

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## HOSEA 1-2

I come from a family of all boys. I have three sons of my own. I never even thought of having a little girl. The possibility literally, never even crossed my mind.

That's why when Natalie was born it was a surprise.

In retrospect, if I had not had a little girl I would have missed out on a lot of life. I love my three sons, but there's something *sweet and special and splendid* about a little girl. Little girls are *daring and delicate, charming and challenging* all at the same time.

Let me read you Alan Beck's description of a little girl. If you've got one, better get your hanky ready!

"Little girls are the nicest things that happen to people. They are born with a little bit of angel-shine about them and though it wears thin sometimes, there is always enough left to lasso your heart - even when they are sitting in the mud, or crying temperamental tears, or parading up the street in mom's best clothes.

A little girl can be sweeter (and badder) oftener than anyone else in the world. She can jitter around, and stomp, and make funny noises, and frazzle your nerves, yet just when you open your mouth, she stands there demure with that special look in her eyes.

A little girl is innocence playing in the mud, beauty standing on its head, and motherhood dragging a doll by a foot. God borrows from many creatures to make a little girl. He uses the song of a bird, the squeal of a pig, the stubbornness of a

mule, the antics of a monkey, the spryness of a grasshopper, the curiosity of a cat, the slyness of a fox, the softness of a kitten. And to top it off, He adds the mysterious mind of a woman.

A little girl likes new shoes, party dresses, small animals, dolls, make-believe, ice cream, make-up, going visiting, tea parties, and one boy. She doesn't care so much for visitors, boys in general, large dogs, hand-me-downs, straight chairs, vegetables, or staying in the front yard. She is loudest when you are thinking, prettiest when she has provoked you, busiest at bedtime, quietest when you want to show her off to the grandparents, and most adorable when she absolutely must not get the best of you again.

She can muss up your home, your hair, and your dignity - spend your money, your time, and your temper; then just when your patience is ready to crack, her sunshine peeks through and you've lost again.

Yes, she is a nerve-racking nuisance, just a noisy bundle of mischief. But when your dreams tumble down and the world is a mess, when it seems you are pretty much the fool after all, she can make you a king when she climbs on your knee and whispers, "I love you best of all!" And that's what this father would've missed had he not been blessed with a daughter.

Little girls are so precious it's a tragedy when they grow up astray. It saddens our heart and moistens our eyes to see *sweetness turn sour, softness turn hard.*

To watch what made a little girl *cute* now make her *cunning*. When sinful ambitions become armed with charm - a woman gone wrong is a pathetic figure.

Hosea is the story of two little girls who grew up into wicked women. Little girls who were loved and considered precious by the men in their lives, yet they sinned against that love and went their own way.

One of those little girls was named, "Gomer," and the other was named, "Israel." Both are a lesson for a third little girl, "the Church," the bride of Christ, you and me.

Hosea begins, verse 1, "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beerī, 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 nations are mentioned: Judah and Israel.

By the time of the Minor Prophets, the once united empire of David and Solomon had divided. The ten northern tribes formed the kingdom of "Israel." The two southernmost tribes took the name of the largest tribe, "Judah." The Hebrew nation split, north and south.

Hosea ministered primarily to the northern kingdom. He dates his ministry from the reign of Jeroboam II.

He served from 760-710 BC. Hosea lived in the shadow of 5 kings, and logged 50 years of faithfulness.

He was the contemporary of two other biblical writers, Micah and Isaiah. They prophesied primarily in the South while Hosea focused his efforts on Israel.

All three prophets had difficulties... but it's hard to imagine a tougher row to hoe than the call of Hosea.

Realize, the first Jeroboam led the northern tribes in revolt against the southern tribes and the politico-religious establishment headquartered in Jerusalem.

The civil war created a divided kingdom. Rather than reconcile, Jeroboam I worked to solidify the division. He set up a rival religious system to eliminate any reason for the northern Hebrews to look southward.

Jeroboam created his own priesthood, sacrifices, and holy places. He sat up golden calves in Bethel and Dan - worship stations. Initially, the golden calves were to *represent* God, but ultimately they *replaced* Him.

From the beginning God considered Jeroboam's religion a form of idolatry. It was a worship of convenience - *man-made* not *God-directed*. Jeroboam devised his own way to worship God, rather than worship God in the way God desired to be worshipped.

And this is the attitude among Americans today. Folks have concocted their own eclectic religion.

They've pulled from pagan beliefs, and borrowed from populous wisdom to invent a worship that's convenient and tailor-made to their own self interests.

