

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 1, Hosea Background and Hosea 1 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Hosea, Session 1, Hosea Background and Hosea 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This transcription details a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on the Book of Hosea. **The lecture focuses on the historical and religious context of Hosea's prophecy**, specifically the political instability and widespread idolatry in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the Assyrian Empire's rise. **Dr. Oswalt emphasizes Hosea's dual purpose**: to call the Israelites to repentance and, if repentance fails, to reveal God's unwavering love and enduring covenant despite their unfaithfulness. **He uses Hosea's marriage to Gomer as a parable illustrating God's relationship with Israel**. The lecture also **explores the themes of God's compassion, judgment, and ultimate faithfulness to His covenant promises**.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Minor Prophets → Hosea).



Oswalt_Hosea_Session01.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Hosea, Session 1, Hosea Background and Hosea 1

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided transcript of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Hosea, Session 1:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Hosea, Session 1

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Hosea_EN_Session01.pdf"

Overall Theme: The primary focus of this session is establishing the historical, political, and religious context of the book of Hosea, and exploring the initial chapters as a lens through which the entire book's message can be understood. Oswalt emphasizes the themes of God's unchanging love amidst Israel's unfaithfulness, the call to repentance, and God's ultimate faithfulness to his covenant promises.

Key Points and Ideas:

1. Historical and Political Context of Hosea:

- **Northern Kingdom of Israel:** The book is addressed to the Northern Kingdom of Israel after its division from Judah. The northern kingdom was larger and wealthier than Judah ("about twice the size of Judah and about three times the gross national product").
- **Time Period:** The book was written roughly between 755 and 725 BC, a turbulent period marked by shifting political alliances and the rise of Assyria.
- **Prosperity and Instability:** The early part of this period saw unprecedented prosperity under Jeroboam II, but this was followed by rapid political instability, with numerous assassinations and five ruling dynasties in 30 years. This instability was symptomatic of a nation collapsing under external pressure from Assyria and internal corruption.
- **Assyrian Threat:** The rise of Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 BC marked a return to Assyrian aggression, which posed an existential threat to Israel. Assyria was aiming to control the trade chain to Egypt and needed to control Syria, Israel, and the Phoenicians.
- **Internal Divisions:** The political climate within Israel was characterized by pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian factions, further destabilizing the nation ("You've got the pro-Assyrians, the anti-Assyrians, the pro-Assyrians, the anti-Assyrians, and the pro-Assyrians before he became anti.").

1. Purposes of Hosea's Prophecy:

- **Call to Repentance:** One primary purpose of Hosea is to call the people of Israel to repentance, emphasizing that it's not too late to turn back to God ("It's not too late. It's not too late. You've got to be nuts, Hosea. Look at Assyria. It's not too late. Look at God.").
- **Preservation in Exile:** The other key purpose is to instill truths in the people that would allow them to maintain their identity and faith even in exile. ("...if it comes, some truths will be ingrained in you so that you will not become part of the imperial culture...And the exile will not destroy you. It will, in fact, purify you.")
- **God's Unchanging Character:** Even in judgment, the book demonstrates God's love and faithfulness.

1. Religious Setting:

- **Idolatry:** Israel had been idolatrous from the start, with Jeroboam I establishing golden bulls in Bethel and Dan to prevent pilgrimages to Jerusalem. These bulls were likely intended to represent Yahweh, but the act of creating physical representations of God was problematic as it made God appear to be manipulable ("You have made him part of this created world that you can manipulate through this world.").
- **Progression to Baal Worship:** Israel's idolatry worsened, with the threat of abandoning Yahweh altogether in favor of Baal worship.
- **Prophets as Messengers of Love:** The numerous prophets sent to Israel, even those with messages of judgment, were messengers of God's love. Oswalt states "Guess what? It's God's love."
- **Core of the Covenant:** The Mosaic covenant had two main requirements: absolute loyalty to Yahweh and self-denying care for others.

1. Hosea's Life as a Lived Parable (Hosea 1):

- **Marriage to Gomer:** God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute, Gomer, and have children with her. This was a symbolic representation of God's relationship with unfaithful Israel ("He is using Hosea as an example of himself and Gomer as an example of Israel.").
- **Symbolic Names of Children:** **Jezreel:** This name references the massacre at Jezreel, highlighting that even actions done in obedience to God can be done for

self-serving reasons. ("...you can do God's will in the wrong way. You can do God's will in a self-serving way.") It serves as a reminder of Jehu's actions and their ultimate consequences.

