

Isaiah 17:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

Analysis

The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. Damascus, one of the ancient world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, receives divine judgment. The word 'burden' (massa) introduces prophetic oracles of judgment. The phrase 'taken away from being a city' indicates not mere defeat but utter destruction—ceasing to function as an urban center. Damascus represents Syria (Aram), Israel's northern neighbor and frequent antagonist. The judgment's cause relates to the Syro-Ephraimite coalition (735-732 BCE) when Damascus and Israel's northern kingdom allied against Judah (Isaiah 7:1-9), attempting to force Judah into rebellion against Assyria. God's sovereignty extends judgment to nations threatening His people and purposes.

Historical Context

Damascus, Syria's capital, boasted millennia of history as a major trade center. The prophecy was fulfilled when Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria conquered Damascus in 732 BCE, deporting its population and reducing it to provincial status (2 Kings 16:9). While Damascus was later rebuilt and remains inhabited today, its status as an independent powerful kingdom ended permanently. The 'ruinous heap' describes its condition after Assyrian conquest—walls demolished, population deported, reduced from proud capital to administrative outpost.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment on Damascus demonstrate His sovereignty over nations beyond Israel?
2. What does Damascus's fate teach about the consequences of opposing God's purposes?
3. In what ways did this prophecy's fulfillment vindicate Isaiah's prophetic ministry?

Interlinear Text

מִשָּׁא	יֵדֵי שָׁקֶה	הִנֵּה	יֵדֵי שָׁקֶה	מוֹסָר
The burden	Behold Damascus		Behold Damascus	is taken away
H4853	H1834	H2009	H1834	H5493
מֵעַיִר	וְהָיָה	קֵמַח	מַפְלָה:	
from being a city		heap	and it shall be a ruinous	
H5892	H1961	H4596	H4654	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 25:2 (Parallel theme): For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

Zechariah 9:1 (Parallel theme): The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

Isaiah 7:8 (Parallel theme): For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

Acts 9:2 (Parallel theme): And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 49:2 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.

Genesis 14:15 (Parallel theme): And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

Micah 1:6 (Parallel theme): Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.