

# Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 16, Hosea, Part 3

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This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 16, Hosea, Part 3.

All right, let's have a word of prayer, and we'll start.

Lord, each day is your day and this is the day you've made. We have today, your word reminds us to act today because tomorrow is uncertain. So, we pray that our accounts will be short with you today, that we will deal with things that we have to deal with, with integrity.

Thank you that you are merciful and long-suffering God with us. We pray that our relationship with you will be daily in fellowship. Forgive us those times when we wander and do not follow you closely.

Grant that we will learn something about God's love for us, even in the midst of our twists and turns and end runs of life. We'll remember that God is pursuing us always. He never lets go and never gives up.

Help us to learn from Hosea and Gomer because you are Hosea and we are Gomer. We pray that as we come to understand your love anew, that we will be called more to a sense of accountability and faithfulness each day, I pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A reminder, Monday we will have our time of close fellowship together. She doesn't like it. She's getting nervous.

We'll cover all the reading as indicated in the syllabus. There will be definitely an emphasis on the biblical texts, especially those we've talked about in class. There will be some objectives, some definitions in a couple of sentences.

There will be some shorter essays and one longer essay will take you all the time. But the main emphasis is on the introductory materials plus Jonah, Amos, and Hosea. Now, last time I talked about marriage as covenant and mentioned that what we have in chapter 2 has been so important in the history of Jewish marriage and marriage tradition that this passage is actually cited in traditional Jewish wedding ceremonies.

I remember we filmed an Orthodox Jewish wedding out of doors in Israel. It's always an extra mitzvah to marry outdoors under the big canopy. I remember hearing the rabbi recite this formula.

These words for a permanent relationship, as God says, I will betroth you to me forever. And that emphasis here then on these various words, righteousness, mishpat or justice, the sense of fairness and sharing, what is right not just for me but for the other as the initial brings out. Mishpat is always a two-way street in the Bible.

It's not what I'm entitled to, what's fair and just for me. Give me my entitlements, it's what's fair for the other guy. There's a reciprocity involved in justice.

That's something we want to keep in mind. Hesed is one of your keywords in Hosea. hesed is more than just love.

When hesed is used, and it occurs over 250 times in the Hebrew Bible, when you study all those contexts, it all reduces to two main things. Now it can be translated different ways. Loving kindness, kindness, even kind of merciful treatment of others.

But the two things that it really boils down to are one, the context of covenant. And so when hesed is used, it's used in the context of a covenantal relationship. And then secondly, along with that context of covenant, there is this idea of dogged fidelity, determined loyalty.

When you have hesed, that's why the RSV doesn't translate it love. In the book of Hosea, RSV renders it steadfast love. Now that little word steadfast, where other renderings may be loyal love, steadfast, loyal love, faithful love.

So that idea of dogged fidelity to the covenantal relationship is what is implied. So hesed is tied to covenant, and as for Israel, hesed was a response to God's hesed. And because of the covenant, cannot in the end finally be broken, or completely broken, because it takes two to make a covenant, and it takes two to break it.

And I always have to remind students that you may not like everything you see in fellow believers sometimes, in terms of their curriculum vitae, over the long haul. The same with Israel. But when one has a clear, personal, covenantal relationship with the king of the universe, nothing ultimately can sever that bond.

We can make end runs, we can lose God's blessings because of folly, and doing other things, but this is the love that will not let us go. That God holds on to Israel, despite Israel's unfaithfulness. If God wanted to cancel the covenant, He could have done that a long time ago.

But God persists for Israel because His purposes for Israel are greater, even than Israel's maintaining faithfulness. God is a faithful love. He's a God of hesed, who shows rahamim, compassion, and finally, this commitment is to be firm.

It's to be unwavering. It is constant, and that's what emunah means. Constant.

Stable. In the Hebrew Bible, the word for pillar comes from this root. It's what supports you.

In the book of Ruth, another word that comes from this root, aman, is translated a nurse. Somebody who gives support, in this case, to a newborn baby, obed. And that child is supported and nourished, and it's a term, therefore, that speaks to us of firmness and support.

