

Amos 8:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

Analysis

The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works—God takes an oath, and the oath formula is startling. **The LORD hath sworn** (נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה, nishba' YHWH) invokes divine self-malediction—God stakes His own nature on this promise. He swears **by the excellency of Jacob** (בְּגִּבּוֹן יַעֲקֹב, big'on Ya'aqov), a phrase with dual interpretation: either

1. God's glory manifested in choosing Israel, or
2. Israel's arrogant pride.

Given the context of judgment, the second sense dominates—God swears by the very pride that characterizes Israel's sin.

The oath's content is terrifying: **I will never forget any of their works** (אֲנִי לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם, im-eshkach lanetsach kol-ma'aseihem). The construction im-eshkach ("if I forget") functions as strong negation in oath contexts—"I will certainly not forget." Lanetsach (לְנֶצַח, "forever, perpetually") means eternal remembrance. Kol-ma'aseihem ("all their works") encompasses every sin cataloged in chapters 1-8: idolatry, injustice, oppression, fraud, sexual immorality, judicial corruption, and religious hypocrisy. None escapes divine memory; all faces reckoning.

This verse subverts Israel's covenant confidence. They presumed God's oath to Abraham (Genesis 22:16-18) guaranteed protection regardless of behavior. Amos declares God swears by that very relationship to guarantee judgment. The

Reformed doctrine of divine immutability means God's character—including His justice—cannot change. He cannot overlook sin without violating His holiness. This anticipates Hebrews 6:13-18: God's oath guarantees His promises, but those promises include both blessing for faith and curse for rebellion (Deuteronomy 28).

Historical Context

God's oath by His own name occurs throughout Scripture when confirming unalterable promises: to Abraham (Genesis 22:16), to David (Psalm 110:4), and to Israel regarding both blessing and curse (Deuteronomy 32:40-42). Amos invokes this oath formula to stress irrevocability—what God swears, He performs. The phrase "excellency of Jacob" elsewhere refers to God's glorious choice of Israel (Psalm 47:4) or to the land (Nahum 2:2), but here it emphasizes Israel's arrogance—they boasted in covenant status while violating covenant obligations.

Within 30 years of Amos's prophecy, Assyria conquered Israel (722 BC), confirming God kept His oath. The northern kingdom never returned from exile—their "works" brought the permanent judgment God swore to remember. This demonstrates that divine oaths guarantee justice as surely as mercy.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's oath to remember sin forever challenge contemporary assumptions that God's love means overlooking our disobedience?
2. What's the relationship between God's covenant faithfulness and His judgment on covenant-breakers, and how does Christ resolve this tension for believers?

Interlinear Text

הָשָׁבַע ע	יְהוָה ה	בְּגָא וִן	יַעֲקֹב ב	אִם	אֲשַׁכַּח ח
hath sworn	The LORD	by the excellency	of Jacob	H518	forget
H7650	H3068	H1347	H3290		H7911
לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח	כָּל	מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:			
Surely I will never	H3605	any of their works			
H5331		H4639			

Additional Cross-References

Amos 6:8 (References Lord): The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

Hosea 9:9 (Parallel theme): They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

Hosea 8:13 (References Lord): They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

Hosea 7:2 (Parallel theme): And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

Psalms 10:11 (Parallel theme): He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

Isaiah 43:25 (Parallel theme): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Psalms 47:4 (Parallel theme): He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

Jeremiah 31:34 (References Lord): And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 17:1 (Parallel theme): The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;

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