

Jer. 49:1-6, Oracle against Ammon
June 29, 1991
H. Van Dyke Parunak

A. Overview

1. Historical background
 - a) Ammonites descended from Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot by his younger daughter, just as Moab is his son by his elder daughter, Gen. 19. Thus they are second cousins to Jacob = Israel.
 - b) Historical territory: within the encircling arm of the Jabbok, extended W to the Jordan by the N. Heshbon just north of the Dead Sea. Heshbon, in Moab, is close to the border.
 - c) Their territory, like the northern part of Moab, was largely controlled by Sihon king of the Amorites, until Israel captured it and settled Gad there.
 - d) Like the Moabites, the Ammonites were continually scrapping with Israel.
 - 1) They flowed back into their ancestral territory in the vacuum left when Assyria took the northern tribes (including the transjordanian settlements) into captivity.
 - 2) Jer. 40:15, sponsored the assassination of Gedaliah, perhaps in an attempt to extend their control even west of the Jordan.
 - 3) Central in the resistance to the rebuilding of the city walls in Neh (4:1ff).
2. The shift from third person to second between vv. 2,3 gives major division of the paragraph; cf. also the restoration promise at the end. Thus
 - a) 1-2, God talks ABOUT Ammon's fall
 - b) 3-5, God talks TO Ammon about her fall
 - c) 6, promise of restoration
3. Each description of the fall discusses their sin and the resulting judgment. The nature of the sin emphasized in the two sections is different, and different aspects of the judgment are emphasized to suit the crime.
 - a) Because Ammon has unjustly appropriated Israel's territory (1), she will be defeated and Israel will return (2).
 - b) Because Ammon proudly glories in her own security (4), she will be delivered up to terror (5) and lamentation (3).
4. Taking into account the shift in person between 2 and 3, the pattern is AB-BAB, folded chiasm.
 - a) 1, sin (living in Israel's cities)
 - b) 2, judgment
 - c) 3, judgment (with lamentation)
 - d) 4, sin (pride and self-trust)
 - e) 5, judgment

B. 1b-2, Third Person Oracle

Because Ammon has dispossessed Israel, God will defeat them and restore their land to Israel. (NB: This restoration hasn't happened yet!)

1. Ammon's Sin, v.1.

Phrased as a rhetorical question. Why is Ammon inhabiting the land of Gad? Doesn't Israel have anyone to live there? Translated into a statement, Jer asserts that Ammon should not possess these cities because they still belong to Israel.

As a matter of fact, at this moment Israel can hardly occupy them. The transjordanian tribes were taken captive by Assyria (1 Chr. 5:25,26). But Jer's statement implies that this land still belongs to Gad in principle.

There is an imbalance here. When Sihon takes land from Moab or Ammon, and Israel later conquers Sihon, the land belongs to Israel. But when TP3 takes land from Israel and Ammon later occupies it, it still belongs to Israel. Perhaps the difference is that in the first case Israel conquered Sihon, while in the second Moab is just squatting under Assyrian rule. That is, possession by conquest is more legitimate than possession by squatting. More likely, the reason is that God has allotted the land to Israel, not to Ammon, and his sovereign rule is what matters.

2. The resulting judgment, v. 2

Described in three steps, each a cause for the next.

a) God will bring battle to Rabbah, the capital.

b) As a result, it will become a ruin, and the smaller cities that depend on it ("her daughters") will be burned up.

c) Finally, with Ammon out of the way, Israel will repossess these lands.

NB: According to Josephus, Ammon was invaded by Neb. in his fifth year (Ant. x.9.7), but Israel has never again held this territory. Even in today's political system, it is unthinkable that Israel could hold the east bank of Jordan. The last item of this promise must await the extension of Messiah's kingdom over all the earth.

C. 3-5, Second Person Oracle

Because of Ammon's pride and self-trust, God will humiliate them and cause them to mourn. The outer members describe the destruction of Ammon; the central one highlights the sin for which this punishment comes upon them. We will analyze the sin first, then move to the encircling judgments.

1. Their sin, v.4.

Now our attention is directed, not to the outward sinful

activities in which they engage, but to the sinful state of their heart. We may discern two trends here:

- a) They glory in their "flowing valley", the fruitful land that makes them economically self-sufficient, and thus trust in their "treasures."
- b) All of this they have in their mountain fastness where enemies seldom come: "Who shall come unto me?" They are off the beaten path of conquest.

In this they are like the Moabites, who trusted in their works and treasures (48:7) and magnified themselves against the Lord (48:26, 42). In both cases, as with us, the root sin is self-trust and self-glory rather than trust in the Lord.

2. The judgments, 3, 5.

The resulting judgments fit the crime, and correspond to the two aspects of their sin, glorying and false security.

