

The Door of Hope (Part II)

Chapter in Development

Chapter 15



The Old Testament book of Hosea presents a unique picture of a troubled family--Hosea, his wife Gomer, and three children, a son Jezreel, a daughter Lo-Ruhama, and another son Lo-Ammi.

This chapter follows the development of this storied family, cites the rejection of the children, and then shows that, in the same location where the rejection of the children occurred, they are again accepted and restored to a unique destiny.

The Family of Hosea

"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." (Hosea 1:1 RSV)¹

The story is set in the 8th century B.C.--Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel,² prior to the Assyrian invasion in 722 B.C. in which the ten-tribes were taken captive.

The story of Hosea, his profligate wife Gomer, and their three children has been variously touted as a literal family portrayal, while others have maintained the story is an allegory but is metaphorical. What gives the story unique character is that God commanded that Hosea associate himself with Gomer, his profligate wife: "When the Lord spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, 'Go take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord.'" (Hosea 1:2 RSV). Whether a literal story or an allegory, it is clear that Hosea's family episode was to serve as an example of the on-going relationship God was to maintain with a polytheistically-inclined Israel. The story illustrates the final restoration of this turbulent family to a wholesome and successful ending. The encapsulating account forecasts the triumphant restoration of spiritual Israel.

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"When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord.' So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said to him, 'Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day, I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.'" (Hosea 1;2-4 RSV)

"She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the Lord said to him Call her name Not pitied, (Lo-Ruhamah) for I will no more have pity on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will deliver them by the Lord their God; I will not deliver them by bow, nor by sword, nor by war, not by horses, not by horsemen. When she had weaned Not pitied, (Lo-Rahumah) she conceived and bore a son. And the Lord said, 'Call his name Not my people, (Lo-Ammi) for you are not my people and I am not your God.'" (Hosea 1:5-8 RSV)

Clearly the family of Hosea was called by God to serve a figurative function depicting God's dealing with Judah and Israel.

The fourteen chapters of the book of Hosea not only present the unique love story of Hosea and his profligate wife Gomer, they present a picture of Hosea's entire troubled family--Hosea, his wife Gomer, and three children, a son Jezreel, a daughter Lo-Ruhama, and another son Lo-Ammi. Each family member represents a facet of Israel's polytheistic history. The chapters of Hosea's treatise proceed to build a mesmerizing account of God's depiction of the Israelite nation--the chapters forecast a destiny reflecting rebuke and failure. But in the end, after years of desuetude, the family's fortunes are turned and Hosea's chastised family is elevated to an enviable destiny. Hosea's record of the restored fortunes of Israel is specific as to the actions and events that lead to this restoration. Speaking for God in inspired

prose Hosea writes about the restoration. He says,

"And there will I give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (Hosea 2:15 RSV)

Hosea, Chapters One and Two: The Childrens Name Change

In a reading of Hosea chapters one and two, a difference in the naming of the children is to be noted. In chapter one Hosea's children are entitled Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi--the prefix 'Lo' in Hebrew meaning 'No.' In chapter two the prefix 'Lo' is dropped with the names of the children becoming Ruhamah and Ammi. Thus whereas Lo-Ruhammah signifies 'No Mercy' and Lo-Ammi means 'Not My People,' in chapter two the names are redennominated and become Ruhammah meaning 'Mercy' while Lo-Ammi becomes Ammi, 'My People.' The name changes signify a change in fortune--they first signified rejection and discipline of the children but then end by the children rising to acceptance, favor, success, and honor. In short, these chapters chronicle the history and saga of God's people on earth--both the houses of Israel and then the rise of the Christian church and finally the elevation and reconciliation of both as unified spiritual Israel. They are both raised to a position of vigor and esteem. The story has a very happy ending.

**Three pages of
Chapter 15, Part II,
are shown as a
sample of this
chapter. (This
chapter is incomplete
at this time.)**

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