



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

HOSEA,
JOEL, AMOS

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

With this volume, we begin exploring the portions of the Bible known as the prophets. This will be the first volume of many devoted to prophecy (interspersed with other books from the Old and New Testaments). Why would we spend so much time on the prophets? Because approximately a third of the Bible is prophecy.

But prophecy can be confusing, without a proper perspective. If you've listened to evangelists on radio and TV, you already know that some of them focus on prophecy. Some specialize in predictive prophecy, so-called "end-times" preaching and teaching whereby they claim to be able to forecast world events. Some claim that Armageddon and the return of Christ are just around the corner. Many set dates which later prove to be false. And many people have been disillusioned with the Bible and Christianity as a result.

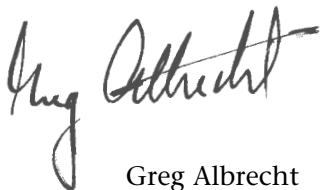
The other negative effect of prophetic speculation is that it obscures the *real* message of the prophets. To be sure, the prophets are sometimes hard to understand, but their messages can be made clear by applying the time-tested, cardinal rule of Bible interpretation: first, learn what the text meant to its original audience, in its historical context. Only then can we understand what the prophetic books (or any other parts of the Bible) *might* mean for us today.

Our journey through the prophets begins with the first three of the minor prophets—Hosea, Joel and Amos. The first one of these prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel, while Joel and Amos prophesied primarily in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Collectively, they take Israel to task for many of the same

problems we see around us today—immorality, paganism, materialism and oppression. Of course, these same human problems are always present in every human society, culture and epoch. Therefore, the message of the prophets is timeless for all humans who have ever lived or will live. In Hosea, Joel and Amos, we see how God dealt with Israel as she departed more and more from his covenant. We see God's judgment and his intolerance of sin. We also see his mercy and forgiveness—and we receive glimpses of a future eternal kingdom where righteousness and peace will be restored.

This is the kingdom Jesus Christ brought to the earth over 2,000 years ago. He continues to bring that kingdom to those who believe in him, and who accept God's offer of forgiveness and reconciliation. While not overtly understood at the time, Jesus is the covert foundational message of the prophets.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Albrecht" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don't be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each "daily" lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges .

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. *The CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS

God's
Faithful
Love

Introduction to Hosea

Authorship: The Hebrew name *Hosea* means “salvation” or “deliverance”—the same as Joshua’s original name (Nu 13:8, 16) and Hoshea, Israel’s last king (2Ki 17:1). Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel in the final decades leading up to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Nothing is known of his family background, except that his father’s name was Beerī.

Date: Hosea was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah and Amos, although most of Amos’ ministry occurred prior to that of Hosea. Hosea’s work is generally dated from about 755-710 B.C. He may have prophesied longer than any other prophet, beginning in the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, extending through the tumultuous reigns of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah and Pekah, and ending after the captivity of Samaria under king Hoshea. The same time period in Judah covered the reigns of Uzziah to Hezekiah.

Setting and purpose: Since the days of the prophet Amos, things had become worse in the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos had preceded Hosea in preaching against idolatry and sin, but the people had paid little attention. Now it was Hosea’s turn, and the fact that Amos had not met with great success did not make Hosea’s task any easier. God was about to judge the kingdom of Israel because of their unfaithfulness. He would allow the Assyrians to invade the country and take Israel into exile and bondage. Though God had blessed them and treated them well, they had answered his blessings with rebellion and idolatry.

As Hobart E. Freeman writes, in his *Introduction to Old Testament Prophets* (Moody Press, 1968), “Hosea is the prophet of Israel’s zero hour. The nation had sunk to a point of such corruption that a major stroke of divine judgment could no longer be staved off. What the weeping Jeremiah was to Judah, the southern kingdom, nearly a century and a half later, that was the sob-choked Hosea to Israel, the northern kingdom....which culminated in the utterly deserved, yet none-the-less heart rending catastrophe of the Assyrian invasion. It is likely that

Hosea actually saw the ten tribes of his beloved Israel dragged away from the land which they had shamefully defiled.”


