

# Hosea and Joel

Come Follow Me



# Hosea

Hosea's name means "deliverance" or "salvation" and is connected on a basic level with the names *Joshua* and *Jesus*.

Hosea was a prophet at the time of King Jeroboam II, who died in 746 BC. His ministry may well have continued until the loss of the Northern Kingdom in 721 BC, spanning about 25 years.





# Hosea

In the latter years of the reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.), probably not much earlier than 760 B.C., Hosea began his ministry through the enactment prophecy of marrying a “prostituting” Israelite and starting a family of “prostituting” Israelites, only a few years before Tiglath-Pileser III (745–728 B.C.) of Assyria changed Israel’s attitudes from complacency to desperation.



# Hosea



The Jehu dynasty, begun in 842 B.C., came to an end with the death of Jeroboam II in 753. It was Israel's longest dynasty. Thereafter, beginning with the accession of Zechariah to the throne in Samaria in 753, attempts at dynasty proved futile. The order of the day was usurpation by assassination. **Hosea eventually prophesied during the reigns of more kings than any other OT prophet.** Six kings governed the north during the remaining thirty years until its fall, none of them notable for his administrative or diplomatic skills. Life in Israel became increasingly precarious; the nation's fortunes waned progressively. These developments are reflected in the book of Hosea, which appears to proceed more or less chronologically from the 750s to the 720s in the ordering of Hosea's oracles.

# A brief outline of the content of the book of Hosea

I. Hosea's experience in marriage and the Lord's experience with Israel (1:1-3:5)

II. The Lord's denunciations of Israel (4:1-9:9)

III. The history of divine grace and Israel's apostasy (9:10-13:16)

IV. Future hope for Israel (14:1-9)



# Hosea

His message was the power of God's love for His people. God used Hosea's marriage to Gomer as analogy of His never ending love for the House of Israel and His willingness to gather them back even after they had betrayed Him.



# Did Hosea really marry a prostitute?

Hosea was commanded to “*take thee a wife of whoredoms... for the land hath committed a great whoredom, departing from the Lord*” (Hosea 1:2). This all means that Israel’s waywardness and infidelity constitute a national prostitution.

The phrase “for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord” means therefore that the whole of Israel is engaged in idolatry. It is a national sin and their very way of life. Each person in that nation, male or female, married or single, young or old are engaged in a lifestyle that has nothing to do with God and His word, but everything to do with worshipping other gods, idolatry and the occult. So Gomer, as a citizen of that thoroughly wayward nation is described, just as any Israelite woman could be, as ‘a wife of whoredom’, precisely because she is a typical Israelite, and this is an indictment in itself. God has commanded Hosea to marry a woman who by reason of being involved in the endemic Israelite national unfaithfulness is ‘prostituting’. **To marry any Israelite woman was to marry a ‘prostituting woman’, so rife was the religious promiscuity of Hosea’s day.** (Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 26-27)

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# Ways of reading

The narrative in chapter 1 reports the Lord's command to Hosea to marry a "wife of whoredoms" to whom were later born three children, whose names symbolized facets of the Lord's ruptured relationship with his people. The narrative in chapter 3 recounts the divine charge to Hosea that he love an adulteress, purchasing her and then confining her to his home, a virtual house arrest (Hosea 3:1-3).

Solutions proposed to explain the ties between the two reports include the hypothesis that Hosea unknowingly married a harlot and, later, retrospectively applied his resulting marital situation to that of the Lord and traitorous Israel. It is clear from the text, however, that the prophet knew beforehand that the woman was a harlot (Hosea 1:2; 3:1). Another interpretation has held that chapters 1 and 3 were to be understood as allegory.

# What we learn about Jesus Christ and his love for us

The story of Hosea and Gomer is one of the most tender illustrations in all of scripture. Not only is this story a commanding allegory of God's infinite capacity to love and to forgive but it also teaches us significant lessons about the sort of love and forgiveness the Lord expects from each one of us.



“I desired  $\tau\omicron\eta$  *hesed*/mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6.6).

*Hesed* is often linked together with the Hebrew word for “covenant” -*berit*. This occurs so often that *hesed* can be a synonym for covenant. Notice the connection between *hesed* and covenant in the following verse: “He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy (*hesed*) for a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy. 7:9, 12).

