

## ***Introduction to the Prophets – Session Three***



*Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem* by Émile Jean-Horace Vernet (1844)

### ***Isaiah (1 – 39) Continued, II Kings, Hosea, Micah, and Jeremiah The Exile***

#### ***Hosea***

Hosea stands first among the prophets that are grouped together in the Book of Twelve. This collection of twelve prophetic books was already recognized as a unit by Sirach in the second century B.C. E. (Sir 49:10). They are often called the Minor Prophets because of their brevity compared to the large books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Unfortunately, some have taken this designation to mean unimportant, of little consequence. Such a perspective is certainly unworthy of Hosea and others of the twelve.

The Hebrew text of Hosea is very difficult to translate. There was probably some corruption of the text as it was carried to Judah from the Northern Kingdom of Israel when that nation was destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C. E. Hosea was the only writing prophet native to the north and may have spoken in a Hebrew dialect that is less familiar and, therefore, harder to translate.

Hosea easily divides into two parts: chapters 1 – 3 about his life and wife and children, and chapters 4 – 14 containing a rich mixture of prophetic sayings. It is very difficult to find order, structure, or an organizing principle for chapters 4 – 14.

The story of Hosea's personal life is very intriguing, though elusive. Surely his own experiences informed his understanding of God's relationship to Israel and gave him

language and metaphor to convey his message to his people. The reader would like to know more about what really happened between Hosea and Gomer and what was the sequence of events described in chapters 1 – 3. One cannot talk in depth about Hosea’s theology without trying to understand Hosea’s personal life. They were intricately intertwined. As was true of other prophets, Hosea really lived his message.

Hosea’s message is a mix of doom and hope, punishment and forgiveness, discipline and love. As in other preexilic prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Micah), there are many harsh words, warnings, frightening pictures of a God who will punish and destroy. How does one sort out the good news from the bad news? What is the final word from God? Is there always another chance so that punishment is never the last word? Hosea seems to say “Yes” to this last question, but there are many hard words along the way before the reader can rest easy with that conclusion.

Hosea emphasizes faithfulness toward God as the proper response for all that God has done for Israel. The sin of idolatry, therefore, is the great offense against which he prophesies. Unlike some other prophets (Amos is the classic case), he does not talk much about injustice and other evils within society. Rather he rails against the root of all sin – turning away from God toward other gods. This emphasis does not indicate that Hosea is indifferent to matters of social justice.

– Daniel J. Simundson (*Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*)

### **Readings from Session Three:**

#### **Amos**

Amos 5:21 - 24

#### **Isaiah 1 – 39**

#### **First Isaiah**

Isaiah 10:5 – 11

Isaiah 1:2 – 3

Isaiah 1:11 – 12

Isaiah 1:17

Isaiah 13:6 – 10

Isaiah 6:13

#### **Hosea**

Hosea 1: 2 – 3, 9

Hosea 3: 1 -5

Hosea 14:1 – 8

#### **Micah**

Micah 1:1 - 2

Micah 1: 6 – 7

Micah 6: 6 – 8

#### **Isaiah 1 – 39**

#### **First Isaiah**

Isaiah 1:17

	<b><i>II Kings 16 – 17</i></b>	<b><i>Downfall of the Northern Kingdom</i></b>
II Kings 17: 1 – 6		
II Kings 17: 7 – 13		
	<b><i>II Kings – 18 – 25</i></b>	<b><i>The fall of Judah</i></b>
II Kings 21:1 – 3		
II Kings 22:1 – 2		
II Kings 23:1 – 3		
	<b><i>Isaiah</i></b>	<b><i>The Fall of Judah</i></b>
Isaiah 31:4 – 5		
	<b><i>Jeremiah</i></b>	
Jeremiah 5:1, 7 – 9		God will destroy the city
Jeremiah 7:21 – 23		I brought you out of Egypt but you didn't obey.
Jeremiah 8: 20 – 22		Is there no balm in Gilead?
Jeremiah 25: 8 – 9		The coming Babylonians
	<b><i>II Kings</i></b>	
II Kings 25:1 – 2		
II Kings 25:6 – 7		
II Kings 25:8 – 11		
	<b><i>Jeremiah</i></b>	
Jeremiah 31:7 – 9		People will return from the north
Jeremiah 31: 27 – 30		New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:31 – 35		New Covenant

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### ***Concerning Prophets, Kings and Dates***

The online video and the table below each provide the timeline in which individual kings reigned, but far less information is available about the timeline in which individual prophets were active.

