

Isaiah 57:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

Analysis

The imagery shifts to a "lofty and high mountain" where Israel "set thy bed"—continuing the metaphor of spiritual adultery. High places (bamot) were traditional sites for pagan worship throughout Canaan, places where people believed deities dwelt and could be accessed. The bed symbolizes both the marriage covenant (which Israel violated) and the literal sexual acts accompanying fertility cult rituals. "Going up" to offer sacrifice mimics the language of legitimate worship at the temple ("going up to Jerusalem"), but here it's a grotesque perversion. This verse employs the prophetic technique of describing idolatry through sexual imagery (Ezekiel 16, 23), emphasizing that covenant unfaithfulness is spiritual harlotry. Reformed theology sees this as illustrating humanity's natural inclination toward false worship rather than true devotion to God—what Calvin called the human heart as a "factory of idols." The irony is sharp: they ascend physical heights while descending morally and spiritually.

Historical Context

High place worship was deeply embedded in Canaanite religion and persisted in Israel despite repeated reforms (1 Kings 3:2, 14:23, 2 Kings 17:9-11). Even some godly kings failed to remove the high places (1 Kings 15:14, 22:43). These elevated sites, often featuring stone pillars, wooden poles (Asherim), and altars, were places where worshipers believed they could encounter deity. The sexual language accurately describes the sacred prostitution and ritual immorality practiced at these sites, practices that violated Yahweh's holiness and covenant stipulations.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do believers today create 'high places' where they pursue false sources of spiritual fulfillment?
2. What does this passage teach about the seriousness of spiritual compromise?
3. How does Christ's faithful obedience contrast with Israel's covenant unfaithfulness?

Interlinear Text

עַל	הַר	גִּבְהַת	וְנֶשֶׁת	שָׁמָּה	מִשְׁכְּבִי	גַּם	שָׁמָּה
H5921	mountain	Upon a lofty	and high	hast thou set	thy bed	H1571	H8033
	H2022	H1364	H5375	H7760	H4904		
עַל יֵת	לְזָבִחַ	זָבַח:					
even thither	to offer	sacrifice					
wentest thou up	H2076	H2077					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 23:41 (Parallel theme): And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.

Ezekiel 16:16 (Parallel theme): And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

Jeremiah 2:20 (Parallel theme): For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

