

Amos 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Analysis

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. This verse details God's covenant discipline against rebellious Israel. "Pestilence after the manner of Egypt" (dever bederekh mitsrayim, דֶּבֶר בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם) recalls the plagues God sent on Egypt (Exodus 9:3-7, 15)—the same devastating power that once delivered Israel now judges them for covenant unfaithfulness. The irony is stark: Israel has become like Egypt.

The litany of judgments—plague, warfare killing young men, captured horses (military strength), and stench of corpses—reflects covenant curses from Deuteronomy 28:21, 25-26, 48. The Hebrew phrase "stink of your camps" (be'osh machaneikem, בְּאוֹשׁ מַחֲנֵיכֶם) evokes unburied bodies rotting after military defeat, creating nauseating odor as constant reminder of divine judgment. The phrase "come up unto your nostrils" (va'aal be'apekhem, וַאֲלֵל בְּאַפְכֶם) means the stench was inescapable—they couldn't avoid confronting the consequences of rebellion.

The devastating refrain "yet have ye not returned unto me" (velo-shavtem adai,

וְלֹא־שׁוּבוּם עָדִי) appears five times in Amos 4:6-11, emphasizing persistent impenitence despite repeated warnings. The verb shuv (שׁוּב, "return/repent") is covenant language for turning from sin back to God. God's judgments weren't vindictive but remedial—designed to wake Israel from spiritual stupor. Their refusal to repent despite mounting evidence reveals the depth of human hardness apart from divine grace.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied around 760-750 BC during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (northern kingdom). Despite economic success, Israel had abandoned covenant faithfulness—oppressing the poor, perverting justice, and syncretizing worship with Canaanite Baal practices. Amos 4 catalogs judgments Israel had already experienced: famine (4:6), drought (4:7-8), crop failure (4:9), and the plagues and military defeats described in verse 10.

The reference to pestilence "after the manner of Egypt" connects to God's identity as covenant LORD—the same God who struck Egypt to deliver Israel would strike Israel for covenant violation. The mention of slain young men and captured horses likely refers to specific conflicts Israel experienced, possibly including defeats by Aramean forces under Hazael and Ben-hadad (2 Kings 13:3-7, 22-25) before Jeroboam II's territorial recovery.

The historical setting reveals a sobering pattern: prosperity without righteousness breeds complacency and spiritual decline. Israel enjoyed material abundance but ignored covenant obligations to justice and exclusive worship of Yahweh. God sent judgments as warnings, but each went unheeded. Within 30 years of Amos's prophecy, Assyria conquered Israel (722 BC), fulfilling the ultimate covenant curse—exile from the land (Deuteronomy 28:64-68). Amos 4:10 demonstrates that God mercifully warns before final judgment.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God use adverse circumstances to call His people back to faithfulness?
2. What does Israel's persistent refusal to repent reveal about the human heart's resistance to God?
3. How should believers respond when facing difficulties that may be divine discipline?
4. What is the relationship between God's judgment and His mercy in passages like this?
5. How can Christians today heed warnings from Scripture and history that previous generations ignored?

Interlinear Text

שָׁלַחְתִּי I have sent H7971	בְּכֶם H0	אֶת־בֶּרֶךְ among you the pestilence H1698	בְּדֶךָ after the manner H1870	מִצֵּר יִם of Egypt H4714
הָרַגְתִּי have I slain H2026	בְּחֶרֶב with the sword H2719	בָּנִי וְיָרֵךְ your young men H970	וְעָמְרִי H5973	שָׁבַח י and have taken away H7628
קוֹסִיךָ your horses H5483	וְאָעֵלָה to come up H5927	בָּאֵשׁ and I have made the stink H889	מִחֲנִיכֶם of your camps H4264	וּבִאֲפֻךְ unto your nostrils H639
וְלֹא H3808	שָׁבַתְתֶּם yet have ye not returned H7725	עָדָי H5704	נֹאמְרִי unto me saith H5002	יְהוָה: the LORD H3068

Additional Cross-References

Joel 2:20 (Parallel theme): But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east

sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

Leviticus 26:25 (Word): And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

2 Kings 13:7 (Creation): Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

Deuteronomy 28:60 (References Egypt): Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.

Jeremiah 18:21 (Word): Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

Jeremiah 48:15 (References Lord): Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

Jeremiah 11:22 (Word): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:

Amos 4:6 (References Lord): And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Amos 8:3 (References Lord): And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

2 Kings 13:3 (References Lord): And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.

