

Amos 5:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

Analysis

Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel שְׁמַעוּ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נִשְׁאָעֵלְיכֶם קִנְחָה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל—the verb shama (עָשָׂה, "hear") demands urgent attention. Amos issues a qinah (קִנָּה, "lamentation/funeral dirge"), the formal poetic genre used at burials to mourn the dead. By speaking a funeral lament over living Israel, Amos declares their doom certain—they're already dead, they just don't know it yet. This rhetorical strategy is devastatingly effective: imagine hearing your own funeral elegy while still alive.

The phrase "which I take up against you" (asher anokhi nose aleikhem) uses nasa (נִשְׁאָעֵל, "lift up/bear/utter"), typically describing lifting up one's voice in formal discourse. The preposition "against" (al, עַל) indicates hostile judgment, not blessing. This isn't encouragement but condemnation. The address "O house of Israel" invokes covenant identity—not foreign nations but God's chosen people face this funeral. The entire northern kingdom, not just individuals, is the deceased. This underscores corporate covenant accountability: the nation as entity faces judgment for collective sin.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied circa 760-750 BC during Jeroboam II's prosperous reign. Israel enjoyed military success, territorial expansion, and economic growth—hardly seeming like a nation about to die. Yet beneath the prosperity, systemic injustice,

religious corruption, and covenant unfaithfulness festered. To announce a funeral lament over a thriving nation would have seemed absurd—which made Amos's prophecy all the more shocking. Yet within 30 years, Assyria conquered Israel (722 BC), deporting the population and ending the northern kingdom permanently. Amos's funeral dirge proved literally true: Israel died as a nation. This demonstrates that apparent prosperity doesn't guarantee security when covenant faithfulness is absent. Material success can mask spiritual death.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does pronouncing a funeral lament over living people underscore the certainty of divine judgment?
2. What is the relationship between covenant privilege ("house of Israel") and covenant accountability in this passage?
3. How should believers respond when seeing apparent prosperity in individuals or churches marked by spiritual unfaithfulness?

Interlinear Text

עָלֵיכָם נִשְׁאַת שְׁמָעָנִי אַתְּ רִבְבָּר בְּנֵי הָאָשָׁר אַנְכִּי H5921 H5375 H595 H1697 H2088 H834 H8085 H853 Hear which I take up

בְּנֵי יִהְיֶה קִיְּמָת הַשְׁׁבָּרָאֵל: O house of Israel

against you even a lamentation

H7015

H1004

H3478

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 19:1 (References Israel): Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

Jeremiah 9:10 (Parallel theme): For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

Jeremiah 9:17 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:

Jeremiah 7:29 (Parallel theme): Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

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