

- Sometimes, it is **Hosea 5:14** ~ *I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. {Played it **tough**, meaning straight and hard talk, severe threats and stiffer punishments, showing her that actions have consequences.}*
- Sometimes, it is **Hosea 11:8** ~ *How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. {Played it **tender**, meaning putting his arm round her, wooing her, pleading with her, appealing to her, even with tears.}*

All three approaches were used with one goal in mind: To **reclaim** and **restore** Gomer!

Another angle of looking at this love: ***It is tough!*** (2:6-13)

(1) He Blocks Their Paths (2:6-8)

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.' For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold-- which they prepared for Baal.

Israel was running after her idols and would not stop. So God blocked their paths with thorns! Israel crashed straight into it, was cut and pierced by the thorns. Despite all those bleeding wounds, she was still pushing ahead! So God built a concrete wall across her path! Yet Israel continues to chase her lovers and seek them (V7). She was looking for gaps in the wall to squeeze through or climb over! But God in His mercy continued to frustrate her, continued to spoil her plans.

(2) He Took Their Goods (2:9-10)

Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, given to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall deliver her from My hand.

God gave them famine and drought and poor harvest and locusts invasion! The grain and new wine, the wool and linen -- God took them all away to speed up the process of disillusion in them. He has the right to do so because they are His grain, His new wine, His wool and His linen.

(3) He Erases Their Laughter (2:11-12)

I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths -- all her appointed feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, 'These are my wages that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

God was going to take away even the common joy of life. Instead, life is just one big sigh, one big drop of tear, one continuous sorrow, one long tunnel with no end in view! Why would God do a thing like that? Not to harm them but to help them. God did it in love! True love, Biblical love, God's love is tough. It is prepared to wound and hurt, because it wants to win and aims to help.

***O love that will not let me go!
This love is tough. Thanks be to God that it is!***