It reminds me of the cartoon - a church marquee reads, "The Lite (L-i-t-e) Church, 24% fewer commitments, home of the 7.5% tithe, 15-minute sermons, and 45-minute worship services. We have only eight commandments - your choose. We have just 3 spiritual laws and an 800 year Millennium.

## Everything you've wanted in a church, and less!"

And God has always seen this attitude for what it is, *idolatry!* For 200 years the northern kingdom continued in this sin. Though prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and Amos warned them, they turned a deaf ear.

Israel had 19 kings and every last one followed in the sin of their wicked predecessor, Jeroboam I.

Finally, God sent Hosea to forecast their judgment. God was about to wipe out Israel at the hands of the Assyrians. Hosea delivered the warning - *then lived to see his warnings fulfilled.* In 722 BC the savage Assyrians invaded and sacked the capitol of Samaria.

God gave the Prophet Hosea a tough assignment, but what made it even more difficult was the method of communication he was to use to deliver his message...

Verse 2, "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 a harlot, and raise kids that aren't his own. Hosea the *pastor* marries a *prostitute*.

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," "The Street Preacher and Streetwalker," "His Light, Red Light," and here's my favorite, "Ho, Hosea."

This is the kind of show networks save for *sweeps week*. Here's a drama that would jack-up ratings.

Yet realize this wasn't pretend. This was real life, and what a shock it was to Hosea's spiritual and moral sensibilities. The Law of Moses required prostitutes to be *stoned, not courted*. What was God doing?

I'm sure he thought, "*My ministry, what church wants a prostitute for a pastor's wife?*" A leprosy wouldn't have been more damaging to Hosea than this marriage.

All Hosea wanted for himself was a happy home - a good woman to raise his kids. A wife who shared his love for God... *instead he has to share her shame*.

Hosea must've thought this was all... *a trick!*

Remember though, throughout the OT when the people refused to hear God's straightforward truth, the prophets would paint the picture with a parable or skit.

Later, 12:10 God tells Hosea, "*I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.*" And He had...

**Isaiah** declared the *bare facts* about Judah's sin by walking naked among them... **Jeremiah** showed the nation they were about to be *grounded* by God when he buried a sash underground next to the Euphrates...

Ezekiel declared that the city of Jerusalem would be invaded by digging a hole in the wall of his house and seemingly "*escaping*" for work every morning...

And here, God tells Hosea to marry a prostitute.

For too long, Israel was suppose to be God's wife, yet the nation followed idols. They'd broken their vow to God and were unfaithful. Here God wants Hosea to *feel and reveal* this message to His people. *Hosea's home was to be a reflection of the house of Israel.*

Being a disciple of Jesus would be easy if our job were just to declare God's truth. But proclaiming, revealing, is only part of our job description. As important as *revealing a truth*, is us *feeling that truth*.

This is the kind of fellowship God desires with us. He brings us into His heart and allows us to feel what He feels. As Paul said to the Philippians, "That I may know (Christ) and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." The deepest intimacy with God is sharing in his heartaches, not just His triumphs.

God's command to Hosea was strange, unsavory, difficult, yet verse 3 tells us he obeyed. "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel." God names the couple's first child, "Jezreel." It was a famous valley. It was the site where the descendants of the wicked king Ahab were slaughtered by the warrior Jehu. The new king, Jehu, brought judgment on Ahab's house.

*With his hands* Jehu obeyed God, but apparently, *in his heart* he went too far. Jehu grew bloodthirsty. The best we can tell, this man did the *will of God* while ignoring the *love of God*... always a big mistake.

Jeroboam II, the king at the time of Hosea, was a descendant of Jehu. Here, Hosea's son was a warning that God would bring judgment *on Jeroboam, and the house of Jehu, and all Israel* - in the valley of Jezreel.

And Hosea is actually referring to two events...

In 722 BC Assyria's General Shalmaneser invaded and defeated Israel. It was *the immediate fulfillment*.

But there's also a long-range, future fulfillment. Hosea is also speaking of the end times, and a final battle in this Valley of Jezreel - for the valley has another name. It's also called, [Valley of Armageddon](#).

The word "*Jezreel*" means "[scattered](#)." It's a Hebrew word for a backhanded toss, what you would do if you wanted to throw a handful of confetti into the wind! Hosea is saying Israel will one day be scattered.

This happened in 722 BC at the hands of Assyria.

It happened again in 70 AD when the Romans invaded Israel. For the last 1900 years the Hebrew people have been scattered to the ends of the earth.

And in the last days, a future dispersion will occur. Israel will again be scattered to the ends of the earth.

Verse 6, "[And she](#) (that is, Gomer) [conceived again and bore a daughter](#). Then God said to him: "[Call her name Lo-](#)



Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away.”

Realize, the story of Hosea plays a divine *name game*. You’ve heard the phrase, “*what’s in a name?*” Well, in the book of Hosea the answer is plenty!

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

Here’s a list of other real names that complement their holder’s occupation. “**Mike Sellers** is a distribution manager. **Ralph Bible** is a minister. One **Mr. Planke** is a carpenter. A **Mr. Hand** is a physical therapist. **Mike Cash** works in finance. **Richard Pye** is a chef. **Mr. Hookem** is director of advertising. **William Love** is a cardiologist. He works on hearts. There’s a doctor who removes dead tissue from wounds, named **Dr. Skinner**. And of course, **Dr. Mohler** is a dentist...”

In Hosea, God uses the names of his kids to convey prophetic messages to His people. Donald Barnhouse wrote, “*Never has so much been said in so few words.*”

Hosea and Gomer have a second child, a daughter. She was named “*Lo-Ruhamah*” - it means “*unpitied.*”

And there comes a time when God will withdraw His pity and His mercy from a people. Before the flood God told Noah, “*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.*”

In other words, God’s patience has limits.

When the Jews pleaded with Pilate to let Christ's blood be upon their hands and their children's hands they didn't know

what they were asking. That moment was a turning point in history, *God withdrew His pity...*

And for 1,980 years Israel has received no mercy.

Names like Aushwitz, Dachau, Belsin-Bergin send cold shivers down our spine. Through the centuries, the judgment on the Jews has been pitiless...

As one Jewish historian facetiously prayed, “Lord, thank you for choosing us as your chosen people, but how about choosing someone else for awhile?”

Verse 7, “Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen.” The southern kingdom of Judah was spared and saved from the Assyrian invasion.

But their deliverance didn't come by bow, sword, cavalry, or battle - divine intervention won the day.

According to 2 Kings 19 an angel of the Lord came, and in a single night slaughtered 185,000 Assyrians.

The enemy's remaining troops retreated to Nineveh, and God gave Judah another 120 years to repent.

“Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son.” At the time, Hebrew moms would breastfeed their babies up to two to three years.

It was a couple of years later she born a second son.

“Then God said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I will not be your God.” This third child is named,

*"Lo-Ammi"* or "not-my-people." If you put it in the singular the name means "not-my-child."

The implication in Hosea's life was that this child was the fruit of Gomer's renewed harlotry, and not the prophet's legitimate son. *"Lo-Ammi"* was "not-his-child"

And what a strong warning this was to Israel. They would no longer be God's people! When Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they were cut from the team - fired. Sent home without pay - suspended by God.

The Bible tells us God temporarily withdrew Israel's "favored nation status." Soon after their rejection of their promised Savior, in 70 AD, the Jews were "scattered." For two millennium they've been "unpitied." Even today, the Jews are "not God's people"

But verse 10, "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.' Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!"

Say to your brethren, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' In essence, God placed the Hebrews on injured reserve. In NT times and even today, the Church has fill their spot on the roster. But here, we're told the Jews will get back into the game.

*Has God abandoned the Jews forever? No way, Hosea(A)!* The Jews will be **regathered** to their land, **reestablished** as a nation, and **reintroduced** to their Messiah. This is the New Covenant God promised.

In the end the Jews will be united under one head, Jesus. Mercy will once again be shown to the Jews!

The awful prophetic names Hosea gave his kids will one day be given a new twist. In the same place Israel was named "**Lo-Ruhamah**" or "**unpitied**" the negative prefix will be dropped. They'll be "**Ruhamah**" or "**pitied.**"

Likewise, "**Lo-Ammi**" or "**not-my-people**" will be changed to "**Ammi**" or simply "**my-people**"... And "**Jezreel**" or "**scattered**" will be **gathered** as one nation.

In the very same land where the nation was cursed, the nation will one day be blessed. Paul tells us in Romans 11:26, that at the time of the end "**all Israel will be saved.**" When Jesus returns all Jews alive at the time will embrace Him, and become **Jews For Jesus!**

The people who were *rejected* will be *reinstated*.

Chapter 2:2, "**Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and expose her, as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. "I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry."**

With the birth of Hosea's last son, "**Lo-Ammi,**" it was apparent that *Gomer* had been *going out* on him.

She had reverted back to her harlotries.

Hosea sends his children to talk Gomer into coming back. If Gomer doesn't return, Hosea will divorce her, publicly disgrace her, cut her off. He's even going to make life hard on her kids. *She had better return!*

If Hosea sounds harsh, understand it's his hurt that's speaking. Nothing upsets, or angers a person as much as discovering their spouse has been guilty of infidelity.

