

-Save This Page as a PDF-

You Have Made Your Bed on Every Hill, There You Went Up to Offer Sacrifices **57: 3-13**

You have made your bed on every hill, there you went up to offer sacrifices DIG: How is the people's idolatry like adultery? What is Isaiah's point in using that image? Why has this happened? What is meant by the prophet's harsh words in 57:9? What is syncretism? From these verses, why do you think the LORD permits divorce on the grounds of adultery? How will the fate of the idolaters contrast with the future of those who have taken refuge in God? How does this section show us that ADONAI is a promise keeper?

REFLECT: How are people still burning with lust and sacrificing their children today? How are they sending ambassadors far away? Why are they not worn out with their idolatry? What forms does idolatry take today? Has something ever taken the place of the LORD in your life? TV? Sports? Family? Spouse? Children? Job? Which have failed to help you when you really needed help? In reality, how do these very things end up separating us from the help ADONAI gives? How would you explain to someone what it means to take refuge in God? What pressures are driving you to take shelter in Christ right now?

In this near historical prophecy Isaiah condemns Jewish citizens living about one hundred years later during the ministry of Jeremiah. This is a scathing denunciation of the men who indulged in idolatrous rites and pagan practices. In this section, **Isaiah** expands on the self-righteousness of the nation that considers itself to be the elect of **the LORD**, a nation that sees **righteousness** as a matter of political correctness in **their** religious practices. In **57:3-10** through **His prophet**, **ADONAI** exposes the practice of idolatry. Finally, in **57:11-13**, **God** addresses the foolishness of idolatry.

In contrast with the righteous, the vast majority of the nation was involved in idolatry. Because **they** had begun worshiping other **gods**, **they** were guilty of spiritual adultery. The concept of **Isra'el** being the wife of **the LORD** is rooted in **Deuteronomy**, which is written in the form of an ancient marriage contract (**to see link click [Je](#) - The Restoration of the**

Wife of the LORD).

But you - come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes (57:3). And as **His wife, Isra'el** was involved in religious prostitution (**Hosea 4:14**). In fertility religions "worshippers" engaged in sexual relations with **prostitutes**, supposedly identifying in that way with the gods and goddesses to help guarantee fertility in their crops, animals, and families.

Whom are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? They participated in a rising tide of rejection against **ADONAI** and **His** followers; starting with poking fun, leading to scornful sneers, which ended up in vulgar rejection. **Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars (57:4).** Such people in **Isra'el** were **mocking** the righteous while **they** were up to **their** eyebrows in sin. By such actions **they** were **rebels** against **God**.²³⁴ This was no accident. It was willful departure from the truth to the lie. **Timothy** said it this way: **For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (Second Timothy 4:3-4)**

Isaiah now proceeds to describe **two aspects of Canaanite religion** that never ceased to horrify the prophets: fertility worship and child **sacrifice**. **First, fertility worship**, with its symbolic lush **spreading tree** and its sexual ritual, supposedly prompted the god to fertilize **their** land, their animals and **their** family. The exact reason for the association of a lush **spreading tree** with fertility worship is not known. But whatever the specific reasons were, the connection was clear (**First Kings 14:23; Second Kings 16:4, 17:10; Isaiah 1:29; Jeremiah 2:20, 3:6 and 13; Ezekiel 6:13, 20:28-29; Hosea 4:12-13**). Their physical union with the loins of creation, rather than a spiritual relationship with **the Creator**, became the key to **their** imaginary power.

