

A Model Family?

Hosea 1:1-2:1

20 October 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

Big Question: What does God's prophet have such an unusual home life?

Big Idea: Unfaithful people don't deserve God's love.

Book Introduction

Today, we're going to be starting a new series in the book of Hosea.

It's fair to say that Hosea doesn't fall into the Top 10 most read books of the Bible.

Or the Top 20 or even the Top 30.

My expectation is that this part of the Bible probably isn't familiar to most of us.

You're probably not alone if you've never even heard of it before.

I've read it a number of times over the years, but it's not a book I'd say that I knew well.

The Bible is made up of two parts – the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament covers the time before Jesus and the New Testament covers the time from Jesus onwards.

Hosea is one of the books that's tucked away at the end of the Old Testament.

I studied chemistry for five years, so I'm proud to show you *The Periodic Table of the Bible*.¹

The Old Testament is arranged into groups of books.

The first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch.

Then comes the history books. They're sometimes called the former prophets.

After them are the wisdom books which show us how to live wisely in the world.

Then there's the major prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Right at the end of the Old Testament are what we call the minor prophets or sometimes, The Twelve.

They're "minor" because they're much shorter than the major prophets.

That's probably how most of us treat them too – as small and insignificant.

We might get to reading them one day, but most of probably don't think we're missing much if we never get there.

Hosea is the first of these minor prophets and it's also one of the longest.

Along with Zechariah, it has fourteen chapters.

Obadiah only has one.

If you're using one of the church Bibles (which you're welcome to borrow from the front table), you can find it on page 901.

At the time of Hosea's ministry, lots of things seemed to be going really well in Israel.

It was one of the most prosperous time in their history.

Their national borders had expanded and lots of the countries they'd been afraid of were getting weaker and weaker.²

It looked like they were experiencing God's blessing.

In many ways, Hosea's world was quite similar to ours.

We've just lived through one of the greatest boom times our country has ever seen.

Depending on exactly how you measure it, Australians are now the second richest people in the world according to a report that came out last year.³

It looks like we're being blessed by the God that less and less people think is there.

Exactly the same thing happened in Israel.

Rather than responding with thanks to God for this blessing, they turned away from him.

They were unfaithful to him.

They started chasing after another (small 'g') god, Baal, who they gave all the credit for their success.

And while the big end of town was doing well, many people were suffering.

What they really needed was to be reminded of God's love.

Hosea was a prophet, which means that he was sent by God with the job of speaking on behalf of God.

His job was to show **God's faithful love**.

When I say show it, his job was to show it literally, using his family.

It's his family's situation that qualifies him to speak to God's people of God's love.

God's relentlessly caring love which makes him reliable and committed to people who're needy.

The kind of love that makes him heartbroken when his people reject and yet the kind of love that causes him to still care deeply for those same people.

Love that cares enough to judge and call people to repent.

Love that ultimately heals and fixes our brokenness.

Many people think that of course God is love.

But what kind of love?

These less well-known books can catch us off-guard.

I like how one person has said:

“It does comfort the afflicted, but it most surely afflicts the comfortable. It is as startling in its presentation of sin as it is surprising in its stubborn certainty of grace.”⁴

Minor prophets can have a major impact because we’re not used to hearing them.

It’s my prayer that we’ll hear God’s love in new and fresh ways – perhaps even for the first time – in the words of Hosea.

Hosea had an important message.

At the end of the day, though, God’s people as a whole didn’t listen to his message.

Let’s not make the same mistake.

Hosea finishes with these words:

Hosea 14:9 (NIV11) ⁹ Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

We’ve going to read some of Hosea together now, beginning with the first chapter.

Introduction

How do you go about telling someone that you love them?

It depends a bit on who it is and what your relationship with them is like.

If you’re married or engaged, then it’s probably not all that hard.

However, telling someone for the first time that you love them – even when you’re dating – can be downright awkward.

So, how do you do it?

You could be a bit discrete and pass them a note in class.

Perhaps you might con a friend to go in and negotiate on your behalf.

You could write a long speech on you PDA, sit them down and read it to them.

You might decide to go a little bit more public.

Write love poem and perform it.

Take out a ad on a billboard that they drive past on their way to work.

