



THE BOOK OF AMOS

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INTRODUCTION

From about the middle of the 9th century B.C., Assyria was beginning to develop as a world power. At the end of the 9th century, it went into decline for about sixty years; it was probably during that period that Jonah had gone to Assyria.

This period of weakness gave Israel and Judah a chance to strengthen their own positions. The period of Assyrian weakness coincided with the reign of Uzziah and Jeroboam II. Both of these kings brought prosperity to their nation.

The territories were enlarged, trade increased, and material wealth was enjoyed by the rich. However, the death of Jeroboam II and the succession to the throne of Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria brought to an end this period of prosperity for Israel. Tiglath-Pileser III embarked on a policy of conquest, which included Israel.

So from the time of the death of Jeroboam II, Israel very quickly collapsed until in 722 B.C. They were finally taken away into captivity by the Assyrians, 2 Kings 17:5-23.

It was during the period of prosperity that Amos brought his message to Israel. Although he was from Judah, his message was for the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

The affluent society in which the rich got richer, and the poor got poorer. Some people were living in luxury, Amos 3:15 / Amos 6:4-7. A society characterised by social injustice, Amos 2: 6-8 / Amos 5:11-12 / Amos 8:4. There was also religious corruption, Amos 4:4-5 / Amos 8:4-6.

AUTHOR

Amos himself is the author, and his name appears seven times throughout his book: Amos 1:1 / Amos 7:8 / Amos 7:10 / Amos 7:11 / Amos 7:12 / Amos 7:14 / Amos 8:2. The name of Amos is not to be confused with Amoz, the father of Isaiah, 2 Kings 19:2 / 2 Kings 19:20.

The name Amos means 'carrier' or 'burden bearer'. He was from the village of Tekoa, Amos 1:1, which was about five miles south of Nazareth. This was a rugged environment, a mountainous region.

By occupation, Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, Amos 7:14. The sycamore tree bore a fig-like fruit. This fruit had to be pierced in order for it to ripen. The message of Amos shows us that God is a God of righteousness and holiness. God's holiness demands that He punish Israel for her wickedness.

DATE

Amos 1:1 gives us the details of the date. In the days of Uzziah, 792-740 B.C. and Jeroboam II, 793-753 B.C., according to the Chronology of the Hebrew Kings by E.R. Thiele.

The date of the earthquake, Amos 1:1, is uncertain, but it must have been a significant earthquake because it is mentioned in Zechariah 14:5. The book is generally dated around 760 B.C.

OUTLINE

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 Judgment on Israel's neighbours. Amos 1:3-2:5
 Judgment on Israel. Amos 2:6-16
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said: “The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers.”’
 Amos 1:1-2

The book begins with ‘the words of Amos’, **Amos 1:1**, who was one of the shepherds of Tekoa, **Amos 1:1**. He was a humble farmer, **Amos 7:14**. Amos saw a vision, **Amos 1:1**, in which he sees the wickedness of Israel. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the earthquake.

‘Some scholars believe that this earthquake was the one mentioned by Josephus who gave the account of a very great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah, an earthquake so great that it was remembered generations afterwards when Zechariah referred to it, **Zechariah 14:5**. That earthquake, according to Josephus, made a breach in the temple, ruined the gardens and palace of the king, and occurred simultaneously with the smiting of Uzziah with leprosy. It cannot be dated exactly,’ **1 Kings 19:11-13 / 2 Chronicles 26:16-23**.’

The Lord roars, **Amos 1:2**. This picture of God as a roaring lion who is about to pounce on the prey, **Isaiah 42:13**. Joel says something similar in **Joel 3:16**. In **Joel 3:16**, God is represented as roaring on behalf of Israel, but in the stern condemnation of Amos, he is represented as roaring against Israel.

It was calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the wicked and lead them to repentance. We see the extent of this judgment in the pastures of the shepherds drying up and the top of Carmel withers, **Amos 1:2 / Deuteronomy 28:20-24**. This is a picture of mourning.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning everything being dried up.

‘This appears quite early in the Bible, where it is related that God ‘cursed the ground for Adam’s sake’, **Genesis 3:17**, a curse which has never been repealed and is still in effect.’

JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the sceptre in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,” says the LORD.’ Amos 1:3-5

JUDGMENT ON DAMASCUS

Amos now declares God’s judgment on seven of Israel’s neighbours, **Jeremiah 12:14**. Each judgment begins in the same way, ‘this is what the Lord says’, **Amos 1:3 / Amos 1:6 / Amos 1:9 / Amos 1:11 / Amos 1:13 / Amos 2:1 / Amos 2:4 / Amos 2:6**. So the Lord’s hand is behind this.

The next sentence in each case starts, ‘for three sins of even for four’, **Amos 1:3 / Amos 1:6 / Amos 1:9 / Amos 1:11 / Amos 1:13 / Amos 2:1 / Amos 2:4 / Amos 2:6**. This signifies a full and complete number of sins.

In other words, sin has multiplied, so much so that God’s patience has run out. He is going to act against them, and He will not reverse the punishment. Some commentators suggest that the three transgressions represent God’s legal limit for their sins. The fourth represents the tipping point for God.

What His people had failed to learn through His mercy and His grace, they would have to learn through His judgment and then His wrath. Damascus, the capital of Syria, will not escape the judgment of God, **Amos 1:3**.

It was about one hundred and thirty-five miles northeast of Jerusalem. Their sin is specified, ‘she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth,’ **Amos 3:3**. Gilead was occupied by the half-tribe of Manasseh, **Deuteronomy 3:13 / Numbers 32:40 / Joshua 13:8-32**.

The threshing sledges were used for the threshing of grain, so we see the excess cruelty of the Syrians. They weren’t threshing grain; they were threshing the people. The Syrians are being condemned for their excessive cruelty, **2 Kings 10:32-33 / 2 Kings 13:7 / 2 Samuel 12:31**.

Amos says that God will send a fire upon the house of Hazael, **Amos 1:4**. Elisha wept as he talked to Hazael because he knew that Hazael would replace Ben Hadad, **1 Kings 20:1 / Isaiah 17:1-3 / Jeremiah 49:23-27 / Zechariah 9:1-4**, as king of Syria, that is, Aram, and as king, he would bring harm to the Israelites, **2 Kings 8:7-15 / Isaiah 17:1-14 / Jeremiah 49:23-27**.

Hazael murdered Ben Hadad and took over as king, **2 Kings 8:15**. He himself had a son whom he called Ben Hadad, **2 Kings 13:3 / 2 Kings 13:24-25**. The names mentioned by Amos are the representatives of the ruling house; he warns them of God’s judgment to come.

Because the gate of Damascus will be broken down, **Jeremiah 51:30 / Amos 1:5**, this would open up the way for the invasion, **Lamentations 2:9 / Amos 1:5**. Aram was conquered by Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria during the reign of Judah, **2 Kings 16:9 / Isaiah 7:8 / Isaiah 8:14 / Isaiah 8:17 / Jeremiah 49:23**.

This judgement was fulfilled in 732 B.C. **2 Kings 16:7-9** tells us that the Assyrians attacked Syria because King Ahaz of Judah asked Tiglath-Pileser for help. The Assyrian king destroyed the royal family, captured Damascus and carried its people captive into Kir, **Amos 9:7**.

JUDGEMENT ON GAZA

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the one who holds the sceptre in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines are dead,” says the Sovereign LORD.’ Amos 1:6-8

Gaza was one of the Philistine cities, and they had continually been an enemy of the Israelites from the time they were established in the land of promise. They took captive whole communities of people, and they were involved in a slave trade with Edom, Amos 1:6 / 2 Kings 18:82 / 2 Chronicles 21:16 / Joel 3:4.

God’s judgment is coming to Gaza, Ashdod, Zephaniah 2:4, Ashkelon, Zephaniah 2:4, and Ekron, all the main cities of Philistia, and all will suffer, Jeremiah 25:20 / Jeremiah 47:5 / Jeremiah 47:7 / Zephaniah 2:4 / Zechariah 9:5.

King, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Of the five cities in which the Philistines live, four are mentioned. As a possible reason for not mentioning Gath, it has been suggested that this city has not restored itself from the destruction that King Uzziah brought upon it, 2 Chronicles 26:6. Also, in later lists of the Philistine cities, Gath does not occur. Jeremiah 25:20 / Zephaniah 2:4 / Zechariah 9:5.’

The completeness is shown in the words, ‘till the last of the Philistines are dead’, Amos 1:8. The judgment against them is going to be harsh; they would perish as a people, Amos 1:7-8.

Some commentators suggest this prophecy was fulfilled when Uzziah and Hezekiah invaded Philistia, 2 Chronicles 26:6-7 / 2 Kings 18:8 / Isaiah 14:29, and when a succession of Assyrian conquerors captured these towns. Some suggest it was completely fulfilled during the Maccabean period, 169-134 B.C., when the Philistines ceased to exist. Other commentators suggest it was partially fulfilled by the Assyrian, Tiglath-Pileser III, who attacked Gaza in 743 B.C., 2 Kings 16:7-9, and many years later, its complete fulfilment came when Nebuchadnezzar totally destroyed Philistia, her cities, kings, and people, Jeremiah 47:5.

