



Hosea - Chapter Two

I [Hosea 1:1-3:5 - Biographical: Hosea's Family \(continues\)](#)

I.c [Hosea 1:10-2:1 - The Restoration of Israel \(continues/concludes\)](#)

Summary of Chapter Two

Israel is an adulterous wife and her children the children of whoredom. The Lord will hedge up her way with thorns, taking away his grain, wine, wool and linen. Her festival days will cease, and her vines and fig trees will be destroyed. Restoration is promised, however: the valley of Achor, i.e. the valley of trouble where Achan's sin was discovered and judged in Joshua 7:26, will become the door of hope. The Lord will be referred to as husband, not as master. The people of God will be restored, and the land will be fruitful.

^{2:1} Say to your brother, Ammi, and to your sister, Ruhamah.

Hosea 2:1

Those addressed are Israelites who, the prophet hopes, will respond to his promise. The verse begins with an imperative say to your brother, as does the following verse. Both serve as an enticement for Israel to return to God. Israel is entreated to anticipate a change in names when unity is restored. No longer will they be 'No Mercy' and 'Not My People.'

This shows that the redemption is complete. The child named Jezreel has his name redeemed, and now the next two children, Lo-Ruhamah, 'No Mercy' and Lo-Ammi, 'Not My People', have their name redeemed as Israel is once again regarded as 'My People' unto the Lord and 'Mercy is shown' unto them. What was a sign of judgement is now evidence of redemption: <<*He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant for ever. Holy and awesome is his name*>> (Psalm 111:9), <<*Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*>> (Luke 21:28), and: <<*He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us*

wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'>> (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

I.d Hosea 2:2-23 - Israel's Infidelity, Punishment, and Redemption

Refer to the chapter summary above.

I.d.i Hosea 2:2-13 - Legal Proceedings against the Wayward Wife

Hosea uses the legal process of an offended husband against his wife as an image for God's plans to deal with Israel.

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 or I will strip her naked
and expose her as in the day she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and turn her into a parched land,
and kill her with thirst.

Hosea 2:2-3

Plead with your mother, plead. The plea for repentance is repeated twice for emphasis.

God paints Israel as an adulterous wife, who is no longer worthy to be compared to a wife. This shows that the relationship has broken down. As commonly understood, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband is a repudiation of the marriage bond, which would parallel God's right to repudiate his covenant bond with Israel. But perhaps it should be read as a threat, rather than an actual divorce. Otherwise, Hosea would have no right to issue the warnings and threats that follow. Isaiah likewise expressed God's reluctance to turn finally away from his people: <<*Thus says the Lord: Where is your mother's bill of divorce with which I put her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? No, because of your sins you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was put away*>> (Isaiah 50:1). The marriage between God and Israel has not ended: <<*When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the*

nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the Lord your God has scattered you>> (Deuteronomy 30:1-3); the covenant made with Israel contains provision for restoration, and Israel is urged to respond to that provision: that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts. This statement is a reference to Israel's continued idolatrous relationship with other gods.

Or I will strip her naked and expose her as in the day she was born. God warns Israel that if she will not put away her whore-like ways, she will be judged. Although relationship is broken, blessing continues, but will be taken away if Israel does not turn. Public humiliation of an unfaithful wife was not exceptional during this time. Similar language was used to describe retributions for breaking treaties. Some commentators see this stripping as the retrieval of everything a husband had provided for his bride: *<<If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out without debt, without payment of money>> (Exodus 21:10-11).*

- ⁴ Upon her children also I will have no pity,
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;
they give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

Hosea 2:4-5

Upon her children also I will have no pity. If Israel as a whole is represented as an unfaithful wife, then her children represent the individual people of Israel. If they do not turn back to the Lord, they will personally experience his judgement.

They are children of whoredom because their mother has played the whore, she who conceived them shamefully. Here is a clear disclaimer of fatherhood. The Lord, like Hosea, proceeds as a husband not only wronged, but injured, by infidelity.

For she said, 'I will go after my lovers.' This suggests that it was Gomer/Israel who pursued the lovers, rather than the other way around: *<<How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals'? Look at your way in the*

valley; know what you have done – a restive young camel interlacing her tracks, a wild ass at home in the wilderness, in her heat sniffing the wind! Who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her month they will find her>> (Jeremiah 2:23-24). Israel's lovers are other gods. Israel justified her whoredom because she received things from her lovers. She looked at all the good she seemed to get from her sin, and it seemed like a good deal. Israel did not understand the passing pleasures of sin, something one of their greatest leaders did understand: *<<By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin>>* (Hebrews 11:24-25).

