

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'ăšê yədekem* (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'ereš mišrayim 'ăšer- 'attem bā'im-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 haḵrît lākem*) and **that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations** (*ûləma'an hěyôtəkem liqlâlâ ûləḥerpâ*). 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

לְהַכְעִסַּנִי	בְּמַעֲשֵׂי י	יְדֵיכֶם	לְקַטֵּר		
In that ye provoke me unto wrath	with the works	of your hands	burning incense		
H3707	H4639	H3027	H6999		
אֱלֹהֵי יָם	אֲחֵרִים	הָאָרֶץ:	מִצְרַיִם	אֲשֶׁר	אֶתְּ
gods	unto other	in the land	of Egypt	H834	H859
H430	H312	H776	H4714		
בָּא יָם	לָגֹור	שָׁם	לִמְעַן	הִכָּרֶית	
whither ye be gone	to dwell	H8033	H4616	that ye might cut yourselves off	
H935	H1481			H3772	
לָכֶם	וְלִמְעַן	הַיּוֹתֶמָה	לְקַלֵּלָהּ	וְלִחְרֹפָּהּ	בְּכָל ל
H0	H4616	H1961	and that ye might be a curse	and a reproach	H3605
			H7045	H2781	
גִּוֵּי י	הָאָרֶץ:				
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.