

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 (יגם-אני גנתתי לךם נקיון)—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** (וְהַסֵּר לְחַם בְּכָל-מִקְוֹתֶיכֶם) makes the meaning explicit—total food shortage. **Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD** (וְלֹא-שָׁבָתָם עִדִּי תָּאָמֵן-הָיָה)—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) indict 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

בְּכָל שָׁבֵעַ יְמֵינוֹ אָנָּי נָתַתִּי לְךָ כְּלֵלִי וְלְעֵדָה יְמֵינֶךָ
H1571 H589 And I also have given H5414 H0 you cleanness H356 H8127 of teeth H3605

וְלֹא מִקְוֹמָתִיךְ מִבְּכָל לְחַם וְחַסְרָה עַד רַיִךְ מִ
in all your cities and want of bread H3605 in all your places H4725 H3808
H5892 H2640 H3899 H4725

שְׁבַעַת מִי הָיָה: אֶתְּנָא מִעֵד יְהוָה:
yet have ye not returned unto me saith the LORD
H7725 H5704 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.