

YAHWEH LITIGATES HIS CASE AGAINST ISRAEL**Read Jeremiah 2.1-37****INTRODUCTION & MAKING THE CONNECTIONS**

1/ Go back to **ch 1.9-10**. Yahweh had called, commissioned, and sent the youth prophet Jeremiah with a six-fold charge: *pluck up, break down, destroy, and overthrow*. Also to *build and plant* – but they will come later in Yahweh's covenant promises to bring Judah back from the 70-year captivity in Babylon [**chs 25 & 30**] and finally in the Messianic New Covenant to be fulfilled in Christ [**ch 31**].

2/ But for now, it is all about the rising threats and impending judgments that would come on them from the invading Babylonians to the north [**see ch 1.13-16**].

3/ I have called this lesson **Yahweh Litigates His Case Against Israel** because that is precisely what this first message is that He sends Jeremiah to deliver. It is both an '*opening statement*' and a '*summary statement*' to declare to them what His grounds are for sending these judgments that are coming on them / **see v 35b**.

4/ He will make His case with explicit and irrefutable details about their chronic and historical rebellions against Him. I will point out the specific evidences of His case He presents against them in the various sections of **chapter 2**.

5/ We have seen Yahweh use this format before in our previous studies from Micah and Amos / **see especially Micah 1.2 & Isaiah 1.2**.

6/ And another of our previous studies from Hosea was a specific, more detailed drawing out of His charges against them in **verse 2: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride...**

7/ **Chapter 2** is a lengthy chapter, 37 verses. So all I can do is give you summaries of the various sections and how they connect and weave together as **Yahweh Litigates His Case Against Israel**.

8/ BTW, I am also calling this lesson '**...Against Israel**' even though the specific audience of this message was '**in the hearing of Jerusalem**,' that is, the southern Kingdom of Judah. The northern Kingdom of Israel is already in captivity in Assyria from 100 years before [722 BC]. But Yahweh is still addressing them also. **See v 4: Hear the word of Yahweh, O house of Jacob [Judah], and all the clans of the house of Israel.** Yahweh still maintains His covenant promises to both kingdoms. In fact, there is a remarkable passage in **ch 3.6-14** where Yahweh stingly rebukes Judah for not learning from Israel's fate and repenting when they witnessed it ... and He continues to call Israel back to repentance.

9/ ALSO, we need to point out that everything Yahweh will charge Judah and Israel with committing has been done so openly, so brazenly, so egregiously ... **that the whole world knew! Yahweh appeals to the very heavens to corroborate His witness against Israel, as in v 12: Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares Yahweh!** / Again, see Yahweh's appeal to the heavens and earth to certify the truth of everything He's charging in **Isaiah 1.2**.

I / vv 1-3 / The Two Grounds for Yahweh's Case Against Israel

1/ **Yahweh had established a two-fold covenant relationship with Israel when He redeemed them from Egypt's bondage and slavery in the Exodus. He had faithfully fulfilled His commitments to them and had kept all His promises – Israel had egregiously and faithlessly violated them all.**

- **MARRIAGE:** Yahweh had lovingly married Israel to Himself as His bride and wife / **see Ezekiel 16 & the Book of Hosea.** They had forsaken Yahweh and gone after other 'lovers,' – the gods of all the other nations around them / **see v 25: by their own admission.**
- **THE LAND:** Yahweh had granted to Israel the Promised Land. It was His Land. He would dwell with them there in their inheritance / **see Numbers 35.34: You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I Yahweh dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.** And yet, they did just that! **See this chapter, v 7.** He would plant them there as His choice 'vine,' and they would give Him the **firstfruits of His harvest** in their love, faithfulness, worship, obedience, and service. **See vv 6-7 & Psalm 80.8-14.** And yet what 'fiorstfruits' did

they return to Yahweh? See v 21: **Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?**

2/ All of these charges, accusations, and indictments will be presented and well-documented ... not only by the records of their transgressions, but as we shall see, by their own stubborn and insolent blasphemies back at Yahweh. / *Also, see my note of application at the end...*

II / vv 4-8 / In His own defense: “What wrong did your fathers find in Me...?”

1/ Yahweh needs no defense, but He presents it anyway. Israel had no grounds or just cause for their faithlessness / **vv 4-5**

2/ Instead of faithfully ‘seeking’ Yahweh to know His will, ways, and pleasure, none of them said, **Where is Yahweh?** that they might follow Him.

