

Hosea: Scandalous Love

Series: Major Message from the "Minor Prophets"

June 18, 2017 – Brad Bailey

Hosea 1:1-3a

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel: ² When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." ³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim..."

1. The love of God is profoundly _____.

Hosea 3:1-2 (NLT)

Then the LORD said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the LORD still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them." ² So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine.

2. The love of God is desperately _____.

3. The love of God will allow us to _____ we have sought others to meet.

Hosea 2:7-9

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.' ⁸ She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold-- which they used for Baal. ⁹ "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness.

4. The love of God offers a _____.

Hosea 2:14-20

Hosea 14:1-4

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! ² Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³ Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion."

Titus 3:4-6 (CEV)

God our Savior showed us how good and kind he is. ⁵ He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning.

Hosea: Scandalous Love

Series: Major Message from the “Minor Prophets”

June 18, 2017 – Brad Bailey

(Note: This was also Father’s Day)

Intro

Today we are going to hear from a Father’s voice.
Your Father’s voice. Our Father’s Voice.

It’s neither the voice of some angry tirade just to exert some control...nor that of a **passive** entity who **pretends** everything is okay.

It is THE voice which bears perfect love...that which will both **confront** that which leads to destruction...but will also **cross beyond** what is fair to meet us in response.

We hear this voice... through one of the prophets.

The prophets were those God raised up to speak such truth and love to his people...his children... his bride.

Sometimes a voice from “outside” is needed to reveal the problem at hand. The prophets of the Old Testament part of the Bible were those voices.

The “Minor Prophets” refers to the **final twelve books of the Old Testament** and the term **“minor”** refers only to their shorter length ...not their importance.

There is a major message in each of these prophets...which speaks to us today. In these voices we hear how the heart of our God confronts the unfaithfulness of human life...with the reality of consequences and hope.

So this summer...we are going to listen to the major message of each prophet...and allow God’s heart to speak to us. Each week a pastor will help us hear one central part of their message.

SO today we begin with the **Book of Hosea. [1]**

A little background for those who may not be familiar with the larger Biblical story....

God had called out a man named Abraham through whom God declared he would form a nation...a nation through whom he would bless the whole world in time.

Thus began the Jewish people and nation of Israel.

God began to reveal to them the nature of life. He roots them in His love. He begins reveal who He is and who they were meant to be...out of which they could live right and free.

Their faithfulness became a cycle of failing and learning and returning. But now they had lost all signs of real faithfulness.

They may have had some mild forms of outward religious life...but no real faithfulness.

Like all such conditions ...the unfaithfulness comes slowly... one choice at a time.

Propped up by some alliances they had made with Assyria and Egypt... they were enjoying some prosperity... which may have furthered their compromise.

The human hearts which were chosen began turning away to others. It **may have begun with a little ohh and ahh...** look at what they have...and then believing that it will serve some needs...and then slowly redirecting their hopes...their trust. And **God knows where this will lead.**

It is amidst such a time...God has raised up a prophets to answer....

Let's listen to the opening of Hosea...

Hosea 1:1 (NIV)

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

This simple opening statement sets all we read in it's historical context. Contrary to what some like to believe...this is the interplay of God in real human history. And the breadth of kings helps us realize that Hosea had served God as a voice to the people for many years. The Book of Hosea is a compilation of these years. And when it begins...he is likely a young man. As a young man he looked forward to having a wife...and children...and entering the stage of life in which he walks as adult in the town. It's in such a season we then read....

Hosea 1:3-3a

When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim..."

Some of you may be wondering if it says what you think it said. It does.

What we discover is that the **people had lost their responsiveness to God over time...**and that he **priest themselves had ceased to root people in the truth...** and so God comes to this young faithful man.

The prophet won't just be some oracle of ideas...**he will bear the message in real life. He wasn't going to just describe the reality of the people's spiritual adultery...their unfaithfulness...he would become a living symbol of it.**

Imagine what he faced...

The text doesn't say whether she was already an active prostitute... so that his choice to marry her was itself a public shock...or if this was what she would soon begin. What we do know...it that he was being **called to choose a life of utter disgrace...and pain.** [2]

As soon as you take her to be your wife, she will **leave you, cheat on you, love other men** more than you, find her **satisfaction with others, lack appreciation** for you, and make you the **biggest punchline in the whole town.**

We can imagine how **in the day he sought the Lord ...and warned the people...then night after night Hosea returned home wondering where his wife was. Night after night he lay**

awake long after it was good for him ... waiting for his wife to return... perhaps he would search for her.

How he processed all this... no one can fully know. What we do know is that Hosea had the strength to suffer for the sake of faithfulness.

We are told that **one by one she bore three children**. [3] The first child was a son God told him was to be named **Jezeel**. And the name Jezeel was the name of a city that had played a tragic part in Israel's history. It was in Jezeel that Israel had violated God with the uncalled for killing. It would be as though a Jew today would call his son Dachau or Auschwitz, the name of one of the horror camps that Hitler used to murder Jews in World War II. Every time he called "Jezeel" in the marketplace that name sounding in the ear of a pious Jew would be a reminder of the fact that in the past God had dealt with the nation's sin.

And then they had a **second child**, a **little girl**, and God told him they were to name her **Loruhamah**, which means **Not Pity**. And then after little Loruhamah was weaned they had a **third child**, a **second boy**, and he was to be called **Loammi**, which means in the Hebrew **No Kin of Mine**.

In this household... God displays his love for us in the most powerful terms.

From these terms...life is defined.

The first truth that Hosea declares to us is that...

1. The love of God is profoundly underserved

How all of the lives around him must have now related to him with the question: ***“How can a holy and faithful man like you love an adulterous woman like that?”*** I believe Hosea was realized that his answer was itself the bigger question... as he explained that he now wondered, ***“How can a holy God like ours love such an adulterous nation as us?”***

They found his love for her **shocking...appalling... disgraceful... she didn't deserve it ...not realizing that it was only a mild picture of their own unfaithfulness ...and how undeserving they were to be loved by God.**

They were living out **the deeper adultery... spiritual adultery** to God.

God confronts the adultery (unfaithful heart) of giving our ultimate trust and hearts to another

.... of turning to other sources to ultimately provide and satisfy our hearts

There are two aspects of unfaithfulness that are raised through the Book of Hosea...

- **Spiritual adultery gives the honor due to the ultimate source ...to that which we form and worship.**

Turn your honor from the one who gives... to that which idols. [4]

Hosea 2: 8 (NIV)

She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold-- which they used for Baal.

- **Spiritual adultery makes alliances for security... giving her trust to that which will only use and enslave her**

Hosea 7:11 (NLT)

“The people of Israel have become like silly, witless doves, first calling to Egypt, then flying to Assyria for help. [5]

Then again we read...

Hosea 12:1 (NLT)

The people of Israel feed on the wind; they chase after the east wind all day long. They pile up lies and violence; they are making an alliance with Assyria while sending olive oil to buy support from Egypt. [6]

When I consider the nature of such unfaithfulness to God... I am faced with this truth.

- **We can be those who give our hearts to lesser loves... even if it means being unfaithful to the truest of Love which is God.**
- **We can become those who give the honor due God to that which is fashioned by human culture.**
- **We can be those who for the sake of security...will give our allegiance to that which will ultimately use us.**

The truth is...I am Gomer. We are Gomer.

(Those who are old enough to have grown up watching Gomer Pyle...may have an especially hard time saying it...Gomer wasn't the brightest character.)

You can change the name...because the Gomer which Hosea married...was just a representation of the nature of how we can be unfaithful to God...in ways that are as indefensible as any.

We are Gomer...there is unfaithfulness in us all.

And to us...Hosea declares that **the love of God is profoundly underserved.**

Hosea is beginning to grasp...that God's love is profoundly rooted in God's nature...not ours.

When God chose a people to bless the world...why didn't he go to Greece... bedrock of great thinking...today all philosophy is still footnoting Aristotle, Plato, Socrates... or Rome... the glorious city that wasn't built in a day...that held the majesty of Caesar...splendor and power...or Babylon...renowned in building it's magnificent palaces...no he chose a small clan who Greece would laugh at, Rome would abuse and Babylon would enslave....and he said you are the “apple of my eye.” [7]

God's love is not rooted in us...it is rooted in Himself.

Such love **can only come from the God who is self-existent**. For he needs nothing from us, Grace.... to suffer not for any gain...any needed practical functional purpose.

