

Amos 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

Analysis

This verse introduces a new prophetic oracle targeting "the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt." The phrase "whole family" (kol-ha-mishpachah) encompasses all twelve tribes—both northern Israel (Amos's primary audience) and southern Judah. By invoking the Exodus, Amos roots Israel's identity and obligation in God's redemptive act. The Exodus wasn't merely historical event but the foundational covenant moment defining Israel's relationship with Yahweh.

"Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you" uses the prophetic call to attention (shim'u, "hear!") demanding urgent response. The word is "against you" ('alekem), not merely "to you"—indicating judgment, not blessing. This challenges Israel's assumption that covenant relationship guarantees protection regardless of behavior. They presumed election meant unconditional favor; Amos declares election means heightened accountability.

The Exodus reference is theologically loaded. God didn't choose Israel because they were numerous, powerful, or righteous (Deuteronomy 7:7-8, 9:4-6) but solely by sovereign grace. He redeemed them from slavery, made covenant at Sinai, gave them the land, and dwelt among them. This gracious history makes their ingratitude and covenant violation all the more heinous. The same God who delivered them will judge them if they persist in unfaithfulness. Election doesn't nullify but intensifies moral obligation.

Historical Context

The Exodus occurred approximately 1446 BC (early date) or 1260 BC (late date), making it 400-700 years before Amos's ministry. Yet this event remained central to Israelite identity, recounted annually at Passover and invoked throughout Scripture as God's defining act of redemption. Every prophet reminded Israel of the Exodus when calling them to covenant faithfulness (Jeremiah 2:6, 7:22, 11:4; Ezekiel 20:5-10; Hosea 11:1, 12:13, 13:4; Micah 6:4).

By Amos's time, Israel had stratified into wealthy elite and oppressed poor—ironically recreating the Egypt they escaped. The wealthy enslaved fellow Israelites for debt (2:6), the powerful oppressed the vulnerable (2:7, 4:1, 5:11-12, 8:4-6), and courts sold justice to the highest bidder (5:7, 10-12, 6:12). They had become the oppressors, contradicting the Exodus's core message: Yahweh hears the cry of the oppressed and delivers them.

Amos's invocation of the Exodus serves multiple purposes:

1. it establishes God's covenant claims on Israel
2. it highlights the grotesque irony of redeemed slaves becoming oppressors
3. it warns that the God who judged Egypt will judge Israel;
4. it reminds them that covenant relationship demands covenant obedience.

Election isn't escape from judgment but call to holiness.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's redemption of Israel from Egypt increase rather than decrease their moral accountability?

2. In what ways do Christians sometimes presume grace nullifies obedience rather than empowering it?
3. What does it mean that God speaks "against" His own covenant people when they violate His standards?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי הָרָא שָׁמְעֵנִי אֶת־הַדָּבָר כִּי־הָרָא אֲשֶׁר־דָּבָר הָרָא הַדָּבָר שָׁמַעַנִי
 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken that the LORD
 H8085 H853 H2088 H834 H1696 H3068

 עַלְיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם כִּי־יְשַׁרְאָל כָּל־עַל יִשְׁרָאֵל כִּי־מִשְׁפָּט הַמִּשְׁפָּט
 against you O children of Israel against the whole family
 H5921 H1121 H3478 H5921 H3605 H4940

 אֲשֶׁר־יְהִי תְּעַלְלָתִי מִן־אֶרְצָת־מִצְרָיִם לֹאמְרָה מִצְרָיִם
 which I brought up from the land of Egypt saying
 H834 H5927 H776 H4714 H559

Additional Cross-References

Amos 2:10 (References Egypt): Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

Jeremiah 8:3 (References Lord): And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

Micah 3:1 (References Israel): And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?