

Jeremiah 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

Analysis

This verse describes Israel's alternative: 'But have walked after the imagination of their own heart.' The Hebrew sheriruth libbam (שְׁרִירָה לִבָּם) indicates stubbornness, obstinacy of heart—following their own desires rather than divine instruction. 'And after Baalim, which their fathers taught them.' Baalism wasn't spontaneous apostasy but generational transmission of idolatry. 'Their fathers' indicates multiple generations of false religion. The plural 'Baalim' reflects local manifestations of the Canaanite storm/fertility god throughout the land. Children learned idolatry from parents who learned from their parents—sin becomes tradition, apostasy becomes heritage.

Historical Context

Despite periodic reforms (Hezekiah, Josiah), Baalism persisted in Judah for centuries. Archaeological evidence shows Baal worship at Israelite sites throughout the monarchy period. The 'teaching' by fathers suggests deliberate religious instruction in pagan practices alongside or instead of Torah instruction. This fulfills the warning of Deuteronomy 4:9-10 about failing to teach the next generation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 – Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does sin become 'inherited tradition' passed from generation to generation?
2. What responsibility do parents bear for the spiritual formation—or deformation—of their children?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹכֶד	לְבָם	שְׁרֵר וְתִּאָכְרִי	בְּגָעֵל יִם
H1980	after	the imagination	of their own heart
H310	H8307		H3820

רָאשֶׁן	אֲבֹתֶם:	לִקְדָּם וּמְאַשֶּׁר	בְּאַלְמָנִים	וְאָכְרִי
H834	taught	which their fathers		
H3925	H1			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 3:17 (Parallel theme): At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Jeremiah 7:24 (Parallel theme): But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Ephesians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Galatians 1:14 (Parallel theme): And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

1 Peter 1:18 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

Jeremiah 2:8 (Parallel theme): The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Genesis 6:5 (Parallel theme): And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org