And this is what was true of Hosea's marriage, and was true of Yahweh's relationship to His people. Alright, so we have these words then as part of that ceremony. Now, chapters 1-3 are biographical, but I said through the dealings of Gomer, the birth of Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi, each of them sends a message of that severing relationship between the northern kingdom and her god.

An exile would come. It would not be a permanent banishment because at the end of chapter 1, there is that promise of restoration, and God, once again, His steadfast love endures. In chapter 3, we have the actual pursuit of the prophet going to bring the slave back to, once again, find his lost and wayward spouse.

This is Israel. God never gives up. And so, we have here an example of what the Goel does.

We have talked about Goel before. Goel, G-O-E-L, means to redeem. But what it really means in the Hebrew Bible is to exert an effort or pay a price in order to liberate somebody or champion the cause of someone.

That's what it means. To pay a price, to exert an effort, to free somebody from some kind of bondage. That's what we will do together in our interfaith Seder.

It's freedom from Egypt. Now, in that case, God Himself is the liberator who frees His people freely and graciously. In this particular case, we actually see somebody coming to buy Gomer back.

And so, God says in chapter 3, go show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man, she is loved by a paramour, and she is an adulteress. So, the text goes on and says, even as the Lord loves the people of Israel, He goes on loving them, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins. Let me just pause there for a moment.

Raisin cakes. It almost seems like a non-sequitur. They're inserted in the narrative, but not really so.

Remember, we gave you the agricultural trio last time. So, basic to Old Testament life and economy. The wine, the grain, and the oil.

And so, raisin cakes, we know from the Baal cult, were offered to Baal. He's a god of nature and one of these basic staples of the economy. These dried grapes were offered.

This agricultural deity comes in here via the cakes of raisins. And so, he goes to this place to purchase this slave concubine, whatever Gomer had become. But you'll observe here that he does it for 15 shekels, which is part of it.

Now, remember, a shekel is four-tenths of an ounce. So, this is what we call the bartering system. B-A-R-T-E-R-I-N-G.

Up until the 7th century B.C., everything was done by bartering. The first coins in the ancient world start coming in around the 7th century. Come in through a group who lived in the Asia Minor area called the Lydians and the Greeks were fast on their heels to pick up coinage.

Now, the normal price for a slave in the Old Testament, at least according to Exodus 21, was 30 shekels. So, Gomer here, half of her purchase price is half the price of a slave. The other is paid for in agricultural products.

And notice what the text says: he, she is purchased for a homer and a lethic, a homer and a lethic or lethic of barley. Now, the Hebrew word chamor means donkey. So, when you hear that measurement in the Bible, homer, you don't think, oh, classical Greek literature.

You think donkey. One of my professors at the university was a Jewish professor called Dr. Hamori, and the students used to; they didn't like him, so they did a number on his name. Homer is the amount of material that a donkey could carry, probably five to six bushels.

This is approximate in terms of the measure. And a lethic is half a homer. So, if a homer amounts to, say, 36 or so bushels and a half a homer, a lethic about three bushels.

So, we're talking nine bushels, possibly as high as ten bushels of grain that a donkey would carry. Homer then apparently had become a slave, belonged to someone else,

and she is bought back with silver and produce, barley. The verses which follow indicate in very short form the exile of Israel and the return.

It speaks of a period of many days, maybe a period of discipline and testing, which was going to come to Israel as they rethought their relationship to the Almighty before God might restore them or reestablish them again in full intimacy. It talks about them living without a king or a prince. This is in 3.4, Israel living in exile outside of the land.

They would have no civil government. But ultimately this passage has to be understood as messianic. And the reason for that is in verse 5, the very last word in this introductory autobiographical, or at least biographical material, it says, in the latter days or afterwards, the children of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God.

There's something spiritual happening here. And they're going to seek David their king. That's a code word for the Messiah.