The calendar system used in this study is the Gregorian calendar which uses "B.C.E." (Before the Current Era, or Before the Common Era), which is essentially the same dating system as the older Dionysian (BC and AD) calendar. The Common Era (CE) is based on the estimated birth of Christ. The death of Solomon, for example is said to have been about 930 B.C.E. (or about 930 years before the birth of Christ.). The Dionysian system was first used in 525 A.D. (CE), and the Gregorian calendar dates from 1582 CE, so people at the time of Solomon obviously had no idea that a few thousand years in the future, people would claim he died in 930 b.c.e.

The dates used by modern scholars are retrofitted based on information available from comparable events at different places. So, in Second Kings we are told that, "*In the twelfth year of King Ahaz of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah began to reign in Samaria*

*over Israel; he reigned nine years,”* we know that Hoshea began his reign in Israel in the twelfth year of Ahaz’s reign, but we don’t yet know what years Ahaz reigned. We have comparable information about Ahaz in relation to other Judean or Israelite kings. We are also told a few verses later in II Kings that, *“in the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria.”* This brings in the opportunity to look at historical record of Assyria, for example, to see what year Assyria thinks they captured Samaria. Interlinking enough information from differing sources scholars can derive estimated dates. Some civilizations kept more precise date information than others.

I Kings 6:1 tells us, *“In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord.”* Backtracking from the fourth year of Solomon’s reign (assumed to be about 966), we could set Joshua’s crossing of the Jordan at around 1446 B.C.E. Modern scholars place the date at closer to 1250 B.C. E., possibly as early as 1350, but not likely as early as 1446. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of other reference points that provide useful information about the date of the crossing of the Jordan. The more recent events described in the Bible are easier to date than those farther in the past because there are more comparable reference points.

While there is relatively reliable information about the dates the kings reigned in Israel in Judah, there is much less information about the prophets. Records were generally kept about the relative timeline of kings; prophets less so. Often, the individuals who transcribed the words of the prophets would record the names of kings during which the prophet was active. For example, *“The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel.”* But, even when this information is available, we only know a range of dates [781 – 687 in Judah, and 783 -743 in Israel].

Jeremiah provides far more information than most:

*(1:1) The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. (2) The word of the LORD came to him in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (3) and throughout the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, when Jerusalem went into exile in the fifth month.*

Translated into modern terms, it says that Jeremiah began to prophesy in 627 B.C.E. and finished around the time of the destruction of the Temple in 586 – a period of more than forty years. We also learn that Jeremiah was a priest and that he hailed from Anathoth, a town about three miles (5 km.) north of Jerusalem.

– derived, in part, from *How to Read the Jewish Bible* by Marc Zvi Brettler

# The Kings of Israel

## The United Kingdom of Israel

Saul  
David  
Solomon

## Approximate Dates

1030 BCE – 1010 BCE  
1010 – 970  
970 – 931

## The Two Israelite Kingdoms

### Judah

Rehoboam 931 – 913  
Abijah 913 – 911  
Asa 911 – 870  
  
Jehoshaphat 870 – 848  
Jehoram 848 – 841  
Ahazaah 841  
Queen Athaliah 841 – 835  
Uzziah 835 – 796  
Amaziah 796 – 781  
  
Uzziah 781 – 740  
  
Jotham 740 – 736  
Ahaz 736 – 716  
Hezekiah 716 – 687  
  
Manasseh 687 - 642  
Amon 642 – 640  
Josiah 640 – 609  
Johaz 3 months in 609  
Jehoikim 609 – 598  
Jehoichin 3 months in 598  
Zedekiah 598- 587