JUDGMENT ON TYRE

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses.” Amos 1:9-10

Tyre is the representative city here. It was an important trading centre and port, Ezekiel 27:12-25. There are two aspects here to remember.

1. They were guilty of the same sin as the Philistines, the slave trade with Edom, Amos 1:6 / Amos 1:9.
2. They did not remember the covenant of brotherhood, Amos 3:9.

Even on this, there are some differences of opinion as to the ‘brotherhood’.

In 1 Kings 5:1-12, we read of the disagreement between Hiram, king of Tyre, and Solomon, 1 Kings 9:12-13. We must note that a covenant is not specified. Again, we read the warning that God’s judgment is coming, Amos 1:10. Because Tyre lived in luxury and trusted in its trade, it will be destroyed by fire. They came under the control of the Assyrians, then the Babylonians. Finally, the city of Tyre was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 332 BC.

JUDGEMENT ON EDOM

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah.” Amos 1:11-12

Edom, the descendants of Lot, **Genesis 19:30-38**, and Esau, **Genesis 36:1-36**, are going to be punished because of their hatred and cruelty. They were continually at odds with their brother, Jacob, **Genesis 25:29-30 / Numbers 20:14 / Deuteronomy 2:4 / Deuteronomy 23:7 / Obadiah 1-10**.

Judgment is coming upon the cities of Teman and Bozrah, chief cities of Edom, **Genesis 36:33 / Jeremiah 49:7 / Jeremiah 49:20**. God’s judgment against them was to make the Edomites cease to exist as a nation of people, **Amos 1:12**.

JUDGMENT ON AMMON

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together,” says the LORD.’ Amos 1:13-15

Ammon is being condemned because of their excessive cruelty, **1 Kings 11:7**. They ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend the borders, **Amos 1:13**. This practice of ripping open pregnant women is mentioned in **2 Kings 15:16**.

Dean, in his commentary, says the following concerning the ‘walls of Rabbah’, **Amos 1:14**.

‘The massive walls, some of which remain in ruins, rise from the precipitous sides of the cliff. I bent over them and looked sheer down about three hundred feet into one wady, and four hundred feet into the other. I did not wonder at its having occurred to King David that the leader of a charge against these ramparts would have met with certain death, consequently assigning the position to Uriah!’

Rabbah will be consumed by fire, and the king and the people will go into exile, **Amos 1:14-15 / Jeremiah 49:3 / Ezekiel 21:28-32**. They, too, would cease to exist as a nation.

Note that the Ammonite ‘king’, **Amos 1:15**, could be speaking about Milcom, Moloch, Molek, the name of the national God of the Ammonites, **1 Kings 11:5 / Jeremiah 49:3**.

Poole, in his commentary, says the following concerning the word king.

‘The idol of the Ammonites, so it signified, as well as king. I suppose the prophet may intend both, their god as well as their king shall be carried captive, as was customary with conquerors, **1 Samuel 5:2 / Isaiah 46:2**.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This happened when Tiglath-Pileser III invaded Ammon in 734 B.C., but Ammon’s final demise came when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Rabbah and took many of Ammon’s citizens captive to Babylon around 586 B.C. The last reference to them is the Ammonites’ defeat by Judas Maccabeus in the second century B.C. **1 Maccabees 5:6-7**.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The cuneiform inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser, the great Assyrian king, relate how Ahaz of Judah, “Sanipu king of Ammon”, both appear in a list of kings who paid tribute to him. Also, some forty years later, “Buduilu of Ammon (along with others) paid Sennacherib tribute and kissed his feet.” Both of these destructions of Ammon occurred at substantial time periods subsequent to Amos’ prophecy. “Their last stand seems to have been against Judas Maccabeus, **1 Maccabees 5:6**.”’

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent. Because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom’s king, I will send fire on Moab that will consume the fortresses of Kerioth. Moab will go down in great tumult amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet. I will destroy her ruler and kill all her officials with him,” says the LORD.’ Amos 2:1-3

JUDGMENT ON MOAB

Moab, Genesis 19:30-38, was another nation that was continually against Israel, Numbers 20:14-25:5 / 2 Kings 1-6. The sin of Moab was that they ‘burned, to ashes the bones of Edom’s king’. There’s no mention of this anywhere else in Scripture, but it was used to describe the cruelty of the Moabites.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Burning the bones of a dead person dishonoured that individual since there was then nothing substantial left of him. Burning the king’s bones indicated a desire to completely destroy the peace and even the soul of Edom’s king, in this case, King Mesha, for eternity. This was a despicable crime in the ancient Near East, where a peaceful burial was the hope of every person. This treatment of a dead corpse reflected a lack of respect for human life, life made in the image of God.’

We read in 2 Kings 3:26-27 how the king of Moab sacrificed his firstborn son because he was losing the battle against the Edomites. Moab was being condemned for its excessive cruelty, Genesis 9:5-7.

Jerome, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That after this war, the Moabites, in revenge for the assistance which the king of Edom had given to Israel, dug up and dishonoured his bones.’

Kerioth is represented as one of the main cities of Moab, Isaiah 15-16 / Jeremiah 48:24. The Moab nation comes to an end, Ezekiel 25:8-11. Even Moab’s ruler and officials will be destroyed, Jeremiah 48:7.

Josephus says the following.

‘Nebuchadnezzar conquered Moab shortly after 598 B.C., which opened the way for Arab tribes to occupy its land.’

JUDGEMENT ON JUDAH

‘This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent. Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed, I will send fire on Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem.” Amos 2:4-5

Amos is now getting close to home, as even Judah, in the Southern Kingdom, doesn’t escape judgment. But the sin of Judah is not an act of inhumanity as with the other nations, it is a rejection of the law of God, 2 Kings 19:17 / Isaiah

5:24 / Isaiah 6:9-10 / Isaiah 29:13 / Jeremiah 5:18-21 / Jeremiah 5:23 / Jeremiah 5:31 / Jeremiah 23:25-28 / Jeremiah 23:32 / Jeremiah 29:8-9 / Jeremiah 29:22-32 / Hosea 4:6 / Hosea 12:2 / Mark 7:1-9 / Romans 2:12-15.

They have followed the lives of their forefathers, they have followed false gods, the Baalim, and Ashteroth, Deuteronomy 6:14 / Deuteronomy 7:16 / Deuteronomy 8:19 / Deuteronomy 11:16 / Deuteronomy 11:28. Old habits die hard, as the saying goes and when people depart from God and His ways, they will go back to their old habits. Israel was used to idol worship in Egypt; it would have been practised everywhere.

It's not surprising that the first thing they did at Sinai was build a golden calf, Exodus 32:2-10, and it's not surprising that they are being condemned for it here. They forgot they were serving the living God, Exodus 20:3 / Joshua 3:10 / Jeremiah 10:10 / Daniel 6:26 / Matthew 22:32.

So God's judgment is coming upon Judah, Hosea 8:14 / Micah 3:12. This was finally carried out by Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, 2 Kings 25:1-12.

JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL

'This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god, they drink wine taken as fines.' Amos 2:6-8

Amos turns his attention to Israel. The sins of Israel are specified in more detail than the others. They were guilty of injustice, oppression, immorality and contempt for God.

We read of the unjust treatment of the innocent, 2 Kings 4:1-7; they sell the righteous for silver, Micah 3:11, and the needy for a pair of sandals, Amos 8:6. Perhaps this is the poor man who owes a pair of shoes and is sold into slavery because he cannot pay.

We also read of the oppression of the poor; they trample their heads into the ground, Exodus 23:4 / Deuteronomy 16:19 / Hebrews 10:29. It appears the poor are being pushed around by the rich, Deuteronomy 15:7-11 / James 2:6. We also read of immorality, the father and son with the same girl, Exodus 20:14 / Hosea 4:14. A son and father would have intercourse with the same young woman, Leviticus 18:6-18 / Leviticus 20:11 / Leviticus 20:17-21 / Deuteronomy 23:17.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

'The 'damsel' meant is one of the prostitutes attached to the idol of Astarte's temple, the prostitution being part of her filthy worship. The Canaanite religion thought that the performance of human actions of procreation could be used to remind the god to fertilise the earth. It is this practice which Amos sees and denounces in Israel. The holy Yahweh is being worshipped as a Canaanite Baal.'

Notice they 'lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge', Exodus 25:25-27 / Deuteronomy 24:17. If a poor man had to pawn his upper garment, they had to be returned by nightfall, Exodus 22:7-26 / Deuteronomy 24:10-13 / Deuteronomy 24:6 / Job 22:6.

But they were lying down beside the altars on the 'garments taken in pledge', they are also using their places of meeting, their house of God, as a drinking place. They purchased wine with the fines that they had taken from the condemned. There was no justice because judgments were made for gain, Amos 5:12.

