

Psalm 78:58

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

Analysis

For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. The causative **For** explains Israel's treachery—idolatry, the ultimate covenant violation. **High places** (bamot, בָּמֹת) were elevated worship sites, often Canaanite shrines Israel adopted for syncretistic worship. They **provoked him to anger** (vakhi'isuhu, וְקָחֵיֶשׁוּהוּ), using vocabulary of intense emotional response to betrayal.

Moved him to jealousy (yakni'uhu, וְקָנֵיֶהוּ) employs marital language—God's jealousy isn't petty envy but righteous zeal for exclusive relationship. He is 'a jealous God' (El kanna, אֵל קָנָא, Exodus 20:5) who refuses to share affection with idols. **Graven images** (pesilim, פְּסִילִים) were carved idols, direct violations of the second commandment.

This verse exposes idolatry's heinousness—it's spiritual adultery against a faithful husband. Israel took God's gifts (the land, prosperity) and used them to worship other deities. Paul later identifies covetousness as idolatry (Colossians 3:5), showing that any rival affection provokes divine jealousy.

Historical Context

Throughout the judges and monarchy periods, Israel struggled with Baal and Asherah worship, often integrating pagan practices with Yahweh worship. The high places remained a snare even under some godly kings (1 Kings 15:14, 22:43).

God's jealousy eventually expressed itself in Assyrian (722 BC) and Babylonian (586 BC) exile.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What modern 'high places' (culturally acceptable idolatries) tempt believers to syncretistic worship?
2. How should understanding God's jealousy as marital devotion rather than petty envy affect your worship?
3. What heart idols (career, comfort, approval) might you need to 'cast out' from your personal 'high places'?

Interlinear Text

וְיִכְעִיסֵּנִים וְהִנֵּה

בְּמָזֹת מִ

בְּפִסְילִית מִ

For they provoked him to anger with their high places with their graven images

H3707

H1116

H6456

וְזִנְיָאָהָוּ

and moved him to jealousy

H7065

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:21 (Parallel theme): They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will

move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Leviticus 26:30 (Parallel theme): And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

1 Corinthians 10:22 (Parallel theme): Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

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:

1 Kings 11:7 (Parallel theme): Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

1 Kings 12:31 (Parallel theme): And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.