

Hosea 3:1

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-3/hosea-31/>

The LORD commands Hosea to retrieve his wife Gomer in love, even though she is an adulteress. This gracious act illustrates God's love for Israel who turns to other gods.

This verse records God's command to Hosea to retrieve his adulterous wife after a temporary separation between them. God said to Hosea, *go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress*. In the first chapter, the LORD commanded Hosea to take to himself a harlot; that is, an immoral and unmarried woman whose life depended upon the gifts of her lovers (Hosea 1:2). Hosea obeyed the LORD and married Gomer.

Here in this chapter, the LORD spoke to Hosea again concerning Gomer, but this time God simply described her as a *woman*, instead of calling her "Hosea's wife." The reason for this change is likely because Gomer was unfaithful to her husband. As a result, she forfeited her status. It is precisely Gomer's unfaithfulness to the marriage bond that disqualified her from being called a "wife."

That Gomer was unfaithful to her husband is indicated by God calling her *an adulteress*. The Hebrew term translated as *adulteress* refers to a married woman who has sexual intercourse with a man who is not her husband. The resulting punishment under the Mosaic law was for the adulterers to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10). The New Testament states that adultery is the only biblical basis for divorce (Matthew 5:31). However, in this case God shows that His mercy supersedes the law (James 2:13).

Gomer apparently continued to live an immoral life even after her marriage with Hosea, thus violating her marriage vows or even breaking the marriage bond. However, God does not tell Hosea to terminate the marriage, but rather to restore it. This would indicate that restoration is preferred to divorce, even in the case of adultery.

Despite her infidelity, Gomer was still *loved by her husband*, Hosea. However, their relationship had suffered severe damage. The text seems to indicate a temporary separation between them, although we are not told details (Hosea 2:2-5). Because of this temporary separation, the LORD asked Hosea to *go again and love* the adulterous Gomer. The prophet was to show grace to his wife by taking her back, despite her unfaithful conduct.

This gracious and loving act on Hosea's part would serve as an object lesson of the LORD's *gracious love for the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes*. It is likely that *raisin cakes* were associated with ritual worship of *other gods*. In ancient Israel, *raisin cakes* ³/₄the produce of the grape harvest ³/₄were common foodstuffs. In the Bible, they are often mentioned with "bread, wine, and cakes of figs" (2 Samuel 25:18).

The Suzerain God would not have had any problem with Israel eating and loving *raisin cakes* as a part of their diet, because He was the one who gave them all their agricultural products (Hosea

2:8). In fact, in the book of 2 Samuel, David “distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one” (2 Samuel 6:19). This suggests that consumption of *raisin cakes* was not prohibited.

The problem with *raisin cakes*, however, was that they were used as a part of pagan worship of *other gods* (Jeremiah 7:18). The Israelites turned to pagan gods (like the Baals) and offered *raisin cakes* to them instead of turning to the true covenant God in faith. This would mark a violation of the terms of the covenant/treaty God had entered into with Israel. The covenant/treaty spelled out the adverse consequence Israel would suffer for following the exploitative ways of *other gods* rather than the “love your neighbor” ways God had commanded (Deuteronomy 8:19-20).

But God’s covenant/treaty with Israel also made clear God’s steadfast love for His covenant people (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). God will never reject His people. But He longed for them to return to Him in intimate fellowship, following His ways. God’s intent toward His people is wholly benevolent. As Moses stated:

“So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always.”
(Deuteronomy 6:24a)

God’s commands were only for the good of Israel, that they might walk in a self-governing manner, rejecting tyranny. That they might love their neighbors as themselves, and build a society based on mutual benefit (Leviticus 19:18). Instead, they turned to pagan ways, which honored the strong exploiting the weak (Leviticus 18). In spite of Israel breaking the treaty, and suffering the consequences (per the terms of the treaty, Deuteronomy 8:19-20) this act of redemption serves as a picture of God’s desire for reconciliation with Israel also as set forth in the treaty, Deuteronomy 30:1-5). He asked Hosea to take Gomer back to show how He would take Israel back once she repented.

This account demonstrates that God’s love for His covenant people is unending and undeserved (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). He still loved the Israelites even though they had turned to other gods and worshiped them. He still wanted the best for His people, even though they had turned their back on His commands to follow their own desires. God’s purpose was for Israel to repent and to acknowledge Him, and return to full fellowship with Him, following His ways. This was fully for their good. So, He used the prophet Hosea, taking back his adulterous wife, as an object lesson to display His own love for Israel, in spite of their unfaithfulness.

Just as Hosea’s wife Gomer was unfaithful to their marital covenant, so Israel was unfaithful to her husband, their covenant God Yahweh. Israel entered into its covenant with God at Mount Sinai. This is properly viewed as being analogous to a marital covenant. The people were not compelled, but agreed of their own will to enter covenant with God (Exodus 19:8). They have broken their covenant, and will suffer the adverse consequences set forth therein, per the terms of their agreement. But God will continue to be a faithful Husband, and will redeem Israel notwithstanding, again as promised in the treaty (Deuteronomy 30:1-5).

Biblical Text

¹Then the Lord said to me, “Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.