

Jeremiah 10:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.

Analysis

This verse describes idol materials: 'Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz.' Tarshish, likely in Spain, was renowned for silver trade; Uphaz may be a variant of Ophir, famous for gold. The finest materials from distant sources—yet still just metal. 'The work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder.' *charash* (חָרָשׁ, craftsman) and *tsaraph* (צָרַף, metalworker, refiner) are human artisans. 'Blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.' Expensive dyes (blue from *tekhelet*, purple from *argaman*) dress the statues in royal colors—yet underneath is dead material. Every element is human product: imported metals, skilled craftsmen, expensive dyes.

Historical Context

Tarshish (possibly Tartessos in Spain) traded silver throughout the Mediterranean. Ophir's location is debated—possibly East Africa, Arabia, or India—but it was legendary for gold (1 Kings 9:28, 10:11). Blue and purple dyes were extraordinarily expensive, extracted from *murex* snails. The finest materials from around the known world, combined by the most skilled craftsmen—yet still producing lifeless objects. The contrast with YHWH, who creates by speaking, is absolute.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does listing the finest materials and craftsmen intensify rather than diminish the critique of idolatry?
2. What does investing the best resources in creating lifeless objects reveal about human religious impulses?

Interlinear Text

כֶּסֶף	מִרְקָעַ	מִתַּרְשִׁישׁ	יוֹבֵא	וְזָהָב	מֵאוּפָז
Silver	spread into plates	from Tarshish	is brought	and gold	from Uphaz
H3701	H7554	H8659	H935	H2091	H210
מַעֲשֵׂה הַ	חֹכֵם שׁ	וְיָד י	צוּרֵהָ	תָּכָה לָת	וְאַרְגָּמָן
the work	of the workman	and of the hands	of the founder	blue	and purple
H4639	H2796	H3027	H6884	H8504	H713
לְבוּשׁ הַ	מַעֲשֵׂה הַ	חֹכְמֵי יָם	כָּלָם:		
is their clothing	the work	of cunning	H3605		
H3830	H4639	H2450			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 115:4 (Parallel theme): Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

Daniel 10:5 (Parallel theme): Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

Isaiah 40:19 (Parallel theme): The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

1 Kings 10:22 (Parallel theme): For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

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