

Amos 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

Analysis

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? (בַּתְּפֵל)—(צְפֹר עַל-פָּח בָּאָרֶץ וּמוֹקֵשׁ אֵין לָהּ)—The Hebrew pach (snare/trap) was a spring-loaded device that caught birds. Moqesh (gin/bait) refers to the trigger mechanism. No bird falls into a trap unless someone deliberately set it. **Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? (פִּישְׁלָה פָּח מִן-פָּאָרֶם וְלֹכֹד)**—The trapper springs the snare only when prey is captured.

The third cause-effect question: traps don't spring randomly, and trappers don't check empty snares. Applied to Israel: their impending exile is no accident but divine judgment (the set trap). God, the master trapper, doesn't spring judgment unless He's caught covenant violators. The imagery reverses Israel's self-perception—they thought themselves predators exploiting the poor (Amos 2:6-8), but they're actually prey caught in God's justice-trap. Hosea uses similar imagery: 'I will spread my net upon them' (Hosea 7:12).

Historical Context

Bird trapping was common in ancient Israel for both food and sacrifice. Trappers used various snares: nets, spring traps, and sticky substances. The Mosaic Law even regulated bird trapping (Deuteronomy 22:6-7), showing God's concern for creation. Amos uses this everyday image to make divine sovereignty concrete.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What areas of your life feel like random suffering that might actually be God's disciplinary snare to capture your wandering heart?
2. How does recognizing God as the active trapper (not fate or chance) change your response to hardship?

Interlinear Text

ל	ה	א	י	וּמֹקֵשׁ	בְּאָרֶץ	פָּחָד	עַל	צָפֹר	פָּתָח	ל
fall	Can a bird	H5921	a snare	upon the earth	where no gin	H369	H0			
H5307	H6833		H6341		H776					
בַּיּוּלָה	פָּחָד	מִן	הַאֲדָم	הַלְּקִידָה	לְאַ					
is for him shall one take up	a snare	H4480	from the earth	and have taken	H3808					
H5927	H6341		H127	H3920						
לְקִידָה!										
and have taken										
H3920										

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 9:12 (Parallel theme): For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.