

Present Truth Lessons from Hosea 1-3

Description

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from

Hosea 1-3

This booklet contains the New Moon message of February 8, 2019. It presents new light upon the book of Hosea, especially chapters 1-3, for present truth believers. Please study its contents thoughtfully and prayerfully. Seek light, love, and life, and let your heart be strengthened.

I will heal your disloyalty; I will love you freely, for my anger has turned
from you. You will live again beneath my shadow and will flourish like a garden.

You will blossom like a vine with fragrance like the wine of Lebanon.

(based on Hosea 14:4, 7)

February 8, 2019

by Trent Wilde

Dear Branch Candidates,

As many of you are aware, the message given to us at the most recent new moon (Jan. 8, 2019) relates to the current crisis in the church and our Heavenly Family's solution. I have been writing a tract detailing both the crisis and the solution, though only the first part has been completed. I know you all have been waiting to hear the solution, and you have heard that it is found in Hosea, but that is about it. A major reason for the delay is that our Heavenly Family has continued to reveal more from Hosea, some of which should go out to the Adventist world as part of the tract and some of which should not.

The truth our Heavenly Family has given this new moon (Feb. 8, 2019) is a continuation of what was given last month. There is enough for a full commentary on Hosea, but due to shortness of time, a mini-commentary will have to do. This little booklet deals with some questions pertaining to the book of Hosea as a whole and then explores some of the first three chapters.

The Book of Hosea as a Whole

We in this message have learned that the idea of a biblical canon is unscriptural, uninspired, unhelpful, misleading, and even demoralizing to the pursuit of knowledge. Thus, we should know that it would be wrong to reject a writing due to its exclusion from a biblical canon or to accept a writing due to its inclusion within a biblical canon. Furthermore, since we have realized that philosophical materialism is true, we have had to correct our understanding of what knowledge is and how it may be obtained. We can no longer accept the idea that it is okay to accept a proposition based on "faith;" we must only accept propositions based upon experimentally verifiable evidence consisting of facts (a.k.a. evident aspects of the one and only material

universe) and nothing else.

So, where does this leave us with the book of Hosea? It is one writing among many which we may have accepted as true simply because it is in “The Bible” without even knowing what positions it advocates. Do you know the message of the book of Hosea? Do you know whether it even claims to be written by Hosea? Who was Hosea anyway? Does this book actually reflect his teachings? What were his claims? When was this book written? To whom was it written? What were the issues of his day? Now that we know the truth-based moral system of our Heavenly Family, does Hosea teach it? These questions, among others, are the questions we have been trained, through the message, to ask, as I hope you all thoroughly understand. Just as the foolish virgins could not obtain oil from the wise, just so no person can obtain knowledge from another. Yes, you can be told the truth, but you cannot know the truth until you do the experiment yourself – whether it be direct or indirect (remember the teaching). Thus, I will relate to you what I know that you may run the experiment to know for yourself.

Authorship of *Hosea*

In searching *Hosea* for clues of authorship, it becomes apparent that the book has different sections, not all of which came from the same author. There are three main sections to *Hosea*:

1. Chapters 1-2
2. Chapter 3
3. Chapters 4-14

Since these sections are evidently separate, they need to be considered independently.

Section 1 – Hosea 1-2

The first two chapters do not claim to be written by Hosea, but are written as a third-person narrative *about* Hosea. Here are a couple verses to illustrate:

When Yahweh began to speak through *Hosea*, Yahweh said to *Hosea*, “Go, take for yourself a wife...” – Hosea 1:2

So *he* [Hosea] went and *he* took Gomer, the daughter of Divlaim. – Hosea 1:3

This third-person narration is most clear from Hosea 1:2-9, but after that it sounds more like a first-person monologue in which the speaker has a dual voice – that of Hosea and Yahweh. The duality makes sense in light of the fact that Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is used as an allegory for Yahweh’s relationship with Israel. Thus, what Hosea says to Gomer is what Yahweh says to Israel. Chapter 2 is full of phrases which could be taken equally as Yahweh speaking to Israel or as Hosea speaking to Gomer along with phrases which more easily fit the Hosea to Gomer scenario and yet others which more easily fit the Yahweh to Israel scenario.

Since Hosea is never referenced in third-person in chapter 2, it may be that the content of that chapter was originally a separate document which the author of chapters 1-2 quoted. In its current form, Hosea 1-2 is not from the pen of Hosea, but it may quote a document written by him. If not, it may relate his actual teachings, albeit probably not word-for-word. An alternative is that the author just made up the prophecy for the sake of his story. The closer to the lifetime of Hosea these first two chapters were written, the less likely this latter scenario is, however, since a fabrication so close to the event could be easily falsified. We'll get back to this when discussing the date of these chapters.

