

Amos 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

Analysis

Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence (וְאִם־יִתְבָּאוּ בְּרֹאשׁ הַכְּרִמָּל מִשָּׁם אֶחְפֹּשׁ וּלְקַחְתִּים)—Mount Carmel, a densely forested mountain range, provided countless hiding places in caves and thickets. The verb *chapes* (חָפַשׁ, "search") describes thorough, determined seeking that will succeed. **Though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them** (וְאִם־יִסְתְּרוּ (מִמְּנֵד עֵינַי בְּקִרְקַע הַיָּם מִשָּׁם אֶצְוֶה אֶת־הַנָּחָשׁ וְנִשְׁכָּם)—even the sea's depths offer no refuge. The *nachash* (נָחָשׁ, serpent) likely refers to sea creatures (possibly sea serpents of ancient mythology, or literally dangerous sea animals), but symbolically evokes the serpent of Genesis 3—all creation, even that which represents chaos and danger, obeys God's command.

The progression is deliberate: vertical extremes (heaven/hell) in verse 2, then horizontal hiding places (Carmel's forests, sea's depths) in verse 3. Every conceivable refuge fails. The verb *tsavah* (צֻוָּה, "command") emphasizes that all creatures—even dangerous serpents—are God's instruments. This echoes Jonah's experience: he fled to the sea to escape God's command, but God commanded both storm (Jonah 1:4) and great fish (Jonah 1:17) to accomplish His purposes. Nature isn't neutral—it obeys its Creator, even when executing judgment.

Historical Context

Mount Carmel, located on Israel's Mediterranean coast, featured dense forests and numerous caves—ideal hiding places. Elijah confronted Baal's prophets there (1 Kings 18), making it symbolically significant for true versus false worship. The sea held mythological terror in ancient Israel—representing chaos and danger (cf. Leviathan in Job 41, Psalm 74:13-14, Isaiah 27:1). Amos declares that neither the most secure land refuge nor the most terrifying sea depth can shield from Yahweh's judgment. This would have been particularly striking to an agricultural people who feared the sea and viewed dense forests as dangerous.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents to Mount Carmel or the sea depths do people use to hide from God—wealth, busyness, intellectual skepticism, moral relativism?
2. How does Jesus's claim to authority over wind and waves (Mark 4:39-41) connect to Amos's declaration that even the serpent obeys God's command?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵם H518	וְיִחְבְּאוּ H2244	בְּרֹאשׁ H7218	לְהַכְרִיחַ H3760	מִשָּׁם H8033
	And though they hide	themselves in the top	of Carmel	
אֶחָד H2664	וְלִקְחֵת יָם H3947	וְאֵם H518	יִסְתֵּר וְ H5641	מִן־גֹּד H5048
I will search	and take them out	thence and though they be hid		
עֵינַי H5869	בְּקִרְקַע H7172	הַיָּם H3220	מִשָּׁם H8033	אֶצְוֶה H6680
from my sight	in the bottom	of the sea	thence will I command	H853
הַנָּחָשׁ H5175	וְנִשְׁכָּם: H5391			
the serpent	and he shall bite			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 16:16 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Isaiah 27:1 (Parallel theme): In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

Job 34:22 (Parallel theme): There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.