

Isaiah 46:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

Analysis

They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth. Isaiah's extended satire on idol-making reaches climax here. The worshiper must physically transport, position, and stabilize the deity - a relationship of total dependence reversed from proper worship. The phrase "from his place shall he not remove" highlights immobility; gods requiring fixed locations lack omnipresence. This contrasts sharply with Yahweh who walks with His people through waters and fire (43:2).

"Yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" employs the Hebrew *za'aq* (cry out in distress) - the same term for Israel crying to God in Egyptian bondage (Exodus 2:23). Idols cannot hear, respond, or deliver. They possess mouths without speech, ears without hearing (Psalm 115:4-7). This inability to save (*yasha*) creates maximum contrast with Yahweh, repeatedly called *Moshia* (Savior) in Isaiah 40-66.

Reformed theology applies this critique to all false gospels. Any salvation system requiring human effort to establish, maintain, or activate God's favor creates an idol-god needing carried rather than the sovereign God who carries His elect. Legalism, moralism, and works-righteousness construct stationary deities unable to save when trouble comes. Only the God who moves toward sinners in grace can answer cries for deliverance.

Historical Context

Isaiah describes the actual manufacturing process of Babylonian idols, which archaeological discoveries have confirmed. Craftsmen fashioned images from wood overlaid with gold and silver, mounted them on pedestals in temple niches, and secured them with nails and chains to prevent toppling (44:12-17). The Enuma Elish and other Mesopotamian texts describe elaborate 'mouth-opening' rituals attempting to animate statues through incantations. Isaiah's satire exposes the absurdity - requiring ceremony to give gods functionality proves they lack inherent life or power.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What religious practices or spiritual disciplines have you treated as mechanisms to activate God's favor rather than responses to His prior grace?
2. How does the immobility of idols ('from his place shall he not remove') contrast with your experience of God's active presence in changing circumstances?
3. When have you 'cried unto' sources of security or identity that 'could not answer, nor save' - and how did that disappointment redirect you toward the true Savior?

Interlinear Text

שָׂאֵהוּ ! They bear H5375	עַל H5921	כֵּתֵף him upon the shoulder H3802	יִסְבֹּל הוּא they carry H5445	וַיִּנִּיחַ הוּא him and set him in his place H3240	
תִּחְבֶּטוּ H8478	וַיַּעַמְד and he standeth H5975	מִמְקוֹמוֹ from his place H4725	לֹא H3808	יִמְיֹשׁ shall he not remove H4185	אֵף H637
יִצְעַק ק yea one shall cry H6817	אֵלָיו H413	וְלֹא א H3808	יַעֲנֵה ה unto him yet can he not answer H6030		
מִצָּרָתוֹ him out of his trouble H6869	לֹא א H3808	יִשְׁעֶנּוּ nor save H3467			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 45:20 (Salvation): Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

Jeremiah 10:5 (Parallel theme): They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

Isaiah 46:1 (Parallel theme): Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.