

Zephaniah 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

Analysis

For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation (עֲזָה אֶזְוָה תִּהְיֶה Azah azuvah tihyeh)—A Hebrew wordplay: 'Gaza' (Azah) sounds like 'forsaken' (azuvah). Similarly, Ekron is 'rooted up' (te'aqer), using assonance for emphasis. The Philistine pentapolis (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath) dominated Judah's coastal plain.

They shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day—Typically armies attacked at dawn. Capturing a fortified city at high noon implies either overwhelming force or divine intervention making defense impossible. This prophecy was fulfilled when Assyria conquered these cities (Isaiah 20:1), then later by Babylon and ultimately by Alexander the Great (332 BC).

Historical Context

The Philistines had been Israel's archenemies since the judges period. By Zephaniah's time, they had been weakened by Assyrian campaigns but still controlled strategic coastal territory. Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns (604-586 BC) devastated these cities as predicted.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does God judge the nations surrounding His people before judging His own people?
2. What does the specific judgment of Philistine cities teach about God's detailed attention to historical enemies of His people?
3. How should Christians view the judgment of hostile powers and ideologies that oppose God's kingdom?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	עִזָּה	עָזוּבָה	תְּהִי	וְאַשְׁקֶל	לְשִׁמְמָה	אֲשָׁדֹד
H3588	For Gaza	shall be forsaken	H1961	and Ashkelon	a desolation	Ashdod
	H5804	H5800		H831	H8077	H795
בַּצָּהָר	יָגֵשׁ וְהָ	וְעֶקְרוֹן	תִּעֲקָר:			
at the noon day	they shall drive out	and Ekron	shall be rooted up			
H6672	H1644	H6138	H6131			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 25:20 (Parallel theme): And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,