Remember, all the way back to Genesis 49, the promise was through Judah, the tribe of Judah, a ruler would come from whom the ruler's staff would not disappear. And through Jacob's son Judah, the kingly tribe, who beautifully, in the Chagall windows in the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, if you've ever been there, Mark Chagall, the greatest biblical Jewish artist, that is an artist depicting biblical scenes and characters, depicts Judah in this royal red, this stained glass window 13 feet high and a number of feet wide, depicting aspects of each of the tribe. And, of course, there are two hands supporting a crown, reminding us of what Scripture says of Judah, the kingly line.

And so, after David was gone, roughly shortly after 1000, and he passed the reigns to his son Solomon, here we have David redivivus, David reestablished, restored, David coming back, a Davidic Messiah if you will. Implying that Israel is going to seek a Messiah and God, in some way, is going to restore the Davidic line, reestablish that hut of David, that sukkah that collapsed, we read about in the end of Amos, chapter 9. Now, somehow, this is going to be restored when the Messianic age comes in. And when this age is climaxed, in the latter days, it refers to this: God's Messiah will rule over the world, and his people will be fully restored and vindicated, according to the minor prophets, in the eyes of the nations.

So, the final restoration, or the restoration of all restorations, is the future. Elie Wiesel once made the point that if the Jewish people no longer held to a Messianic vision, to a Messianic hope, Jews would have nothing to live for. In one sense, that's true because Jews anticipate an end to history, and it's very, very prophetic that history is moving to a great and glorious climax in a golden age that is tied with this

Messianic view of a renewed, restored people, and Shalom, and Tzedakah, and Mishpat, covering the earth, associated with that ultimate Messianic reign.

Has it been inaugurated? Yes. Read the New Testament. The Kingdom of God is here, in the presence of Jesus.

In some way, he began that reign and that rule of God by triumphing over sin and death and through the resurrection, and he reigns now through the Holy Spirit in the heart of each believer and in the church. But that reign is not yet consummated, and what we will be reminded of at the Passover Seder is that both Jews and Christians are co-partners, both awaiting the redemption of the world, because there's still earthquakes, still famine, still plagues, still wars, still all kinds of earthly imperfections that are not removed from this world. So therefore, redemption, obviously, has yet to be culminated and brought to its final and ultimate meaning.

And that poses a very interesting dialogue between Christians and Jews. We always have. Christians proclaim that the Redeemer has come and that the world is redeemed, and their Jewish friends look and they say, show me the money.

Show me the evidence. Have you read the New York Times today? Have you watched CNN today? The world is redeemed. We've got a long way to go.

And that's a reminder to simply say that redemption, as described in the Prophets, deals with the righteous, universal reign of God on this earth, something we have yet to achieve. And in the Christian system, will not come until He personally, God's Messiah, speaks peace to the nations and reigns and rules personally through His second advent. Now, we live in the overlap of the two ages.

Now, some more things I want to say about Hosea. In chapters 4 through 13, it's pretty negative because he's talking about an unfaithful people. And he keeps coming back to this theme, stanza after stanza, of Israel's adultery.

Yeah, she was not faithful to the God of Israel, and she went whoring after other idols to use the language of Hosea. And she ignored God. One of the things that Hosea keeps talking about is your textbook by Heschel; read it carefully when he talks about the Da'at Elohim.

Da'at means knowledge. Da'at Elohim, the knowledge of God. And again and again, Hosea faults the people of the Northern Kingdom for having no knowledge of God.

Now here again, when he says in 4:1, there's no knowledge of God in the land, that's true, and it's not true. In an intellectual sense, there are all kinds of centers where understanding and knowledge of the history of Israel could be presented to the people. But what Hosea means about Da'at is that Da'at comes from the word Yadah,

the Hebrew verb meaning to know, used as early as Genesis 4:1, when Adam and Eve know each other in a sexual relationship.

To know means to have a personal, intimate relationship with someone who is indeed authentic. And when God says there's no knowledge of God in the world, there are all kinds of theories about God, but not practice, obeying His will, living the life. And so when he exhorts Israel in 6.3, let us know, let us press on to know the Lord God. We're not talking about studying textbooks on theology in order to know God.

