

SPIRITUAL CAT SCANS

HOSEA

Ever had a *cat scan*? I don't mean *scan a cat...* or *cat on a scanner!*

“Cat Scan” is an acronym for “Computerized Axial Tomography” - a noninvasive diagnostic tool used by physicians to examine a patient's medical condition. The technology is sometimes called a “CT Scan.”

A cat scan is a sophisticated X-ray that rotates around your body and sends out multiple beams of radiation. It takes cross-sectional pictures.

The scanner photographically dissects your body into thin slices that the computer software reassembles into detailed images. A cat scan gives a doctor a multi-dimensional view of a patient's insides. CT Scans are a quick way to examine a person's chest cavity, or abdomen, or pelvis.

Cat Scans are used to detect a wide range of ailments and injuries.

There is a section of Scripture I think of as **Spiritual Cat Scans**. The last twelve books of the OT are commonly known as the Minor Prophets.

We like to call Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel the **Major Prophets**.

Then starting with Hosea, the next 12 books are **Minor Prophets**. And note the distinction has nothing to do with

significance, but *size*. Each of the Major Prophets averages 46 chapters - the Minor Prophets just 6.

Yet Joel and Amos and Zephaniah are just as inspired by God, and vital to us, as Isaiah and Ezekiel. **“The minor prophets pack a major message.”**

These Minor Prophets are **Spiritual Cat Scans**. God puts the patient - usually the nation Israel or Judah - on a stretcher, slides them into the X-ray tube, spins around them taking slices of what’s going on under the surface of their national life - then spits out a picture and a diagnosis.

On the surface of the nation, there’s buying and selling – kids go to school or folks head to work – there are weddings, births, celebrations, and graduations taking place. In most cases it is business as usual.

But God let’s the prophets see what’s going on inside, under the surface of people’s lives. And in many cases there are cancers growing, and organ disease, and hidden malignancies that would’ve been undetected without the scan. These prophecies were God’s attempt to save His people.

For the next 12 weeks we’re going to study the Minor Prophets.

We’ll take one prophet a week – *introduce his background, spell out His circumstances, summarize His message* – then *explore how the prophet’s message applies to our lives today*. And I think you’ll be surprised

at just how timely, relevant, and applicable these prophecies will prove to be...

These ancient Cat Scans may just help us diagnose our problems – even provide us a cure, and get us on the road to spiritual health.

This morning we'll look at the first of the Minor Prophets, **Hosea.**

When Hosea and his finance, Gomer, were dating they had a heart-to-heart conversation. Hosea opened up, "Honey, I need to confess. There is something you need to know about me before we get married...

I have an obsession with golf. Whenever I drive past a course I drop what I'm doing and tee it up. I've been known to miss work, and forget family commitments, just to play a round of golf. And I'm worried my compulsion might cause some real problems in our marriage."

Gomer understood. She responded, *"Sweetheart, that's okay. But while we're on the subject I also have a confession to make. Hosea, there's something about me you need to know... I'm a hooker."*

Without batting eye, Hosea replied, "Is that all? Don't worry. Just bring your right hand over the top of your club, and it'll straighten out that hook." Well, the real Hosea was *not a golfer* - but the real Gomer was *a hooker!*

Verse 1 puts the prophet and his prophecy in their historical context.

“The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

Notice, two kingdoms are mentioned... By the time the Minor Prophets wrote, the once united empire of David and Solomon had been divided.

Twelve tribes split into *two kingdoms*. The ten northern tribes formed a kingdom called “*Israel*.” The two southernmost tribes went by the name of the largest tribe, “*Judah*.” The Hebrew nation split, north and south.

Hosea ministered primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel. He served from 760-710 BC. He lived in the shadow of 5 kings, and logged 50 years of faithfulness. Hosea was the contemporary of two other biblical writers.

Micah and Isaiah worked in the south while Hosea focused on Israel.

All three prophets had difficult ministries... but it’s hard to imagine a tougher row to hoe than the call of Hosea. Verse 2 tells us, “When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.” God tells Hosea to marry an unfaithful wife, and raise kids that aren’t his.