- a) 3, They who once gloried in their wealth will now lament. Two commands to lament because of the coming judgment.
 - 1) The first is addressed to Heshbon, which is on the northern border of Moab. Did Ammon possess it at this time? More likely, it is being called as an external witness, just as those around Moab were commanded to witness her fall in 48:17,20. That others see her fall is particularly painful in view of her pride; they not only see it but weep, because as the enemy moves farther south, they too will be endangered.

This analysis suggests that (*ay* here has the generic sense of "ruin" rather than being a proper name. The Moabites observe the generic condition of desolate ruins, and lament.

- 2) The second command is to the Ammonites themselves, because they will shortly go into captivity, and have to leave their vaunted wealth behind.
- b) 5, They who once felt unapproachably secure will now flee in terror before the enemy.

D. 6, Restoration

Sudden and unexpected. There is nothing in Ammon's history that would lead us to expect this--but then, that is always the way with God's mercy. It is unexpected and unmerited, which gives us all the more reason to praise him for it.

Summary

1. God's sovereignty in distributing the circumstances of this world. Land that Ammon lost to Sihon becomes Israel's, but land

that Israel loses to TP3 does not become Ammon's. God alone holds the title deeds.

2. The many sides of sin. Is Ammon judged because she abuses Israel, or because of her pride? Yes. Sin is the expression of our sinful nature; its outward forms are many, but all stem from the root rebellion against God, and he can deal with them together.
3. The punishment suits the crime.
4. God is merciful to some of those whom he judges, and (in spite of their history) promises to restore them to the place of blessing--as he has done with us in salvation.

Psalm: Ps. 107, Rebels, Who Had Dared to Show

Analysis 49:1-6, Sons of Ammon

- A. 1 LI/B:N"Y (AM.OWN
K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH
- B. 1b-2, Third person oracle: reason-result p: Because Ammon has dispossessed Israel, God will bring judgment on them.
 1. reason: Rhetorical question: Ammon possesses the land of Israel
 - a) H:A/BFNIYM)"YN L:/YI&:RF)"L
 - b))IM-YOWR"\$)"YN L/OW
 - c) MAD.W.(A YFRA\$ MAL:K./FM)ET-G.FD
 - d) W:/(AM./OW B.:/(FRFY/W YF\$FB
 2. result: temporal p: 2 LF/K"N
 - a) time: HIN."H YFMIYM B.F)IYM N:)UM-Y:HWFH
 - b) text: seq p (causal chain)
 - 1) setting: W:/HI\$:MA(:T.IY)EL-RAB.AT B.:N"Y-(AM.OWN
T.:RW.(AT MIL:XFMFH
 - 2) bu-1: chiasitic coordination p
 - a> W:/HFY:TFH L:/T"L \$:MFMFH
 - b> W./B:NOTEY/HF B.F/)"\$ T.IC.AT:NFH
 - 3) bu-n: W:/YFRA\$ YI&:RF)"L)ET-YOR:\$FY/W
 - c))FMAR Y:HWFH
 - C. 3-5, Second person oracle: chiasitic reason p
The outer members describe the destruction of Ammon; the central one highlights the sin for which this punishment comes upon them.
 1. coordinate p: Lament, for you are defeated.
 - a) motivated command
 - 1) command: 3 H"YLIYLIY XE\$:B.OWN
Why is this listed both in Ammon (here) and Moab (ch.48)?
 - 2) motivation: K.IY \$UD.:DFH-(AY
 - b) motivated command
 - 1) command:
 - a> C:(AQ:NFH B.:NOWT RAB.FH
 - b> X:AGOR:NFH &AQ.IYM
 - c> S:POD:NFH
 - d> W:/HIT:\$OW+A+:NFH B.A/G.:D"ROWT
 - 2) motivation: K.IY MAL:K.FM B.A/G.OWLFBH Y"L"K: K.OH:ANFY/W

W:/&FRFY/W YAX:D.FY/W

2. comment p: Their sin: false glory and trust
 - a) text: 4 MAH-T.IT:HAL:LIY B.F/(:AMFQIYM ZFB (IM:Q/"K: HA/B.AT
 - b) comment: coordinate p
 - 1) HA/\$.OWB"BFH
 - 2) example p
 - a> text: HA/B.O+:XFH B.:/)OC:ROTEY/HF
 - b> example: MIY YFBOW))"L/FY
3. seq p: You will flee before the terror
 - a) 5 HIN/:NIY M"BIY) (FLAY/IK: P.AXAD N:)UM-):ADONFY Y:HWIH
C:BF)OWT MI/K.FL-S:BIYBFY/IK:
 - b) W:/NID.AX:T.EM)IY\$ L:/PFNFY/W
 - c) W:/)"YN M:QAB."C LA/N.OD"D

D. Restoration: 6 W:/)AX:AR"Y-K"N)F\$IYB)ET-\$:BW.T
B.:N"Y-(AM.OWN N:)UM-Y:HWFH S