

March 8, 2024

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

RETURN, O ISRAEL, TO THE LORD YOUR GOD

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Today's First Reading

*Thus says the LORD: Return, O Israel, to the LORD, your God;
you have collapsed through your guilt.*

*Take with you words,
and return to the LORD*

*Say to him, "Forgive all iniquity,
and receive what is good, that we may render
as offerings the bullocks from our stalls.*

*Assyria will not save us,
nor shall we have horses to mount;*

*We shall say no more, 'Our god,'
to the work of our hands;
for in you the orphan finds compassion."*

I will heal their defection, says the LORD,

I will love them freely;

for my wrath is turned away from them.

I will be like the dew for Israel:

*he shall blossom like the lily;
He shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar,
and put forth his shoots.
His splendor shall be like the olive tree
and his fragrance like the Lebanon cedar.
Again they shall dwell in his shade and raise grain;
They shall blossom like the vine,
and his fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.
Ephraim! What more has he to do with idols?
I have humbled him, but I will prosper him.
"I am like a verdant cypress tree"—
Because of me you bear fruit!*

Let him who is wise understand these things; let him who is prudent know them.

Straight are the paths of the LORD, in them the just walk, but sinners stumble in them.

HOSEA 14:2-10

Reflection

The focus of this prophetic book is covenant love, which calls for strong fidelity between Israel and their God. Hosea was the first prophet to describe this covenant love as a marriage, highlighting a personal dimension to the legal framework of the Mosaic covenant.

Notice Divine activity: healing, restoration, and new life which comes freely even after Israel's infidelity:

**I will heal their defection,
I will love them freely;
for my wrath is turned away from them.
I will be like the dew for Israel:
he shall blossom like the lily;
He shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar,
and put forth his shoots.
His splendor shall be like the olive tree
and his fragrance like the Lebanon cedar.**

From Jeremiah's perspective, God is experienced as the sustainer, nurturer,

and transformer of life who offers hope to all. The nature imagery emphasizes the relationship between the restoration of human life and the restoration of the natural world. For contemporary readers it is a message reminding us that God desires the well-being and fruitfulness of all creation.



Planting Seedling into Soil
Photo by Kkarolina Grabowska

For Pondering

- Which Divine activity (healing, restoration, new life) have you either experienced or witnessed this week? What do you say to God?
 - How do you practice faithfulness to God?
 - Which verse in this passage offers you hope?
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For Prayer

*Gracious Creator God,
I thank you for your life given so freely.*

*Within me
it nurtures, transforms and
joins me to all of your creation.*

*I now give you my life
faithfully proclaiming my gratitude to you
wherever I am.*

Amen.

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