In my opinion this is one of the most bizarre storylines in the Bible.

I'm surprised Hollywood hasn't turned Hosea's story into a movie. Imagine the potential titles: "The Minister and the Madam," "Man of the Cloth and Lady of the Night," "Street Preacher and the Streetwalker," "His Light, Red Light," and here's my favorite "Ho, Hosea."

This is the type of sensationalism that runs on television during *sweeps week*. The story of Hosea and Gomer would've jacked-up the ratings.

Here's what I want to do. I'm going to tell you the story of Hosea. Then when we're done there's one big lesson I think this story communicates.

That big deal is what I hope you'll leave today remembering...

Pastor Hosea *marries a madam*. What a shock this was to his spiritual sensibilities and morality. The Law of Moses required prostitutes to be *stoned not courted*. What was God's purpose behind this command?

And what about his future ministry - *what church would hire a pastor who comes with a prostitute for a pastor's wife?* A bad case of leprosy would not have done more to isolate and disgrace a man like Hosea.

All Hosea wants is a happy home - a good woman to raise his kids. A wife who shares his love for God... *instead he has to share her shame.*

Hosea may've wondered if it was all a *trick*... It was surely a strange command, yet Hosea obeyed. Verse 2, "He went and took Gomer..."

There's a passage that appears later in the book, Hosea 12:10, where God speaks, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets."

The prophets were God's representatives. Often, they *spoke* for God. On occasion, they conveyed messages through "*symbols*" or "*skits*."

Isaiah exposed the *bare facts* about sin by walking naked and barefoot among God's people for three whole years. He was a *spiritual streaker*...

Jeremiah buried a scarf by the river in Babylon to show the nation Judah, that they were *grounded*. They'd be in exile for 70 years.

Ezekiel illustrated the city of Jerusalem would be *invaded* by digging a hole in the side of his house and escaping for work each morning.

At times, God scripted His prophets bizarre parts to play, but no prophet drew as challenging a role as Hosea. His marriage to a prostitute gives us a glimpse of God's heart toward Israel, but it caused Hosea severe pain.

The first three chapters of Hosea focus on his marriage - his *private misery*. The last eleven chapters record his *public message*.

And here's Hosea's theme, "**Israel rebels, but God redeems.**" Despite our unfaithfulness to God, He still seeks to *buy us back and set us free.*

Hosea is all about redemption. Let me give you **four fours** that will help with the message of Hosea, and his marriage to Gomer... *Four fours...*

First, his marriage **foreshadows** God's relationship with His people.

Second, Hosea's story was a **forewarning** of a judgment to come.

Third, Hosea's life with Gomer demonstrated God's **forbearance.**

The fourth four, hope is always available through **forgiveness.**

As tough as it was, the mission God assigned to Hosea was the same situation God had endured for centuries in His relationship with Israel.

God's wife, Israel, had committed spiritual harlotry. Rather than remain faithful to God – she'd shared her bed, and given her heart, and wasted her affections on idols. *Hosea's home mirrored the house of Israel.*

And keep in mind, idolatry – spiritual harlotry – isn't just an ancient sin.

It's still alive and well. Rarely do we see trinkets and statuettes sitting on a person's mantle, but people today

pimp out their faith and commitment to God for *trivial thrills*, and *superficial pleasures*, and *temporary comforts*.

There's an old saying, "**everybody has a price.**" *I hope not!*

But apparently, some folks do come cheap. They throw away *integrity* for *income*. They turn their back on *eternal life* for a *one-night stand*.

Here's how idolatry works today... On the surface you can claim to love God, but if you sneak an attitude, or action, or relationship through a back door in your life, and then let it move about and gain momentum – while ignoring God's will and avoiding His scrutiny... *welcome to your god!*

It's taken control... It's calling the shots... It's vying for the throne...

Israel's heart strayed from God. Has your heart strayed? Have you gone a different way? Has your allegiance and focus drifted?

Hosea's marriage **foreshadowed** God's relationship with His people both then and now. Some of us have also acted like a *Go-Go Gomer*.

