

# Hosea

## Chapter 2

**“Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’**

*Israel Punished and Restored*

**<sup>2</sup>“Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. <sup>3</sup>Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst. <sup>4</sup>I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery. <sup>5</sup>Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.’ <sup>6</sup>Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. <sup>7</sup>She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’ <sup>8</sup>She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold— which they used for Baal. <sup>9</sup>“Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness. <sup>10</sup>So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. <sup>11</sup>I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed feasts. <sup>12</sup>I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them. <sup>13</sup>I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,” declares the LORD. <sup>14</sup>“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. <sup>15</sup>There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. <sup>16</sup>“In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’” <sup>7</sup>I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. <sup>18</sup>In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. <sup>19</sup>I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. <sup>20</sup>I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. <sup>21</sup>“In that day I will respond,” declares the LORD— “I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; <sup>22</sup>and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. <sup>23</sup>I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my**

**loved One.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”**

**2:1** *your brothers ... your sisters.* Hosea calls for his message to be heard by all Israel, recalling not only a common lineage through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but esp God’s constant blessing and favor. (TLSB)

*My people ... My loved one.* The negatives associated with the names of Hosea’s children are dropped. (CSB)

God’s promise, even before Israel promises to change (cf Eph 2:13). Wordplay of the names of Hosea’s children (Not My People and No Mercy). Hosea artfully emphasizes God’s promise to show mercy and restore His people. Cf 1Pt 2:10. (TLSB)

In His NT revelation God Himself explains the meaning of such promises. Not the blood of Abraham flowing in our veins but the faith of Abraham created in our hearts makes us children of God. “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26-29). (PBC)

**2:2** Metaphor of Hosea’s marriage and family life is extended; Israel is identified as the Lord’s unfaithful wife. (TLSB)

*Plead.* Hbr *rib*, “contend” or “strive,” as in a legal setting. (TLSB)

*not my wife.* The marriage was broken by unfaithfulness, but reconciliation, not divorce, was sought (cf. vv. 7–15). (CSB)

Because Israel has been as guilty of adultery as Gomer, the nation has thus proven itself wholly unworthy of a committed husband. However, the Lord remains faithful (cf 2Tm 2:13). (TLSB)

2 Timothy 2:13, “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

**2:3** The Lord warns with increasing severity that shame, desertion, and death will come if Israel refuses to repent. The graphic imagery employed here recalls Israel’s miserable status in Egypt and the desperate conditions she experienced during the wilderness wanderings of Exodus. Cf 11:1, where Hosea reminds the people that “out of Egypt” God called His beloved son, Israel. (TLSB)

*strip her.* The husband supplied the wife’s clothing (see Ex 21:10; Eze 16:10), and here her unfaithfulness was exposed (see Jer 13:26; Eze 16:39). (CSB)

*bare.* As Israel was when the Lord “found” her in Egypt—in slavery and with nothing (cf. Eze 16:4–8; Na 3:5). (CSB)

DESERT – The desert is a picture of the various tribulations and sufferings of the exile. (Kretzmann)

**2:4** *her children*. Though earnestly invited to a restored relationship in v 1, God’s children will yet be left without mercy if their rebellion continues. (TLSB)

*children of adultery*. See 1:2. This contrasts with being “sons” of the Lord (1:10; 11:1). (CSB)

Just as husbands typically feel little obligation for children conceived in adultery, so also the Lord warns the tainted children of Israel that He may desert them. Cf 5:7. (TLSB)

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**2:5** Israel acts as though its food and clothing come from the surrounding pagan nations. The people completely ignore the Lord’s generous provision. Consequently, Hosea warns that these sustaining gifts may be removed (vv 8–9). During the exodus, God miraculously provided His people manna and quail daily (Ex 16; Nu 11:1–15). The people ought to have remembered God’s goodness and thankfully depended on Him. (TLSB)

*go after*. The wife was chasing other men (see Jer 3:2; Eze 16:33). (CSB)

