

I Planted You Like a Choice Vine, from the Very Best Seed

2: 20-28

DIG: Why do you think Jeremiah used word pictures to paint a description of Y'hudah? How is the southern kingdom of Judah like a young calf freed from the yoke of bondage? A wild vine? A stain that cannot be removed? A she-camel in heat? A disgraced thief when caught? How do these word pictures differ from the earlier one that described the Israelites as the bride, holy to the LORD (see 2:2-3)? To whom could you apply these word pictures today?

REFLECT: What happens when someone loves their sin more than they love ADONAI? Not many people bow down before or talk with gods of wood or stone in our society today. But do you think we've overcome the sin of idolatry? What kinds of things do people worship today? What things, seemingly good things, like family or work, are you tempted to worship? Do you think God regards you as a "bride" or a "prostitute?" Why?

616 BC during the reign of Josiah

The Israelites didn't want to have anything to do with God's control or restraint over them. Therefore, ADONAI now deals with Judah's extreme dedication to idolatry (Hosea 1-2; Jeremiah 3:1-9; Ezekiel 8:1-18, 16:15-41, 23:5-44). Jeremiah uses **five analogies** to show how deeply her worship of Ba'al was entrenched. The sexual imagery used in **Jeremiah** to speak of the relationship between Y'hudah and YHVH (and other deities) is ultimately derived from religious practices associated with the worship of Ba'al and Judah's resulting infidelity. Idolatry is seen as spiritual adultery. So the sexual practices associated with Ba'al worship meant that the sexual images also had a real, literal, reference.⁴⁰

In the first analogy Isra'el is pictured as a young calf that has been freed from the yoke of bondage but now refuses to serve (Hosea 4:16). Long ago, before you broke off your yokes and tore off your bonds; you said, "I will not serve You!" Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down and prostitute yourself (2:20). She now chases everywhere after idols and under every spreading tree (3:6). She was unfaithful (Hosea 1:2) and was found guilty of spiritual adultery as the wife of YHVH (Deuteronomy 5:1-3 and 6:10-15).

The second analogy likens Isra'el to a choice vine. I had planted you like a choice vine (Hebrew: *soreq*), from the very best seed that produces red grapes (Hosea 10:1). Judah is often pictured as the LORD's choice vine in the TaNaKh (Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 21:33-46) and in the B'rit Chadashah (Mattityahu 21:33-46). Yet, this choice vine produced poisonous branches (Deuteronomy 32:32), incapable of producing any good fruit. How then did you turn against Me into a corrupt, wild vine (2:21).

The third analogy describes a stain that cannot be removed. Although you wash yourself with soap (a strong vegetable alkali) and use an abundance of cleansing powder (a strong mineral alkali), the stain of your guilt is still before Me, declares Adonai ELOHIM (2:22). No amount of washing with normally reliable detergents would remove it.

Jeremiah's **persistent** faithfulness contrasted with the erratic and impure nature of the people with whom he lived. They were full of projects, and wild with enthusiasm, but nothing ever added up. The prophet did his best to show them the shabby emptiness of their lives. Israel's idolatry is further exhibited by her hypocrisy. She denies going after other gods. In answer to her denials, HaShem says: How can you say, "I am not defiled; I have not run after the gods of Ba'al, or the ba'alim?" See how you have behaved in the Valley of Ben Hinnom; consider what you have done (2:23a). This Valley is a constant witness against what Isra'el had done. Later, in Jeremiah we learn that the Israelites would burn their sons and daughters in the fire (see Cf - [They Will Bury the Dead in Topheth](#)).

The fourth analogy pictures a she-camel in heat. In a bold, sexually explicit metaphor, he captured their attention and then dramatized their futility. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving - in her heat who can turn (*shuwb*) her away? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry. But you said: It's no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them (2:23b-25). When in heat, a she-camel runs back and forth, here and there without any reason. She is wild and unrestrained. This is like Isra'el running back and forth going in circles. She sniffs the wind for the smell of male urine, and becomes totally uncontrollable until her desire is spent.

Those were strong words. Stand on a hill and look down in the valley at a young she-camel looking for a mate, back and forth, up and down. The record of her restless searching in the pad prints in the sand - a lot of movement going nowhere. Or look at the wild donkey in heat out in the desert, sniffing the wind for the scent of a mate - no matter who - unrestrained and purposeless except for one thing, the satisfaction of desire. Therefore, Jeremiah said that Y'hudah **eagerly sought one god after another**.

This is what you look like, preached **the prophet**. Dominated by appetite and impulse, your lives are empty of commitment, purpose, and continuity. You are frantic and busy, rushing here and there, wherever there is the slightest suggestion that you might satisfy something or other. But you are not **camels** in the mating season. You are people with the capacity for faithfulness. Isn't it time to start living like it?⁴¹

The fifth analogy likens Isra'el to a disgraced thief when caught. So the people of Judah would be disgraced like a thief is caught - especially their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets (2:26). The thief is not disgraced or shamed because of stealing, but because **he is caught**. Likewise, when Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah was taken into exile, **Y'hudah** would be disgraced in her trust in other gods.

Then **God** exposed the foolishness of idolatry. They say to wood, "You are my father," and to stone, "You gave me birth." They have turned their backs to Me and not their faces. In their syncretism they thought they could have it both ways. It was only when calamity struck that Judah realized the futility of depending on gods of Canaan who were powerless to deliver them.⁴² And so, when they are in trouble, they say, "Come and save us" (Psalm 3:8)! But during her death struggle with the Babylonians in 586 BC (see **Ga - The Fall of Jerusalem**), **ADONAI** would ask rhetorically: **Where then are the gods of Ba'al you made for yourselves now? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble!** In those final days of judgment the Israelites would call upon their gods to save them, but would hear nothing from stone and wood. **For you, Judah, have as many gods as you have towns (2:27-28).** Many of the small towns were named after pagan deities. And **Jeremiah's** hometown, Anathoth, was one of them!

Believers today face a real threat from the world that seeks to water-down centuries and centuries of true doctrine. It is not uncommon today to be in the presence of people who think they are very spiritual and pray to "the great spirit," or "the mother goddess," and downplay the uniqueness of the Gospel. Syncretism, the belief that all religions lead to **God**, is, as always, prevalent in the world today. But in the end, true believers chose sound doctrine and unbelievers don't. **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going out showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19).**

The B'rit Chadashah builds on the theme of **YHVH** as a foundation of living water (2:13). **Yeshua** informed the Samaritan woman the **He** could give her living water . . . welling up to eternal life (John 4:10 and 14). To any who believe in Him, **Christ** declares that streams of living water will flow from within them (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Gp - On the Last and Greatest Day of the Feast**). To reject His claim is to reject the offer of life that only **ADONAI** can give. This was just as true in **Jeremiah's** day as it is our own.⁴³