

Amos 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

Analysis

But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof—God pronounces judgment on Gaza, the foremost Philistine city. The Hebrew *shilachti esh* (שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֵשׁ, "I will send fire") uses fire as metaphor for military conquest and destruction. *Armonot* (אַרְמוֹנוֹת, "palaces/fortresses") represents the citadels of power where Philistine rulers governed and from which they orchestrated the slave trade condemned in verse 6.

This verse concludes the oracle against Gaza (1:6-7), part of Amos's larger series of judgments against Israel's neighbors (chapters 1-2). Gaza's specific sin was slave trafficking: "they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom" (1:6). The Philistines didn't just take prisoners of war but engaged in wholesale deportation of civilian populations, selling entire communities to Edom. This violated basic human dignity and ancient Near Eastern conventions regarding treatment of captives.

The judgment formula "I will send fire" appears repeatedly in Amos's oracles (1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5), creating a drumbeat of divine wrath against covenant-violating nations. The consistency of judgment demonstrates God's impartiality—He judges all nations by the same moral standard rooted in His character. The mention of "palaces" emphasizes that judgment strikes the seats of power where the exploitation was planned and profited from. Archaeological evidence confirms that Gaza was destroyed by Assyrian forces under Tiglath-Pileser III (734 BC) and later campaigns, fulfilling Amos's prophecy.

Historical Context

Gaza was one of five major Philistine cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron), located on the coastal plain as a major trade route hub between Egypt and Mesopotamia. This strategic position made Gaza wealthy through commerce but also facilitated the slave trade. The Philistines were ancient enemies of Israel, dominating them during the judges period until David's victories. By Amos's time (760 BC), they remained hostile neighbors.

The practice of selling captive populations was lucrative but morally heinous—treating humans as commodities. Edom, Israel's blood relative (descended from Esau), participated in this trafficking, compounding the crime. Amos condemns both trafficker and buyer. The fulfillment came through Assyrian and later Babylonian campaigns that devastated Philistine cities, eventually erasing Philistine identity from history.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment of Gaza for human trafficking demonstrate that He holds all nations accountable to His moral law, not just covenant Israel?
2. What modern forms of "slave trade" (human trafficking, exploitative labor, consumer goods produced through oppression) should provoke prophetic outrage today?

Interlinear Text

אֲרָמֹנֵיהֶּ:	וְאָכְלָהּ	עַל הַ	בְּחוֹמַת	אֵשׁ	וְשָׁלַח הָיִי
the palaces	which shall devour	of Gaza	on the wall	a fire	But I will send
H759	H398	H5804	H2346	H784	H7971

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 47:1 (Parallel theme): The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

2 Kings 18:8 (Parallel theme): He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

Zephaniah 2:4 (Parallel theme): For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

Romans 12:19 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Deuteronomy 32:35 (Parallel theme): To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Amos 1:4 (Parallel theme): But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

2 Chronicles 26:6 (Parallel theme): And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.