When I say 'I love you', and you refuse to love me, I hurt because I have lost something. **When God says 'He loves you'**, and you refuse to love God, God hurts too. Not because God has lost something, but you have lost something. **That's the very perfection of His love.**

It is not merited...warranted... bound by any need.

This grows ever more dramatic as Hosea is called to even greater grace.

Gomer appears to have sunk lower and lower until she fell into the hands of a man who did not care for her at all. And that man decided he would sell her into slavery. In the ancient world slavery was an established institution. There was hardly a city that did not have some time during the year or many times during the year a place where men and women were bought and sold like animals. Secular historians say that in some of the auctions that when a woman was auctioned she was stripped of her clothes and forced to stand before the gaze of the crowd.

And so we read at the start of Hosea chapter 3 ...

Hosea 3:1-2 (NLT)

¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the LORD still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them." **² So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine.**

Imagine such a process. Imagine what the people who had long seen her giving herself to other men... of having no regard for honoring her husband...must have thought when bids are being shouted out...and then comes his voice... now buying what was already his.

This is shocking... it's scandalous.

We think that the scandalous love is that of the adulterous...but it's the love that bears such disgrace that is scandalous...because it violates what is fair.

From our judgment...the love of Hosea for Gomer...is **appalling ...shameful ...disgraceful.**

And **if we could see clearly**... in ways we cannot even understand...God's love for us is scandalous.... shameful...disgraceful. And it is just such love that can bear disgrace...that declares it's truest honor.

What we see here in these event...what is at hand right here (in our midst)...is

The disgrace of the unfaithful... is met with the disgrace of the faithful...God.

2. The love of God is desperately needed.

Every soul was created to be rooted in love. Not in mere functional value...but in love.

We value being affirmed for what we do...but **nothing we do can prove our worth.**

Here is the truth of God's love:

“You are not loved because you have value...you are valued because you are loved.”

God loves that way. God is the only source of such love.

Naturalism cannot offer that love. It operates from a vacuum in the transcendent. Naturalism declares that you can only be valued for what you do to benefit others and the survival of the fittest.

God values what he loves...but that does not mean that God simply lets us walk off. The third thing we learn about God's love in Hosea, is that...

3. The love of God will allow us to face the needs we have sought others to meet.

Listen to what God says in....

Hosea 2:7-9 (NIV)

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'⁸

She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold-- which they used for Baal.⁹ "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness.

The love of God will allow us to face the consequences of turning to that which cannot ultimately fulfill....and will ultimately destroy us.

God knows that we clothe ourselves in so many ways that may not cover our true nakedness.

I believe that **every one of us** in this **room...** and for that matter...**on this planet...**could say that they **feel uncovered in some way**....naked...vulnerable... **AND most would admit** it's something **we don't like**...we want to grab something to cover ourselves with...even if it can't .really cover us.

What Hosea is describing is a profound distinction. Man has generally projected upon God the nature of his own anger. **Man's anger is retribution...** **God's anger** is about what is needed to bring **restoration.** [9]

God knows that we cannot presume to understand the condition we are in.

We can be like the proverbial frog in the kettle. We like the warm ater...not realizing it is slowly getting hotter...and we go from being comfortable to being cooked... unless something wakes us up.

So He allows that which can awaken us. He allows Gomer

In recent years we have felt such a need...and used the term "tough love" to describe it.
[8]

It is loving because it understands that the consequences that will come are greater than the consequences one is allowing now.

It is not a matter of removing one's choices...but a matter of allowing them to face the reality of those choices.

Human nature has long thought that there is something powerful about claiming we want to be our own persons... break down all constraints... yet we have never seemed to stop and realize...we have that freedom. God's question is, "So who are you?" Who is this person we think we are? And we love to think we are powerful to declare that we will set our own boundaries? God says we are free to do so. But Would ask: "Why do we believe that you will be better off on the other side of boundaries?"

G.K. Chesterton "Anytime you remove a fence, pause long enough to find out why it was put up in the first place." -

There is always hope when there is a force for change rather than final dismissal.

4. The love of God offers a new hope

We first hear of new hope in Chapter 2 as God says...

