



The book of Hosea



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Introduction

This book, Hosea, is one which brings forward the sensitive topic of being involved in rituals and ceremonies which are religious but are devoid of actual devotion. There is warning against such practices and not to just individuals but to a community at large.

The setting of the book is such where Hosea is presented as Beer's son which leads to the assumption of him belonging to the tribe of Reuben in spite of the lack of evidence for it. Another assumption based on circumstantial evidences is that the book must have been written in Judah.

Hosea 1:1-11

The structure of the passage can be divided as follows:

- Hosea is told to marry (Hosea 1:2)
- The command to name the first born (Hosea 1:3-5)
- The command to name the second born (Hosea 1:6-7)
- The command to name the third born (Hosea 1:8-9)
- Display of hope (Hosea 1:10 onwards to the beginning of the second chapter)

The main theme here is of Israel which has been unfaithful to God while he still loving the people and wanting to connect with them. Hosea get a revelation which is direct and he declares that prophesy to the people. The prophesy of Hosea is in accordance with the person of God which has been portrayed. The center of attention here is the circumstances that exist in the Northern Kingdom. There people of Israel have been shown as being unfaithful which is covered in the beginning three chapters of the book. This is dealt with the prophesies that are made by Hosea.

The use of symbolism is done here where the relationship between God and the people of Israel has been portrayed through the relationship between Hosea and his wife. The Lord tells Hosea to marry a prostitute and bear illegitimate children showing that the people of Israel have been behaving the same way and are equal to a prostitute. He further goes to give Hosea instructions to name the child and how He would punish the Jehu dynasty. Hosea's wife further has a daughter who is name Lo-Ruhamah which means "No-Pity". He showed Hosea how He would not have pity on the people and further declared that they were not His people by telling Hosea to name the third born Lo-Ammi which meant "Not my people".

Here the behavior of the people of Israel is seen as that of infidelity towards God, who is often compared as being a groom to His people in the Bible. This led to the declaration of a warning against the people. Although, what makes it show of God's love is that the message also affirms the people of the love of God and his concern towards His people which also provides a hope for the people and a chance for the repenting and going back to God. Once they would repent, they would once again get the advantages of being seen as pure in the sight of God.

This can be clearly seen in the relationship of Hosea with Gomer where after being unfaithful to him, she would repent and reconcile with him and be one with him. (Hosea 1:2-9; Hosea 3:1-5). It would be interesting to point out that the method in which this has been represented in the style of prose writing and also serve as beginning and end of an intermediate section of poetry. These sessions are also structured in a very similar manner, where the structure is as follows:

- Command of God
- Compliance of the prophet
- Explanation by God and other details

Coming to the clause that comes at the very beginning, the text shows when initially God spoke through the prophet Hosea. It brings forwards His first call to be of service to God. This would imply a great deal of sacrifice on his part and giving up on a major part of his normal life (Hosea 1:2). To choose a life partner according to the will of another is a major decision, and here it can be seen that Hosea takes a decision based on what was asked of him by his Lord. Purely relying on His word, Hosea decides to accept his command and marries Gomer.

Another aspect that points out to the unique nature of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer is that the name Gomer was usually given to a man. This uniqueness provides a sense of special quality in the relationship and the way it represented the relationship between man and God. It is also an assumption that is made by many that the child named "not my people" was a representation that the child was not of Hosea. Although there is no certainty here and may simply represent the rift that was between God and his people of Israel.

There is a visible balance in the relationship between God and the people of Israel. It can be seen that God talks about fully forgiving the people as well, along with the judgement, which many believe to be a clause which is something that controls the further text. Thereby, implying that there is neither forgiveness, nor mercy for Israel. Garrett and other commentators have observed this to be the representative of a balance between the two, not leaning on any one side.

Conclusion

The outline of this section of the scripture can be divided into five sections, where Hosea is first given the command to marry Gomer, then to name the first born Jezrel, the second born, Lo Ruhamah, the third born, Lo-Ammi and lastly how the meaning of the names would be reversed in their roles. All through there is a parallel with the relationship between Israel and God and a display of love and anger as the same time. The obedience of the prophet is quite clear through the passages as he sacrifices his own will and follows the will of God while trying to correct the relationship of God and man, the people who, God called His own. The passage displays the love of God through his anger and there can be seen a balance being maintained between the two.

References

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