

Amos 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities (וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָכֶם נִקְיוֹן)—Haunting euphemism: 'clean teeth' means no food to chew, i.e., famine. The Hebrew *niqyon shinayim* (cleanness of teeth) poetically describes starvation. **Want of bread in all your places** (וְחִסָּר לֶחֶם בְּכָל־מְקוֹמוֹתֵיכֶם) makes the meaning explicit—total food shortage. **Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD** (וְלֹא־שָׁבַתֶם עָדִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה)—The devastating refrain. *Shavtem* (returned/repented) is the prophets' central call; Israel's refusal seals their doom.

This begins a litany of covenant curses (vv. 6-11) that God sent to provoke repentance: famine, drought, blight, plague, war, destruction. Each mirrors Deuteronomy 28's curses for disobedience, showing God's faithfulness even in judgment—He warned, then disciplined incrementally, giving multiple opportunities for *teshuvah* (repentance/return). The repeated refrain 'yet have ye not returned' (vv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11) indicts Israel's hardness, echoing Pharaoh's repeated hardening (Exodus 7-11). Romans 2:4 warns that despising God's kindness in postponing judgment leads to storing up wrath.

Historical Context

Israel experienced periodic famines during the 8th century BC, documented in archaeological evidence showing crop failures and food scarcity. Rather than reading these as divine discipline calling them to covenant renewal, Israel's

prosperity gospel assumed continued blessing regardless of ethics. Amos exposes this theological delusion.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What personal hardships might God be using to call you to repentance rather than random suffering requiring mere endurance?
2. How does persistent refusal to 'return to God' through repeated discipline progressively harden the heart toward final judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְגַם	אֲנִי	נָתַתִּי	לְךָ	נְקִי	שֵׁן	בְּכָל
H1571	H589	And I also have given	H0	you cleanness	of teeth	H3605
		H5414		H5356	H8127	
עַל	וְחָסֵר	לֶחֶם	בְּכָל	מְקוֹמֶיךָ	וְלֹא	
in all your cities	and want	of bread	H3605	in all your places	H3808	
H5892	H2640	H3899		H4725		
שָׁבַתְּ	עַד	נֹאמַר	יְהוָה:			
yet have ye not returned	H5704	unto me saith	the LORD			
H7725		H5002	H3068			

Additional Cross-References

Haggai 2:17 (References Lord): I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 5:3 (References Lord): O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Isaiah 9:13 (References Lord): For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 2:21 (Parallel theme): And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Leviticus 26:26 (Parallel theme): And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

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