- ⁶ Therefore I will hedge her way with thorns;
and I will build a wall against her,
so that she cannot find her paths.

Hosea 2:6

Therefore I will hedge her way with thorns. This is the first of three therefores in this chapter; the other two are in v.9 and v.14. It is spoken in response to the mother's unbridled lust. The 8th Century prophets, including Hosea, truly believed that Israel's sins could be forgiven and the nation restored. The jealous husband of Israel will put a hedge around his wife so that she is prevented from straying, i.e. making pilgrimages to pagan shrines. The intention is redemptive.

To bring Israel to repentance, God promised to set a hedge of thorns on the sides of their path, so that it would hurt whenever Israel went off the correct path, and so the wrong paths would be hard to find. When God hedges the way with thorns, people usually do not like it: *<<Why is light given to one who cannot see the way, whom God has fenced in?>>* (Job 3:23), *<<He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths>>* (Job 19:8), and: *<<he has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked>>* (Lamentations 3:9). They sometimes think God is against them when the thorns hurt and they cannot find the wrong paths. However, it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to hedge up the way with thorns and to wall his people in.

- 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 with me then than now.’

Hosea 2:7

By the obstruction of thorns and a wall, the wayward wife will not be able to find her lovers, although she diligently seeks them. Left in limbo, without a husband to provide for her needs, she repeats the same words she said in v.5: I will go. She decides that she should return to her first husband: <<*For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called*>> (Isaiah 54:5). She acknowledges him as her husband and that there was a time in her marriage when things went well. When God allows the passing pleasures of sin to pass, people often then see how good it was to follow the Lord. In a marriage sometimes the grass can seem greener even with the best spouse; even in a Christian walk with the Lord the idols seem attractive until God exposes them: <<*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first*>> (Revelation 2:4). Only then are his people ready to return to their first husband, the Lord.

⁸ She did not know
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished upon her silver
and gold that they used for Baal.

Hosea 2:8

In retrospect, she did not know. Israel’s failure to ‘know’ the Lord and his provision, and the Lord’s plan to remedy this, is a key idea in the book; refer to 2:8, 2:20, 4:1, 4:6, 5:3-4, 6:3, 7:9, 8:2, 11:3 and 13:4-5. The prosperity lavished upon Israel was due to the generosity not of Baal but of the Lord. Particularly hurtful is that the prosperity was used in heathen worship, a real slap in God’s face, for he had clearly stated: <<*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me*>> (Exodus 20:2-3).

I who gave her continues the dominance of the first person pronoun ‘I’ in the rest of the chapter.

She did not know that it was I who gave her the grain. Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. This showed his great, unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and prepared it for Baal, he still loved them. When Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It is as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer’s lover, where she

lived apart from her husband and in adultery. He knew that this scoundrel of a man could not provide for Gomer, and that she lived in poverty and rags. Hosea knocked at the door. He spoke to the man who answered, “Are you the man living with Gomer?” The man wondered what business it was of Hosea’s; then he revealed: “I’m Hosea, her husband. I’ve brought these groceries and money so she can be provided for.” When Hosea left, Gomer and her lover must have thought he was a fool. What a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea brought! But this is how the Lord loves his people, lavishing blessing upon them even when they are worshipping idols, providing them with blessings they then waste on other gods, the true desires of their lives.

That they used for Baal. This principle shows how offensive idolatry really is to God. Whatever a person gives to an idol, they have received from God. God gives to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. He gives man the skills and knowledge to make an axe and nails from the iron, and the energy to cut down the tree, the skill to fashion the wood into beams. God gives man the cleverness to make a handle from the wood, and head from the iron, and combine it into an effective hammer. Then man takes the beams, the nails, and the hammer and he nails God to the Cross, where God willingly stretched out his arms, dying on the Cross to take the guilt and penalty man’s sin deserved, and to make a new, restored relationship between God and man possible. This is grace!

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.

Hosea 2:9

Therefore I will take back my grain in its time. This second therefore is in response to Israel’s blind stubbornness in the face of God’s goodness. Like Hosea, who threatens to strip his adulterous wife of what he has bestowed upon her, the Lord will strip the land completely bare: <<***The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet***>> (Nahum 1:3). God gave grain to Israel, and they gave what he provided in sacrifice to Baal. Therefore, God will take away this provision, and as Israel feels their need and deprivation, perhaps they will turn back to the Lord.

