

Amos 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Analysis

And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate (וְנִשְׁמָמוּ בָמוֹת יִשְׁחָב) —God specifies the judgment announced in verse 8. The "high places" (bamot, בָּמוֹת) were worship sites established throughout Israel's history, often on hilltops or elevated platforms. Though initially used for legitimate worship (1 Samuel 9:12-14, 1 Kings 3:4), high places became centers of syncretistic worship mixing Yahweh-worship with Canaanite practices (1 Kings 11:7, 12:31-32, 2 Kings 17:9-11, 23:5). The verb nashammu (נִשְׁמָמוּ, "shall be desolate") from shamem (שָׁמַם) means devastated, appalled, laid waste—total destruction.

The reference to "Isaac" rather than "Israel" or "Jacob" is unusual and emphatic. Isaac was the son of promise, the miracle child through whom God's covenant continued (Genesis 21:12, Romans 9:7). By invoking Isaac's name, Amos emphasizes the tragedy: the descendants of the promised son have so corrupted worship that God will destroy their sanctuaries. Their patriarch's name becomes a reproach. The rhetorical strategy mirrors Amos 7:2, 5 ("Jacob is small") and anticipates 7:16 ("house of Isaac")—using patriarchal names highlights covenant relationship now violated.

And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste (וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִחָרְבוּ) —"sanctuaries" (miqdeshei, מִקְדָּשֵׁי) refers to places set apart for worship, including Bethel, Dan, Gilgal, and Beersheba (Amos 4:4, 5:5, 8:14). The verb yecheravu (יִחָרְבוּ, "shall be laid waste") from charav (חָרַב) means destroyed, made desolate,

turned to ruins. These shrines Israel trusted for security and blessing will become rubble. The historical irony: Jeroboam I established Bethel and Dan to rival Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:28-29), claiming they represented true Yahweh-worship. Now God declares He will destroy them.

And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword (וְקָמְתִי עַל-בֵּית יִרְבֹּעַם בְּחֶרֶב)—God promises to "rise against" (qamti al, קָמְתִי עַל) the royal dynasty "with the sword" (becherev, בְּחֶרֶב). Jeroboam II, reigning during Amos's ministry, presided over Israel's last period of prosperity. But God promises dynastic overthrow through violence. This was fulfilled when Zechariah son of Jeroboam II was assassinated after reigning only six months (2 Kings 15:8-10), ending Jehu's dynasty. The following decades saw rapid succession of kings through assassination and chaos, culminating in Assyrian conquest.

Historical Context

Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) expanded Israel's borders and economy to heights not seen since Solomon (2 Kings 14:25-28). The prosperity seemed to validate Israel's religious system centered at Bethel. But Amos announced that within a generation, Jeroboam's dynasty would end violently, Israel's shrines would be destroyed, and the nation would be exiled. This seemed impossible during Jeroboam's golden age, yet it happened exactly as prophesied.

Jeroboam II died around 753 BC. His son Zechariah reigned only six months before Shallum assassinated him (2 Kings 15:10), fulfilling Amos 7:9. The next decades saw political instability, Assyrian invasions (745, 733, 722 BC), and finally total conquest. Bethel, Dan, and other shrines were destroyed. The "high places of Isaac" became desolate ruins, exactly as Amos prophesied. The lesson: external prosperity and religious activity don't guarantee God's approval when covenant faithfulness is lacking.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment on Israel's sanctuaries and dynasty demonstrate that religious activity cannot substitute for covenant obedience?
2. What warnings does the collapse of Jeroboam's dynasty offer about presuming political or economic success proves divine blessing?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| וְנֶשׁ מוֹ | בְּמֹוֹת | יִשְׁחָק | וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי י | יִשְׂרָאֵל |
| shall be desolate | And the high places | of Isaac | and the sanctuaries | of Israel |
| H8074 | H1116 | H3446 | H4720 | H3478 |
| יִחָרְבוּ | וְאֶקְמָה י | עַל | בֵּית | יִרְבֹּעַם |
| shall be laid waste | and I will rise | H5921 | against the house | of Jeroboam |
| H2717 | H6965 | | H1004 | H3379 |
| בְּחֶרֶב: | | | | |
| with the sword | | | | |
| H2719 | | | | |