

Amos 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Analysis

The Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt (וַיִּדְבֹק אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת הַנּוֹגֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ וְתִמּוֹג (יהוה הצבאות הנוגע בארץ ותמוג)—this doxology (9:5-6) interrupts the judgment sequence to ground it in God's cosmic sovereignty. The title Adonai Yahweh Tseva'ot (Lord GOD of hosts) emphasizes supreme authority over heavenly and earthly armies. The verb naga (נָגַע, "touch") suggests minimal effort—God merely touches the earth and it mug (מוֹג, melts/quakes). **All that dwell therein shall mourn** (וְאֵלֶּיךָ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ)—the verb aval (אָבַל, mourn) describes grief over catastrophe. **It shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt** (וְתִשָּׂא כִּמְצוֹת מַיִם וְתִשָּׁבַח כִּי־יִשָּׁבַח מַיִם)—the imagery shifts to the Nile's annual flooding, which rises and subsides dramatically.

The "melting" earth could describe earthquake (Amos experienced one, 1:1) or cosmic dissolution. Either way, it demonstrates God's power over creation's stability. The Nile imagery (repeated from 8:8) is deliberately ironic: the Nile's flooding brought life to Egypt through agricultural fertility, but here it symbolizes destructive inundation. The God who controls nature's rhythms (beneficial Nile floods) can weaponize those same forces for judgment. This echoes Psalm 46:6: "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted." Creation's stability depends on God's sustaining word; He can unmake what He made.

Historical Context

Israel experienced a severe earthquake during Amos's ministry, mentioned in both Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5 ("the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah"). This natural disaster would have given visceral power to Amos's imagery of God touching the earth and causing it to melt. Archaeological evidence at Hazor and other sites confirms widespread earthquake damage in the 8th century BC. The Nile flood reference shows Amos's familiarity with Egyptian geography and patterns—appropriate since he prophesies judgment that will be "as by the flood of Egypt," connecting Israel's punishment to the Exodus narrative where God judged Egypt.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's effortless sovereignty over creation—He merely 'touches' the earth and it melts—affect your understanding of human power and pride?
2. What does it mean that the same natural forces God uses to bless (Nile floods providing fertility) can become instruments of judgment when deployed against covenant-breakers?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵדֹנָי י	הַצֶּבֶא וְתִּיהוּ הַ	הַנּוֹגַעַ	בְּאֶרֶץ	
And the Lord	GOD	of hosts	is he that toucheth	the land
H136	H3069	H6635	H5060	H776
וְתָמּ וְג	וְאֶבְל וְ	כָּל	י וְשָׁבִי	בְּ הַ
and it shall melt	therein shall mourn	H3605	and all that dwell	H0
H4127	H56		H3427	
וְעָלָתָּ הַ	כִּי־אֵר	כָּל הַ	וְשִׁקָּעָה הַ	כִּי־אֵר
and it shall rise up	as by the flood	H3605	and shall be drowned	as by the flood
H5927	H2975		H8257	H2975
מִצִּיֵּן:				
of Egypt				
H4714				

Additional Cross-References

Amos 8:8 (Resurrection): Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Psalms 46:6 (Parallel theme): The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Revelation 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Isaiah 64:1 (Parallel theme): Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,