What he's calling for is Da'at Elohim, obedience to God, where belief and behavior go together. Now keep in mind, this whole theme is how Paul sets out his epistles. Paul is concerned in many of his epistles.

He lays out beliefs, but then he moves to behavior. He lays out creeds in Romans 1-11. Then he is interested in conducting in 12-16.

Paul in Colossians 1 and 2 talks about doctrine, but in 3 and 4 he talks about deeds, how you ought to live. And those are always coupled together in scripture. The information has to lead to a lifestyle.

And so, knowledge in the Hebraic sense is quite different than in the Greek sense. In the Greek sense, knowledge is often to reflect on concepts, ideas, and theories. In the Hebrew sense, it is putting something into practice in a personal and intimate way.

So, to know God means to live in accord with the will of God. That's the knowledge of God that was lacking in the land. Now in chapter 4, he's very graphic here in terms of his description of how far down the drain the people had become in playing the harlot.

In fact, in this chapter, he mentions it ten times. Gomer is a picture of Israel's spiritual forsaking of the Lord. God had called for an exclusive relationship at Sinai.

He alone you shall worship according to the Ten Commandments. But Israel forsook God for idols, as verse 10 puts it. But also involved here in this adultery is literal prostitution, which involves cult prostitutes and other things associated with Baal worship.

And the Bible here emphasizes even prostitutes engaging in oral sex. Now, if you preached a sermon, you'd pack the church out of what the Bible has to say about oral sex on a Sunday morning. It wouldn't come for anything else.

But it is mentioned here, and it is mentioned in the book of Proverbs, and it is tied to prostitution in this context. So, the whole land was given over to Baalism, and the whole land was prostituting itself in pagan worship, which included these shrines, and so God had had enough. Yeah, that's in verse 10, the oral sex.

It's what prostitutes do. I think what he's describing here is how prostitutes operate. In the realm of the Canaanites, the land is filled with cultic prostitutes.

They're involved in all forms of illicit sexual activity outside of the faithful commitment within marriage that God from Mosaic times till now had called for. Yeah? I don't think the Bible speaks to that specifically. I don't think it forbids it.

I just don't think it speaks about it specifically. Here, it's speaking about it negatively because it's just one of the various kinds of things that... the life of a prostitute. You follow a prostitute around, and this is part of a prostitute's ways, according to the Bible.

You get the same language in Proverbs 30, verse 20. I read it. This is the way of an adulteress.

She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I have done no wrong. Now, get your better commentaries out, and they'll tell you exactly what that means. I've done no wrong.

Again, it's a different world. It's not in the context of covenant faithfulness. And as far as that goes, to my knowledge, the Bible does not speak to the rightness or wrongness of that.

Therefore, it doesn't pronounce any kind of judgment. It's not necessarily wrong. You can learn a lot from the argument of silence or nothing.

In verse 15 of chapter 4, though you play the harlot, O Israel, let not Judah become guilty, enter not into Gilgal, nor go to Beth-Avon. Beth-Avon. Beth-El, house of God.

Beth-Avon, house of iniquity. There's a little pun going on here. Avon is one of the Hebrew words for sin.

It properly means to be twisted or to be distorted like a twisted pretzel. You're bent out of shape from God's straightness.

So, this house of iniquity is a euphemism for Bethel. Don't go to Beth-Avon. It would be like my cautioning you: Please don't go to the house of hypocrites this Sunday.

In chapter 5, just hitting a few more interesting highlights here. In chapter 5 of verse 14, notice how God is likened to a lion. I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah.

I even, I will rend and go away, I will carry off and none shall rescue. Sort of sounds like something Amos would say. The figure is taken from the realm of nature.

And so God is going to carry off his prey. He's going to carry off the northern kingdom, and by 586 he will have carried off also the southern kingdom. All of you, I hope sometime in your life you will travel to Israel.

It's very interesting how modern Israel draws so much from the Bible. For example, the Department of Tourism has a decal, and it takes it from the Book of Numbers. And it's a picture of Joshua and Caleb with a pole carrying an eshchol, a cluster of grapes, fruit, coming back from the promised land.

