

Amos 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

Analysis

Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves (הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מָעֵיךְ תְּחִתֵּיכֶם פֶּאֲשָׁר פָּעֵיקְ הַעֲגָלָה בְּמַלְאָה לָהּ עַמִּיר) — This vivid agricultural metaphor has challenged translators. The Hebrew *me'iq* (עַיִק) from 'uq means "to press" or "cause to totter." Some render it "I will press you down" (ESV), while KJV maintains "I am pressed under you." Either way, the image is of an overloaded cart groaning under excessive weight, ready to collapse.

The metaphor likely depicts God's patience strained to breaking by Israel's sins—like a cart groaning under sheaves at harvest. The phrase *ha'agalah hamle'ah lah 'amir* (the cart full of sheaves) creates the image of maximum capacity exceeded. Just as the overloaded cart must eventually break or dump its load, so God's forbearance has limits. Amos has catalogued Israel's sins: oppressing the poor (2:6-7), sexual immorality at pagan shrines (2:7), extortion and temple defilement (2:8), ingratitude for God's redemption (2:9-11), and silencing prophets (2:12). The accumulation becomes unbearable.

This verse introduces the judgment oracle (vv. 13-16) where God describes the coming devastation. The warriors' flight, the archer's inability to stand, the swift unable to escape, the mighty losing strength, and even horsemen failing to deliver themselves—all demonstrate total military collapse. When God rises in judgment, human strength proves utterly insufficient. The metaphor warns that divine patience, though great, has boundaries. Accumulated sin eventually brings catastrophic judgment.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied during Jeroboam II's prosperous reign (793-753 BC) when Israel experienced territorial expansion and economic boom. The agricultural metaphor would resonate with his audience—harvest carts piled dangerously high with grain represented wealth but also potential disaster if overloaded. The subsequent Assyrian invasion (722 BC) fulfilled Amos's prophecy: Israel's military might proved useless against divine judgment executed through human agents.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the image of God 'pressed down' by accumulated sin challenge modern assumptions that God's patience is unlimited?
2. In what ways do we overload God's patience through persistent, unrepentant sin while presuming His grace has no boundaries?

Interlinear Text

פָּאֵשׁ	ר	תְּחִתִּיכְמָ	פָּעֵיקָ	פָּאֵשׁ	ר	תְּחִתִּיכְמָ	פָּעֵיקָ	
אָנֹכִ	י	הִגְּהֵה	אָנֹכִ	י	הִגְּהֵה	אָנֹכִ	י	הִגְּהֵה
H2009	H595	Behold I am pressed	H5781	H8478	H834	Behold I am pressed	H5781	

פָּעֵגֶל	ה	ל	ה	פָּמְלִא	ה	עַמְּרִים:
under you as a cart		that is full		H0		of sheaves
H5699		H4392				H5995

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:14 (Parallel theme): Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

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