Reading outline:

I. ISRAEL’S SPIRITUAL CONDITION, 1:1–3:5

- A. Two Unfaithful Brides, 1:1-11
- B. Chasing the Wind, 2:1-13
- C. A Coming Engagement, 2:14-23
- D. The Pain of Rejection, 3:1-5

II. GOD’S JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, 4:1–14:9

- A. God vs. Israel, 4:1-19
- B. The Point of No Return, 5:1-15
- C. Don’t Be Long! 6:1-11
- D. Danger Ahead! 7:1-16
- E. Challenging Conventional Wisdom, 8:1-14
- F. God’s Abandoned Garden, 9:1-17
- G. How Does Your Garden Grow? 10:1-15
- H. The Prodigal Son, 11:1-11
- I. Inherit the Wind, 12:1-14
- J. Idol Hands Are the Devil’s Workshop, 13:1-16
- K. The Way Home! 14:1-9

A black and white photograph of a beach. The foreground is dominated by a vast expanse of sand with intricate, wavy patterns created by the receding tide. The patterns consist of numerous small, overlapping ridges and troughs that stretch across the frame. In the background, a calm body of water meets the shore, with a dark, silhouetted coastline visible on the horizon under a pale sky.

*“Yet the
Israelites will be
like the sand on
the seashore,
which cannot be
measured or
counted. In the
place where it
was said to
them, ‘You are
not my people,’
they will be
called ‘sons of
the living God.’”*

Hosea 1:10

Two Unfaithful Brides

DAY 1

Hosea 1

Can you think of someone who was or is known primarily for acts of immorality?

1. Can you think of a reason why God would command one of his prophets to marry a prostitute?
2. While humans are and have always been notoriously untrustworthy, and while human expressions of love are often shattered by cruel reality, God loves us without exception and unconditionally.
3. Was God being cruel to Hosea, or was God teaching Hosea? What might the lesson have been?

1. Has your life been tested by someone close to you who betrayed you? What lessons have you learned that you might not have otherwise?
2. Have you ever responded to God's faithfulness in your life with unfaithfulness?
3. Have painful experiences you have experienced in human relationships caused you to ever doubt God's fidelity?

*Much debate has been focused on **Hosea's marriage to Gomer**. Some believe that the marriage was allegorical, not literal. Further, some say Gomer was a prostitute when she married Hosea; others say she was an Israelite who had engaged in a Canaanite rite of sexual initiation in preparation for marriage. Still others believe she became a prostitute after she married Hosea. The context seems to indicate that the command to Hosea should be understood as "go marry a woman who will prove to be unfaithful" (v. 2). **The bow** (v. 5) was a symbol of power.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 2

Chasing the Wind

Hosea 2:1-13

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you exerted a lot of time and energy to obtain something that later turned out to be worthless to you? What was it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Under what misunderstanding was the nation of Israel laboring (v. 5)?
2. What was God planning to do to help Israel return to a relationship with him (vs. 6-7)?
3. What was God's greatest accusation against Israel (v. 8)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. God gave Israel wonderful gifts, yet they failed to give him credit. Can you think of gifts you have thanked others for—but not God?
2. How has God blessed your life? List 10 different ways, including relationships, health, abilities and opportunities. Have you given God credit for these blessings? If not, who or what received the credit?
3. Is there a particularly enticing activity, passion or pursuit that draws your heart away from God? What do you intend to do about it?

WINDOW
on the Word

The word **rebuke** (v. 2) in Hebrew is used for a formal legal accusation. Israel, pictured by Gomer, had broken the old covenant marriage contract, or covenant, that bound Israel to God and God to Israel. **"She is not my wife"** (v. 2). **Baal** was the Canaanite god who was thought to provide fertility—both agriculturally and in humans. By seeking these blessings from Baal instead of God, Israel was breaking the first commandment (Ex 20:3, Dt 5:7). To prove his power and reality over Baal, God would reverse the Israelites' agricultural blessings and cause them to see that Baal had no power to help. In this way, Israel's unfaithfulness would make her spiritually naked—exposing her shameful, unfaithful conduct toward God.

A Coming Engagement

DAY 3

Hosea 2:14-23

When we love another person, how do we talk to the one we love and how do we communicate our love?

1. What did God plan to do to bring Israel back to him (v. 14)? What does this teach you about the nature of God?

2. What would Israel call God in the future, when he drew her back to him (v. 16)? What were they calling God that offended him, and why did it offend him?