*lovers*. See vv. 7, 10. The reference is to Canaanite deities (such as Baal), whose worshipers hoped to gain agricultural fertility. (CSB)

*who give my food ... my drink*. Ugaritic texts attribute crops to rain given by Baal. (CSB)

*wool ... linen ... oil ... drink*. The agricultural staples of Palestine. Israel does not know the true source of her blessings. (CSB)

Food, clothing, and the enjoyments of life; for Israel's commercial enterprise was stimulated by the riches and power of the nations round about, and it was with the idea of getting and holding their friendship that the Israelites began to practice idolatry. (Kretzmann)

**2:6** *block her path*. Rather than punish Israel with death (cf. Dt 22:21; Eze 16:39–40; Na 3:5–7), the Lord would isolate her. (CSB)

*hedge ... a wall*. Before acting on His threat to kill Israel (v 3), the Lord acts to restrain her wickedness. By erecting a hedge, God means to block His people’s pursuit of Baal. Cf Is 5:1–5 for similar imagery. (TLSB)

Setting insurmountable obstacles to keep Israel away from the heathen nations with their allurements and temptations. (Kretzmann)

CANNOT FIND HER WAY – Namely, to the temples and altars of the idols. The Lord undoubtedly refers to the oppression and affliction of the exile, which opened the eyes of the children of Israel to the vanity and helplessness of the idols. (Kretzmann)

**2:7 chase.** A cultic term in Hosea; elsewhere the Hebrew for this word is translated “press on” or “pursue” (6:3; 8:3; 12:1). (CSB)

Determined, at first, to cling to the false gods whom she had accepted. **(Kretzmann)**

*look for.* See 5:6, 15. (CSB)

*not find.* See 5:6. (CSB)

Sadly, Israel will end up frustrated within the protective maze of the restraining wall, since she will persist in the pursuit of other gods. Cf 5:6 for a contrasting image. (TLSB)

She would be reduced to such straits as would show her how vain was her hope in these idols and their assistance. (Kretzmann)

*go back.* The Hebrew for this expression often means “repent.” (CSB)

*my husband.* The Lord. (CSB)

Just as Hosea took Gomer (1:3), so the Lord would take back Israel. This is remarkable since God’s Word allowed for divorce in cases of adultery (Dt 24:1–4). (TLSB)

**2:8 She has not acknowledged.** The Canaanites attributed grain, wine and oil to Baal. (CSB)

*I who gave.* Despite Israel’s preposterous claims that her food and clothes came from other nations and gods (v 5), the Lord here sets the record straight. He is the source of Israel’s well-being. (TLSB)

*silver and gold.* Used for making idols (see 8:4; 9:6; 13:2). (CSB)

Using it for his cult and worship, in open idolatry. Many a person serves a false god, not knowing that the very gifts which he brings are the blessings of God’s goodness upon him. (Kretzmann)

*Baal.* The Canaanite god who was believed to control the weather and the fertility of crops, animals and man. (CSB)

Ironically, Israel was taking the gold and silver God lavished on her and offering them to images of Baal. The people were even fashioning these precious metals into idols (8:4; cf 1Ki 12:28–30). (TLSB)

**2:9** *take away*. By withholding the fruits of field and flock, the Lord made known the true source of those blessings. (CSB)

If God takes the gifts suddenly and at the very time of the harvest, the punishment would be more severe than if He had taken them after the outlook already was poor. (Kretzmann)

**2:10** *expose her lewdness*. The unfaithful wife was exposed to public shame (see La 1:8; Eze 16:37; 23:39). (CSB)

*uncover her lewdness*. A return to the warning of v 3. Israel's nakedness contrasts starkly with her boast that she is well-supplied by the gods of other nations (v 5). When God removes the fruitfulness of the land, the fertility god Baal will be useless to cover Israel. (TLSB)

*no one will take her*. Baal had no power. (CSB)