- **Lo-ruhamah:** Meaning "no compassion," represents God's withdrawal of compassion from Israel. This highlights the consequences of sin and God's grief over their actions ("... it took 700 years for God's compassion to run out.").
- **Lo-Ammi:** Meaning "not my people," symbolizes Israel's broken covenant with God.
- **Hope in the Midst of Judgment:** Despite the judgment, the chapter ends with a promise that Israel will be like the sand on the seashore and will be called children of the living God, reflecting God's ultimate faithfulness.

1. **Outline and Key Hebrew Words:**

- **Three sections:** The book can be broken into three sections based on explicit calls to repentance: Chapter 6:1-3, Chapter 11:1-11, and Chapter 14.
- **Yadah (To Know):** Emphasizes the importance of a deep, intimate relationship with God.
- **Hesed (Unfailing Love):** God's love is given by a superior to an inferior, especially when undeserved.
- **Emet (Truth):** This is not primarily objective truth but faithfulness to relationships, which in turn implies that there are objective truths in God's world ("truth is not an objective concept...it is to be true to someone as God has been true to us.").

1. **Dating of the Book:**

- Hosea's unusual practice of dating his writings based primarily on Judean kings instead of those of the northern kingdom is viewed by Oswalt as a sign that Hosea considered the northern kings to be illegitimate, a fact that is not explicit in the text.

Quotes:

- "This book is addressed to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, after the division when Solomon died."
- "He had watched three quarters of Israel go into exile."

- "It's during that time, during that roughly 40 years from 795 to 50 years, 795 to 745, the pressure's off."
- "It's the day of the Lord, all right. But let me tell you what the day of the Lord's going to be like."
- "...the pro-Assyrians are the ones who are going to die."
- "The Bible does not believe in fate. The Bible believes in historical responsibility."
- "Repetition is the soul of education."
- "You have made him part of this created world that you can manipulate through this world."
- "Oh, man, I got to read the prophets. All this darkness. All this judgment. Guess what? It's God's love."
- "The whole law and prophets is summed up in this. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
- "But what this book is about is about love. Love forfeited. Love missed. Love denied. And yet love continued."
- "He is a promise-keeping God."
- "Remember, as you're being dragged away with a hook in your nose, perhaps wearing nothing but a loincloth, remember, remember, Israel will be like the sand on the seashore."
- "Judgment is coming. You have sinned away God's compassion. But God's not done. God's not done. Don't forget it."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture lays a critical foundation for understanding Hosea. He highlights the intertwined nature of historical events, political instability, and religious apostasy in Israel. He emphasizes that the book is not primarily about God's judgment, but rather about his relentless love and faithfulness despite Israel's persistent unfaithfulness. The personal life and family of Hosea become a living parable for Israel's relationship with God, revealing both the depths of God's pain and the enduring nature of his promises. He sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the book, focusing on the core themes of knowing God, experiencing his *hesed*, and living in *emet*.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Hosea, Session 1, Hosea Background and Hosea 1

Hosea Study Guide: Session 1

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the historical context of the book of Hosea, and to whom was it primarily addressed?
2. What was the political situation in Israel during the time Hosea was written (specifically regarding Assyria), and how did it contribute to the instability?
3. According to Oswalt, what are the two main purposes behind Hosea's writing?
4. What was Jeroboam's religious strategy to keep people from going to Jerusalem, and what was the fundamental problem with this strategy?
5. What role did the prophets play in Israel's relationship with God during the time of Hosea, and how did this relate to God's love?
6. What are the two central requirements of the Mosaic Covenant, and how do they connect to God's desire for an intimate relationship with his people?
7. Briefly describe the three sections of Hosea that Oswalt outlines and the key concept he associates with each.
8. Why does Hosea date his book using Judean kings rather than the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, and what does Oswalt suggest might be the reason?
9. What is the significance of God's command for Hosea to marry a prostitute, and how does it serve as a metaphor in the book?
10. Explain the significance of the names of Hosea's children – Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The book of Hosea is addressed to the northern kingdom of Israel after the split of the kingdom following Solomon's death. It is set in a time of political instability and approaching judgment, with the Assyrian empire growing in power and threatening the region.

