

Jer. 2:1 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
Jer. 2:2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was not sown*.
Jer. 2:3 Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, *and* the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

This chapter begins with Jeremiah receiving another message from the LORD that he is to declare to the people of Jerusalem. He is to emphasize that this message is from the LORD. He is reminding the people of their spiritual beginnings and how they loved Him like a young bride. They obediently followed Him through the wilderness as He led them to the Promised Land. He is to remind them how the LORD had chosen them for a position of honor among the nations. They grew under His protection and empowerment, and any enemy who came against them met with His judgment.

It stood out to me that this is a fond, nostalgic type memory that I completely identify with the older I get. As a parent I look back without much thought of the sleepless nights and the struggles of dealing with teenagers and their foolish choices that resulted in harsh words and nights of worry. It's the sweet memories that come more readily to mind—the joys of watching those first steps, hearing those first words, enjoying the many recitals and concerts, etc.

The LORD is focusing on their times of obedience and overlooking the disobedience that eventually led to their wandering in that wilderness for forty years.

Jer. 2:4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

Jer. 2:5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

Jer. 2:6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

At this point the LORD broadens His message to include not only those in Jerusalem, but all the families of the house of Israel. This would include those of the Northern Kingdom that had already been taken captive by the Assyrians.

The LORD wants an answer to a couple of questions. He is basically saying: "What did I do that caused your fathers to reject Me as LORD and turn to worshipping false gods? It is obvious that these false gods are useless. So why didn't they turn back to Me—Almighty God who brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them through the harsh desert while providing for their every need?"

Jer. 2:7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

Jer. 2:8 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*.

The LORD goes on to remind them how He brought them into a land filled with good things. Instead of responding with gratitude and obedience, they decided to defile the land and fill it with the disgusting practices of idol worship. Even the religious leaders did not seek the Lord. Those who were supposed to teach the people God's law did not know it themselves. The spiritual leaders and the prophets declared themselves followers of Baal. They led the people in worship of impotent and useless false gods.

Baal seems to be a generic term for many of the false gods worshipped by the Gentile nations. This name was used to identify the main god of the Phoenicians, according to Easton's Dictionary, and was also identified with Molech, the god to whom the Israelites sacrificed their own children. The Canaanites worshipped him as the sun god and connected him with fertility.

Elijah represented God in a great test of power against the prophets of Baal as recorded in 1 Kings 18. In summary, they prepared sacrifices and proceeded to see which "god" could answer with fire and consume the sacrifice. Elijah patiently waited as the prophets of Baal called on him from noon until the time of the evening sacrifice. No answer from Baal. Finally Elijah made an altar and made a trench around it. He placed his sacrifice on the altar and commanded that they dump 12 barrels of water on the sacrifice and the wood under the altar and fill the trench with water as well. The result:

1 Kings 18:36–38 "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

How many times does God have to prove Himself to His people to command their respect and obedience? To us?

Jer. 2:9 ¶ Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

Jer. 2:10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

Jer. 2:11 Hath a nation changed *their gods*, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which doth not profit*.

Verse nine is a very sad declaration of God's knowledge that this attitude of rebellion will continue in future generations. He is basically saying that not even the Gentile nations have turned against their gods in spite of their impotence. In stark contrast, the LORD's people had chosen to turn against Him in the face of His awesome display of power on their behalf and turned to serve the impotent "gods" of the heathen.

Jer. 2:12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

Jer. 2:13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

I think the meaning of verse 12 is better expressed in the CJB: "Be aghast at this, you heavens! Shudder in absolute horror!" says ADONAI. "

The LORD is basically calling on the heavens as a witness; maybe this even includes the angels as well. He is making two specific charges against the people of Israel.

1. They have forsaken Him, the very source of life-giving water.
2. They have attempted to find provision from broken cisterns that can hold no water—the false gods and idols of their own making.

JFB made an important observation. Fountains supply an ever-flowing supply of fresh water; while cisterns are dependent on an outside water source. The false gods are being compared to cisterns that are broken and can't even hold water.

Jer. 2:14 ¶ Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?

Jer. 2:15 The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

Jer. 2:16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

The LORD poses more questions to get the people to think. Are you slaves? Were you born into slavery? Why then have you been taken captive?

God had declared Israel to be His son.

Exodus 4:22 "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:"

The young lions appear to be a reference to the nations that are taking the people captive and destroying the cities of Israel. This appears to be referencing the Assyrians who had taken the Northern Kingdom captive and destroyed many of their cities and goes on to include Egypt's invasion of Judah and the death of King Josiah who went out to battle against them.

Jer. 2:17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

Jer. 2:18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

Jer. 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.*

In these verses the LORD is basically saying that His people had brought judgment upon themselves by breaking covenant with Him (as noted in chapter 1). He doesn't understand why they would choose to depend on alliances with Egypt and Assyria. I think the mention of the rivers of these nations is in direct contrast to the living waters available to them through the LORD.

Verse 19 states an important principle: Experiencing the consequences of sin should serve to correct and convict God's people to the point of repentance. That experience should make them understand that to rebel against "the LORD thy God" and not serve Him with reverence and obedience always results in distress, wretchedness and grief.