Wool, flax, and linen were the primary sources for weaving cloth for clothing. Thus, the use of these in pagan festivals will come to an end. Verses 9-10 and what follows complement v.6 as additional descriptions of the Lord’s discipline. The

disciplines work in tandem, and the condition of the land throughout the OT serves as a barometer of Israel's relationship with the Lord.

¹⁰ Now I will uncover her shame
in the sight of her lovers,
and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

Hosea 2:10

The Lord will expose the Baals' impotency so that Israel will know that no one shall rescue her out of my hand, for there is no other god: <<*See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and no one can deliver from my hand*>> (Deuteronomy 32:39).

¹¹ I will put an end to all her mirth,
her festivals, her new moons, her sabbaths,
and all her appointed festivals.

Hosea 2:11

I will put an end to all her mirth. In his law and commandments God had appointed festivals for the people to gather and celebrate all that they had been given as a nation. These were seen as a great source of joy in the land but that would no longer be the case because of their idolatry: <<*I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day*>> (Amos 8:10).

¹² I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
of which she said,
'These are my pay,
which my lovers have given me.'
I will make them a forest,
and the wild animals shall devour them.

¹³ I will punish her for the festival days of the Baals,
when she offered incense to them
and decked herself with her ring and jewellery,
and went after her lovers,
and forgot me, says the Lord.

Hosea 2:12-13

These are my pay. Sacrifices presented to the Baals are likened to a fee given to a shrine prostitute: <<*Do not rejoice, O Israel! Do not exult as other nations do; for you have played the whore, departing from your God. You have loved a prostitute's pay on all threshing-floors*>> (Hosea 9:1). Adulterous behaviour applies literally to the woman, and figuratively to the nation. It is also clear that the lovers are the Baals.

Israel went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the Lord. During the time of Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed great prosperity. However, she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures, so God will take away her prosperity.

I.d.ii Hosea 2:14-23 - Covenant Relationship Re-established

Hosea indicates God's plan to restore his 'marriage' with Israel.

- ¹⁴ Therefore, I will now persuade her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.

Hosea 2:14

Therefore, I will now persuade her. With this third therefore, the reason for the punishments for Israel's roaming becomes clear – to bring Israel to repentance. The verb persuade is more accurately translated as coax or allure and can have the idea 'to entice or seduce.' This is seen in the account of Samson: <<*On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, 'Coax your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?'*>> (Judges 14:15), and: <<*The lords of the Philistines came to her and said to her, 'Coax him, and find out what makes his strength so great, and how we may overpower him, so that we may bind him in order to subdue him; and we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver'*>> (Judges 16:5); but here it is paralleled with speak tenderly to her. The Lord will woo his estranged wife away from her lovers with the language of courtship: <<*And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her*>> (Genesis 34:3), <<*Then her husband set out after her, to speak tenderly to her and bring her back. He had with him his servant and a couple of donkeys. When he reached her father's house, the girl's father saw him and came with joy to meet him*>> (Judges 19:3), <<*Then she said, 'May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants'*>> (Ruth 2:13), <<*So go out at once and speak kindly to your servants; for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night; and this will be worse for you than any disaster that has come upon you from your youth until now*>> (2 Samuel 19:7), and: <<*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and*

cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins>> (Isaiah 40:2).

Bring her into the wilderness depicts the wilderness as if it were a brighter time in the marriage. This is how it was when Israel first came up out of Egypt: <<*At the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain*>> (Exodus 19:1-2).

¹⁵ From there I will give her her vineyards,
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
There she shall respond as in the days of her youth,
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

Hosea 2:15

The Valley of Achor, where Achan was cursed in Joshua 7:25-26, will become a place for hope. Achor means 'trouble,' so the Valley of Achor is the 'Valley of Trouble.' God's restoration is so great that he will transform the 'Valley of Trouble' into a door of hope.

There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, When Israel is restored, they will be restored to joy. The passing pleasures of sin are forgotten and the true pleasures of God are restored.

As at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. Israel is reminded of the time when the people were taken out of abject slavery by God and were heading towards the land of promise.

¹⁶ On that day, says 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 mentioned by name no more.

Hosea 2:16-17

On that day. This is not a reference to a particular time but a description of what the day will be like when God lures Israel back.