While the nations round about were looking on, partly in helpless idleness and partly in malicious joy, Israel was delivered to her punishment. (Kretzmann)

**2:11** *stop ... celebrations*. In exile these joyous seasons would be only a memory. (CSB)

The annual celebrations of Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths. The new-moon celebrations were monthly; the Sabbath, weekly. Such weekly, monthly, and annual celebrations will come to an abrupt halt when God allows a pagan invader, the Assyrians, to take Israel into exile. (TLSB)

*yearly festivals*. Especially the three highest festivals, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. (Kretzmann)

*New Moons*. See 2Ki 4:23; Isa 1:13; Am 8:5. (CSB)

Whatever days were observed in the course of the year. (Kretzmann)

*Sabbath*. See Ex 20:8–11. (CSB)

**2:12** *pay from her lovers*. The harlot's pay (see 9:1; Dt 23:18; Eze 16:33; Mic 1:7). Israel attributed her agricultural products to the false gods she worshiped, rather than to the Lord (see Dt 11:13–14). (CSB)

*my wages*. Israel foolishly considered the fertility of her land to be the result of her illicit relationship with Baal. Accordingly, God threatens to overthrow such folly by laying waste to Israel's vines and fig trees. Cf Lv 26:22; Dt 11:13–17 for similar warnings. (TLSB)

*thicket*. See Isa 5:5–6; 7:23; 32:13; Mic 3:12. (CSB)

*a forest.* A place of danger. (TLSB)

**2:13** *days.* Festival days. (CSB)

Punishing her for devoting the great festival days of the Jewish church-year to the service of heathen idols. (Kretzmann)

*Baals.* See v. 17; 11:2. Hosea used the plural here, suggesting the idols at the many local shrines (see Jer 2:23; 9:14). (CSB)

*feast days of the Baals.* See note, Nu 25:3. Israel abandoned the Lord's festivals (v 11) and began offering sacrifices to Baal. The abundance of individual shrines to Baal likely explains the plural "Baals." (TLSB)

*burned offerings.* Numerous places in the OT refer to Israel offering burnt sacrifices to Baal and Asherah (e.g., 4:13; 1Ki 11:7–8; 12:28–33; 16:32–33; 2Ki 17:7–13). (TLSB)

DECKED HERSELF...RINGS AND JEWELRY – Decorating herself for the purpose of making an impression upon those whom she had permitted to seduce her. (Kretzmann)

Israel continues to act as a harlot, dressing in finery to attract attention, pursuing Baal instead of her faithful Lord. For an ironic contrast between God's steadfast knowledge and Israel's willful forgetfulness, cf 13:4–6. (TLSB)

*forgot.* The opposite of "know" in Hosea (cf. 13:4–6). (CSB)

That is the outstanding, reprehensible feature of unbelief and idolatry: the rejection of the true God, for He wants no other gods beside Himself. (Kretzmann)

**2:1–13** God warns Israel that He will punish her for the idolatrous insistence that Baal will provide for her needs. At the same time, the Lord more earnestly urges Israel to repent and avoid judgment. Today, God warns us similarly through the preaching of His Law. He also unfailingly adds the promises of His Gospel, wherein grace and every blessing are assured. • Lord, all goodness comes from You alone. We embrace the Gospel in faith, give You thanks for Your enduring gifts, and so enjoy the benefits of Your unfailing compassion. Amen. (TLSB)

**2:14** *allure.* Hbr *pathah*, "to persuade," "entice." God thus turns from threatening Israel to pursuing her winsomely. (TLSB)

*into the desert.* For a second betrothal (see vv. 19–20). It refers back to the days of Israel's desert wandering, before she was tempted by the Baals in Canaan. (CSB)

Recalls the exodus and a time when Baal had not intruded into the relationship of God and Israel (cf Jer 2:2). (TLSB)

Where there was nothing to detract her attention any more, (Kretzmann)