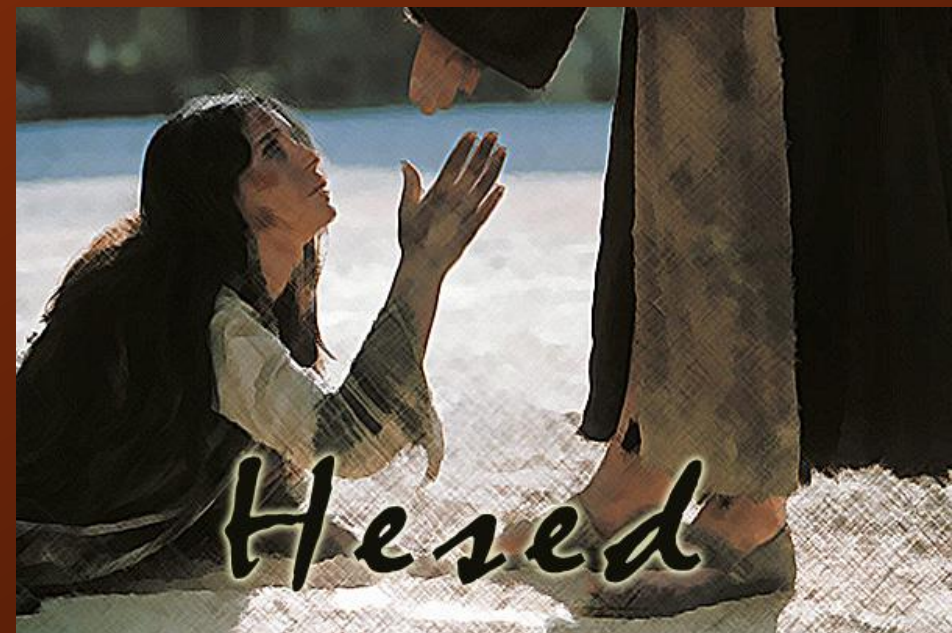
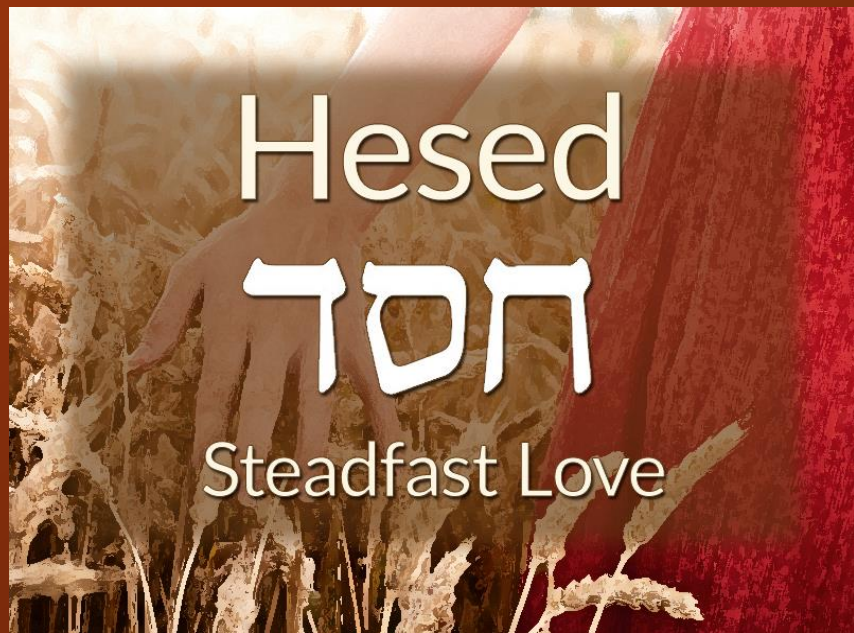
*Hesed* “applies primarily to God’s particular love for His chosen and covenanted people. **The entire history of Yahweh’s covenantal relationship with Israel can be summarized in terms of *hesed*...** the association of *hesed* with “covenant” keeps it from being misunderstood as mere providence or love for all creatures; it applies primarily to God’s particular love for His chosen and covenanted people. ‘Covenant’ also stresses the reciprocity of the relationship; but since God’s *hesed* is ultimately beyond the covenant, it will not ultimately be abandoned, even when the human partner is unfaithful and must be disciplined.