You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree (57:5a). In addition, worship centers were set up on **high places** so that the idolaters could imagine themselves even closer to their gods. Often these **high places** were in lush forest areas to picture the fertility being sought by the idolaters. Their spiritual adultery was so great that **ADONAI** said: **You burn with lust**, and would accuse **them** of making **their bed on every high and lofty hill**. **They** even sacrificed their **children** to the tree gods among **the oaks** (see below). Idol temples and altars were built, surrounded by thick groves and trees. There, **under every spreading tree, offering sacrifices in gardens (65:3)**, excesses of the worst kind were committed. Therefore, **God** had to forbid the planting of trees near **His**

altars, lest **His** people should become, or seem to be, like unbelievers.²³⁵



The second aspect of Canaanite worship was child sacrifice. You sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags (57:5b). ADONAI had told Moses to say: **Any Israelite or any alien living in Isra'el who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him (Leviticus 20:2, also see Leviticus 18:21, 20:3-5; Jeremiah 49:1-3).** Molech worship consisted of the ritualized sacrifice, or "passing through the fire" of the first-born infant son of every Ammonite family. Building a fire in the belly of the beast, getting it good and stoked, so that the flames poured out of the mouth, the high priest mounted a scaffold and tossed the first born male child into an opening in **Molech's** chest or placed him in the statue's outstretched arms (**Jeremiah 7:31, 32:35**). If a couple sacrificed their first-born son, **they** believed that **Molech** would ensure financial prosperity for the family and future children. In contrast to that, the Torah taught that the firstborn of **Isra'el** belonged to **the LORD** (see the commentary on **Exodus Cd - Consecrate To Me Every Firstborn Male**), but those idol worshipers gave their firstborn male to **Molech** instead! They treated their infant sons like cattle.

They even worshiped the smooth stones from the stream that once slew a giant (**First Samuel 17:40**). **The idols among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion (57:6a).** And as if worshiping the tree gods wasn't sufficient, **they** also worshiped the stone gods and expected **God** to look the other way. **One of the rites of idol worshipers was the worship of stone pillars, water-worn and smoothed by the winter floods, upon which was poured or smeared the blood or oil of sacrificial offerings to the deity the stones represented.** The worship of stone is referred to in **Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3** and in many passages where the word **images** is used. It is also very probable that the allusion to the **rock** in **Deuteronomy 32:31 and 37** is a reference to the same practice of idolatry. The image **of the goddess Artemis, which fell down from heaven** and was

worshiped by the **Ephesians**, may be another example (**Acts 19:27 and 35**). The old custom was to anoint **the stones**, which were worshiped, and to present offerings to **them**. **The worthless stones are contrasted with the greatness of God**. ADONAI said to the **Israelites**, if **you reject Me**, then all **you** will get are some useless **stones**. **They, they are your** reward instead of a relationship with **Me (57:6c)**.

Then **God** asked rhetorically: **Yes, to the idols of stone you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings. In the light of these things, should I relent (57:6b)? The answer expected is that no appeasement is possible. Such revolting worship demands not pacification but punishment.** From the depths of **the ravines** to the height of **the lofty hills**, practice of spiritual adultery filled **the whole Land**. Returning to the imagery of prostitution, **He** said: **You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill; there you went up to offer your sacrifices (57:7)**. They worshiped everything except the true and living **God**.

All of this resulted in spiritual adultery. **Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols. Forsaking Me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide; you made a pact with those whose beds you love, and you looked on their nakedness (57:8)**. Money aside, **her** heart was given to another. In **Deuteronomy 6:9** Moses said that the commandments of **the LORD** were to be written on **the doorframes of your houses and on your gates**. But now we see that **they** had **put pagan symbols** of other gods **behind their doors and doorposts**. They had forsaken **God**, and **Isaiah** uses the allusion of them climbing into bed and making a **pact with those who they love** to worship. It is no wonder that **Jesus** says: **I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery (Matthew 19:9)**. ADONAI knows how much **Israel's** actions hurt **Him**. **He** loved **her** so much, yet **she** kept committing spiritual adultery. **God** finally gave **Isra'el** her certificate of **divorce** in **Jeremiah 3:8**. **I gave Isra'el her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. God** does not ask more of us than **He** does of **Himself**.

The metaphor of prostitution is expanded. **You went to Molech**, an Ammonite god, **with olive oil and perfumes** to attract **her** foreign lover. **You sent ambassadors far away (57:9a)**. Judah had flirted with foreign powers to gain military alliances (**Ezeki'el 23**). But those political alliances always involved relations with foreign gods. Therefore, signing covenants with pagan nations was like signing **her** own death warrant. Figuratively, it was like she **descended to the grave**, or sh'ol, **itself (57:9b)**! When **she** was committing spiritual adultery with foreign **gods**, it was like **she** was killing **herself**. You can't swim in

the toilet, and come up smelling like a rose!

