

## **The Book of Hosea**

*(Minor Prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah)*

### **I. The Title of the Book**

This sacred book is oft called “*The Book of the Law and of Love*,” for therein is revealed the unchanging love of God toward His covenant people. Though the sins of Israel and the demands of the Law called for judgment, yet the divine love pursued them still, until they should return unto Him. The holy affection of the Lord is steadfast, not willing that His people should perish, but that they should be restored through repentance.

### **II. The Occasion of the Book**

Before the captivity of the Assyrians, Hosea the prophet was raised up in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the days of Jonah, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah—who were his contemporaries—the word of prophecy came unto Hosea in one of the darkest hours of Israel’s history, as recorded in *2 Kings 14:21–18:1*.

Hosea began his ministry during the reign of Jeroboam II and continued through the reigns of six kings thereafter. Though Israel, as a nation, prospered outwardly in that age, yet spiritually she was corrupted. Her rulers walked in wickedness, and the land was filled with idolatry, bloodshed, bribery, and oppression of the poor. Thus, amidst temporal plenty, the soul of the nation was famished.

### **III. The Author of the Book**

The author is none other than the prophet Hosea himself. Of his life but little is known, save that he was an Israelite who ministered in the Northern Kingdom. His father’s name was Beeri, and the name of his wife was Gomer. Hosea had two sons and one daughter, each bearing a name of prophetic meaning.

The prophet’s heart was filled with divine love and with the burden that his people might return unto the living God. In his sufferings and in his steadfast affection, Hosea became a living emblem of the longsuffering love of the Lord toward His unfaithful people.

### **IV. The Message of the Book**

Though the people and rulers of Israel were steeped in wickedness, Hosea’s prophecy is chiefly a declaration of God’s enduring love. Despite their uncleanness and their union with Canaanite idols, the prophet earnestly admonished them to repent and to understand the mercy of the Lord. His cry was unto those who had fallen, that they might return unto God and obtain compassion.

The language of this book is poetic and filled with divine tenderness. It is a solemn and heartfelt call to the people of God to turn again unto Him and to receive His mercy. The prophecy of Hosea lays emphasis upon four principal truths:

- (a) God reproves Israel for her fall.
- (b) God continually called them to return.

- (c) God desired that they respond, that He may have mercy upon them.
- (d) Yet the righteous and just God cannot shew mercy accept they repent.

## V. The Unique Characteristics of the Book

### (a) The Symbolic Marriage and Family of Hosea

The Lord commanded Hosea to take unto himself a wife of whoredoms. Though the prophet knew of her unfaithfulness, yet he obeyed the divine word, and children were born unto him. But the woman departed from him and returned to her life of sin. In obedience to God's command, Hosea sought her again, manifesting his love, and bought her back for a price, thereby revealing the redeeming love of God for His wayward people.

The names of Hosea's children were prophetic and served as living testimonies to his message:

- **Jezreel**, meaning "*God will scatter*," declared the judgment of the Lord upon Israel.
- **Lo-Ruhamah**, meaning "*Not pitied*," signified that mercy was withdrawn, for their iniquity was full.
- **Lo-Ammi**, meaning "*Not My people*," revealed their rejection because of unrepentant hearts.

Thus through the life, marriage, and family of Hosea, the Lord illustrated His covenant love, His righteous judgment, and His ultimate purpose of restoration for Israel who had gone astray.

### The Book of Joel

(*Minor Prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*)

## I. The Title of the Book

This sacred prophecy is oft called "*The Book of the Day of the Lord*," for within its brief chapters the expression "*the day of the Lord*" appeared five times. This phrase signified the coming of God, either for awakening or for judgment. In the prophecy of Joel, the term is used in threefold sense:

1. **The Local Coming:** A visitation of divine judgment upon sin.
2. **The Prophetic Coming:** The outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.
3. **The Final Coming:** The ultimate *Day of the Lord*, even the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

## II. The Occasion of the Book

Joel is counted among the earliest of the writing prophets. He is believed to have ministered in Judah during the reign of King Joash. In those days, Joash was but a child, and judgment and counsel were administered by Jehoiada the high priest. Yet after Jehoiada's death, Joash turned unto idolatry and led the nation away from the Lord.

Therefore, God in His mercy raised up prophets to call the people unto repentance, and among them was Joel. His message came amidst a time of national calamity, when a grievous

plague of locusts had devoured the land. This natural disaster was a divine warning of a greater spiritual judgment yet to come, unless the people would return unto the Lord their God.

### **III. The Author of the Book**

The author is the prophet Joel, the son of Pethuel. Though the Scriptures mention about twelve men named Joel, little is known of this one save what is written in his prophecy. His name signified "*Jehovah is God.*"

He dwelt near Jerusalem, for he often spake concerning Zion and the house of the Lord. From his frequent mention of priests and temple service, it appeared that Joel had close acquaintance with the ministry of the sanctuary and perhaps was himself of priestly descent.

### **IV. The Message of the Book**

The message of Joel may be divided into three principal sections:

#### **(a) The Desolation and Judgment (1:1–2:11)**

This portion described a dreadful devastation upon the land—locusts consuming all fruit, grain, and vine. The plague was both literal and symbolic, declaring God's judgment upon the disobedience of His covenant people. The prophet called the priests, elders, and people to fasting, mourning, and repentance, promising that if they turn unto the Lord with all their heart, He will pardon and restore them.

#### **(b) The Awakening and Restoration (2:12–3:21)**

Here the prophet proclaimed glorious promises of revival, deliverance, and renewal for those who repent. God will remove the curse and send abundance once more. Moreover, Joel foretells the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, saying, "*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.*" This prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in *Acts 2:16–21*.

Finally, Joel looked beyond to the ultimate *Day of the Lord*, when Christ shall return to judge the nations and to dwell in the midst of His redeemed people.

### **V. The Unique Characteristics of the Book**

#### **(a) Joel's Prophecy of Pentecost.**

He foretold the descent of the Holy Ghost upon all flesh, fulfilled in the new covenant through Jesus Christ.

#### **(b) Joel's Prophecy of the Last Days.**

He revealed the vision of the great and terrible *Day of the Lord*,

### **The Book of Amos**

*(The Prophet of Justice and Righteousness)*

### **I. The Title of the Book**

This prophecy is oft called “*The Book of Judgment*,” for Amos was raised up of God not only to proclaim judgment upon His covenant people, Israel and Judah, but also upon the nations round about them. The prophet declared divine judgment upon eight several nations, revealing that the Lord is sovereign over all kingdoms of men, and that none can escape His righteous wrath.

## **II. The Occasion of the Book**

Amos was a man of Judah, yet the Lord sent him to prophesy in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. Though the nation was outwardly prosperous, abounding in wealth and luxury, it was inwardly corrupt, filled with greed, oppression, idolatry, and moral decay. The people lived in self-indulgence and forgot the Lord their God. Thus, in the midst of peace and plenty, the word of judgment came forth.

## **III. The Author of the Book**

The prophet Amos was not a priest, nor a prince, nor a man of learning. He was a humble shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees, a man of the field whom God chose to bear His message to the proud and the powerful. His very name meant “*Burden-bearer*.”

Amos ministered in the same general period as Hosea and Isaiah, being one of their contemporaries. Through him, the Lord proved that He can take the lowly and make them vessels of divine truth and righteousness.

## **IV. The Message of the Book**

The central theme of Amos is that the patience and mercy of God are not without limit. The people had despised His grace, hardened their hearts, and trampled upon His law. Therefore, judgment must come.

Each nation mentioned in the book is condemned for a particular transgression — violence, cruelty, deceit, oppression, or idolatry. Yet above all, Israel is judged most severely, for to them were given the covenants, the law, and the prophets, and still they rebelled.

The message of Amos cried out: “*Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*”

## **V. The Distinctive Features of the Book**

The Book of Amos contained five visions, each revealing a stage in God’s dealing with His people and His holy judgment:

1. **The Vision of the Locusts** — showing that divine judgment was stayed through the prophet’s intercession.
2. **The Vision of Fire** — revealing that the Lord prepared to devour the land, yet again withheld His hand at the prophet’s plea.
3. **The Vision of the Plumb line** — declaring that the Lord measured His people and found their ways crooked and perverse.