*speak tenderly to.* Reassure, encourage, comfort (cf. Ge 34:3; Ru 2:13; Isa 40:2). God continually shows love in the midst of judgment. (CSB)

God speaks with the kindness of a loving spouse. (TLSB)

in a friendly, heart-to-heart talk, with the intention of once more manifesting His love, now that Israel was ready to acknowledge her transgression. (Kretzmann)

**2:15** *Valley of Achor.* Near Jericho (see Jos 7:1–26; 15:7; Isa 65:10). As the prophet reversed the meaning of the names of his children, so also the meaning of Achor (see NIV text note)—where God first judged his people in the promised land—became a symbol of new opportunity. (CSB)

Southwest of Jericho. God judged Israel here during the entry into the Promised Land (Jsh 7). (TLSB)

*door of hope.* Achor means “trouble”; God ironically reverses the name of the valley by calling it a door of hope. This rhetorical move follows the transformation of Hosea’s children’s names (1:6, 8; 2:1) and anticipates the reversal of the way Israel will address the Lord in v 16. (TLSB)

So that the crime of Achan would not be repeated, Josh. 7, 26. (Kretzmann)

WILL SING – Once more with the true happiness of a believing people. (Kretzmann)

*answer as in ... her youth.* Recalls Israel’s acts of faithfulness, as when she rejoiced to follow the Lord out of Egypt (Ex 15:1–21) and worshiped Him after entering Canaan (Jsh 4). (TLSB)

When the Lord first led His people into the Land of Promise. (Kretzmann)

**2:16–17** *husband ... master ... Baals.* A play on words. Of the two Hebrew words for husband, one (master) is identical with the name of the god Baal. There will be such a vigorous reaction against Baal worship that this Hebrew word for “master” will no longer be used of the Lord. (CSB)

*Baal.* Hbr *ba’al* means both “husband” and “lord.” Here both senses nuance the meaning. (TLSB)

**2:18** Acting as a third party, God establishes a covenant between Israel and the wild creatures. He demonstrates both His rule over the created order and His compassion for Israel. (TLSB)

*make a covenant.* See 6:7; 8:1. Animals, the instruments of destruction in v. 12, as well as birds and insects, would no longer threaten life. Nature and history combine in a picture of peace (see Isa 11:6–9; 65:25). (CSB)

*on that day.* A key phrase appearing elsewhere (cf vv 16, 18, 21) that makes plain that the end of time is in view, when a new heaven and earth will be established. Cf Is 11:6–9; 25:6–9; 65:17–25. (TLSB)

*Bow and sword.* See 1:5. War is terminated. (CSB)

God will break the bow that endangers the animals and humankind, though for now it is still needed. (TLSB)

*land.* Israel (see 1:2; 4:1, 3; 9:3; 10:1). (CSB)

*lie down in safety.* See Jer 33:16; Eze 34:24–28. (CSB)

This promised peaceful coexistence between people and beasts is a complete reversal of the conditions described in v 12, where wild animals are a threat. (TLSB)

All this, of course, is figurative description of the time when there would be peace on earth through Him who is our Peace. (Kretzmann)

**2:19–20** Rather than money, these five traits necessary to the covenant relationship make up the bride-price (see Ex 22:16–17; Dt 22:23–29; 1Sa 18:25; 2Sa 3:14). (CSB)

**2:19** BETROTH – Hebrew ‘aras, not only the engagement proper, but also the compensation for the bride’s family. Cf Dt 22:23–27. Betrothal usually lasted several months and was considered as binding as marriage, from which it was hardly distinguished. (TLSB)

*righteousness.* See 10:12; Jer 23:6; Am 6:12; Mic 6:5. (CSB)

Namely, that earned by Christ when He cleansed His Church from all unrighteousness through the blood of His cross. (Kretzmann)

*justice.* See Am 5:24. (CSB)

By which He interferes in behalf of His people on the basis of Christ’s perfect atonement. (Kretzmann)

