

LESSON 2

EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS IN ISRAEL

In the middle of the eighth century B.C. (750 B.C. and following), Amos and Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom; Micah and Isaiah spoke to the Southern Kingdom. The purpose of this lesson is to study the messages of the two prophets who proclaimed the word of the Lord to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Their messages must be understood in the context of the political, social, and spiritual environments of the day; therefore, a survey of the background conditions needs to be made before the contents of their messages are examined.

The Political Background

David is remembered for his loyalty to Yahweh. Solomon began the tradition of religious compromise as a result of his political marriages to the daughters of foreign kings. His wives were permitted to import their gods and to carry on the religious practices of the lands of their birth. Even though Solomon is noted for building the Temple of Yahweh, the historian points out that his seven hundred wives turned his heart away after other gods: "And his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 11:4). He built altars for the worship of Chemosh, the god of Moab, and for Molech, the god of Ammon. "And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (1 Kings 11:8). The writer of Kings explained that because of Solomon's idolatry the Kingdom of Israel was divided after his death. As noted in the previous lesson, Ahab continued the policy of compromise by joining his Phoenician wife Jezebel in the worship of Baal (see 1 Kings 16:31). His foreign wife Jezebel was a devoted missionary of Baal-Melkart, and she almost succeeded in turning all Israel to her god. The tide was checked only by the radical demands of Elijah, the faithful prophet of Yahweh.

Under the reign of Omri and Ahab, the Northern Kingdom enjoyed a resurgence of political and commercial power. A political alliance was established with Judah, enabling Israel to recover from the enervating civil wars that had left her weak since the division of Solomon's kingdom. Even though Israel was stronger than Judah, she was less stable because of the many changes in her dynasties. After the reign of four kings, the dynasty of Omri in the Northern Kingdom gave way to the dynasty of Jehu. After the reign of five kings of Jehu's dynasty, there was political instability again, and the nation fell in 722 B.C.

Match by drawing lines from the countries to their kingdom-titles. Then list the prophets who prophesied to each during the middle of the eighth century B.C.

Israel	Southern Kingdom

Judah	Northern Kingdom

(Israel—Northern Kingdom—Amos, Hosea;
Judah—Southern Kingdom—Micah, Isaiah)

Place an X by the reasons David's reign differed spiritually from Solomon's.

1. David built the Temple for God. ____
2. Solomon compromised and built altars for idols. ____
3. David was loyal to Yahweh. ____

(2, 3)

Unscramble the following Scripture to find another spiritual difference between David and Solomon.

"his father and his heart David of heart as way the was the was not with perfect the Lord his God,"

(Compare with 1 Kings 11:4)

Elijah and Elisha set in motion the revolutionary forces which overthrew the Omri dynasty. Elisha commissioned a school of prophets to anoint the army commander Jehu as king of Israel. The prophets' support of Jehu lit the fuse of revolt which was supported by the mutinous army. Jehu's purge of Israel was without mercy, nor was it limited to Israel. He murdered Ahaziah, king of Judah, who had come to visit his uncle Joram, king of Israel. Joram had been wounded in a battle with the Syrians. Jehu is famous for his treatment of Jezebel.

After his brutal revolt and successful accession to the throne, Jehu, "when he was come in, he did eat and drink" (2 Kings 9:34). His revolution was in part religiously motivated. He had been anointed by prophets, and he determined to exterminate the enemies of Yahweh. He prohibited sacrifices to Baal-Melkart, and he destroyed the image of the mother goddess Asherah. The temple of Baal was demolished and converted into a latrine. However, he failed to remove the idolatrous shrines Jeroboam I had established at Dan and Bethel.

The worship of Baal-Melkart had been imported to Judah by Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, who was the mother of the Judaeen king Ahaziah, a victim of Jehu's purge. After her son's death, she disposed of the male members of the Davidic line and usurped the throne. She overlooked the infant Joash (or Jehoash) who was hidden by the priests in the Temple. In Judah, the priests, rather than the prophets, led in a revolt against Baal. The temple of Baal was destroyed, and both Athaliah and the Baal priest Mattan were assassinated. Under the influence of the priests, the child king Joash took his place along with Asa as one of the reforming kings of Judah.

Jehu's drastic actions in Northern Israel resulted in political isolation. He was soon attacked by the Syrian king Hazael. Hoping to save his throne and to protect Israel from Hazael, Jehu paid tribute to the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser III (the political event is recorded on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III). The later weakness of Shalmaneser permitted Hazael to invade Israel. Jehu's son Jehoahaz ruled over a greatly reduced land. These conditions continued until 805 B.C. when Hazael was succeeded by his son Benhadad.

During Syria's political instability, Jehoash of Israel recovered many of the cities lost previously to Syria. Assyria regained her strength and crippled Syria to the extent that she was no longer a threat to Israel. During the next fifty years, Israel was free from foreign interference. Jehoash used the favourable political situation to expand his kingdom. He defeated Judah and reduced her to vassalage (servitude). Conditions were favourable for the glorious reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.) who restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to as far as the Sea of the Arabah—the Dead Sea (2 Kings 14:25).

Who were the prophets who set in motion Jehu's purge of Israel? _____

(Elijah, Elisha)

Now that you have read the first two paragraphs on this page, name three ways Jehu purged Israel and Judah of idolatry.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(1. Murdered Ahaziah and Jezebel, 2. Prohibited sacrifices to Baal-Melkart, 3. Destroyed the image of the mother goddess Asherah)

Who was Athaliah and what was her relationship to the worship of Baal-Melkart?

(Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and the mother of Ahaziah. She imported the worship of Baal-Melkart to Judah.)

Underline the correct words.

Jehu's drastic actions brought (social, political) isolation and an attack from (Judah, Syria).

(political, Syria)

During the time of Amos, Micah, and Hosea, the political and economic conditions were good:

1. Jereboam II extended the border of _____.

(Israel)

Continue on the next page.

Jeroboam's contemporary in Judah was Azariah (Uzziah). He was regent from 791 B.C., king from about 767-742 B.C., and his death was connected with the call of Isaiah (Isa. 6:1). Judah also enjoyed military victories and prosperity. The Philistine cities and the peoples of Transjordan and the Negeb were brought under Judaeen control. Prosperity and political security brought luxurious living to the wealthy (who had little concern for the poor) and increased greed and economic injustice. The merchant class became wealthy, but the great mass of people remained very poor.

The religious purge of Jehu failed to root out Baalism. Some Israelites concluded that their prosperity sprang from the worship of Baal. Since Baal was a god of fertility, temple prostitution was practised. Conflict continued between the adherents of Baal and of Yahweh. The Mosaic tradition and the religion of Yahweh were kept alive by a class of teaching priests, called Levites.

The Message of Amos

Biographical information

Amos revealed that he was a shepherd of Tekoa, a village lying a few miles south of Jerusalem, and his messages were delivered during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. Although he was from the Southern Kingdom, his messages were delivered to the Northern Kingdom. Amos was not a professional prophet but a layman, a simple herdsman who was convinced that he must prophesy against Israel. He came from a strong tradition of Yahwism in Judah and recognized the neglect of the worship of Yahweh in Israel. His only recorded appearance was at Bethel in the Northern Kingdom. He soon came into conflict with Amaziah, priest of the royal sanctuary at Bethel, who expelled him because he thought Amos was stirring up sedition and rebellion. Since Amos mentioned both Zion and Jerusalem (see 1:2; 6:1), he may have also prophesied in Judah.

Amos is characterized as a prophet of doom. His message was a warning to the people who faced punishment because they had repeatedly transgressed the law of Yahweh. The Day of Yahweh was near, and it would bring the opposite of what was expected. The popular concept was that it would be a time of victory for the Israelites. Amos warned that, because of their sins, it would actually be a time of national defeat, destruction, and exile for many. Their only hope was to seek the Lord and establish justice in order that Yahweh might be merciful to a remnant.

Continued from the previous page.

2. King Uzziah enjoyed military _____ and _____.
3. Prosperity and political security came to _____ and _____.

(2. victories, prosperity; 3. Israel, Judah)

Is this statement true or false?

Jehu was able to root out Baalism because the people had no faith in the power of Baal to bring about prosperity. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Place an X by the following facts that are true about Amos.

1. His messages were delivered to the Southern Kingdom only. ____
2. He was a shepherd of Tekoa. ____
3. He was not a professional prophet. ____
4. He preached during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II. ____

(2. X, 3. X, 4. X)

Amos is characterized as a prophet of doom.

His message was a w_____. The Day of Yahweh was near, and it would bring the o_____ of what was expected. The popular view was that it would be a time of v_____. But Amos warned that, because of the people's sins, it would be a time of national d_____, d_____, and e_____.

(warning, opposite, victory, defeat, destruction, exile)

Contents

INTRODUCTION (1:1-2)

Amos identified himself as the shepherd from Tekoa and gave the date of his prophecy (about 760-750 B.C.). The book contains the words "which he saw"; therefore, it is a book of words and visions. Verse 2 is an excellent example of Hebrew poetry. It is composed of two couplets with 3/3 metre (three stressed syllables per line) and with synonymous parallelism (the second line of the couplet repeats the thought of the first). "The Lord will roar" is an announcement of judgement, using the metaphor of a lion's roar. Yahweh's threat to Israel would be like a lion's threat to Amos' flock. A second metaphor is the drought which destroys the pastures where the shepherd feeds his flock.

ORACLES OF DOOM AGAINST THE NATIONS (1:3-2:16)

The prophet gives oracles of doom against seven nations before turning to the transgressions of Israel. Undoubtedly, the Israelites would have rejoiced in hearing his denouncement of her enemies. Amos used a rhetorical device for gaining interest and building towards a climax. He proclaimed what the people wanted to hear before proclaiming what they detested to hear—judgement against themselves.