4. **The Vision of the Basket of Summer Fruit** — signifying that Israel, once the first ripe fruit, had now grown rotten, and the end was near.
5. **The Vision of the Lord at the Altar** — portraying the execution of divine judgment, for the Lord Himself stood at the altar, and the guilty could no longer escape His wrath.

## **The Book of Obadiah**

*(The Prophet of Retribution)*

### **I. The Title of the Book**

This prophecy is called “*The Book of Retribution*,” for its message is built upon the divine law of recompense — “*As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.*” Though God’s justice may seem delayed, His righteous judgment shall surely come in due season.

### **II. The Occasion of the Book**

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, yet its message is weighty and solemn. It proclaimed the judgment of God upon Edom, the descendants of Esau.

From the days of Jacob and Esau there had been enmity between the two peoples — between the sons of promise and the sons of flesh. This ancient hatred continued through the generations, and Edom stood as a perpetual adversary of Israel.

When Jerusalem was invaded and Judah taken captive, the Edomites rejoiced in the downfall of their brother nation. They aided the enemies of Judah, plundered the city, and cut off the fugitives who fled for refuge.

Therefore the Lord sent His prophet to declare:

*“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.”*

Edom’s pride, cruelty, and betrayal were to be repaid in kind. Yet even in this judgment, the book looked forward to the triumph of Zion and the coming of the kingdom of the Lord, when “*the saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.*”

## **The Book of Obadiah**

*(The Prophet of Divine Retribution)*

### **III. The Author of the Book**

The author of this prophecy is **Obadiah the prophet**. In the Scriptures there are about thirteen persons bearing this name, which meant “*Servant of the Lord.*” Yet of this particular Obadiah little is known. He was of the southern kingdom of Judah, and it is not recorded that he belonged either unto the priesthood or the royal line, for his parentage and lineage are not mentioned. Nevertheless, the Lord chose him as His mouthpiece to declare judgment upon Edom.

## IV. The Message of the Book

The chief message of this book is that **God will bring judgment upon Edom** because of her hatred and violence against His people. None may despise the people of God and go unpunished, for the Lord Himself will avenge them.

This prophecy reminded Israel of the long and bitter strife between the descendants of Jacob and Esau:

- (a) The conflict began in the **Book of Genesis**, concerning the birth right and the father's blessing.
- (b) It continued when Edom **refused passage** unto Israel in the wilderness (*Book of Numbers*).
- (c) It deepened when **Doeg the Edomite slew eighty-five priests** of the Lord (*1 Samuel 22:17*).
- (d) It waxed greater when the Edomites **joined themselves to Israel's enemies** (*1 Kings 11:14*).

Thus, the enmity of Edom against Jacob was ancient and continual, but the Lord, who is righteous, declared that He would repay them according to their works.

## V. The Distinctive Features of the Book

Obadiah prophesied that **Edom should be utterly cut off**, as though she had never been. Yet he also foretold that **a remnant of Judah would be delivered**, and that the **kingdom of Judah would again prevail**.

Within four years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the **Babylonians turned their hand against Edom**, laying her waste. These were the same Babylonians whom Edom had aided in afflicting Judah. Thus, the Lord caused their own cruelty to return upon their heads.

The few Edomites who survived fled southward into the region of **Idumea**, where they remained adversaries of the Jews for four centuries. In the days of the Roman Empire, **Herod the Great**, who ruled over Judea, was he an Idumean? But after the destruction of Jerusalem in **A.D. 70**, the nation of Edom perished from history, and her name was no more remembered among the peoples.

### The Book of Jonah

*(The Prophet of God's Mercy to the Nations)*

## I. The Title of the Book

This book is called "*The Book of God's Mercy unto the Nations.*" It most beautifully and plainly revealed the compassion of the Lord toward those who seem most unworthy of it. The Almighty sent His prophet unto **Nineveh**, the wicked capital of Assyria, to cry against it; and when the people repented, God forgave them. Thus, this book declared that the eyes of the Lord are not limited unto Israel alone, but that He loved all mankind.

## II. The Occasion of the Book

Jonah prophesied in the days of **Jeroboam II**, between the ministries of **Elisha, Amos, and Hosea**. In those days Israel was outwardly prosperous yet inwardly corrupt. Assyria, the mightiest power of that age, oppressed the nations and took captives at her will.

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was feared and despised for its cruelty. Therefore, Jonah, when commanded to go there, fled from the presence of the Lord; for he knew that if the Ninevites repented, God would show them mercy, and he desired not that Israel's enemies should find grace.

### III. The Author of the Book

The author is **Jonah the prophet**, the son of Amittai, of the region near **Galilee**. He was the prophet whom God sent to a Gentile nation. The Lord used his life and his experiences as a living parable of divine mercy and redemption.

### IV. The Message of the Book

The great message of Jonah is found fulfilled in the words of **Peter the Apostle** in *Acts 10:34–35*:

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:  
But in every nation he that feared Him, and worked righteousness, is accepted with Him.”

Jonah's story showed that God's mercy is for all who repent — Jew or Gentile, friend or foe. The Lord's compassion extended beyond borders, and His salvation is offered to every soul that turned from evil.

### V. The Distinctive Features of the Book

- (a) The **extraordinary journey** of Jonah, from fleeing the Lord to being cast into the sea and swallowed by a great fish.
- (b) The **special preparation** of Jonah by God through chastening and grace.
- (c) The **three days and three nights** Jonah spent in the fish's belly, a prophetic sign of **Christ's death and resurrection**.
- (d) The **repentance of Nineveh**, a model of true contrition and the power of divine mercy.

#### The Book of Micah

*(The Prophet Who Pleaded for Repentance)*

#### I. The Title of the Book

This book is called “*The Book of Persuasion*,” for Micah's chief ministry was to convince Israel and Judah of their sins and to call them unto repentance. As he declared:

“But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.” (*Micah 3:8*)

#### II. The Occasion of the Book

Micah prophesied during the reigns of **Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah**, kings of Judah. He likely witnessed the wickedness of Ahaz, who set up idols in the temple and shut its doors. Grieved by the nation's corruption, Micah proclaimed the word of the Lord against idolatry, oppression, and immorality.

His prophecies foretold the **captivity of both Israel and Judah**, showing that sin bringeth ruin. Yet his message also shone with hope — of **restoration, peace, and the coming of the Messiah**, who should be born in **Bethlehem** and bring salvation unto His people.

### 3. The Author of the Book

The author of this book is Micah the prophet. Among the eight men named Micah mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, this Micah was the one raised up of God to declare His Word unto Judah and Israel. The meaning of his name is, “*Who is like unto God?*”—a name most fitting for one who proclaimed both the terrors of divine judgment and the glory of divine mercy. In his writings are found many pastoral and rural expressions, for he was a man acquainted with the simplicity of the fields and the labours of the shepherd. In the course of time, Micah was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, prophesying in the same generation concerning the sins of the people and the coming deliverance through the Messiah.

### 4. The Message of the Book

The message of Micah is threefold and full of divine revelation:

**(a) *God hated sin*** — “Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; is it not for you to know judgment?” (Micah 3:1). The prophet declared that the Lord cannot bear the iniquities of His people, nor shall He always strive with them.

**(b) *God hath a plan to end sin through the Messiah*** — For out of Bethlehem Ephratah shall He come forth, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2–4). Through Him shall peace and righteousness be established?

**(c) *God careth to restore the repentant*** — For the Lord delighted in mercy, and will turn again, and have compassion upon His people, and will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18–19). Thus the book revealed the heart of God—holy in judgment, faithful in purpose, and tender in restoration.

### 5. The Distinctive Features of the Book

#### **(a) *The Prophet's Clear Denunciation of Sin***

Micah doth plainly set forth a catalogue of the nation's transgressions, that they might see their own corruption before the face of the Lord:

1. Idolatry — the worship of graven images and the forsaking of Jehovah.
2. Covetousness — greed and oppression of the poor.
3. Violence and injustice — bloodshed and the misuse of power.
4. Dishonesty — deceit in trade and false dealings among men.
5. Bribery — judges and rulers taking reward to pervert judgment.
6. Treachery — the betrayal of trust and unfaithfulness among brethren.
7. Sorcery — enchantments and dealings with familiar spirits.
8. Corruption among priests, kings, and prophets — for the leaders thereof caused the people to err.

**(b) *The Prophet's Call to Righteousness***

Micah cried aloud, saying, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

Thus the Book of Micah standeth as a mirror to the conscience of man, revealing both his sin and his hope in the Redeemer who is to come.