

# The Doctrine of the High Places

**Topics:**            **The Hebrew**  
                         **The High Places of Idolatry**  
                         **The High Places of Jehovah Worship**  
                         **Wellhausen's False Theory**  
                         **High Places Used as a Neutral Term**

**Charts/Pictures:**   **Upright Stone Pillars** (picture)

**Preface:** In my mind, I have always associate the words *high places* (which is actually one word in the Hebrew) with idolatry. However, a precursory glance at this word in the lexicon indicates that it has several uses, both actual and figurative, both legitimate and illegitimate. Although the Hebrew word *bâmâh* is very consistently rendered by the KJV as *high place(s)*, there are several connotations associated with this word. This will help you to understand why in one context, worship on a *high place* is condemned to the greatest degree, and in other context, it seems to be legitimate and approved by God.

## I. The Hebrew:

1. First of all, the Hebrew word for *high places* is *bâmâh* (בָּמֹה) [pronounced *baw-MAW*], which has several meanings. When I read *the high place*, I immediately think of idolatry and the phallic cults, but this word has multifarious uses. (1) *a high place, a height, a mountain*. It is found as a general word which can refer to mountains or hills without any religious connotation (2Sam. 1:19, 25 Jer. 26:18 Micah 3:12). This is considered to be its most primitive meaning, as *Akkadian and Ugaritic suggest*.<sup>1</sup> (2) *Bâmâh* can also refer to *a fortress, a castle* [which has been built upon a mountain or a hill]. This can be used in a figurative sense (Psalm 18:24) or a literal sense (Ezek. 43:7). (3) *heights, high places* with regards to the seas (Job 9:8); and with regards to clouds (Isa. 14:14). What we tend to associate with *bâmâh* primarily is (4) *high places* where idolatry took place. In some cases, *bâmâh* refers to the location of the cult activity and in many others, it became so closely associated with the cult activity that *bâmâh* came to mean the *shrine* itself. (5) However, *bâmâh* also refers to legitimate altars and sanctuaries which are built upon hills or mountains as well. It is the latter two uses that we will examine. (6) Finally, *bâmâh* is used for a *sepulchral mound*, a use we find in Ezek. 43:7 Isa. 53:9. Now, given all these various nuances of *bâmâh*, the KJV, interestingly enough, is very consistent in its rendering of this word, and uses the phrase *high place(s)* in almost every occurrence (the few exceptions being *heights* or *Bamah*, the proper noun). Strong's #1116 BDB #119.
2. There is a synonym for *bâmâh*, which is, interestingly enough *râmâh*. It is only found four times where it simply means *high place* or *elevation*, and all of these are in Ezekiel 16 (vv. 24, 25, 39).<sup>2</sup>
3. Interestingly enough, whereas the proper noun *Bâmâh* is rare, the proper noun *Râmâh* is found nearly 40 times. My first thought was that *Ramah*, because it is Samuel's hometown, is the main reason this word is found so many times. Not true. There are possibly 5 different cities with that name (I believe I reduced that number to 3); and there are 5 cities or locations built upon that name. Noun = Strong's #7413 BDB #928. Proper noun = Strong's #7414 BDB #928.

## II. The first and primary use of the word *bâmâh* in Scripture is in reference to idolatry and false worship.

1. Although God speaks of idolatry many times in the Law of Moses, there are only four instances where the high places are mentioned in conjunction with heathen worship:
  - 1) The first time we find this word, it is used in reference to the 5 cycles of discipline (so designated by R. B. Thieme). In the fifth and last cycle, God tells Israel, "[Yet, if in spite of this, you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, ... I then will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols, for My soul will abhor you](#) (Lev. 26:27,

<sup>1</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*; editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.525.

<sup>2</sup> *Râmâh* the noun has a homonym in *râmâh* the verb, the latter of which means *to throw, to deceive*.

