

Hosea 2:14-23

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-2/hosea-214-23/>

The LORD promises to restore Israel along with her fortunes. He will reverse all the curses that fall on her and sow her for Himself in the land.

God's indictment on Israel and prediction of exile and destitution (vv. 6-13) is followed by a beautiful section dealing with Israel's future restoration (vv. 14-23). In the first two verses, God promised to restore His love for Israel. The LORD began the section with the particle "therefore," which clearly refers back to the section about Israel's punishment by God (vv. 6-13). However, "therefore" does not continue the theme of judgment, as one might expect. Rather, it unexpectedly switches from Israel's judgment to her complete restoration by God. This indicates that God's purpose in punishing His wife Israel was His way of pruning her to ensure she was molded enough to repent and turn to Him. In other words, God had no intention of abandoning Israel. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). But because He is holy, God keeps the terms of the covenant, and deals with sin to restore His people to fellowship with Him.

God thus stated, *Behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly to her.* The particle "behold" is used to show the imminent nature of God's acts on Israel's behalf, and the pronoun "I" is emphatic in the Hebrew text, indicating that it is Yahweh, not Baal, who will restore Israel.

The verb "to allure" refers to a tender, even romantic speech (Judges 14:15). Such a romantic activity will be initiated by the Suzerain God of Israel, who promised to *bring Israel into the wilderness*, where she will be separated from Baal and her other lovers. Such a separation from Baal would cause Israel to focus her mind solely on the true and living God. This bringing into the *wilderness* likely refers to the coming exile of Israel by Assyria (2 Kings 17:6). Interestingly, Israel did not return to the land, as did Judah. Therefore this promise of blessing would likely apply to the children of Israel while being in the *wilderness* of being dispersed throughout the world.

Having brought Israel *into the wilderness* where she could listen attentively, the LORD would *speak kindly to her*; literally, He would speak to her heart. Earlier in this chapter, the term *wilderness* was symbolic of God's judgment on Israel (Hosea 2:3). Here, however, it is quite the opposite: the *wilderness* would be the place where God would speak romantically to Israel's heart. This would be like a honeymoon celebration.

During this glorious time, the *wilderness*—the dry and inhospitable land or the place of desolation—would be transformed into a fruitful and fertile land. There the LORD would *give Israel her vineyards and the valley of Achor*. The term *vineyards* here symbolize all Israel's agricultural products.

The term *Achor*, meaning "trouble," reminds the reader of the sin of Achan during the days of Joshua. The Bible tells us that Achan "took some of the things under the ban," causing the nation

Israel to fall under God's wrath and be defeated at Ai" (Joshua 7:1-5). After careful investigation, Joshua was able to find Achan's sin and have him stoned and burned with fire in the valley of Achor (Josh. 7:25). Because of Achan's sinful action, "the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor" (Joshua 7:16-26).

The text of Hosea tells us that when the LORD restores His relationship with Israel, *the valley of Achor* will no longer be a place of trouble or a place of God's judgment. Rather, it will be *a door of hope* because the nation Israel will respond positively to God's call and will be restored to her full vigor and strength. *She will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.* God's covenant intimacy with Israel will be restored.

Israel's experience in Egypt was painful, but the end results were joyful. When the LORD redeemed Israel from the land of Egypt, Moses and the Israelites sang a beautiful song to celebrate their victory over the Egyptians and to thank the LORD for His redemption (Exodus 15). In the future, Israel will again be restored and will sing as she did during and after her exodus from Egypt.

In vv. 16-20, the LORD described how He would restore His marriage covenant with Israel (vv. 16-20). Indeed, *in that day* of restoration and hope, the nation Israel will acknowledge the Suzerain God as the true and only God. *Israel will call Him Ishi and will no longer call Him Baali.*

The term *Ishi* means "my husband." The term *Baali* means "my master." Both terms were used interchangeably to refer to one's husband in ancient Israel, especially in the earlier days (2 Samuel 11:26). However, the term *Baali* had been later associated with *Baal*, the Canaanite fertility god. For this reason, the Suzerain God would no longer want to be called *Baali* by Israel, for such an appellation would bring back some of the distressing memories for both covenant partners.

More importantly, the exclusion of the title *Baali* in favor of *Ishi* is indicative of Israel's complete change of heart and restoration. Israel will cease to treat the LORD as a master and will begin to treat Him as a husband. Such a change will be done by the Suzerain God who will purify Israel, as He declared, *For I will remove the names of the Baals from Israel's mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more.* The LORD Himself would get rid of the *Baals* and any influence they may have had on Israel. The relationship will become one of great intimacy, as with husband and wife.

Not only will the Suzerain God protect Israel from Baal's influence, He will also restore her full security. He will make peace for Israel in both the animal realm and in the human realm. In the animal realm, *God will make a covenant for them in that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground.* That means God will protect and preserve Israel's field. Israel's vineyards and fig trees (or any agricultural products) will no longer be destroyed by the "beasts of the field" (2:12) or any other animals. God's judgment on Israel will be reversed. Israel's covenant with the animals will be one of peace. There will be harmony in God's creation, as it was in the garden of Eden before Adam's fall.

This would indicate that Israel's restoration will ultimately occur with their return to the land of Israel, and the restoration of the land. Ezekiel prophesies of the restoration of the land of Israel, even prophesying that the Dead Sea will become a body of fresh water (Ezekiel 47).

In the human realm, God *will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land*. The *bow* was a weapon used in war and in hunting (Genesis 27:3; Joshua 24:12). These military instruments would no longer be available because God would *abolish* them. As a result, the might of Israel's adversaries will be destroyed by God because He *will make Israel lie down in safety*. Israel will return to the land, the land will be fully restored, and the land will be at peace.

