

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, צֹרִי), 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 (תְּרֻפּוֹת, "medicines") and te'aleh arukah (תִּשְׁלֶה-אַרְכָּה, "shalt not be cured/healed") declare Egypt's wound fatal.

The address **O virgin, the daughter of Egypt** (betulah bat-Mitsrayim, בְּתוּלַת מִצְרַיִם) 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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

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

יָלֶךְ	גִּלְעָד	וְקַח	יְצֹר	בְּתוּלָה	בֵּת	מִצְרַיִם
Go up	into Gilead	and take	balm	O virgin	the daughter	of Egypt
H5927	H1568	H3947	H6875	H1330	H1323	H4714
לְשׁוֹן	הִרְבֵּי יָתִי	רְפָא וְתִי	תִּשְׁלַח הַ	לֹא יֵן	לָהּ:	
in vain	shalt thou use many	medicines	for thou shalt not be cured			
H7723	H7235	H7499	H8585	H369	H0	

Additional Cross-References

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?