

LESSON 34
“I Will Betroth Thee unto Me in Righteousness”
Hosea 1-3; 11; 13-14

OVERVIEW:

Christ is the bridegroom, the Church is the bride. The message of Hosea is the deep compassion of the Lord for his people, very much like the love of a groom for his bride or the love of a father for his children. Hosea chooses the tender subject of marriage and moral fidelity to emphasize the nurturing and forgiving nature of our Father in Heaven.

The Hebrew text of Hosea’s book is very corrupted making some passages difficult to grasp. The key to comprehending all of Hosea’s words lies in chapters 1 through 3, the report of his marriage to a harlot. Hosea served between 755 BC to 725 BC. Others say between 790 and 724 BC. He was contemporary with Isaiah, Amos, and Micah.

During this time period, Israel is about to fall to Assyrian armies. Hosea wants Israel to have the right frame of mind that will produce right actions. Hosea 6:6 says “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Hosea’s main target is the Northern Kingdom, the Ten Tribes.

A theme of Hosea is Israel as a harlot or prostitute. The first three chapters we have Hosea apparently being told to marry a prostitute. Lev 21:10-15 prohibited this by priests. And *he that is* the ^ahigh priest among his brethren, upon whose head the ^banointing oil was poured, and ^cthat is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; 11 Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; 12 Neither shall he go out of the ^asanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the ^bcrown of the ^canointing oil of his God *is* upon him: I *am* the LORD. 13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity. 14 A ^awidow, or a divorced woman, or profane, *or* an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife. 15 Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the LORD do sanctify him.

In the first three chapters we have a wedding in chapter one and one in chapter three. There are 5 possibilities of what is going on here.

Plural marriage, two wives.

Marriage, divorce, remarriage to same woman.

Marriage, divorce, remarriage to different woman.

Marriage, widower, remarriage.

No literal marriages at all.

Also, there are five possible explanations to what is happening.

1. Hosea was actually commanded to marry a harlot.
2. The whole experience came to Hosea in a dream.
3. Hosea married a woman who at the time was good, but became a faithless wife, a harlot.

4. A variation of 3 is that Gomer was not an actual harlot but was a worshipper of Baal; therefore she was guilty of spiritual harlotry.
5. The story is an allegory designed to teach Israel the spiritual consequences of her unfaithfulness.

Sidney Sperry, an LDS Bible scholar said that Hosea never did actually contract such a marriage. He said: “The Lord’s call to Hosea to take a harlotrous woman to wife represents the prophet’s call to the ministry – a ministry to an apostate and covenant breaking people. The evil children of this apparent union represent the coming of the judgments of the Lord upon Israel, warning of which was to be carried to the people by the prophet. The figure of the harlotrous wife and children would, I believe, be readily understood at the time by the Hebrew people without reflecting on Hosea’s own wife, or, if he was unmarried, on himself. Furthermore, for Hosea to marry a woman with questionable past would make it impossible for him to preach to his people and expose their sexual immoralities. They could point the finger of scorn at him and say, ‘You are as guilty as we are; don’t preach to us.’” (Voice of Israel’s Prophets, p. 281)

Elder Henry B. Eyring said: “This was a story of a marriage covenant bound by love, by steadfast love... The Lord, with whom I am blessed to have made covenants, loves me, and you... with a steadfastness about which I continually marvel and which I want with all my heart to emulate.” (Covenants and Sacrifice, Church Education Symposium, 15 Aug. 1995, p. 2)

SCRIPTURES:

HOSEA CHAPTER 1

Hosea and his family are a sign unto Israel—In the day of gathering, Israel shall become the sons of the living God.

1 THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of ^aUzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. (The first verse is the book’s title.)

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a ^awife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great ^bwhoredom, departing from the LORD.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel (God will disperse); for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of ^aJehu, and will cause to ^bcease the kingdom of the house of Israel. (refers to 2 Kings 9 - A prophet anoints Jehu king over Israel, and prophesies destruction of house of Ahab and the death of Jezebel—Jehu kills Joram in the field of Naboth—Jezebel slain and eaten by dogs.)

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will ^abreak the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. (The Lord will not strengthen Israel in battle.)

6 ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name ^aLo-ruhamah (ie not having obtained mercy): for I will ^bno more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them ^caway.

7 But I will have ^amercy upon the house of ^bJudah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by ^chorses, nor by horsemen.

8 ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

9 Then said God, Call his name ^aLo-ammi (not my people): for ye are not my people, and I will not be

your *God*.

10 ¶ Yet the ^anumber of the children of Israel shall be as the ^bsand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered (the chiasm pivots on the Abrahamic covenant); and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the ^csons of the ^dliving God. (no longer not my people, but the children of God)

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be ^agathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel. See Jeremiah 3:18 - In those days the ^ahouse of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the ^bland of the ^cnorth to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.)

CHAPTER 2

Worshipping false gods brings severe judgments upon Israel—In the last days they shall be reconciled to God and become his people.

