

Jeremiah 49:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

Analysis

If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? This rhetorical question uses agricultural imagery to emphasize the totality of Edom's coming destruction. Normal grape harvesters (botserim, בֹּצְרִים) leave gleanings ('olelot, עֲלֵלוֹת)—the remnant grapes for the poor (Leviticus 19:10, Deuteronomy 24:21). Even thieves take only what they need and can carry. But Edom's judgment will be complete—no remnant, no survivors, no recovery.

If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. The Hebrew shavitu (שָׁבִיתוּ) means to ruin or destroy, while dayyam (דַּיָּם, enough) indicates thieves stop when satisfied. The contrast is stark: human plunderers show restraint; divine judgment is thorough. This echoes Obadiah 5, which uses nearly identical language in prophesying Edom's destruction.

The imagery teaches that God's judgment, when fully executed, surpasses human devastation. While invaders leave survivors to rebuild, God's decreed judgment on Edom would be final. This didn't mean immediate genocide but the nation's eventual, complete disappearance from history—a fate that materialized over subsequent centuries.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare typically left some population to work the land and pay tribute. The gleaning laws in Israel's Torah ensured provision for the vulnerable. But Edom's judgment would exceed normal conquest patterns. After Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns, the Nabataeans displaced the Edomites, who migrated into southern Judea (becoming 'Idumeans'). By the Roman period, Edom as a distinct nation had vanished. The Herodian dynasty (Idumean converts to Judaism) represented Edom's final appearance in biblical history, ending with Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD. Unlike Israel, which survived exile with preserved identity, Edom disappeared completely—fulfilling the imagery of total devastation without remnant.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the completeness of God's judgment on Edom teach about the seriousness of persistent rebellion and pride?
2. How does this passage challenge assumptions that God's judgment will always leave room for recovery or second chances?
3. In what ways does Edom's total disappearance from history validate the reliability of prophetic Scripture?

Interlinear Text

אִם	בְּצֹרִים	בָּאוּ	לָךְ	לֹא	יֵשָׁא רֹו
H518	If grapegatherers	come	H0	H3808	to thee would they not leave
	H1219	H935			H7604

עֹלִיל וְת	אִם	גַּנָּב יִם	בַּלְיָלָה	הַשֹּׂחַ יִתּוּ
some gleaning grapes	H518	if thieves	by night	they will destroy
H5955		H1590	H3915	H7843

יָם:

till they have enough

H1767