

Hosea

Chapter 2

Israel's Unfaithfulness Punished

Say to your brothers, “You are my people,” and to your sisters, “You have received mercy.”
2 “Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; 3 lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst. 4 Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. 5 For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ 6 Therefore 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 shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.’ 8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. 9 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. 10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand. 11 And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts. 12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.’ I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them. 13 And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.

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)

you are my people. 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)

put away her whoring. 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)

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

wilderness – 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 whoredom. This contrasts with being “sons” of the Lord (1:10; 11:1). (CSB)

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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. The reference is to Canaanite deities (such as Baal), whose worshipers hoped to gain agricultural fertility. (CSB)

who give my bread ... my water. Ugaritic texts attribute crops to rain given by Baal. (CSB)

wool ... flax ... 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 *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)

cannot find her paths. 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 *pursue.* A cultic term in Hosea; elsewhere the Hebrew for this word is translated “press on” or “pursue” (6:3; 8:3; 12:1). (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)

return. 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 did not know.* 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 *uncover her lewdness.* The unfaithful wife was exposed to public shame (see La 1:8; Eze 16:37; 23:39). (CSB)

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 shall rescue 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 *put an end... mirth.* 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)

feasts. 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)

Sabbaths. See Ex 20:8–11. (CSB)

2:12 *wages...lovers have given me.* 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)

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)

a forest. A place of danger. (TLSB)

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

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. 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)

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)

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)

The LORD's Mercy on Israel

14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. 15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. 16 “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. 18 And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. 19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. 21 “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, 22 and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, 23 and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

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

into the wilderness. 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 – 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)

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 for them 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)

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)

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)

steadfast love. A reversal of God’s threatened withdrawal of compassion. “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)

2:20 *you shall know*. 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)

2:21 *answer*. 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)

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." 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)

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. (TLSB)

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)