Hosea marries Gomer, and it's not long before they have a son. In 1:4 the Lord names the baby. He's called "**Jezreel.**" Two more kids follow. A girl named "**Lo-Ruhamah,**" and another baby boy named "**Lo-Ammi.**"

The names of these children served as a **forewarning** to Israel.

Once, I heard of a doctor whose last name was “*Hurt*.” “*Doctor Hurt*” - can’t be good for business. Who goes to “*Doc Hurt*” to get healed?

Here’s a list of other real names that complement their occupation.

"Mike Sellers a distribution manager. Ralph Bible a minister. Mr. Planke a carpenter. Mr. Hand a physical therapist. Mike Cash works in finance.

Richard Pye is a chef. Mr. Hookem is a director of advertising. William Love is a cardiologist. There’s a doctor who removes dead tissue from wounds, named Dr. Skinner. And of course, Dr. Mohler the dentist...”

Well, God gave Hosea’s three children prophetic handles...

The first son was named “*Jezreel*” which means “*scattered*.” That’s what God did to Israel. In 722 BC the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians and its inhabitants were scattered among the Gentile nations.

To this very day twice as many Jews live *outside Israel*, as *inside*.

Hosea and Gomer’s next child was a girl they named “*Lo-Ruhamah*” or “*no pity*.” There comes a time when God withdraws his mercies and pity.

Before the flood of Noah, God said, “*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever*.” Even God’s bountiful patience and forbearance has its limits.

This explains the devastating plight of Israel over the centuries. From the Crusades, to the Inquisitions, to the Holocaust - the Hebrews have been un-pitied. Names like Aushwitz and Dachau send chills down our spine. For the last 2000 years our world has shown the Jews “no pity.”

The minister and madam have a final child, “Lo-Ammi” – or “not my people.” What a strong rebuke. Israel claimed to God’s people. But God denied it. They were illegitimate. They had His name, but not His nature.

It reminds me of the newspaper ad, “Lost Dog - walks on three legs, is missing an eye, has a gnarled left ear, a broken tail, several scars... goes by the name, “Lucky”. Some names don’t exactly fit the bearer’s nature and life experiences. So it was with Israel – they were called *children of God*, but as far as God was concerned they were “not my people.”

Three names illustrated a nation’s future for two millenniums. One commentator wrote, “Never was so much been said in so few words.”

But here’s the question. If Israel was renamed “Lo-Ammi” or “not my people” does that mean God has abandoned the Hebrews forever?

The answer is “no way Hose(a)!” In 1:10 right after the names are given God says, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not

My people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'"

In verse 11 God promises that “Scattered” or “Jezreel” will be regathered. In 2:1 “Lo-Ammi” is renamed “Ammi” or “my people.” And to “Lo-Ruhamah” God guarantees “mercy will be shown.”

In the Hebrew language the prefix “Lo” means “no or not” – it applies a negative spin. “Ruhamah” means “pity.” “Lo-Ruhamah” means “no pity.”

Notice, God was the one who took away the “Lo” from these names.

Why is it, people accuse God of adding negativity to our lives? No, *God takes it away*. People say, “God just wants to saddle you down, spoil your party. He’s a killjoy.” Hey, it’s sin that adds negativity and pain to our lives. God eliminates the negative. He drops the “Lo” and mercy starts to flow.

Chapter 2 opens with Hosea hurt and angry. The name “Lo-Ammi” means “not *my* child” rather than “not *our* child.” It’s in the singular.

The implication is that by this point Gomer has gone back to the streets or to the brothel. Hosea is sure Gomer’s third son is not even his own boy. Lo-Ammi was sired by another man – one of Gomer’s illegitimate lovers.

In verse 2 Hosea threatens Gomer with divorce - even public disgrace. He hurts. His pain is severe. He wants his wife to repent and come home.

Over years I've done enough marriage counseling to sympathize with Hosea. Nothing damages a psyche, and breaks a person's heart more severely than a spouse's betrayal. It hurts. This wound cuts deep.

Whenever I officiate a wedding I remind the bride and groom, "God doesn't expect you to be perfect, but He does expect you to be faithful."

That's true in marriage, and it's true in our relationship with God.