- 30). Although this is the first mention of the high places in Scripture, clearly the Canaanites had these high places well-established long before the Israelites entered into the Land of Promise.
- 2) When Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, he took Balaam to the high place of Baal, when whence a portion of the Israelites could be seen. Balaam instructed Balak to build seven altars there and it was there from whence Balaam blessed Israel. Num. 22:41 23–24
  - 3) One of Israel's chief responsibilities when entering the Land of Promise was to ["Drive out all the inhabitants of the land...destroy all their figured stones, destroy all their molten images and demolish their high places."](#) (Num. 33:52b).
  - 4) When Moses blessed the tribes of Israel, he also blessed Israel as a whole, ending this song with: [Blessed are you, O Israel—Who is like you, a people delivered by Jehovah, Who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty. So your enemies will cringe before you and you will tread upon their high places](#) (Deut. 33:29). The imagery is Israel tearing down the high places or idolatry stations of the heathen, and then stomping them into the ground. There is no longer an association with these places and heathen worship; the land is simply a place where Israel treads.
2. As we would expect, many of the cities which Israel conquered and inhabited were named after heathen gods. Surprisingly, there was only one named *High Places of Baal* or *Bamoth-baal* (Joshua 13:17). In fact, *Bamoth* as a proper noun, is used rather infrequently (Num. 21:19–20 22:41 Joshua 13:17).<sup>3</sup> I must admit that when I looked this up in BDB, I expected to find a dozen places with such a name. Of course, a precursory glance in any Bible dictionary or encyclopedia will result in the same dearth of proper names which include *bâmâh* or *bâmôth*.
  3. Some kings were involved in heathen worship themselves:
    - 1) Solomon back-pedaled spiritually and built a *high place* for Chemosh, the idol god of Moab (1Kings 11:7).
    - 2) Jeroboam was an idolater and the context of 1Kings 12:31–32 13:3, 32–33 2Chron. 11:14–16 indicates that what he built worship stations in the high places in the northern kingdom. However, it appears as though these were only in part idolatrous, the main problem being that he appointed priests out of the general population of Israel rather than from the Aaronic priesthood. In fact, he apparently purposely excluded Levites from this worship (1Kings 12:31, 33 2Chron. 11:14 13:9). This was not, however, the only problem. These worship areas seemed to be set up in opposition to the worship of the recently erected Temple and there were golden calves set up in Bethel and Dan as well. Jeroboam was clearly rebuked by God in 1Kings 13:1–6. What appears to be his motivation is that he had initiated a new kingdom in the North and did not want his people going down to Judah for religious festivals and celebrations. Therefore, he attempted to rival what the southern kingdom offered. The reasoning is simple: if the northern Israelites bonded too closely with the southern Israelites over their worship of the One True God, then the recently divided kingdom and his power were threatened.
    - 3) Jehoram, one of the evil kings over Israel, [built high places in the mountains of Judah and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot to he led Judah astray](#) (2Chron. 21:11b).
    - 4) Ahaz, one of the most evil kings of all Judah, was heavily involved in cultic sacrifices (2Kings 16:4 2Chron. 28:1–4, 22–25).
  4. Asaph wrote a poem which dealt with the history of Israel. He refers to Israel going astray and worshipping false gods in high places (Psalm 78:58).
  5. The people of Judah built idolatrous worship areas all over during the time of Rehoboam (1Kings 14:21–24). This would have been coterminous with Jeroboam's idolatry in the north and with the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. It appears in 1Kings 15:11–15 22:43 2Kings 12:3 14:4 15:4, 35 as though these high places either continued through several kings or were rebuilt several times during the times of these kings (compare 2Chron. 14:2–5 15:17, when Judæan kings removed the altars from the high places and/or destroyed the high places). That these high places existed has been adequately confirmed by archeology, particularly in Gezer.

<sup>3</sup> This is the sum total of the places where we find this word used as a proper noun. Its use in Num. 22:41 may not properly be a proper noun.

