

Amos 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

Analysis

Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee (וְאָמַרְתִּי יְהוָה דַּלֵּל—Amos's second intercession mirrors the first (verse 2) but uses a different verb. Where verse 2 pleaded "forgive" (selach, סָלַח), here he cries "cease" (chadal, חָדַל). The verb chadal (חָדַל) means "stop/cease/desist/leave off." Amos isn't requesting forgiveness of sin but cessation of judgment—essentially, "Please stop this destruction!" The urgency is palpable; the prophet desperately pleads for God to halt the consuming fire before it obliterates Israel.

By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small (מִי יַקּוּם יַעֲקֹב כִּי קָטָן הוּא)—This is identical to verse 2, emphasizing consistency in Amos's intercessory argument. The rhetorical question "by whom shall Jacob arise?" (mi yaqum Ya'akov, מִי יַקּוּם יַעֲקֹב) appeals to God's covenant purposes. If He destroys Jacob completely, through whom will His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be fulfilled? The description "he is small" (qaton hu, קָטָן הוּא) emphasizes Israel's weakness and insignificance apart from divine grace.

Amos's intercession demonstrates the prophet's pastoral heart. Though called to announce judgment, he doesn't relish destruction but pleads for mercy. This aligns with God's own heart: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). The pattern of prophetic intercession appears throughout Scripture: Abraham for Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33), Moses for Israel (Exodus 32:11-14, 31-32; Numbers 14:13-19), Samuel for Israel (1 Samuel 7:5-9, 12:19-23), Daniel for Judah (Daniel 9:3-19). True

prophets combine faithful proclamation of God's word with compassionate intercession for God's people.

The Reformed understanding of prayer includes this mystery: God invites—even commands—His people to intercede, and their prayers genuinely affect outcomes, yet God's sovereignty remains absolute. Prayer doesn't manipulate God but aligns with His ordained means for accomplishing His will. God has determined both the end (showing mercy to Israel) and the means (Amos's intercession). This elevates rather than diminishes prayer's significance.

Historical Context

Amos's second intercession follows the same pattern as the first: vision of judgment, prophetic plea, divine relenting (verse 6). The repetition emphasizes God's patience and willingness to delay judgment when His servants intercede. However, this pattern doesn't continue indefinitely. The third and fourth visions (7:7-9, 8:1-3) include no intercession and result in irrevocable judgment. The shift from relenting to finality marks a crucial turning point.

Theologically, this teaches that God's patience, though vast, is not infinite. There comes a point where persistent impenitence exhausts divine forbearance. Proverbs 29:1 warns: "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Israel received multiple warnings through Amos and other prophets (Hosea, Jonah, possibly Joel), yet they refused to repent (Amos 4:6-11 catalogs judgments Israel ignored). Eventually, God declared "I will not again pass by them any more" (7:8, 8:2), and within decades, Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom (722 BC).

The historical lesson for the church: don't presume on divine patience. Hebrews 3:7-8 warns: "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Second Corinthians 6:2 declares: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Delayed judgment is mercy providing opportunity for repentance, not proof that judgment won't come. Those who harden their hearts against repeated warnings will face "sudden destruction" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Amos's repeated intercession balance prophetic proclamation of judgment with pastoral compassion for God's people?
2. What does the transition from God relenting (verses 3, 6) to declaring irrevocable judgment (verses 8, 8:2) teach about the limits of divine patience?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲמַר ר	אֲדֹנָי י	יְהוָה	דָּל	נָ א	מִי י	וּמ יקו
Then said	I O Lord	GOD	cease	H4994	H4310	arise
H559	H136	H3069	H2308			H6965
יִשְׁכָּן ב		פִּי	קָטָן	הוא:		
I beseech thee by whom shall Jacob		H3588	for he is small	H1931		
H3290			H6996			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 85:4 (References God): Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.