

Amos 7:4-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-7/amos-74-6/>

In his second vision, Amos sees an all-consuming fire that evaporates the waters of the deep sea. The prospects of this devouring fire prompt the prophet to intercede again on Israel's behalf to ask God to stop the judgment. God listens to Amos and relents concerning this judgment as well.

As the prophet described his second vision, he reported what the *Lord GOD* showed him. This vision begins with the particle 'behold,' like the first vision, to alert the Israelites of the importance of his statements and to invite them to pay attention to the message because the timing of the judgment was imminent. In this vision Amos saw how *the Lord God was calling to contend with them by fire*. That means, the LORD was bringing a covenant lawsuit against them because they violated His covenant principles, and were now subject to enforcement of the covenant provisions regarding judgement for disobedience (Hosea 12:2).

The image of *fire* often represents God's instrument of divine judgement. The *fire* that God would use to judge His covenant people was so strong that it *consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land*. Amos envisioned a devouring fire that raged so uncontrollably that it evaporated even the waters of *the great deep* (the deep sea). The *fire* also began to devour the farm land of Israel.

The prospect of this devouring *fire* prompted Amos to intercede on Israel's behalf once again. And in his plea, he *said, Lord God, please stop! How can Jacob stand, for he is small*. The prophet begged the LORD to desist (cease) from such a judgment, because Jacob was *small* and would not survive. As stated earlier, the adjective *small* might refer to Israel's inferior size relative to Assyria, but could also reflect the reality that all human endeavors are *small* compared to the power of Almighty God.

Although the covenant people of Israel were strong and prosperous under King Jeroboam II relative to prior periods in Israel, they were still small compared to the great empire of Assyria, and certainly *small* before the Suzerain God, who is all-powerful. Amos interceded on Israel's behalf because he knew they would become helpless and unable to withstand should God decide to punish them with such a devouring *fire*.

For a second time in this chapter (cf. v. 3), Amos told his audience that *the LORD changed His mind about this and said, 'This too shall not be.'* That *the LORD changed His mind* indicates the paradoxical nature of God, as viewed by humans. ([See our Tough Topics article on "Founding Paradox"](#)) On the one hand, the Bible tells us that "God is not a man, that He should repent," which is to have a change of mind (Numbers 23:19). On the other hand, we see incidents like this where God is said to have *changed His mind*. Exodus 32:14 says "the LORD changed His mind" regarding a judgement against Israel due to the intercession of Moses. James asserts: "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much," which indicates that our prayers to make requests of God can affect outcomes, and what God decides (James 5:16).

God is in control of all things, but our decisions and actions matter, and change things, both in the physical and spiritual world. This is certainly a paradox from our perspective. But it is not a contradiction because the paradox stems from the personhood and nature of God, who is the essence of all existence (Exodus 3:14). We as humans cannot fathom a person who created existence, holds existence together, and is existence all at the same time. This is in spite of the fact that each human exists as a unique entity, and is created in His image (Colossians 1:16-17).

However, although we cannot fathom that God is both above as well as within all that exists, it must be so, for we exist, and cannot reasonably explain our existence apart from a creator God who is the essence of existence. God relented regarding His plan to bring judgement fire upon Israel. This is a display of His grace, mercy, and love as well as His regard for Amos. In this second vision, God changed His plan to destroy the Israelite land with the all-consuming fire. However, He did not forgive Israel, as evidenced in the next section, which will spell out the judgement for which God will not relent (vv. 7–9).

Biblical Text

⁴Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, the Lord God was calling to contend *with them* by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land. ⁵Then I said,

“Lord God, please stop!

How can Jacob stand, for he is small?”

⁶The Lord changed His mind about this.

“This too shall not be,” said the Lord God.