In a nutshell this is the message of Hosea. Keep your vow to God and your spouse! None of us are perfect, but we can all be faithful.

In Chapter 2 Gomer reveals her excuses for leaving Hosea. Rather than live in a cul-de-sac she wanted the fast lane. She was *disco* not *domestic*.

Hosea lived on humble means. He was a prophet and she didn't like his modest lifestyle. In her mind, Hosea was *boring*, so she went *whoring*.

In verse 5 Gomer says, "I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink." She sold her body and soul for gourmet food and designer clothes. She satisfied her john's *sexual desire*, while his money satisfied her *selfish desires*.

At the time, dignity, and self-respect, and other people, even her family - didn't factor into her thoughts... Shaz-zam, this Gomer was a sell-out.

It's interesting how both God and Hosea dealt with their wayward wives.

Rather than try to hold on, they let their girls go. They turned loose so she can reap the consequences of her actions. God says of Israel in verse 6, and it applied to Gomer. **“Hedge up (her) way with thorns, and wall her in...”** In other words, I'll make her way hard, and thorny, and restrictive.

Verse 7 continues, **“She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.’”**

When I was five years old I got mad at my parents, and I decided to run away from home. I'll never forget how it went down. Dad helped me pack. Mom made me one last peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the road.

I made it four doors down the street before I realized life at the Adams' house wasn't so bad after all. This is how God treats wayward sinners.

The best opportunity for a rebel to reach the right conclusion is to let him go. Let him taste the consequences of his sin – no matter the pain that might involve. Hopefully, it'll dawn on him how good he had it!

Backslide from God – choose to walk away – and God won't chase you.

Instead, God will honor your choice. He'll let you learn the hard way. In 8:7 we read, "**They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.**" They got more than they bargained. They sowed seeds of sin and grew a bumper crop.

Here's good advice for how to handle an adulterous spouse, or a rebellious child, or an embittered friend, or an upset church member... Don't try to hold on. Let them go. Turn them over to their choices.

Stand in their way – arrange a bail out - and you'll keep God from getting their attention. We learn more by reaping what we've sown.

It's interesting, Hosea let's Gomer go, *but he doesn't give up*. This is the balance we have a hard time striking. Letting someone go doesn't mean washing our hands of them. **We let them go - to get them back.**

Remember God is into redemption. He might *work us over*, but He'll always *take us back*. Redemption is His goal. This is why the story of Hosea is such a beautiful picture of God's **forbearance** and patience.

It's so easy for us to give up on people, but God's love endures.

Throughout the book of Hosea the prospects for Israel's restoration look bleak... In 4:1 Hosea sizes up the nation's spiritual condition, "**There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.**" The next verse reveals the fallout, "**They break all restraint.**" When God is out of

the equation there is no absolute truth, or right or wrong, or transcendent values.

People feel emboldened to do as they please - school shootings, and gang violence, and sexual confusion, and the exploitation of children...

Where there is no knowledge of God brace yourself for anarchy.

Twice in Hosea, he says the nation had a “**spirit of harlotry.**”

One of Israel’s idols was a golden calf. Four times Hosea calls it “**the calf of Samaria.**” This is why Israel was so bull-headed and stubborn.

You take on the likeness of what you worship. You get enslaved.

In chapter 7 Hosea uses four idioms to describe Israel’s unfaithfulness.

A heated oven... A baker fired up his oven in the daytime, but it cooled at night. Israel’s desire for sin never faded. Its fire, its lust, never cooled.

“A cake unturned...” Forget to flip your pancakes on the griddle and the underside will burn. Israel refused to flip or change. They were too proud. The old maxim is true, **“When you’re through changing, you’re through.”**

“A silly dove...” Doves get confused by conflicting noises. They’re *fickle*, not *faithful*. Rather than trust God, Israel allied herself with other nations.

“A warped bow...” When my son, Zach, was 11 he paid \$15 for a BB gun with a warped barrel. He got ripped off. A gun with a twisted barrel never shoots straight. And this is the sinner’s problem. It’s not that our aim is sometimes off. Our very nature is sinful. The bow is warped.

