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Introduction

The prophet exhorts his people to speak and to act as became those who obtained mercy of God; and to remonstrate strongly against the conduct of their mother, (Samaria), whose captivity is threatened on account of her forsaking God, and ascribing her prosperity to idols, Hosea 2:1-5. As an amplification of this threatening, the prophet enumerates a series of afflictions which were to befall her to bring her to a sense of her duty to God; and of her folly in seeking after idols, and falsely ascribing to them the blessings of Providence, Hosea 2:6-13. After these corrections, however, God promises to conduct Israel safely to their own land; perhaps alluding to their restoration from the Babylonish captivity, for this prophecy is supposed to have been delivered about two hundred and fifty years prior to this event, Hosea 2:14, Hosea 2:15. He farther engages to deal with them as a tender husband, and not as a severe master, as were the idols which they served, Hosea 2:16, Hosea 2:17. The rest of the chapter promises the people of God, the true Israel, security from every evil, with the possession of every blessing, under a new covenant; and that in terms full of beauty, energy, and consolation. Heaven and earth, and whatever they contain; all nature, and the God of nature, are represented as uniting to make the people of God happy; so that if they only breathe a wish, one part of nature, animate or inanimate, echoes it to another, and all join in sweet harmony to transmit it to the ear of the Almighty. "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

Verse 1

Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi - I prefer the interpretation of these proper names. Say ye unto your brethren, My People; and, to your sisters, who have Obtained Mercy.

Verse 2

Plead with your mother - People of Judah, accuse your mother, (Jerusalem), who has abandoned my worship, and is become idolatrous, convince her of her folly and wickedness, and let her return to him from whom she has so deeply revolted.

Verse 3

Lest I strip her naked - Lest I expose her to infamy, want, and punishment. The punishment of an adulteress among the ancient Germans was this: "They shaved off her hair, stripped her naked in the presence of her relatives, and in this state drove her from the house of her husband." See on Isaiah 3:17 (note); and see also Ezekiel 16:39; Ezekiel 23:26. However reproachful this might be to such delinquents, it had no tendency to promote their moral reformation.

And set her like a dry land - The Israelites, if obedient, were promised a land flowing with milk and honey; but, should they be disobedient, the reverse. And this is what God here threatens against disobedient Israel.

Verse 4

They be the children of whoredoms - They are all idolaters; and have been consecrated to idols, whose marks they bear.

Verse 5

That give me my bread - See the note on Jeremiah 44:17-18 (note), where nearly the same words are found and illustrated.

Verse 6

I will hedge up thy way with thorns - I will put it out of your power to escape the judgments I have threatened; and, in spite of all your attachment to your idols, you shall find that they can give you neither bread, nor water, nor wool, nor flax, nor oil, nor drink. And ye shall be brought into such circumstances, that the pursuit of your expensive idolatry shall be impossible. And she shall be led so deep into captivity, as never to find the road back to her own land. And this is the fact; for those who were carried away into Assyria have been lost among the nations, few of them having ever returned to Judea. And, if in being, where they are now is utterly unknown.

Verse 8

For she did not know that I gave her corn - How often are the gifts of God's immediate bounty attributed to fortuitous causes - to any cause but the right one!

Which they prepared for Baal - And how often are the gifts of God's bounty perverted into means of

dishonoring him! God gives us wisdom, strength, and property; and we use them to sin against him with the greater skill, power, and effect! Were the goods those of the enemy, in whose service they are employed, the crime would be the less. But the crime is deeply engrained, when God's property is made the instrument to dishonor himself.

Verse 9

Therefore will I return, and take away - In the course of my providence, I will withhold those benefits which she has prostituted to her idolatrous services. And I will neither give the land rain, nor fruitful seasons.

Verse 10

In the sight of her lovers - Her idols, and her faithful or faithless allies.

Verse 11

Her feast days - Jerusalem shall be pillaged and destroyed; and therefore all her joyous assemblies, and religious feasts, etc., shall cease.