Hosea 2:14-23 (NIV)

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. ¹⁶ "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' ¹⁷ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. ¹⁸ In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. ¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. ²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

That word *Achor* from the Valley of Achor, verse fifteen, simply means the valley of trouble. And Hosea's saying I'm going to lead her out into the wilderness. I'm going to allow her to stumble into the Valley of Achor, and there in that awful, dreadful place I will open to her again the door of salvation and hope. And what God did with the nation Israel God sometimes does with us. Sometimes when we persist in our running and our going astray it's almost as if God took his hands off of our lives and let us suffer and feel the consequences of what we did. We stumble into the Valley of Achor, place of broken dreams and broken hearts and broken lives. But it's often in that dreadful place that God opens to us a door of salvation and hope.

You may know something of that valley... of troubles...of the desert.

It is the **place of longing**...and God here declares that there is a better end... a future that will come. And you can hear something of what lies beyond anything they have known.... It will last forever... and it will be without violence... and all conflict will be settled.

He has come to the place where slaves are sold...even prostitutes. And he will buy them. God says you were created in love...and you can be redeemed in love.

We read in ...

Titus 3:4-6 (CEV)

God our Savior showed us how good and kind he is. ⁵ He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning.

Closing story...

There is a story of a **little boy who built a sailboat**. He built the sail and had it all fixed up, tarred and painted. He **took it to the lake** and pushed it in hoping it would sail. Sure enough a wisp of breeze filled the little sail and it billowed and went rippling along the waves.

Suddenly before the little boy knew it, the boat was out of his reach, even though he waded in fast and tried to grab it. As he watched it float away, he hoped maybe the breeze would shift and it would come sailing back to him. Instead he watched it go farther and farther until it was gone.

When he went home crying, his mother asked, *“What’s wrong, didn’t it work?”* And he said, *“It worked too well.”*

Some time later, the little **boy was downtown** and **walked past a second hand store**. There in the window he saw the boat. It was unmistakably his, so he went in and said to the proprietor, *“That’s my boat.”*

He walked to the window, picked it up and started to leave with it.

The owner of the shop said, *“Wait a minute, Son. That’s my boat. I bought it from someone.”*

The boy said, *“No, it’s my boat. I made it. See.”* And he showed him the little scratches and the marks where he hammered and filed. The man said, *“I’m sorry, Son. If you want it, you have to buy it.”*

The poor little guy didn’t have any money, but **he worked hard and saved his pennies**. Finally, one day he had enough money. He went in and bought the little boat.

As he left the store holding the boat close to him, he was heard saying,

“You’re my boat. You’re twice my boat. First you’re my boat ‘cause I made you and second you’re my boat ‘cause I bought you!”

If you ever think that you aren't worth much, just remember what God thinks of you. You are His. Twice His. First you're His because He made you. You are His by right of creation. And second you're His because He bought you on the cross. He paid a price to redeem you. You are His by right of redemption. [10]

Resources: I am indebted to Ravi Zacharias for his simplified points focusing on the nature of God's love from which I drew. I only heard his message on Hosea, which he appears to have given in different contexts, sometimes titled *The Prophet Marries a Prostitute*. I also found the best narrative in a message by Haddon Robinson ("The World's Best Love Story.")

Notes:

1. The Bible Project has created a great short introduction and overview of Hosea available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE6SZ1ogOVU>

2. Chisholm notes: "Those who hold to a literal marriage disagree over Gomer's status at the beginning of her relationship with Hosea. Some argue that Gomer was a prostitute at the time she was married. A modification of this is the view that she was a typical young Israelite woman who had participated in a Canaanite rite of sexual initiation in preparation for marriage (Wolff, Hosea, pp. 14–5). Others contend that Gomer was sexually pure at the time of marriage and later became an adulteress. The Book of Hosea does not provide information concerning Gomer's premarital sexual experience. The expression "adulterous wife" (lit., "wife of adultery") does not describe her condition at the time of marriage, but anticipates what she proved to be, a wife characterized by unfaithfulness. Any knowledge of Gomer's status at the time of marriage is thereby precluded.

Both the language of Hosea 1:2 and the following context support this interpretation. The expression is similar to others in Hebrew that describe a married woman's character (e.g., "wife of one's youth," "a quarrelsome wife" ["a wife of quarrelings"], "a wife of noble character"; for these and other examples see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, p. 159).

