

Hosea 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

Analysis

Prayer for barrenness: 'Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.' Hosea's anguished prayer: תְּנוּלָהֶם יְהֹוָה מִה-תִּתְנַתֵּן (ten-lahem YHWH mah-titten, Give them, O LORD: what will You give?). Answer: רְקֵם מַשְׁקֵל וְשָׁדִים צְמָקִים (rechem mashkil veshadayim tsomeqim, miscarrying womb and dry breasts). This shocking prayer requests covenant curse (Deuteronomy 28:18) as mercy—better not born than born for slaughter. It demonstrates that sometimes temporal loss prevents greater suffering. Only Christ transforms curse into blessing, death into life (John 10:10).

Historical Context

Understanding Hosea's prayer requires recognizing historical context: Assyrian conquest meant children faced brutal death or slavery. Archaeological evidence and Assyrian annals describe horrific treatment of conquered peoples: impalement, mutilation, enslavement. Given this certain future, barrenness becomes relative mercy—preventing children suffering such fate. The prayer echoes Job 3:11-19, Jeremiah 20:14-18—preferring non-existence to suffering. Jesus similarly warns: 'Woe unto them that give suck in those days!' (Matthew 24:19, Luke 23:29). This demonstrates that divine judgment sometimes makes life's normal blessings (fertility, children) become curses—better to lack them than see them destroyed.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Hosea's prayer for barrenness demonstrate that sometimes temporal loss is mercy compared to greater suffering?
2. What does this prayer reveal about the prophet's compassionate identification with people's suffering despite pronouncing judgment?

Interlinear Text

Give	H0	לְךָ	תְּנַתֶּן	יְהִי	הָ	מֵהֶם	תְּנַתֶּן	תְּנַתֶּן	לְקָרְבָּן	תְּנַתֶּן	לְקָרְבָּן	
	H5414			them	O LORD	H4100	Give	Give	H0		womb	H7358

מִשְׁאָכָּה	אֵל	בְּ	צְמַחִים	וְשָׂדֵה	בְּ
them	a miscarrying		breasts	and dry	

H7921 H7699 H6784

Additional Cross-References

Luke 23:29 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.