

Isaiah 24:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof;
because they have transgressed the laws, changed the
ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Analysis

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof—chaneph (חָנֵף, "defiled") denotes moral pollution, especially covenant violation. The preposition "under" (tachat, תַּחַת) indicates that earth suffers beneath the weight of human sin, recalling Numbers 35:33: bloodshed defiles the land. Creation groans under humanity's rebellion (Rom 8:20-22).

Three indictments follow: **they have transgressed the laws** (avar torot, עָבַר (תּוֹרוֹת)—violated divine instruction; **changed the ordinance** (chalaph choq, חָלַף (חֻק)—altered God's statute; **broken the everlasting covenant** (parar berit olam, פָּרַר בְּרִית עוֹלָם)—shattered eternal covenant. The berit olam likely references the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:16), binding all humanity—universal accountability predates Sinai. Some identify Adamic or creational covenant (Hos 6:7 margin). Regardless, humanity stands guilty of cosmic covenant-breaking.

Historical Context

This verse provides the theological foundation for verses 1-4's judgment—earth's devastation results from moral causation, not arbitrary divine wrath. The 'everlasting covenant' most likely refers to the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:1-17), which established basic moral order for all nations: prohibitions against murder, dietary laws, and accountability to God. Ancient Israel understood that even Gentile nations bore covenant obligations to the Creator (Amos 1-2 judges nations

by moral law, not Mosaic Torah). Humanity's universal covenant-breaking warranted universal judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the concept of the 'everlasting covenant' (likely Noahic) establish universal human accountability to God?
2. What modern examples can you identify of humanity 'changing the ordinance'—altering God's moral statutes?
3. In what ways does environmental degradation reflect and reveal humanity's spiritual rebellion against the Creator?

Interlinear Text

וְהָאֵרֶץ	חֲנֹפָה	תַּחַת	יֹשְׁבֵי יָהּ	כִּי
The earth	also is defiled	H8478	under the inhabitants	H3588
H776	H2610		H3427	
עֲבָרָו	תּוֹרֹת	חֲלָפוּ	חֻקֵּי	הֵפְסוּ
thereof because they have transgressed	the laws	changed	the ordinance	broken
H5674	H8451	H2498	H2706	H6565
בְּרִית	עוֹלָם:			
covenant	the everlasting			
H1285	H5769			

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:20 (Covenant): Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Hebrews 9:1 (Covenant): Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

Daniel 7:25 (Word): And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Luke 1:6 (Word): And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.