

Aram (1:3-5)

³Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Damascus
 and for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because they threshed Gilead with
 implements of sharp iron.

Aram was Abraham's point of origin (DT 26:5), so there was a distant family connection to Israel.

"Threshed" is the very term used to describe Hazael's oppression of Israel during the reigns of Jehu & Jehoahaz. (2 KI 10:32-33; 13:7)

⁴So I will send fire upon the house of
 Hazael
 And it will consume the citadels of
 Ben-hadad.
⁵I will also break the gate bar of
 Damascus,
 And cut off the inhabitant from the
 valley of Aven,
 And him who holds the scepter, from
 Beth-eden;

V.4 refers to the fact that ALL the kings of Aram descended from Hazael deified themselves as being a god called "hadad". V.5 refers to the source of the people's trust, first in the security of a city of their own building, and then in their gods which were "gods of the valley" and proclaimed to be stronger than the God of Israel. (1 KI 20:23) They even called it the "House of Eden", a false paradise.

So the people of Aram will go exiled to
 Kir,"
 Says the LORD.

Kir is a region in modern-day Armenia by the river Cyrus that empties into the Caspian Sea. When Ahaz applied for help from Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, the Assyrian king took Damascus, slew king Rezin, and carried away its people captive to Kir. (2 KI 16:9) Aram ceased to exist around 732 B.C. and Damascus was absorbed by the Assyrian empire.

Philistia (1:6-8)

⁶Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Gaza and
 for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because they deported an entire
 population
 To deliver it up to Edom.

In the time of King Jehoram, the Philistines plundered the possessions of the king's house, taking all his sons and wives save one. (2 CH 21:17). These were sold to the Edomites who were also in rebellion against Israel at the time. This would be a repeated pattern of behavior by the Philistines in the future as well.

⁷So I will send fire upon the wall of
 Gaza
 And it will consume her citadels.
⁸I will also cut off the inhabitant from
 Ashdod,
 And him who holds the scepter, from
 Ashkelon;
 I will even unleash My power upon
 Ekron,

These were the 4 remaining capitals of power and false worship remaining in Philistia (Gath having already been subdued by David.) They came under successive attack beginning with Uzziah in the time of Amos (2 CH 26:6), continued with Hezekiah (2 KI 18:8) and at the hands of successive invasions by the Egyptians, Persians, Alexander and the Macabees.

And the remnant of the Philistines will
 perish,"
 Says the Lord GOD.

By Christ's time, they were extinct as a people and those cities still in use were wholly populated by new people groups, largely Hellenistic. What are today called by some as "Palestinians" – a reference to Philistia – in reality are of no relation to them whatsoever.

Tyre (1:9-10)

⁹Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Tyre and
 for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because they delivered up an entire
 population to Edom
 And did not remember the covenant of
 brotherhood.

Tyre not only engaged in the same activity as Philistia in selling Jewish captives to Edom, but it forsook the covenants establish between its King Hiram and David and Solomon. (2 SA 5:11; 1 KI 5:2-6, 10-22)

¹⁰So I will send fire upon the wall of
 Tyre
 And it will consume her citadels."

Tyre fell first to the Assyrians and then to Nebuchadnezzar, and then was wiped out permanently by Alexander. What has been rebuilt is near the original city, but the original inhabitants have long been extinct and new people groups moved into the area and had marginal political success.

Edom (1:11-12)

¹¹Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Edom and
 for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because he pursued his brother with
 the sword,
 While he stifled his compassion;
 His anger also tore continually,
 And he maintained his fury forever.

"Edomites" are the direct descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob from whom Israel is descended. Edom's history was to always quarrel with Israel and attack them when they were most vulnerable. (NU 20:21; 2 CH 28:17; 2 KI 16:5; PS 137:7-8) Thus this blood relative's anger remained perpetually against Israel.

¹²So I will send fire upon Teman
 And it will consume the citadels of
 Bozrah."

The Edomites were well-known for their own false gods and false worship in these religious centers. (2 CH 25:14)

Edom was conquered by the Babylonians and eventually their original lands were taken over by the Nabateans. Under John Hyrcanus the Macabees conquered them and forced them to rejoin Israel. By Roman times they were in the region known as Idumea from whom the Herods were descended. After Rome's destruction of Israel in 70 A.D., the Edomites seem to have ceased as a people as well.

Ammon (1:13-15)

¹³Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of the sons
 of Ammon and for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because they ripped open the
 pregnant women of Gilead
 In order to enlarge their borders.

