

Hosea

Chapter 14

Repentance to Bring Blessing

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! ² Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³ Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say ‘Our gods’ to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.” ⁴ “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; ⁶ his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. ⁷ Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon. ⁸ O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me.” ⁹ Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

14:1 *Return.* Another appeal for repentance (see 10:12; 12:6). Unlike that of ch. 6, this repentance would have to be sincere in order for the people to receive the gracious response from the Lord promised in vv. 4–8 (cf. Ps 130:7–8; Isa 55:6–9). (CSB)

Israel’s sin is here compared to a misstep, which leaves the possibility for regaining one’s balance. The Lord continues to reach out in love and hope to a wayward people. (TLSB)

14:2 *Take words.* None could appear empty-handed (Ex 23:15; 34:20), but animal sacrifices would not be enough. Only words of true repentance would be sufficient. (CSB)

Approach the Lord with words of confession. (TLSB)

pay with bulls. The prophet exhorts Israel to offer the sacrifices prescribed in the Books of Moses. At the same time, they must understand that such external signs of repentance are secondary to redirecting one’s heart and mind to God. They do not contribute to the redemption or ransom, which comes from God’s initiative. (TLSB)

fruit of our lips. As thank offerings to the Lord. (CSB)

14:3 *not ride on horses.* Warns Israel against relying on alliances with worldly powers (such as Assyria and Egypt). Only a return to God and trusting in Him can avert their doom. (TLSB)

the work of our hands. Israel's idols are the creation of their imagination and the work of their hands. (TLSB)

fatherless. Penitent Israel (see Ps 10:14; 68:5; La 5:3). (CSB)

In You the orphan finds mercy. Not Baal, but the Lord is the hope of the orphan. (TLSB)

find compassion. Cf. the name of the child Lo-Ruhamah. (CSB)

In the entire prayer of repentance the trust in the mercy of the Lord is evident. The Lord's answer, therefore, is a wonderful promise of mercy. (Kretzmann)

14:4–7 The Lord's tone changes here. He begins to announce good news to Israel. Specifically, He promises to heal the people, love them freely, and turn away His righteous anger. The imagery contrasts with the heat and dryness of the judgment in 13:15. (TLSB)

14:4 *heal.* See 11:3. (CSB)

heal their apostasy. Restore them from their rebellious ways. (TLSB)

waywardness. See 11:7. (CSB)

All the calamities brought upon them by their unfaithfulness to the Lord. (Kretzmann)

love. See 3:1; 11:1, 8–9. (CSB)

love ... freely. See Isa 54:6–8. (CSB)

With the fullness of His abundant love and mercy. (Kretzmann)

anger ... turned away. Contrasts with the burning anger that brought destruction (see 8:5). (CSB)

Having readily been withdrawn at the evidence of real sorrow which their prayer showed. (Kretzmann)

14:5 *dew.* Here not a symbol of transitoriness (cf. 6:4; 13:3) but of God's blessing (cf. Dt 33:13). (CSB)

Land of Israel is very hot, which makes the morning dew an important means of relief and refreshment. Although the Lord would scorch the land in judgment, He would also refresh and restore it afterward. (TLSB)

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BLOSSOM LIKE LILY – White lilies of Palestine are still known for their fruitfulness and fragrance. The ancient botanist Pliny the Elder observed in the first century that they produced as many as 50 bulbs from a single root. (TLSB)

take root like the trees of Lebanon. Lebanon was covered with oak, pine, and esp cedar trees. Ancient Phoenicians built ships from the wood of these forests. God promises not only to heal Israel but also to allow the nation to sink new roots into the land. (TLSB)

cedar. See Ps 80:9–11. (CSB)

Lebanon. See Ps 104:16; Isa 35:2; 60:13. (CSB)

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14:6 *his shoots shall spread out.* God promises His people stability and security in the future. They will experience abundant growth, like the giant trees whose branches made up the vast canopy of Lebanon’s forests. (TLSB)

fragrance like Lebanon. Area is known for cedar trees and various spices. (TLSB)

With its cedars and aromatic shrubs. So the attributes of firmness, of fruitfulness, of beauty and glory, and of amiability and loveliness are ascribed to the repentant people once more received into the grace of God. (Kretzmann)

14:7 *return.* Implicitly the motive for Israel’s return and future trust in the Lord is God’s gracious outpouring of forgiveness, love, and blessings. (TLSB)

shade. Protection (cf. Jdg 9:15; SS 2:3; La 4:20; Eze 31:6). (CSB)

beneath My shadow. In returning to God, Israel would find protection and solace. (TLSB)

vine. See 10:1; Isa 5:1–7. (CSB)

Pliny the Elder notes the international repute of Lebanese wine in his *Naturalis Historia*. (TLSB)

Which was known of old for its excellent flavor. (Kretzmann)

14:8 *Ephraim.* Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

answer. The one, true, and only living God answered Israel’s prayers. To this very day, He hears our cries of worship and devotion. (TLSB)

tree. Only here in the OT is God compared to a tree. For the point of the imagery see Eze 31:3–7; Da 4:12. (CSB)

like an evergreen cypress. Only time in the OT that God compares Himself symbolically to a tree. Fittingly, the Eastern Cypress tree was renowned for its graceful form and enormous size. As such, it provides an immense amount of shade and even protection from the elements. (TLSB)

fruitfulness. Ephraim (“fruitful”; cf. Ge 41:52) received his fruitfulness from the Lord (cf. 2:8). (CSB)

from Me comes your fruit. Israel’s provision and blessings come from the Lord. (TLSB)

14:9 *ways of the LORD.* See Ps 18:21. The prophet concludes by offering each reader the alternatives of walking or stumbling (cf. 4:5; 5:5)—of obedience or rebellion. (CSB)

Ch 14 The overwhelming evidence of Israel’s apostasy showed that Hosea’s indictment was true. In our own cases, the verdict is similarly clear. However, Jesus Christ has borne our sentence for us. The dew of His mercy and the shade of His cross heal our apostasy. He renders us innocent before God’s holy tribunal. • We thank You, Lord Jesus, for all that You have done to make us holy and righteous. Enable us to walk in Your ways now and always. Amen. (TLSB)