Verse 12

These are my rewards - They attributed all the blessings of Providence as rewards received from the idols which they worshipped.

Verse 13

Days of Baalim - To visit signifies to inflict punishment; the days are taken for the acts of idolatrous worship committed on them; and Baalim means the multitude of false gods worshipped by them. Baal was a general name for a male idol, as Astarte was for a female. Baalim includes all the male idols, as Ashtaroth all those that were female. But the species of idol was often designated by some adjunct; as Baal-Zebub, Baal-Peor, Baal-Zephon, Baal-Berith, etc.

Her earrings - *נִזְמָה* (nizmah), signifies rather a nose jewel. These are worn by females in the East to the present day, in great abundance.

And her jewels - *כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב* (vechelyatah), rings, armlets, bracelets, ankle-rings, and ornaments of this kind.

Verse 14

I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her - After inflicting many judgments upon her, I will restore her again. I will deal with her as a very affectionate husband would do to an unfaithful wife. Instead of making her a public example, he takes her in private, talks to and reasons with her; puts her on her good behavior; promises to pass by all, and forgive all, if she will now amend her ways. In the meantime he provides what is necessary for her wants and comfortable support, and thus opening a door of hope for her, she may be fully reconciled; rejoice as at the beginning, when he first took her by the hand, and she became his bride. This is most probably the simple meaning of the above metaphorical expressions. The valley on Achor was very fruitful; it lay to the north of Jericho, not far from Gilgal See Isaiah 65:10.

Verse 15

She shall sing there - There she shall sing the responsive song as on high festival occasions, and in marriage ceremonies. The Book of Song of Solomon is of this sort.

Verse 16

Thou shalt call me Ishi - That is, my man, or my husband; a title of love and affection; and not Baali, my master, a title exciting fear and apprehension; which, howsoever good in itself, was now rendered improper to be applied to Jehovah, having been prostituted to false gods. This intimated that they should scrupulously avoid idolatry; and they had such a full proof of the inefficacy of their idolatrous worship that, after their captivity, they never more served idols.

Verse 18

Will I make a covenant for them - I will make an agreement between them and the birds, beasts, and reptiles, so that they shall not be injured by those; their flocks shall not be destroyed, nor their crops spoiled. I will also prevent every species of war, that they may no more have the calamities that arise from that source. They shall also be safe from robbers and nightly alarms; for I will make them to lie down in safety.

Verse 19

I will betroth thee unto me - The people are always considered under the emblem of a wife unfaithful to her husband.

In righteousness - According to law, reason, and equity.

In judgment - According to what is fit and becoming.

In lovingkindness - Having the utmost affection and love for thee.

In mercies - Forgiving and blotting out all past miscarriages. Or there may be an allusion here to the dowry given by the husband to his wife: "œI will give righteousness,â€• etc., as a dowry.

Verse 20

In faithfulness - Thou shalt no more prostitute thyself to idols, but be faithful to him who calls himself thy husband.

Thou shalt know the Lord - There shall be no more infidelity on thy part nor divorce on mine; and thou shalt experience me to be the sole, present, and eternal good of thy immortal spirit: and when this conviction is fully rooted then there can be no more idolatry, for it shall be seen that an idol is nothing in the world.

Verse 21

I will hear, saith the Lord - The sentence is repeated, to show how fully the thing was determined by the Almighty, and how implicitly they might depend on the Divine promise.

I will hear the heavens - The visible heavens, the atmosphere, where vapours are collected. The clouds, when they wish to deposit their fertilizing showers upon the earth.

They shall hear the earth - When it seems to supplicate for rain.

Verse 22

Shall hear the corn, and the wine - When they seem to express a desire to supply the wants of man.

And they shall hear Jezreel - The destitute people who are in want of the necessaries of life.

This most elegant gradation in the exertion of the influences of nature, for the supply of the wants of man, may be considered thus: -

1. There is a concord, harmony, and mutual influence, which God has established in the parts of created nature, in reference to the support and preservation of the human race.

