

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

כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	עַל	שְׁלֹשָׁה	פְּשָׁעֵי י	דָּמָּ שָׁק	וְעַל
H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	H5921	For three	transgressions	of Damascus	H5921
	H559	H3068		H7969	H6588	H1834	
וְעַל	אַרְבָּעָה	לֹא	אָשִׁיבֵנּוּ	עַל			
	and for four	H3808	I will not turn away	H5921			
	H702		H7725				
		דִּשָּׁן			בְּחֶרֶץ	וְעַל	
		the punishment thereof because they have threshed			with threshing instruments		
		H1758			H2742		
לְ	אֶת הַבִּרְזֶה	הַגִּלְעָדִי					
	of iron	H853	Gilead				
	H1270		H1568				

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: