

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 3

In this chapter is an order to the prophet to love an adulterous woman beloved of her friend, and by this parable to express the love of God to Israel, and their ingratitude to him, (~~XXII~~ Hosea 3:1), the prophet's execution of that order, making a purchase of her, and a covenant with her, which set forth the captive, servile, mean, and abject state of that people, (~~XXII~~ Hosea 3:2,3), which is explained of their being deprived for a long time of civil and ecclesiastic government, (~~XXII~~ Hosea 3:4), and the chapter is concluded with a prophecy and promise of their conversion to Christ in the latter day, (~~XXII~~ Hosea 3:5).

Ver. 1. *Then said the Lord unto me*, etc.] Or, as the Targum,

“the Lord said unto me again”;

for the word yet or again is to be joined to this, and not the following clause; and shows that this is a new vision, prophecy, or parable, though respecting the same persons and things:

go, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress; not the prophet's wife, not Gomer, but some other feigned person; beloved either of her own husband, as the Targum and Jarchi, notwithstanding her unchastity and unfaithfulness to him; or of another man, as Aben Ezra, who had a very great respect for her, courted her, and perhaps had betrothed her, but had not yet consummated the marriage; and, though a harlot, loved her dearly, and could not get off his affections from her, but hankered after her; or of the prophet, as Kimchi, who paraphrases it,

“thou shall love her, and be to her a friend;”

to protect and defend her, as harlots used to have one in particular they called their friend, by whose name they were called, and was a cover to them. The sense is, that the prophet was to go to the people of Israel, and deliver this parable to them, setting forth their state and condition, and their behaviour towards God, and his great love to them, notwithstanding

all their baseness and ingratitude; it was as if a woman that was either married or betrothed, or that either had a husband or a suitor that so dearly loved her, that though she was guilty of uncleanness, and continued in it, yet would not leave her; and which is thus expressed by the Targum,

“go, deliver a prophecy against the house of Israel, who are like a woman dear to her husband; and though she commits fornication against him, yet he so loves her that he will not put her away:”

according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel; or such is the love of the Lord to them; for though they were guilty of idolatry, intemperance, and other immoralities, yet still he loved them, and formed designs of grace and goodness for them. And thus, though God does not love sinners as such; yet he loves them, though they are sinners, and when and while they are such; as appears by his choice of them, and covenant with them, by Christ’s dying for them while sinners, and by his quickening them when dead in trespasses and sins:

who look to other gods; or “though they look to other gods”^{f50}; look to them and worship them, pray unto them, put their trust in them, and expect good things from them:

and love flagons of wine, or “tubs of grapes”^{f51}; or of wine made of them; or lumps of raisins, cakes or junkets made of them and other things, as the Septuagint; and may respect either the drunkenness and intemperance of the ten tribes; (see ^{<2301>}Isaiah 28:1), they loved, as Kimchi says, the delights of the world, and not the law and commandments of God; or the feasts that were made in the temples of their idols they loved good eating and drinking, and that made them like idolatry the better for the sake of those things; (see ^{<0316>}Exodus 32:6), for the Heathens used to eat and drink to excess at their sacrifices: hence Diogenes^{f52} the philosopher was very angry with those who sacrificed to the gods for their health, yet in their sacrifices feasted to the prejudice of their health.

Ver. 2. *So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver*, etc.] Or, “fifteen shekels”, which was about one pound seventeen shillings and six pence of our money, reckoning a shekel at two shillings and six pence; though some make it to be but two shillings and four pence; this was but half the price of a servant, (^{<0213>}Exodus 21:32), and alludes to the dowry which men used to give to women at their marriage; (see ^{<0125>}1 Samuel 18:25). The word here used has the signification of digging; hence the Vulgate Latin version

