

Amos 1:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Analysis

But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah —Teman and Bozrah were major cities in Edom, representing the entire nation. The Hebrew Teman (תֵּמן) literally means "south" and refers to the southern region of Edom, while Botsrah (בּוֹצְרָה) was a principal city and fortress. Edom's condemned sin (1:11) was pursuing "his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever."

Edom's guilt was particularly heinous because of blood relationship—Edomites descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother, making them Israel's closest relatives (Deuteronomy 23:7). The phrase "pursued his brother with the sword" (rodfo bacherev achiv) describes relentless, vindictive hostility. Shihet rachamav (שִׁחַת רָחָם, "corrupted/destroyed his compassions") indicates Edom suppressed natural mercy toward kin. Apo taraf lanetzach (אֶפְוֹ טָרַף לְנֶצֶח, "his anger tore perpetually") uses predatory language—Edom's wrath was like a wild beast constantly tearing at prey.

Edom's persistent hatred violated the most fundamental human bond: family loyalty. They nursed generational grudges dating to Jacob's deception of Esau (Genesis 27), refusing to let ancient grievances die. This pattern of perpetual vengeance appears throughout Scripture: Edom refused Israel passage during the Exodus (Numbers 20:14-21), celebrated Jerusalem's fall (Psalm 137:7; Obadiah 10-14), and maintained hostility for centuries. The entire book of Obadiah pronounces judgment on Edom for this sibling rivalry turned genocidal hatred.

Malachi 1:2-4 declares God's rejection of Esau and Edom. The historical fulfillment came through Nabataean Arab conquest (6th-4th centuries BC) that displaced Edomites, who then became the Idumeans—eventually absorbed and erased as distinct people.

Historical Context

Edom occupied the mountainous region south and east of the Dead Sea, with well-fortified cities like Bozrah and Sela (Petra). The terrain provided natural defense, fostering Edomite pride (Obadiah 3-4). Despite blood kinship with Israel, Edom consistently opposed them. When Babylon destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC), Edom apparently assisted, seizing Judean territory—the ultimate betrayal condemned by Obadiah and Psalm 137:7.

The region's later history fulfilled Amos's prophecy: Nabataeans displaced Edomites, who migrated to southern Judea (becoming Idumea). Herod the Great was Idumean, ironically ruling Jews. After AD 70, even the Idumean identity disappeared. Today, no Edomite descendants exist—total extinction, as prophesied.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Edom's nursing of generational grudges warn against harboring unforgiveness and perpetuating family or tribal conflicts?
2. What does God's particular judgment on Edom for violence against "brother" Israel teach about heightened accountability for those who harm their kin or fellow believers (1 John 3:15)?

Interlinear Text

בָּצָרָה: אַרְמָנָן וְתַּתְּבִּיחַ
וְשָׁלַחַ חֶתֶן | אֲשֶׁר בְּתִימָן אֲכַל הַ
But I will send a fire upon Teman which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah

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Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 49:7 (Parallel theme): Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?

Jeremiah 49:20 (Parallel theme): Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

Jeremiah 49:22 (Parallel theme): Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

Jeremiah 49:13 (Parallel theme): For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

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