, but his love will not. This is not just about Israel, history, or national deliverance. If death stands in the way of God’s love, then death itself must die. God loves his own that much. His love will never break, so death must. And if defeating death costs him his Son, so be it—because he loves you and me.

B. Therefore Love Me (14:1-9)

How do you love the one who has so loved you first? Look at 14:2,

Hosea 14:2: “2 Take words with you and return to Yahweh. Say to Him, ‘Forgive all iniquity And take what is good, That we may pay in full the fruit of our lips.’”

The call to return to God begins with these words: “Take words with you” (Hosea 14:2). Returning to God fundamentally means praying—speaking with Him. To love God is to engage in conversation with Him. But what should we say? What should we deeply believe and express to God? The text answers: “Say to Him, ‘Forgive all iniquity.’” Why ask for forgiveness? Because forgiveness reveals the truth about ourselves. It is a confession: I know I am in the wrong. I dislike who I am. I recognize that my sinful self must come to an end. I have no leverage in this relationship; everything is in Your hands. Forgive me. At the same time, asking for forgiveness is also a confession about God. It acknowledges that He has every right to judge us, to strike us down. I am guilty. I am the offender. If You condemned me, You would be just. But it also acknowledges His mercy. Yet, I know You are compassionate. I know You can forgive. So I plead with You—forgive me.

The second expression of love is devotion to worship. Hosea shifts the focus from Israel’s failure to God’s worthiness. This is found in the rest of verse 2: “Say to God, ‘Take what is good.’” Israel was to bring words of worship, and God was to receive them. The phrase “pay in full” signifies an exact and complete offering—giving what is fully expected. Worship is not about repaying God for salvation, earning His favor, or buying His love. Rather, it is about expressing His worth. Worship means using everything you have and everything you are to declare how worthy He is. But He is eternally worthy—how could I ever express that? This is why true worship is lifelong. Every breath, every action, every moment is an offering to God, striving endlessly to ascribe to Him His full worth.

Love is not only denying yourself and devoting yourself to worship. It also means denying everyone else, verse 3,

Hosea 14:3: “3 ‘Assyria will not save us; We will not ride on horses, Nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’ To the work of our hands; For in You the orphan finds compassion.’”

Why does Hosea mention Assyria? Because throughout this book, Israel has continually turned to Assyria. They have sought its help, made treaties, trusted in its power, and even loved it.

Their dependence on Assyria is not just political—it is spiritual adultery. Everything we do is spiritual in relation to God, and Israel has placed Assyria above Him. But now, they confess: God, we once loved others more than You. We trusted Assyria, but no more. We deny them. We run from them. We want nothing to do with them. Love for God is not just about how you treat Him—it is about how you treat everything and everyone else in comparison to Him. Israel finally understands this. They reject all competing allegiances, whether nations, people, or idols. Nothing matters to us except You, God. We forsake all others so that we can love You fully.

Israel had once taken God's gifts and credited them to their adulterous relationships. Imagine the offense in a marriage—if a husband gave his wife a gift, but she believed it came from her lover and used it to strengthen the affair. That is the depth of Israel's betrayal. But now, they declare: We will never do that again. Just as marriage vows include the promise to forsake all others, Israel now proclaims in verse 3: We forsake all others for You. This is true repentance—a wholehearted pursuit of God while rejecting everything and everyone else.

And when Israel repents and returns, God will resurrect them and restore them to their blessed state, verse 4,

Hosea 14:4–7: “**4** I will heal their turning away from Me; I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them.” **5** I will be like the dew to Israel; He will flourish like the lily, And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. ” **6** His shoots will go forth, And his splendor will be like the olive tree And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. ” **7** Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, and they will flourish like the vine. His name of remembrance will be like the wine of Lebanon.”

He will heal them. He will love them. He will turn His wrath away from them. He will restore His Edenic covenant relationship with them.