

Amos 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

Analysis

Amos begins oracles against nations: 'Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron.' The formula 'for three transgressions... and for four' is Hebrew numeric escalation indicating fullness/completion of sin—measuring cup overflowing. Damascus (Syria/Aram) committed atrocities against Gilead (Israelite territory east of Jordan). 'Threshing with iron instruments' describes brutal torture—crushing prisoners under spiked threshing sledges used for grain. This war crime provoked divine judgment. The pattern establishes principle: God judges all nations (not just Israel) for inhumanity. His moral law binds pagans too; violating it brings consequences (Romans 1:18-32, 2:14-15). God's justice is universal.

Historical Context

Syria/Aram, capital Damascus, frequently warred with Israel during the divided kingdom era (1 Kings 15:18-20, 20:1-34, 2 Kings 6:8-23, 8:28-29, 13:1-7). King Hazael's campaigns (2 Kings 10:32-33, 13:3-7) likely included the atrocities Amos references. Archaeological evidence and Assyrian records confirm regional warfare's brutality. That God judges pagan nations for war crimes demonstrates His sovereignty extends beyond Israel; He holds all peoples accountable to basic

moral standards reflecting His character. Amos proceeds to pronounce judgment on six surrounding nations (chapters 1-2) before culminating with Israel and Judah —showing God's impartial justice. The nations' judgments were fulfilled through Assyrian and Babylonian conquests.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment of pagan nations for atrocities shape my understanding of His universal moral law?
2. Do I recognize that all people, regardless of religious knowledge, are accountable to God for basic justice and humanity?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה כְּהַנְּתָנָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר יְהוָה אֲמָרָה כִּי־
H3541 Thus saith the LORD H5921 For three H7969 transgressions H6588 of Damascus H5921 H1834

וְאֵלֶּה כְּהַנְּתָנָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר יְהוָה אֲמָרָה כִּי־
H559 H3068 H5921 H7969 H6588 H1834

וְאֵלֶּה כְּהַנְּתָנָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר יְהוָה אֲמָרָה כִּי־
the punishment thereof because they have threshed with threshing instruments
H1758 H2742

וְאֵלֶּה כְּהַנְּתָנָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר יְהוָה אֲמָרָה כִּי־
of iron Gilead
H853 H1568 H1270

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 8:4 (Parallel theme): For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

Amos 2:6 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

Amos 1:9 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

2 Kings 8:12 (References Lord): And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.

Amos 2:4 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

Amos 1:6 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

Amos 1:13 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

Amos 2:1 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Zechariah 9:1 (References Lord): The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

Amos 1:11 (Sin): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: