

The Book of the Twelve Hosea

Interpreting the Text:

1. What are your first impressions after reading through the Book of Hosea? How does the text make you feel? What questions does it leave you with?
2. Hosea is one of several places through the Hebrew Bible in which the text uses language and metaphors we find deeply hurtful or problematic. What is your experience in dealing with these kinds of books or passages? What is your responsibility, to your communities and to the text itself, as an interpreter?
3. How do we engage with ancient literature in a way that acknowledges how different the historical context is from our own, without excusing or condoning the behaviour and content it promotes?
4. It is easy to think of the stories in the Hebrew Bible as having always been connected – that from the Garden of Eden we move on to Abraham, from Abraham to Egypt, to the Exodus, and so on. What is your response to learning that many of these traditions were likely originally separate, and came together later? Why do you think the writers of the Hebrew Bible eventually wove these individual stories together into one unified history? How does this affect how we read books like Hosea?

Applying the Text:

1. Hosea is the kind of book that might warrant a “Content Warning” before reading. It can be challenging to approach in a faith community. Are you in, or have you ever been a part of, a community that has tackled this kind of text in a way you admired or found helpful? If not, what would you like that kind of community response to look like?
2. It is deeply disturbing to read Hosea and see God as an abuser. What is your reaction to this image? How does it make you feel?
3. Dr. Baden wrestles with the fact that this book is considered scripture, a sacred text teaching us something about God, and a “textbook” model for domestic abuse. How do you reconcile these two realities?