These were descendants of Lot, so like Edom, they were relatives that should have behaved as such.

Under Hazael this is exactly what they did (2 KI 8:12) trying to leave Israel without an heir so that they could seize their inheritance for themselves. (JE 49:1)

¹⁴So I will kindle a fire on the wall of
 Rabbah
 And it will consume her citadels
 Amid war cries on the day of battle,
 And a storm on the day of tempest.

Their abominable false god was Milcom (1 KI 11:5) which involved sacrificing of children.

This describes their destruction as coming upon them suddenly unawares.

¹⁵Their king will go into exile,
 He and his princes together," says the
 LORD.

In the wake of Judah's captivity into Babylon, the last king of Ammon (Baalis) was an accessory to the murder of Gedaliah whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over the remnant of Jews left in the land. (JER 40:14). This provoked the invasion, utter destruction of Ammon, and captivity of the king and all his people by Nebuchadnezzar. They opposed the restoration of Jerusalem's walls (NEH 2:10-19) and seem to have completely vanished after their last stand against Judas of the Macabees.

Moab (2:1-3)

¹Thus says the LORD,
 "For three transgressions of Moab and
 for four
 I will not revoke its punishment,
 Because he burned the bones of the
 king of Edom to lime.

These were descendants of Lot, the brother of Ammon, and were therefore related to Israel.

There was always an up and down relationship with Moab, who was the nation that called on Balaam to curse Israel, but at various times was an ally and aid. The reference to the king of Edom is not recorded in the Bible but obviously refers to something horrific and infamous as a sin.

²So I will send fire upon Moab
 And it will consume the citadels of
 Kerioth;
 And Moab will die amid tumult,
 With war cries and the sound of a
 trumpet.

Moab was the first nation to spiritually entice Israel away from the One True God. (NUM 25:1-9; 31:16) It was a constant source of spiritual conflict.

God's judgment specifies that they would come to an end in the tumult of war.

³I will also cut off the judge from her
 midst
 And slay all her princes with him,"
 says the LORD.

The implication of the complete removal of both princes and judges would indicate a dual judgment against both the government and the religious system, both of which encouraged worship of false gods. Moab would be eradicated by two major invasions, the first at the hands of the Assyrians and then, along with Ammon, at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar after the destruction of Jerusalem. Like Ammon, they do not exist as a people group today.

The Nations of Amos 1-2

Chronologically, it seems that these are the first nations outside of Israel and Judah against which judgment is prophesied. They are all immediate neighbors of Israel and were in direct contact not just politically but religiously in their perpetual worship of false gods and exporting of same to Israel time and again. 4 of the 6 have familial connections to Israel: Aram from whence came Abraham, Edom the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau, and Ammon and Moab the sons of Abraham's nephew Lot. Tyre at times had a very close and affectionate "brother-like" relationship, particularly through David and Solomon. Philistia appears to be the only nation with no relationship connection and was a perpetual, outright enemy of Israel.

Although some of the cities mentioned as originally belonging to these nations exist even to this day, these original people groups have long ceased to exist in tact. Their lands and cities have long been overtaken by other groups, sometimes changing hands several times, even though it appears that the new groups intermingled with the original have inherited the same attitudes toward Israel as the original did. What God did to them should have served as an example not just to Israel and Judah, but to the even larger coming empires who would rule over the Middle East. These smaller, neighboring kingdoms all had in common the mistreatment of Israel, the desire to take Israel's inheritance for themselves, and the completely forsaking of the One True God for false gods, even becoming missionaries in effect for those false gods.

It might be important to note that ultimately they were invaded and carried away by the same empires who came against Israel and Judah. The difference as to why Israel has miraculously not just survived but is being *revived* is a powerful illustration of the difference between choosing the One True God and an alternate. In the End Times, this repeats itself in that Christ intervenes on Israel's behalf while Satan gathers all the nations against Him. Israel survives and the rest are destroyed because of the spiritual revival that will take place that reconciles Israel to Jesus the Messiah while the others embrace a false Messiah in the work and person of the Antichrist.

It is interesting to note that these nations are also mentioned in Psalm 83, a scenario which has never taken place historically and thus must be fulfilled at some future point. In some way, what is described in Joel foreshadows something which will take place again in the Last Days. It is also interesting to note that Joel, being the first prophetic pronouncement by a Prophet against nations for their mistreatment of others, parallels the last time Christ deals with the nations as described in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25. The nations are gathered together and divided into "sheep" and "goats" solely on the criteria of how they, too, treated others.

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