They were the spies. And so come take a look at Israel. It's this land of milk and honey.

Come check it out. When Israel had to come up with a name for its national airline, it decided it was going to head to the book of Hosea to get the name of its airline. It, of course, is LL.

Kind of a funny name for an airline when foreigners look at that. I mean, Swiss air makes sense, British air makes sense, but LL? What is it? Well, there are two places in Hosea where LL is mentioned. One is in 7.16, and the other is in 11.7. The word L, of course, is a shortened form for God, as in Beth El, Daniel, and Joel.

So, LL, what it means properly, it's a noun. It means the mighty one, the strong one. And Al is both a preposition in Hebrew as well as a noun.

Al also can be a noun, and it means above or what is high. So, LL, how is that translated in the RSV? It's translated the most high. They do not turn to LL, the most high.

So, Al means above or high, and that's what airplanes are supposed to do. And the idea of Al being the strong, the powerful, the most, the most high. So, this is the most high airline.

And why is it capitalized in the Bible? Not because it's the name of an airline but because EL is the name of the God of the people of Israel historically. They do not turn to the Most High. And because of that, they've got problems.

And so, the prophet calls them. In 11:7, it says, even if they call to the most high, even if they call to LL, he will by no means exalt them. But he does say, speaking again in the first person, I cannot give you up, Ephraim.

My heart is changed within me. All my compassion is aroused. I cannot give you up.

Here are some of the warmest and most tender feelings that God has about his people, even in the midst of their apostasy. He assures them of his love and that he has not let them go. One of the anthropopathisms in the Bible, anthropomorphism, the attributing of a human part to God, God's eyes, God's ears, God's arm, that's an anthropomorphism.

Anthropopathism, which Heschel talks about in your textbook, attributes human-like emotions and feelings to God. In 8:5, God says, my anger burns against them. Typically, in Hebrew, when you express anger is to get red or to get hot in the nostrils.

To burn in your nostrils usually comes into English as somebody's getting hot under the collar, i.e. angry. Maybe it went back to the Semitic world where you snorted. When you get upset, maybe like a horse does.

So, God is depicted here with a panaim, with a dual nose, like you and me. It's a dual in Hebrew. And when his two-part nose, two holes for breathing, gets hot, gets red, it equals anger.

You notice the context here, what ticks him off. It's a calf of Samaria. Here we are, Egypt revisited.

Here we are. The greatest sin in Israel's history, according to the rabbis, was the golden calf. Just a short time after coming out of Egypt, the golden calf episode. And so he says the calf of Samaria will be broken into pieces.

The darkest heresy to the prophets was losing your identity. And Hosea's comments on this. Israel is swallowed up among the nations in 8:8. To become like the nations was the darkest heresy.

And when you lose your identity in the midst of this Canaanite world, it wants you to be a nature worshipper, and to lose the integrity of your family life, and to attribute to Baal all of your economic and family necessities, you've lost it. You've become swallowed up. Assimilation is one of the greatest challenges for God's people throughout their history.

And that delicate balance, how to be in the world but not of the world. Shall return to Egypt. Ephraim will return to Egypt.

The northern kingdom, Egypt, is the code word for exile again. Enslavement again. Symbol of slavery.

So, we don't always interpret the Bible literally. Never get caught in that argument. Do you take the Bible literally? Literally, the answer should be sometimes.

I read it according to its literary type. And here is a figure of speech. Ephraim is going back, not to literal Egypt, but Egypt is figurative for Assyrian captivity.

In 10-12, we have an interesting marked text. You might even believe that that text could be used as a text for a sermon. It's probably as evangelistically sounding as Hosea comes.

Again, he's talking about outdoor life. He says, sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of hedges, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord that he may come and rain salvation upon you.

Notice all the puns from nature here. All the plays on the sowing, reaping, breaking up fallow ground, so that God may rain salvation on you. All figures from the soil and nature.

Interesting, again, point of contact. He starts where the people are thinking. They're so sold into bale worship where nature is their God.

Now he makes that point of contact, and he turns it into something spiritual. Righteousness, steadfast love, seeking God to receive his salvation.

