

Amos 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

Analysis

I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins—God's comprehensive knowledge (yada' rabim pish'eikhem va'atsumim chatoteikhem, יָדַע רַבִּים פִּשְׁעֵיכֶם וְעֲצָמִים חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם) uses two words for sin: pasha' (פָּשַׁע, "transgression/rebellion") denotes willful covenant violation, while chatta't (חַטָּאת, "sin") means missing the mark. "Manifold" (rabim, רַבִּים, "many") and "mighty" (atsumim, עֲצָמִים, "strong/numerous") emphasize both quantity and severity of their guilt.

Three specific crimes follow: **they afflict the just** (tsorerim tsaddiq, צֹרֵרִים צַדִּיק, "oppressing righteous people"); **they take a bribe** (loqchei kofer, לֹקְחֵי כֹפֶר, "ransom or bribe money that perverts justice"); **they turn aside the poor in the gate** (ve'evyonim bash-sha'ar hittu, וְעֲבִיּוֹנִים בַּשַּׁעַר הִטּוּ, "denying the poor (evyon, עֲבִיּוֹן) their legal rights"). The gate was where justice should be administered, but Israel's courts sold verdicts to the wealthy. This triad—oppressing the righteous, accepting bribes, denying the poor justice—summarizes systemic corruption that violates Torah repeatedly (Exodus 23:6-8; Deuteronomy 16:19, 27:19).

Historical Context

During Jeroboam II's prosperous reign (793-753 BC), Israel experienced territorial expansion and economic growth, but wealth concentrated among elites who built it on exploitation. Archaeological evidence from Samaria reveals massive inequality

—ivory palaces for the rich, while debt slavery enslaved the poor. Courts that should have protected the vulnerable instead sold justice. God's detailed knowledge of their crimes ("I know") meant no secret sin escaped divine notice—accountability was coming.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do wealth and power corrupt justice systems even in societies with formal legal protections?
2. What does it mean that God knows not just our actions but the "manifold" and "mighty" nature of our sins?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	יָדַעְתִּי	רַב־יָם	פְּשָׁעֶיךָ	וְעֶצְמָתִי	חַטֹּאתֶיךָ
H3588	For I know	your manifold	transgressions	and your mighty	sins
	H3045	H7227	H6588	H6099	H2403
צָרָה	צַדִּיק	לִקְחֵי	כֶּסֶף	וְאֶבְיוֹנֵי	בֶּשֶׁר
they afflict	the just	they take	a bribe	the poor	in the gate
H6887	H6662	H3947	H3724	H34	H8179
וְהִטּוּ:					
and they turn aside					
H5186					

Additional Cross-References

Amos 5:10 (Parallel theme): They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

Isaiah 1:23 (Parallel theme): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Malachi 3:5 (Parallel theme): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

1 Samuel 8:3 (Parallel theme): And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

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