**Fall of Jerusalem July 587 or 586**

### Israel

Jeroboam 931 – 910  
Nadab 910 – 909  
Baasha 909 – 886  
Elah 886 – 885  
Zimiri 7 days in 885  
Omri 885 – 874  
Ahab 874 – 853  
Ahaziah 853 – 852  
Joram 852 - 841  
Jehu 841 - 814  
Jehohaz 814 – 798  
Jehoash 796 – 783  
Jeroboam II 783 – 743  
Zechariah 6 months in 743  
Shallum 1 month in 743  
Menahem 743 – 738  
Pekah 737 – 732  
Hoshea 732 – 723  
**Fall of Samaria 722**

# Chronology

1,800 b.c.e. **	Abram leaves Ur with Sarai to go to the land of Canaan	
	<i>Period of the Prophets</i>	
1,300 b.c.e.	Moses leads Hebrews out of Egypt Joshua leads conquers Canaan	Egyptian Dominance of Region
1030 – 1010 b.c.e.	Saul	
1010 – 970 b.c.e.	David	Assyrian Dominance
970 – 931 b.c.e.	Solomon	
722 b.c.e.	Fall of Samaria (Israel – the Northern Kingdom)	
700 b.c.e.	Isaiah 1 – 39	
650 b.c.e.		Assyria in decline - Egypt in Ascendancy
612 b.c.e.		Babylonians conquer Nineveh
600 b.c.e.		
588 b.c.e.	Fall of Jerusalem (Judah - The Southern Kingdom) - defeated by Babylonians	
586 b.c.e.	Exile in Babylon begins (Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon)	
538 b.c.e.	Some Jews allowed to return to Jerusalem Isaiah 40 – 55	Cyrus the Great [Persia] attacked Babylon in 539 and allowed some Jews to leave
515 b.c.e.	The second temple is built	
400 b.c.e.	Isaiah 56 - 60	
4 – 1 b.c.e.	Birth of Jesus	Roman Rule
30 c.e.	Crucifixion of Jesus	
68 c.e.	Destruction of Temple in Jerusalem	

## ***Characteristics of Nonclassical Versus Classical Prophets***

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Nonclassical</i>	<i>Classical</i>
Knew secret and hidden information	Yes	No
Typically consulted on fixed occasions	Yes	No
Were paid to disclose or intercede	Yes	No
Banded together	Yes	No
Induced prophecy	Yes	No
Worked miracles	Yes	No
Main audience	King	People
Main genre of speech	Prose	Poetry
Reason for strange deeds	Build prestige	Convey a message
Type of predictions	Short verdicts	Long warnings

### ***Micah***

The book of Micah is best known for three often quoted passages: the promise of a time of peace when weapons of war will be turned into implements of agriculture (4:3; also quoted in Isaiah 2:4), the expectation of a new ruler from Bethlehem (5:2), and the declaration that what God really wants from people is, “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (6:6 – 8). Like other preexilic prophets Micah is concerned for social justice and true worship. He condemns what he sees and predicts disaster, even for the sacred city of Jerusalem (3:12), if the nation continues its present ways. Words of hope are also presented here and there in the book, especially in chapters 4 and 5.

The decline of the nation and the suffering of the people are the consequence of sin. God is a God of justice and God is active in the world. When true worship is corrupted and obligations toward the weak in society are abandoned, then bad things will happen. This cause-and-effect interpretation of disaster is the prevailing theology of prophets like Micah. Micah is particularly irate at the suffering endured by people who are not the main offenders but must bear the pain caused by the behavior of their leaders. All of the nation will suffer, even though not everyone is equally guilty. Innocent suffering is a possibility even when the suffering is understood as God’s punishment for sin.

– Daniel J. Simundson (*Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*)

*Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah – Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries* by

Daniel J. Simundson, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2005

*How to Read the Jewish Bible* by Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2005

**Session Four:** *Jeremiah, Isaiah (40 – 66), Ezekiel, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*