'Yet I destroyed the Amorites before them, though they were tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks. I destroyed their fruit above and their roots below. I brought you up out of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness to give

you the land of the Amorites. “I also raised up prophets from among your children and Nazirites from among your youths. Is this not true, people of Israel?” declares the LORD. “But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.” Amos 2:9-12

Despite their strength, God had completely destroyed the Amorites before them, Amos 2:9 / Numbers 13:28-33 / Deuteronomy 1:26-28 / Joshua 10:10-11 / Psalms 18:17.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here the Amorites, the most formidable of the native inhabitants, represent all of them, by metonymy, cf. Genesis 15:16. The defeat of these giants demonstrated Yahweh’s superior power as well as His love for His people. By implication, if God drove the Amorites out of the land, He might also drive the Israelites out.’

He had brought them out of Egypt, Amos 2:10 / Exodus 12:31-42 / Exodus 13:17-22. He led them through the wilderness for forty years, Amos 2:10 / Exodus 13:17-14:31.

God also gave them the land of the Amorites, Amos 2:10 / Joshua 21:43-24:15. God gave them prophets and also gave some of the young men to be Nazirites, Amos 2:10.

God asks Israel if these events were true, did God really do all of these things? Amos 2:11. The obvious answer is yes, God did these things and a lot more for Israel.

Nazirites must not drink wine or anything that comes from the grapevine, they must not shave their heads and must not go near a dead body, Numbers 6:1-21. But here, we see that the Israelites made the Nazirites break their vows by drinking wine, Amos 2:12.

In addition, they didn’t want to hear the word of the God of Israel from the prophets; they commanded the ‘prophets not to prophesy’, Amos 2:12 / Isaiah 30:9-11 / Matthew 23:29-36 / 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Even today, we are sadly familiar with the preacher who preaches the whole Bible most faithfully, yet so that none of his hearers are ever shaken out of their sins. I myself have been told by a sincere Christian man, who was motivated, as he thought, purely by concern for my well-being, ‘You mustn’t say that kind of thing here, or you will not be invited again.’ How many a man of God has been passed over when a minister has been wanted: ‘He is not the man for us.’ There are many ways of saying to the prophet ‘Prophesy not, and one and all, they are an abomination to God and bring judgment on God’s people.’

So they showed their contempt with regard to what God had commanded them, Proverbs 28:10 / Habakkuk 2:15. In other words, they condemned themselves to the judgment of God.

‘Now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. The swift will not escape, the strong will not muster their strength, and the warrior will not save his life. The archer will not stand his ground, the fleet-footed soldier will not get away, and the horseman will not save his life. Even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day,” declares the LORD.’ Amos 2:13-16

The people are right for judgment. God says, He will crush them as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. In other words, they won’t be able to escape.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amos 2:13.

‘Another interpretation understands Amos picturing Israel being crushed like an object under the wheels of a heavily loaded cart.’

The swift won’t be able to run, the strong will lose their strength, the warrior will not save his life, the archer won’t be able to stand his ground, the soldier will not escape, and the bravest warrior will flee naked, Isaiah 31:3 / Jeremiah 48:41. In other words, they would fall beneath the judgments of God.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fulfilment of this threatened judgment came when the Assyrians besieged and destroyed Samaria, Israel’s capital, in 722 B.C. and carried many of the people of that land into captivity.’ 2 Kings 17:5-23.’

McKeating, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The predictions of Amos were fulfilled to the letter, and within the prophet’s own lifetime or shortly afterwards. They were fulfilled while there were still plenty of people around who could remember what they said. Their words were therefore treated with respect and eventually written down.’

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the LORD has spoken against you—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.” Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything? When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it? Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets. The lion has roared—who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken—who can but prophesy?’ Amos 3:1-8

WITNESSES SUMMONED AGAINST ISRAEL

The first three of the five condemnations begin with the words, ‘hear this word’, Amos 3:1 / Amos 4:1 / Amos 5:1. The last two begin with the phrase, ‘woe to you who’, Amos 5:18 / Amos 6:1.

The first message here is a message from the Lord against Israel, 2 Chronicles 36:16 / Isaiah 1:2-4. This would also include Judah, ‘the family I brought up out of Egypt’, Amos 3:1. But the message is primarily for Israel, Exodus 19:3-6 / Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

As God’s people, they should have known better, so He warns them that He will punish them, Amos 3:2 / Amos 3:14 / Luke 12:48. In Amos 3:3-5, we find a series of rhetorical questions, that is, the answers are implied in the questions.

The lesson, for instance, two people can walk together if they have agreed to do so, but if one, that is, Israel, breaks that covenant, how can they walk with God? Amos 3:2.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amos 3:4.

‘Just as the roar of the lion, or the growl of the young lion, means that the prey is before them, the roaring of the prophet against Israel means that, ‘God not only has before him the nation that is ripe for judgment, but that he has it in his power.’

A lion doesn’t roar in the thicket unless it has found prey. Young lions don’t growl in their dens unless they have captured something and are protecting it. A bird will only go into a trap if the bait is set; it can’t be trapped if the snare isn’t set, Amos 3:5 / Jeremiah 2:35. Israel’s fall to the ground means that they were caught in their own trap of sin.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following concerning the blowing of the trumpet, [Amos 3:6](#).

‘As the trumpet, when blown, frightens the people out of their self-security, so will the voice of the prophet. The calamity, which is bursting upon them, comes from Jehovah, and is sent by him for punishment.’

No calamity befalls a city unless the Lord has caused it, [Amos 3:6](#). People tremble in a city when the trumpet sounds, and so, He warns the people before He acts in judgment, [Amos 3:6-7](#) / [Psalm 25:14](#) / [Jeremiah 23:18](#) / [Jeremiah 23:22](#).

God doesn’t do anything without first revealing His will, [Amos 3:7](#). In other words, God would bring no judgment on His people unless He first warned them.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God especially reveals the secrets of His coming judgment, so that men will have time to repent and no reason to be surprised. ‘Such secrets of God are revealed to them, that they may inform the people; that, by repentance and conversion, they may avoid the evil, and, by walking closely with God, secure the continuance of his favour’.

God warned them through His prophets, but they rejected what they said, [Amos 2:12](#). No true prophet speaks unless by divine revelation, [Amos 3:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 18:22](#) / [Numbers 23:19](#) / [Ezekiel 13:10](#).

Israel had rejected the pleas of God through the prophets to follow after His commandments, [Amos 2:4](#) / [Amos 7:10-13](#). God’s message through Amos is likened to the lion’s roar, [Amos 3:8](#). God was the lion who roared through the prophets to tell Israel to turn from their sin, [Amos 1:1](#) / [Joel 3:16](#).

Motyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The only view of history that the Bible espouses is that the Lord is the Great Agent. Behind every event stands a cause, behind all history stands the Lord, [Isaiah 45:5-7](#). Maybe thus they will prepare themselves for his future acts of judgment.’

‘Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt: “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people.” “They do not know how to do right,” declares the LORD, “who store up in their fortresses what they have plundered and looted.” Amos 3:9-10

Ashdod, that is, Assyria and Egypt, are summoned to Samaria to witness the unrest and oppression, that is, their treatment of the poor, [Amos 3:9](#). Two witnesses were required under Old Testament law before the death sentence could be carried out, [Deuteronomy 17:6](#).

The wickedness of Israel rivals the wickedness of Ashdod and Egypt. They don’t know how to do right, [Hosea 4:6](#), and they stored up goods in their strongholds, [Amos 3:10](#). As a result of not knowing God and His ways, they made up their own values and behaved in such a way to please their own desires, [Amos 3:10](#).

‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “An enemy will overrun your land, pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses.” This is what the LORD says: “As a shepherd rescues from the lion’s mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch.” “Hear this and testify against the descendants of Jacob,” declares the Lord, the LORD God Almighty. “On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed, and the mansions will be demolished,” declares the LORD.’ Amos 3:11-15

Here we read that an enemy will overrun the land, they will pull down their strongholds and plunder their fortresses.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That enemy proved to be Assyria, which besieged and destroyed Samaria and overran all Israel in 722 B.C.’

The severity of this is likened to a lion's attack on a sheep, [Amos 3:12](#) / [Exodus 22:10-13](#). 'Only two leg bones or a piece of an ear remain', [Amos 3:12](#), may suggest that a small remnant remains, or that God has done everything that He can, and they will be destroyed, [Jeremiah 50:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Those of them that escape these judgments shall escape with as great difficulty, and be of as little worth, as the two legs and piece of an ear that shall be snatched out of the lion's mouth. We know that when the Babylonians carried away the people into Chaldea, they left behind only a few, and those the refuse of the land.'

The descendants of Jacob will also receive judgment, [Amos 3:13](#), which means both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms will be judged by God. We read of the judgment upon Bethel, [Amos 3:14](#) / [Hosea 8:11](#).

