

בְּמִדְבָּר

B'midbar

(in the wilderness of)

B'midbar [Numbers] 1:1-4:20

הַפְטָרָה בַּמִּדְבָּר

Haftarah B'midbar

Hoshea [Hosea] 2:1-22

in English Bibles 1:10-2:20

Into the wilderness

Hoshea 2:14

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak upon her heart."

This passage brings to mind two main questions. One question is: when does this happen? And another question is: where is this wilderness? Let us examine Scripture to see what YHWH says in answer to these questions.

Please note that in the above passage the speaker is YHWH Himself. He is speaking about Israel, all twelve tribes. How do we know this?

Hoshea 2:2 (in English Bibles 1:11)

And the children of Y'hudah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land; for great shall be the day of Yizre'el.

In the beginning of this section of Scripture YHWH states that He is speaking about both houses, the house of Y'hudah and the house of Israel. The house of Y'hudah consists of the two tribes in the south which were Y'hudah, Benjamin and most of Levi. The house of Israel then were the other ten tribes.

Notice that after being gathered together and selecting for themselves a head, they then go up from the land. The phrase here is מִן־הָאֶרֶץ – “min-ha’aretz” which means *from the land*. The word מִן means “to separate from the whole”; in this case “to separate from the land.” The question that this brings to mind is: which land is YHWH referring to in this passage? Is YHWH referring to the land of Israel, or the land into which they have been scattered? One might first suppose that YHWH is speaking of the land of Israel. However, when we carefully consider the context of this passage we see something quite different.

In the first two verses of this passage, Hoshea 2:1-2 (in English Bibles 1:10-11), YHWH gives a summary statement which is followed by a detailed explanation in 2:3-22 (in English Bibles 2:1-20). Notice in verses 3 and 4 that YHWH has put her away because of her idolatry (adultery). Then in the next verse He makes her like a wilderness. That has already happened and that is where we currently find ourselves, in the wilderness. Verse 2:5 (in English Bibles 2:3) then speaks to the question of when does this happen, as it has already happened, for as we are waking up to return to YHWH as our Elohim, we are finding that we are in fact in the wilderness.

But notice what we find in that those who are waking up to the reality of the situation that we currently find ourselves in.

Hoshea 2:9 (in English Bibles 2:7)

“And she shall pursue after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them; then shall she say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.’”

Notice that as she (12 tribe Israel) comes to her senses, she desires to return to her first husband, who is YHWH Tzava’ot. It is for this reason that she then separates herself from her idolatrous lovers. Notice what her sons and daughters are to say to her.

Hoshea 2:4 (in English Bibles 2:2)

“Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; and let her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts;”

As the descendants of Israel are waking up we are contending with one another as to what is idolatrous in the eyes of YHWH and what is not idolatrous. It is a very ardent undertaking having been so long engaged in the worship of pagan deities. Many of the things that we do in our world today have their origins which are so distant in times past, and were used in the worship of gods whose names we no

longer even know, that it can be difficult and trying to let go of those things that we hold dear; things which are not pleasing to YHWH!

It was for this very reason that YHWH took us into the wilderness in the first place, for the idolatry of our fathers. This is where we find ourselves today. It could be that YHWH will gather us together in one place before we enter the land. Does He give us any clues in this portion of Scripture?

Hoshea 2:17 (in English Bibles 2:15)

“And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”

Notice that it will be from this place in the wilderness that YHWH will once again give to us our vineyards. YHWH seems to be saying that the entrance back into the land will be the valley of Achor. The valley of Achor was where Achor had hidden his loot from the taking of Yericho under the leadership of Yehoshua (Joshua). Achor had taken things for himself that YHWH had placed under the ban. As a result Israel failed to take Ai. So this allusion to the valley of Achor is most likely two-fold. First, YHWH is saying that we need to get rid of all those things that He has placed under the ban. Otherwise, like Achor we will be facing the death penalty!

But also YHWH could mean it in a literal sense as well. Please consider this passage.

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:9

That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:15

That which is has been long ago; and that which is to be has long ago been; and Elohim seeks again that which is passed away.

In both of these passages we see that YHWH works in cycles. As Scripture says, YHWH is the same yesterday, today and forever; for which we can be eternally thankful! As such, YHWH does again and again what He has already done. So, as YHWH says concerning the gathering together again of Israel, that it will be like when He took Israel out of Egypt the first time, could He be saying that He will once again bring us to the mountain of Sinai? It is quite possible.

We know that when Israel entered into the land and camped in the land before they took Yericho, they camped just south of the city between Yericho and the Dead Sea. Notice in this map that the Valley of Achor is actually the southern part of that plain in which Israel camped after they had crossed the Yarden River.



It is not hard to see that this valley which now bears the name of Achor was where he was camped and where he died because of his sin.

It is quite possible that YHWH is saying that when He once again enters into a covenant relationship with Israel, He will once again bring them into His land via the same route that He brought them into the land the first time.

It is important to note that being in Egypt was a type of wilderness experience. YHWH just relocated Israel within the wilderness; specifically He took them away from the pagan influences so that He could deal with them personally. But what we want to take note of is that He entered into a covenant relationship before bringing Israel into His land, before bringing her into His house.

There is one other aspect of being in the wilderness that we would like to bring out and that concerns the word “wilderness” itself. The Hebrew word is מִדְבָּר – “midbar,” which is the base word of this week’s Parasha. However, what you may not have realized was the word which מִדְבָּר comes from. It comes from דָּבַר – “davar” which means *word*, among other things. The root דָּבַר literally means to *combine separate items into one*. So when the prefix מַ which is short for מֵן is added to the beginning of דָּבַר giving us מִדְבַר, we have the combined meanings of to *combine separate items into one* preceded by the meaning of to *separate from the whole*. The idea then expressed by the combination of מַ and דָּבַר is that which was whole and complete is no longer whole and complete. Thus, the idea of wilderness is expressed. For one who is in the wilderness, either actual or metaphorical is one who is not whole or complete, but who is hopefully seeking after that wholeness.

ABBA YHWH, do what it takes to bring us out of the wilderness unto Yourself and make us whole and complete; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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