A couple of other points, in 11:1 we have, in one of my opening lectures, the point was German in prophecy, or a prophecy which has a fulfillment coming in the New Testament. When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son. Well, there was God's firstborn son that God brought out of Egypt.

But under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 2.15, we all know that passage where God says, out of Egypt have I called my son. And this idea of fulfilling often means to connote or allude to a broader theme or idea. It is not a reference to a specific context, not a proof text.

So, to connote, not the primary or explicit meaning, but a more implicit meaning through association with the original idea. What's the original idea? Release from Egypt, coming out of Egypt. That certainly was true of the nation.

It's why Passover has been celebrated for nearly 3,500 years. But that doesn't exhaust the meaning. It will be filled with deeper meaning as that event is alluded to now.

And it connotes another exodus of sorts. Where the most significant figure of scripture, God's own beloved unique son, son fils unique, is brought out of Egypt, albeit as a little tyke of a couple of years of age at the time of the massacre of the innocents.

So, this broader meaning than that we read of in Matthew's gospel is very interesting in saying the whole narrative is about a greater exodus of sorts. Because anything that involves the very son of God himself is the greater. So, Matthew sees the history of Israel recapitulated in Jesus coming out of Egypt.

This is a sort of typology where he makes use of this text in a way perhaps we would not. But finds a deeper significance. Hosea knows a little bit about Old Testament history.

You'll notice in chapter 12, verse 3, he talks about Jacob and Esau. And in the womb, he took his brother by the heel, and in manhood, he strove with God. Again, this pun on wrestling, struggling, and striving with God.

Jacob at the Jabbok, Genesis 32. He strove with the angel and prevailed. Jacob met God at Bethel, and so forth.

So, he alludes to the history of the patriarchs. And even mentions Moses, 12, 13. By a prophet, the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt.

Most Christians don't think of Moses as a prophet. But according to the Bible, he is the greatest prophet in the Old Testament. By a prophet, the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt.

One or two final comments. When Paul gives his locus classicus on the resurrection, his greatest speech found in Scripture on the resurrection, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, Paul dips into the book of Hosea, in chapter 13, verse 14. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? And here we find that Paul quotes this particular passage from 13, 14, in 1 Corinthians 15, 55.

Describing, for Paul, the triumph of the Christian over death. It's a promise to Israel in its original context. All right, you're going into captivity.

You're going into exile. Assyria is on the way. But your restoration is going to be, as it were, like a birth, or like the resurrection of the dead, much like Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones.

You're not going to be dead there among the nations of the earth in that large Assyrian nation. The pestilence and destruction of Sheol would be overcome. And so, here, Hosea anticipates the restoration of his people, not Christ's resurrection.

So, this fuller significance of the defeat of death, O Sheol, where is your destruction? And so forth. That awaits the New Testament. And that would be the census plenum.

The last chapter, again, is the editorial sweetness. The last chapter involves the positive blessing, forgiveness, in response to repentance. What is the Hebrew word for repent? It's return.

Go back. How does chapter 12 end? Return. Shub/shuv, O Israel, to the Lord your God.

Return to the Lord. Where did Paul get the notion of using the olive tree as a metaphor for Israel? Right here from Hosea. There's one place in Psalms, but this is where he gets it.

Israel's shoots and beauty will be like the olive. Chapter 14, verse 6. So, immediately, that connection would be made by his readers. That Israel, indeed, is an olive tree.

The book sort of ends: whoever is wise, let him understand these things. Whoever is discerning, let him know them. Sort of like something you'd read in the Gospels.

Take heed. A call to listen well. Last word.

Da'at Elohim, to know the Lord. How does Hosea end his book? He's interested in knowing. Following God.

And so, the postscript for the book comes back to knowing. Whoever is wise, let him know these things. Because the upright will walk in them.

In other words, that's what knowledge of God is. Obeying, living it out, walking it out. So, I think he comes full circle.

There's no knowledge of God in the land. But, when you truly know God, you will walk in His paths. Alright, that will be it for today.

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