Bethel was one of the centres of worship in Israel, [1 Kings 12:25-33](#), where Jeroboam set up golden calves for sacrifice at Bethel and Dan after the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The altars will be destroyed, and the horns, [Amos 3:14](#) / [1 Kings 1:50](#) / [1 Kings 2:28](#), a symbol of power or sanctuary, of the altar will be cut off. It shows that the centre of worship will be destroyed. This is the devastation of their idolatry and the punishment of their transgressions.

Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, will be surrounded, and when it finally falls, the royal palaces, [1 Kings 22:39](#) / [Psalms 45:8](#), will be plundered, and the city itself will be totally destroyed.

Mays, in his commentary, says the following.

'The judgment which Amos announces is no ascetic primitivism, growing out of simple hostility against a commercial culture and its influence. The houses were built beam by beam, and stone by stone, from a store of crimes.'

God's judgment isn't going to stop at their idol altars. It would continue on to the expensive places they build at the expense of the poor, [Amos 3:15](#). Israel was going to be punished because of their religious practices, [Amos 3:14](#), and their abuse of their wealth and power, [Amos 3:15](#).

The judgment which Amos is speaking about eventually happened a few years later when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, brought down Samaria, and so, also brought an end to the Northern Kingdom, [2 Kings 17:5-6](#).

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

'Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!" The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: "The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks. You will each go straight out through breaches in the wall, and you will be cast out toward Harmon," declares the LORD.' Amos 4:1-3

ISRAEL HAS NOT RETURNED TO GOD

We can divide this chapter into two halves.

1. Social and religious corruption.

This chapter begins with a judgment on the women, ‘you cows of Bashan’, [Amos 4:1](#). We have mention of Bashan, [Deuteronomy 32:14](#) / [Psalm 22:12](#) / [Jeremiah 50:19](#) / [Ezekiel 39:18](#) / [Micah 7:14](#).

This area of Bashan had rich pastureland, which was good for cattle, [Numbers 32](#). It was situated on the east of the Jordan. The women were being compared with them.

They are intolerant and aggressive towards their husbands, [Amos 4:1](#). These rich women appeared to have been pressuring their husbands into providing them a luxurious lifestyle, [Deuteronomy 28:56-57](#) / [Isaiah 32:9-13](#). They oppressed their husbands to exploit the poor in order that they are able to enjoy great wealth in luxuriant living, [Amos 4:1](#) / [Isaiah 3:16-4:1](#).

McFadden, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All of the Hebrew prophets knew that for the temper and quality of civilization the women are greatly responsible. A country is largely what its women make it; if they are cruel or careless or unwomanly, the country is on the road to ruin.’

The holiness of God has been offended, and so, God is going to act in judgment against them, [Amos 4:2](#). The judgment pictured here is of captives being led away by cords attached to rings in their lips, [Amos 4:2](#).

They are taken into captivity through the breaches in the wall, [Amos 4:3](#). The walls will be broken down, and the captives led out through them. During the destruction of Samaria, the dead bodies of the rich and famous are going to be dragged away to a rubbish pile of corpses for burning. The meaning of Harmon is unknown, [Amos 4:3](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Harmon is sometimes construed as ‘naked’ and sometimes as a place-name; but if it is the latter, no such place has ever been identified.’

‘Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings—boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,” declares the Sovereign LORD.’ [Amos 4:4-5](#)

Here we read about the religious corruption. The false religion in Israel was the cause of social corruption. There is sarcasm in the language being used by God here.

Bethel is mentioned as a place of worship, but it was used for idol worship; they worshipped golden calves. Gilgal must also have been a centre of false worship, [Hosea 4:15](#) / [Hosea 9:15](#).

In the zealousness of their religion, they were actually increasing the call for judgment to come upon them. The outcome of their religion is a multiplication of transgressions; they bring their false sacrifices every morning, [Amos 4:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 14:28](#).

They are making a public show, boasting about their tithing, their offerings, making it an outward display. Note that some translations say they brought their tithes every three days, [Amos 4:4](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God hyperbolically and ironically urged the people to bring their sacrifices every morning and their tithes every three days (rather than every three years as the Law required, cf. [Deuteronomy 14:28-29](#)). Even if they sacrificed every morning and tithed every three days, they would only be rebelling against God. The people were careful to worship regularly, but it was a ritual contrary to God’s will.’

They were burning leavened bread, which was contrary to the law, and they bragged about their free will offerings, [Amos 4:5](#) / [Exodus 23:18](#) / [Leviticus 2:11](#) / [Leviticus 7:11-12](#). God wanted their loving obedience, not their acts of worship, [Psalm 50:13-15](#) / [Psalm 51:16](#) / [Hosea 6:6](#) / [Matthew 9:13](#).

God was angry because he had laid down laws for the Israelites to follow. Time and time again, He had forgiven them and accepted their repentance. Yet they continued to do things contrary to His will. Perhaps they considered there was no harm in burning the leavened bread; it seemed such a small point.

Don't we say the same today? Don't we ignore what God says sometimes because 'this is what we love to do'? What does it matter? Is it only a small point? I wonder what God will say? When God tells us to do certain things, what right do we have to decide that our way seems better, so we will do it our way? Proverbs 14:12.

'I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me,' declares the LORD. "I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up. People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. "Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. "I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. 'Therefore, this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God.' He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the LORD God Almighty is his name.' Amos 4:6-13

2. We have seven warnings here sent by God to the people, Genesis 3:17-19.

The number seven implies perfect, complete and utter destruction. Over the years, God tried to get His people to obey His commands, but they refused to listen; they were then punished to bring about their repentance, but still, they didn't respond. God sent prophets to them, but still, they wouldn't listen, Matthew 21:33-46.

1. Famine, Amos 4:6.

I gave you empty stomachs, some versions use the words, 'cleanness of teeth' and lack of bread, 1 Kings 8:37-39 / Proverbs 14:4. God had previously warned them, if they didn't stick to the covenant, He would bring famine upon them, Leviticus 26:26 / Leviticus 26:29 / Deuteronomy 28:17 / Deuteronomy 28:48.

2. Drought, Amos 4:7-8.

The rains before the harvest were being withheld, just when the crops needed it most, 1 Kings 8:35. This again was a part of the covenant agreement; God would punish them with drought, Leviticus 26:19 / Deuteronomy 28:22-24 / Deuteronomy 28:48.

3. Mildew, Amos 4:9.

God struck the gardens and vineyards with blight and mildew, Deuteronomy 28:22 / 1 Kings 8:37-39. This too was a part of the covenant agreement; God would punish them with plant diseases, Leviticus 26:20 / Deuteronomy 28:18 / Deuteronomy 28:22 / Deuteronomy 28:30 / Deuteronomy 28:38-40 / Deuteronomy 28:42.

4. Locusts, Amos 4:9.

They devoured your fig and olive trees.

5. Pestilence, epidemic, Amos 4:10.

I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt, Exodus 7:14-11:10.

6. War, Amos 4:10.

I killed your young men with the sword, I filled your nostrils with the stench of death, 1 Kings 8:33 / 1 Kings 8:37.

The smell from the dead bodies should have caused the people to repent, but they didn't, Leviticus 26:16-17 / Leviticus 26:25 / Leviticus 26:31-39 / Deuteronomy 28:21-22 / Deuteronomy 28:25-27 / Deuteronomy 28:35 / Deuteronomy 28:49-52 / Deuteronomy 28:59-61 / Deuteronomy 29:23-28.

7. Earthquake, Amos 4:11.

I overthrew you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, Ezekiel 16:47-63. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, Isaiah 1:9 / Isaiah 13:19 / Jeremiah 50:40 / Zephaniah 2:9.

All of these warnings had one aim: to bring the people back to God, Amos 3:11-15. But each one ends in the same way. I did these things so that you would change your ways, but still ‘you have not returned to me’, says the LORD, Amos 4:6 / Amos 4:8-10 / Amos 4:12.

Because these warnings have not been heeded, there will be no more warnings, only judgment, Micah 1:3-4. God says, ‘I will bring destruction upon you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel’, Amos 4:12.

The LORD God Almighty has issued His last warning. The God who formed the mountains, created the winds, revealed his thoughts to man, who turns dawn to darkness, who treads the high places of the earth, He has spoken, Amos 4:13 / Amos 5:8 / Amos 9:5-6. Someone has said that this is ‘God’s signature on Israel’s death warrant’.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amos 4:13.

‘There is very little agreement among scholars as to the origin of this verse and the reason for its being placed where it is. Of course, if one accepts the tradition that Amos wrote all of this book, just as we have it, there can be no problem here except a difficulty in understanding why he put a hymn of praise immediately after an announcement of terrible judgment.’

Motyer, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amos 4:13.

‘God is sovereign over things visible (the mountains), things invisible (the wind), and things rational (man and his thought). He is in direct executive control of the world, as is evident when he makes the morning darkness, i.e., brings about the sequence of day and night. No place is beyond his reach, even the heights of the earth being beneath his feet.’

