

Jeremiah 23:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right.

Analysis

For the land is full of adulterers—na'aph (נאָף) refers both to literal sexual immorality and spiritual adultery (covenant unfaithfulness). Jeremiah likely means both: the prophets' moral corruption (23:14) reflected and enabled widespread covenant breaking. **Because of swearing the land mourneth**—alah (אָלַה) means curse or oath-breaking, not profanity. The covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 were activating. **The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up** uses na'oth (נאָות), meaning pastures or habitations, showing ecological judgment.

Their course is evil employs merutsah (מְרוּצָה), meaning running or pursuit—their life-direction races toward wickedness. **Their force is not right** uses geburah (גְּבוּרָה), meaning might or strength, indicating they exert power unrighteously. The verse links moral corruption (adultery), covenant violation (oath-breaking), environmental consequences (drought), and misdirected zeal (evil pursuits with wrongly applied strength). This holistic view of judgment—affecting land, society, and individuals—reflects Torah theology where covenant faithfulness brings blessing and unfaithfulness brings curse.

Historical Context

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah (627-586 BC). Despite Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22-23), surface compliance masked deep-rooted idolatry and injustice. Archaeological evidence confirms this period

experienced severe droughts, which Jeremiah interprets as covenant curse rather than random weather. The 'adulterers' included religious leaders who maintained temple rituals while practicing Baal worship and sexual immorality at high places. Oath-breaking pervaded society—false oaths in courts, broken treaties with foreign powers, and violated covenant commitments to God. The wilderness pastures drying up affected both nomadic shepherds and settled farmers, creating economic crisis that should have prompted repentance but instead hardened hearts.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the connection between moral corruption and environmental judgment challenge modern separation of ethics from ecology?
2. In what ways might religious leaders today be 'full of adultery'—maintaining external orthodoxy while violating covenant faithfulness?
3. What does 'their force is not right' teach about misdirected zeal and wrongly applied strength in spiritual pursuits?

Interlinear Text

אָלָה	מִפְנִין	כִּי	מִלְאָה	הַ	מִתְּנָאָפִים	כִּי
H1961	H6440	H3588	H776	H4390	H5003	H3588
of swearing	for because	for	For the land	is full	of adulterers	אָלָה
וְתַהַ	מִדְבָּר	נָא וְתַ	יִבְשׁ וְ	בָּאָרֶץ	בָּאָרֶץ	מִתְּנָאָפִים
H4057	H1961	H4999	H3001	H776	H56	mourneth
of the wilderness	the pleasant places	are dried up	For the land	For the land	mourneth	אָלָה
לֹא	וְגַבּוּרָת	מִ	בָּעֵד	בָּאָרֶץ	מִרְוֹצָתָם	and their course
H3651	H3808	H1369	H7451	H4794	H4794	and their force

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 107:34 (Evil): A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

Jeremiah 9:10 (Parallel theme): For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

Jeremiah 9:2 (Parallel theme): Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

Malachi 3:5 (Parallel theme): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 24:6 (Parallel theme): Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.