

Hosea 6:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-6/hosea-61-3/>

After being severely afflicted, a future generation of Israelites will earnestly seek the LORD. A voice from the nation urges the people to return to the LORD so that they may live in His presence and experience His blessings.

This section is composed of a song in the form of a penitent prayer. It is a brief interlude that switches from oracles of judgment (Hosea 5:10-15) to oracles of salvation and hope. A similar interlude already occurred in the first two chapters of Hosea. There the prophet Hosea stopped talking about the demise of Israel (v. 9) to predict the restoration of both Israel and Judah (Hosea 1:10-2:1). Here it is a voice from the nation that speaks to urge the people to return to God.

The section is linked to the latter portion of the previous chapter in at least four ways.

- First, in 5:13, the Israelites “went to Assyria” for help, but here they are commanded to *come* back to God (6:1).
- Second, in 5:13, the Assyrian king was unable to “heal” God’s people of their wound, but God would *heal* them (6:1).
- Third, in 5:14, the LORD said He would “tear to pieces” Israel, as a lion with its prey. Here in this petition *He has torn* the people, but now will *heal* them (6:1).
- Fourth, in 5:15, God said He would withdraw His presence to cause His people to seek His face, and here the people want to *press on to know the LORD* or to seek Him (6:3).

This brief penitent prayer records the words that a future generation of Israelites will speak after experiencing the LORD’s severe judgment. Speaking from the perspective of having been severely afflicted, the future generation of Israelites would seek the LORD with honesty.

An unnamed speaker among the people would command Israel and Judah, saying, *Come, let us return to the LORD* (vs 1). At that time, the people of God will come to their senses and will realize that the LORD will not restore them if they do not “earnestly seek” Him (5:15). Jesus also stated this principle in His Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus gave His followers an admonition to seek God’s kingdom first; by seeking first His kingdom and His way of righteousness (harmony with God’s plan), we gain all our desires (Matthew 6:33). But by seeking the kingdom of the world, we get only futility and corruption (Galatians 6:8).

With great confidence the speaker encouraged His covenant people, telling them that although *the LORD* had *torn* them, He would *heal* them. God had *wounded* them, *but He* would *bandage* them (vs 1). The people would then realize the mistake they had made of turning to the cruel kingdom of Assyria for help instead of turning to the LORD.

Of course, Assyria was unable to *heal* the people (5:13), but the Suzerain (Ruler) God would do so because He is all-powerful. Once the people realize their hopeless situation, they will seek the LORD in faith, and He will *bandage* them for the wounds He inflicted on them, consistent with

the covenant/contract which the people entered into with God (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). God alone is the great physician; He alone is the source and sustainer of life (Deuteronomy 32:39).

The speaker expressed his burden and desire for God to restore Israel and Judah quickly. This is indicated in the next verse, where he said, *He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day* (vs 2). The expressions “after two days” and “on the third day” refer to a short period of time. This expresses the notion that the Suzerain God is always eager to restore His fellowship with His people when they repent with all their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:1-3).

This raising up of Israel on the *third day* may be a prophetic picture of Jesus raising on the *third day* (Luke 24:1-7). This unnamed voice calling Israel to *return to the Lord* could have a fulfillment in John the Baptist, who called the nation to repent/*return* (Matthew 3:1-2). Hosea 6:2 could be the verse Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:4, when he says “according to the scriptures.” If so, this validates the idea that events that occur to Israel foreshadow events that will occur to the Messiah (Jesus).

The speaker’s hope was that a revival might soon take place and that God might restore them, so *that we may live before Him* (vs 2). The verb “to *live*” means to continue to exist or to stay alive. This means that God would preserve the lives of His covenant people so that they might continue to live in His presence and enjoy His blessings.

Moreover, having realized that the people were being destroyed for lack of knowledge of God (Hosea 4:6), the speaker urged them, saying, *So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD* (vs 3).

The verb translated as *press on* means to pursue; that is, to strive to achieve something vigorously. The people of God were pursuing material possessions by exploiting others. They were pursuing satisfaction through sensual pleasure, with moral justification through worship practices of the fertility god Baal. In doing this they were ignoring the true God (Hosea 2:6-8). They were also violating their covenant with God, in which they agreed to follow all His commands (Exodus 19:8).

A part of that covenant was an agreement that if they violated God’s command to love and serve their neighbors, they would fall under God’s discipline (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). They had refused to repent, and now God had disciplined them that they might return to Him, per the terms of their agreement (Hosea 5:15).

Now Israel and Judah were urged to *know* the LORD, not just to have a theoretical knowledge about Him, but to *know* Him in an everyday practical way; to experience Him and to accept Him as the only sovereign authority in their lives. The key aspect of this is to believe in faith that God’s commands are truly for their good (Deuteronomy 10:13).

It is only by knowing God that the people could experience blessings and enjoy life. In Jesus’s John 17 prayer, Jesus states that the ultimate experience of life is to have an intimate and relational knowledge of God and with God (John 17:3). This principle runs throughout scripture, as evidenced in this statement in verse 3: *let us know, let us press on to know the LORD*.

Finally, the speaker gave a clear picture of the LORD's restored presence when he said, *His going forth is as certain as the dawn* (vs 3). That means the Israelites could count on their Suzerain (Ruler) God just like they counted on the rising of the sun. In a similar fashion, the speaker compared God's presence with the coming of the rain: *He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth*. God's intervention will happen on time, bringing with it life just like rain falls on *earth* in its seasons to cause the crops to grow.

The Israelite land receives its rains twice during the year. The *early rain* or autumn rain falls during the months of October and November to bring the dry summer to a close and loosen the soil in preparation for plowing and sowing. On the other hand, the *late rain* or spring rain falls during the months of March and April to enable the final growth period before gathering or collecting the crops (Deuteronomy 11:14).

It is the timing of these rains that determines whether or not Israel will experience a good harvest or famine. According to the speaker here in Hosea 6, God's restored presence would come to them at the proper time, like the rain that waters the land. that would infer that God's timing is always perfect, even though it often might not overlap our own timing preference.

Biblical Text

¹**“Come, let us return to the Lord.**

**For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us;
He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us.**

²**“He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day,
That we may live before Him.**

³**“So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;
And He will come to us like the rain,
Like the spring rain watering the earth.”**