

Who was Lo-ruhamah in the Bible?

Lo-ruhamah was the name given to the daughter of the prophet Hosea. In Hebrew, Lo-ruhamah means “she has not received mercy” or “no pity.” The prophetic name was assigned by God to indicate that He had withdrawn His compassion and mercy from Israel because of His people’s great sins.

Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom during its final years of existence. God appointed Hosea to expose Israel’s widespread corruption and apostasy and call the Israelites to repent and return to God. In a unique form of symbolism, the Lord used Hosea’s family to illustrate the enduring covenant and redeeming love God has for the nation of Israel.

The prophets were often called to go above and beyond preaching. Hosea’s prophetic ministry launched when God gave him the puzzling assignment to find a wife among the unfaithful, immoral young women of Israel: “When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, ‘Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD’” (Hosea 1:2).

Hosea was a picture of the Lord, a loving husband. Hosea’s prostitute wife, Gomer, was a portrait of unfaithful Israel: “The LORD said to me [Hosea], ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes’” (Hosea 3:1).

Gomer gave birth to three children; their names were symbolic of God’s divine messages of judgment upon Israel. Hosea’s first child was Jezreel, a son, named after the Valley

of Jezreel, a beautiful area in Israel where many bloody battles were fought. The name was a reminder of Israel's bloodguilt as a nation. The beauty of the valley had been disfigured by violence and bloodshed.

Lo-ruhamah, the name of Hosea's second child, a daughter, has a lovely ring in Hebrew. The root of the word, Ruhamah, describes God's tender mercy and compassion. However, the negative prefix, Lo-, reverses the meaning and signals the withdrawal of God's love, mercy, and compassion from Israel.

Hosea's third child, another son, was called Lo-Ammi, which means "not my people." The devastating message of judgment in his name meant that Israel would no longer be the people of God.

Hosea, like the Lord, was heartbroken by his wife's unfaithfulness. More than anything, God longs for relationship with His people. Even when they have been grossly unfaithful, the Lord draws them back. Ultimately, God used the three names of Hosea's children to demonstrate the renewal of His covenant with the people of Israel (Hosea 1:10 - 2:1; 2:14 - 3:5).

Like no other prophet, Hosea's portrayal of Israel as a cheating wife reveals the heart of God—both broken and abounding in love—for His people.