

Hosea 2:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

Analysis

The mother's motivation: 'For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.' Israel's adultery was motivated by false belief that Baal provided agricultural blessings—bread, water, wool, flax, oil, drink (basic sustenance and luxury). The Hebrew 'lovers' (me'ahabay) ironically describes Israel pursuing false gods as sources of provision. This is practical atheism: attributing God's gifts to created things or false deities. 'Done shamefully' (hovish) indicates disgraceful, humiliating behavior. The tragedy: Israel credits Baal for what YHWH provides (v. 8). Idolatry always misattributes blessings, failing to recognize the true Source. Romans 1:21-25 describes this: knowing God but not honoring Him, worshiping creation rather than Creator. Only the gospel reveals that Christ is the true Provider of all we need.

Historical Context

Canaanite Baal worship centered on fertility cult beliefs: Baal (storm/rain god) impregnated earth goddess, producing crops. Cult prostitution supposedly magically stimulated this divine reproduction. Israel's agricultural economy made them vulnerable to this deception—fear of famine drove them to 'insurance'

through Baal worship while maintaining nominal YHWH worship. Deuteronomy 7:12-13 and 28:1-14 explicitly promise agricultural blessing for covenant obedience, and 28:15-68 threatens agricultural curses for disobedience. That Israel sought blessing from Baal rather than obeying YHWH showed both theological ignorance and willful rebellion. Archaeological evidence confirms widespread Baal worship in 8th century Israel. This demonstrates how economic anxiety can drive idolatry—trusting created systems rather than Creator.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What 'lovers' (false sources of security, provision, or identity) do I pursue instead of recognizing God as the source of all good gifts?
2. How does economic anxiety tempt me toward functional atheism—living as though prosperity depends on my efforts or systems rather than God's providence?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	זָנְתָהּ	אֲמָם	הֵב יָשָׁה			
H3588	hath played the harlot	For their mother	them hath done shamefully			
	H2181	H517	H3001			
הַזֹּנֶת	כִּי	אָמַרְהָ	אַחֲרַי	מֵאַהֲבָי	נָתַנִּי	
she that conceived	H3588	for she said	H1980	after	my lovers	that give
H2029		H559	H310	H157	H5414	
לֶחֶמִי	וּמִיָּמִי	צֻמָּה	וּפִשְׁתִּי	שֶׁמֶן	וְשִׁקְוִי:	
me my bread	and my water	my wool	and my flax	mine oil	and my drink	
H3899	H4325	H6785	H6593	H8081	H8250	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:21 (Parallel theme): How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Hosea 2:8 (Parallel theme): For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

Hosea 3:1 (Love): Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.