Or dream big and have the words “I love you” written in the sky.

When God wanted to speak to his people and remind them of his faithful love, he decided to go with something public and spectacular.

He held a performance by getting Hosea to live out his message.

Hosea’s family served as a model for the people of Israel.

Outline

It’s not easy to explain exactly how Hosea fits together as a book, but it’s quite clear that there are two main parts it.

Chapters 1-3 describe Hosea’s family situation.

He’s got an unusual choice of wife matched by equally surprising kids’ names.

Their family situation lays the foundation for what he then says in chapters 4-14.

In those chapters, he speaks about where Israel are at.

Hosea’s family are the model family.

I don’t mean they’re perfect. Quite the opposite.

They’re a model for God’s people precisely because they’re not at all a model family.

That’s exactly why God uses them to show what all of Israel is like.

We’re going to see that **unfaithful people don’t deserve God’s love.**

- An Unfaithful Wife (1:2-3a)
- The Fruit of Unfaithfulness (1:3b-1:9)
- Hope for the Unfaithful (1:10-2:1)

An Unfaithful Wife (1:2-3a)

Firstly, God tells Hosea that he needs to get hitched.

But he's not meant to look for just any bride, God's got a particular kind of woman in mind.

Have a look with me at verse two:

Hosea 1:2 (NIV11) ² When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her,

If you've never read this before, you might be a bit surprised.

Could that possibly be right?

And yet that's exactly what God had in mind.

This was God's plan, not Hosea's.

Prophets were often called to demonstrate their message in unusual ways.

Isaiah was naked and barefoot for a few years.⁵

Ezekiel lay on his side.⁶

Hosea married a promiscuous woman.

We see the reason why in the second half of verse two.

God's people, the people of Israel have been committing Spiritual adultery.

They hadn't been faithful to Yahweh their God.

Hosea's life is going to match the nation's life – a faithful husband married to an unfaithful wife.

You and I can feel kind of distanced from the situation until we put ourselves in his shoes.

Can you imagine what that would've been like for Hosea?

He was being asked to commit himself to a wife that he fully expected to be unfaithful.

On their wedding day, when he said, "I do", he knew that her promises to him were empty.

It'd kind of put a dampener on your wedding day, don't you think?

The pain that he must've known he was going to put himself through would've been immense.

That's exactly what it was like for God.

When he gave the Israelites a land and a king to rule over them, he knew they'd be unfaithful.

When he rescued them out of slavery in Egypt and gave them his law to live by, he knew they'd be unfaithful.

When God chose Abram and made promises to him, he knew they'd be unfaithful.

When he made Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden, he knew they'd be unfaithful.

Even before the beginning of time, God knew the people he'd make would be unfaithful to him.

We don't know much about Gomer – only her name, her father's name and that she was unfaithful.

Just because a name's in the Bible, it doesn't mean that's a name you want to give your daughter.

That's really not what you want to be remembered for.

Hosea goes and marries Gomer, knowing exactly what he was getting himself in for.

A sinner is someone who rebels against God.

Sinners reject God's good leadership and instead try to rule themselves and others.

The Bible says that every man, woman and child is a sinner.

Romans 3:23 (NIV11) ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

When people first saw Hosea's family and the message God had given them, they weren't meant to think of themselves as being Hosea.

We're not meant to do that either.

We aren't the faithful husband.

The hero of this story is Hosea and he's a God-figure here.

You and I? We're not Hosea.

We're Gomer.

Hosea's message is a message for people like us, because we're all unfaithful too.

The Fruit of Unfaithfulness (1:3b-2:1)

If you know anything about Hosea, it's probably about Gomer and her unfaithfulness.

But wait, there's more to the story.

In fact, that's not even really the focus in this first chapter.

There's really only one verse about Gomer in the first chapter, the rest is about their kids.

Hosea and Gomer get married and not surprisingly, they start to have kids.

It seems natural to wonder what the fruit of this union is going to be like.

Faithful prophet and unfaithful wife results in some kids with really strange names.

The names are so strange that they can't be a coincidence.

God used Hosea's whole family to speak to his people.

Even his poor kids, who seem to have got the rough end of the pineapple.