renders it, “I dug her”; and the abettors and defenders of it think it refers to the digging, or boring the ears of a servant that chose to continue with his master, (^{<0216>}Exodus 21:6), but the word is used in the sense of buying, (^{<0015>}Genesis 1:5 ^{<0816>}Deuteronomy 2:6), and so Jarchi says it has the sense of merchandise or bargaining; and in the sea coasts he observes, that they call **hrykm**, a purchase, **hryk**. Perhaps the word is better rendered by the Septuagint and Arabic versions, “hired”; and ^{<Arabic>} “cara” in the Arabic language signifies “to hire”; so it is used in (^{<4230>}Acts 28:30). So with the Turks, as Monsieur Thevenot^{f53} observes, a letter out of beasts to hire is called “moucre” or “moukir”, which comes from the Arabic word “kira”, he says, which signifies to let or hire; and is here fitly used of a harlot. The Jews have many whims and fancies about these fifteen pieces of silver. The Targum, and Pesikta in Jarchi, take them to respect the fifteenth day of Nisan, on which the Israelites were redeemed out of Egypt; according to Aben Ezra, they design the fifteen kings of Judah, from Rehoboam to the captivity, reckoning the sons of Josiah as one, being brethren; according to others, in Kimchi, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes; and, according to Abarbinel, the fifteen prophets that prophesied of the redemption:

and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley; a “homer” held ten “ephahs”, and a “lethec”, or “half homer”, five “ephahs”, or so many bushels, these making the number fifteen: again, according to Saadiah, they design Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and the twelve tribes; and, according to Aben Ezra, the number of the high priests in the kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, a homer making thirty sheahs, and a half homer fifteen, in all forty five; but according to others, in Kimchi, these design the forty five days between the coming of the Israelites out of Egypt and their receiving the law: but, leaving these fancies, as the number of shekels given for her was but a low price, and shows what an estimate was made of her; and barley being the coarsest of grain, and bread made of it, that of the worst sort, which the poorer people eat; may be expressive of the captive, servile, mean, and abject state of the people of Israel, from the time of their captivity to their conversion to Christ, as is after more fully explained.

Ver. 3. *And I said unto her*, etc.] Having bought or hired her; this was the covenant or agreement he made with her,

thou shall abide for me many days; dwell alone in some solitary and separate place, and have no conversation with any, especially with men;

live like a widow that has lost her husband, and so wait for a long time till the prophet should think fit to take her to his house and bed:

thou shall not play the harlot, and thou shall not be for another man; neither prostitute herself, as she had done to her lovers; nor marry another, but keep herself chaste and single:

so will I also be for thee; wait for thee, and not take another wife; or will be thy husband, after having made proper trial and full proof of thy conduct and behaviour: the Targum paraphrases it thus;

“say, O prophet, to her, O congregation of Israel, your sins are the cause that you are carried captive many days; ye shall give yourselves to my worship and not err, nor serve idols, and even I will have mercy on you.”

The whole is explained in the following words:

Ver. 4. *For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince,* etc.] Without any form of civil government, either regal or without any civil magistrate, either superior or subordinate, of their own; being subject to the kings and princes of other nations, as the ten tribes were from their captivity by Shalmaneser, to the coming of Christ, which was about seven hundred years; and from that time the tribes of Judah and Benjamin have had no kings and princes among them, for the space of nineteen hundred years, which may very well be called “many days”. This answers to the harlot’s abiding for the prophet many days, in the parable:

and without a sacrifice; the daily sacrifice, which has ceased as long as before observed; and any other sacrifice of slain beasts, as the passover lamb, etc.; the Jews not thinking it lawful to offer sacrifice in a strange land, or any where but upon the altar in Jerusalem; and to this day have no such sacrifices among them, though they have no notion of the abrogation of them, as the Christians have; but so it is ordered in Providence, that they should be without them, being kept out of their own land, that this and other prophecies might be fulfilled:

and without an image, or “statue”: such as were made for Baal, or as were the calves at Daniel and Bethel; and though the people of Israel were very subject to idolatry, and set up images and statues for worship before their

captivities, yet since have nothing of image worship among them, but strictly observe the command.

