

Micah 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

Analysis

And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire (וְכָל-פְּסִילִים יִכְתּוּ וְכָל-אֲתְנָנִים יִשְׁרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ) we-khol-pesileha yukattu we-khol-etnanneiha yissarfu ba-esh). The (pesilim, graven/carved images) Israel crafted for idol worship will be smashed. (etnan) means "hire/wages of a prostitute"—disturbingly, Israel's idolatry is described using prostitution economics. They enriched pagan shrines with wealth that should have gone to Yahweh's temple.

For she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot (כִּי מִאֲתָנָן זֹנָה קִבְצָה וְעַד-אֲתָנָן זֹנָה יִשְׁבּוּ) we-ad-etnan zonah yashuvu). The phrase (zonah, prostitute/harlot) appears three times, emphasizing spiritual adultery. Israel's idol shrines were funded by economic prosperity (the "hire"), but this wealth derived from covenant-breaking. Now it will "return" to prostitution—conquerors will plunder these idols, melting gold/silver for pagan temples.

The prostitution metaphor pervades prophetic literature (Hosea 1-3; Jeremiah 3:1-3; Ezekiel 16, 23). Israel was betrothed to Yahweh (Exodus 19:4-6) but played the harlot with other gods. Deuteronomy 23:18 forbade bringing prostitute's wages into God's house; Israel did worse—turning God's house into a prostitute's establishment. Their religious syncretism mixed Yahweh worship with Baal fertility

cults, sometimes involving literal temple prostitution (1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 23:7). Judgment fits the crime: wealth gained through spiritual prostitution returns to literal idolaters.

Historical Context

The Northern Kingdom's idolatry began with Jeroboam I's golden calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-33), intended to prevent pilgrimages to Jerusalem. This political compromise led to deeper apostasy—Baal worship introduced by Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-33), child sacrifice in Molech's fires (2 Kings 17:17), and divination practices (2 Kings 17:17). Despite prophetic intervention (Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea), idolatry became entrenched in Israel's culture and economy.

Fertility cults promised agricultural prosperity through ritual sex with temple prostitutes. Israel's wealth from trade routes (connecting Egypt, Phoenicia, and Mesopotamia) enriched these pagan shrines. When Assyria conquered Samaria (722 BC), they plundered temple treasures, fulfilling Micah's prophecy that idol-wealth would "return to the hire of a harlot." The theological point: covenant violation doesn't pay; apparent prosperity is temporary, and judgment is certain.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the prostitution metaphor expose the intimate betrayal involved in idolatry—not merely breaking rules but violating covenant relationship?
2. What modern forms of spiritual adultery might Christians commit while maintaining external religious observance?
3. How does the principle that ill-gotten wealth "returns to prostitution" apply to prosperity gained through ethical compromise?

Interlinear Text

וְכֹל	פָּסִיל	יָבֹא	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
H3605	And all the graven images	thereof shall be beaten to pieces	H3605	
	H6456		H3807	
וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
אֶתְנָן	יִשְׂרָף	בְּאֵשׁ	אֶתְנָן	וְכֹל
and all the hires	thereof shall be burned	with the fire	H3605	and all the idols
H868	H8313	H784	H3605	H6091
וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
אֲשֶׁר	שְׁמַמָּת	אֲשֶׁר	אֶתְנָן	זֹנָה
thereof will I lay	desolate	H3588	and all the hires	of an harlot
H7760	H8077		H868	H2181
וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל	וְכֹל
וְעַד	אֶתְנָן	זֹנָה	זֹנָה	זֹנָה
H5704	and all the hires	of an harlot	and they shall return	H7725
	H868	H2181		H7725

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:18 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Hosea 2:12 (Parallel theme): And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

Revelation 18:3 (Parallel theme): For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

Hosea 8:6 (Parallel theme): For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.