

Jeremiah 49:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?

Analysis

Concerning the Ammonites. Thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? This oracle addresses Ammon's territorial expansion into Israelite land (Gad's territory east of Jordan). The rhetorical questions—"Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir?"—emphasize the injustice. Though northern Israel fell to Assyria (722 BCE) and survivors were exiled, the land remained Israel's by divine grant. Ammon's occupation during Israel's weakness violated both covenant promises and international justice.

The reference to "their king" likely indicates the Ammonite deity Milcom/Molech, suggesting religious as well as political annexation. Ammon not only seized territory but established pagan worship where Yahweh should reign. This double offense—territorial theft and idolatrous worship—demanded divine judgment. God defends His people's inheritance even when they're too weak to defend themselves.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. God's gifts and land grants to His people remain valid despite temporary dispossession
2. taking advantage of God's people during weakness provokes divine judgment
3. God vindicates the oppressed and judges opportunistic aggression

4. territorial promises have divine backing, transcending human political calculations.

This anticipates the church's confidence that Christ's inheritance cannot be stolen (1 Peter 1:4-5).

Historical Context

Ammon (descended from Lot, Genesis 19:38) occupied Transjordanian territory east of Israel, often in conflict with God's people. When Assyria exiled northern Israel's tribes (722 BCE), including Gad, Ammon expanded westward into the power vacuum. Archaeological evidence from sites like Rabbath-Ammon (modern Amman, Jordan) shows Ammonite culture flourished during this period.

The prophecy found fulfillment when Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against Ammon (582 BCE, per Josephus), reducing them to Babylonian vassalage. Later, they faced further judgment under Persian and Hellenistic rule, eventually disappearing as a distinct people. The historical pattern demonstrates that exploiting others' weakness brings eventual reckoning—a principle relevant to all international relations and interpersonal conduct.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's defense of Israel's territorial rights despite their weakness demonstrate His faithfulness to covenant promises?
2. In what ways does this oracle warn against opportunistically taking advantage of others' vulnerabilities?
3. How does understanding that oppression of God's people provokes divine judgment encourage believers facing persecution?

Interlinear Text

וְבָנֵי אֱמֹן	וְבָנֵי אֱמֹן	כִּי	אָמַר	יְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים
Concerning the Ammonites		H3541	thus saith	the LORD
H1121		H5983	H559	H3068
וְבָנֵי אֱמֹן	אָמַר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין	יְהִי שָׁבֵן אֵין	לֹא	
Concerning the Ammonites		H3478	H518	H369
H1121		H369	H3423	H0
וְבָנֵי אֱמֹן וְעַמּוֹד וְעַל	וְבָנֵי שָׁבֵן מֶלֶךְ	אָתָה תְּגַדֵּל	וְעַמּוֹד	
H4069	H3423	H4428	H853	H5971
hath he no heir	why then doth their king		Gad	and his people
			H1410	
בָּשָׁבֵן בָּשָׁבֵן				
in his cities	dwell			
H5892	H3427			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:3 (References Lord): An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:

Jeremiah 49:7 (References Lord): Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?

Jeremiah 25:21 (Parallel theme): Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,

2 Chronicles 20:1 (Parallel theme): It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.