

# Jeremiah 46:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.

## Analysis

**Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt**—The bitter irony intensifies as Jeremiah prescribes medicine for a mortal wound. Gilead's balm (tsori, צָרִי), a resinous healing substance exported throughout the ancient world (Genesis 37:25), symbolizes therapeutic hope. Yet the diagnosis is devastating: **in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured**. The Hebrew teruphot (תְּרוּפּוֹת, "medicines") and te'aleh arukah (תְּעַלָּה-אָרְכָּה, "shalt not be cured/healed") declare Egypt's wound fatal.

The address **O virgin, the daughter of Egypt** (betulah bat-Mitsrayim, בְּתוּלָה בָּתָּי-מִצְרָיִם) uses ironic tenderness for a nation about to be violated by conquest. Egypt considered itself inviolable, yet would suffer the shame of defeat. Spiritually, this pictures humanity's attempt to heal sin's wound through human remedies—religion, morality, philosophy—all insufficient without God's intervention. Only Christ, the true physician, heals what human medicine cannot touch (Luke 5:31-32). The New Testament echoes this imagery: no human remedy cures sin's disease; only Christ's blood brings healing (1 Peter 2:24).

## Historical Context

Gilead, east of the Jordan River, was famous for medicinal balm production. Jeremiah himself used this imagery regarding Judah's incurable wound (Jeremiah 8:22, 46:11). Egypt's defeat at Carchemish (605 BC) was indeed mortal to its

imperial ambitions—though Egypt survived as a nation, it never again dominated the ancient Near East. Nebuchadnezzar's later invasion of Egypt (568 BC, predicted in vv. 13-26) confirmed the wound's fatal nature.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. What 'balms' do people seek today to heal spiritual wounds that only God can cure?
2. How does recognizing our wound as incurable apart from Christ lead to genuine repentance?
3. What does Egypt's incurable wound teach about the consequences of pride and self-reliance?

## Interlinear Text

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מֵצָב	בְּ	בַּת	בְּתַול	תְּ	אַרְ	וְקַח	וְלַעַד	עַל	יְ
Go up	into Gilead	and take	balm	O virgin	the daughter	of Egypt			
H5927	H1568	H3947	H6875	H1330	H1323	H4714			
לְשֹׁוֹא	הַרְבֵּה	יִתְּ	רְפָא	וְתִ	תַּעֲלֵה	הַ	לֹה:	אֵ	יְ
in vain	shalt thou use many	medicines	for thou shalt not be cured				H369	H0	
H7723	H7235	H7499	H8585						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 8:22** (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

**Isaiah 47:1** (Parallel theme): Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

**Micah 1:9** (Parallel theme): For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

**Jeremiah 14:17** (Parallel theme): Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

**Nahum 3:19** (Parallel theme): There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

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