And without an ephod; a linen garment wore by the high priests under the law, to which the breastplate was fastened, which had in it the Urim and Thummim; and which were wanting in the second temple, and have been ever since; so that these people have been so long without this way and means of inquiry of God about future things, (see ^{<1506>}Ezra 2:63), this may be put for the whole priesthood, now ceased in a proper sense; and so the Septuagint render it, “without a priesthood”; so that the Jews are without any form of government, civil or ecclesiastical; they have neither princely nor priestly power: “and without teraphim”; which some understand to be the same with the Urim and Thummim; and so the Septuagint render it, “without manifestations”; by which they are thought to mean the Urim, which according to them so signifies: but the word is generally thought to design some little images or idols, like the penates or household gods of the Romans, which were consulted about future things; and so the Jews commonly understand it, and some describe them thus^{f54},

“what are the “teraphim?” they slay the firstborn of a man, cut off his head, and pickle it with salt and oil, and inscribe on a plate of gold the name of an unclean spirit, and put that under his tongue; then they place it in a wall, and light candles before it, and pray unto it, and it talks with them.”

But now, according to this prophecy, the Jews in their captivity should have no way and means of knowing future things, either in a lawful or unlawful manner; (see ^{<1574>}Psalm 74:9). How the whole of this prophecy is now fulfilled in them, hear what they themselves say, particularly Kimchi;

“these are the days of the captivity in which we now are at this day; we have no king nor prince out of Israel; for we are in the power of the nations, and of their kings and princes; and have no sacrifice for God, nor image for idols; no “ephod” for God, that declares future things; and no “teraphim” for idolatry, which show things to come, according to the mind of those that believe in them;”

and so Jarchi

“without a sacrifice in the sanctuary in Judah; without an image of Baal in Samaria, for the kings of Israel; without an ephod of Urim

and Thummim, that declares hidden things; and “teraphim” made for a time to speak of, and show things that are secret;”

and to the same purpose Aben Ezra. The Targum is,

“without a king of the house of David, and without a ruler over Israel; without sacrifice for acceptance in Jerusalem; and without a high place in Samaria; and without an ephod, and him that shows;”

i.e. what shall come to pass. The Syriac version renders the last clause, “without one that offers incense”; and the Arabic version, “without one that teaches”.

Ver. 5. *Afterward shall the children of Israel return*, etc.] The ten tribes of Israel, and also the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which are included in the name of Israel, as Aben Ezra interprets it; and these are joined together in parallel places; (see ^{<281B>}Jeremiah 30:3,9 ^{<281B>}50:4,5) for though they did not go into captivity together, yet their return and conversion will be at the same time; and they are all spoken of under the name of Israel by the Apostle Paul, when he foretells their conversion and salvation, (^{<512B>}Romans 11:26). The “return” of them, here prophesied of, does not barely mean their return to their own land, which will be at this time; (see ^{<281B>}Jeremiah 30:3 ^{<3721>}Ezekiel 37:21,22 ^{<1195>}Amos 9:15), but their return to the Lord by repentance; when they shall repent of, and turn from, their sinful course of life, and particularly of their unbelief and rejection of the true Messiah, and embrace him; and of their traditions and false ways of worship, which they shall discard; and of their own righteousness they shall now renounce; and shall turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in him for righteousness, life, and salvation:

and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; these may be considered either as two distinct persons, Jehovah the Father, and the Messiah, as in (^{<3723>}Ezekiel 34:23,24) and so the Targum,

“and seek the worship of the Lord their God, and obey Messiah the Son of David their King;”

who will be both equally sought after, and unto, by them; and which is a proof of the divinity of the Messiah, and of his equality with God his Father; as well as points out the right way in which Jehovah is to be sought, namely, with Christ, or in him, in whom he is a God gracious and merciful; and to seek and know both the one and the other is eternal life,

