

Hosea

Chapter 14

A Plea to Return to the LORD

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 2 Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.” 4 I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. 5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; 6 his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. 7 They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. 8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit. 9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors 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 with you 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)

vows 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)

orphans. 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)

finds mercy. Cf. the name of the child Lo-Ruhamah. (CSB)

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

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

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)

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)

blossom like a lilly – 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)

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

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

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)