

Isaiah 44:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Analysis

The idol-worshiper 'feeds on ashes' - pursuing what cannot nourish. A 'deceived heart' has turned him aside so he cannot 'deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' The Hebrew 'kazav' (lie) describes the idol he clings to. Self-deception prevents even asking the right questions about ultimate reality.

Historical Context

The image of feeding on ashes pictures attempting to sustain life on what has no nutritive value. Spiritual malnutrition results from worshiping what cannot give life.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what ways do people today 'feed on ashes' - pursuing what cannot satisfy?
2. How does self-deception prevent us from asking whether we're trusting in lies?

Interlinear Text

רֹעֵה אֶפֶר לְבָבְךָ הָוָת לְבָבְךָ הָטַהוּ הַלְאָה
He feedeth on ashes heart a deceived hath turned him aside
H7462 H665 H3820 H2048 H5186 H3808

וְאֵל יְצָא אַתָּה וְלֹא נִפְשַׁׁר בְּלֹא יְאַמֵּר וְלֹא
that he cannot deliver his soul nor say Is there not a lie
H5337 H853 H5315 H3808 H559 H3808 H8267

בִּימִינִי:
in my right hand
H3225

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 102:9 (Parallel theme): For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

Job 15:31 (Parallel theme): Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence.

Romans 1:28 (Parallel theme): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Hosea 12:1 (Parallel theme): Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Romans 1:25 (Parallel theme): Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Hosea 4:12 (Parallel theme): My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

2 Timothy 2:13 (Parallel theme): If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Revelation 13:14 (Parallel theme): And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

Revelation 12:9 (Parallel theme): And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 18:23 (Parallel theme): And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.