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you: “Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up.” This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Israel: “Your city that marches out a thousand strong will have only a hundred left; your town that marches out a hundred strong will have only ten left.” Amos 5:1-3

A LAMENT AND CALL TO REPENTANCE

This chapter is a lamentation, the funeral song for Israel, Micah 2:4. Israel will fall and rise no more, but this wasn’t to happen for some years yet, but God speaks as though it has already taken place.

This is because God is talking about His judgment, Amos 5:1. At the end of Israel’s prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, Amos came and proclaimed this prophecy of death.

Note the word, ‘fallen’, Amos 5:2, which appears to be used in reference to fallen in battle, 2 Samuel 1:19 / 2 Samuel 1:25 / 2 Samuel 1:27 / 2 Samuel 3:34 / Lamentations 2:21 / Revelation 18:2.

The words, ‘Virgin Israel’, [Amos 5:2](#), mean that previously they had been unconquered but now they are going to fall never to rise, [Revelation 18:2](#). Ninety per cent of the people are going to be wiped out, [Amos 5:3](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Israelite cities that had sent 1,000 soldiers against Israel’s enemy saw only 100 survive, and smaller towns that sent out only 100 soldiers saw only 10 come home alive. No nation could survive such devastating defeat in war.’

‘This is what the LORD says to Israel: “Seek me and live; do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.” Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground. He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name.’ [Amos 5:4-8](#)

Here we read of a call to repentance. Even while God is saying He is going to destroy Israel, He calls to those who would follow Him to repent, [Jeremiah 18:1-10](#).

He is still giving them a chance. He encourages the people to seek the Lord and abandon idolatry to live, [Amos 5:4](#) / [Psalms 69:32](#) / [Amos 4:4](#) / [Amos 5:6](#) / [Zephaniah 2:3](#) / [Hosea 4:15](#).

Bethel, [Genesis 28:11-19](#) / [Genesis 35:1-7](#), Gilgal, [Joshua 5:1-12](#), and Beersheba, [Genesis 21:22-33](#) / [Genesis 26:23-33](#) / [Genesis 46:1-5](#), were all places which were rich in history with God and His people.

Now Bethel, [Amos 3:14](#) / [Amos 4:4](#) / [Hosea 10:15](#) / [Hosea 13:1-3](#), Gilgal, [Hosea 4:15](#) / [Hosea 9:15](#) / [Hosea 12:12](#), and Beersheba, [Amos 8:14](#), have become the centres of idolatry, [Amos 5:5](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Bethel’ means ‘house of God,’ but it would become ‘Beth Aven,’ meaning ‘house of nothing.’ ‘Aven’ (nothing) often referred to the powerless spirits of wickedness, [Isaiah 41:22-24](#) / [Isaiah 41:28-29](#).’

Beersheba is in the Southern Kingdom, yet it is listed here, [Amos 5:5](#), and in [Amos 8:14](#), for destruction. Beersheba had a long historical association; it was where Abraham had lived. Idolatry was the creation of an idea of a god after their own imagination and desires.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jeroboam I pretended that it was too much for Israel to go up to Jerusalem; and yet Israel thought it not too much to go to the extremist point of Judah toward Idumea, perhaps four times as far south of Jerusalem, as Jerusalem lay from Bethel!’

The judgment is likened to fire, [Amos 5:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) / [Isaiah 10:17](#) / [Jeremiah 4:4](#) / [Lamentations 2:3](#). The house or tribes of Joseph is a phrase referring to the Northern Kingdom, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, [Amos 5:6](#) / [Amos 5:15](#).

Justice and righteousness are being overturned, which shows God’s ability to complete this justice, [Amos 5:7](#). The NIV uses the word ‘bitterness’, but some translations use the word ‘Wormwood’, [Amos 5:7](#), which was a bitter plant. Here it is used symbolically of the injustice that was in the society, [Deuteronomy 29:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 29:20](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These figures picture their total contempt for what was right, [Proverbs 1:3](#) / [Proverbs 2:9](#) / [Proverbs 8:20](#) / [Proverbs 21:3](#) / [Isaiah 1:21](#) / [Isaiah 5:7](#) / [Isaiah 28:17](#). Right conduct was the proper action, and justice was the result, but the Israelites had despised both in their courts. Instead of the judicial system functioning like medicine, healing wrongs and soothing the oppressed, the Israelites had turned it into poison.’

Pleiades and Orion, [Amos 5:8](#), were groups of stars used to indicate changes in the seasons, [Genesis 1:26-27](#) / [Job 9:9](#) / [Job 38:31](#). God can change day into night; He can call for the sea to cover the land, which is possibly a reference to the flood of Noah when God poured down rain for forty days, [Amos 5:8](#).

Deane, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here is an allusion to the flood and similar catastrophes, which are proofs of God’s judicial government of the universe, when, ‘he maketh his creature his weapon for the revenge of his enemies.’ God doeth all these marvellous things, and men presume to scout his law and think to be unpunished.’

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We should not understand this as a reference to the moisture that rises from the sea and then falls upon the earth as rain. The words suggest the thought of terrible inundations of the earth by the swelling sea, and the allusion to the judgment of the flood can hardly be overlooked.’

God is the Creator of all things, and so, higher than all He created. These statements show the transforming power of God’s judgment.

‘With a blinding flash, he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin. There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offences and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore, the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.’ [Amos 5:9-13](#)

God is going to punish their unrighteousness. Some versions refer to the ‘gate’, the NIV says, ‘court’, [Amos 5:10](#), but they mean the same. The gate of the city was where people gathered for judgment to be made, [2 Samuel 15:2](#) / [Ruth 4:1-2](#).

Hubbard, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Judicial decisions for each community were taken at the gate of the city, where the heads of families and other elders assembled to hear witnesses, arbitrate disputes, decide controversies and generally dispense justice. The space on the inner side of the gate, together with rooms or alcoves in the gate area itself, was used as courtrooms.’

They hated the one who reproves in court, they hated a righteous judge, and they despised those who spoke the truth, [Amos 5:10](#). They oppressed the poor, [Habakkuk 3:24](#), and God warns those who have become rich through oppression will not live in their mansions made of stone or drink wine from their vineyards, [Amos 5:11](#) / [Micah 6:15](#). They maintained their luxurious lifestyle by exploiting the poor, [Exodus 23:2](#) / [Exodus 23:6](#).

God knows their many sins, He knows what they are doing, taking bribes and turning aside from the needy, [Amos 5:12](#). The poor who weren’t able to pay any bribes didn’t receive any justice, [Amos 5:12](#).

Wolfe, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Usually, the last stand of respectability in a declining nation is found in her judiciary. With the degeneration of Israel’s legal machinery, the fate of the nation seemed certain.’

He says, if they are disturbed about what is going on, they should keep their mouth shut, [Amos 5:13](#) / [Habakkuk 2:3](#). They should keep silent as they wait on the vengeance of God. When the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians, the rich and their possessions were taken, and the poor were left in the land to care for it.

‘Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.’ [Amos 5:14-15](#)

They are now encouraged to seek good, not evil, then they will live, [Amos 5:14](#) / [Amos 5:4-6](#) / [Micah 8:11](#), that is, God will be with them, [Numbers 23:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 20:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) / [Judges 6:12](#) / [Isaiah 8:10](#) / [Zephaniah 3:15](#) / [Zephaniah 3:17](#). They are to hate evil, love good, and make sure that the courts maintain justice, [Amos 5:14](#).

McFadden, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The root of the social problem, as someone has said, is not defective social arrangement, but sin and no fundamental improvement can be effected by a change in the environment, but only by a change in the men.’

After Tiglath-Pileser swept through the Northern Kingdom in 732-31 B.C., he left only a remnant of Ephraim in the land, [Amos 5:15](#). The remnant was the poor who were to farm the land for the Assyrians.

‘Therefore, this is what the Lord, the LORD God Almighty, says: “There will be wailing in all the streets and cries of anguish in every public square. The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail. There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst,” says the LORD.’ Amos 5:16-17

This is an announcement of the judgment and its effects. The dead would be so prevalent that the farmers would be called to mourn over their dead relatives in the cities, [Amos 5:16](#).

The professional mourners would be hired to lament both death and destruction, [Jeremiah 9:17-18](#) / [Matthew 9:23](#). There will be wailing, mourning and lamentation when God passes through their midst, [Amos 5:16-17](#) / [Exodus 11:4-7](#) / [Exodus 12:12-13](#).

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amos was reminding Israel that God had been passing by in judgment, as he did that night in Egypt. But now, he would not pass by them anymore. He would pass through their midst and leave a trail of tears as he had in the homes of the Egyptians.’

THE DAY OF THE LORD

‘Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light—pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?’ Amos 5:18-20

Here we read of a message of woe. The first three messages began with the words, ‘hear this’, [Amos 3:1](#) / [Amos 4:1](#) / [Amos 5:1](#), and the fourth message begins with the words, ‘woe to you’, [Amos 5:18](#).

Israel thought of the Day of the Lord as the time when God would judge their enemies, but they thought it wouldn’t be applicable to them. But this is a warning that they, too, will face that judgment. It will be a dark time for Israel, [Amos 5:18](#) / [Isaiah 5:30](#) / [Jeremiah 46:10](#) / [Joel 3:1-17](#) / [Zephaniah 3:8](#) / [Zechariah 14:1-3](#).

