

Amos 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

Analysis

Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks—The Hebrew *ve-anokhi hishmadti et-ha-Emori* (וְאֲנֹכִי הִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֶת־הָעַמֹּרִי, "Yet I destroyed the Amorite") emphasizes divine agency—I accomplished this, not Israel's military prowess. The comparison to cedars and oaks (both majestic, strong trees) describes the Amorites' intimidating physical stature and military might. Numbers 13:28-33 records the spies' terror at Canaanite giants. **Yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath**—*va-ashmid piryo mima'al ve-sharashav mitachat* uses agricultural metaphor for total eradication. Destroying fruit (offspring) and roots (ancestors/foundations) means complete annihilation, leaving nothing.

This verse begins a recital of God's gracious acts toward Israel (vv. 9-11), establishing the stark contrast with their ingratitude and covenant violation (v. 12). God reminds them: "I drove out the terrifying Canaanites—something you couldn't do—giving you the Promised Land." The Amorites here represent all Canaanite nations (often used as synecdoche for pre-Israelite inhabitants). Israel's conquest wasn't their achievement but God's gift, fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 15:16, 18-21).

The cedars-and-oaks metaphor emphasizes what God overcame: nations that

seemed invincible, rooted deeply in the land for centuries, fell before Him. The double destruction—fruit and roots—means God didn't merely defeat them militarily but removed them from history. This recalls God's promise to Abraham that after 400 years of Egyptian sojourning, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16). God patiently waited until Canaanite sin reached such depths that judgment became necessary, then gave the land to Israel. But now Israel occupies the Amorites' place—and commits similar sins (injustice, idolatry, oppression). If God didn't spare the Amorites, He won't spare Israel.

Historical Context

The Amorites and other Canaanite peoples occupied the Promised Land before Israel's conquest under Joshua (c. 1406-1400 BC or 1230-1220 BC, depending on dating). Archaeological evidence confirms the violent destruction of numerous Canaanite cities during this period. The inhabitants were known for idolatry (worshipping Baal, Asherah, Molech), sexual immorality, and child sacrifice—practices God found abominable (Leviticus 18:24-30, 20:22-23; Deuteronomy 12:29-31).

God's judgment on Canaan wasn't arbitrary ethnic cleansing but moral reckoning after centuries of patience. Yet Israel, recipient of this gracious gift, adopted the very practices that caused the Amorites' destruction. Amos highlights this tragic irony: God gave you the land by judging previous inhabitants for sin; now you commit the same sins and expect different results? The logic is devastating.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's reminder of destroying the "invincible" Amorites challenge your faith when facing overwhelming obstacles, knowing the same God fights for His people?
2. What warning does Israel's adoption of Canaanite sins after God gave them Canaan offer to Christians who receive grace but return to the very sins from which Christ redeemed them (2 Peter 2:20-22)?

Interlinear Text

אֶשׁ רַמְּפִיָּה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ	אֶת־	וְאַשְׁמֵי יָד	וְאֶנְכִּי	
H834	H567	H853	H595	
before	I the Amorite	Yet destroyed		
H6440	H567	H8045		
הָיָא	וְחָסֵן	גְּבֵהָ	אֶרְצֵי	גְּבֵהָ
H1931	H2634	H1363	H730	H1363
and he was strong	them whose height	of the cedars	them whose height	
מִתְחַתּוֹ	וְשָׁרְשָׁיו	מִמֶּנִּי	פְּרִי	וְאַשְׁמֵי יָד
H8478	H8328	H4605	H6529	H8045
and his roots	from above	his fruit	Yet destroyed	as the oaks

Additional Cross-References

Job 18:16 (Parallel theme): His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Exodus 34:11 (Parallel theme): Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Genesis 15:16 (Parallel theme): But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Deuteronomy 3:11 (Parallel theme): For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

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