6. One of the early kings did removed these foreign altars in the high places—Asa (2Chron. 14:2–5). He did not, however, use his authority to remove the high places in Israel, the northern kingdom (2Chron. 15:16–17).
7. As mentioned, the people either rebuilt these high places or not all of them were destroyed, because the king which followed Asa, Jehoshaphat, also removed the high places and idolatrous worship (2Chron. 17:6). Apparently, he was not completely thorough, however, as there were apparently some high places which were not removed (2Chron. 20:31–33).
8. The people of Israel, the northern kingdom, also built places of idolatry, which was the reason that God abandoned them. He abandoned them because they abandoned Him. 2Kings 17:7–18. Their most basic sin was that **they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in Jehovah their God** (2Kings 17:14).
9. King Hezekiah of Judah tore down all the high places and destroyed all of the related artifacts (2Kings 18:4, 22 2Chron. 32:9–12 Isa. 36:4–7). In fact, his kingship/ministry inspired much of Israel and the high places were destroyed in Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh apparently by the population of Israel (2Chron. 30:22, 25–27 31:1). This would have been after the dispersion of the northern population of Israel; Hezekiah reigned circa 716–687 B.C. and Israel was conquered and dispersed in 723 B.C. (2Kings 18:10–12). Because of this, the reference to the *sons of Israel* in 2Chron. 31:1 would have been to those who lived in Judah along with whoever remained in the northern kingdom.
10. One of Judah's most evil kings, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, rebuilt the high places which his father had destroyed, and then reinstated idolatrous worship (2Kings 21:1–3 2Chron. 33:1–3). However, he believed in Jehovah, the God of Israel, near the end of his life and restored the proper worship, including the worship of the True God in the high places (2Chron. 33:11–19).
11. The good king of Judah, Josiah, cleansed the Temple and did away with the idolatrous priests of the high places (2Kings 23:4–15 2Chron. 34:1–3). He also went to Samaria and removed the houses of the high places there as well (2Kings 23:19–20). This again would have occurred after the dispersion of Israel, the northern kingdom, as Josiah ruled circa 640–608 B.C.
12. One of the very interesting epilogues is that of Samaria (or Israel, the northern kingdom). When a nation was conquered, the people were generally removed and taken to another area, which gave the conquerors a psychological advantage. The king of Assyria populated the northern kingdom with foreigners who, as one would expect, set up their worship in the high places (2Kings 17:24–26, 29–31). However, because of the discipline which they suffered at the hands of Jehovah (God sent lions to plague them), the king of Assyria sent a few Israelite priests back into the land, the result being that some of them fear Jehovah God and believed in Him (2Kings 27–33). So what we have is heathen who practiced idolatry in the high places (2Kings 17:29) and others of them who worshiped the True God in the high places (2Kings 17:32).<sup>4</sup>
13. The prophets also spoke to the people (and kings) about the high places:
  - 1) Isaiah mentions the high places in a judgment against Moab in Isa. 15:2 16:12. Jeremiah also mentions the high places in a judgement against Moab in Jer. 48:35.
  - 2) Jeremiah mentions the high places in Israel and ties them to child sacrifice in Jer. 7:31 19:5 32:35.
  - 3) Jeremiah, Hosea and Amos all mention the high places in association with idolatry in diatribes against Israel in Jer. 17:3 Hosea 10:8 Amos 7:9.
  - 4) Ezekiel warns Israel that God will take vengeance against them and tear down their high places (Ezek. 6:3, 6).
  - 5) When Ezekiel speaks of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, he of course mentions the high places (Ezek. 16:16<sup>5</sup> 20:29).
  - 6) One mention of *high places* in Micah is neutral (Micah 1:3), one mention is uncertain (Micah 1:5) and a third mention seems to refer to idolatry Micah 3:12). In the latter case, it could just refer to a mountain becoming overgrown when Israel is destroyed.

<sup>4</sup> I must admit that when I first examined this passage, it appeared as though *high places* first referred to an area for idolaters and then to a legitimate place for the worship of Jehovah God. However, upon closer examination, the people here feared the True God, but they still practiced idolatry. 2Kings 17:41

<sup>5</sup> The word found in v. 24 is a different word.

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- III. According to ISBE, even though *bâmâh* originally meant *high place*, it became almost synonymous with heathen worship and idolatry, so that we find it used of such a worship area, apart from its elevation.<sup>6</sup> Their reasoning is three-fold:
1. *High places* are distinguished from *hills* in 2Kings 16:4 2Chron. 28:4.
  2. The reference in Ezek. 16:16 is to a portable structure.
  3. The *high places* found in various cities could really have been anywhere in the cities (2Kings 17:9 2Chron. 21:11—in the Septuagint).<sup>7</sup> Douglas, who agrees with ISBE, points out that during the monarchy, these shrines were often built within the confines of the city limits (i.e., within the gates of the city), and were called *high places* (*bâmâh*) anyway (2Kings 23:8).
  4. ZPEB adds that there were some *high places* which were located in valleys (Jer. 7:31 19:5 32:35).<sup>8</sup>
  5. Whereas these three points do not undeniably support this viewpoint, it is reasonable.

IV. We have a reasonable understanding of how these high places looked and operated from excavations made at Petra and Gezer.<sup>9</sup>

1. First of all, the cultic practices and their sacred artifacts were often scattered over a fairly large area rather than being located simply at the summit of a particular hill or mountain. I question this, simply because we have recorded instances in Scripture where these artifacts were destroyed and apparently scattered. This would account for them not all being found in a centralized location.
2. What appears to be the most basic necessity to a *high place* is an upright stone pillar, which may possibly be taken as phallic.
3. Along with the pillars there were often altars of various sorts, some for sacrifices some simply for pouring libations into.
4. The trees seemed to have a part in this worship, and they were occasionally replaced by artificial trees or poles (called *groves* in the KJV).
5. These high places were thought to be the habitation of their local god; and having several high places did not necessarily require there to be several deities.
6. ISBE: *An amusing feature of the discoveries is that these objects were often of minute size, so that the gods could be gratified at a minimum of*



A series of ten standing stones were uncovered in early excavations of the site (they were found laying down and re-erected by archaeologists). Poor excavation makes these masseboth difficult to date, but most archaeologists would date them to about 1500 B.C., in the heyday of the Canaanites. Some of the stones are more than three meters high. The stones may have represented a treaty alliance (cf. Ex 24) or have been a cult center (cf. Lev 26). The picture and text was taken from a web site, but my computer froze before I could record the site itself.

Manley notes a similarity between these standing stones and those in Stonehenge.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas is in agreement with this. *The New Bible Dictionary*; editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.525.

<sup>7</sup> These points were taken from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. III; p. 1390.

<sup>8</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> These points come primarily from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. III; p. 1390.



*expense to the worshiper.*<sup>10</sup> Although we are certain that small images called t<sup>ê</sup>râphîm (*household idols*) were used, we actually have no remnants of these (although, bear in mind that this particular reference source goes back to 1939 and 1956).

7. Other requirements of some *high places*: a source and/or containing area for water, which was used for purification; a kitchen wherein the sacrifices could be prepared (they were often boiled); possibly a home for the priest (although there was not always a particular priest attached to a high place; and even when there was, he could live down below in the village and simply commute to work). There were occasionally huts where one would sleep to gain various revelations in one's dreams (call *incubation*). Occasionally, there would be a temple in a high place; however, often the mention of a building (e.g., in 1Kings 12:31 13:32 2Kings 17:29, 32 23:19) did not necessarily refer to any sort of grand temple but to one of the structures also mentioned.

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- V. *Bâmâh*, or the high place, is also used legitimately for a place of worship of the True God. Although the heathen staged much of their worship up in the mountains, perhaps with the idea that they would be closer to God or more in tune with nature; the people of Israel also took up that practice and there are occasions when the worship of the True God of Israel took place in the high places.
  1. Our context (1Sam. 9) is the first legitimate use of the word *bâmâh* with regards to the worship of the True God. The key is the fact that the word has the simple use of being a *high place*, a *place that is high*, a *mountain*, a *hill*, apart from any religious connotation. Since the word can so be used, then it is not necessary that we find it as always relating to the worship of false gods (although, up to this point in Scripture to 1Sam. 9, we do not find it used innocently, apart from being a proper noun) (1Sam. 9:12–14, 19, 25). We may reasonably assume that in this context, the *high place* was literally a higher elevation than the city in general, as the young women speak of Samuel as *going up* to the *high place* (1Sam. 9:13–14). Barnes suggests that there was a citadel in Ramah, to which was connected an altar for sacrifices and a banquet room.<sup>11</sup> At the very least, we do have some sort of a structure here which, if not a citadel, then it is on a hill in Ramah.
  2. In the following chapter, Samuel will make a prediction of what will happen to Saul in the next day or so. When he travels back, he will be near Rachel's tomb in Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin, and he will run into a group of prophets coming down from *the high place*. What seems to be the implication is that Israel is not necessarily in idolatry, but that they had taken the idea that the heathen had and made their places of worship on mountain or hill tops. 1Sam. 10:5, 13
  3. The Open Bible<sup>12</sup> states that the use of the high places for worship indicate some backsliding for Israel. That is, we no longer have the strict adherence to the Laws of God as found in the Pentateuch. After all, we have two high places mentioned in these two chapters which appear to be connected to the worship of Y<sup>e</sup>howah; the problem is that sacrificial worship is to be associated only with the Tent of God, as per Deut. 12:2–7, 13–15.
  4. During the time of David and Solomon, the Tent of God was in the high place in Gibeon (1Chron. 16:39 21:29 2Chron. 1:3). When Solomon was first made king, the people of Israel were still sacrificing to God on the high places because a Temple to God had not yet been built (1Kings 3:2–4). The passage quoted seems to excuse the people of Israel for this sort of worship, as there was no Temple built to honor God at that time. However, there does appear to be some hint of disapproval. [The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of Jehovah still in those days. Now Solomon loved Jehovah, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar](#) (1Kings 3:2–4).