- **The people did not seek or inquire after Him / vv 6-7**
- **The priests did not seek or inquire after Him / v 8.** They were the ones charged with ‘handling the Law’ and teaching it to the people.
- **The shepherds [pastors] did not seek or inquire after Him / v 8 [cp 3.15]**
- **The prophets did not seek or inquire after Him / v 8**

III / vv 9-19 / The absurdity and senselessness of Israel’s faithlessness and infidelity

1/ Yahweh announces His ‘suit’ against Israel with this word **‘contend.’** This word means ‘to hold an argument’ or ‘to plead.’ When Yahweh declares, **‘I still contend with you,’** He means to let them know He is **still** open for their repentance. In this next section, He will show Israel that they had proven themselves to be both absurd and senseless in all their faithlessness toward Him.

2/ **vv 10-11** / No other nation had ever ‘shopped around’ among the other nations around them to find gods other than their own chosen, preferred, patron gods ... and abandoned their own gods for others. *Yahweh was the ‘glory’ of Israel by His very Presence*, but Israel had abandoned and forsaken Him **for that which does not profit. That is absurd and senseless!**

3/ Israel had **committed two evils** – both absurd, senseless, and egregious: **[1] they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, [2] and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.** Water was their most prized and essential staple. Yahweh had been to Israel **the fountain of living waters**, all they could ever need or desire. Yet, they forsook Yahweh and ‘hewed out their own cisterns – thinking to be independently self-sustaining from Yahweh – only to find that their self-made, self-found sources and supplies of help and assistance could **hold no water**.

4/ **v 14** / Israel was not a ‘**slave**’ – they were Yahweh’s ‘**firstborn son**’ / see Exodus 4.22. The very name **Israel** was the name Yahweh had given Jacob [see v 4], meaning **prince with God** / see Genesis 32.27-28.

5/ **v 15** / Yet, the very nations Israel had committed spiritual and physical adultery with turned on them, abused them, and even eventually invaded and enslaved them.

6/ **vv 16-19 / Memphis and Tahpanes were cities in Egypt / see ch 44.1-14.** At least for the previous century, when the neighboring nations had threatened them, instead of appealing to Yahweh for His covenant protections, they had gone to Egypt and even Assyria to seek friendships and protective military and financial alliances / see Hosea 7.11 & Isaiah 30.1-5; 31.1-3. *As it applies to us, see James 4.3-4.*

7/ Israel’s absurdity and senselessness of seeking protection from their alliances with those nations who were their worst, most inveterate, cruelest, and most abusive enemies is summed up in **v 17: Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking Yahweh your God, when He led you in the way?** and **v 19: Your evil will chastise you, and your apostacy will reprove you.**

IV / vv 20-28 / ‘In your own words’: Yahweh turns Israel’s own words against them – they become the chief witnesses for the ‘prosecution’ against themselves

1/ This is an ingenious argument and rebuttal that Yahweh brings against Israel – He repeats back and throws back in their faces all the belligerent, hateful, and rebellious statements they have made to Him over the centuries He's been seeking to call and woo them back to Himself [see again Hosea]. In effect, He cites their own 'confessions of un-faith,' making them witnesses against themselves in their own words!

2/ There is a series of five of such 'confessions of un-faith':

- **v 20: ...but you said, 'I will not serve.'** Yahweh had broken their yoke of bondage and burst the bonds with which Egypt had enslaved them ... He had planted them like a choice vine and of pure seed in the Promised Land. But when they got into the land, immediately they began their idolatrous and adulterous worship of the false gods of the Canaanites around them. They had **turned degenerate and become a wild vine / see v 3 and Isaiah 5.1-7.**
- **v 23: How can you say, 'I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals'?** After declaring them unclean and '**the stain of your guilt is still before Me....**' Israel has the brazen, lying audacity and gall to retort that they are NOT unclean and that they have NOT gone after the Baals. In truth, they had been worshipping the false gods of the nations around them from the days of Joshua / **see Joshua 24 & Judges 2.11-13.**
- **v 25: But you said, 'It is hopeless, for I have loved foreigners, and after them I will go.'** In follow up to their previous blatant denial of their idolatry, Yahweh reminds that they had relentlessly pursued and chased after the neighboring nations' gods like a wild animal in heat – seeking gratification for their spiritual lusts. To which Israel replied: *We can't help ourselves. We love them, and we'll continue to pursue them!*
- **v 27: '...who say to a tree, "You are my father," and to a stone, "You gave me birth"** This 'wood' and 'tree,' of course, are the dead materials their dead 'gods' are made from. And yet they – all of them – will be shamed by their trust in their trees and stone they are worshipping. Their shame will like that of a thief when he is caught red-handed with the stolen property in his hands. Look at how proudly they are expressing their disdain for Yahweh, who is, in truth, their 'Father' and who 'gave them birth.' And they are doing this to His Face ... intentionally! **'For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face.'**
- **v 27: 'But in the time of their trouble they say, "Arise and save us!"'** And yet ... when they fall into their trouble from the patrons of the very gods they are worshipping, they will expect Yahweh to deliver and save them! In the words of **Proverbs 1.28-30: Then they will call upon Me, but I will not answer; they will seek Me diligently but will not find Me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh, would have none of My counsel and despised all My reproof.** Yahweh will turn them over to be saved by the 'gods' they have loved: **But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.**

