

Isaiah 57:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

Analysis

The "smooth stones" (chalaqei-nachal) likely refers to sacred stones used in pagan worship, possibly phallic symbols associated with fertility cults. The wordplay on chalaq (smooth/portion) is intentional—these stones are their "portion" (chelqech) and "lot" (goral), mocking Israel's true inheritance as God's portion (Deuteronomy 32:9, Psalm 16:5). Drink offerings and meat offerings were elements of legitimate Yahweh worship (Leviticus 23:13, Numbers 15:1-10), here grotesquely perverted to honor idols. The final rhetorical question, "Should I receive comfort in these?" reveals divine pathos—God expresses wounded grief over His people's betrayal. The Hebrew *niccham* means "to be comforted" or "to relent." God asks whether He should simply accept this betrayal and withhold judgment. Reformed theology recognizes both God's immutability and His covenantal grief over sin, distinguishing anthropopathic language from any suggestion of divine changeability.

Historical Context

Stone worship was widespread in ancient Near Eastern religions, with sacred standing stones (*masseboth*) marking holy sites. The Canaanites used such stones to represent Baal and other deities. Streams and valleys were considered especially sacred in fertility religion because water symbolized life-giving power.

The perverted use of legitimate sacrificial terminology shows how Israel syncretized Yahweh worship with pagan practices rather than maintaining covenant purity. This syncretism characterized much of Judah's history, particularly during periods when weak or wicked kings tolerated or encouraged such abominations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God grieves over sin while remaining unchangeably holy?
2. How can legitimate religious practices become empty or even sinful when our hearts are far from God?
3. What is our true portion and inheritance according to the New Covenant?

Interlinear Text

בְּחִלְקֵי	בְּ חִל	חֵלְקֶךָ	הֵם	הֵם
Among the smooth	stones of the stream	is thy portion	H1992	H1992
H2511	H5158	H2506		
גֹּזְלֵי	לָהֶם	שָׁפַךְ	נֶסֶךְ	
they they are thy lot	H1571 H1992	even to them hast thou poured	a drink offering	
H1486		H8210	H5262	
הָעֵל יִתְּ	מִנְחָה	אֵלַי	אֲנִי:	
thou hast offered	a meat offering	H5921 H428	Should I receive comfort	
H5927	H4503		H5162	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 3:9 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

Jeremiah 7:18 (Sacrifice): The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Habakkuk 2:19 (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

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