

The Tabernacle of Moloch

Commentary for August 1, 2017 — Moloch or Molech — the Same Lethal Pagan “god”

I received a question before I completed this month’s article “Israel and Judah: 25. Jehoshaphat and Other Kings.” For an introduction to the article, read the [“August 2017 Newsletter.”](#)

Question: Stephen told the Chief Priests and Elders (would that have been the Sanhedrin?) about the Tabernacle of Moloch! Can you give me any information on Moloch or the “Tent/Tabernacle of Moloch”?

Answer: Moloch (sometimes spelled Molech) was the chief god of Moab, mentioned in this month’s article. The Moabite god is mentioned in the following verses. In his trial statement made before he became the first Christian martyr, the deacon Stephen cited a passage from Amos 5:25–27.

“And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands [making that idol]. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets,

‘O you house of Israel, have you offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan,¹ figures which you made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’”

• Acts 7:41–43, quoting Amos

A “tabernacle” is a Hebrew word for a booth or an open tent, usually used to reference religious purposes. Here are some relevant verses regarding Moloch in chronological order.

- Leviticus 18:21, 20:2-5. These passages take place during the early time of Israel’s wilderness wandering. Baal and Moloch are apparently related in their worship rituals.
- 1 Kings 11:7 (similar thoughts are said in 2 Kings 23:10). These passages show that the worship of Moloch continued from the Exodus, through Solomon’s reign, to the time of King Josiah, the last good king of Judah.
- In Amos 5:25–27 (referenced in Acts 7:43) the “booth” or “tabernacle” of Moloch is

¹ “Remphan” in Acts 7:43 is the Greek translation of “Chiun” in the Hebrew of Amos 5:26. Both refer to the god later known to the Greeks as Chronos or Saturn to the Romans. In mythology this god ate his own children. (The Saturnalia festival originally involved human sacrifice.) Some scholars think the translation of Amos 5:26 should be different than the King James Version and other English translations. However, Acts 7:41–43 follows the Septuagint (the LXX) translation, which is convincing that the New Testament authors read the Hebrew of Amos the same. In my opinion, the King James Version is correct in this case.

discussed, with more information than in Acts, which Stephen's audience knew:

"Have you offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus [in exile], says YHWH, whose name is The God of hosts."

• *Amos 5:25–27*

This tabernacle was set up in the Valley of Hinnom. Its specific purpose was for sacrifice to foreign gods. YHWH was to be worshipped exclusively at an assigned place and structure designated by Him, either the Tabernacle of Moses or in the Temple built by Solomon.

- After Amos, the prophet Jeremiah shows the close connection of Baal and Moloch worship, one of the Baal group of pagan gods:

"And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."

• *Jeremiah 32:35*

This passage was given through Jeremiah after YHWH pronounced His final doom upon His people of Judah, but God promised that the people would return from exile. The doom warned about by Moses, and predicted by Amos, was about to be fulfilled in Jeremiah's time.²

In recounting this part of Israel's history, in Acts 7:43 Stephen equated the sins of Israel in his day, particularly Jesus' murder, with those of the Israel's ancestors. Both sins were serious and collective, transgressions done by the leaders and the people. Both deserved God's wrath. After Stephen's death, God's punishment was fulfilled in 70 AD.

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² Jeremiah predicted of a time when the Valley of Hinnom would no longer be called the Tophet, but would be called "the Valley of Slaughter," Jeremiah 7:29–33:

"Cut off your hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for YHWH has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, says YHWH: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name [the Temple], to pollute it.

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

... behold, the days come, says YHWH, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray [scare] them away."

(See also Jeremiah 19:6). Remember, Molech is one of the gods to whom children were sacrificed (Amos 5:25–27). God's threatened wrath is not to be taken lightly. There are limits to His patience for the gross sins and open disobedience by His people. If they are so evil that they slaughter their own children to pagan gods, then YHWH says He will slaughter most of them. YHWH fulfilled His threat when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians acting as YHWH's agents of punishment.