There’s a string of heavy statements that God makes in this book...

Hosea 4:17 is a sad verse, **“Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.”** God isn’t *giving up*, but He’s *giving Israel over* to what she serves. If she wants to serve idols, let her idols save her. Obviously, no help will come.

Chapter 5:6 says, **“He has withdrawn Himself from them.”** Israel wanted to go it without God – so He lets them. He won’t give up, but will pull out.

In 9:15, God makes an ominous statement, **“I will love them no more.”** Here the word **“love”** is a verb – not a noun. God always loves us. God loves everyone in hell. But there comes a time when he will no longer extend his love – when you can forfeit the benefits of God’s love...

Finally Hosea 9:17 sums up what happened to Israel. **“My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.”** *“The wandering Jew”* has been an expression for the last 2700 years. Scattered Hebrews have wandered the globe.

In a Charles Dickens novel “*Bleak House*”, an orphaned Jewish boy is told by a policeman to stop loitering and move on. The boy answers with tears in his eyes, “I’m always a-moving on, sir. I’ve been a-moving on since the day I was born. Where can I possibly move on to, sir?”

The calloused constable replies, “My instructions don’t address that question. I’ve been told you’re to move on, and I’ve told you 500 times.”

Today, the modern state of Israel is finally a place Jews can move on to... Even today, God has not given up on the Jews. One day God will rename them “**Ammi**” – not “**Lo-Ammi.**” They’ll be His people again.

Here’s my question... *has God ever given up on you?*

When God gives up on you and your quirky habits, and insensitivities, and shortcomings, and failures, and sins - then you can give up on your spouse, or son, or friend, or fellow believer, or neighbor, or coworker.

There may be much to **work out**, but be very reluctant to **walk out**.

God tells Israel in 10:12, “**Break up your fallow ground...**” Repent of your hardness. Humble yourself. Plow under your pride. Between man and man, or God and man— there can be no genuine *reconciliation* apart from *repentance*. There’s work to do - but we can’t give up.

What happened to Gomer after she left Hosea was not a pretty picture.

She got bought by a brothel – became a slave to a pimp. She lived in a dank, nasty hotel - and catered to an endless stream of loveless lovers.

At the beginning of chapter 3 Hosea hears that Gomer is in the slave market, on the auction block. He wonders what God wants him to do...

Hosea 3:1 reads, “Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods...” Hosea obeys.

This means you can stop serving God - stop loving God - stop worshipping God – *but you’ll never stop God from loving you.*

His love cannot be extinguished. *It endures all things.*

My favorite character in the Toy Story movie was the space ranger, Buzz Lightyear. I liked his famous line, “To infinity and beyond!”

Once in Sunday School the teacher stated God’s love has no limits.

After the lesson, she quizzed her class, “Okay boys and girls, how much does God love us?” One of the boys shouted, “To infinity and beyond!” That is how much God loves us! His love is an eternal buzz.

Hosea still loves Gomer, and he goes to the slave market to buy her freedom. Here is a beautiful picture of our fourth four – **forgiveness.**

History describes the slave markets of the ancient world. They were barbaric and brutal places. Humans were treated like livestock. Slaves were stripped and paraded before the buyers. Imagine, Hosea having to watch his naked wife be humiliated before a crowd of rowdy men.

Hosea enters the bidding and in short order he buys Gomer back.

According to 3:2 Hosea bought *Gomer* for a *homer* – actually, “fifteen shekels of silver, and 1½ homers of barley.” Exodus 21 set the standard price for a slave at 30 shekels. Sin must’ve taken its toll on Gomer. A *used-up Gomer* was bought back for half the price of a healthy slave.

When Gomer bailed on God and her marriage she thought it would make her life better and happier. Just the opposite happened.

She now was a shell of the woman who’d been Hosea’s bride.

Here’s a moving scene... Hosea approaches the platform, hands over his money, wraps his disgraced wife in his cloak, covers her nakedness, dries her tears, loosens her chains, wraps his arm around her, and then escorts her through the jeering crowd. When they get home there’s a yellow ribbon around the old oak tree. Gomer finally makes it home.

