

Justice and Judgment ~ Part 3 Yesha'yahu 57:3-13

In my last post, we continued to explore the effects of **Justice and Judgment ~ Part 2** in **Yesha'yahu 56:9-57:2**. In this post, we continue with **Justice and Judgment ~ Part 2** in **Yesha'yahu 57:3-13**.

In this passage, **Adonai** blasts those who practice idolatry and warns them of His coming Judgment. In the last half of the final verse of this passage, He affirms the righteous.

³ "But you, you witches' children, come here, you spawn of adulterers and whores!

Sorcery and adultery together point to polytheistic fertility rites. In much of the ancient Near East, sorcery was usually forbidden. However, some made a distinction between black (or evil) magic, performed by a sorcerer/sorceress, and white (or benevolent) magic, performed by a legitimate exorcist. Sorcery involved the use of potions, figurines, and curses designed to bring death, disease, or bad luck to the victim. ¹

⁴ Whom are you making fun of? At whom are you laughing and sticking out your tongue? Aren't you rebellious children, just a brood of liars? ⁵ You go into heat among the oak trees, under every spreading tree. You kill the children in the valleys under the cracks in the rocks.

The biblical writers attributed child sacrifice to the Phoenician worshipers of **Molekh**. "**You are not to let any of your children be sacrificed to Molekh, thereby profaning the name of your God; I am Adonai.**" ~ Leviticus 18:21 (CJB) Archaeologists have dug up numerous earthen jars in which were skeletons of newborn babies. During these dark days of apostasy in **Isra'el**, people would place the infant baby in a pot and entomb it in the walls of their house in hopes of pleasing the **Molekh**.

The thought seems alien to us today. Yet aren't we, as a society, doing this very thing? Every week, thousands of babies are slaughtered, aborted. Our culture is committing the same sin for which **Adonai's** people are here indicted.

⁶ Your place is among the smooth stones in the vadi; these, these are what you deserve; you pour out drink offerings to them, you offer grain offerings to them. Should I calmly ignore these things?

The ravines or **vadis** were the place where child sacrifices took place, the most notorious being the **Hinnom Valley** on the west side of **Yerushalayim**. Because of a well-developed ancestor cult that pervaded much of the ancient Near East, the dead were considered to have some power to affect the living. It was believed that if libations were poured out on behalf of the deceased ancestors, their spirits would then offer protection and help to those still living.

⁷ You set up your bed on a high, lofty mountain; you also went up there to offer sacrifices.

The **bed on a high, lofty mountain** is a probable reference to Jeremiah 2:20b, where cultic fornication was committed. Its double meaning of "a place to lie down" also brings out the image of death and the grave.

⁸ Behind door and doorpost, you set up your [lewd] memorial; then, far from Me, you uncovered your bed, climbed up on it and opened it wide, made an agreement with some of them, whose bed you loved when you saw their hand beckoning. ⁹ You went to the king with scented oil; you added to your perfumes; you sent your envoys far away, even down to Sh'ol.

¹ Bible Background Commentary - Old Testament.

It isn't sure what the *scented oil* and *perfumes* were used for. The *scented oil* may have been offerings, while the *perfumes* were to kindle incense offering. Another suggestion is that they were used to anoint the children that were being offered to **Molekh**. These *envoys* are those who practice necromancy, the consultation of the dead on behalf of the living. The *envoys* probably went to the shrines where the powers of the netherworld (**Sh'ol**) were worshiped to seek their will by oracular means. **Molekh** was the god of the netherworld. ²

¹⁰ Though worn out by so much travel, you did not say, 'All hope is gone'; rather, finding your strength renewed, you did not grow weak. ¹¹ Of whom have you been so afraid, so fearful that you lied? But Me, you don't remember; you don't give Me a thought! I have held My peace so long that you no longer fear Me. ¹² I will expose your [so-called] 'righteousness'; and what you have done won't help you.

Such idolatrous behavior was a result of a lack of fear of **Adonai**, perhaps encouraged by His silence. He would be silent no more as He exposed His people's righteousness, which was no righteousness at all.

¹³ When you cry, will those [idols] you gathered rescue you? The wind will carry them all away; a puff of air will take them off. But whoever takes refuge in Me will possess the land and inherit My holy mountain." ~ Isaiah 57:3-13 (CJB)

Adonai warned His people that if they worshiped idols, they would have to depend on those idols in times of trouble. But the idols were not substantial so that the wind would blow them away. They will be of no help. On the other hand, **Adonai** Himself is a refuge in trouble. The passage ends with the promise that the truly righteous will possess **Adonai**'s holy mountain, **Tziyon**, in **Yerushalayim**.

In my next post, we will conclude our exploration of **Justice and Judgment ~ Part 4** in **Yesha'yahu 57:14-21**.

² Ibid.