

Jeremiah 8:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Analysis

This famous verse cries out for healing: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?' Gilead, the Transjordanian region, was renowned for medicinal balm exported throughout the ancient world. The Hebrew *tseori* (צֵרִי, balm, balsam) was a precious healing ointment. 'Physician' (*rophe*, רֹפֵא) indicates professional healers. The questions expect positive answers—yes, there is balm; yes, there are physicians. Yet the perplexing conclusion: 'Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?' If healing resources exist, why does the wound remain fatal? The implied answer: the wound is too deep, the patient refuses treatment, or sin has made healing impossible apart from radical intervention.

Historical Context

Gilead's balm was extracted from the resin of the balsam tree (*Commiphora gileadensis*), highly valued for wound treatment and exported to Egypt and throughout the ancient Near East. Genesis 37:25 mentions Ishmaelite traders carrying it to Egypt. The phrase became proverbial for healing resources. Jeremiah's question suggests that despite available spiritual resources (Torah, temple, prophets), Judah's sickness was terminal because they refused the remedy.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What spiritual 'balm' is available to heal our wounds, and why do we sometimes refuse it?
2. How does this verse anticipate Christ as the true Physician who provides complete healing?

Interlinear Text

רֹפֵא	אָמֵן	בְּגִלְעָד	אָיִן	בְּאֶצְרִי	שָׁם
is there no physician	is there no	in Gilead	is there no	in the land	is there no
H369	H518	H1568	H7495	H369	H8033
הַיְנֵה	לֹא	מִדְבָּר	עָלֵיתָה	אָרֶבֶת	בֵּית
then why then	not	desert	recovered	is not the health	of the daughter
H4069	H3808	H5927	H724	H1323	
עַמִּים					
of my people					
H5971					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 46:11 (Parallel theme): 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.

Genesis 37:25 (Parallel theme): And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

Jeremiah 51:8 (Parallel theme): Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

Luke 8:43 (Parallel theme): And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

Genesis 43:11 (Parallel theme): And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

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