And this is what Jesus wants for us! We were all once slaves to sin.

On the cross Jesus entered the bidding, and paid for our **forgiveness**. Now He clothes us in righteousness, dries our tears, brings us home...

The Hebrew name "*Hosea*" means "*salvation*". And what a powerful picture this story paints of the salvation that comes through Jesus. *He forgives our sin – He covers our shame – and He ends our slavery.*

And it's interesting what happens next – when Hosea brings Gomer home. Here's a lesson in forgiveness. Forgiveness is not restoration.

Verse 3 "And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man - so, too, will I be toward you." Hosea takes her back, but he doesn't try to turn back the clock and ignore what she's done. He takes her home, but not to bed.

He brought Gomer under his protection and provided her his provision, but they continued to sleep in separate rooms. Hosea gave her time to learn repentance, and demonstrate her desire to be a wife.

For an unspecified period of time Gomer was without a man, Hosea included. To sum it up, Gomer was no longer a *harlot*, but neither was Hosea her *husband*.

And this gets very relevant to Israel's contemporary situation.

This describes Israel's status for the last 2000 years. She's no longer idolatrous - a harlot - but neither is God her husband. She was cured of faith in false gods, but hasn't yet been convinced of faith in God's Son.

God supports and protects Israel - but they're sleeping in separate rooms. Israel lives in limbo – God's people are without their Messiah.

And this also illustrates the difference between forgiveness and restoration. Hosea forgave Gomer in the slave market when He brought her back. But He now expected repentance from God. For restoration to take place Gomer needed to show that she was truly sorry and willing to change.

Understand, Gomer is now Hosea's slave. He can do with her as he pleases.

Once I read of a woman in Georgetown, Guyana found her husband in the bed with another woman. Her husband physically attacked her. She took him to court.

The judge punished the man by sentencing him to be his wife's slave for two weeks. The judge said to the woman, "For two weeks your husband is to be at your beck and call. He is your slave. Anything you want him to do he has to do."

Husband... wife... what would you do if your spouse was made your slave for two weeks? Would you pay'm back for the way they've treated you? What form of slow,

painful torture would you devise? How would you make their life miserable?

This was the situation between Hosea and Gomer. She was his slave. He could do to her whatever pleased him and guess what he did? *He forgave her!* True forgiveness is having it within your power to pay someone back for the evil they've done to you, and instead show them mercy. As author Archibald Hart defines it, "Forgiveness is surrendering my right to hurt you for hurting me."

Guys, if you haven't discovered it already, the biggest key to a successful marriage is learning to bury the hatchet. Husbands and wives have to forgive!

Never doubt God's love for you. Hosea 6:1 invites us, "Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up." God allows us to be torn; so we can be healed. A *rod of discipline* is in God's one hand - *bandages of love* in the other.

Chapter 11:3 describes God as a doting dad, "I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."

God nurtured the nation when they were unaware. He was there when they took their first steps. God has always been behind the scenes.

This is true with us. He leads gently. He's not pushy or cruel. God leads us with **"bands of love."** God wants us to serve Him because we love Him.

Hosea 11:8 is to me one of the most stirring verses in the book. Israel is bent on backsliding and needs to be judged. Something has to be done. But the thought of letting harm come to Israel breaks God's heart.

He says, **"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim?"** Admah and Zeboiim were cities destroyed by fire along with Sodom.

Then God says, **"My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred."**

In the midst of His threats God gets emotional. One author writes, **a cry of love escapes...** Don't think of God as a vindictive judge. He's more like a heart-torn parent trying to restore a rebellious kid with some tough love.

Chapter 14:2 is great advice, **"Take words with you, and return to the LORD."** The cost of redemption is confession. You've got to tell your sin to God. I once spoke to a lady, who said of her friend, **"He knows he's sinned. He just hasn't told it to God."** Forgiveness comes when you tell it to God.

That's why Hosea pleads, *"return to God and **take words with you.**"*

Hosea closes in chapter 14. God speaks to Israel in verse 4, **"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him."** Charles Spurgeon use to say, **"God soon turns from His wrath, but He never turns from His love."** The story of Hosea is prime evidence.