Section 2 – Hosea 3

Unlike the first section, Hosea 3 is written in the first-person voice of the prophet. It does not use the word "Hosea," but it tells a story which, despite different details, seems to refer to the same reality as Hosea 1-2; that is, Hosea's marriage to an adulterous woman. Interestingly, both sections use this marriage as an allegory for Yahweh's relationship with Israel. If this was a common theme, it wouldn't indicate any real connection between the two sections, but as it stands, the theme is apparently unique to Hosea-material among what remains from that time. In other words, since Hosea is the only one from that time, or before, with whom the Yahweh-married-to-Israel theme is associated, Hosea 3 most evidently claims to be written by Hosea. Unique themes is just one aspect; however, the language and date are also relevant. Since the date matches the time of Hosea (as we will see) it, along with the other aspects, indicates that Hosea is indeed the author.

Section 3 – Hosea 4-14

This section is very different from the first two in that it doesn't relate to Hosea's marriage to an adulterous woman. That said, it is very similar in other respects, including portraying Israel as the adulterous wife of Yahweh (c.f. 4:12; 9:1). It contains other teachings, imagery, and language that is also strikingly similar to what is in the first two sections. It is written in the first-person voice of the prophet with the same sort of Hosea-Yahweh dual voice that is present in Chapter 2. The date, language, style, themes, etc. all indicate that Hosea is, in fact, the author.

Before moving on to the issue of the dating of the various sections of *Hosea*, I should also point out that the idea that the bulk of the book of Hosea originated with Hosea himself is actually the consensus position among modern critical *Hosea* scholars. The top three critical commentaries are probably 1) *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible) by Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, 2) *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea* (Hermeneia) by Hans Walter Wolff, and 3) *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (International Critical Commentary) by A. A. Macintosh. These all hold that Hosea himself authored most of *Hosea*, and the introductions to their commentaries give more reasons for that conclusion.

Date of *Hosea*

As with the authorship, the date of each section needs to be considered separately. This said, there are a few broad points that can be made that apply to all three sections. First, with the exception of 1:1 and a few places that may be later insertions, every bit of evidence from all three sections of *Hosea* points to the 8th century BCE as the century from which this text comes to us. The understanding by modern linguists of the development of the Hebrew language over time has increased a great deal in recent years and it reveals that the language of *Hosea* is 8th century BCE Hebrew. The historical references are all in line with the 8th century BCE, as well as the relationship of this document to other documents. Wolff, in the introduction to his commentary, pointed out,

To be sure, we possess very little biographical information about him [Hosea]. Yet it is possible to date his sayings with a high degree of accuracy. At the most, the exact year may be disputed, but not the decade. – Wolff, p. xxi

Section 1 – Hosea 1-2

In addition to the general points mentioned above, this section does contain some points that allow for more specific dating. What is probably most telling is the fact that Hosea 1:4-5 connects three events together: 1) the punishing of the house of Jehu, 2) the end of the kingdom of Israel, and 3) the breaking of the bow of Israel. As I hope you all understand from studying the message, prophecy does not describe the actual future in advance. It describes plans which may be fulfilled in a number of different ways. Since we are free agents, able to make choices which affect future outcomes, prophecies are usually worded in a way which is open to multiple possibilities in that it lacks certain specifications. Prophecies which are written after-the-fact usually contain a far higher degree of detail and nothing that could be interpreted as a mismatch with the actual events. What is relevant here is that the most natural reading of Hosea 1:4-5 implies that the three aforementioned events would take place at the same time. In other words, the kingdom would come to an end at the same time the house of Jehu is punished and “on that day” Israel would suffer a military defeat as represented by breaking the bow (Jer. 49:35).

In actual reality, these events did not all happen at the same time (though it must not be forgotten that they did all indeed happen). This is important because nobody writing a prophecy of these events after-the-fact would write of them as though they were going to happen at the same time. In fact, once the first of these events happened, nobody would write a prophecy of it as though other events coincided with it when in fact, they did not coincide in time. This means that this prophecy must have been written before the first of these 3 events occurred.

