

4 VIOLENCE AS DIVINE JUDGEMENT

This study expands some of the themes of chapter 7

Justice *matters*. Judgement is a *positive thing*. I thank God that he is neither indifferent nor capricious; more than that, he is compassionate.

From chapter 7, 'Violence as divine judgement', p. 105

Opening question

What are your initial responses to these words? Are there parts of scripture that make them hard for you to agree with?

Case study

Read Hosea 11:5–11. (It might help to understand that 'Ephraim' is the prophet's way of referring to Israel.)

Notice how verses 10–11 'undo' verse 5. What is the reason given in verses found towards the centre of the passage?

I think of this passage as showing God's conflicted heart for his people. Do you agree? If so, how does this help us understand his actions against them?

Digging deeper

We might not be too surprised if God feels conflicted about punishing Israel. But this is not confined to those we might consider 'his people'. Read Isaiah 19:1–17. What sorts of disasters do you think Isaiah is describing? Why would God be angry with Egypt?

Bearing in mind that when Isaiah was writing, there were two arch-enemies of Israel: Egypt and Assyria, now read verses 18–25. What surprises you in this passage?

Take another look at verses 22 and 25. Is there a contradiction between them, with regards to God's attitude to Egypt? Why or why not?

What has surprised you in today's study? How might this affect the way that you read other passages about the judgement of God?

For further study

Read Isaiah 64. What is the prophet's attitude towards God's judgement, in the following verses?

- vv. 1–2
- vv. 4–5a
- vv. 5b–7
- vv. 8–12

Does the prophet regard God's judgement as a 'good thing'? Why or why not?

Is there a place in the present day for praying for God's judgement to come?