

Jeremiah 44:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

Analysis

In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands—bəma‘āsē yədekim (with the works of your hands) is technical vocabulary for idols (Deuteronomy 4:28, 27:15, 31:29; Isaiah 2:8). Idols are 'works of hands' because humans manufacture them—the absurdity of worshiping one's own creations.

Burning incense unto other gods continues the indictment from verse 3, showing their pattern persisted from Judah into Egypt.

In the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell (bə’ereş miṣrayim ’āšer-’attem bā’îm-šām lāgûr šām)—the verb gûr (to sojourn, dwell temporarily) recalls their stated intention to stay 'temporarily' (42:15, 17, 22; 43:2), but their idolatry shows permanence of purpose. The devastating purpose clauses: **that ye might cut yourselves off** (ləma‘an hakrît lākem) and **that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations** (ûləma‘an hĕyôtəkem liqlālâ ûləhērpâ). The ləma‘an (in order that) clauses depict ironic purpose—their actions achieve the opposite of their intentions. Seeking safety, they guarantee destruction; seeking honor in Egypt, they become a curse-word among nations (cf. Deuteronomy 28:37).

Historical Context

Egypt was filled with idolatrous worship—Ra, Osiris, Isis, Horus, and countless local deities. The Jewish refugees apparently participated in Egyptian cults and continued worship of the 'Queen of Heaven' (likely Ishtar). Archaeological discoveries at Elephantine show later Jewish communities syncretizing Yahweh worship with pagan elements. Jeremiah warns that such compromise would lead to their extinction and infamy.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the phrase 'works of your hands' expose the absurdity of trusting in human-created securities (ideologies, systems, wealth)?
2. What ironic purposes might your actions be accomplishing—seeking one thing but guaranteeing its opposite?
3. How does cultural accommodation to pagan surroundings lead to forfeiting God's protection?

Interlinear Text

לְקַטְּ רִ בְּמַעַשׂ נִ יְדֵיכֶם לְקַטְּ רִ בְּמַעַשׂ נִ יְדֵיכֶם
In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands burning incense
H3707 H4639 H3027 H6999

אֱלֹהִים אֶחָרִים בְּאֶרְזָה לְאֱלֹהִים אֶחָרִים בְּאֶרְזָה
gods unto other in the land of Egypt gods unto other in the land of Egypt
H430 H312 H776 H4714 H834 H859

בָּאָהָם לְגַזְעָם שְׁמַעַן לְמַעַן בְּכָרְתִּית
whither ye be gone to dwell H8033 H4616 that ye might cut yourselves off
H935 H1481 H3772

בְּכָל וְלִחְרָפָה לְקַלְלָה וְלִמְעָן לְכָם
and that ye might be a curse and a reproach H7045 H2781
H0 H4616 H1961 H3605

בְּאֶרְזָה
among all the nations in the land
H1471 H776

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 42:18 (Curse): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

Jeremiah 44:3 (References God): Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers.

Jeremiah 18:16 (Parallel theme): To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

2 Chronicles 7:20 (Parallel theme): Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations.

Hebrews 3:16 (References Egypt): For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

Isaiah 65:15 (Curse): And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

Isaiah 3:8 (Parallel theme): For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

Jeremiah 26:6 (Curse): Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

Jeremiah 29:18 (Curse): And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

Jeremiah 44:12 (Curse): And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.