Chisholm, R. B., Jr. (1985). Hosea. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1379). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. The immediate description of the three children...and their names comes in **Hosea 1:3-9...and adds to the profound weight of shame which Hosea symbolically bore to represent the true condition of Israel.**

Hosea 1:3-9 (NIV)

³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. ⁵ In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel." ⁶ Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them. ⁷ Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them--not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the LORD

their God." ⁸ After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. ⁹ Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

4. Regarding redirecting honor due to God, see also Hosea 4:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ² There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. ³ Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying. ⁴ "But let no man bring a charge, let no man accuse another, for your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. ⁵ You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother-- ⁶ my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. ⁷ The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their Glory for something disgraceful. ⁸ They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness. ⁹ And it will be: Like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds. ¹⁰ "They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted the LORD to give themselves to prostitution, ¹¹ to old wine and new, which take away the understanding of my people. ¹² They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God.

5. Re Hosea 7:11, the Cambridge commentary notes:

But Ephraim is become like a silly dove without understanding. As a dove, fleeing from a hawk, is snared in the fowler's net, so Ephraim, when afraid of Assyria, calls in the assistance of Egypt, and when afraid of Egypt, applies to Assyria (see Introduction). In his folly he does not observe the snare which the false friend, or rather (Hosea 7:12) Jehovah, prepares for him.

6. Re Hosea 12:1, as noted in Ellicott's commentary...

(1) East wind.—Comp. Isaiah 27:8 and Job 27:21. On the latter passage Wetzstein remarks:—"This wind is more frequent in winter and early spring, when, if it continues long, the tender vegetation is parched up, and a year of famine follows. Both man and beast feel sickly while it prevails." Hence, that which is unpleasant and revolting in life is compared by Orientals to the east wind. The idea expressed by the east wind here is the same as in Job 15:2, combining the notions of destructiveness and emptiness.

We later hear of the shame that will come...

Hosea 10:6 (NLT)

This idol will be carted away to Assyria, a gift to the great king there. Ephraim will be ridiculed and Israel will be shamed, because its people have trusted in this idol.

Finally we hear of Israel's confession which acknowledges these very issues....

Hosea 14:3 (NLT)

Assyria cannot save us, nor can our war-horses. Never again will we say to the idols we have made, 'You are our gods.' No, in you alone do the orphans find mercy."

7. The term we associate and translate as “apple of my eye” is actually a similar meaning Hebrew idiom. The texts are:

Psalm 17:8

Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings

Zechariah 2:8

For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.

Deuteronomy 32:10

"He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

8. We see this “tough love” in....

Hosea 2:6-12 (NIV)

Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. 7 She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.' 8 She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold-- which they used for Baal. 9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness. 10 So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. 11 I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days--all her appointed feasts. 12 I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them.

God knows how simply fearing consequences can lead to short term shallow responses...which are like the morning mist which soon dry up and disappear. He does not want religious symbols and shows of response that do not reflect true change of heart.

Hosea 6:1-6 (NIV)

1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. 2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. 3 Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." 4 "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. 5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you. 6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians. He asked, "Have I then become your enemy by telling the truth to you and dealing sincerely with you?" (Gal. 4:16 Amplified).

9. We hear God's love yearn...and declare it's power to act beyond the nature of human nature.

Hosea 11:8-9 (NIV)

8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. 9 I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man-- the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath.

10. The real defining response is found here, in which we are given the words fitting of repentance...which include every aspect of what they had been doing. Hosea instruct the people to return to the Lord....

Hosea 14:1-9 (NIV)

¹ Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! ² Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³ Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion."

I have not inc

"Yahweh's attitude toward the erring people of Israel is like that which Hosea displayed toward Gomer. Yahweh's main concern for his people would be to bring about their restoration rather than mete out to them the exact amount of punishment they deserve. In other words, Yahweh's justice is always subordinate to his mercy.

Justice in human relationships is based on the idea of equality, which means giving to each person exactly that which is due. According to Hosea, divine justice is determined not so much by what people deserve as by what is necessary in order to bring about the desired reformation on their part.

This new element in the conception of deity had many important consequences for the future development of Israel's religion. For one thing, Yahweh's punishments could be interpreted as remedial rather than retributive." – Source is missing