1 SAY ye unto your brethren, ^aAmmi; (ie My people) and to your sisters, ^bRuhamah. (ie Having obtained mercy, or those who have obtained mercy)

2 Plead with your ^amother, (the nation Israel) plead: for she *is* not my wife, neither *am* I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 Lest I ^astrip her ^bnaked, and set her as in the day that she was ^cborn, and make her as a wilderness (the captivity), and set her like a dry land, and slay her with ^dthirst. (as the marriage covenant has been violated by her, the husband is no longer under obligation to support her)

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they *be* the children of whoredoms. (idolaters, illegitimate children, so the husband has no obligation for them)

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done ^ashamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers (priests, priestesses, and idols of the Canaanite temples or, in the larger sense, any person one loves more than God), that give *me* my ^bbread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. (verses 5-9, 13, bread, corn, wool, jewels-worldly values and treasurers. She thinks she gets her wealth from the nations around her, not from God, see v.8)

6 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will ^ahedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. (They will not escape judgment.)

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first ^ahusband; for then *was it* better with me than now. (Unless Israel puts aside her harlotries and reforms she will meet with stern action. For her gross sins she will be checked and punished and thus learn in the crucible of bitter experiences that her husband means more to her than she at first supposed.)

8 For she did not know that I gave her ^acorn, (Heb grain) and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal. (It was God who had blessed her – see v.5. They were using their God bestowed wealth to serve idols.)

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness. (the covenant is revoked and the blessings are taken away)

10 And now will I discover her ^alewdness in the sight of her lovers (Israel's allies), and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. (Her allies can't defend Israel.)

11 I will also cause all her ^amirth to ^bcease, her feast days, her new ^cmoons, and her ^dsabbaths, and all her ^esolemn feasts. (Israel will not be able to worship in captivity.)

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of ^aBaalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her ^bearrings (Heb – nose jewels) and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD. (the Lord heaps covenant cursings on Israel to humiliate her in the eyes of the nations)

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, I will allure her (Jehovah still cares for her and will try to win her back), and bring her into the ^awilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. (He will take her aside privately. Jehovah's steadfast affection for Israel despite her waywardness through the years is shown in attempts to woo her again.)

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of ^aAchor (ie Trouble) (a rich valley north of Jericho near Gilgal, the Lord will restore her to great blessings) for a door of hope: and she shall ^bsing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

16 And it shall be at that ^aday, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me ^bIshi; (Hebrew for “my husband”) and shalt call me no more ^cBaali. (Hebrew for “my master”) (Eventually Israel will accept God as her Lord and her true husband.)

17 For I will take away the names of ^aBaalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. (His tender and compassionate wooing will result in Israel's eventual return to the fold. No longer will she indulge in the vicious Canaanite immoralities mentioned so frequently in Chapter 2.)

18 And in that day will I make a ^acovenant for them with the ^bbeasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down ^csafely. (Animals will not injure them and they will be safe from robbers and nightly alarm.)

19 And I will ^abetroth thee unto me for ever; (the fullness of the new and everlasting covenant restored to Israel in the latter days and the eternal blessings that will result from Israel's faithful marriage to Jehovah) yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness (lawful), and in judgment (fit & becoming), and in lovingkindness (affection), and in mercies. (forgiving)

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt ^aknow the LORD. (no more infidelity)

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; (rain)

22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. (Hebrew for “God shall sow.” The down trodden and poor Israel. Like the Jezreel Valley, they have great potential and will be resown and made fruitful by the Lord.)

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon ^aher (Heb lo-ruhamah) that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to ^bthem (Heb lo-ammi) *which were* not my ^cpeople, Thou *art* my ^dpeople; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God. (Jehovah affirms that in the latter-days, Israel shall be highly blessed and the covenant renewed between them that existed at the first.)

CHAPTER 3

Israel shall seek the Lord, return to the Lord, and receive of his goodness in the latter days.

1 THEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend (Heb-one who loves evil), yet an ^aadulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love ^bflagons of wine. (or raisin cakes (used in fertility rites))

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and *for* an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley; (Women were considered property at this time. The husband purchased his wife from her lover. In what sense has Jesus Christ “bought” each of us? What does Christ require of us in return? This price is half the price of a slave. Hosea wanted to buy her back, just like God wants to redeem us.)

3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee. (Even though the price had been paid for her, there

was a time of testing, of waiting, and preparing, before one is reinstated to all the blessings of the covenant and enjoys the company of a husband and a savior. Gomer had to purify her life before she could feel Hosea's love, because true love requires that Gomer also love herself. In their captivity Israel would suffer without God's help until she purified her life; then she would know of God's continued love.)

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim: (a Canaanite figure that was worshipped)

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and ^aseek the LORD their God, and ^bDavid their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the ^clatter days. (This talks of Israel's impending captivity. They would be leaderless. What did the ephod carry? The Urim and Thummim.)

CHAPTER 11

Israel, as a child, called out of Egypt in similitude of our Lord, as a child, returning therefrom—But Ephraim turns away from the Lord.