A Son named 'Bloodshed'

Gomer falls pregnant and she gives birth nine months later.

The delighted father gets presented with a son, verse three.

Hosea probably followed the usual tradition and on the eighth day, he named him Jezreel.

Jez sounds like quite a normal kind of name.

But just hold off going and adding it to the list of possibilities for your next boy.

I'm going to give you a little bit of history, but please don't get bogged down in the details.

One of the reasons is that I just want you to get your bearings on where Hosea fits into the whole sweep of history.

Hosea was around ministering a long time ago – between 700 and 800 years before the time of Jesus.

We can date it fairly accurately because of the names of the kings we're given in verse one.

The really high point of Israel's history was when the people of Israel were living in the land that God had given them with King David on the throne.

The same David who's famous for slaying the giant Goliath and writing a whole bunch of neat songs we call the Psalms.

David's son Solomon is famous for his wisdom, wealth, wine and women.

His wives turned his heart away from God and it was all downhill from there.

Solomon's son Rehoboam wasn't a great guy.

He made a lot of people very unhappy and so there was a coup and Israel was divided in two separate countries.

The northern kingdom was made of ten tribes and is sometimes known by the name of the biggest one, Ephraim.

Just to be REALLY confusing, other times it's just called Israel.

The south was made up of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and is often just called 'Judah'.

Hosea mostly spoke to the people of the northern kingdom.

This was during the period just before they were invaded by the Assyrians in 722BC.

After that time, Israel didn't exist for the next couple of centuries.

The first king of Israel – the northern kingdom – was Jeroboam I.

If you've read much of the Old Testament, you've probably heard him called Jeroboam son of Nebat.

He wasn't a good man. He was evil.

And all the kings of Israel that followed after him got the thumbs down too.

It's not all that pleasant to read the history of these kings and it wouldn't have been fun to live through their reigns.

The first five kings of the northern kingdom lost the throne through bloodshed.

Life was very unstable, with the kings turning over so regularly no one knew quite where they stood.

Ahab is significant amongst the kings of Israel because along with his wife Jezebel, they introduced Baal worship.

His family carried on this blatant rebellion against the Lord.

God used another bloke named Jehu to bring an end to the House of Ahab.⁷

Jehu assassinated Ahab's descendent, King Joram, at Jezreel.

From the same place, he gave the order for all of Ahab's remaining descendants to be wiped out, seventy princes.

At first the new king, Jehu, removed most of the Baal worship, but it wasn't long until he led the people back to worship Baal again.

He didn't learn his lesson from Ahab's mistakes.

Just because God used Jehu, it didn't mean that he could do whatever he wanted.

God was angry at this rebellion and so his promise was that Jehu would be punished too.

That's just one example of something that happened at the Valley of Jezreel.

There were also a number other incidents that ended in bloodshed there.

So, the place became associated with bloodshed.

Naming your child Jezreel was like calling a kid Port Arthur or Tiananmen Square or Chernobyl.

This is a warning to the whole northern kingdom that God will break their “bow of protection” if they continue in their unfaithfulness.

If they haven’t learned their lesson, there’s going to be another bloody coup.

But this time God’s going to use a foreign army and the whole nation will be carried off into exile.

That’s what he says in verse 5:

Hosea 1:5 (NIV11) ⁵ In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.

The fruit of the union between the faithful Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer was Jezreel.

This first son is a warning that God’s judgment is coming on unfaithful people.

A Daughter Named ‘I won’t have Compassion’

Gomer has a second child, this time a girl.

Mum was probably glad because now they had a child of each gender.

It doesn’t seem like Dad was so sure about this child – well, their naming choices certainly didn’t get any better.

Sometimes, you wonder whether some people should be allowed to name their kids, but again this’s a symbolic name, packed with meaning.

The little girl gets called, “*Lo-Ruhāmāh*” or as the NIV translates it for us in verse six, ‘Not loved’.

You see the way some parents spell their kids’ names and you wonder whether they really do love their kid because you know that the poor child’s going to spend the rest of their life having to correct their name – “No, it’s ‘Clint’ with a ‘K’ and four ‘n’s and a silent ‘g’ at the end.”

But this really takes the cake, doesn’t it?

