

salem as the seat of the theocracy. Taking into account the testimony furnished by the monuments, the chronology of this period is not in all points clearly defined, some writers making the time of Hosea's prophecy extend over about forty years, others making it as much as sixty-five. Approximately, the period may be assigned to B. C. 790—730, coming down to a few years before the deportation of the ten tribes. Another matter has elicited diversity of opinion. The question has been asked, Did the prophet deliver these discourses as a whole, or are they only an outline of addresses given to the people from time to time over a period of half a century or more? The arguments for and against are discussed in treatises on Old Testament Introduction. The most natural view is that the book as we now have it contains only an outline of the prophet's addresses—an outline, however, drawn up by himself towards the close of his life.

. In the time of Hosea, the northern kingdom had fallen into a state of frightful apostasy. Notwithstanding the blow which Jehu had struck at Baal-worship, its effects were still widely felt. The nation was a nation of idolaters. The heart was set upon idols. Some of the people professed to worship Jehovah by images, but others were downright idolaters. Then, as a necessary result the morals of the land were sadly low. Error in doctrine as in every case induced error in practise. Oppression, dishonesty, lying, swearing, adultery and kindred sins, were unblushingly practised. The land was groaning beneath its load. True, here and there, as in the times of Elijah, God had his hidden ones. Throughout the land were those who had not bowed the knee to Baal, who regarded altars and asheras as an abomination, who had no sympathy with calf-worship, and who still had faith in the covenant relationship. But what were they among so many? All classes of the people seem to have been affected. King and noble and peasant, so called prophets and priests, appear to have been carried away by one great flood of wickedness. In the time of temporal prosperity, as during the reign of some of the dynasty of Jehu, in the time of Jeroboam II. himself for example, when the nation attained a high pre-eminence in this respect, the people sacrificed to their own net and burned incense to their own drag, not recognizing the fact