

Hosea 2:2-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-2/hosea-22-5/>

The LORD urges His children to denounce their mother for her shameful behavior, lest they follow her and fall under the same judgment that awaits her.

This section uses the analogy of Hosea's marriage and family to describe God's relationship with His covenant people, Israel. The nation has cheated on the Suzerain God just as Gomer has cheated on Hosea. This section exposes Israel's idolatry, which further explains why the LORD asked Hosea to marry an unfaithful wife in the first place, as an illustration to Israel of how they have treated their Husband, God.

Whereas in the preceding verse the children were urged to speak with their brothers and sisters (2:1), here they are to speak with their *mother*. The LORD asked the children, saying, *contend with your mother, contend*. The verb translated "contend" is used twice here for emphasis.

The term "mother" stands for the nation Israel, the soil from which these future children will come forth. The *mother* is also God's wife because the nation Israel was God's covenant partner, having entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai, which was the marriage of Israel to their God (Exodus 19:8).

In this passage, Hosea called upon his *children* to chastise their *mother* for her unfaithfulness. Following this analogy, the LORD is calling upon individual Israelites (His children) to repudiate their *mother* (the nation Israel) for her shameful behavior. The children were to denounce their mother's attitude and actions and separate themselves from her, lest they suffered the same punishment that awaited her.

The LORD then provided the reason why His children were to denounce their *mother*: *For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband*. On the surface, this statement appears to be a formal declaration of divorce. However, the context suggests that it is more like a time of separation prior to a divorce, and this was an appeal to repentance and restoration.

The Suzerain (Ruler) and Husband God, maker of the covenant, called on His wife Israel to repent from her shameful and adulterous actions so that His relationship with her might be restored. He still desired oneness with Israel, and that is why He commanded His children to *contend* with their *mother*. Repentance was needed so that healing and reconciliation might take place.

God continued to say, *Let her put away her harlotry from her face and her adultery from between her breasts*. The word *face* is used to display the intent and character of the adulterous wife. By turning *away* her *face* from adultery and *harlotry*, she would make a choice to follow a righteousness path, a path of chastity to her Husband, who is God. This means she is making a choice to focus upon and follow God rather than the lovers with whom she is committing adultery.

The word *breasts* represents her body. In addition to turning her attention, focus, and devotion away from *harlotry* and adultery, God desired that she restore intimacy with Him. When a husband and wife enjoy sexual oneness, it also creates spiritual oneness (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). God commanded Israel to turn away from the pagan gods and to cling to Him because He alone was her covenant marriage partner. As such, He required the exclusive loyalty necessary for a healthy marriage. God desired oneness and fidelity; He is still willing to extend mercy and forgive her. But the offer of repentance is not indefinite.

The LORD then spelled out several calamities that would fall upon the nation Israel if she refused to repent. First, He said He would *strip her naked*. To *strip* means to remove something; in this case, it has to do with removing the woman's clothes so that she might remain *naked*. God would *strip* His wife *naked and expose her as on the day when she was born*. Such an act would make her an object of humiliation and embarrassment. The penalty would be appropriate for Israel's sexual crime because she had exposed herself through her *harlotry* and *adultery*. Israel would experience shame and humiliation for violating God's covenantal laws.

Second, God said He would *make* His wife *like a wilderness*, an uncultivated and inhospitable place. He would remove her fertility to *make her like desert land*, a place deprived of water. Just as plants need water to grow, human beings need water and other substances to survive. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, the LORD threatened to *make her like a desert land and slay her with thirst*. In addition to being spiritual, this could be literal, saying that God would plague Israel with drought, a prolonged shortage in the water supply. This would be disastrous.

Last but not least, God said He would *have no compassion on His wife's children because they are children of harlotry*. Individual Israelites were called *children of harlotry* because they were born to an unfaithful or immoral *mother*, the land of Israel. As God pointed out, *their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully*. Thus, the children bore the shame and guilt of their mother's attitude and conduct.

Therefore, God announced that His wife's *children* would not receive His *compassion* or His love. The reason for this was because His wife misunderstood His provisions for her. Her own declaration explained her intentions and actions: *For she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water. My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink*.

The terms "bread" and "water" stand for physical nourishment. The term *wool* refers to the textile fiber that can be obtained from the hair of sheep. It is used to make warm clothes (Proverbs 31:13). The term for *flax* pertains to a grass-like plant which gives soft fibers for making cooler clothes (Proverbs 31:13). Thus, *wool and flax* stand for protection of the body. Finally, *oil and drink* stand for pleasure and entertainment.

The items above formed the basis of the ancient Near Eastern economy and were the symbols of fertility granted to Israel by the LORD, her covenant partner (Jeremiah 31:12). But Israel thought she received these items from Baal, the Canaanite god. Israel thought she could manipulate the power of this false god in order to meet her needs. For this reason, God declared that His wife *acted shamefully*.

Through the husband-wife metaphor, the LORD made clear that Israel committed spiritual adultery by going after other gods with whom she had no covenant relationship. Israel thought that Baal^{3/4}the so-called fertility god^{3/4}provided for her, but it was always the LORD, Israel's covenant partner, who met all her needs. For this reason, the LORD was about to confront her. God would punish the nation because she had transgressed His covenantal precepts, as contained in the covenant law they had entered into with God (Exodus 19:8).

God's judgment on Israel was an indication of God's gracious love to her. Under the covenant God had entered, "For whom the LORD loves He reproves" (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6). God chose Israel as His covenant partner and wanted to make sure she obeyed the terms of the covenant, for her own good. That is why He called individual Israelites to rebuke the nation, to invite them to play a part in bringing the nation to repentance.

Biblical Text

²“**Contend with your mother, contend,
For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband;
And let her put away her harlotry from her face
And her adultery from between her breasts,
³Or I will strip her naked
And expose her as on the day when she was born.
I will also make her like a wilderness,
Make her like desert land
And slay her with thirst.
⁴“Also, I will have no compassion on her children,
Because they are children of harlotry.
⁵“For their mother has played the harlot;
She who conceived them has acted shamefully.
For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
Who give *me* my bread and my water,
My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’**