The most easily datable of these three events is the end of the Kingdom of Israel, which took place in 722 BCE. As for Israel having their “bow broken” in the valley of Jezreel, that took place ten years earlier (733/732) when Tiglath-Pileser III, the king of Assyria, took over the area (2 Kings 15:29). The latest possible date for punishing the house of Jehu is 752 when the house of Jehu came to an end. Since nobody would write Hosea 1:4-5 (as it is) after this event, Hosea 1-2 must be dated to before 752. This is very interesting because it shows that even though Hosea didn’t write Hosea 1-2, it was written during his lifetime, and even near the beginning of his prophetic ministry. And who would write it? Probably not his opponents. The most likely scenario is that it was written by a disciple of his, especially considering the fact that the author knew a fair number of the details of his life, including the name of Hosea’s wife, and father-in-law. Given this, Hosea was most likely aware of Hosea 1-2 and the writing could have easily been discredited if it did not accurately depict his life and teachings. Such a discredited writing would not have a high likelihood of surviving the marketplace of painstakingly hand-written literature. All things considered, there is strong evidence that Hosea 1-2 were written within Hosea’s own lifetime and accurately depict his life and teachings.

Section 2 – Hosea 3

As we have already explained, this chapter is written in the first-person language of the prophet. In that sense, it is far more personal than the first two chapters. It is also more basic. It is less developed in its description and in the explanation of the allegory. Moreover, it only describes the marriage itself and a period of time at the beginning of the marriage in which the prophet and his wife would have no relations and she was to remain chaste. No mention is made of children and all that is described excludes the possibility of children within the period referred to. This all indicates that this chapter was written near the beginning of Hosea’s marriage before he had children. Another fact in favor of this point is that even though Hosea 1-2 are generally more detailed, Hosea 3 actually includes more details regarding the act of marriage itself (vs. 2), details which would be more likely remembered and recounted closer to the event than in later years.

Section 3 – Hosea 4-14

I do not yet know the precise date of this section. Some scholars date it to the 740s, some to the 730s, and others to the early 720s. Others think this section can be divided up into smaller sections and that the material comes from all three decades, or at least from the 40s and 30s. Since there are literary links tying this section together from beginning to end, it seems that if the material was composed over a period of many years, Hosea himself would have edited and expanded it in such a way to keep literary continuity. The sorts of links I am talking about are things like foreshadowing and echoing. The way these literary devices occur throughout this section seems to indicate it is a literary unit rather than several originally independent documents.

There are several passages that refer to Ephraim, the 10-tribe kingdom, forming some sort of alliance with Assyria (5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1). This fits well with the reigns of Menahem (mid-740s to early 730s) and Hoshea (late 730s to early 720s); see 2 Kings 15:17-22 and 2 Kings 17:1-23. Hosea 13:16 refers to pregnant women being ripped open (how unspeakably awful!) – an act attributed to Menahem in 2 Kings 15:16. But there are other factors, such as Judah moving landmarks (Hosea 5:6), breaking a covenant at a place called *Adam* (6:7), and reference to a man called Shalman (10:14) that require further investigation (please do so!).

In any case, everything in this third section fits sometime between the mid-740s and mid-720s – after the end of the Jehu dynasty, but before the end of the kingdom of Israel.

With these two big questions (authorship and date) out of the way, we should still have other questions, but these are best answered while going through the book. It is nice to know, though, that in the book of Hosea, we have what we can verify to be the teachings of an 8th century BCE prophet who warned ahead of time of the punishment upon the house of Jehu, the military defeat in Jezreel, and the end of the kingdom of Israel. But one can make accurate predictions and yet be a false prophet (Dt. 13:1-5). So, what else did Hosea teach?

Hosea 1-2

Many of you are already familiar with the Rod and Branch teachings on these chapters, so it would be impractical for me to repeat what you already know and can read for yourself. Yet, there is more to say beyond what has already been said. For simplicity's sake, I will list these additional aspects in point form:

1. While many suppose that Hosea's marriage was purely allegorical, and not actual, the facts (some of which we have already covered) indicate otherwise. What are the facts? 1) The command for Hosea to take a wife came at a particular time (1:2), 2) Hosea is described as obeying the command, 3) the name of his wife and his wife's father are mentioned even though they bear no obvious relevance for the subsequent prophecy, 4) the names which are relevant for the prophecy have their meanings explained, 5) Hosea is described as bearing a son with Gomer, at which point he receives a command from Yahweh to name him Jezreel (the significance of this is that the text describes multiple revelations to Hosea at different points of time tied to the events of his life rather than one revelation containing an allegory), 6) Hosea's marriage is multiply attested, one source from a disciple of Hosea (chapters 1-2) and another from Hosea himself (chapter 3), 7) the different sources bear evidence of having been written at different points within the history of the marriage, 8) the bridal price is listed (3:2), though not explained as having any relevance for the allegory, 9) the text builds the allegory on what it describes as actual events, and 10) Hosea's use of the image of the adulterous wife even in his later teachings (chapters 4-14) indicates that it had a deep impression and lasting importance to him. This would doubtless be the case if he himself went through such an experience.