There is no escape; if they avoid one danger, it will only be to be faced with another. The wicked of Israel were caught in a trap. If he flees from a lion, he will meet a bear. If he flees from the bear and thinks he is safe in his house, he will confront a snake, [Amos 5:19](#) / [Matthew 7:10](#).

The Day of the Lord won’t be daylight; it will be darkness, pitch-darkness, [Amos 5:20](#) / [Joel 2:1-2](#) / [Joel 2:10-11](#) / [Zephaniah 1:14-15](#). This prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians overran Israel and took most of the people into exile in 722 B.C.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The coming day of the Lord would mean inescapable tragedy for Israel. The Israelites may have thought they had escaped one enemy, but they would have to face another. They might think they were secure and safe in their homeland, but deadly judgment would overtake them in that comfortable environment. There would be no safe haven from God’s coming judgment, even though they frequented the temple.’

‘I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! “Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves. Therefore, I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty.’ Amos 5:21-27

God despises their feasts, their sacrifices and their assemblies, [Amos 5:21-22](#) / [Leviticus 26:31](#) / [Malachi 6:6](#). These would be their annual festivals, with the associated times of worship. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, which correspond to Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

Notice God says, ‘I will not accept,’ ‘I will not look,’ and ‘I will not listen,’ [Amos 5:22-23](#). He won’t accept their burnt and grain offerings. He has no regard for them, [Amos 5:22](#) / [Malachi 1:8](#) / [Matthew 5:23-24](#). Their singing and music were also rejected by God, [Amos 5:23](#).

They didn’t worship Him alone; they worshipped other gods as well. The worship that took place at Bethel and Dan was based on the temple worship in Jerusalem, but it had been corrupted. Jeroboam I, soon after the kingdom was divided, set up golden calves to worship in Bethel and Dan, [1 Kings 12:25-33](#).

The form of worship was the same, the same festivals were remembered, and they worshipped God, but they didn’t worship Him in the way they should have done, [John 4:24](#).

They are simply an outward show that has no meaning, [Amos 5:15](#) / [Isaiah 1:13-14](#) / [Proverbs 15:8](#). God says, Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! [Amos 5:24](#).

There are two views as to what this means.

1. Justice and righteousness seem to refer to the flooding of the land with the judgement and righteousness of God.

This is God’s judgment coming in a flood because of their false worship, [Isaiah 10:22](#).

2. The people are being called to replace their idolatrous worship with justice and righteousness.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Amos 5:24](#).

‘With [Hosea 6:6](#) and [Micah 6:8](#), this text stands as one of the great themes in prophetic literature with regard to the nature of sacrifices and true religion. God is not pleased by acts of pomp and grandeur but by wholehearted devotion and complete loyalty.’

The people had been guilty of idolatry from the time of their wilderness wanderings. They had not worshipped in the way God wanted them to, [Amos 5:25](#). [Amos 5:26](#) has been a difficult verse for the translators. Various names are mentioned, which seem to be the names of idols.

‘Sakkuth Kaiman.’ RSV

‘Moloch Chiun.’ AV

‘Shrine of your king pedestal of your idols.’ NIV

The footnote for [Amos 5:26](#) has the following.

‘Or lifted up Sakkuth your king / and Kaiwan your idols, / your star-gods; Septuagint lifted up the shrine of Molek / and the star of your god Rephan, / their idols’

They all refer to the idolatry of Israel, idols which they had made for themselves. They had transferred worship that was due to God to these idols, [Acts 7:42-43](#). All this idolatry will have consequences; they will go into exile beyond Damascus, which refers to Assyria.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Amos 5:27](#).

‘The terrible consequences of rebellion against God grew steadily worse. Injustice, crime, and immorality of all degrees soon led to complete anarchy in the land. In 722-721 B.C., the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom were subjugated by the Assyrian king and the people were deported to Assyria, never to return as a nation.’

Sunukjian, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The horror of ‘exile’ was more than the ruin of defeat and the shame of capture. For Israel, it meant being removed from the land of promise, the land of God’s presence. Exile, in effect, was excommunication.’

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come! Go to Kalneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath, and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours? You put off the day of disaster and bring near a reign of terror. You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore, you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.’ Amos 6:1-7

WOE TO THE COMPLACENT

This is the second message of woe, the first being in [Amos 5:18](#). This one is directed to the notable men of Zion and Samaria, [Amos 6:1](#). It’s a message to the leading men of both Israel and Judah, [Amos 2:4-5](#) / [Amos 3:1](#) / [Amos 5:1](#) / [Amos 5:5](#), although the message is primarily for Israel.

This prophecy was made during the reign of Jeroboam II. It was a time of great prosperity in the Northern Kingdom.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The 31 years following King Jeroboam II’s reign saw increasingly worse conditions for Israel, [2 Kings 15:8](#) to [2 Kings 17:6](#). Six kings reigned, three of whom seized power by political coup and assassination. Fear and violence marked this period, [2 Kings 15:16](#).’

They had become complacent in Zion, [Luke 6:24-25](#) / [Luke 12:13-21](#), and they felt secure in Samaria. Because of their relationship to God, they were in this privileged position, [Psalms 127:1](#).

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These people misunderstood the terms of the covenant, thinking that God would spare Jerusalem regardless of what they did; they were at ease in Zion. In Samaria, they were trusting in the mountain of Samaria, a natural fortress which Israel’s leaders must have thought impregnable.’

Amos points out that Israel is better than these foreign countries, namely, Kalneh, that is, Babylon, Hamath, that is, Syria and Gath, which is Philistia, but they must prove themselves to be better, [Amos 6:2](#).

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amos names three great and flourishing capitals, because he is speaking to the great men of the capitals of the two kingdoms of Israel.’

They cannot just rely on this relationship that they have with God. The leaders of Israel think that this judgment day is far away, but they are labouring under a false impression, [Amos 6:3](#). Their actions are leading to lawlessness.

Of the last six kings of Israel, only one died naturally. The other five were all murdered, showing what an evil, vicious nation they were becoming. Their forgetfulness of God is represented by their way of living. Their beds of ivory, upon which they lounged upon and they were eating the choicest lambs and fattened calves, [Amos 6:4](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The idle rich were using inlays of ivory to decorate their beds, indifferently ignoring the gross poverty around them, and living as extravagantly as possible.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the strumming on their harps, [Amos 6:5](#).

‘The word which Amos alone uses in this place describes probably a hurried flow of unmeaning, unconsidered words, in which the rhythm of words and music was everything, the sense, nothing.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning David and music, [Amos 6:5](#).

‘I believe that David was not authorized by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the divine worship of which we read and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet and I further believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian Church is without the sanction and against the will of God.’

They drank a lot of wine, [Philippians 3:19](#), and anointed themselves with the finest of oils, and strummed on their harps, [Amos 6:6](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Joseph.

‘The name of the patriarch, Ephraim’s father, recalled his suffering from his brethren. His brethren cast him into a “pit without water” [Genesis 37:24](#), probably an empty, leaking well (much as was that into which Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 38:6](#), was cast), damp, fetid, and full of loathsome creatures. They “saw the anguish of his soul when he besought them, and would not hear” [Genesis 42:21](#). But what did they? “They sat down to eat bread” [Genesis 37:25](#). So did these rich men deal with all their brethren, all Ephraim.’

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Too many Christians are laughing when they should be weeping, [James 4:8-10](#), and tolerating sin when they should be opposing it, [1 Corinthians 5:2](#).’

Remember, there’s nothing wrong with wealth, but it can lead to our destruction, [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) / [James 5:1-6](#).

They didn’t care that all around them was being destroyed and falling into decay, [Daniel 5:1-25](#).

The house of Israel shall be carried into captivity before the house of Judah, [Amos 6:7](#). These luxuriant leaders would go into captivity at the head of the people of Israel. Their banquets would cease, and they would lounge on their soft couches no longer.

THE LORD ABHORS THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL

‘The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself—the LORD God Almighty declares: “I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it.” If ten people are left in one house, they too will die. And if the relative who comes to carry the bodies out of the house to burn them asks anyone who might be hiding there, “Is anyone else with you?” and he says, “No,” then he will go on to say, “Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD.” For the LORD has given the command, and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small house into bits. Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness—you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, “Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?” For the LORD God Almighty declares, “I will stir up a nation against you, Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.” Amos 6:8-14

Here we read the announcement of punishment for these leaders.

God rejects the nation on an oath, He says, ‘He will deliver up the city and everything in it’, [Amos 6:8](#) / [Amos 8:7](#).

The city is probably Samaria.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a solemn warning because God can swear by no one greater than Himself, [Hebrews 6:13-14](#).’

Motyer, in his commentary, gives the following summary.