*love.* See 4:1; 6:4; 10:12; 12:6. (CSB)

*compassion.* A reversal of God’s threatened withdrawal of compassion (see 1:6 and NIV text note). “Lo-Ruhamah” means lit. “not shown compassion” (cf. Ps 51:1; 103:3–14). (CSB)



*righteousness ... justice ... steadfast love ... mercy.* These four qualities may profitably be understood as the price God pays for His Bride. (TLSB)

In His free and merciful favor, and in mercies. Every idea of merit on the part of man is thus entirely excluded; God accepts every member of the Church on the basis of His own mercy in Christ Jesus alone. (Kretzmann)

**2:20** *faithfulness.* Dependability (see Dt 32:4; Ps 88:11). (CSB)

With a pledge of the eternal duration of the covenant on His side. (Kretzmann)

*acknowledge.* The Hebrew for this word can refer to intimate marital relations (Ge 19:8; Nu 31:17–18, 35), but it also refers to active acknowledgment of a covenant partner (see 4:1, 6; 5:4; 6:3, 6; 8:2; 11:3; 13:4). (CSB)

The saving knowledge of Jehovah being imparted through this Gospel-message. (Kretzmann)

**2:21** *respond.* The woman (Israel) responded to the Lord's overtures (see NIV text note on v. 15); now God responded to her new behavior. The land also responded in becoming productive (vv. 21–22). (CSB)

The Lord pledges to respond to His Bride, esp her words of desertion (v 5), her eventual promise to return (v 7), and her predicted calling on the Lord as her "Husband" (v 16). (TLSB)

His ears, as it were, being attuned to the slightest stirring on the part of those who know Him as their Savior. (Kretzmann)

*they shall answer the earth.* God's response to a repentant Israel will be to renew and multiply Jezreel's agricultural capabilities. The fruit once withheld from that region (vv 8–9) will be restored, thus demonstrating the Lord's love for His people. (TLSB)

**2:22** *Jezreel.* Here used in the sense "God plants" (see NIV text note and v. 23; see also note on 1:11). The threats represented by the names of the children are turned into blessings (see 1:10). The terms of the covenant were: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God." (CSB)

This wordplay emphasizes that Jezreel will someday no longer be the scene of bloodshed (1:4). Instead, God Himself will cultivate the land and so assure that His people will reap a bountiful harvest. Cf 14:4–7. (TLSB)

The people of the true Israel, of the Church of God, becoming partakers of the rich blessings of the Lord in the Messianic era. (Kretzmann)

**2:23** *sow.* Hbr *zara* '. Related to the word Jezreel (v 22). (TLSB)

*Mercy ... Not My People.* The meanings of these names will also turn around, so that Israel will once again be accepted as the Lord's children and Bride. (TLSB)

*he.* Singular. May refer to the last child, Not My People, who speaks for all. (TLSBB)

*You are my God.* The people respond to God's graciousness. This verse is quoted in part in Ro 9:25; 1Pe 2:10 and applied to Gentiles coming into the church. (CSB)

That is the confession of the Church and of all its members. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, members are won for the Church, and the sum total of these believers are the bride of Christ and partake of all the blessings which He has gained for all men by His redemption. (Kretzmann)

**2:14–23** Despite Israel's complete disregard for the covenant, the Lord promises to renew His marriage with her. To this end, He will even marshal creation as His witness and servant. Though it pains us to admit it, our wealth often begins to lead us into the same failings as those of Israel in Hosea's day, putting our trust in things rather than in the Lord. Fortunately for us, however, the God of Israel never wavers in His commitments. God's Law continues to show us our sins and to make us want to be rid of them. Through Christ, all our waywardness and idolatry is forgiven, and a new and all-inclusive covenant has been enacted. • Though we are unworthy of Your love, O Lord, renew our relationship with You through the strength of Your faithfulness and commitment. May we always say, "You alone are our God." Amen. (TLSB)