

# Amos 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus;  
Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the  
highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to  
mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

## Analysis

**Wailing shall be in all streets... and they shall call the husbandman to mourning**—This verse depicts comprehensive national lamentation when judgment arrives. God speaks as **the LORD, the God of hosts** (Adonai YHWH Elohei-Tzeva'ot, אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-צְבָאוֹת), emphasizing His sovereignty over heavenly armies—the one announcing judgment has power to execute it. The phrase misped (מִסְפָּד, "wailing/mourning") appears twice, along with nehi (נְהִי, "lamentation") and the cry ho-ho (הוֹ-הוֹ, "Alas! alas!")—Hebrew onomatopoeia for grief.

The imagery is striking: mourning will be so widespread that **they shall call the husbandman to mourning**—even farmers untrained in formal lamentation rites must be conscripted because professional mourners cannot handle the volume of death. **Such as are skilful of lamentation** (yod'ei nehi, יוֹדְעֵי נְהִי) refers to professional mourners hired for funerals, but their expertise will be overwhelmed. Every street, every highway will echo with grief. This fulfills covenant curses from Deuteronomy 28:65-67—no rest, trembling heart, anguish of soul.

## Historical Context

Professional mourning was common in the ancient Near East—families hired skilled lamenters for funerals (Jeremiah 9:17-18; Matthew 9:23). Amos predicts

judgment so severe that professionals cannot manage it alone; amateurs must join. This was fulfilled when Assyria conquered Israel (722 BC)—mass slaughter, deportation, and exile produced exactly this overwhelming grief. The phrase "I will pass through thee" (e'evor beqirbeka, אֶעֱבֹר בְּקִרְבְּךָ, v. 17) echoes the Passover (Exodus 12:12), but instead of passing over Israel, God will pass through in judgment.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How does the certainty of coming judgment affect how we should live and speak today?
2. What is the relationship between covenant privilege and covenant accountability in this passage?

## Interlinear Text

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כֵּן H3651	כֹּה H3541	יֹאמְרוּ H559	יְהוָה H3068	אֱלֹהֵי H430	צְבָאוֹת H6635	אֲדֹנָי H136
		and they shall say	Therefore the LORD	the God	of hosts	the Lord
בְּכָל H3605	רְחֹב H7339	וּמִסָּפַי H4553	וּבְכָל H3605	חוּצוֹת H2351		
	shall be in all streets	thus Wailing		in all the highways		
יֹאמְרוּ H559	הֵן הֵן H1930	וְקָרְאוּ H7121	אֶחָד H406	אֶל H413		
and they shall say	alas	and they shall call	the husbandman			
אֶבֶל H60	וּמִסָּפַי H4553	אֶל H413	יְוֹדְעֵי H3045	נִהְיָ H5092		
to mourning	thus Wailing		and such as are skilful	of lamentation		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joel 1:11** (Parallel theme): Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

**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.