Understanding Hosea's marriage as a real marriage can help to illuminate certain aspects of the workings of Inspiration, especially how our Heavenly Family uses circumstances in the lives of Their prophets to teach them certain truths that may even form a large part of their message and its delivery.

2. Lo'ruhamah and Lo'ammi were not Hosea's children. This is first implied by the difference in the description of Gomer's conception of Jezreel as compared to the description of her conception of the latter two children.

With Jezreel, the text says, "And he [Hosea] took Gomer daughter of Divlaim, and she conceived and bore him a son." (1:3) – a clear description of Hosea begetting through Gomer. Lo'ruhamah's conception is described simply as "she conceived again and bore a daughter" (1:6) and Lo'ammi's conception is described as "When she had weaned Lo'ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son" (1:8). One wonders, "Where is Hosea in all of this?" Their illegitimate nature is explicitly stated in 2:4-5, which says, "I will not have mercy on her [not "my" or "our"] children, for they are *children of whoredom for their mother whored. In conceiving them she acted shamefully, for she said, 'I will go after my lovers...'*" This fact is important for the allegory because it illustrates that God did not originate the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They came about as kingdoms outside of his will. He didn't want them to have kings and thus kingdoms, but they made them anyway (8:4) and thus were conceived as the fatherless children of their whoring mother. Why should Yahweh be responsible or suffer long for children who are not his? His love is all the more powerful with these thoughts in mind, as are his words, "I will have pity on Lo'ruhamah, and I will say to Lo'ammi, 'You are my people,' and he will say, 'You are my God,'" (2:23) and also the words of Israel, "In you the fatherless finds mercy." (14:3).

3. Some understand "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (1:4) to have been fulfilled by Jehu slaying the house of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 10). This is not the case. The text of Hosea 1:4 is quite clear that it is the house of Jehu that is being punished for blood that they shed. It is actually the violence of Jehu in slaughtering the house of Ahab that is being punished. The reason why people often miss this is because 2 Kings 10 portrays the actions of Jehu as being in harmony with the will of Yahweh and people suppose that two things in the Bible cannot disagree, so it wouldn't make sense for Yahweh to punish the house of Jehu for this action as spoken through Hosea. Hosea is thus interpreted in a way so as to not disagree with 2 Kings.

4. Victor Houteff had a misunderstanding of the fulfillment of the phrase, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (1:5). Houteff says, "But the decree, '...I will break the bow of Israel [the princes of the tribe kingdom] in the valley of Jezreel' (Hos. 1:5), was not fulfilled until later when Jehu 'slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in [the valley of] Jezreel, and all his great men and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.' 2 Kings 10:11." – Tract 4, p. 15.4. There are two main problems with this understanding. First, Hosea's prophecy is describing a punishment *upon* the house of Jehu, not a punishment *through* the house of Jehu. Second, the slaying of the house of Ahab by Jehu took place 100 years before Hosea's prophecy, but Hosea's prophecy speaks of something future from the point at which the prophecy was given: "...I *will* punish the house of Jehu... I *will* put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel... *On that day* I *will* break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (1:4-5).

5. Hosea has, as part of his message, an opposition to violence. As we already mentioned, the slaughter of the house of Ahab carried out by Jehu is something worthy of condemnation in Hosea's message (1:4). This is the case in spite of the fact that Hosea clearly opposed the ways of Ahab and Jezebel. Yahweh's description of how he would save Judah was, "not by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen." (1:7). And later Yahweh says, "I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety." (2:18). This message of non-violence was timely given that Assyria was the dominating power and they were excessively violent, known even today for their grotesque brutality. This became so all the more in 745 when Tiglath-Pileser III became king (more like "emperor") of Assyria and created the first full-time military the world had ever seen. The pronouncements against violence in the 3rd section of Hosea (4-14) were declared within that context (see 4:2; 6:8-9; 10:13b-14a; 14:31a).

6. Hosea 1:9 would be more accurately translated as, "And he said, 'Call his name Lo'ammi, for you are not my people and I am not I AM to you.'" The word for "I AM" here is "Ehyeh" and is the same as in Ex. 3:14, "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*).' And he said, 'You shall say this to the children of Israel: I AM (*ehyeh*) sent me to you.'" For Yahweh to say, "I am not Ehyeh to you," is for him to say that he is not in a covenant with them as he was with Moses and Moses' people.