3. Though Israel was like Gomer, an unfaithful wife, what relationship did God offer to Israel in the future (v. 19)?

1. How have you experienced God calling you back to him after you have strayed?

2. When you disobey God, how do you imagine him speaking to you? Is it the same way he spoke to Israel in verse 14?

3. God wanted Israel to call him, and treat him, as their *ishi* (husband), not their *baali* (master). God wants a deeper more intimate relationship with us than we often realize. Jesus called his Father *abba* (daddy), and urged his disciples to do the same. Does the idea of calling God “dad” or “daddy” in your prayers help you, or make you feel uncomfortable? Why?

*The **Valley of Achor** (v. 15, meaning “valley of trouble”) was the place where Achan’s sin of greed proved such a calamity to the nation of Israel (Jos 7). The next time God led them through it, however, it would be different. It would be a “door of hope,” leading to a repossession of the Holy Land.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

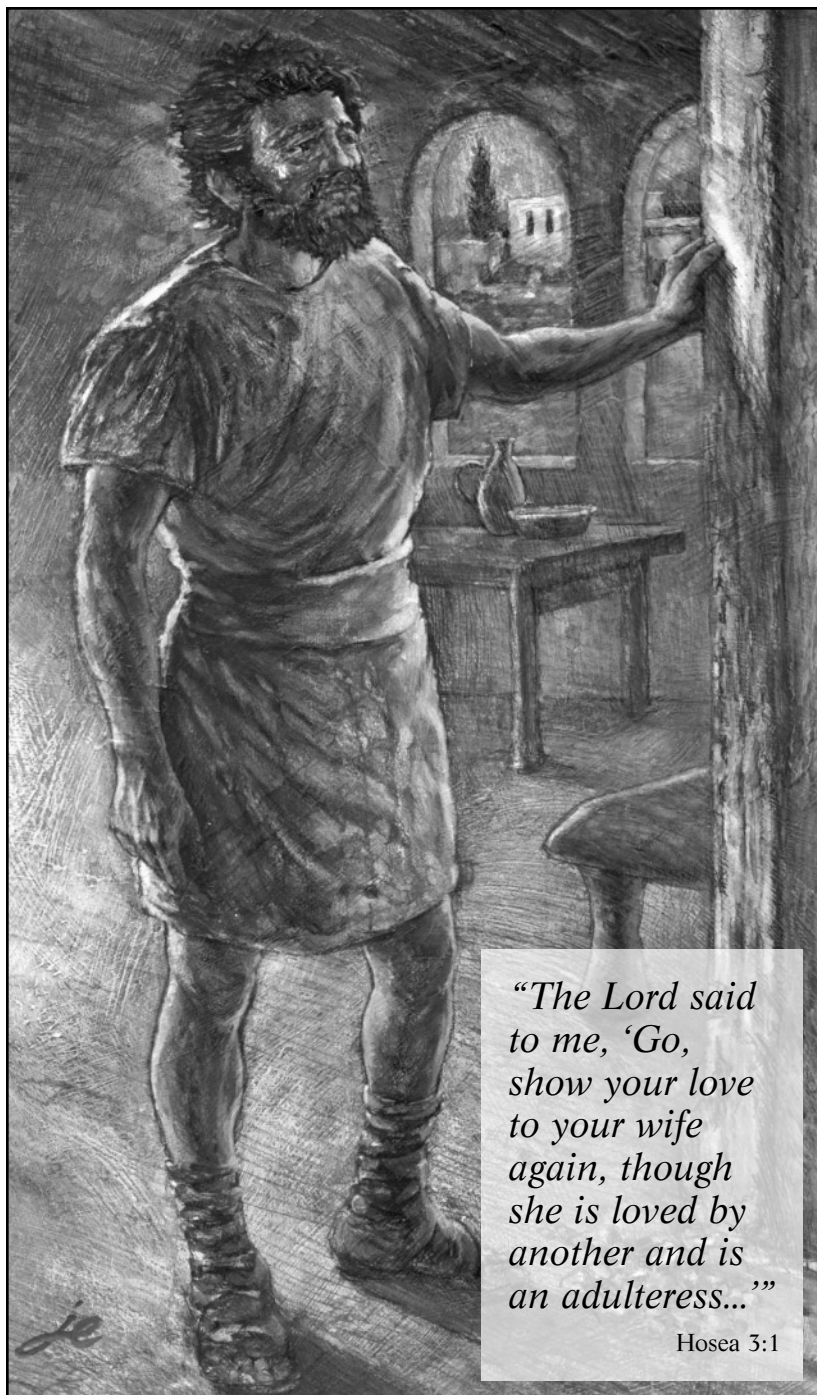
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“The Lord said
to me, ‘Go,
show your love
to your wife
again, though
she is loved by
another and is
an adulteress...”*

Hosea 3:1

The Pain of Rejection

DAY 4

Hosea 3

Have you ever loved someone, and then seen your love rejected and slighted? Is there any pain greater than love that isn't returned?