(^{<817B>}John 17:3) or else all this is to be understood of the Messiah, rendering the words, “and seek the Lord their God, even David their King” as also (^{<2810>}Jeremiah 30:9, ^{<610B>}Jude 1:3), may be rendered; and so these are all epithets, titles, and characters of him: he is Jehovah, the everlasting I AM; the true God, and eternal life; Immanuel, God with us; God in our nature, manifest in the flesh; the Son of David, and his antitype, often called David in Scripture. (^{<880B>}Psalm 89:3,4 ^{<2624>}Ezekiel 34:24 37:24), King of kings, King of the saints, of his church, and will be owned as such by the Jews at the time of their conversion, though they have rejected him; but now they will receive him, and be subject to him; they will seek to him for salvation, for the pardon of their sins, for righteousness, for rest, for food, for protection and safety, and to serve and obey him: and this seeking will not be out of curiosity, or in a carnal way, or for selfish ends; nor hypocritically; but with their whole hearts, and diligently, and in earnest. Not only the Targum interprets this of Messiah the Son of David, but Aben Ezra on the place says, this is the Messiah; and it is applied to him, and his times, by other Jewish writers, both ancient and modern. In an ancient book^{f55} of theirs, speaking of David, it is said, the holy blessed God is well pleased with him in this world, and in the world to come; in this world, as it is written, “and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake”, (^{<1216>}2 Kings 20:6), and in the world to come, as it is written,

they shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King, etc.; David was King in this world, and David shall be King in the time to come. And in both Talmuds the words are applied to the Messiah; in one of them^{f56}, after quoting this text, it is added, the Rabbins say this is the King Messiah; if of the living, David is his name; if of the dead, David is his name. And in the other^{f57}, it is said, when Jerusalem is built, David comes; that is, the Son of David, the Messiah; which is proved by this passage, “afterwards the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King”; that is, as the gloss interprets it, after they shall return to the house of the sanctuary, or the temple: so Abarbinel, both in his commentary upon this place, and elsewhere^{f58}, as he interprets the “one head” in (^{<2011B>}Hosea 1:11), of Messiah ben Ephraim, whom he, with the rest of his tribe, feign shall perish in war; so he observes, that then Israel shall seek David their King, the rod out of the root of Jesse, whom the Lord shall choose, and cause to reign over them. And another of their later writers^{f59} interprets the passage of the Messiah, and produces it to prove against the Christians that

he should come in the end of days, or in the latter days; as it is plain and certain that our Jesus, the true Messiah, came at the end of the Jewish world, in the last days of their civil and church state; (see ^{<S000>}Hebrews 1:1,2 ^{<S026>}9:26),

and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter day; not man, but the Lord; not his wrath and vengeance, but his goodness; not with a servile, but with a godly filial fear; a fear influenced by the blessings of goodness they shall now be partakers of, particularly pardoning grace and mercy, (^{<S013>}Psalm 130:3,4), they shall fear the Lord, who is good, and goodness itself, and Christ, in whom the goodness of God is displayed, and who is prevented with the blessings of goodness for his people: it may be rendered, they “shall fear”, or “come fearing to the Lord, and his goodness”,^{f60} being sensible of their sin, danger, and misery; they shall flee to the Lord as to their city of refuge, and to the blessings of his goodness they see their need of; and this they shall do in haste, as Aben Ezra interprets it, comparing it with (^{<S011>}Hosea 11:11). The Septuagint version is, “they shall be amazed at the Lord, and his good things”; the Syriac version, “they shall know the Lord, and his goodness”: the Arabic version, they shall confess the Lord, and his benefits; the Targum,

“they shall give themselves to the service of the Lord, and his goodness shall be multiplied, which shall come to them in the end of days;”

or, as Aben Ezra, in the end of the prophecy of the prophets, in future time, in the times of the Messiah; which, as Kimchi serves, are always meant by the last days; and here it signifies the latter day of the last days, or of the Gospel dispensation.