How would you like to grow up with the name “you’re not loved?”

As a child, I remember telling my parents that they didn’t love me when things didn’t go my own way.

That’s probably a common experience for most kids.

But can you imagine your name being “I don’t love you?”

I'd hate to see the psychology bill if she was born today.

A better translation than 'I will have no love' though, is 'I will have no compassion' or 'I will have no mercy.'

Their daughter is a warning that God's not going to have compassion on them anymore.

The people of Israel aren't going to feel God's love.

They keep spurning his forgiveness and so he's not going to do it anymore.

The people of the northern kingdom of Israel – Ephraim – are going to be carried off into exile.

But not the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, verse 7.

They're in a completely different boat at this point.

They haven't been nearly as unfaithful as the people of Israel.

So, they're going to be spared.

They're not going to be saved by their strength and might though.

The people of Judah won't be saved because of their archers or their swordsmen or their cavalry.

God's going to be their bow – to use the language of verse five – but not by using a bow.

They're going to be saved by God himself.

And that's exactly what happened.

You can read about it in 2 Kings 19.

The Assyrian army came through and wiped out all of the northern kingdom before laying siege to Jerusalem.

But then God saved them.

Yahweh, showed them compassion by fighting for them.

God's people don't deserve his compassion when they rebel against him.

According to the Census, more and more people are saying that they have "no religion".

What does that mean?

For many of them, no doubt, it does mean that they're atheists.

I suspect for many though, it means that they don't belong to a specific church or organised religion.

I wouldn't be surprised, however, if many of them believe in God.

Lots of Australians think that there is some kind of supernatural force out there – a god – but they just don't know which one.

What they are sure of, though, is that God's job is to love people.

Regardless of what we do, God's job is to love people.

Where do they get that from – the God of the Bible, sort of.

They want all the benefits of Yahweh, but what they really want is a god of their own making.

A god who loves them even when they're unfaithful.

But that's not the God we meet in the Bible.

Rebelling against God has consequences.

The fruit of their unfaithfulness and rejection of God is that he won't have compassion on them.

A Son Named 'Not My People'

Not long after, Gomer has another bun in the oven.

This third little tacker is a boy.

Hopefully you're seeing a pattern here because he's given another strange, but meaningful name.

He's called *Lo-Ammi*.

We were told that Hosea was the father of Gomer's first son.

When it comes to Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi though, it's not so clear that he was definitely the father.

Given that Gomer was unfaithful, it's at least possible – maybe even probable – that Lo-Ammi isn't his son

That seems to be what's indicated by what God says in 2:4:

Hosea 2:4 (NIV11) ⁴ I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery.

We're not told many of the details, but if that's true, I'm imagining what it would've been like when Hosea was shown his son.

If Hosea had brown eyes, dark skin and straight brown hair, can you imagine him looking at his son and seeing a pale baby with blue eyes and locks of red curly hair?

It'd have to give him pause to wonder if that was really his son.

If it was a situation like that, perhaps he'd say, "That's not my son."

God was in the business of making a people for himself.

A people that he could bless and bless the whole world through.

He called Abram and promised him that he'd make him a great nation.

Then, when God called the Israelites out of Egypt, he told them:

Exodus 6:7 (NIV11) ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

Yet now God's saying the very opposite.

Because of their unfaithfulness, the people of Israel won't be his people anymore.

Lo-Ammi means "you're not my people".

Have another look at verse nine:

Hosea 1:9 (NIV11) ⁹ Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

People who were God's people won't be called his people anymore because of their unfaithfulness.

That would've been shocking, confronting.

After all, that was their birthright!

Didn't they have the right to be God's people?

Isn't God being unfair?!

God isn't the one who initiated this.

It was Israel's unfaithfulness that caused this.

They're not his people because Yahweh isn't their God.

It was their rejection of him is what caused his rejection of him.

And it tallies with exactly what God promised in Deuteronomy.

If God's people followed the terms of his covenant, there would be blessing, but if they rebelled, there would be curses.

These children were a clear reminder of the consequences of being unfaithful to God.

I bet it wasn't fun to be one of Hosea's kids.

But his kids tell us something about the children of unfaithfulness.

