



## Lesson

# Bamidbar / "In the wilderness"

Numbers 1:1 – 4:20

Hosea 1:10 – 2:20; 1 Samuel 20:18-42

Luke 16:1 – 7:10

GRAFTED IN FELLOWSHIP

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All scripture references are New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise indicated.

In years when Shabbat Bamidbar coincides with Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan the regular haftarah portion is replaced with Machar Chodesh, 1 Samuel 20:18-42.

### My Notes:

### Your Notes:

#### Historical Context:

- Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel
- The Northern Kingdom (NK) was formed under King Jeroboam
- Jeroboam led the 10 tribes in a revolt against Rehoboam
- Jeroboam created high places at Dan and Bethel, complete with golden calves
- He changed the dates of the appointed times
- He installed a priesthood of his own choosing
- Almost 100 years later, King Ahab's Phoenician wife (Jezebel) introduced Baal worship to the NK
- She promoted Baal worship to an official state-sponsored religion
- At the same time, she tried to extinguish the worship of YHVH by silencing the prophets
- To punish the house of Ahab and remove their dynasty from the throne, Elisha anointed Jehu as the future king of Israel (NK)
- Jehu did not want to wait (like David did with Samuel)
- He immediately launched a bloody coup, slaughtering King Joram and his household as well as King Ahaziah of Judah
- Another 100 years later, Jehu's descendent Jeroboam II reigned over Israel
- Israel flourished and Jeroboam II expanded Israel's territorial holdings
- At the same time, King Uzziah of Judah also expanded his holdings
- Both expansions of territory had been unseen since the days of Solomon
- Israel took control of the trade routes and prosperity

followed

- Despite the optimistic climate of fortune, Israel had strayed from her covenant with YHVH
- Syncretism and idolatry remained the normative religion in Israel
- Jezebel's Phoenician Baal worship polluted the worship of YHVH
- Israel no longer clearly distinguished between YHVH and the Baals of the Canaanite pantheon
- The people forgot the stipulations of the original covenant with YHVH
- They forgot Torah

+Hosea 4:1, 6 – 1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

- In the context of this political disarray and religious apostasy, Hosea made his debut

+ Hosea 1:1 – The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

- Midrash: Rabbi Yochanan said, "Hosea was the first of four prophets who prophesied in that age: Hosea, Isaiah, Amos and Micah." (*b.Pesachim 87a*)

### Why this portion?

- What connects this section of Prophets to the Torah Portion Bamidbar?
- Two elements:
  - + Bamidbar tells the story of the census in the wilderness; Haftarah begins with the prediction that Israel will multiply until they are innumerable
  - + Bamidbar is the first reading of the Book of Bamidbar; Haftarah predicts that one day YHVH will lead Israel back into the wilderness to reclaim her fidelity

### In Depth:

#### As the Sand of the Sea

Hosea 1:10 – "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'

- YHVH's promises:
  - + Abraham

-- **Genesis 13:15** — for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.

-- **Genesis 15:5** — Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

#### + Jacob

-- **Genesis 32:12** — For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’ ”

- In the days of Hosea and Isaiah, the NK prospered and multiplied, but terrible doom hung over them

+ **Isaiah 10:22** — For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, A remnant of them will return; The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

- For centuries, the NK was like an adulterous wife, and strayed from the covenant with YHVH

- YHVH spoke to Hosea and told him to marry a harlot

+ **Hosea 1:2** — When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the LORD.”

- He married Gomer, a promiscuous and adulterous woman

- He had three children with Gomer

- He gave each child a prophetic name

+ **Jezreel**: not only an omen of remembering the slaughter by Jehu of Ahab at Jezreel, the name also ominously predicted a not-too-distant battle in which Israel would fall in the Valley of Jezreel

-- **Hosea 1:4-5** — Then the LORD said to him: “Call his name Jezreel, For in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

#### + Lo-ruhamah: means no compassion (לא רחמה)

-- **Hosea 1:6** — And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: “Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away.

#### + Lo-ammi: means not my people (לא עמי)

-- **Hosea 1:9** — Then God said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God.

- Hosea’s three children prophesied a coming time of punishment and judgment during which YHVH would thrust the people of Israel into hardship and exile

- The exile would only be temporary

- In the future YHVH will gather all His people (Judah and Israel)

- **Hosea 1:11** — Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel!

- The one leader will be the King Messiah (Targum Yonatan)
- Those who “go up from the land” refer to those who will rise from the ground at the time of the resurrection of the dead (16<sup>th</sup> century midrash)

### Hosea’s Change of Heart

- Talmudic story

### Once You Were Not a People

Hosea 1:10 – “Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’”

- This prophecy is referring to the people of the NK
  - The Messiah will gather his people back to their land at the time of His coming
  - Both Peter and Paul understood this prophecy as a veiled reference to the God-fearing Gentile believers
  - Through faith in Yeshua, these believers acquired status and citizenship within the eschatological Israel
  - Grafted in to the nation, they became “fellow heirs”
- + Ephesians 3:6 – that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,
- + Romans 8:15-16 – For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
- + 1 Peter 2:10 – who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.
- + Romans 9:24-26 – even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.” “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

### The Threat of Divorce

Hosea 2:2 – “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts;

- YHVH is the husband
  - The NK is the adulterous wife
  - The people of the kingdom are the woman’s children
  - Hosea 2:4 – “I will not have mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry.
  - In some ancient societies, the court stripped a woman convicted of adultery to shame her prior to execution
  - YHVH threatens to strip His adulterous wife and expose her
- + Ezekiel 16:37-38 – surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers

with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy.