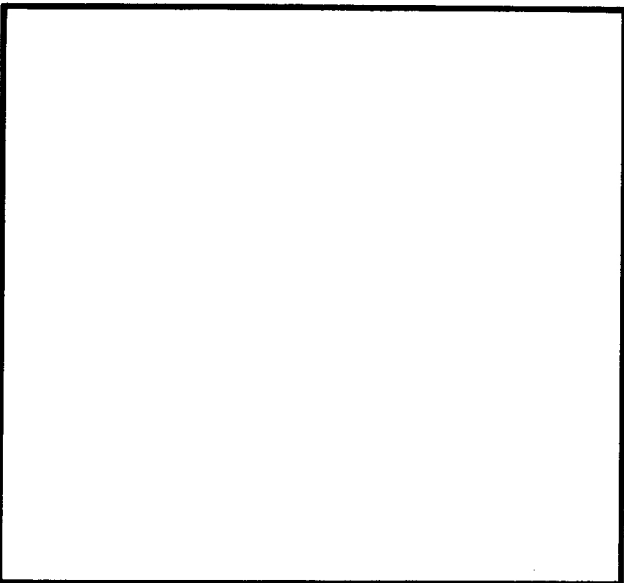
Oracle against Damascus (1:3-5).—This city was the capital of Aram, or Syria, and had recently been engaged in a struggle with Israel. Damascus was condemned for unwanton cruelty in time of war. The Syrians had run over prisoners of war with threshing sledges which had iron teeth.

"For three transgressions . . . and for four" occurs eight times in the oracles of doom. Three stands for enough, and four means more than enough: transgressions had reached the point that they could not go unpunished. The opportunity for repentance had passed. Transgression refers to Israel's rebellion against God's laws. Punishment will be by fire, a weapon used in warfare against the fortresses of the enemy.

Oracle against Gaza (1:6-8).—This Philistine city was condemned for procuring slaves for the Edomites to sell again. Gaza likewise would be destroyed by fire during war.

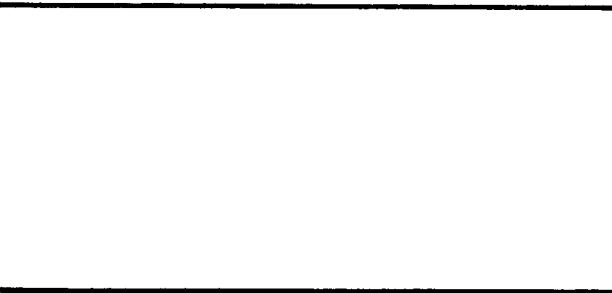
Oracle against Tyre (1:9-10).—This most important commercial city of Phoenicia also sold slaves to Edom. Her crime was worse than that of Gaza because it involved breaking "the ties of kingship" (NEB).

Oracle against Edom (1:11-12).—The Edomites in the southern part of Transjordan were guilty of excessive cruelty in war. They were descendants of Esau; thus they were distant relatives of the Israelites. Bitter rivalry existed between them. The Israelites agreed with the denunciation of the Edomites' cruelty—"they hunted their kinsmen down" in war (NEB).



Why did Amos condemn seven other nations before turning to the transgressions of Israel?

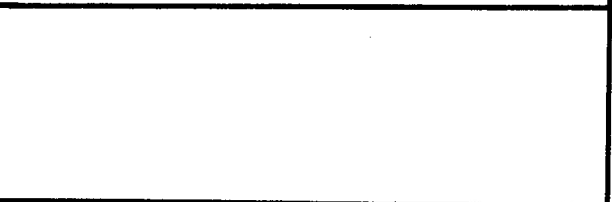
(Compare your answer with the text.)



Read all of the oracles of doom against the seven nations, which continue on the next page. Then list the two most prominent reasons for which Amos condemned them.

1. _____
2. _____

(1. oppressive treatment of the slaves and the poor, 2. idolatry)



Oracle against Ammon (1:13-15).—The Ammonites, who occupied the middle territory in Transjordan, were also guilty of great cruelty in warfare. They had "ripped up women with child in Gilead" (RSV).

Oracle against Moab (2:1-3).—The Moabites, who occupied the high plateau east of the Dead Sea, were guilty of the terrible act of desecration in which they burnt the bones of the king of Edom, possibly in order to use the ashes for plaster.

Oracle against Judah (2:4-5).—Judah rejected Yahweh and His laws. Judah's lies, which led her astray, seem to refer to idolatry.

Oracle against Israel (2:6-16).—The doom of Israel was suddenly pronounced by Amos. She was condemned with great severity and in much more detail than the other nations. The Israelites were rebuked for four reasons:

1. The wealthy sold the poor, righteous people into slavery for trifling debts (v. 6).
2. The greed of the rich caused them to covet even the dust which the poor placed upon their heads in time of mourning (v. 7).
3. They were guilty of immorality (v. 7).
4. They worshipped idols even though Yahweh had done much for them in delivering them from Egyptian bondage (v. 8).

God, who had been gracious, would come in judgement in the Day of the Lord.

FURTHER JUDGEMENT OF ISRAEL (3:1—6:14)

Israel's election (3:1-2).—Although Yahweh is the God of all the nations and will hold them accountable for their sins, Israel carried greater responsibility because of her election. The Israelites argued that their election by Yahweh guaranteed their safety as a nation. Amos replied that they were mistaken. The fact that they were Yahweh's elect involved them in special responsibility and greater condemnation for failing. Election did not give special privilege and exemption from punishment.

Argument based on the relation of cause and effect (3:3-8).—The prophet illustrated from nature the fact that specific effects have specific causes. He asserted that if a city was defeated, the Lord had caused it. In verse 8, he applied the cause-effect relation to the Lord and Israel. Israel's sins had caused the Lord to speak (the effect).

The certainty of judgement (3:9-15).—The prophet invited the leaders of Assyria and Egypt to observe the moral and spiritual decay of Israel. He implied that Israel's pagan neighbours knew more about

List the four reasons Israel was rebuked.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Amos' interpretation of Israel's election was her election meant special r _____ and greater c _____ for failing rather than special p _____ and exemption from p _____.

(responsibility, condemnation, privilege, punishment)

morality than she did. The oppression of the poor was a means of storing up violence and robbery in the day of judgement. Israel's enemies would participate in her punishment. Israel's destruction was compared to a lamb that has been devoured by a lion. All that is left is a few worthless pieces. The legs or pieces of an ear which the shepherd rescues from the lion give evidence of the tragic destruction of the lamb; likewise will the remnant of Israel give evidence of her fate. Only the corner of a couch or a part of a bed will remain. The wealthy who had winter and summer houses would no longer find security in their formalistic but empty religion. The horns of the altar had offered assylum to the threatened, but then the victims would flee to the altar and find its horns gone (cf. 1 Kings 1:51; 2:28).

Future hardships predicted for the wealthy (4:1-5).—Amos used the uncomplimentary analogy of cows to describe the women of the upper classes. They urged their husbands to commit acts of injustice and oppression to provide them with luxuries, especially alcoholic beverages. Bashan was a fertile district noted for its fine cattle. Amos predicted that the lazy and pampered women would experience great suffering when the Northern Kingdom fell. Amos implied that the corrupt only added to their transgressions by worshipping at Bethel or Gilgal. The unjust oppressor was happy to perform all the functions of religion. Religious performance without submission to the will of God is hypocrisy.

Unheeded discipline (4:6-13).—Amos lamented that, although the Lord had disciplined His people through drought, diseased crops, destructive caterpillars, war, and earthquakes, the people had not returned to the Lord. Further punishment would come in the form of captivity. Israel must next meet God in judgement. Amos concluded the section with a recognition of the greatness of God.

Warnings concerning the fall of Israel (5:1-27).—Lamentation over the fall of Israel is expressed in the first three verses of chapter 5 in the form of a funeral dirge for a young woman who has been ravaged by an invading army. The following verses exhort Israel to repent in order that she may be delivered from the coming destruction: "Seek the Lord and live." The gods Israel worshipped at Bethel and Gilgal could not deliver her; only Yahweh could. Israel was instructed to seek her Creator who turns darkness into morning. To seek Yahweh meant to "hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate" (5:15). The gate was the place where court was held. The poor were trampled underfoot while the wealthy built houses of hewn stone. Judges took bribes, merchants were dishonest in weights, and landlords oppressed their tenants. Their sins would cause the entire land to wail when the enemy ravaged the cities and vineyards.

The Day of the Lord would not mean blessings but destruction unless they "let judgment run down as

Is this statement true or false?

In Amos 3:12, Israel's destruction was compared to a lamb devoured by a lion with only a few pieces left. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Explain Amos' use of the term kine of Bashan.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Read the entire section, Warnings concerning the fall of Israel before doing the following exercise.

Circle the number of each statement which is correct.

- 1. Israel was instructed to seek her Creator who turns darkness into morning.*
- 2. Their sins would cause the entire land to wail when the enemy ravaged the cities and vineyards.*

(1, 2)

waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24). Ritualistic worship would not atone for dishonesty and mistreatment of the disadvantaged. Unrighteousness renders worship unacceptable. Sacrifices will not substitute for righteousness. Some looked forward with anticipation to the Day of the Lord since they considered it to be a time of light, victory, and joy (5:18).¹ The people were walking in darkness, and the Day of the Lord would be a day of punishment and doom. There would be no escape or safety, but it would be like a man fleeing from a lion only to encounter a bear, or seeking safety in a house only to be bitten by a serpent. The elaborate ceremonialism of their feast days and burnt offerings would not serve as a satisfactory substitute for righteousness and justice. Verse 27 predicts the Assyrian captivity. Israel could find no security in her election (ch. 3), in religious rituals (ch. 4), nor in God's future judgement (ch. 5).