The LORD then spoke of His restored relationship with Israel as if He had no prior marital relationship with her. He declared, *I will betroth you to Me forever*. To *betroth* a girl is to enter into a formal engagement to marry her. In ancient Israel, once a girl was formally engaged or betrothed, she was regarded as though she was a married woman because a bride-price was paid to the girl's father by the groom to seal the agreement (Deuteronomy 22:23-27; 2 Samuel 3:14). Similarly, the Suzerain God will pay the bride-price to Israel, but His price will not come in the form of money or silver. Rather, the LORD *will betroth* Israel to Him *in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion*. This indicates that the breakage of God's covenant was a sort of divorce. But now God is remarrying Israel. It seems this renewed relationship with Israel will reach a new level of intimacy.

The terms *righteousness and justice* refer to God's gracious activity by which He delivers His covenant people and vindicates their cause. The term *lovingkindness* refers to God's steadfast or unending love which enables Him to continue to love His people despite their flaws. Finally, *compassion* describes God's tender feeling and expression of love motivating Him to act on behalf of His people to aid them. This language is similar to how Peter describes a restored earth that will take place at the end of the age, when this earth is destroyed:

“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”
(2 Peter 3:13)

However, since this promise refers to the land of Israel, it seems there will be a time of righteousness prior to this earth being destroyed. This promise could take place during the thousand-year reign of Christ, prior to the termination of this earth (Revelation 20:4-6).

The LORD further said to Israel, *I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness*. The term *faithfulness* implies firmness, dependability, and honesty. It describes someone whose words match his actions. God's quality of *faithfulness* received particular attention as He separated it from the other four. This quality is likely used to summarize the previous four. That is, God's faithfulness to His words would enable Him to manifest love, compassion, righteousness, and justice to Israel.

In exchange for His faithfulness and loyalty, the Suzerain God anticipated Israel's complete obedience and loyalty. As He said, *Then you will know the LORD*. That means, the Israelites will

acknowledge the LORD as their Suzerain (or covenantal partner) and live accordingly. They will respond to God in faithfulness and in loyalty.

In the final three verses, God described how He would restore Israel's blessings and *sow her* for Himself *in the land*. He did so by using wordplays on the names of Hosea's three children: *Jezreel* ("God sows"), *Lo-ruhamah* ("not compassion"), and *Lo-ammi* ("not my people"). He began with the formula "*it will come about in that day*" to tell His people that the restoration was still future.

God declared that He would *respond favorably in that day*. He *will respond to the heavens*, and the heavens in turn *will respond to the earth* by sending rain to it. Then, *the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil*, meaning that the earth will allow the crops to grow. And *the grain, the new wine and the oil* will in turn *respond to Jezreel* to meet her needs.

The term *Jezreel* means "God sows" and was used in the previous chapter to refer to disasters that God was about to sow, with the harvest of judgement on the house of Jehu and to the land of Israel (1:4–5). Here however, *Jezreel* is used to imply abundance and prosperity in the land of Israel. This verse tells us that the Suzerain God will answer the prayers of His covenant people. In that day, when the people of Israel cry out for help, God will command *the heavens* to send rain to *the earth*, and *the earth* in turn will cause the crops to grow to meet the needs of the starving people living in the land. God will sow seeds of prosperity.

Playing on the name *Jezreel*, "God sows," the LORD stated that He would *sow* or plant Israel for Himself *in the land*. The Hebrew word translated *sow* can indicate pregnancy. The land of Israel will thus produce a crop of children. As a result of the LORD's reconciliation with His wife Israel, all the curses that fell on her will be reversed. Israel will enjoy peace, prosperity, and fellowship with the Suzerain God. The land will be full of people.

This truth is evidenced in the next statement, where the LORD declared, *I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion*. This sentence can literally be rendered as "I will have compassion on Lo-ruhamah."

The name Lo-ruhamah, meaning "not compassion," was the name of Hosea's wayward wife Gomer's daughter. Hosea's unfaithful wife pictured Israel's unfaithfulness to the LORD. The LORD asked Hosea to name the child "Lo-ruhamah" to symbolize that God would no longer have compassion on the Israelites (1:6). However, when God restores Israel, He will accept the Israelites again and will have *compassion* on them. Therefore, "Lo-ruhamah" ("not-compassion") would become "Ruhamah" (*compassion*).

In a similar vein, the LORD declared, *I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!'* This sentence can literally be rendered as "I will say to Lo-ammi, 'you are ammi.'" Again, the name "Lo-ammi" means *not My people*, and it was the name that God gave to Gomer's third child (1:9). There in Hosea 1:9 the name "Lo-ammi" signified that the Suzerain God no longer considered the nation Israel to be His people. However, here the LORD announced that those who were "Lo-ammi" (*not My people*) will no longer be estranged. God will have compassion on them and will call them "ammi," meaning *My people, and they will say*,

‘You are my God!’” On that day, the Israelites will acknowledge the LORD as their only Suzerain God. They will confess that God alone, not Baal, is their husband and savior.

Biblical Text

¹⁴ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Bring her into the wilderness

And speak kindly to her.

¹⁵ “Then I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.

And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ “It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord,
“That you will call Me Ishi
And will no longer call Me Baali.

¹⁷ “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,
So that they will be mentioned by their names no more.

¹⁸ “In that day I will also make a covenant for them
With the beasts of the field,

The birds of the sky

And the creeping things of the ground.

And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,
And will make them lie down in safety.

¹⁹ “I will betroth you to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
In lovingkindness and in compassion,

²⁰ And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.
Then you will know the Lord.

²¹ “It will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the Lord.
“I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,

²² And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,
And they will respond to Jezreel.

²³ “I will sow her for Myself in the land.

I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,

And I will say to those who were not My people,

‘You are My people!’

And they will say, *‘You are my God!’*