

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, אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאֹת), emphasizing His sovereignty over heavenly armies—the one announcing judgment has power to execute it. The phrase misped (מִשְׁפֵּד, "wailing/mourning") appears twice, along with nehi (נְהִי, "lamentation") and the cry ho-ho (הֹהֵה, "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, יֹדְעֵי 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 begirbeka, אֶעֱבֹר בְּגִירְבָּקָה, v. 17) echoes the Passover (Exodus 12:12), but instead of passing over Israel, God will pass through in judgment.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

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

אָדָן וְאַבָּאוֹת אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה וְאֶחָד כְּהֵן מֶלֶךְ כָּל כָּלָה
the Lord of hosts, the God of gods, the Lord of kings, the King of kings, the High Priest of all the earth
H3651 H3541 H559 H3068 H430 H6635 H136

בְּכָל	רַחֲבָות	וּמְסֻפֵּר ד	וּבְכָל	חֹצֶצֶת
H3605	shall be in all streets	thus Wailing	H3605	in all the highways

אֵל	אָכֶר	וְאָמַר יְהוָה	וְיִקְרָא יְהוָה	וְיִהְיֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר	וְיִהְיֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר	וְיִהְיֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר
the husbandman	H406	the husbandman	H7121	and they shall call	H1930	and they shall say
					H559	

נְהִי וְלֹדֶעַ וּמְסֻפֵּד אֵל אֵי בֶּל
of lamentation and such as are skilful thus Wailing to mourning

Additional Cross-References

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.

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