

Amos 5:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Analysis

As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him—this vivid imagery describes inescapable judgment. The Hebrew paints a scene of escalating terror: fleeing a lion (ari, אַרִי), the person encounters a bear (dov, דּוֹב)—both dangerous predators. Escaping that, **he went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him** (nakhsh, נָחָשׁ). Even the supposed safety of home proves deadly. The serpent hidden in the wall strikes when he thinks he's finally safe.

This illustrates the Day of the LORD (vv. 18-20)—Israel expected it to bring deliverance from enemies, but Amos declares it will bring judgment on Israel. There's no escape: flee one danger, encounter another; reach safety, and hidden peril strikes. The progression (lion → bear → serpent) moves from obvious external threats to hidden internal danger, suggesting judgment will be comprehensive and inescapable. Romans 2:3 asks similarly: "thinkest thou... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

Historical Context

Ancient Israel faced real dangers from lions and bears—shepherds like David fought both (1 Samuel 17:34-37). Serpents hiding in stone walls of houses were also common threats. Amos uses familiar dangers to illustrate a theological point: when God's judgment comes, there is no refuge. Israel's complacency assumed

covenant status guaranteed protection, but Amos shatters this presumption. The Day of the LORD they eagerly anticipated would bring them terror, not triumph.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this imagery of inescapable judgment challenge the assumption that church membership or religious heritage provides automatic protection from God's wrath?
2. In what ways do people today flee from one conviction of sin only to encounter another, yet still refuse to repent?

Interlinear Text

הָדָבָה	וּפָגַע	הָאֵרֶץ	מִפְּנֵי	אִישׁ	יָנֹס	כְּאִשׁ רֹ
						H834
						did flee
						H5127
						As if a man
						H376
						from
						H6440
						a lion
						H738
						met
						H6293
						and a bear
						H1677
וְנָשַׁכְתִּי	הַקִּיר	עַל	יָדוֹ	וְסָמָךְ	הַבַּיִת	וְכִי אֵ
						him or went
						H935
						into the house
						H1004
						and leaned
						H5564
						his hand
						H3027
						on the wall
						H7023
						bit
						H5391
וְהַנָּחָשׁ:						
and a serpent						
H5175						

Additional Cross-References

Acts 28:4 (Parallel theme): And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org