As one woman wrote Dr. Abby, "I was twenty and he was twenty-six. We had been married two years and I hadn't dreamed he could be unfaithful. The awful truth was brought home to me when a young widow from a neighboring farm came to tell me she was carrying my husband's child. My world collapsed. I wanted to die. I fought the urge to kill her. And him." *Defiled, degraded, spit in the face, stabbed in the back, betrayed and bloodied* - these are the feelings caused by infidelity.

Years ago, a woman in Rio de Janeiro discovered her lover had been cheating on her. The next time he went to kiss her, she bit off his tongue. The wounded woman then swallowed it so it couldn't be reattached.

The man, now unable to talk, wrote his feelings on a piece of paper, "Now that was a real Judas kiss."

These kinds of stories illustrate the rage, the pain, the agony that's caused by the violation of one's vows.

Hosea was hurting, but so was God! Israel did to God what Gomer did to Hosea. *God has emotions too!*

It's amazing to realize that you (*tiny, piny, puny you*) has the power to injure the Almighty! Real love always involves vulnerability - and God in pouring out His love to us makes Himself vulnerable to our rejection.

When you cling to possessions, pleasures, and pursuits that take your focus off God, *it hurts Him*. Fall in love with rival affections, and it breaks God's heart.

When I conduct a wedding ceremony I tell the bride and groom, "God doesn't expect you to be perfect, He knows better. But He does expect you to be faithful."

None of us are perfect. God knows there'll be times when we fail. But God does expect us to be faithful, to keep our hearts turned to Him, to love Him with all we've got, to keep Him at the center of who we are.

Verse 5, "For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has behaved shamefully." Sadly, Gomer swapped *the cul-de-sac* for *the fast lane*.

A husband and three kids were *boring*, so Gomer went *whoring*. Hosea brought home a pastor's salary, so Gomer supplemented it by pimping herself out.

Tragically, her own dignity, her commitments, the people in her life, even her God didn't factor into her thoughts. "Shazzam" - *this Gomer* - was a sell-out.

"For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.' Here's a tragedy. Hosea provided for Gomer's every

material need, but she had given credit to her lovers. *She forgot who was paying the bills!*

And Israel likewise, had forgotten the source of her bounty and blessings... Even today modern Israelis are inclined to take credit for their successes.

Rather than give praise to God for their survival, they credit the “indomitable human spirit.” Rather than thank God for their achievements it’s “Jewish ingenuity.” Rather than point to the hand of God for their military prowess they praise their own “courage and firepower.”

Let's you and I be on guard against taking credit for successes that in reality flow from the hand of God!

Verse 6, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. 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.’ For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold - which they prepared for Baal.” Notice how Hosea and God handle their wayward brides. *They let her go! Turn her loose!*

Hosea let's *the go-go girl* go! He doesn't chase after Gomer - or beg her to stay. He's willing to let her go, and allow her to taste the consequences of her sin.

If you try to hold on to a rebellious heart it often bucks even harder. But let it go and let it drink of the natural consequences of the path its chosen, often it'll realize how good it had it, and come running back.

This is good advice for handling a spouse who's been unfaithful, or a grown child who's been rebelling, or a church member who's disgruntled and embittered.

When we try to stand in the person's way, we keep God from getting their attention and teaching them the lessons they ultimately need to learn. **The sooner we let them go, the sooner we might get them back.**

When I was a young tike I decided my Dad was too mean. I was running away from home. If I remember correctly, Dad helped me pack my bag. Mom made me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the trip. I think I made it half way down the street, before I realized that life in my father's house wasn't so bad after all!

This was what Gomer and Israel needed to learn.

And this is also a lesson for us. Backslide from God - walk away - and God won't chase you. He hedges your way with thorns - or in essence, creates obstacles for you. He'll make your way hard - he'll keep you lost, You **"cannot find your paths"** - to bring you to your senses.

God doesn't give up on you. He's patient. But He lets you learn the hard way. He knows sometimes we don't learn to appreciate what we have until its taken away.

In verse 9 God speaks, **"Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, given to cover her nakedness.** Since Israel had not given God credit for her



blessings - since she was not grateful - God was going to take those blessings back.

“Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall deliver her from My hand.

I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths - all her appointed feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, ‘These are my wages that my lovers have given me.’ So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot,” says the Lord.” God describes His treatment of His wayward wife, Israel. She had boasted that her bounty was due to her lovers, the false gods she served. What painful words the Lord speaks, *“but Me she forgot.”*

The story of Hosea teaches us that **gratitude is the first step toward worship. And ingratitude is the first step toward idolatry.** A heart that's full of thanks is ready to express it. But a heart that's been lulled into taking God's grace for granted is slowly pulling away.

