

Jer. 2:26-3:5, The Second Indictment
May 20, 1989
H. Van Dyke Parunak

A. 2:1-3:5, Overview

1. 2:1-3 sets forth the original relation between God and his people at the time of the Exodus and conquest; 2:4-3:5 is a *ryb*, a formal accusation itemizing what Judah has done.
2. Prominent correspondences show the presence of two parallel halves, dividing at 2:25.
3. The second half has three main panels. The outer two correspond closely to one another, and emphasize Judah's sin, her presumption on God's forgiveness, and her refusal to really change. The center section highlights her presumption of innocence. The overwhelming theme is that pious actions from a corrupt heart are worthless.

B. 2:26-30, The Futility of Idols

1. 26-27a, Statement: Judah will be ashamed of her idols.
 - a) What has she done? v.27a. A "stock" is a tree trunk. She is acknowledging idols as her divine parent, the source of her being, instead of the Lord who nurtured her in Egypt and led her into nationhood.
 - b) Who? Leaders, cf. 2:8. The very ones who should have set her an example and guided her aright, who instead steered her toward sin, will have the reddest foreheads.
 - c) "As the thief...." Cf. 2:23, "see thy way in the valley." The "hand in the cookie jar" syndrome again. Judah will be caught red-handed, and forced to acknowledge her folly. Exactly how this happens is the subject of the next section, 27-30.
2. 27b-30, Amplification: A Conversation between God and Judah, showing how this shame takes form.
 - a) Setting, 27b: Judah has turned away from God.
 - b) Judah, 27c: When real trouble comes, she calls for God's help.
 - c) God, 28: Go to your gods. You've got plenty! This sounds cruel, but it's the only way to bring Judah to her senses.
 - d) Judah, 29a: Complains that God isn't being true to his covenant. Cf. 2 Chr. 7:14, the seed of the temple cult, since the time of Solomon, which said that if you prayed in the temple and did the sacrifices, God just had to hear you.
 - e) God, 29b-30: Judah is not sincere in her repentance.
 - 1) She has sinned.

- 2) He has tried in vain to reprove her, sending the prophets.
- 3) She slew the prophets, thus rejecting God's overtures.

3. **Application:** Beware the presumption that we can control God by doing all the right things spiritually, and then use him like a bottle of spiritual aspirin, taking two when we have a headache, and otherwise leaving it in the kitchen drawer. If we are not sincere in our trust in him, he may leave us high and dry, to draw whatever help we can from the surrogates that we have allowed to take his place.

C. **2:31-35, Presumption of Innocence Invites God's Wrath**

Like the triple question in 2:14, we have an observation (introduced with "why"), a putative answer that turns out to be false, and the real answer.

1. The observation, 31b, 32. Judah has forgotten the Lord, and prefers to wander rather than return to him. It is strange enough for a woman to forget her wedding dress--but Judah has forgotten the bridegroom too! NB: for "we are lords" read "we have wandered." Cf. 2:25. The nation has given itself up to hopeless apostasy.
2. The putative explanation, 31a. The Lord is a wilderness, a dark shadow, not worthy of Judah's attention, and no solution for her wandering.
3. The real explanation, 33-35. Judah is protesting innocence in the face of flagrant sin, and thus is due for God's wrath. Thus she has a bad conscience.
 - a) 33, to "trim one's way," lit. "make it good," is a common expression in Jeremiah for reformation. Cf. 7:3,5; 18:11. But Judah is so perverse that her only reformation is to go further astray, and to "teach her ways wickedness," to become more consistent in sin. She is not basically good with just a little evil, but basically evil and now weeding out the remaining good.
 - b) 34, specific sin: murder of the poor and innocent, who trust in God.
 - 1) "You have not discovered them breaking in," Exod. 22:2, the one condition in which intentional killing was justified.
 - 2) "But [the killing is] on account of all these [idolatries]," as the nation slew the idols in order to remove opposition to their sin.
 - c) 35a, yet she protests innocence, and tells herself that God will forgive her!
 - d) 35b, this very arrogance is precisely why God will not let her off the hook.
4. **Application:** Judah stays away from God because she has sinned and

will not admit it. This is for us at once an explanation and a warning.

- a) It *explains* why unbelievers often don't want to consider salvation. They clearly sin, yet they have persuaded themselves (so they think) that they are innocent. Yet they cannot completely deny the conviction of the HS, and so they are uncomfortable around God.
- b) It *warns* us to keep short accounts with God, and always to be open to rebuke or correction from our brethren. Sin in itself does not cut us off from God: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." But sin plus a false protestation of innocence will effectively block our spiritual growth.

D. 2:36-3:5, The Futility of Foreign Alliances

This section has several close parallels to 26-30. But now, instead of the idols, we are looking at foreign alliances. These may have implied some degree of god-borrowing. But at a deeper level, something does not have to be a statue to be an idol. It's enough for it to be the center of our trust, displacing God. Col. 3, "covetousness is idolatry." And that is what Egypt and Assyria had become to Judah.

1. 36-37, Judah will be ashamed of her foreign partners (as she was of the false gods, cf. 26-27). "Hands on the head:" we would say, "head in the hands." Gesture of despair and helplessness, 2 Sam. 13:19.
2. 3:1, Though she has abandoned God, yet she will presume to turn back to him.
 - a) The law is from Deut. 24:1-4. Recall from our studies on divorce that it is one law, not three. Jeremiah in fact makes this clear.
 - b) In spite of this law, Judah presumes that she can come running back to the Lord when it's convenient. Cf. 27b.
 - c) Note change from last week. This is not an invitation to Judah to return, but a statement that she presumptuously does try to return: "and now you want to return again to me."
3. An interchange between God and Judah (recall the conversation in 27-30)
 - a) Judah's sin, v.2. Shameless moral degeneracy.
 - 1) "lien with," "ravished," a word so strong that later scribes considered it too vulgar and so always used a marginal reading.
 - 2) "like the Arabian," the desert bandit

b) God's judgment, 3a. He withheld the rain and dew to bring drought.

c) Judah's response

1) 3b, no shame.

2) 4-5a, outward repentance. Again a change from last week. The verb tense is past, not future. "Hast thou not said....?"

3) 5b, continued sin. The insincerity of Judah's repentance is seen in her continuing in her sinful ways.

4. **Application:** It's well to remember here how apostasy can be political or economic as well as religious. Idolatry is not just going after a false religious god. It can be anything that we seek security in. The trick of such things is that once they snare us, they may blind us to the nature of true repentance.

Usage of verb tenses with *M''/(AT.F'* (3:4)

1. alone:

a) Isa. 48:6 Pf. of God's action

b) Dan. 10:17 Impf. + Niphal pf.

c) 2 Chr. 16:9 Noun clause with *yeš*

2. with *W(D (LM:*

a) Isa. 9:6 Noun clause with *)yn*

b) Isa. 59:21 Impf.

c) Mi. 4:7 Impf + converted perfects

d) Ps. 113:2 Impf *hyh*

e) Ps. 115:18 Impf

f) Ps. 121:8 Impf

g) Ps. 125:2 Noun clause

h) Ps. 131:3 Impf