- YHVH threatens to make a formal declaration of divorce: “She is not my wife, and I am not her husband”
- This is the opposite of the marriage declaration: “I am her husband, and she is my wife”
- YHVH used the same formula at Mt. Sinai (as well as throughout the Bible)
  - + Exodus 6:7 – I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
  - + Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:45; Deuteronomy 26:17-18; Jeremiah 7:23, 24:7, 31:33, 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:23, 37:27; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:3
- In the Messianic Era, YVHV will renew His marital relationship with Israel
  - + Jeremiah 31:33 – But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
  - + Ezekiel 34:24 – And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.
  - + Ezekiel 37:23 – They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.
- In the world to come, He will spiritually consummate the union in New Jerusalem
  - + Revelation 21:3 – And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

## **Divorce and Remarriage**

- Torah says a man cannot remarry his wife after she has married another man
- If a man divorces his wife, she marries another man who either dies or divorces her, the first husband cannot remarry her
  - + Deuteronomy 24:4 – then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.
- If she does not marry another man, then he may remarry her
- All this causes us to ask, “If YHVH divorced Israel, how

## can He take her back as His people?

+ **Jeremiah 3:1, 8** – 1 “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man’s, May he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the LORD. 8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

- One explanation is that Israel did not “marry” these other “lovers”—they just were having an affair with them
- In other words, they do not enter into covenant with them
- Therefore, YHVH tells Jeremiah to prophesy toward the north saying:

+ **Jeremiah 3:12** – Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: ‘Return, backsliding Israel,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not remain angry forever.’

- **Isaiah contests the idea that YHVH ever divorced His people at all—the exile was only punishment for their sins**

+ **Isaiah 50:1** – Thus says the LORD: “Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.”

## Israel’s Lovers

**Hosea 2:5** – For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.’

- The people of the NK no longer considered YHVH their sole provider
  - They worshipped the gods of foreign nations
  - YHVH metaphorically portrays the false gods as Israel’s lovers
  - Israel prayed to these false gods as the source of rain and agricultural success
  - **Hosea 2:12** – “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, Of which she has said, ‘These are my wages that my lovers have given me.’ So I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field shall eat them.”
- + The Hebrew word for “wage” is “etnah” (אתנה), and literally means a prostitutes wage
- YHVH causes distress, and Israel still pursues the foreign gods, but they find no relief
  - But in the face of agricultural ruin, Israel will return to YHVH

+ **Hosea 2:7** – She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, For then it was better for me than now.’

## Feasts, New Moons, Sabbaths, and Assemblies

Hosea 2:11 – I will also cause all her mirth to cease, Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths—All her appointed feasts.

- The NK still kept the festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths
- Although, Jeroboam moved Sukkot to the eighth month
- The prophet Amos scolded the NK for trying to hasten the end of the Sabbath day
  - + Amos 8:5 – Saying: “When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit,
- Amos warned them that one day YHVH would turn their festivals into days of mourning
  - + Amos 8:10 – I will turn your feasts into mourning, And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, And baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, And its end like a bitter day.
- In addition to the holy days of YHVH, the NK also kept the holy days set aside for the other gods
  - + Hosea 2:13 – I will punish her For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, And went after her lovers; But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.
- Even worse, due to syncretism, this allowed Israel to lose track of which deity was which
- Since YHVH was Israel’s husband (ba’al, בעל), Hosea’s generation merged the two deities into one
- Biblical Hebrew contains two words for husband: ba’al and ish (literally, man)
- Ish, when used in a construct state with a woman’s name or possessive pronoun, it has the same sense as “husband”
- The problem with ba’al is that it sounds like Baal, and since Israel had merged the worship of YHVH with the worship of Baal, it came to the point that Israel made no distinction between them
- YHVH tells His penitent wife that she is no longer to call Him “ba’ali” (בעלי – my master)
- Instead, she must now call Him “ishti” (אישי – my man)

### Return to Romance

Hosea 2:14 – “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her.

- YHVH will punish His promiscuous wife
- He will strip her of her agricultural success and break her relationship with idolatry

- He deprives her of material wealth to encourage her to repent and turn back to Him in fidelity
- When Israel does turn back, He will lead them to the wilderness and woo her with loving words
- The Hebrew literally translates, “I will speak to her heart”
- In the wilderness, YHVH will win her heart back and establish their relationship
- Hosea looks back to Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness as years of romance between newlyweds
- Israel followed YHVH and depended upon His provision
- Hosea says YHVH will bring his wayward wife back to the wilderness and rekindle their early affection
- The prophet Ezekiel foretells a similar return to the wilderness during the final redemption

+ Ezekiel 20:35-38 – And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord GOD. “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

- The wilderness will be a time of marriage renewal
- He will lead her across the Jordan and enter the land again
- They will first arrive in the Valley of the Curse (Achor) near Jericho
- They will rename the valley “Door of Hope” (Petach Tikvah), because it will be the door through which they enter the land

+ Hosea 2:15 – I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

### **The New Covenant**

Hosea 2:18 – In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely.

- Finally coming up from the exile and from the wilderness, the people of Israel will enter the Holy Land in the Messianic Age
- In that day, YHVH will initiate a new covenant with Israel and Judah

+ Jeremiah 31:31 – “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

- He will make a covenant of peace with them

+ Ezekiel 34:25, 27-28 – 25 “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 27 Then the trees of the field shall yield

their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid.

**+ Isaiah 11:6** – “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.

**+ Zechariah 9:10** – I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’

**+ Isaiah 2:4** – He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

- **This will fulfill the Torah:**

**+ Leviticus 26:6** – I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land.

Resources used:

[First Fruits of Zion, Torah Club Volume 3, Voice of the Prophets](#)