They show us what Israel was like and where they were headed.

Hope for the Unfaithful

You might be wondering if this makes God unfaithful?

What about his promises?

Well, no, he's not unfaithful.

This isn't the end of the line because this chapter ends with hope.

He starts to look ahead with much more optimism, starting from verse ten.

Even though everything he's said up to this point true, he looks forward to the time when the Israelites will be like sand on the seashore.

No one in their right mind would even try to count the number of grains of sand on the beach.

There are just too many.

We've just been on a beach holiday and so I'm reminded that sand is like glitter – it gets everywhere.

You're not going to be able to even find them all, let alone count them!

You can't help but think of the promises to Abram that his decedents will be as many as the stars in the sky.

Different metaphor, but same meaning.

We saw how the kingdoms were divided, but the Israelites will be united again into one nation.

Uniting two countries isn't easy.

When the Berlin wall came down in 1989, they tried joining together two very different countries who'd been separated for just 30 years.

In that short time, they'd grown apart.

You'd think the East Germans would be glad for the freedom they got – and they were.

But there were downsides too. The crime rate went through the roof.

You don't get much crime when everyone's spying on everyone else.

God will restore the nation under one king.
The two kingdoms of Israel will be united under him.
The divided country will be united once again.
And they'll return to the land

He describes this as the day of Jezreel.
But hang on a second! Didn't we say that meant bloodshed?
It came to be associated with that, but it actually means 'God plants'.
There's a play on words here.
God will plant his nation.

The king who'll unite God's people will do it through bloodshed.
So, there's another play on words here too because this's also talking about the cross.
On the cross, Jesus' blood was shed for unfaithful people.
God died so that our sin can be forgiven and unfaithful people can come home.

He's the king that will unite God's people together.
They won't be called "not my people" or "unloved" anymore.
Instead they'll be named:

Hosea 2:1 (NIV11) ¹ "Say of your brothers, 'My people,' and of your sisters, 'My loved one.'

It's not just the people of Israel who are unfaithful, it's all of us.
Jesus offers to heal us and fix our brokenness too.
This doesn't just apply to Jewish people.
It applies to all people.
In Romans chapter nine, the apostle Paul quotes from these verses and applies them to gentiles as well.
People who once weren't his people will become his people.
That's what this points forward to.

Conclusion

What does all this tell us?

This is a picture of the people of Israel.

Why this choice of a wife?

Why scar these kids with these names?

It was to demonstrate to Israel what they were like.

More than that, this is a call to return to God before it's too late.

For Israel to stop being unfaithful.

Hosea is a God-like character.

And his wife and children are a picture of what Israel is like.

And yet these are the people that God is going to love and deal with.

Unfaithful people don't deserve God's love.

That's the foundation that's been laid for us in chapter one.

But God doesn't just love those who deserve his love.

He loves those who are completely undeserving of it.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that even though we were lost from the beginning, you were pleased to extend us your hand, and to restore us to salvation for the sake of your Son; and that as we continue each day to run headlong to our own ruin, — grant that we may not, by sinning so often, provoke at length your displeasure so to cause you to take away the mercy which have shown us up until now, and through which you have adopted us. By your Spirit destroy the wickedness of our heart, and restore us to a sound mind, that we might cling to you with a true and sincere heart, so that strengthened by your defence, we may continue safely through all kinds of danger, until at length you bring us into that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.⁸

¹ <https://visualunit.me/2015/06/02/periodic-table-of-the-bible-tiled/>

² 2 Kings 14:23-29

³ Shayanne Gal & Hilary Brueck, 'The Wealthy Country: Australians Are the Richest People in the World', The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/the-wealthy-country-australians-are-the-richest-people-in-the-world-20181109-p50eyc.html>.

⁴ Duane A Garrett, *Hosea, Joel* (Nashville Ten.: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 22.

⁵ Isaiah 20:1-4

⁶ Ezekiel 4-5

⁷ 2 Kings 9-10

⁸ Adapted from the Prayer for the Second Lecture of John Calvin's *Commentary on Hosea*.

A Model Family?

Hosea 1:1-2:1

20 October 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

Big Question: What does God's prophet have such an unusual home life?