7. Hosea 2:1 suddenly expands the image of Lo'ruhamah and Lo'ammi from singular individuals (a brother and a sister) to plurals (brothers and sisters). By using the plural of both brothers and sisters, Hosea was calling on his fellow Israelites and Judahites, both males and females, to "plead with mother." Hosea's disciples, then, were evidently not restricted to men; he saw there was a place for women in the ministry just as much as men.

Houteff evidently understood this since he referred to female Davidian evangelists as “Ruhamah hunters.” (Symbolic Code, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 9)

8. Hosea opposed kingship and instead taught that God’s people are to be led by prophets (8:4; 9:15; 12:13; 13:10-11). The symbol of Jezreel captures this idea. The name Jezreel can mean “God sows” and it can also mean “seed of God” as in “child of God.” Jezreel, in contrast to his siblings, was Hosea’s true child. Israel and Judah were considered not to be God’s children largely because they were appointing kings for themselves whom God had not appointed (8:4; 13:10-11). As reading the entirety of Hosea will reveal, opposition to kingship is a major part of his message. As Houteff explained, and as is evident from the fact that Jezreel is the one who gives the message of God to his fellow Israelites (2:1), Jezreel represents God’s prophets. God’s prophets and those who follow them rather than uninspired kings are thus the true children of God. This contrast is present from the beginning of Hosea to its end, and a day is looked forward to when Israel and Judah appoint for themselves the one head whom God has already appointed; thus – great shall be the day of Jezreel. I’m sure you can all see how this is relevant for the current debate over authority within Adventism.

Hosea 3

My comments on this chapter will be brief in keeping with the brevity of the chapter. Also, it isn’t necessary to go into much explanation in light of what we have already covered and what past messages have revealed. Yet, once again, there are some points to be made.

1. The first verse of this chapter explicitly identifies Israel's other lovers as other gods besides Yahweh.
2. There is a parallelism between Hosea’s wife “remain[ing] many days” (3:3) without having sex with her other lovers or with him and Israel “remain[ing] many days” (3:4) without a king, or ruler, or sacrifice, etc.
3. Since the symbol is that Hosea’s wife’s lovers are representatives of gods (Hosea representing Yahweh and the other lovers representing other gods), then sexual intimacy with her lovers must represent some form of intimacy with gods. Since going without intimacy in 3:3 is parallel to going without kings, rulers, sacrifice, etc. in 3:4, then all the things listed in 3:4 are being presented as ways of being intimate with gods, whether Yahweh and/or other gods.
4. The last verse of this chapter speaks of the end of the period of chastity and thus a time at which Israel is again to be intimate with her God. Though 3:4 had listed many ways in which Israel might be intimate with gods, 3:5 only mentions one way in which Israel will be intimate with Yahweh; that is, by having David as their king – an inspired leader rather than an uninspired king. David here plays the same role as does Jezreel in 1:11. David is their inspired king and ruler and they can thus be intimate with Yahweh through him. Hosea 14:2 describes a type of sacrifice (the fruit of the lips) by which Israel may be intimate with Yahweh. The other methods of intimacy are left without comment so far as I know.

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Even though there is much more to be said regarding Hosea, I hope you are seeing Hosea in a new light – as it is in truth, in reality. I encourage you to study it with prayer, to immerse yourself into its teachings. Hosea was to me, at one point, just a book in the Bible. I now see Hosea as a person like myself and like yourselves, and I see his message as a unity of principles standing out as a beacon of light amidst the darkness of his day. He looked at the world around him and what did he see? He saw the inhumanity of Assyria; he saw Israel gone astray. He saw that the people who should know righteousness did not; they abandoned the ways of Yahweh. He saw that his God had no obligation to Israel and Judah, but He had pity on them anyway. Hosea could have been discouraged. How likely was Assyria to change their ways? How likely was Israel or Judah to repent? Should he really spend his time pleading with a people who thought he was a fool (9:7)? He had his own problems to worry about – his wife didn’t love him; she was continually unfaithful. Through his own dire straights, he saw the dire straights of his people – enough to break down and cry; instead he gained order of understanding through the chaos of sad circumstances. He saw that he could love as against hate, and he could speak peace as against war. Love, truth, and knowledge of God were supreme in his thoughts. He saw them as having power greater than all else. Even in the darkest of days, he saw hope. That was reason

enough to go forward each day, rising above the dark clouds to grasp the light and shine it upon all who would be willing to see, from his day to ours. And so it shall be that we shall come in awe to Yahweh and his goodness in the latter days (Hosea 3:5). So let it be, amen.