

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 אָנוּכִי מִעִיק תַּחְתִּיכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּעִיק הָעֲגֹלָה הַמְלֵאָה לָהּ עֲמִיר)—This vivid agricultural metaphor has challenged translators. The Hebrew me'iq (מִעִיק) 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

אֲנֹכִי הֵן ה	תַּעֲיֹק	תַּחֲתֶיךָ מ	כָּאֲשֶׁר ר	תַּעֲיֹק
H2009	H595		H8478	H834
	Behold I am pressed			Behold I am pressed
	H5781			H5781
הַעֲגֹלָה	הַמְלֵאָה	לָהּ	עֲמִיר:	
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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