1. What did God tell Hosea to do to Gomer, in spite of her infidelity (v. 1)? How did God resemble Hosea in this action?

2. How much did Hosea have to pay to buy Gomer's freedom (v. 2)? Why did he have to pay to get her back?

3. After all Gomer had done by breaking Hosea's heart (she was "loved by her husband")—why didn't he just leave her and divorce her when he had the right to do so (v. 3)? What does this tell us about God's love for us?

1. Think of a time when you loved someone deeply, and that person didn't return your love. Did you ever imagine that our disobedience could make God feel that way?

2. God instructed Hosea to buy back his wife, for a large sum, even though she had shown herself unworthy of his trust and love. How do you see this paralleled in Jesus' death for you on the cross?

3. Was it Hosea who initiated reconciliation, or Gomer? When we stray from God and disobey him, who is constantly seeking to initiate reconciliation—God or us?

Sacred raisin cakes (v. 1) were delicacies apparently associated with feasts of Baal and Baal worship. A **homer** and a **letheq of barley** (v. 2) was a substantial price, equivalent to about 15 shekels. Hosea's payment for his wife totalled about 30 shekels, the price of a slave. It is uncertain whether Hosea had legally divorced Gomer or whether she had become a prostitute in a temple of Baal, someone's legal property, a concubine or had hired herself out as a prostitute. In any case, Hosea was required to buy back his own wife. **Ephod** (v. 4) refers to a method of divination. The ephod was a garment worn by the Hebrew priests in the Temple, but in this case it was probably an object of pagan worship.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 5

The Case of God vs. Israel

Hosea 4

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever had to go to court or participate in a legal action? What was it like?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why did God choose the method of bringing a legal case against Israel and the land (v. 1)? Had there been a legal agreement between God and Israel that Israel had broken? What was it?

2. What specific accusations did God bring against Israel, and what laws were broken (v. 2; compare Ex 20)?

3. Verses 4-10 detail God's case against the priests of Israel. What charges did God bring against them in verse 6? God says the priests "feed on the sins of my people" (v. 8). This refers to the priests encouraging the people to make many sacrifices for sin—not for a pure motive, but because the priests personally received portions of every offering.

4. Where were Israelites seeking guidance for their lives (v. 12)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. The people were very religious, offering sacrifices for sin and seeking divine guidance. How is it possible to be religious yet distant from God?

2. Although you may own several Bibles, could you still be "destroyed from lack of knowledge" (v. 6)? Consider what Jesus said to the Bible scholars of his day (Jn 5:39-40).

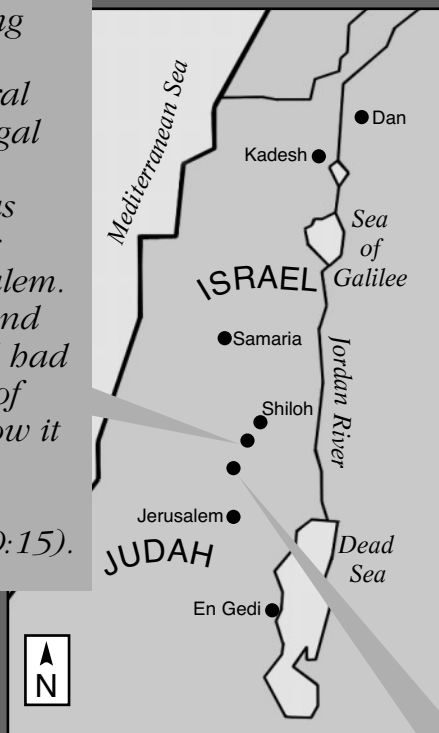
WINDOW
on the Word

*The people, led astray by the priests and prophets, were engaging in **Baal worship**, sacrificing to false gods and engaging in cult prostitution. Canaanite altars, which Moses had commanded destroyed, were on hills and under shady trees throughout the northern kingdom of Israel. Here the people of Israel were taking part in sexual rites with cult prostitutes. The point of these rituals was to seek to please the fertility gods of Baal and Asherah—to increase agricultural and human fertility.*

GILGAL AND BETH-AVEN

Gilgal

Gilgal, meaning “circle,” was a name for several towns. The Gilgal mentioned in Hosea 4:15 was about 17 miles north of Jerusalem. Under Elijah and Elishah, Gilgal had been a center of instruction. Now it had become a center of false worship (Hos 9:15).