Big Idea: Unfaithful people don't deserve God's love.

Discussion Questions

1. Where does Hosea fit into the story of the Bible?
2. What does the last verse of the book (14:9) tell us about its message?
3. Which character are we meant to identify with in Hosea? What does this tell us about ourselves?
4. How do you think Hosea would've felt when he was given his mission by God? What does this tell us about God?
5. How did the kings of Israel differ from the kings of Judah? Why does this matter?
6. What is the significance of Jezreel in this chapter?
7. Is God obliged to love people?
8. Why is the name of Gomer's second son so significant?
9. Some people have called 1:10-2:1 a "reversal". Why would it be called that? What difference do these verses make to the way we read this chapter?

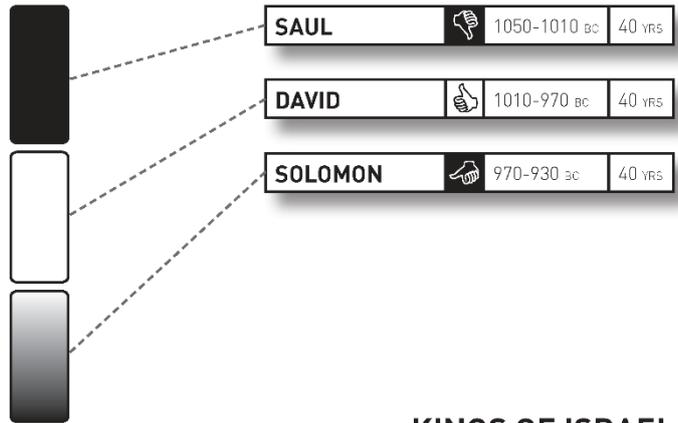
JEZREEL. (Heb. Yizra'el, 'God sows'). 1. The town in Judah (Jos. 15:56), home of Ahinoam, one of David's wives (1 Sa. 25:43). 2. A city of Issachar in the Jezreel plain (*ESDRAELON), about 90 km N of Jerusalem, identified with Zer'in (Jos. 19:18). The city and surroundings are associated with several notable events. The Israelites assembled by its spring before engaging the Philistines at Gilboa (1 Sa. 29:1; 31). It was part of Ishbosheth's short-lived kingdom (2 Sa. 2:8ff.) and an administrative district of Solomon (1 Ki. 4:12). Recent excavations have revealed a fortified site from the time of Ahab, x m, with fortifications, including a moat, 36 m wide. It is thought to have been Ahab's chariot centre, and the scene of the tragedy of Naboth and his vineyard (1 Ki. 21). Here Joram was slain by Jehu, and his body significantly cast into the vineyard so appropriated by Ahab (2 Ki. 8:29; 9:14–29). At Jehu's instigation Jezebel (2 Ki. 9:30–37) and the remnant of Ahab's household (2 Ki. 10:1–11) were also slain. Parts of Israelite buildings have been found (Levant 26, 1994, pp. 1–50). 3. The name symbolically given to Hosea's eldest son (Ho. 1:4–5) and to Israel (Ho. 2:22). 4. A Judahite (I Ch. 4:3).⁹

⁹ J. Woodhead and J. D. Douglas, "Jezreel," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 587.