‘The fact of pride, [Amos 6:8](#), its moral indifference, [Amos 6:12](#), and its self-centeredness, [Amos 6:13](#), are brought before us; but now we see the divine reaction to them. [Amos 6:1-7](#) tells us in so many words that pride goes before a fall; [Amos 6:8-14](#) tell us why this is. The divine reactions are hatred, [Amos 6:8](#), alienation, [Amos 6:9-10](#), and enmity, [Amos 6:11-14](#).’

They will be the first to go into exile because they took pride in their wealth, [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) / [James 5:1-6](#), but God was about to take their wealth away, [Amos 6:8](#). Pride is never a good thing, [1 Peter 5:5](#) / [James 4:6](#) / [Proverbs 3:34](#).

Notice the conditions within the city, ‘if ten men are in a house they will die,’ [Amos 6:9](#). God couldn’t stand their fortified cities because they took advantage of the poor and needy to maintain their lifestyle, [Amos 3:9-10](#). If the relative who is to burn the bodies finds someone hiding there, he will say, ‘Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord,’ [Amos 6:10](#).

There are two possible interpretations given for this statement in [Amos 6:10](#).

1. The name of the Lord mustn’t be mentioned in case God’s attention is drawn to him, and he is discovered and killed.
2. The name of the Lord is not to be mentioned because of the despair.

McComiskey, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When a relative of one of the dead comes to burn the corpses, should he find one person still alive, that person will not permit his mentioning the name of the Lord for fear that the Lord will turn his wrath on him.’

Out of the despair of what is happening to them, they want to forget God. Perhaps despair was caused because they realised they had turned from God, that they had been in the wrong, and they couldn’t face him.

But God’s judgment embraces the whole of the city, whether it be the great house or the small house, the rich or the poor; they will be smashed into pieces, [Amos 6:11](#) / [Amos 6:9-10](#). They will be broken down. God is not only going to smash the people who live in the city, [Amos 6:9-10](#), but also the city itself, [Amos 6:11](#).

The N.I.V. seems to differ from other versions in [Amos 6:12](#). It suggests that horses and oxen run or plough over ‘rocky crags’. Other versions talk about oxen ploughing over the sea and oceans. Nevertheless, both are impossibilities.

[Amos 6:12](#) tells us that these leading men can’t rely on their own strength. Do horses run on rocks? Does one plough the sea with oxen? These are against common sense and nature. But Israel was acting against common sense. Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Shall horses run upon the rock?’ ‘Will one plough rocks with oxen?’ The answer implied is, ‘Certainly not,’ and it meant that, if a thing cannot be done, it is not worth doing; if it can, it will be well for us not to attempt to do it.’

Schultz, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is a spiritual and moral order in the universe that is just as impossible to ignore as the natural order. It is as senseless to pervert justice as it is to expect horses to run on the rocks, or for oxen to plough on rock.’

They should not turn justice into poison nor the fruit of righteousness into bitterness, [Amos 6:12](#). Some translations use the words, ‘gall and wormwood’. In other words, what they thought was justice was actually the bitterness of gall. They were trusting in their strength, [Amos 6:13](#). Jeroboam II had enlarged their borders and increased their prosperity, [2 Kings 14:25](#). Lo Debar, [2 Samuel 9:4](#) / [2 Samuel 17:27](#), which means ‘nothing’, and Karnaim, which means ‘horn’, were probably scenes of victory. These were towns east of the Jordan that were taken by Jeroboam II. They rejoiced in their own power, strength and victory.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The kingdom of Israel was destroyed in the year 722 by Sargon in the first month of his reign when Samaria was taken after a siege which was begun by his predecessor, Shalmaneser IV, and had lasted three years.’

Notice the entire limits of Israel, from her northern and southern borders, [Amos 6:14](#). The Assyrians would overwhelm them from the northern borders of Israel, that is, Lebo Hamath, to Arabah, the southern borders near the Dead Sea. They will be oppressed throughout all of their territories. So all of their proud achievements are going to be taken away.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Once again God’s people would fall under the control of a foreign oppressor, as they had done in the past, [Exodus 3:9](#) / [Judges 2:18](#) / [Judges 4:3](#) / [Judges 6:9](#) / [Judges 10:11-12](#) / [1 Samuel 10:17-18](#).’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It should always be remembered in studying this prophecy that it was exactly and terribly fulfilled just as God had promised. Both the Sacred Scriptures and the testimony of the archaeologist testify to the overwhelming destruction of Israel within some thirty years after Amos wrote this prophecy.’

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts after the king’s share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up. When they had stripped the land clean, I cried out, “Sovereign

LORD, forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!” So the LORD relented. “This will not happen,” the LORD said. This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: The Sovereign LORD was calling for judgment by fire; it dried up the great deep and devoured the land. Then I cried out, “Sovereign LORD, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!” So the LORD relented. “This will not happen either,” the Sovereign LORD said. This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD asked me, “What do you see, Amos?” “A plumb line,” I replied. Then the Lord said, “Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. “The high places of Isaac will be destroyed, and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.”

Amos 7:1-9

LOCUSTS, FIRE AND A PLUMB LINE

The first four visions begin with similar statements, ‘this is what the Lord showed me’.

1. The vision of locusts, [Amos 7:1-3](#) / [Amos 4:9](#).

In his vision, Amos saw God preparing a swarm of locusts just as the second crop was coming up. Remember, this wasn’t a literal plague of locusts as in Joel, but a visual scene.

Deane, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This refers to the retreat of the Assyrians under Pul, the usurping monarch who assumed the name of Tiglath-Pileser II, [2 Kings 15:17-29](#). Some commentators consider this judgment to be literally a plague of locusts, but this is not probable.’

Amos pleads to God and asks, How can Jacob survive? He is so small! [Amos 7:2](#). He sees utter destruction, complete destruction. So God relented, [Amos 7:3](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:37](#). The self-sufficiency of the nation was attacked through blight before the arrival of the Assyrians.

2. The vision of Fire, [Amos 7:4-6](#).

This time, the Lord brought judgment by fire, which was even more devastating. The fire devoured the sea and was eating up the land; it threatened total destruction, [Amos 7:4](#). It seems even more devastating than the locusts.

So once again, Amos intercedes as before, this time begging God to stop and asking the question, How can Jacob survive? He is so small! [Amos 7:5](#), and again the Lord relents and gives the people time to repent, [Amos 7:6](#) / [2 Peter 3:9-10](#).

3. The vision of the plumb line, [Amos 7:7-9](#).

In this vision, Amos sees the Lord standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, [Amos 7:7](#). God asks Amos what he saw, and he sees God had a plumb line in his hand, [Amos 7:8](#). The wall symbolises Israel, which had been built in accordance with the plumb line of God.

But God now comes to re-assess the wall with his plumb-line, and this time finds the wall, that is, Israel, off the true vertical, [2 Kings 21:13](#) / [Isaiah 28:17](#) / [Isaiah 34:11](#) / [Lamentations 2:8](#).

They were measured and found wanting; their uprightness has been found faulty! God says that he will no longer spare them. They have had the opportunity to repent many times.

The people had built for themselves places where they practised idolatry, [Amos 7:9](#), but God will destroy the high places, the idol temples at Dan and Bethel, [1 Kings 12:29](#), at Gilgal, [Amos 4:4](#), the monarchy will be wiped out by the Lord but this time Amos does not intervene as he did before, [Amos 7:2](#) / [Amos 7:5](#). God’s patience is exhausted and there is no more time to repent.

AMOS AND AMAZIAH

‘Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. For this is what Amos is saying: ““Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.”” Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.” Amos 7:10-13

We have a break in the visions, an intermission. We see here that the priest Amaziah informs Jeroboam II of Amos’ actions. He accuses Amos of conspiracy and quotes Amos as saying, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land,’ [Amos 7:10-11](#). We’re not told what Jeroboam’s response to this was.

Notice that Amaziah says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword’, [Amos 7:11](#). This wasn’t what Amos declared earlier; he actually recorded what God said, ‘with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam’, [Amos 7:9](#).

Amaziah was a religious leader who was on the payroll of the state, and so, brought charges against Amos before the state. He told Amos to get out of Israel, because this was the king’s sanctuary and temple, [Amos 7:12-13](#) / [1 Kings 12:28](#), and go back to his homeland, Judah. Earn your money there, he suggests that Amos would earn more money in his own country.

‘Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say, ““Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.”’ “Therefore, this is what the LORD says: ““Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.”” Amos 7:14-17

This is Amos’ answer to Amaziah. Amos wasn’t a prophet who represented the ‘professional prophets’, he was a simple farmer whom God had chosen, [Amos 7:14](#). Amos wasn’t prophesying for money, he was there because he was obeying the command of God, [Amos 7:15](#).

Amos continues with a message for Amaziah, you have told me to stop prophesying, therefore God says that your wife will become a prostitute, your sons and daughters will die by the sword, your land will be divided up, and you will die in an unclean land, [Amos 7:17](#). And Israel will certainly go into exile away from their native land. This would bring to an end the descendants of Amaziah.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amaziah undoubtedly felt secure behind the defences of Samaria and the religious observances at Bethel. He erred in considering the word of God to be just the word of a man and in failing to examine himself and his society, and may we add, and his religion, in light of the covenant privileges and responsibilities.’