Jer. 2:20 ¶ For of old time I have broken thy yoke, *and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.*

Jer. 2:21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

Jer. 2:22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, *yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.*

The LORD goes on to declare that long ago He had broken their yoke and delivered them from slavery in Egypt. At that time they had promised to obey Him and keep the covenant He made with them. Now, however, they were blatantly prostituting themselves to false gods and idols.

The LORD reminds them that He had planted them in the land of Israel as a choice, fruitful vine from proven good seed. I would assume He is making reference to their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the same truth declared by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 5:1–4 "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

The LORD's question: How did you become such a degenerate, adulterous vine to Me? There is no lye (nitre) or soap that is strong enough to cleanse you of your sin; your sin has left a permanent mark on you before Me.

These are words that should strike fear in their heart; God is declaring this generation in need of harsh, hopefully purifying judgment.

Jer. 2:23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

Jer. 2:24 A wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

The LORD questions how His people could deny that they were morally unclean or had followed the ways of Balaam. The evidence was clear.

“see thy way in the valley...” – Commentaries connect this with the sacrifice of their children to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, and that makes sense to me.

The LORD then goes on to compare His people to a dromedary (a young she-camel), which the commentaries indicate makes reference to an animal in heat trying to find satisfaction. He emphasizes His point by also comparing them to a wild ass in the same condition. The IVP Commentary made a pointed application: “The female donkey, when in heat, becomes almost violent and chases after the male donkey, just as Israel, like the wild female donkey, chases after the Baals.”

Jer. 2:25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

The LORD has been pleading with His people through His prophets to stop their ongoing, determined pursuit of these false gods. They're driven to fulfill the desires of their flesh by participating in the perverted practices that are part of the worship of the false gods of their heathen neighbors.

Jer. 2:26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Jer. 2:27 Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their* face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

In these verses the LORD is basically declaring that the only time His people show any shame or remorse is when they are in trouble and need Him to rescue them. They prostrate themselves before idols made of wood and stone in direct rejection of YHWH, but expect Him to welcome them with open arms in their time of need.

I couldn't help but make a comparison to the attitude of our nation as a whole today—a nation founded on the principles of scripture and clear in its recognition of God, the Creator, as the authority behind the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We have gradually but surely rejected God's truth and authority. Our culture has embraced materialism and become morally decadent. I remember how after the tragedy of 9/11, the churches were full again for a while as people sought comfort and understanding. Most of the time we live as though there is no God other than self. Yet, when tragedy strikes, we expect Him to be ready to answer our every prayer. I've observed many times in these journals how we want to hold Him accountable for such tragedies without being held accountable for the way we have rejected Him. This is just like the attitude of the people of Israel to whom Jeremiah was speaking.

Jer. 2:28 But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for *according to* the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Jer. 2:29 ¶ Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

The LORD is chiding His people—Let your chosen “gods” save you out of your trouble. You have as many gods as you have cities; surely you don't need Me. Why come to me for help? You have rejected my authority.

Jer. 2:30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

The LORD continues—I have punished you, but it has done no good. You have refused to be corrected. You have even killed My prophets.

Notice how the people are held accountable for their own choices. A righteous God cannot hold people to account whom He has preprogrammed to do wrong. I just don't know how people can try to argue otherwise.

Jer. 2:31 O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

Jer. 2:32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

The LORD is asking the people to consider these questions.

- “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?” - In other words, have you been deprived of nourishment and provision?
- “a land of darkness?” - I think this is making reference to the knowledge they need to grow and benefit both physically and spiritually.

He continues to drive His message home—Why would you reject me as LORD in light of all I have done for you?

Instead of taking delight in the love of YHWH, as a bride for her groom, the people of Israel had directed their passion toward the worship of false gods. The

LORD makes point of the fact that this hasn't been just a short term fling, but a long term affair.

Jer. 2:33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

Jer. 2:34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

Jer. 2:35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

The NLT translation of verse 33 is more readily understood: "How you plot and scheme to win your lovers. The most experienced prostitute could learn from you!"

I think verse 34 is making reference again to the souls of the innocent children who were publicly offered as sacrifices to Molech. It could also include reference to the prophets who were killed because the people did not like their message, or even others who tried to live in obedience to the LORD and incurred the wrath of the masses.

In spite of all the evidence before the LORD, the people refuse to recognize their sin and expect Him to turn His anger away from them. The LORD declares that He is going to "execute judgment" against them (from the Hebrew for *plead*) since they refuse to repent of their sin.

As I continued to think about how long God gave His people before judging them, I was reminded of the words of Peter.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The LORD always goes to the nth degree to get us to accept His love and provision by accepting Him as LORD and Savior. His desire is for all to come to repentance. That truth was just as true in Old Testament times as it is now. Continued rejection, however, will result in judgment in God's time and according to His purpose.

Jer. 2:36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

Jer. 2:37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

I think the LORD is basically asking His people why they continue to look for strength and protection from other nations rather than from Him. Assyria had ended up turning on Israel and taking them captive. Judah's alliance with Egypt for protection against Babylon is going to be just as inadequate. The LORD is

going to ensure that they are led in shame into captivity just as surely as were those in the Northern Kingdom.