

Amos 8:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Analysis

They that swear by the sin of Samaria הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּאַשְׁמַת שְׂמָרוֹן (hanishba'im b'ashmat Shomron)—'sin' (אַשְׁמַת, ashmat) likely refers to the golden calf at Bethel or possibly Asherah worship. They swear oaths by idols rather than Yahweh. **And say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth** וְאָמַרְוּ חָי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם דָּן (v'am'ru chei Eloheicha Dan)—Dan had the other golden calf shrine (1 Kings 12:29). **And, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth** זֶה—וְחַי דְּרֵכָה בֵּאֵר שְׁבָע (derech) might mean 'way' (pilgrimage route) or refer to another cultic object. **Even they shall fall, and never rise up again** וְנִפְלְוּ וְלֹא־יָקְמוּ עוֹד (v'naflu v'lo-yakumu od)—permanent spiritual death.

Swearing by false gods demonstrates complete apostasy—binding oneself to powerless idols rather than the living God. The irony: they say these gods 'live' (חַי, chei), but worshipers themselves will fall and never rise. Psalm 115:8 warns: 'They that make them are like unto them'—idolaters share their idols' impotence. Only those who swear by the true God's name find life (Jeremiah 4:2).

Historical Context

The golden calves at Dan and Bethel represented Israel's foundational apostasy (1 Kings 12:28-29). Beer-sheba was in Judah's territory but apparently featured in northern pilgrimage practices. This syncretistic worship—mixing Yahweh forms with pagan content—epitomized covenant unfaithfulness that guaranteed exile.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents exist to 'swearing by idols'—binding ourselves to false securities and calling them 'alive'?
2. How does syncretism (mixing true worship with false elements) ultimately prove deadlier than outright paganism?
3. What does it mean to 'fall and never rise'—experiencing judgment without hope of restoration?

Interlinear Text

אֱלֹהִים יְבָשָׂעִים תְּבַשֵּׂעַ וְאֶתְּנֶשֶׁבָּעִים
They that swear by the sin of Samaria and say liveth Thy god O Dan
H7650 H819 H8111 H559 H2416 H430 H1835

וְאֵת יְמִינְךָ בְּאָרֶב שְׁבָעַ וְגִילָּל אֵלָא
liveth and The manner of Beersheba even they shall fall H3808
H2416 H1870 H884 H5307

עִזָּה: וְמִזְרָחָה
and never rise up H5750
H6965

Additional Cross-References

Amos 5:5 (Parallel theme): But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

Deuteronomy 9:21 (Sin): And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

Acts 9:2 (Parallel theme): And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

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