V / vv 29-37 / 'Your objections are overruled!' Israel's counter-suit/complaint is dismissed

1/ **v 29 /** The reason I'm calling this section what I am is that Yahweh repeats the same word for '**contend**' that He introduced for Himself in **v 9.** His contentions, arguments, or 'suit' against them was well-grounded in all the evidences He has presenting. What Israel is doing here is raising objections to all that Yahweh has witnessed and testified against them. They are trying to file a 'counter-suit' against Yahweh, accusing Him of being unjust, unfair, or filing false charges against them. Contrarily, "**Why do you contend with Me? You all have transgressed against Me,' declares Yahweh.**" In other words, '**You are not the wronged party here...I am!**' / See also **v 4.**

2/ **v 30 /** They had stubbornly refused to be corrected by Yahweh's loving discipline. '**You refused to be corrected by my disciplinary actions toward you!**'

3/ v 31 / They had ungratefully abandoned the very One who had redeemed them, delivered them, and provided for them throughout all their history. **‘I have not been a deceiving and dangerous wilderness to you – I am the One who led you through your wilderness journeys and provided for you everything you needed. And yet, here you are declaring your independence from Me: “We are free, we will come no more to You!”’**

4/ v 32 / They had shown their disdain for Yahweh by forgetting their very bridal attire on the day of their marriage ceremony. That is unthinkable! **‘Can a virgin forget...? A virgin does not forget her bridal ornaments, and a bride does not forget her wedding-day attire! And yet, My people have forgotten Me more days than can be numbered!’** *Back in the late 60s and early 70s, when we were much younger, we had a slang expression we used to show our disdain for someone: we would say, “Forget you!” which meant, “You’re not worth my even remembering you exist!”* Which is precisely what they wanted Yahweh to know what they thought of Him!

5/ v 33 / They had become so expert, so well-versed and practiced, so ‘professional’ in their debaucheries that they even became ‘teachers’ to the more pagan nations than they how to conduct their illicit and immoral activities. **How well you direct your course to seek love! So that even to wicked women you have taught your ways.** *I had one of my elderly caregiving recipients to his doctor recently. One of the nurses in the lab had a name tag that read above her name, “Preceptor.” When I asked her what that title meant, she informed me that she had been trained to teach others how to do the procedures she performs. I looked it up on the internet, and in the medical field, their principles and how to conduct their practices are called ‘precepts,’ just like in the Bible. So, one who can teach their ‘precepts’ is called a ‘preceptor.’* Israel had moved beyond being merely ‘practitioners’ of their debaucheries to being ‘preceptors’ of their wicked ways.

6/ vv 34-35 / Adding to their spiritual idolatries and sexual perversions, they also engaged in numerous activities of social injustice. They were fabricating charges of stealing from them against the already-poor and taking them to court to extort yet more of what little they already had. **Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in.** Yet in spite of all these things [see all the above] you say, **‘I am innocent; surely His anger has turned away from me.’** And then the hammer of Yahweh’s justice falls – He pounds His holy gavel on the Heavenly Judge’s bench – **Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’**

7/ vv 36-37 / And then Yahweh returns once again to their betrayals of Him – abandoning Him, not seeking Him, not trusting Him, not repenting of all their transgressions, not appealing to Him to get glory to Himself by saving them from their enemies as He had promised to do [see v 3] – by turning them over to the murderous invasions of the very ones they had gone to seek alliances against those who were threatening them / **see again vv 16-18 and III, 6/.** **And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates?** [BTW, both of these former super-powers of the world had just been defeated and conquered by the rising Babylon which was now the most ‘clear and present danger’ for Judah...]

8/ They will end up being betrayed by the very enemies to whom they had appealed for assistance. **How much you go about, changing your way! You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria. From it too you will come away with your hands on your head, for Yahweh has rejected those in whom you trust, and you will not prosper by them.**

AND...we must take these same admonitions and warnings to our own hearts. Jesus Christ has brought us into these very same New Covenant relationships with Himself through His Gospel. We must faithfully fulfill them to Him. As Paul wrote: **‘For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one Husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ’** / 2 Corinthians 11.2. And, **‘Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God’** / Romans 7.4.