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HOSEA.

THE book of the prophet Hosea is placed at the head of the Minor Prophets, not because it is first in time but in importance. Little is known of the writer except what can be gathered from the book itself. The whole tenor of the composition shows that the prophet belonged to the northern kingdom. The addresses concern Israel, the style has an Aramaean coloring, the land is named as the prophet's land, and the King of Samaria the writer calls "our king."

The time when Hosea exercised the prophetic gift is stated in the opening of the prophecy. Jeroboam II. reigned in the kingdom of Israel, and Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings in Judah. It is noticeable, however, that Jeroboam's reign comes down only a part of the way covered by the time of Hosea's prophecy. This may have been that the period succeeding the fall of the dynasty of Jehu, not long after the death of Jeroboam II., was a time of anarchy in the northern kingdom, and the prophet may not have regarded it worth while mentioning kings who reigned only a year or two, or in some cases only a few months. Another explanation is that originally the prophecies may have been in two parts, and that as the matter contained in the first part, covered by the first three chapters, points to a time when the dynasty of Jehu still existed, it was fitting that the name of Jeroboam II. should be placed at its head. The question has been asked, Why did Hosea who belonged to the northern kingdom enumerate the kings of Judah? To this it may be replied that Hosea although living in Israel still regarded Jeru-