Condemnation of the leaders (6:1-14).—Chapter 6 contains woes against the luxury-loving leaders. The leaders of Zion or Judah were included as well as those of Samaria. Two cities which had been destroyed by the Assyrians are mentioned (v. 2), and the implication is that Israel could not hope to escape the same fate which had befallen them. The leaders lay on expensive inlaid furniture and ate fine meat while peasants slept on the ground and ate coarse herbage or starved. Jacob's pride and dependence on material resources were detested (vv. 4ff.). Samaria would be utterly destroyed. Perhaps a plague would destroy the men, and an earthquake would destroy the small and great houses—the rich and poor alike would suffer (vv. 9ff.). In addition, a nation (Assyria is implied) would defeat the house of Israel.

YAHWEH'S JUDGEMENT AND MERCY (7:1-9:15)

The first part of the book sets forth the oracles or words of Amos. The last three chapters present his visions. The visions appear to support his oracles which were rejected by many.

Visions of Amos (7:1-9).—The visions of Amos reveal the justice and mercy of God. Because of her sin, Israel deserved God's punishment in the form of locusts which devoured the crops. Amos pleaded with Yahweh not to destroy Israel but to forgive her. Because Yahweh is merciful, He conceded to Amos' plea. The vision of locusts is followed by a vision of a great fire which destroyed the land. The vision of the hand

¹It is uncertain when the concept of the Day of the Lord arose. The popular concept was that Yahweh would judge Israel's enemies and bless His people. Amos shocked his hearers by pronouncing judgement upon those who claimed to be the people of Yahweh because of their sins. (See also Isa. 2:12; 13:6; 24:8; Joel 1:5; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5.)

Circle the number of the correct statements.

3. The Day of the Lord would mean blessings but not destruction.
4. There would be no escape from Yahweh's punishment.
5. Israel could find security in her election and in religious rituals.
6. Israel's leaders were condemned because they laid upon expensive beds and ate meat while peasants slept on the ground and starved.

(4, 6)

Continue reading all of the next page of the text. Then be prepared to list Amos' visions.

of Yahweh measuring the wall with a plumbline symbolized that Yahweh had tested Israel and found her most corrupt and untrue to Him. The vision revealed that Israel was so wicked that judgement was inevitable. Amos did not intercede on this occasion for the people.

A historical section (7:10-17).—The attempt was made by Amaziah, priest of Bethel, to expel Amos from that city. He accused Amos of being a traitor to King Jeroboam II and of prophesying for money or bread. Amaziah used the word seer as a term of contempt when referring to Amos—a visionary or victim of hallucinations. Amos denied any association with the professional prophets, but he claimed that he had been sent by Yahweh to prophesy to Israel. Amos was a poor man who earned a living as a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. He did not fear Amaziah, nor did he flee when opposition arose. Amos predicted tragic events for the priest's family.

Additional visions (8:1–9:6).—Chapter 8 opens with the fourth vision, a basket of fruit which ripened at the end of the summer. The ripened fruit marked the end of summer and the end of the harvest; it symbolized the imminence of Israel's end. The vision is followed by an oracle denouncing those who oppressed the poor by cheating them when they bought food. The businessmen felt restrained by the laws prohibiting sales on Sabbaths and during religious observances at the beginning of every lunar month. Their greed would turn the Day of the Lord into a day of darkness and mourning instead of joy and light. Punishment would come in the form of an earthquake and a famine (a dearth of hearing the words of the Lord, not of bread). In the midst of punishment, men would be without hope from God (without His words). The idolators in the land would fall, and their gods would be unable to raise them again.

Chapter 9 opens with the vision of Yahweh's standing beside the altar. The sanctuary would be destroyed by an earthquake which would cause the pillars (capitals) that support the Temple to give way, killing all of the worshippers. There would be no safe place for any Israelite, not even in the Temple. Those who escaped death during the earthquake would be destroyed either by the serpent (a mythical monster believed to live in the sea) or by the sword during a war. There is no escape from God for the unrighteous! He is able to carry out His punishment through historical events. He controls history (see vv. 5f.).

Certainty of Israel's desolation (9:7-10).—The Lord of all the earth who builds His upper chambers in the heavens was able to bring to pass judgement upon Israel. There was no difference with God between the Ethiopians and the Israelites. God loved both and would judge both. In the darkness of doom, however, there was a ray of hope that the house of Jacob would not be destroyed completely. Sinners who trusted in false righteousness would be destroyed, but a faithful remnant would escape, and the house of David

Amaziah attempted to expel Amos from the city. He accused Amos of being a _____ to King Jeroboam II and of prophesying for _____ or _____. But Amos was not afraid of Amaziah, nor did he _____ when _____ arose.

(traitor, money, bread, flee, opposition)

Finish reading the text on this page. Then list the visions of Amos.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(Compare your list with the text.)

would not be destroyed. The sieve would remove the foreign matter and leave a righteous remnant.