1 WHEN Israel *was* a child, then I ^aloved him, and called my ^bson out of ^cEgypt. (Matthew saw the emergence of Israel from Egypt as a type, or pattern, of Jesus' coming out of Egypt [Matt 2:15 - And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of ^aEgypt have I called my son.])

2 As they called them, so they went from them: they ^asacrificed unto ^bBaalim, and burned incense to graven images.

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I ^ahealed them. (like a father with a toddler, he had taught Ephraim to walk)

4 I drew them with (the) cords of a man (leading strings to teach a child to walk), with bands of ^alove(;) and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

5 ¶ He shall not return ~~into~~ (unto) the land of ^aEgypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. (Prophecy of Israel's captivity.)

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own ^acounsels.

7 And my people are bent to ^abacksliding from me: though they called them to the ^bmost (Most) High, none at all would exalt *him*.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as ^aAdmah? (See Deut 29:23 - *And that* the whole land thereof is ^abrimstone, and ^bsalt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, ^cAdmah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? ~~mine heart is turned^b within me, my repentings are kindled together.~~ (My heart is turned toward thee, and my mercies are extended to gather thee.) (His original feelings of parental love still persisted and, although he must punish his people, he vowed that he would check his anger.)

9 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: and I will not ^aenter (or come in anger) into the city.

10 They shall ^awalk after the LORD: he shall roar like a ^blion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. (The Lord determines to leave a remnant from Israel. When he roars like a lion, to make himself known, His righteous remnant will gather to Him. They will gather to him from whatever country they resorted to.)

11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses (temples), saith the LORD. (He resolved to restore their descendants to their ancestral home. See Jeremiah 3:18 - In those days the ^ahouse of Judah shall walk with the house of

Israel, and they shall come together out of the ^bland of the ^cnorth to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.)

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ^aruleth (or walks) with God, and is faithful with the saints. (Ephraim is already near to destruction, but Judah is not yet ripe.)

CHAPTER 13

Ephraim's sins provoke the Lord—There is no Savior beside the Lord—He ransoms from the grave and redeems from death.

1 WHEN Ephraim spake trembling (humble & meek), he exalted himself in Israel (the 10 tribes break off after Solomon's death); but when he ^aoffended in Baal, he died.

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten ^aimages of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. (A test – a real Jew would not do this.)

3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the ^achaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

4 Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no ^agod but me: for *there is no* ^bsaviour ^cbeside me.

5 ¶ I did ^aknow thee in the wilderness, in the land of great ^bdrought.

6 According to their pasture, so were they ^afilled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they ^bforgotten me.

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe *them*:

8 I will meet them as a ^abear *that is bereaved of her whelps*, (excessive aggressiveness) and will rend the ^bcaul (ie chamber) of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. (Animals drinking blood, tearing flesh, breaking bones to get the marrow)

9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast ^adestroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine ^bhelp.

10 I will be thy ^aking: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a ^bking and princes? (It is the Lord who can help them, not kings.)

11 I gave thee a king in mine ^aanger, and ^btook *him* away in my wrath. (Under direction from Samuel.)

12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid.

13 The ^asorrows of a ^btravailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place* of the ^cbreaking forth of children. (This is a difficult passage because it uses both genders, he and she.)

14 I will ^aransom them from the power of the ^bgrave; I will ^credeem them from death: O ^ddeath, I will be thy ^eplagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: (The resurrection will occur) ^frepentance (Heb compassion) shall be hid from mine eyes. (A better translation might be “Revenge shall be far from my thoughts.” the future gathering of Israel)

15 ¶ Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east ^awind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. (Israel will be smitten with famine and war.)

16 ^aSamaria (capital of the Northern kingdom.) shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be ^bdashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up. (Israel soon to be destroyed.)

CHAPTER 14

In the last days, Ephraim shall repent and return unto the Lord.

1 O ISRAEL, return (the Hebrew word for return means repent) unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast^a fallen by thine iniquity. (God is encouraging repentance and reconciliation.)

2 Take with you words (pray), and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we^a render the^b calves of our lips. (This verse deals with one's resolves to do better. To present the sincere prayers of one's lips as an offering to the Lord was as precious as the best offerings in the Mosaic Law, which were young oxen or bullocks.)

3^a Asshur (ie Assyria) shall not^b save us; we will not ride upon^c horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the^d fatherless findeth mercy.

4 ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will^a love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. (a blessed future)

5 I will be as the^a dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. (Lebanon at the time was very lush and beautiful. In the April 1954 National Geographic Magazine they said that 4 million citrus trees had been planted in Lebanon to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 29:17.)

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the^a olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. (Israel shall blossom as the Garden of Eden)

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; (from death-resurrection) they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

9 Who *is*^a wise, and he shall understand these *things*?^b prudent, and he shall know them? for the^c ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall^d walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. (Hosea closes his book by saying whoever is wise will understand what he has said, but whoever is foolish will only stumble upon his words. The wicked are not enlightened by the Spirit so they cannot perceive the meaning of these words, and will continue to stumble about in ignorance.)

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