The constant quest for new gods with which to prostitute **herself** was exhausting. **You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, "It is hopeless, I need to return to the LORD."** You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint in your pursuit of other lovers (57:10-11). We see that while **the Israelites** liked to worship many **gods** in general (Ezeki'el 8), they like to worship one god in particular, **Molech** the god of the Ammonites. As mentioned above, the worship of **Molech** required human sacrifice, specifically first-born baby boys. So the **children** of **sacrifice** were slaughtered. Even though the worshipers of **Molech** were very tired, they always found a second wind to continue **their** worship of him. **So while they were committing spiritual adultery they never even thought about the One true God, who alone gave them life and strength.**

Finally, **God** called the people to account. **He** starts out by asking **them** what could possibly have motivated **them** to be untrue to **Him**. **Whom have you so dreaded and feared that you have been false to Me, and have neither remembered Me, nor pondered this in your hearts? Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear Me (57:11)?** The Bible teaches that **the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10)**. Isra'el had **feared** wood and stone, but not the true **God**. And yet those **gods** of wood and stone had kept silent. But **Isra'el's God**, whom **they** had ignored, continually spoke the truth. **God's apparent indifference to their way of life had ended. He was proceeding to pronounce judgment** and would **expose Isra'el's** lack of **righteousness** and **works** of adultery. **Those** who trusted in and had faith in, or believed in those little gods of wood and stone were left with nothing but the **wind**. **There was nothing to stop them from chasing after their evil desires, since no fear of the LORD stood in their way.** In short, **they** were fools.

So what would **God** do? **I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you (57:12).** Their alleged righteous works, when exposed, would be shown for what **they** really were, and as a result their counterfeit deeds would be of no help to **them** when **they** face **Yeshua Messiah** in judgment (see the commentary on **Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment**). The books will be opened and all **their** counterfeit **righteousness** will be exposed. **ADONAI** said sarcastically: **When you cry out for help, let your collection of idols save you! The wind will carry them off (57:13a).** **They** fooled **themselves** into believing that all **their** rituals and spells, **their** sexual escapades and child sacrifices were pleasing to **the LORD**. It is the same today. The out-and-out denial of **God** is rarely the problem. Most people say they believe in "God." The problem is the prostitution of it. People rub shoulders with syncretism so much that in the

end **their** "faith" ends up being worthless. **They** might have called it **righteousness**, but it was really abomination (**66:3**). There was so little spiritual substance to those **Israelites** living in Jerusalem during the days of **Jeremiah** that **a mere breath** blew **them away** (**57:13b**). **They** were spiritual shells with nothing inside . . . walking spiritual zombies.

But whoever takes refuge in Me will inherit the Land and possess My holy mountain (57:13c). In contrast to those who worshiped wood and stone were those who took **refuge in the true God of Isra'el**. Those who took **refuge in Him will inherit the Promised Land, and possess ADONAI's holy mountain (11:9)**. This is a hint of something that is spelled out in other prophets. The righteous of the TaNaKh will be resurrected after the Second Coming (see [Eg - You Who Dwell in the Dust Will Wake Up and Shout for Joy](#)), for the purpose of inheriting and possessing all of **the Promised Land**. **ADONAI** said to Abraham: **To your descendants I give this Land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates - the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephates, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites (Genesis 15:18-19)**. **He** repeated this promise to Isaac and Jacob. Yet when all three died, the most they possessed of **the Promised Land** was a buried cave and several wells. So how would **God** fulfill **His** promises?

The only way **ADONAI** could fulfill **His** promises to **them** is to resurrect **them** from the dead and bring **them** to **the Land**, where **they** will possess *all* of **the Promised Land**. In addition, the prophets also clearly make the point that the righteous of the TaNaKh will also possess **the Promised Land** someday: **For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the Land (Psalm 37:9)**.