2. God alone is the author of all this; and unless he give his command, communicate his energetic influence to the different parts of nature, these effects will not, cannot be produced.

3. Jezreel, the people who have been dispersed for their iniquities, and now about to be sown or planted in their own land, will require the most fostering care. See on Hosea 2:23 (note).

4. They are heard in desiring oil, wine, and corn. These are necessary to the support and comfort of life; and to those the desire of animal life naturally aspires.

5. These products are looked for from the Earth. On it, and by it, grass grows for the cattle, and corn for the service of man.

6. The seeds or germs, whence proceed corn, wine, and oil, live and grow in the earth; but cannot come to perfection, unless the earth be impregnated with the dews and rains from the clouds. They are therefore represented as imploring the heavens to collect their clouds, to pour down their fructifying moisture upon it.

7. The clouds, or materials of which they are composed, not being able to arrange themselves, nor aggregate themselves so as to meet those demands, prevent drought, and maintain an effective vegetation, are represented as calling upon the heavens to form, arrange, and supply them with the requisite quantity of moisture.

8. God, who is the author of all being and all bounty, dependent on nothing, comes forward and says, I will hear the heavens, the clouds which are gathered in the atmosphere; he will arrange the particles, saturate those that are light, till they become sufficiently impregnated with the necessary fluid; and then direct them in his providence where to deposit their contents. And,

9. When brought to the proper place, he will shake them with his winds, or strike them with his thunder, so as to cause them to fall down in drops to fertilize the earth with their showers.

Thus then: -

1. God works upon the heavens.

2. In them the clouds are collected.

3. The clouds drop their moisture upon the earth.

4. The earth exerts its vegetative influence upon the germs which it contains.

5. They expand, increase, and become matured, under the genial influences of the heavens, sun, air, water, from the clouds, etc.

6. Man receives and applies those bounties of Providence, and variously prepares them for the support and comfort of life.

Take all this in still fewer words: -

As Jezreel or the Israelites are here considered as perishing for want of food, all inanimate nature is represented as invoking God in their behalf.

1. The heavens have prayed that they be stored with clouds, that they may drop down fatness upon the earth.

2. The Lord answers the heavens, and clouds are formed.

3. The earth invokes the clouds, that they may drop down their fatness into its bosom.

4. The bottles of heaven are, consequently, unstopped for this purpose.

5. Then the corn, wine, and olive, implore the earth to put forth its vegetative energy.

6. The earth answers; and corn, wine, and oil are produced.

7. Jezreel cries for the necessaries of life, and the abundance of the above supplies all his wants.

All these are dependent on each other, as the links are which constitute a chain; and God has the government of the whole; and he manages all for the benefit of man. How wondrous is this providence! How gracious is this God!

Here is a series of prosopopoeias together. Corn, wine, oil, the earth, the clouds and their contents, the heavens, sun, moon, etc., are all represented as intelligent beings, speaking to and influencing each other. God is at one end of the chain, and Man at the other; and by means of the intermediate links the latter is kept in a state of continued dependence upon the former for life, breath, and all things.

Verse 23

I will sow her - Alluding to the import of the name Jezreel, the seed of God. Then shall it appear that God has shown mercy to them that had not obtained mercy. Then the covenant of God will be renewed; for he will call them his people who were not his people; and they shall call Jehovah their God, who before had him not for the object of their worship. It does not appear that these promises have had their fulfillment among the Jews. They must either be understood of the blessings experienced by the Gentiles on their conversion to God by the preaching of the Gospel, or are yet to be fulfilled to the Jews on their embracing the Gospel, and being brought back to their own land.

The sentences in the latter part of this verse are very abrupt, but exceedingly expressive; leaving out those words supplied by the translators, and which unnerve the passage, it stands thus: I will say to Not My People, Thou My People; and they shall say, My God.