Jeremiah 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

Analysis

God commands Jeremiah to survey the land visually: 'Lift up thine eyes unto the high places' (śĕʾî-ʿênayiḵ ʿal-šĕp̄āyim, שְׂאִי־עֵינַיִךְ עַל־שְׁפָיִם). The 'high places' were elevated worship sites where Israel practiced syncretistic religion mixing Yahweh worship with Canaanite fertility rites. The rhetorical question 'where hast thou not been lien with?' uses šuggal (שֻׁגַּל), a crude term for sexual violation, intensifying the adultery metaphor. Israel waited for pagan worshipers 'as the Arabian in the wilderness'—like a desert bandit ambushing travelers or a prostitute soliciting customers. The indictment concludes: 'thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness' (waṯĕḥănĕp̄î ʾereṣ bĕziwnûṯayiḵ ûbĕrāʿāṯēḵ). The vocabulary progression—whoredoms (zĕnûṯ), wickedness (rāʿâ), pollution (ḥānēp̄)—emphasizes comprehensive moral corruption.

Historical Context

Archaeological excavations throughout Israel and Judah have uncovered numerous high places with altars, standing stones (maṣṣēḇôṯ), and Asherah poles. These sites continued functioning despite periodic reforms. The comparison to 'Arabian' (desert nomad) reflects knowledge of Bedouin customs. Jeremiah's contemporary audience would recognize these locations—hilltop shrines visible across the landscape. The prophet's graphic language shocked hearers accustomed to

thinking themselves religiously acceptable. The pollution concept derived from Levitical holiness codes where sexual sin and idolatry both defiled the land, potentially causing the land to 'vomit out' its inhabitants (Leviticus 18:25, 28)—precisely what happened in the Babylonian exile.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What areas of compromise or syncretism in your life need to be exposed and abandoned for wholehearted devotion to Christ?
2. How does viewing sin as spiritual adultery against God change your perspective on behaviors you might otherwise minimize?

Interlinear Text

שְׂאִי	עֵינַ יִךְ	עַל	שְׁפָיִ ם	וּרְאֵ י	אֵיפֹה	ל א
Lift up	thine eyes		unto the high places	and see	where	
H5375	H5869	H5921	H8205	H7200	H375	H3808

שֻׁגַּ לְתְּ	עַל	דְרָכִים	יָשַׁ בְתְּ	לָהֶ ם
thou hast not been lien	with In the ways		hast thou sat	
H7693	H5921	H1870	H3427	H0

כַּעֲרָב יִ	בַּמִּדְבָּ ר	וַתַּחֲנִ יפִי	אֶ רֶץ
for them as the Arabian	in the wilderness	and thou hast polluted	the land
H6163	H4057	H2610	H776

בִּזְנוּתַ יִךְ	וּבְרָעָתֵךְ׃
with thy whoredoms	and with thy wickedness
H2184	H7451

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:7 (Parallel theme): And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

Genesis 38:14 (Parallel theme): And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

Jeremiah 3:1 (Parallel theme): They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

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.

Deuteronomy 12:2 (Parallel theme): Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: