



## Hosea - Chapter Three

### I Hosea 1:1-3:5 - Biographical: Hosea's Family (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Three

Hosea returns to his own marriage situation, which is still an image for God and Israel. Israel's hope, like Judah's, lies with the house of David.

#### I.e Hosea 3:1-5 - Further Assurances of God's Redeeming Love

Refer to the chapter summary above.

<sup>1</sup> The Lord said to me again, 'Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.'

#### Hosea 3:1

Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress. Although the name of this woman is not stated, she should be understood as Gomer, Hosea's wife in Chapters 1-2; otherwise, the analogy of the woman to Israel breaks down. It is Israel, the adulteress, that the Lord pursues, not another people. Hosea is to retrieve his adulterous wife so that Israel will clearly know that the Lord still loves Israel, his spiritually unfaithful wife.

This reveals that although Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:7-8 permit divorce when adultery breaks the marriage union, it by no means commands divorce. If God commanded divorce in the case of adultery, then he would go against his own command here. This also shows an important principle about love: Hosea is directed to love, even when it must have been hard to love. People are filled with many romantic illusions about love, and one of these illusions is that love has very little to do with personal will, for a person is just

captivated by love and follow whatever course it leads. But in principle, the Scriptures reveal another way - that love is largely a matter of the will, and when individuals direct themselves to love someone God tells them they must love, it can and will happen. This is why the frequent occurrence 'we're not in love anymore' is not valid grounds for a bad relationship or divorce. It assumes that love is something beyond or outside of a person's will.

**Having said this, it does not mean that Christians have to remain within a bad relationship just because the Bible commands them to love others. Sometimes it is more loving to release someone from a bad marriage than it would be to keep them bound up in it.**

Just as the Lord loves the people of Israel. Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? He did so, not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the Lord's relationship with his people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the Lord still loved them: <<*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us*>> (Romans 5:8), and: <<*We love because he first loved us*>> (1 John 4:19). When one thinks of the greatness of God's love and compassion towards them, it should make them much more loving, compassionate, and forgiving towards others.

Though they love raisin cakes probably refers to some rite in the Canaanite cult.

<sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine.

### Hosea 3:2

The word bought refers to some kind of trade, such as its use in: <<*You shall purchase food from them for money, so that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them for money, so that you may drink*>> (Deuteronomy 2:6), which traditionally has been understood to mean redeeming Gomer from slavery, although the exact custom is unknown. Some interpreters hold that it is unlikely that Gomer had become a bondservant, as the price for a slave was 30 shekels, not fifteen and some barley: <<*If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slave-owner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned*>> (Exodus 21:32), <<*If the person is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels*>> (Leviticus 27:4), and: <<*I then said to them, 'If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.'* So they weighed out as my wages *thirty shekels of silver*>> (Zechariah 11:12). Other interpreters, however, think that fifteen shekels plus some barley and wine could have been the agreed-upon price for this particular slave, and 30 shekels may not have been the standard price for every slave in every circumstance. In any case, the amount paid is not great, and it shows the desperate condition into which Gomer had fallen.

Hosea did not really need to 'buy' his own wife, to hire her as a prostitute. She was his wife! However, as a display of love and commitment, he goes the extra mile, beyond what is expected or even reasonable. In providing this way for his own wife, Hosea also showed her: "I can give you what the others can. You do not need them. Let me show you how I can provide for your needs."

<sup>3</sup> And I said to her, 'You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, nor I with you.' <sup>4</sup> For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

### Hosea 3:3-4

You must remain as mine has the force of a command. The point of paying Gomer was not just to get her to give up her trade as a prostitute or to entice her back from her adulterous affair, whichever is intended. It was to bring her into relationship with Hosea, her husband. Relationship and living together was the primary aim. The segregation of Gomer/Israel will lead to her purification, rededication, and renewal. This segregation will be an extensive, although undefined, time of the absence of those things that constituted Israel's apostasy, namely, king and prince, who failed in keeping Israel faithful to the Lord (Hosea 1:4 and 8:4); sacrifice, which they offered to the Baals (Hosea 11:2 and 13:1-2); the cult pillar (Hosea 10:2), popular in Canaanite religion; the ephod, which degenerated into a tool for magical rites; and teraphim or household gods, idols prohibited from Israel's religion; refer to Judges 17:5 and 18:14, 2 Kings 23:24 and Zechariah 10:2. The Lord's purging, far from being incompatible with his love, is a major aspect of it.

During this time the phrase nor I with you is reassuring and resonates covenant promises and divine support. The Lord God doggedly persists with his people during these trying times. However, Israel must not play the whore. The lesson having been learned, Israel will be restored beyond all expectation: <<*The Lord your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors*>> (Deuteronomy 30:5). Paul expresses a similar sentiment: <<*And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again*>> (Romans 11:23).

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

## Hosea 3:5

Afterwards the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God. In this time of political and spiritual ruin, Israel will return and seek the Lord again. This will mark their restoration, and there will be no restoration until they turn back to the Lord.

To call David their king is significant for the northern kingdom, which has been in revolt against the house of David for two centuries. They must return in order to be full participants in God's covenant. In other words, God intends to honour the covenant he made with David in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. It is from the house of David that the ultimate king for God's people will come, as indicated in the term the latter days: *<<In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it>>* (Isaiah 2:2). God has a glorious future in store for all of his people.

This shows that this prophecy will be ultimately fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, where David will reign over Israel: *<<Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you>>* (Isaiah 55:3-5), *<<But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them>>* (Jeremiah 30:9), *<<I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely>>* (Ezekiel 34:23-25), and: *<<In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem>>* (Micah 4:1-2). However, any individual right now can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if only they will turn to the Lord.