# What we learn about Jesus Christ and his love for us

A verse that has power in this text is Hosea 6:6. It reads, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” The word used in this verse for mercy is an interesting word. The word is *hesed* חֶסֶד. It means much more than mercy. *Hesed* is a deep, abiding, protecting and covenant based type of faithful love. It is a word that I find hard to describe in English. The best way I can describe *hesed* is by way of illustration.





# God's Deep Feeling

Traditional Christian theology has held that God is not subject to passions or emotions. Although this idea has been challenged by some Christian theologians, it remains a strong tenet of Christian belief. Hosea's depiction of God cuts against this traditional view.

We read things with deep feeling like: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . My heart is turned toward thee, and my mercies are extended to gather thee. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee" (JST Hosea 11:8-9).

[See the summary article "Impassibility of God," in [The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church](#), 2d ed., ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University, 1974), p. 694.]



# Hosea 11: Israel, God's son, was called out of Egypt

Hosea 11.1: When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

The paternal metaphor was commonly used in the ancient Near East to express the relation between ruler and ruled, sovereign and subject. It is not incongruous for prophets to mix metaphors, such as Israel as God's wife and as God's child.

# Recontextualization

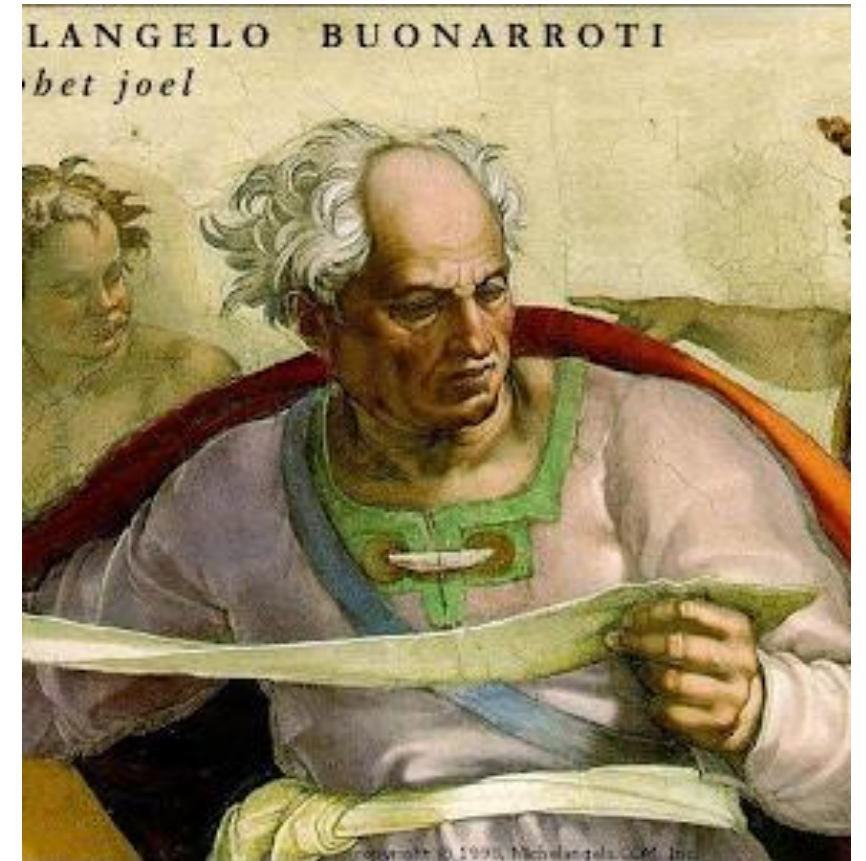
Matthew 2:13-15 provides further understanding in the typological use of this passage of scripture: “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”

Matthew uses Hosea’s statement to show that the coming of the Messiah is an extension of the Lord’s love to His people. Matthew does not say that Hosea had Jesus in mind when Hosea 11.1 was originally written. Instead, Matthew says that the experience of Jesus matched what Hosea had written about Israel. This is a way that later New Testament authors would recontextualize Old Testament passages to teach about Jesus. In many ways, the Old Testament authors did the same thing. They would repackaging stories and legends from their day and make create new scripture that taught about their experiences with God in terms that they could understand.