2. During the time of Hosea, Assyria was a rising imperial power after a period of relative inactivity. This power vacuum led to a period of great prosperity in Israel under Jeroboam II, but it was short-lived as Assyria's growing military aggression and expansionism became a threat to all the surrounding nations.
3. Oswalt identifies two main purposes of Hosea: to call the people of Israel to repentance from their idolatry and unfaithfulness, and if they do not repent, to ingrain God's nature in the people going into exile so that they do not lose themselves in the imperial culture of the captors.
4. Jeroboam established golden bulls at Bethel and Dan as alternate places of worship, to prevent the people from traveling to Jerusalem, which was the seat of the Davidic line. The problem with this strategy is that it made God into a manipulatable entity tied to the created world rather than the transcendent creator.
5. The prophets served as messengers of God's love, calling the people to turn from their sins and warning of impending judgment if they did not repent. They emphasized that God's judgment was also an expression of His love and a call to restoration.
6. The two central requirements of the Mosaic Covenant were absolute loyalty to Yahweh as the one and only God and self-denying care for others. These reflect God's desire for a relationship with His people marked by faithfulness and love, which is best expressed in the metaphor of marriage.
7. Oswalt divides Hosea into three sections using three calls to repentance. The sections are also loosely tied to the Hebrew words, *Yadah* (to know), *Hesed* (unfailing love), and *Emet* (truth), which represent central aspects of faith in God.
8. Hosea dates his book using the kings of Judah, not the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, because he likely viewed the northern kings as illegitimate and violent rulers. He suggests that Hosea considered Jeroboam II as the last legitimate king.
9. God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute as a living metaphor for Israel's unfaithfulness to God, despite God's love for them. This demonstrates the depth of God's pain and his desire for their genuine return.

10. Jezreel, meaning "God sows," foretells the punishment of Jehu's house, where a massacre took place; Lo-ruhamah, meaning "no compassion," indicates God's withdrawal of compassion from Israel; and Lo-ammi, meaning "not my people," signifies God's rejection of Israel's unfaithfulness.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the relationship between political instability, idolatry, and the message of repentance in the book of Hosea, as described by Dr. Oswalt. How do these factors intertwine to create the need for Hosea's prophetic voice?
2. Discuss the significance of the metaphor of marriage in the book of Hosea, as presented by Dr. Oswalt. How does this metaphor help us understand both God's love for Israel and the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness?
3. Dr. Oswalt emphasizes the importance of knowing God, God's unfailing love, and God's truth as key concepts in the book of Hosea. How do these three concepts interact, and what do they reveal about God's character and His expectations for His people?
4. Compare and contrast the themes of judgment and hope in the first chapter of Hosea, as outlined by Dr. Oswalt. How does God's promise to Israel stand against the backdrop of the nation's failures?
5. Explain the significance of Hosea's willingness to follow God's command to marry a prostitute. What does this indicate about the relationship between God's will and human obedience, as well as God's willingness to go to great lengths to reach His people?

Glossary of Key Terms

Assyria: A powerful empire located to the northeast of Israel, which became a dominant force in the region during the time of Hosea. It posed a significant military and political threat to Israel, leading to exile and oppression.

Baal: A Canaanite god of storm and fertility, whose worship was a significant temptation for the Israelites. The prophets saw Baal worship as a direct challenge to the exclusive worship of Yahweh.

Bethel and Dan: Two locations where King Jeroboam I established golden bulls as alternate places of worship. This religious strategy was to prevent people from traveling to Jerusalem, the center of Davidic and priestly authority.

Emet: A Hebrew word often translated as "truth," understood in the Old Testament not just as an objective fact but as faithfulness and reliability in relationships.

Hesed: A Hebrew word that signifies God's unfailing love, covenant loyalty, and mercy, especially from a superior to an inferior. It is often used to describe God's steadfast love for Israel.

Idolatry: The worship of idols or false gods, which was a major transgression of the Mosaic Covenant and a central theme in the book of Hosea.

Jeroboam II: King of the northern kingdom of Israel during Hosea's time, whose reign was marked by great prosperity but also deep idolatry and injustice.

Jezreel: The name of Hosea's first child, meaning "God sows". The name alludes to the massacre by Jehu's dynasty at Jezreel and God's impending judgment on that dynasty. It also connects to the place where God will "sow" the people again.

Lo-ammi: The name of Hosea's third child, meaning "not my people," signifying God's rejection of Israel due to their unfaithfulness.

Lo-ruhamah: The name of Hosea's second child, meaning "no compassion," symbolizing God's withdrawal of mercy from Israel due to their sin.

Mosaic Covenant: The covenant God established with Israel through Moses, which includes the Ten Commandments and other laws, calling for exclusive devotion to Yahweh and care for others.

Prophet: A person who speaks on behalf of God, conveying messages of warning, judgment, and hope to the people of Israel.

Repentance: A turning away from sin and turning back to God, a central theme in Hosea, emphasizing the possibility of restoration if the people would acknowledge their unfaithfulness and seek God's forgiveness.