Promise of a glorious future (9:11-15).—The book closes on a positive note of abundant blessings. "In that day" had reference to the "golden days" of the Messianic Age when the fallen kingdom would be restored. Passages such as this one gave hope to God's faithful servants who continued for centuries under foreign domination. These passages were reinterpreted and gave rise to additional teachings which prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Hosea

Historical background

Hosea likewise prophesied in the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam II and succeeding kings. After the death of Jeroboam, anarchy prevailed. Zechariah could not maintain his throne and was murdered after a six-month reign. The dynasty of Jehu came to an end, and a number of kings ruled in rapid succession. Jehu's religious purge had not improved the corrupt society.

The succeeding kings attempted to gain royal power with the aid of Assyrian or Egyptian support. Shallum remained on the throne only a month before he was murdered by Menahem. Menahem attempted to strengthen his position by buying the support of the Assyrian monarch Pul (Tiglath-pileser, 2 Kings 15:19ff.). After ten years, Menahem was succeeded by Pekahiah who was assassinated two years later by Pekah, a rough soldier from Gilead. Pekah was deposed and murdered by Hoshea who was supported by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser. Later, Hoshea changed his allegiance to Egypt, an action which precipitated the Assyrian siege of Samaria. Samaria withstood the siege of Shalmaneser for three years, but the city capitulated to Sargon in 722 B. C.

Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom. His ministry extended from about 754 to 734 B. C., or perhaps even to the fall of Samaria in 722 B. C. The first three chapters appear to belong to the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II. Chapters 4-14 belong to the turbulent period of the five kings from Zechariah to Pekah. The predicted punishment of Samaria was not far in the future. Her defeat and the captivity of the people came under the next king, Hoshea.

Superscription (1:1)

The author gave his name and dated his ministry. The authority of his message was "the word of the Lord" which came to him. His message pre-existed in the mind of God and was given to him. The name Hosea is a variant of Joshua which means Yahweh saves. The fact that he used the kings of Judah to date his book may indicate that the message included

Is this statement true or false?

The Book of Amos closes on a note of doom.

_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

What did Hosea predict about the punishment of Samaria? _____

_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Judah as well as Israel. He appears to have been from a rural area in the Northern Kingdom.

The lessons from Hosea's marriage (1:2-3:5)

ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS TO YAHWEH (1:2-2:13)

An analogy of Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh (1:2-11).—A problem in interpretation is created by the command of the Lord to "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms." "Wife of harlotry" has been interpreted variously as—

- a sacred prostitute,
- one who dressed like a harlot,
- a woman of an apostate or immoral nation,
- a participant in fertility rites,
- a woman of illegitimate birth,
- a woman with a tendency to harlotry.

Confusion in the first three chapters is not limited to 1:2. Some scholars suggest that the woman who had become an adulteress in chapter 3 was not the same as Hosea's wife in chapter 1. Others suggest that Gomer was probably faithful during the infancy of the three children but later fell into adultery and slavery. Still others say that the story is either a vision or an allegory.² Hosea's marriage and the names of his children symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness and Yahweh's temporary rejection of Israel.

The husband-wife symbolism of the book depicts the intimacy of the relationship between God and his people. The relationship was designed to produce happiness, symbolized by the birth of children. However, the unfaithfulness of Israel turned potential happiness into sorrow and condemnation, represented by the names of the three children. The first son was named Jezreel to symbolize judgement upon the royal house of Jehu for his massacre of the royal family of the previous dynasty. Jehu had destroyed many Baal worshippers, but he failed to lead the people back to God. Judgement upon the royal house meant judgement upon the people. The valley of Jezreel did fall into Assyrian hands in 733 B.C. The name of the second child (a daughter), Lo-ruhamah, meant "uncompassioned" or "it is not pitied." Although the judgement would be severe, God would have no mercy on His people who forsook Him. The people broke the Covenant; therefore, God withdrew His mercy. The name of the third child (a son), Lo-ammi, meant "not my people." Lo-ammi was not the son of Hosea, nor was Israel the people of God. They would be abandoned to a conquering nation. Hosea's marriage was dissolved. The

²Fred Woods commends the accuracy of the NEB: "take a wanton for your wife." He concludes that Gomer must have been from the background of the Baal fertility cult (Hosea:Prophet of Reconciliation, Nashville:Convention Press, 1975, p. 19).

List six possible interpretations of "wife of harlotry" in Hosea 1:2.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Circle the one word that makes this statement false. Then write below the one word that would make this a true statement.

Hosea's marriage illustrated Israel's faithfulness in her relationship to Yahweh.

