

Jeremiah 17:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Analysis

This verse extends the blessing announced in verse 7 using vivid agricultural imagery. The Hebrew word for 'tree' (ets, עץ) planted 'by the waters' (mayim, מים) and spreading roots 'by the river' (yubal, יובל) depicts a tree with constant water supply—in contrast to trees dependent on sporadic rainfall in Palestine's semi-arid climate. The phrase 'shall not see when heat cometh' uses ra'ah (ראה), meaning to perceive or be affected by—the tree doesn't suffer when drought and heat arrive. Its 'leaf shall be green' (ra'anah, רענן) indicates continuous vitality, freshness, and flourishing. 'Shall not be careful in the year of drought' uses da'ag (דאג), meaning to be anxious or worried—the tree remains untroubled because its roots access deep water sources. 'Neither shall cease from yielding fruit' (peri, פרי) emphasizes productivity regardless of circumstances. This imagery echoes Psalm 1:3 and anticipates Jesus as the true vine (John 15:1-8). Theologically, it teaches that those rooted in God through faith have an inexhaustible spiritual resource enabling perseverance, joy, and fruitfulness even in trials. The Christian life draws sustenance from union with Christ, not fluctuating circumstances.

Historical Context

The tree metaphor resonated powerfully with Jeremiah's audience familiar with Palestine's agricultural challenges. The region's climate featured distinct dry and rainy seasons, making agriculture precarious. Trees planted near wadis (seasonal streams) or springs had distinct advantages over those dependent on rainfall alone. Archaeological studies of ancient Israelite agriculture reveal sophisticated water management systems—cisterns, aqueducts, and terraced farming—reflecting constant water scarcity concerns. Jeremiah's ministry occurred during prolonged drought periods, as referenced in chapter 14, making this imagery especially poignant. When Babylon besieged Jerusalem (588-586 BC), the city experienced extreme famine, and agricultural production ceased. Those who had relied on their own strength and resources (like trees without deep roots) withered under judgment's heat. Yet the faithful remnant who trusted God—represented by Jeremiah himself, who suffered imprisonment yet remained spiritually fruitful—exemplified the promise. The exiles in Babylon who maintained faith despite displacement proved this truth: spiritual vitality comes from God's presence, not favorable circumstances.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What 'droughts' or trials in your life have revealed whether your spiritual roots reach deep into relationship with God or remain shallow?
2. How does this passage challenge the modern pursuit of circumstances-based happiness rather than Christ-rooted contentment?

Interlinear Text

וְיַעֲלֶה	וְעַל	מִן	עַל	שָׁתָה וְלִ	כַּעַזְבִּן	וְכַפֵּר בְּ
H1961	For he shall be as a tree	H6086	H8362	H5921	by the waters	H5921
	planted			H4325		by the river
						H3105
וְיַעֲלֶה	וְעַל	מִן	עַל	שָׁתָה וְלִ	כַּעַזְבִּן	וְכַפֵּר בְּ
and that spreadeth out	her roots	H7971	H8328	H3808	and shall not see	H3588
				H7200		cometh
						H935
וְיַעֲלֶה	וְעַל	מִן	עַל	שָׁתָה וְלִ	כַּעַזְבִּן	וְכַפֵּר בְּ
when heat	but her leaf	H1961	H5929	H7488	in the year	H8141
H2527					of drought	H1226
						H3808
וְיַעֲלֶה	וְעַל	מִן	עַל	שָׁתָה וְלִ	כַּעַזְבִּן	וְכַפֵּר בְּ
and shall not be careful	neither shall cease	H1672	H3808	H4185	from yielding	H6213
						H6529

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 1:3 (Parallel theme): And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Isaiah 58:11 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Ezekiel 47:12 (Parallel theme): And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

Job 8:16 (Parallel theme): He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.