# Joel

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The book of Joel seems to be completely removed from the context of the time and place in which it was written. This absence of contemporary references certainly seems to be deliberate; it is as though Joel wanted us to leave behind all thoughts of the here and now and join him in his visions of the future. And the future is clearly the book's focus. **Joel's apocalyptic style makes his fundamental message very clear: in a dramatic way, God will bring judgment upon the world, destroying evil and blessing the righteous with millennial peace and happiness**







## Moroni quoting Joel

Joel is particularly significant to us because he prophesied of our day. On the night he visited Joseph Smith, Moroni quoted from Joel and said that the prophecies would shortly be fulfilled. (see Joseph Smith—History 1:41.) Joel is also a major source of information on the battle of Armageddon, one of the momentous events in the coming history of the world. So, although the book of Joel is a short work, it is full of valuable insights and information.

# Apocalyptic Visions

The symbolism in apocalyptic vision is thus much different from metaphor, the literary imagery that is used so abundantly throughout the Old Testament. Metaphor is meant to be understood. For the most part it is easily comprehended by those who are familiar with the culture, history, language, geography, and social circumstances in which the scripture arose. ***Apocalyptic vision, in striking contrast, is meant to be understood fully only with the help of other revelation.*** The vision usually requires an angelic interpreter or a companion revelation to unlock its meaning (see D&C 77, where the Lord unlocks portions of John's Apocalypse). Joseph Smith taught this principle:





# He holds himself responsible

When the prophets speak of seeing beasts in their visions, they saw the images—types to represent certain things. And at the same time they received the interpretation as to what those images or types were designed to represent. I make this broad declaration, that where God ever gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, **he always holds himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof**, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief in it. Don't be afraid of being damned for not knowing the meaning of a vision or figure where God had not given a revelation or interpretation on the subject ([\*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith\*](#), p. 185).

# The Quiet Witness

What are the spiritual blessings of which Joel prophesied? Most often when we think of such things, we envision such miraculous events as visions, healings, and speaking in tongues. Though these are tremendous manifestations, the blessings of which Joel spoke are not restricted to these. Perhaps the greatest fulfillment of these words is in the quiet witness that faithful Saints receive in answer to their humble prayers concerning the truthfulness of the gospel and the divine mission of the Church.





# The Quiet Witness

The most powerful manifestation of the Spirit today is the personal revelation that we call a testimony, which is granted freely by the Lord to the sons, daughters, old and young, servants and handmaids of the Church. God's Spirit is at work among the Latter-day Saints as they quietly "prophesy"—enjoy personal revelation in their lives—"dream dreams," "see visions," and otherwise enjoy the blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

(Kent Jackson, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.)



# Temple Images in Joel

The people are gathered at the temple. We see this in Joel 2.15-17, where the horn is blown for a communal fast and lament, where the priests are at the porch and the altar (Joel 2.17). The bridegroom comes out of his chamber (Joel 2.16), and the bride comes out from her wedding canopy, or *ḥupâ* הַפָּתִיחַ – this has images of the divine marriage, whether of an actual ceremony, where a bride and groom are told to leave their celebrations and come to the fast or to the divine marriage between Jehovah and his people embodied in the First Israelite Temple Festival.

# Temple Images in Joel

In this temple setting “the floors shall be full of wheat” (Joel 2.24), an image that could simply mean that Israel will be fruitful or that the Saints are at the threshingfloor, the stone at the base of the Holy of Holies, where they as the “seeds” are liturgically brought into the presence of God the Father. After they are brought to the “floor,” they “shall eat in plenty,” and this in turn is the feast we see represented in Exodus 24, D&C 27 and Revelation 19, where the Saints, once they come into the presence of God are allowed to feast in his presence in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

# Temple Images in Joel

These Saints (both men and women – Joel 2.28) made perfect will have the Lord in their midst (Joel 2.27), not be ashamed (Joel 2.26), have visions and prophecy open unto them (Joel 2.28), and be delivered “in Mount Zion” (Joel 2.32). The enemies of Israel will be put down (Joel 3.4-8, 19), and dwelling in God’s presence, the Saints will be cleansed from the sins and blood of this world (Joel 3.21).

This can be seen as a temple vision and prophecy of the Saints that have come unto the Lord through covenant. With all of the images laid out in this chapter, when read in connection with the work that LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks have published on the subject, seeing this in a First Israelite Temple setting comes into clearer focus.