<sup>10</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. III; p. 1390.

<sup>11</sup> *Barnes' Notes; 1Samuel to Esther*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 376.

5. One of Judah's most evil kings, Manasseh, believed in Jehovah, the God of Israel, near the end of his life and restored the proper worship, including the worship of the True God in the high places (2Chron. 33:11–17). The plural in this passage indicates there remained some high places of worship, but the people worshipped only the God of Israel there.<sup>13</sup> What would be likely is that some of the high places referred to in 2Chron. 33:19 where Manasseh built altars to false gods were later sites of true worship (2Chron. 33:17). In other words, the term *high places* can be essentially a neutral term.
- VI. Samuel offers a sacrifice in the high place of this unnamed city (1Sam. 9):
1. What we lack during this time of Samuel is a functioning Tabernacle of God (apparently). We've already discussed how Shiloh has probably already been destroyed; the Ark is in storage; and, although the Tabernacle is apparently not in use, it is safe (we will find this out when Solomon builds the Temple).
  2. Given these facts, and given the fact that Samuel is not really in the line of the priests (although he is probably part Levite), he probably did the best he could, under the circumstances, which involved offerings made at various locations. In this case, the location is the *high place* of this city.
  3. This does not mean that Samuel preached there every third Sunday and the heathen priests were there on the other two Sundays. Recall, Israel removed most or all of their heathen worship (1Sam. 7:3–6). Samuel was simply making use of these spaces. For instance, let's say a *Kingdom Hall* or a *Mormon Tabernacle* closed down, and someone put a *for rent* sign on the front (or something along those lines). Would a Christian church be prohibited from making use of these structures? Of course not! They are simply buildings, and nothing more.
  4. Given the destruction of Shiloh and the non-functioning Tabernacle, Samuel is simply functioning the best that he can as a spiritual leader. There is no indication in Scripture that God ever required Samuel to do something about the Tabernacle or the scattered furniture (at least, the Ark was not with the Tabernacle throughout the time of Samuel).
  5. Of course, you may wonder if this violates the *one altar* which is clearly called for in the Law.
    - 1) Deut. 12:5 really states the limitation: "[You will seek Jehovah at the place where Jehovah your God chooses from all your tribes to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you will go](#)" (see also Deut. 12:11–12). When there is an established city of worship, such as Shiloh, then that is where all Israel goes to worship.
    - 2) Israel is further warned: "[Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place you see, but in the place which Jehovah chooses in one of your tribes—there you will offer your burnt offerings and there you will do all that I command you](#)" (Deut. 12:13–14). Again, all of this is predicated upon a holy city, and a place of worship in that holy city (e.g., Shiloh or Jerusalem).
    - 3) The general law is also stated in Ex. 20:25. The idea was, there was to be one place, as there is one God and one sacrifice which appeases God. The worship of the people of God was not to be confounded with the worship of the heathen.
    - 4) We even have a situation in Joshua 22:10–34 when an altar was build as a memorial, but not to be used; and that this stirred up a great deal of controversy.
    - 5) What is different in Samuel's case is, we apparently do not have a specific city set aside for the worship of God anymore; and the cultic worship has been removed—therefore, Samuel offers up sacrifices in several cities.
    - 6) What we do *not* have is, several different priests or quasi-priests (like Samuel) simultaneously offering up sacrifices in different places at the same time. This destroys the shadow image of Jesus Christ, which is taught through the sacrifices.
  6. Finally, since Samuel was in direct contact with God, if there was a problem, then God would have let him know this. That is, if offering up sacrifices in different cities violated the Law, then God would have made that clear to Samuel.
  7. That the function of the Tabernacle goes through some changes during the time of Samuel and David should not cause us great alarm. This might be seen as a transition era from Tabernacle worship to Temple worship.
    - 1) Shiloh was destroyed during the time of Samuel.
    - 2) Saul, who is not a spiritual man, just lets this go.

<sup>13</sup> There was to be only one altar to the God of Israel.