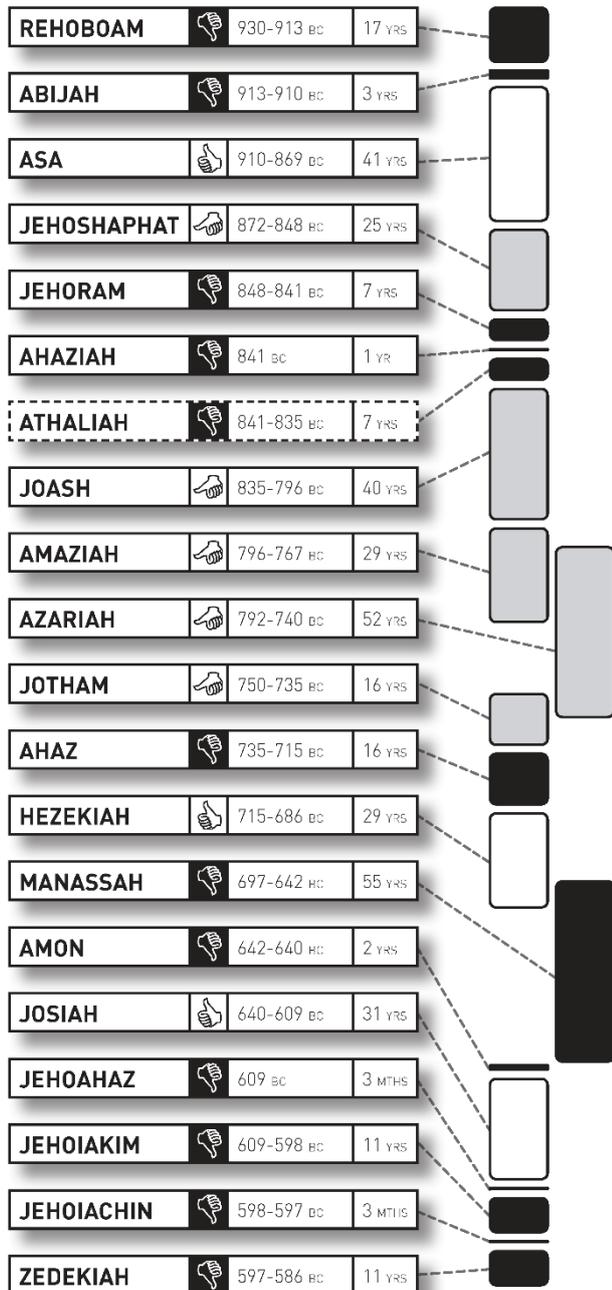
THE KINGS OF JUDAH & ISRAEL

FROM 1 & 2 KINGS

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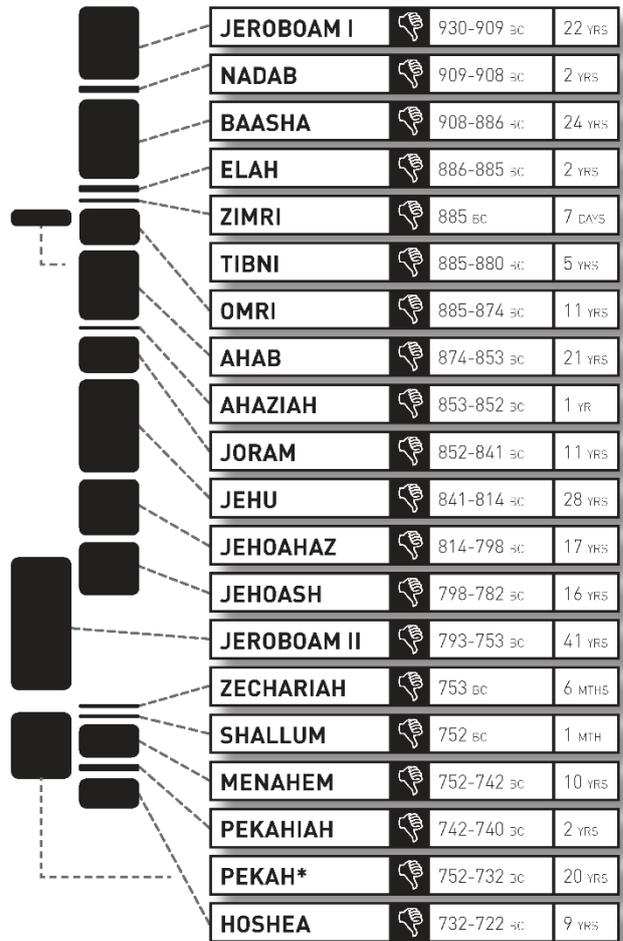
KINGS OF JUDAH



JUDAH EXILED BY BABYLON (586 BC)

KINGDOM DIVIDES (922 BC)

KINGS OF ISRAEL



ISRAEL ASSIMILATED BY ASSYRIA (722 BC)

KEY

- 👍 "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done."
- 👎 "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done." (i.e. completely rid the land of idolatry)
- 👎 "Did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD."

* Pekah's 20-year reign presumably includes a period of rule as rival to Menahem.