

Amos 5:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

Analysis

That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress (הַמְבִלִּיג שֶׁד עַל־עֶז וְשֶׁד עַל־מִבְצָר יָבוֹא, haMavlig shod al-az veshod al-mibtsar yavo)—this verse concludes the doxology (vv. 8-9) by celebrating God's power to reverse fortunes. The verb balag (בָּלַג, "flash forth/cause to shine") may describe sudden, unexpected action. "The spoiled" (shod, שֶׁד) can mean "destruction" or "the despoiled/plundered one"—the victim of violence. "The strong" (az, אַז) means the mighty, powerful oppressor. God empowers the devastated victim to overcome the strong oppressor.

The phrase **so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress** means the formerly powerless victim will assault the fortified stronghold of the powerful. "Fortress" (mibtsar, מִבְצָר) represents defensive strength, military power, security. God can reverse any human power structure—making the weak strong and bringing down the mighty. This theme resonates throughout Scripture: Hannah's song celebrates how God "raises the poor from the dust" and "brings low the mighty" (1 Samuel 2:7-8). Mary's Magnificat echoes this: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree" (Luke 1:52). In context, Amos warns Israel's powerful elite: the God you've ignored can empower your victims to destroy you.

Historical Context

Israel's wealthy oppressors felt secure in their fortified cities and military might. Archaeological excavations reveal impressive fortifications at Samaria and other Israelite cities—massive walls, elaborate palaces, stored goods suggesting wealth and security. Yet Amos declares these fortresses offer no protection against God's judgment. Historically, Assyria was God's instrument to "strengthen the spoiled against the strong"—the formerly insignificant Assyrian power grew mighty and conquered Israel's fortresses. The fall of Samaria (722 BC) after three-year siege proved no fortress withstands God's judgment. This principle applies to all history: God governs by His sovereign will, not human military or economic power. Empires rise and fall at His command.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's power to reverse fortunes (empowering victims against oppressors) relate to His justice?
2. What does this verse teach about the futility of trusting military strength and fortifications against divine judgment?
3. How should believers respond when seeing powerful oppressors seemingly secure in their fortresses?

Interlinear Text

הַמַּבְלִי יִגְ	וְשׁוֹד	עַל	עַז	וְשׁוֹד
That strengtheneth	so that the spoiled	H5921	against the strong	so that the spoiled
H1082	H7701		H5794	H7701
עַל	מִבְצָר	יָבוֹא:		
H5921	against the fortress	shall come		
	H4013	H935		

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