(faithfulness—circled; unfaithfulness—correct word)

Match by writing beside the names of Hosea's children the letter of the symbolism of each.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ___ Jezreel | a. Israel was no longer the people of God. |
| ___ Lo-ruhamah | b. Judgement would come upon the royal house of Jehu. |
| ___ Lo-ammi | c. God would have no mercy upon His people who forsook Him. |

(b-Jezreel, c-Lo-ruhamah, a-Lo-ammi)

apostate condition of Israel was expressed in terms of sexual unfaithfulness, for Israel had abandoned her God and worshipped other gods. The terminology is particularly appropriate since Israel participated in the Canaanite fertility religion. Hosea may have been referring to the "Canaanizing" of Israel's religion in which Yahweh was worshipped as Baal, possibly with a female consort. Hosea's wife may have been engaged in the sexual ritual of a fertility cult.

Impending punishment and its cause (2:1-13).—The first commandment stated that Israel was to have no other god. Her unfaithfulness to the Covenant by worshipping other gods had annulled the relationship. God would no longer provide for and protect Israel, who had honoured in worship the fertility god Baal and had credited him with providing her prosperity (vv. 5, 8ff.). Israel's joy and prosperity would be brought to an end by God's judgement. She would discover that she was not free from Yahweh's punishment; her lovers could not bless her. Israel was blind to the source of her blessings (v. 3). However, God is merciful; His forsaking of Israel would not be forever.

YAHWEH'S UNDESERVED LOVE (2:14-3:5)

God's willingness to forgive (2:14-23).—The threat of impending judgement was followed by an expression of God's loving concern. During the journey through the wilderness, Israel had depended on Yahweh. After her defeat by an enemy, God would once again woo her faith and dependence. After her captivity and restoration, Israel would not turn again to idolatry (v. 16). The new relationship would be like a betrothal (v. 20). The new marriage relationship would be characterized by God's loving-kindness and mercy and the people's righteousness and faithfulness.

Hosea had described previously the destruction of Israel's vines and fig trees (v. 12). "In that day" (the Golden Age), the land would be blessed by Yahweh who alone has the power to make it fertile (vv. 21f.).

Undeserved love (3:1-5).—Apparently Gomer left home shortly after the birth of the third child. Hosea continued to love his wife who had become an adulteress and had become enslaved to her lover. He was commanded to love again "a woman loved of her lover." One day, he saw his wife for sale and purchased her for the price of a slave. According to the Law, he could have had her stoned instead. Hosea's experience symbolized Yahweh's experience with the unfaithful Israelites. Because of their unfaithfulness, they brought upon themselves the tragedies of defeat and deportation. After experiencing the consequences of unfaithfulness, the sons of Israel would turn back to Yahweh whom they had forsaken previously. Because of His love, Yahweh would redeem them after depriving them for a time of all civil functions and worship. In the latter days, the children of Israel would turn back to God. They were promised the Davidic Messiah (v. 5).

God would no longer provide for and protect Israel; she had honoured in _____ the god _____. Israel's joy and _____ would be brought to an end by God's _____.

(worship, Baal, prosperity, judgement)

What did Hosea's forgiving and restoring his wife symbolize?

(Yahweh would redeem His unfaithful people after a period of deprivation.)

Discourses on punishment (4:1-14:9)

Yahweh's controversy (4:1-19).—In their unfaithfulness to the Lord and His Covenant, the people swore, deceived, murdered, stole, committed adultery, and were guilty of violence and bloodshed. Punishment would come through desolation in the land and a scarcity of animals. The people perished in their sin because of their lack of knowledge. The priests had forgotten the Law of God. They encouraged people to sin in order to receive greater fees for forgiving them. Yahweh would no longer provide for and protect the people, and they would discover that their wooden idols could not deliver them. Worship of the fertility god had destroyed fidelity in the home, resulting in tragedy instead of blessing. The men were blamed for bringing about conditions that had caused the spouses to turn to whoredom. They would reap the wages of their sins.

The failure of Israel's leaders (5:1-7).—The priests and king had led the nation beyond hope of repentance. Deep involvement in sin, a loss of knowledge of the Lord, and the pride of Israel would not allow them to return to their God. Sacrificing flocks and herds would not enable them to find God.

Political failure (5:8-7:16).—Judah, as well as Israel, would reap God's wrath because of her wickedness. Both were guilty of disloyalty. They only sought the Lord in the time of trouble, and they honoured Baal during the time of their prosperity. According to chapter 7, during times of trouble the people turned upon their kings. When they plotted against the kings, "their hearts are like an oven" (7:6), but they failed to be consistent in their actions. Although they consumed their unworthy rulers by assassination, they did not call upon Yahweh. Ephraim was compared to a half-baked cake. Assassinating wicked kings and then turning to Egypt or Assyria for deliverance was inconsistent. Israel needed to turn to the Lord her God.

The broken Covenant (8:1-14).—In the covenant relationship, Yahweh had promised to give Israel victory over her enemies if she worshipped only Him. After Israel turned to the worship of wooden idols covered with gold, both Israel and her god (the golden calf of Samaria) would be broken to pieces. Although Israel had entered an alliance with Assyria for protection against Syria, Israel would continue to decline. Sacrificial gifts would not secure deliverance.

The nearness of exile (9:1-17).—Egypt and Assyria were the predicted places of exile. The prophet warned that during exile, they would be completely forsaken by Yahweh. Their food would be eaten in sorrow and defilement. The prophet announced that the days of exile had arrived.

Inescapable disaster (10:1-15).—Israel responded to Yahweh's blessing of prosperity by making more altars to idols. Disaster was inevitable. Not even the

In the following list, write a P after the promises which Yahweh would no longer keep and a V after the violations of the Covenant by Israel.

1. Protect _____
2. Deceived, murdered, stole _____
3. Provide _____
4. Adultery, idolatry _____

(1. P, 2. V, 3. P, 4. V)

Circle the two nations where Israel was to be exiled.

Judah
Assyria
Egypt
Babylon

(Compare your answers with the text.)

idols of Bethel would be able to avert it, but they also would be carried off to Assyria. Thorns and thistles would grow on the altars. Existence would become so miserable that the people would call for the mountains to fall on them. Exile and punishment were just rewards for Israel's wicked sowing.

Yahweh's lament for Israel (11:1-12).—Yahweh called the Israelites out of Egypt to be His people, but they had chosen Baal as their god. Yahweh had shown divine care and love: "I took them up in my arms" (RSV). Although the people had gone from Him as disobedient sons, how could He give them up? Because of Yahweh's love, some hope was expressed for the Israelites. They would be brought back from exile and settled in the land to walk after the Lord.

Israel reminded of her errors (12:1-13:16).—Israel was again informed that the treaties with foreign nations were mistakes. Jacob's early life had been lived in deceit, but eventually he sought and found God at Bethel. Israel was urged to return to faith in God and to put away her sins. References to Jacob indicate that the corruption of the people dated back to their forefather, the deceiver. Jacob's deceit forced him to flee to the land of Aram. The implication is that the sojourn in Egypt was a form of punishment. Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt by the prophet Moses, but the people continued to sin. Hosea reminded them of their covenant responsibility to God (13:4). Since Israel had forgotten her God who blessed her, she would be destroyed. Her king and her foreign allies would be unable to deliver her.

An invitation to repent (14:1-9).—The Israelites were exhorted to return to their God. Yahweh was willing to forgive and to bestow His blessings on them. His ways are right, and the righteous will walk in them.

Israel responded to Yahweh's blessings by building more altars to idols.

E _____ and p _____ were just rewards for Israel's s _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

True or false?

Yahweh was willing to forgive Israel if she repented and returned to Him. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. How did David's reign differ spiritually from Solomon's? _____

2. What contributed to Israel's instability? _____
3. List three actions of Jehu in purging Israel and Judah of idolatry. _____

4. By whom was Baal worship imported to Judah? _____
5. Describe briefly the political and economic conditions in Israel and Judah at the time of Amos, Micah, and Hosea. _____

6. Why did Jehu's religious purge not succeed? _____

7. List three biographical facts about Amos. _____

8. How did Amos' message concerning the Day of Yahweh differ from the popular concept? _____
9. Why did Amos condemn seven other nations before he condemned Israel? _____
10. What were the two most prominent charges which Amos made against other nations? _____
11. List four reasons for Amos' rebuke of Israel. _____

12. How did Amos interpret Israel's election? _____

13. Interpret Amos 3:12. _____
14. Who were the kine of Bashan? _____
15. Interpret Amos 5:18-19. _____

16. Why would Israel's leaders be condemned? _____
17. List the visions of Amos in chapters 7-9. _____
18. List five interpretations of Hosea 1:2. _____

19. What did Hosea's tragic marriage illustrate? _____
20. What did the names of the three children symbolize? _____

21. What did Hosea's forgiving and restoring his wife symbolize? _____

22. Name five violations of the Covenant by Israel and the promises Yahweh would no longer keep.

23. In what nations would Israel be exiled? _____

24. Was Yahweh willing to forgive Israel in spite of her sin? Explain. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

1. Evaluate the effects of political and military success and prosperity on justice and spirituality in Israel.
2. Describe the injustices which existed at the time of Amos and compare them to our contemporary situation.
3. Briefly describe the social and economic situation for which Amos was greatly concerned. What did he exhort Israel to do about it?
4. What did Hosea's experience with his wife teach him about God's experience with Israel?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. What is the relation of prediction to ethical preaching in Amos?
2. Amos has often been described as a prophet of doom. Is this a correct description? Explain.
3. Relate God's message of judgement to His message of love in Hosea.

Seminar Discussion

1. In the light of widespread idolatry in Israel, would you conclude that the majority of people were monotheists (those who believed that Yahweh was the only God)?
2. With reference to Jehu's religious purge, how effective are political movements in maintaining spirituality?
3. Can a government like Ahab's hinder the spirituality of the people? How?
4. What are the dangers of religious leaders' being supported by the state?
5. What attributes of God are emphasized by Amos and Hosea?
6. How would Amos have defined sin? How would Hosea have defined sin?
7. What are some preaching themes found in Amos and Hosea?