

Hosea 2:6-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-2/hosea-26-13/>

The LORD describes His judgment on Israel because she goes after other gods. Since Israel credits the fertility gods such as Baal for providing for her needs, the Suzerain God declares that He will prevent her from all means of access to cause her to return to Him.

This section is built upon the previous one, in which the Suzerain God described Israel's unfaithfulness as she went after pagan gods and worshiped them, instead of worshiping the true God, Yahweh (vv. 2-5). Here the nation Israel is accused of ingratitude and idolatry and is sentenced accordingly.

The LORD began this section with the particle *behold* to announce the imminent judgment on His wife and said, *Therefore, I will hedge up her way with thorns and I will build a wall against her.* To *hedge up* the way is to bar it or to fence it. God would obstruct Israel's way so that she could *not find her paths*. God would rightly oppose her in her pursuit of pagan gods and idols. As a result, *she would pursue her lovers, but she would not overtake them.*

Israel would pursue other gods, but she would not succeed. She would *seek them but would not find them*. This meant that all her efforts would be futile. Her search would yield no fruit. It would produce nothing but frustration.

Frustrated in all her undertakings, Israel would say, *I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.* Her own words would demonstrate the inferiority of her false gods as well as the superiority of the true God, whom she had rejected. She would now seek to return to the LORD who was her first *husband*, the one who redeemed her from slavery in Egypt and accompanied her throughout her difficult and perilous wilderness journey (Deuteronomy 5:6; 8:15).

Indeed, Israel failed to understand God's gracious love toward her. She could not realize that it was the LORD, her Husband and covenant partner, who had been providing for her. As the LORD stated, *She does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil.* The *grain, the new wine and the oil* were the three essential agricultural products in ancient times (Deuteronomy 14:23). The LORD provided Israel with all these agricultural products to make sure all her basic needs were met.

But besides providing Israel with these necessities, the LORD provided luxuries as well, and *lavished on her silver and gold*, symbolizing riches and wealth. That means the Suzerain God gave Israel abundance. Although Israel lived an abundant life, she failed to give thanks to the LORD. Instead, she *used her silver and gold* to make or fabricate *Baal* idols. The worship of *Baal* involved sexual immorality, providing a moral rationale to pursue lusts. All idolatry included a promise of manipulation, that the idol could be manipulated so its followers could gain their desires. Instead of gratitude for God's provision, and seeking to obey Him, they sought after their own lusts by following *Baal*.

For this reason, the Suzerain God declared that He would *take back His grain at harvest time and His new wine in its season*. Israel would be deprived of her agricultural products. The harvest seasons would yield no *grain*, and there would be no grapes to produce *wine*. This curse recalls one of the curses in Deuteronomy 28: “Cursed *shall be* the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock” (Deuteronomy 28:18). God’s covenant relationship with Israel was dependent upon Israel’s behavior. Blessings were promised for obedience to the covenantal laws, and curses, for disobedience. God set up the cause effect relationship, it was up to Israel to choose its path, and the resulting consequences.

In picturing Israel as a woman, the LORD said He would take away His *wool and His flax given to cover her nakedness*. She would then have no clothes to cover herself or to protect her body. Through this destitution, the LORD would *uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers*. Israel would experience shame and would be exposed to the grand public. Her lovers would not be able to help because the LORD stated, *no one will rescue her out of My hand*. God’s judgment on Israel would be severe and would demonstrate that God—not Baal—is the possessor and giver of all gifts.

Moreover, God would *put an end to all Israel’s gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her festal assemblies*. The term *feast* is used to refer to the three annual festivals celebrated in Israel: the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:1-17). These *feasts* and *festal assemblies* included sacrifices and worship, but were intended to provide enjoyment, *gaiety*.

The *New Moon* (also called “the Feast of Trumpets”) refers to a religious festival that was celebrated on the first day of the lunar month, Tishri (September/October), as mandated by Moses in Leviticus 23:23-24. This celebration corresponds to our New Year’s Day.

Like the *new moon*, the *sabbath* was a day of rest and feasting. It was celebrated on the seventh day of the week to commemorate both creation (Exodus 20:8–11) and Israel’s redemption from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12–15). The prescribed sacrifice for the *sabbath* day consisted of “two male lambs one year old without defect, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering” (Numbers 28:9).

Religious *feasts* and activities that were normally regarded as joyful occasions (Isaiah 30:29) would come to an end. This likely means Israel will be exiled from the land, and the tabernacle representing God’s presence will be destroyed. All these things had been corrupted by idol worship. The LORD would cancel all the *festal assemblies*. He would also *destroy* Israel’s *vines and fig trees of which she said, These are my wages which my lovers have given me*.

The term for *wage* here is “*etnā*,” which refers to a gift to a harlot in return for her service. Israel would lose her vineyards and fruit trees, which were actually God’s blessing, but were instead regarded by Israel as gifts from false gods to whom they had played the harlot. God would *make them a forest and the beasts of the field would devour them*, indicating that the land would become uninhabited. All Israel’s gifts would be gone. Israel thought she was secure when she turned to the pagan gods, but that was not the case. The Suzerain God, the all-powerful one who had provided for Israel, would remove her abundance to cause her to understand her spiritual

condition. This was in accord with the covenant Israel had entered into, and consistent with the punishment prescribed within the covenant to which they had agreed (Exodus 19:8).

The LORD would thus *punish Israel for the days of the Baals*. The phrase *the days of the Baals* refer to the Canaanite cultic festivals. During these cultic feasts, Israel *used to offer sacrifices and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry and follow her lovers*. In doing so, *she completely forgot the LORD*. She followed in the way of the Canaanites, which was a way of exploitation and child sacrifice (as described in Leviticus 18).

Therefore, she would be severely punished. She would be forgotten just as she forgot the LORD (for a time).

Israel would be severely judged for violating God's covenantal precepts by acknowledging Baal as her god and by forgetting the self-existent God, Yahweh, the one who redeemed her from slavery and continued to provide for all her needs. Nevertheless, God's punishment would not be His final action. He would one day restore the nation Israel and reclaim her as His own wife, as the next section indicates.

Biblical Text

**⁶“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns,
And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.**

**⁷“She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them;
And she will seek them, but will not find *them*.
Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband,
For it was better for me then than now!’**

**⁸“For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil,
And lavished on her silver and gold,
Which they used for Baal.**

**⁹“Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time
And My new wine in its season.
I will also take away My wool and My flax
Given to cover her nakedness.**

**¹⁰“And then I will uncover her lewdness
In the sight of her lovers,
And no one will rescue her out of My hand.**

**¹¹“I will also put an end to all her gaiety,
Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths
And all her festal assemblies.**

**¹²“I will destroy her vines and fig trees,
Of which she said, ‘These are my wages
Which my lovers have given me.’
And I will make them a forest,
And the beasts of the field will devour them.**

¹³“I will punish her for the days of the Baals

**When she used to offer sacrifices to them
And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry,
And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,” declares the LORD.**