



Hosea

Spiritual Adultery

Introduction

- Author: Hosea (הוֹשֵׁעַ) ‘YHWH saves’ (1:1)
- Date: Prior to Assyrian invasion, Jezreel 733 B.C.
- Setting: Spiritual & social decline
- Theme: Spiritual Adultery
- Message: With his life (1-3) & message (4-14), Hosea confronts Israel’s **spiritual adultery**, alternating between caution of God’s imminent judgment and comfort of His future restoration, concluding with a call for their repentance.

Rhetorical Structure

Judgment
(Confront)

1:2-9

2:2-13

4:1-5:15

6:4-11:7

11:12-13:16

Restoration
(Comfort)

1:10-2:1

2:14-3:5

6:1-3

11:8-11

14:1-9

“YHWH has a **covenant lawsuit** against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and **no knowledge of God in the land**; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing and committing adultery; they break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”

Hosea 4:1-2

What is the connection to the covenant here?

Confront: Adultery (4-5)

- Proceeding (1-3): ‘**covenant lawsuit**’ (Deut. 17:8)
[reason: ‘knowledge’ (6:6), disobey covenant; **adultery 14x**]
- Punishment (4-19): “like people, like priest”
 - **Priests** (4-11): reject/be rejected, forget/be forgotten; feed on sin (offerings), eat but not be satisfied (10)
 - **People** (9-14): Baal worship (fertility), spiritual & physical ‘**whoring**’ (9x) but not multiply.
 - **Prevention**: (15-19): Judah, avoid Gilgal & Bethel!
(Beth-aven, ‘house of wickedness’)

Confront: Adultery (4-5)

- Punishment (1-15): ‘For the judgment is for you’
 - Persons (1-2): “I’ll discipline all” (priest/nation/king)
 - Plain (3-5): **whoring** not hidden, pride, **illegitimate**
‘deeds prohibit return, they do not know YHWH’
 - Penalty (6-11): withdrawn, devoured, desolate
[tension: nation w/o hope (4-6), call to repent?]
 - Prey (12f): decay (Ps. 39:12; Prov. 12:4), devour
[irony: protector becomes means of punishment]

Comfort: Restored (6:1-3)

- Repentance? ‘Come, let us return to YHWH’
 - Prayer: model for future exiles (YHWH desires)
 - Presumption: empty words (2-3 days, similes, 6:4f)
- Reversal:
 - Plea: lion **returns** to lair, until people **return** to Him!
 - Physician: tearing to binding (**5:13, contra Assyria**)
 - *Take note of the different self-portraits of God!
 - Press: “Let us **know**, press on to **know** YHWH” (cf. **5:4**)

Confront: Adultery (6:4-11:7)

- Unfaithful (6-7): lack **loyal love** (cloud/dew)
[YHWH desires **sole allegiance** demonstrated in action]
 - Man: murder (6:7-9), theft (7:1f), deception (7:3), unrestrained passions (7:3-7a)
 - God: ‘horrible whoredom’ (idolatry defiles, 6:10, cf. 5:3), no allegiance (call/seek), foreign allegiances (snare), idolatrous worship (7:7b-15)
- Unrelenting: God wants to heal/restore (7:1, 13) but will bring discipline (12-13, 16)

Confront: Adultery (6:4-11:7)

- Rebellion (8:1-6): Israel spurned (זָנָה) covenant and will be judged! (vulture, cf. Deut. 28:49)
 - Independent (kings), idolatry (spurn, זָנָה), ‘not God’
- Reap (8:7-14): “sow wind, reap the whirlwind”
 - Fertility god (cf. 7:14) ≠ agricultural fertility
 - Foreign alliances ≠ security (oppression & exile)
 - Formalism ≠ acceptance (altars-for sin)
 - Forgotten Maker (cities/palaces consumed)

Confront: Adultery (6:4-11:7)

- Adultery (9:1): ‘For you have played the whore’
[fertility worship (Baal) = whoring(זנה) away from God]
- Anguish (9:2-6): barren & banished (Deut. 28-30)
[no sacrifice, festivals; death in exile, homes in ruin]
- Allusions (9:7-17):
 - Gibeah (Jdg. 19): hostility to prophets (7-9)
 - Baal-Peor (Num. 25): spiritual adultery (10)
[Ephraim ‘fruitful’: unfruitful, dried up, 11-14, 16]
 - Gilgal (Josh. 4:19): possess-dispossess (15)

Confront: Adultery (6:4-11:7)

○ Images (10:1-11:7)

○ Fertile vine to thorn and thistle (1-10)

- Worship: altars, pillars, calf idol, high places
- Wages: broken, destroyed, tribute, ruin

○ Trained heifer to plowing iniquity (11-15)

- Corrupt: freedom (thresh) - judgment (plow)
- Change/ or cease: seek righteous/YHWH, live/die by sword

○ Infant, dependent to rebellious (11:1-7)

- YHWH led Israel through its infancy (exodus) but they strayed to worship idols. They refuse to **return**, so they will **return** to exile (Egypt, Assyria)

Comfort: Restored (11:8-11)

- Relent (8-9): rather than ‘overthrow’ Israel
 - God’s heart is ‘overthrown’ with mercy. He won’t totally destroy them [like Sodom & Gomorrah]
- Reversal (10-11): punishment to restoration
 - Lion: not tear prey (5:14), roar to summon people
 - Dove: not easily deceived (7:11) but quick in flight
 - Return: not to exile (11:5) but resettled in homes

Confront: Adultery (11:12-13:16)

- Litigation (11:12-12:2): ‘covenant lawsuit’ (4:1)
 - Infidelity: foreign allegiances (Assyria/Egypt)
 - Injustice: deceit, violence
- Lessons (12:3-14)
 - Jacob’s deception (3-6): God blesses seekers, not deception/strength; ‘return, hold fast to love, justice’
 - Jacob’s exile (7-13): deceit endures (can’t find sin), exile (tents) again, (Aram & Egypt – hope?)
 - Jacob’s future (14): ‘repay him for deeds’ (12:2)

Confront: Adultery (11:12-13:16)

- Prostitute (1-6): idolatry brought death!
[fade-mist, dew, cf. 6:4; full-forgot God, Deut. 6:10f]
- Penalty (7-16): Judgment is on the horizon!
 - God: lurking leopard, bereaved bear, hungry lion; no king or divine compassion to save them
 - Israel: despite the labor pains, not wise to see and repent; horrific judgment coming (infants/babies)

Call to Repent (14:1-9)

- Repent (1-3): ‘**Return** to YHWH your God.’
[note: emphasis on word (confess) & deed (adultery)]
- Response (4-7): ‘I’ll heal their **waywardness**...
and **return** them to My protection & provision’
- Reminder (8-9): God is provider & protector
[Sinful, God is **lurking** (13:7); repentant, God **cares for**]
“Whoever is wise, let him understand...”

Summary

- Covenant: Israel's unfaithfulness to God was vividly pictured in Hosea's marriage!
- Confront: Hosea brought a covenant lawsuit, calling Israel to return to faithfulness [God/man]
- Caution: Without repentance, judgment was imminent, from God and through enemies
- Comfort: Upon repentance, God vowed to replace waywardness, reverse curses, and restore His blessings.

Applications

- Adultery: While we may not worship wood, God views our pursuit of [cause] in the same way as a spouse pursuing another love!
- Allegiance: Just as God jealously pursued Israel, bringing judgment to lead them to repentance, so He will pursue us to bring us back to Him.
He desires holiness more than our happiness!