

Amos 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me,
and ye shall live:

Analysis

For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. This verse provides divine alternative to dead religion. The imperative "seek ye me" (dirshuni, דִּרְשׁוּנִי) demands active, intentional pursuit of God Himself—not religious locations, rituals, or traditions. The verb darash (דָּרַשׁ) means to seek diligently, inquire of, consult—implying sustained effort to know God personally and align with His will. This isn't casual religious observance but wholehearted pursuit.

The promise "and ye shall live" (wihyu, וַיְחִי) offers life as consequence of seeking God. The Hebrew hayah (הָיָה, "live") encompasses physical survival (escaping coming judgment), covenant blessing, and spiritual vitality. This anticipates Jesus's teaching: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). True life—not mere existence but flourishing relationship with God—comes only through seeking Him.

The context (vv. 5-6) contrasts seeking God with seeking religious sites: "But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba." These were Israel's primary worship centers, yet God condemns them because worship there was syncretistic (mixing Yahweh worship with Canaanite practices) and hypocritical (divorced from justice). God rejects religion that substitutes ritual observance for genuine relationship. The Reformers rediscovered this truth: salvation comes through faith in Christ alone (sola fide), not through institutional religion,

sacramental participation, or meritorious works. We must seek God Himself, not religious forms.

Historical Context

Beth-el, Gilgal, and Beer-sheba were ancient Israelite worship sites with legitimate patriarchal connections—Abraham built altars at Beth-el and Beer-sheba (Genesis 12:8, 21:33), and Gilgal was Israel's first camp after crossing Jordan (Joshua 4:19-20). But by Amos's time, these locations had become centers of corrupt worship. Jeroboam I established golden calf worship at Beth-el (1 Kings 12:28-29), making it a royal sanctuary rivaling Jerusalem (Amos 7:13). Israel's worship became performative ritual divorced from covenant faithfulness and social justice.

God's command to seek Him rather than these shrines would have been shocking. People assumed worship at traditional sites guaranteed divine favor. Amos demolishes this: location, liturgy, and religious tradition mean nothing if divorced from seeking God Himself. The principle applies throughout redemptive history: God desires relationship, not mere religion (Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, 12:7). Israel's failure to heed this warning resulted in Assyrian conquest (722 BC)—the shrines couldn't save them because God had departed from them. Similarly, Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they didn't recognize their visitation (Luke 19:41-44), and Revelation 2-3 warns churches that religious forms without genuine faith lead to judgment.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between seeking God Himself versus seeking religious experiences, practices, or institutions?

2. How does the promise that seeking God brings life challenge both works-righteousness and dead orthodoxy?
3. In what ways might modern believers substitute religious activity for genuine pursuit of knowing God?
4. What does it mean to seek God "diligently" rather than casually or intermittently?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֹה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	לְבַיִת	יִשְׂרָאֵל	דַּרְשׁוּ וְנִי
H3588	H3541	For thus saith	the LORD	unto the house	of Israel	Seek
		H559	H3068	H1004	H3478	H1875

וְנִי
ye me and ye shall live
H2421

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 15:2 (References Lord): And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Zephaniah 2:3 (References Lord): Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

Psalms 14:2 (References Lord): The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

Isaiah 55:3 (Parallel theme): Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Matthew 7:8 (Parallel theme): For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (References Lord): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

2 Chronicles 20:3 (References Lord): And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

Amos 5:6 (References Lord): Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

Psalms 27:8 (References Lord): When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Psalms 69:32 (Parallel theme): The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.