Verse 14, *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.”* This is a painful cry! Hosea really loved Gomer despite her harlotries, and God loves us despite our unfaithfulness. This is what makes *sin so sinister!*

It would be one thing if sin were merely *turning from God's truth*, but it's much more than that, it's *spurning God's love*. As

the old saying goes, “Sin is not just breaking *God’s Law* its breaking *God’s heart*.”

God’s love makes His feelings vulnerable to our decisions. We should never *trifle with* or *jilt* that love.

Verse 15 tells us, “I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

God is saying once His people have been broken and humbled; then He'll allure her - He'll woo her with His love. But God only courts a contrite heart.

Psalm 34:18 declares, “The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” *God sings His love songs to listening ears; plants His kisses on the back of a bowed neck; strokes the cheeks that are wet with tears...* It’s when I come broken and humble that God reaches down. He heals a broken heart when we give him all the pieces.

Notice Hosea predicts the Valley of Achor will be a door of hope to Israel. “*Achor*” means “trouble.”

Literally, *the valley of trouble* will become a *door of hope*. God will use Israel's hardships to draw her back.

Innocence and freshness will be restored to this hardened harlot. Israel will again be like a bubbly, little school girl. And so can we, if we let our troubles soften our hearts - not harden our hearts. Humility is our ally.

Israel lost its first love, but through troublesome times still ahead, God will win back her devotion.

These verses also apply to the end times.

When the Antichrist violates his covenant and attacks the Jews, *as Jesus told us in Matthew 24*, the Jews flee to the wilderness. Isaiah 14 identifies their three-and-a-half year hideout as the rock city of Petra.

We're heading to Petra this year on our Israel trip.

Hosea may be referring to the last three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation, when he says it's in the wilderness that God begins to woo Israel with His love.

Verse 16, **“And it shall be, in that day,” says the Lord, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master’...”** God says to His people you'll call me **“Ishi”** or **“husband,”** rather than **“Baali”** or **“master.”**

God is our Lord, and as Master we take orders from Him. We're servants of God, we're His slaves. But hear me carefully, the priority of our relationship with God is not *serving God*, it's *knowing God* and *loving God*.

God says the day is coming when you won't call me *Master*, but *husband*. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:15, **“No longer to I call you servants... but I have called you friends...”** In Christ, God wants a personal heart-felt relationship with us.

It's easy to fall into the trap of serving Jesus without loving Him. *Its performance without passion - devotion without emotion - busyness without a beating heart.* He wants to remind us He's our husband, not just Lord.

Verse 17, “Or I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely.” Apparently, at the time Israel had become associated with idols, the Baals.

But God will remove that association. Peace will come when He shatters the bow and sword of battle.

And this is a commentary on current events in Israel.

True peace will come to Israel when God shatters the sword and bow - *not when men lay them down.*

“I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.” “*Betroth*” in these verses means to “woo, or court, or romance.”

We’re told in the end God will romance Israel and the two will live forever in a loving, faithful relationship.

Verse 21 tells us, “It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,” says the Lord; “I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth.

The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’

And they shall say, 'You are my God!' Here again we should ask ourselves the question, "*what's in a name?*" Again Hosea draws upon the names of his three kids.

Which 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 just don't fit the person who has them. But not so with Hosea's three children.

Remember the name "*Jezreel*" means "scatter" - it's that backhanded toss. But here it's given a new twist.

The backhanded flip\_that scatters confetti into the wind is the same wrist action a farmer uses to sow his seed. What meant "scatter" can also mean "plant".

Despite their *Diaspora* - the Jewish dispersion over the last two millenniums - God has promised to plant the Jews back in their land. Today, in Israel we're witnessing the beginning of what Hosea predicted.

Then he says, "*I will have mercy.*" "*Lo-Ruhamah*" meant "unpitied." Yet God will change that. He will have mercy on the nation that had not obtained mercy.

And then Hosea's third child, "*Lo-Ammi*" or "You are not My people" - in the last days God will say, "You are My people." In the end God will restore to Israel both *His mercy* and *their status* as His favored people.

This whole ordeal was not easy for Hosea. He let go, but he never gave up. He kept hoping and praying, and longing for Gomer's return. And rewarded his faith.

One day he hears that his wife is the slave market.

She's being auctioned off by her pimp. Used and abused she's being sold on the auction block like some cheap commodity. He rushes in, buys her back, brings her home... But we're getting ahead of ourselves...

We'll tackled more of the story next week.