Beth-Aven

Although Beth-Aven was a town about 10 miles north of Jerusalem, Hosea uses the name as a derisive term for Bethel (Hos 4:15). Bethel means “house of God,” whereas Beth-Aven means “house of nothing.” Bethel had become a “house of nothing” since the golden calves had been set up there.

DAY 6

The Point of No Return

Hosea 5

OPENING
up to the Word

Has anyone whom you consider to be an authority ever given you bad advice or set a terrible example? Did you follow either their advice or example?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why do you think God began his judgment against Israel with the priests and leaders (v. 1)? What did he accuse them of doing to Israel?
2. What is the tragic result of the depth of sin in Israel (vs. 4-6)? What is the most serious loss they would experience?
3. When Israel began to be aware of their precarious situation, why wasn't an increase in sacrifices effective (v. 6)?
4. What was God's assessment of the main problem that ultimately caused Ephraim's downfall (v. 11)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Although Israel still practiced many rituals of the Mosaic law, they were no longer wholly trusting in the Lord. How could the same thing happen to you? What Christ-less, empty legalistic traditions might you still be involved in?
2. If you are still deceived by Christ-less religion in some way, how might God help to lead you to freedom in Christ?

WINDOW
on the Word

Mizpah and Tabor (v. 1). *The leaders of Israel—priests, kings and prophets—had encouraged false worship at shrines in these cities. The sounds of horns blowing in **Gibeah and Ramah** (vs. 8-9) were a call to battle, indicating an invading force would sweep into Israel's northern kingdom, all the way to their southern border with Judah. This would be God's judgment on Israel, using the hated Assyrians to fulfill this task. **Boundary stones** (v. 10) were markers separating one person's property from another. They could be moved in the dead of night. God is accusing the leaders of Israel and Judah of shifting the boundaries between right and wrong, true and false, God and idols. Trying to avoid divine judgment, Israel turned not to her God in true repentance, but to a political alliance (v. 13) with the eventual invader, Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria.*

HIGH PLACES OF IDOLATRY

Mount Tabor, in the north, overlooks the Sea of Galilee. It was the site of an idolatrous sanctuary.



PTM Photo

Mizpah was a city in southern Israel about eight miles north of Jerusalem. It was built on a hill, probably the site of a pagan religious shrine or “high place.”

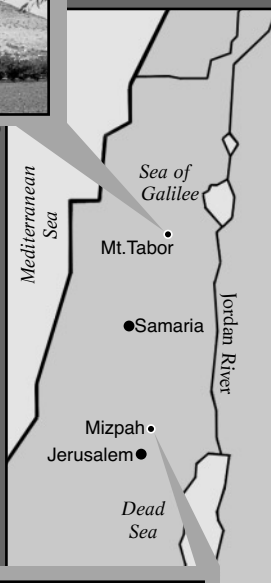


Photo by P. Termes

DAY 7

Don't Be Long!

Hosea 6

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever experienced the joy of returning to the Lord after having wandered away from him?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What words describe God's restoration of Israel (vs. 1-2)? Who was the source of both the wounds and the healing?
 2. When Israel truly repents and turns to the Lord, what word pictures describe the reconciliation that will be like (v. 3)?
 3. What metaphors did God use to describe Ephraim and Judah (v. 4)?
 4. What is more important to God than the external rites of sacrifice and offering (v. 6)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. When we wander away from the Lord in our spiritual lives, what kind of reception can we expect from him when we return (see Lk 15:11-32)?
 2. What have you learned about the heart of God in this passage that you didn't know before? How does this change the way you respond to him today?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

While God condemned Israel's **offerings and sacrifices**, it wasn't because they were not commanded under the terms of the old covenant. Rather it was because they were not being offered with loyal or faithful hearts to God. They had become little more than a superstitious ritual, lacking any true faith in God. Israel's loyalty to God lasted no longer than a **morning fog, or morning dew** (v. 4) that quickly blows away or evaporates. **Shechem** (v. 9) was originally one of the "cities of refuge" that Joshua had set aside, where those who had killed someone accidentally could go to live without fear of vengeance (Jos 21:21). Ironically, murder had become rampant in these cities.