

Amos 5:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Analysis

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? (הֲזִבַּחְתִּים וּמִנְחָה הַגִּשְׁתֶּם-לִי בַּמִּדְבָּר, hazevachim uminchah higashtem-li bamidbar)—This rhetorical question expects 'no' as the answer. During the wilderness wandering (Exodus-Deuteronomy), Israel frequently rebelled rather than worshiped. The Hebrew construction emphasizes the pronoun לִי (li, 'to ME')—even when they performed rituals, their hearts weren't directed toward Yahweh but toward idols (Acts 7:42-43 confirms this interpretation).

God isn't merely criticizing ritual hypocrisy but exposing deep-rooted idolatry spanning generations. The wilderness generation set a pattern: outward religious conformity masking inward rebellion. This challenges any presumption of covenant faithfulness based on ritual performance rather than heart devotion.

Historical Context

Stephen cited this verse in Acts 7:42-43, interpreting it to mean Israel carried idols even in the wilderness. The golden calf incident (Exodus 32) and subsequent rebellions confirm persistent idolatry. Amos addresses 8th-century Israel by reminding them their ancestors' pattern of faithlessness.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How might modern Christians maintain religious rituals while their hearts worship other gods—success, comfort, reputation?
2. What does it mean to offer sacrifices 'unto me' versus performing religious duties without heart engagement?
3. How does this verse challenge generational assumptions of faithfulness based on religious heritage rather than genuine devotion?

Interlinear Text

הַזִּבְחֵי יָם	וּמִנְחָה	הַגִּשְׁתֶּם	לִּי	בַּמִּדְבָּר
unto me sacrifices	and offerings	Have ye offered	H0	in the wilderness
H2077	H4503	H5066		H4057
יָם אַרְבָּעֵי	שָׁנָה	בֵּית	יִשְׂרָאֵל:	
forty	years	O house	of Israel	
H705	H8141	H1004	H3478	

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:18 (Parallel theme): Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

Ezekiel 20:8 (Parallel theme): But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

Nehemiah 9:21 (Parallel theme): Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

Joshua 24:14 (Parallel theme): Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

Leviticus 17:7 (Sacrifice): And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.

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