The act of changing names continues: you will call me "My husband," and no longer will you call me "My Baal." With great anticipation, God looks forward to the day when relationship is genuinely restored with his people. He wants an intimate love-relationship with his people, and longs for the day when his people will have a marriage-like love and commitment to their God. The Israelites had fused the name of the Lord with Baal as though doing so made no difference. In earlier times the Hebrew for my husband sounded like my Baal, but now Israel

must use a different word in order to make clear her exclusive devotion to the Lord, and not to Baal. God was not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with his people where they thought of him primarily as Baal. He wanted a relationship where they thought of him primarily as husband.

For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth. In Hebrew, the name Baal comes from the word Master and the two words sound alike. It was the Baals, the idols of the nations, that wanted this ‘master-slave’ relationship with man. But not the Lord God: *<<On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit>>* (Zechariah 13:2); he wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with his people. Scriptures that use the same word for husband and master include Exodus 21:22 and 24:4, 2 Samuel 11:26, and Proverbs 12:4, 30:23, 31:11, 31:23 and 31:28.

¹⁸ I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, 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.

Hosea 2:18

For you refers to the Israelites who are recipients of the covenant announced earlier: *<<Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people’, it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God.’ The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall take possession of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel>>* (Hosea 1:10-11). The terms for the animals here evoke Genesis Chapters 1-2, where man in his created condition had a proper dominion over them; hence Israel is in its restored condition living out the creational ideal, which was the goal of God’s redemption.

I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land. Ultimately, this blessing of restored relationship will result in a transformed earth, changed both ecologically: **the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground**, and politically. This blessing will be fulfilled in the millennial earth, but people can come to know the transforming power of restored relationship right now by turning to Christ.

To **lie down in safety** is the ultimate blessing in a world fraught with persistent threats of aggression. Isaiah foresees such a time coming on the people of God: *<<The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead*

them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox>> (Isaiah 11:6-7).

¹⁹ And I will take you for my wife for ever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. ²⁰ I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.

Hosea 2:19-20

And I will take you for my wife for ever. Recovery is described as a renewed betrothal. The betrothal, a marriage agreement, is established by the payment of a bride price to the bride's father: <<*Then David sent messengers to Saul's son Ishbaal, saying, 'Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines'*>> (2 Samuel 3:14), a practice still found particularly in some African and Asian cultures. The bride price paid is righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and mercy. These attributes come only from the Lord: <<*The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin'*>> (Exodus 34:6-7a), and are precisely what Israel desperately lacks. This is in harmony with the divine initiative represented by the many 'I wills' in Hosea.

²¹ On that day I will answer, says 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 him for myself in the land.
And I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah,
and I will say to Lo-ammi, 'You are my people';
and he shall say, 'You are my God.'

Hosea 2:21-23

On that day. That is, when the marriage is again consummated. Former adversities suffered by Israel will be reversed; grain, wine, and oil will be replenished. When relationship is where it is supposed to be, God abundantly provides. This is the same principle Jesus taught: <<*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*>> (Matthew 6:33 NIV).

I will answer. This is great blessing of real, vibrant relationship with God. A believer's heart beats in rhythm to his, and so they want what he wants. So when they ask God to do things, they already ask what he wants to do, so he will answer. This is the same principle Jesus taught: *<<If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you>>* (John 15:7).

They shall answer Jezreel. The name **Jezreel** means scattered, and could be used in a negative sense, as in Hosea 1:4-5. However, it was also the word used to describe the good scattering of seed, i.e. sowing. Here, the Lord promises glorious redemption of the name Jezreel, which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgement. Now it becomes a prophecy of the promise: **I will sow him for myself in the land.** God will restore his people to abundance and blessing. Scattering will be transformed into sowing.

I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah. Hosea's second child, a daughter, was named Lo-Ruhamah, meaning 'No Mercy' (Hosea 1:6). That name, originally given as a marker of judgement, is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

I will say to Lo-ammi, 'You are my people'. Hosea's third child, a son, was named Lo-Ammi, meaning 'Not My People' (Hosea 1:9). That name, again originally given as a marker of judgement, is also transformed into a mark of restoration.

He shall say, 'You are my God.' With this, the restoration is complete. The Lord relates to his people as their God, and his people relate to him as his people. This is relationship, full of warmth and love, and what God longs for.

Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the love of their followers? Which of them ever asked, "Do you love me?" False gods do not want love, they want fear, obedience, slave-like sacrifice and devotion. However, the true God, the living God, is not satisfied with just his people's fear, their obedience, or even with their slave-like sacrifice and devotion. He wants their love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with him. If Christians miss this, they miss the heart of God's work in them and for them. They see complete restoration. All three of Hosea's children, named as marks of judgement, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!