- 3) Although David brings the Ark into Jerusalem, he apparently does not set up the Tabernacle, as his mind is on building a Temple for God.
  - 4) Solomon ends up being the man who builds a Temple for God, signifying a permanent reign of God over the earth.
  - 5) We have transition periods throughout Scripture: from the Patriarchs to the establishment of the nation Israel; from the giving of the Holy Spirit to the establishment of local churches and the completion of the canon of Scripture. Therefore, we should not be confused or upset that this is a part of a long transition period.
8. Israel never fully and completely followed the Law of God. Throughout all of Israel's history, her Sabbath years were ignored.
- VII. It would be reasonable to ask, *is there a precedence which has been clearly set?* And, in fact, there has. Moses encountered God on the mountain of Sinai (Ex. 19:10–18) and Jacob offered sacrifices and worshiped God upon a mountain as well (Gen. 31:54). However, encounters between man and God did not, in every case, take place on a mountain. Therefore, the geography of the matter is inconsequential.
- VIII. An interesting, but false theory, is that of Wellhausen, whose theories have been accepted by many modern scholars, particularly those of a theologically liberal persuasion. He believed that the *Book of the Covenant* (Ex. 20–24) was a product of the early monarchy which allowed worship in local sanctuaries, allowing such worship to occur in the high places. However, much later, when Hezekiah came along and destroyed these high places, with these time came the *Deuteronomic reform*, which was the book of Deuteronomy, which forbade such worship. In other words, it was okay at one point in Israel's history, not okay later; and so, the writings from these two times were swirled together kind of like a marble cake mix, so that such activity seems to be both allowed and condemned. G. T. Manley: *This evidently is not the belief of the author of the two books of Kings, who, after all, was in a better position to judge.*<sup>14</sup>
- IX. Sometimes *bâmâh* is used simply to a *high place* completely apart from a reference to either legitimate or heathen worship on a mountain:
1. In 2Sam. 1:19, 25, *bâmâh* refers to mountains or to hills. We have the first line of a song lamenting what would happen to Israel, and it begins with: “Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen....How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places.” The general context is that this is a tribute to Saul and Jonathan, and does not necessarily indicate anything more than the use of *bâmâh* to refer to mountains or hills.
  2. *Bâmâh* can be used to refer to the high points of the sea (i.e., the top of a wave). In fact, for those who have a modern translation and cannot read Hebrew, the only reason you know that the word *bâmâh* occurs in Job 9:8 is because I have told you that it does.
  3. *Bâmâh* is used in Psalm 18:33 Isa. 58:14 Habak. 3:19 metaphorically for a place of blessing.<sup>15</sup>
  4. When Satan falls by the sin of pride, he says to himself that he will ascend above the heights of the clouds (Isa. 14:14).
  5. Even though Jeremiah mostly associates *high places* with idolatry, we have a neutral use of that term in Jer. 26:18 mentioned in a prophecy about Israel.
  6. When blessing Israel, God mentions *high places*. The context indicates that we are speaking of mountains and hills. Ezek. 36:2
  7. We have God walking (metaphorically, of course) upon the high places of the earth in Amos 4:13.
  8. In Micah 1:4, God comes down and tramples the *high places* of the earth; however, the reference is simply to *high places* with no hint of idolatry (which is, however, mentioned several verses later).
- X. The actual worship ceremony could be very different from place to place, and group to group. As ISBE mentioned, a worship service of Jehovah could be orderly and legitimate under someone like Samuel (1Sam. 9:11–24); a worship service of another god could be could involve wild orgiastic rites and even child sacrifice. According to ISBE, child and human sacrifice is very well documented in archeology. *The gruesome cemetery for newly born infants at Gezer is only one of the proofs of the prevalence of child-*

<sup>14</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*; editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.526.

<sup>15</sup> I could, of course, go into much greater detail as to how we would properly interpret this word in context; however, the point is that it has nothing to do with idol worship in this passage. It is also unrelated to the worship of God in a high place.

sacrifice, and the evidence for human sacrifice in other forms is unfortunately only too clear.<sup>16</sup> However, a specific phallic cult along with unmistakable phallic emblems have not been found. This does not mean that there is no evidence of associated phallic cult activity. *In the accumulated rubbish around these pillars were found enormous numbers of small stone phallic images, together with pottery plaques of Astarte, made with rude exaggeration of the sexual organs.*<sup>17</sup>

- XI. Errata: we have one contested reading in Ezek. 43:7, which has no effect upon this doctrine. I'm still thinking about Micah 1:5 and the interpretation of that word in that passage.

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<sup>17</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. II; p. 1224.