Tiglath-Pileser III: An Assyrian king known for his aggressive military campaigns, whose rise to power initiated a period of Assyrian expansion, greatly affecting Israel.

Yadah: A Hebrew word meaning "to know" in an intimate, experiential sense. It describes both a personal knowledge of God and sexual intimacy.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Hosea, Session 1, Hosea Background and Hosea 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Hosea

1. **What is the historical and political context of the book of Hosea?** The book of Hosea is addressed to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, approximately double the size of Judah and three times its gross national product. It was written during a tumultuous period between roughly 755 and 725 BC, a time when Israel experienced significant prosperity followed by rapid decline due to the resurgence of Assyria. This period saw numerous changes in leadership, with multiple kings and ruling dynasties, along with a complex political landscape involving pro- and anti-Assyrian factions within Israel, all while being threatened by the powerful Assyrian empire to the north. The kingdom of Israel was poised for destruction.
2. **What are the two primary purposes of the book of Hosea?** Hosea has two main purposes: first, to call the people of Israel to repentance, urging them to turn away from their idolatry and injustice. Despite their impending doom, there is still a chance to avert God's judgment by returning to him. Secondly, if repentance fails, the book seeks to instill truths in the people that will sustain them through the exile, preventing them from assimilating into the culture of their captors and instead allowing the exile to purify them. It emphasizes that God's love and covenant remain, even in exile.
3. **What was the religious situation in Israel during Hosea's time?** The religious situation in Israel was marked by widespread idolatry. King Jeroboam I had established golden bulls at Bethel and Dan to prevent the people from going to Jerusalem to worship. This was viewed as an attempt to manipulate God. Over time, this idolatry escalated, encompassing the worship of other gods, such as Baal. This led to intense conflict and the ministries of prophets like Elijah and Elisha to confront this issue, even though the people often stopped short of completely abandoning Yahweh, the covenant Lord.

4. **What does Hosea's marriage to Gomer symbolize?** Hosea's marriage to a prostitute named Gomer serves as a vivid parable of God's relationship with Israel. Just as Gomer is unfaithful to Hosea, so too is Israel unfaithful to God, turning to idolatry and other sins. The children born to Hosea and Gomer, each with symbolic names like Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah (no compassion), and Lo-Ammi (not my people), illustrate the broken covenant and God's response to Israel's infidelity. This unconventional marriage highlights the depth of God's love for Israel and how far he is willing to go to illustrate that love and bring them to repentance.
5. **What is the significance of the names given to Hosea's children?** The names of Hosea's children are symbolic of God's relationship with Israel. Jezreel is a reference to the massacre at Jezreel and God's impending judgement. Lo-Ruhamah, meaning "no compassion," signifies that God's patience with Israel's unfaithfulness has run out. Lo-Ammi, which translates to "not my people," reflects God's rejection of the faithless nation. However, these names are not the final word; the book later reveals the possibility of restoration and God's enduring love.
6. **What is the importance of the three Hebrew words, "Yadah," "Hesed," and "Emunah" in Hosea?** These three Hebrew words - *Yadah* (to know), *Hesed* (God's unfailing love), and *Emunah* (truth/fidelity) - highlight key themes in Hosea. *Yadah* signifies both an intellectual knowledge of God as well as an intimate, relational understanding similar to a sexual embrace; Israel lacks this real knowledge of the Lord. *Hesed* points to God's loyal, undeserved love offered to the people, and *Emunah* stresses the need for faithfulness and truth, both towards God and others. The book emphasizes that true faith is not just acknowledging God but also embodying his attributes in daily life, just as a marriage requires loyalty, compassion and truth.
7. **How does Hosea address the themes of judgment and hope?** Hosea vividly portrays the imminent judgment that Israel faces because of its sin. He details the political and social instability and the coming exile due to their unfaithfulness to God. However, interwoven with this message of judgment is a persistent theme of hope. God's love and covenant are enduring. Despite the harsh consequences, the book contains promises of restoration, a future where Israel will be restored and called "children of the living God". This hope underscores God's unchanging love and faithfulness, even amid judgment.

8. **How does Hosea's message relate to the concept of marriage, and what does the book ultimately emphasize?** The book of Hosea uses the metaphor of marriage to illustrate the relationship between God and Israel. God is depicted as a faithful husband and Israel is portrayed as an unfaithful wife. This relationship emphasizes themes of loyalty, love, and betrayal, underscoring the deep pain God feels due to Israel's spiritual infidelity. Ultimately, the book emphasizes God's unwavering love that persists even when it is forfeited, denied, or missed. God's heart is oriented towards love, covenant and an intimate relationship with His people and He will not ultimately abandon them.