

THE BOOK OF HOSEA
"Return and Blessing"
Hosea 14:1-9

January 30, 1983

INTRODUCTION

1. This is one of the most beautiful chapters in the whole book of Hosea. It is a fitting close to the prophecy. It should be compared with chapter two.
2. Huge billows of denunciation have rolled upon Israel because of their enormous apostasy. The highpoint may well be 13:16 (which is v. 1 of chapt. 14 in original Hebrew).
3. Now God speaks in tenderness and grace (cf. Luke 19:42). His grace shines through the threatening clouds of judgment.

1. INVITATION v. 1.

The verb "return" is an intensive form in the Hebrew and means return at once and completely. It is not to a system, but to the "Lord thy God," i.e., a personal relationship. The reason for this call to return is the failure of the nation. Being their God "from Egypt" gives Him His right to issue this call (13:9). The application to the present believer is clear.

2. SUPPLICATION vv. 2, 3.

Words and not sacrifices are the issue--words of true repentance (cf. Psa. 78:36; Isa. 29:13). It is the Lord who is to be addressed. The series of confessions are bold:

a. Take away

Israel does not speak with a half-heart. "All" demonstrates she wants a full and complete dealing with sin. That is true penitance.

b. Receive good

Here is a positive word to God. The good is offered to the Lord. It is the personal answer to the plea to "take away."

c. Payment made

The "calf" had been an idol (13:2), but now the word is used of true confession to God by the lips (Psa. 69:30, 31; Heb. 13:15).

d. Shift effected v. 3.

The three besetting sins of Israel are categorized: 1) Trust in Assyria is rejected. 2) Application to Egypt for horses is rejected. 3) Idolatry is rejected. Why all of this? The admission that "in Thee the fatherless find mercy."

3. RESTORATION vv. 4-7.

a. God's Promises vv. 4, 5a.

1) I will heal (cf. 11:7). Israel will not come away from idolatry without injury (sin works that way), but God will heal. The very malady of apostasy is renewed--not wounds alone.

2) I will love It is God's very being to do this. It is all unmerited and gratuitous, hence entirely independent of them. No more anger is spent on Israel.

3) I will be Three times dew is mentioned in this book: a) 6:4--the goodness of Israel vanished. b) 13:3--the transitoriness of Israel. c) Here--God will be the constant dew to water Israel unto fructification. It is His invigorating power to bring forth. There is nothing evanescent about it.

b. Israel's Response vv. 5b-7.

1) He shall grow. Here purity and productivity are in focus. Reportedly one lily will produce 50 bulbs.

2) He shall cast forth. The mention of Lebanon points to durability. Cedars of Lebanon accent firmness and perpetuity.

3) His branches shall spread. The aromatic freshness of the restored nation is noted here. But her fruitfulness is the real concern--great spread.

4) He shall return. Formerly they dwelt, but now they return and that for three reasons: a) To revive as corn. b) To grow as a vine. c) To smell like wine. All of these images speak of blessing overflowing.

4. APPLICATION v. 8.

While there is some discussion as to whom these words refer, the context seems best to attribute them to Israel. The nation applies all to herself.

a. What have I?

The past madness for idols is completely disclaimed. A break has been made once and for all.

b. I have yielded.

The commitment to God is threefold: 1) I have heard Him. This verb means to answer. 2) I have observed. This verb means to look intently for. 3) I am like green cypress. Why all this? One answer: Acknowledgement of resources in God. Hence the cure for apostasy is a restored vision of God.

CONCLUSION The wise understand the truth. The prudent know it. Why? God's ways are right. Just walk in them (proving their commitment) and transgressors fall in them (proving their rejections). Which are you?