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. “What do you see, Amos?” he asked. “A basket of ripe fruit,” I answered. Then the LORD said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. “In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!” Amos 8:1-3

A BASKET OF RIPE FRUIT

In the previous chapter, Amos received three visions. The locusts, fire and a plumb line, [Amos 7:1-9](#). Here, we read of Amos’ fourth vision.

4. The vision of the basket of fruit.

God once again shows Amos another vision and asks him what he sees, [Amos 8:1-2](#). This vision of the basket of summer fruit suggests ripeness. In fact, the N.I.V. calls it the vision of a basket of ripe fruit. What we have here is a play on words; the Hebrew word for fruit was ‘qayits’.

The N.I.V. says ‘The time is ripe for my people Israel’.

The R.S.V. says, ‘the end, ‘qets’, have come.’ Israel is ripe for judgment’.

The N.I.V. says, ‘I will spare them no longer’.

The R.S.V ‘I will never again pass by them’.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Most commentators and translators are greatly impressed with what they see as a kind of pun in the similarities between the Hebrew word for basket and their word for end. But the Hebrew word from which this is translated actually means a receiver and might just as well be translated hook for plucking, or receiving the fruit from the tree.’

The picked fruit would eventually become rotten, and so, be discarded, [Jeremiah 8:20](#). Israel was ripe and ready to be discarded, [Amos 8:2](#). Their songs in the temple will become wailings because of this judgment, [Amos 8:3](#). Their dead bodies will be flung everywhere, [Amos 8:3](#), which would result in the land becoming defiled, [Deuteronomy 30:17-20](#).

There is no hope for deliverance, and it would be a complete waste of time to cry out to God for help; hence, why there is silence, [Amos 8:4](#) / [Zephaniah 1:7](#) / [Habakkuk 2:20](#) / [Zechariah 2:13](#).

‘Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.’ Amos 8:4-6

Here we return to the idea of the oppression of the poor and covetousness of the rich, [Deuteronomy 15:7-11](#) / [Psalms 72:12-13](#). They longed for the New Moon festival to be over, [Amos 8:5](#) / [Numbers 28:11](#), and the Sabbath to be over because, as it was a day of rest, they couldn’t make any profit from their workers, [Amos 8:5](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As repeatedly in Amos, there is an indirect allusion to the Passover experience of the children of Israel in Egypt when God ‘passed over’ them and spared them from disaster; but this can no longer be expected. The people are ripe for judgment and destruction, [Amos 7:8](#).’

Here, it appears that the greedy merchants didn’t want to give the poor labourers a day off because this meant they couldn’t make any money. The rich traders want the festivals over quickly so that they can get on with their business of making fat profits.

Notice how dishonest they are, they give short measures, overcharge and use false balances, that is, false scales, [Amos 8:5](#) / [Leviticus 19:35-36](#) / [Proverbs 11:1](#) / [Micah 6:11](#).

The poor farmers received little for the goods that they sold to the rich who lived in the cities, [Amos 8:6](#). As a result, they got richer while the poor got poorer. They forced the poor to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay back what they needed for daily sustenance, [Amos 8:6](#).

‘The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget anything they have done. “Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.’ Amos 8:7-10

God reminds them that He will not forget them, He has sworn by Himself, [Amos 8:7](#) / [1 Samuel 15:29](#), that they will be punished. God will not forget the rich who had been oppressing the poor.

Three things are used here to describe the punishment that is coming.

1. Earthquake, [Amos 8:8](#).

The land will tremble as God brings judgment through earthquakes.

2. River overflowing, [Amos 8:8](#).

Just like the River Nile flooded once a year, God’s judgement would rise up against them, [Isaiah 8:5-8](#).

3. Eclipse of the Sun, [Amos 8:9](#).

The sun will go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight, [Romans 13:1-7](#).

This will be a time of mourning; all of them will wear sackcloth and shave their heads, and their singing will turn to weeping, [Amos 8:10](#). It will be like a bitter day for them when the Assyrians take them into captivity.

‘The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it. “In that day”, the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst. Those who swear by the sin of Samaria—who say, ‘As surely as your god lives, Dan,’ or, ‘As surely as the god of Beersheba lives’—they will fall, never to rise again.” Amos 8:11-14

They had already forgotten the law of God, [Hosea 4:6](#), but here we read that their conditions will be made worse by the famine of the Word of God, [Amos 8:11](#) / [Psalm 74:9](#).

Not a famine of bread or water, but they will not hear the Word of God, [Amos 8:11](#). They will seek it but will not find it because God’s Word has been withdrawn from them, [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#) / [Matthew 4:4](#).

People will stagger from sea to sea and from east to west, but they won’t find the word of God, [Mark 4:24-25](#).

Youthfulness and strength are symbolised, [Amos 8:13](#), if the strong can’t escape thirst, then no one will, [Isaiah 40:31](#) / [Matthew 5:6](#).

Notice that Amos goes beyond the judgment of the Northern Kingdom; he says that Judah would also be judged because they, too, were involved in idolatry. Those who trust in false gods, that is, the false gods they worshipped in Samaria, [2 Kings 17:29-30](#), which represents the Northern Kingdom and Dan and Beersheba, [1 Kings 12:29-33](#), which represents the Southern Kingdom of Judah, will fall and never rise again, [Amos 8:14](#).

Hammershaimb, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The god that they worship and swear by is therefore not the true Yahweh, but a god which they have fashioned to their own desires. Idolatry in the Northern Kingdom had come of age. The people no longer either recognised or

honoured the true and Almighty God, but instead, worshipped and swore by their golden idols. Added to that was the licentious and abominable worship they practised there, and if that was not apostasy, there never was such a thing.’

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: “Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape. Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. “I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good.” Amos 9:1-4

ISRAEL TO BE DESTROYED

In this final chapter, Amos receives his fifth vision. He sees the Lord standing beside the altar, **Amos 9:1**, but no one is sure what altar he saw in the vision, whether it was Jerusalem or one of the false altars of worship.

Amos 1:2 speaks about Jerusalem, so it may be the altar in the temple, but the destruction he talks about is of the places of false worship, such as Bethel and Dan, **Amos 9:1 / 1 Kings 12:25-16:34**.

He strikes the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake, **Amos 9:1**; the thresholds are at the bottom of a door. So the picture we have here is one of destruction from top to bottom, **Matthew 27:51**.

There will be no hiding place for the people, **Amos 9:1**. They can’t hide at the top of Mount Carmel or the bottom of the sea, **Amos 9:2-3**. God, who is omniscient and omnipotent, **Psalms 139:7-12**, will find them and slay them wherever they go, **Amos 9:4**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord would seek the guilty out and command His agents to execute them, even if that agent had to be a serpent in the sea, **Amos 5:19 / Job 26:12-13 / Psalms 74:13-14 / Psalms 89:9-10 / Isaiah 27:1 / Isaiah 51:9-10**. Note the chiasmic structure in these verses, going from down to up and back down, signifying all places.’

God’s judgment would start at the altar and spread to all the nations. All of this was going to happen because they broke their covenant with God concerning the land, **Leviticus 26:23-25 / Deuteronomy 28:15 / Deuteronomy 28:63**.

‘The Lord, the LORD Almighty—he touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn; the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt; he builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth; he calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name.’ **Amos 9:5-6**

Here we have a reminder of the power of God, it’s a vivid description of the Lord Almighty, **Amos 9:5 / Amos 4:13 / Amos 5:8 / Amos 8:8**. When God rises up, He brings judgment that will overwhelm those of His creation as a flood of waters, **Amos 9:5 / Amos 8:8**.

In other words, there is no escaping the upcoming judgment, **2 Corinthians 5:10**. God calls on the ‘waters of the sea’, that is, the nations, to flood over His people, **Amos 9:6**.

‘Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?’ declares the LORD. “Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? “Surely the eyes of the Sovereign LORD are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob,” declares the LORD. “For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground. All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, ‘Disaster will not overtake or meet us.’ Amos 9:7-10

Israel is regarded by God as a faraway foreign nation. No longer do they have special privileges, no longer do they have a special relationship with God.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God seems to be announcing the end of God’s special relationship to Israel as a nation (i.e., a kingdom). It means that God will treat Israel like any other nation; the nation will have no special privileges; and when they sin, they will be punished.’

You Israelites are no different from anyone else now. God says, He brought them out of Egypt, **Amos 9:7**, but He also says, He brought the Philistines from Caphtor, **Amos 9:7**. He brought nations such as the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Philistines and Arameans into existence, **Amos 9:7 / Genesis 12:3 / Acts 14:16-17**.

Israel is a sinful kingdom that will be destroyed, **Amos 9:8 / Amos 3:1-2 / Revelation 19:11-21**, but there is hope that God will not utterly destroy the descendants of Jacob, that is, the Northern Kingdom, **Amos 9:8**, because of the covenant He made with them, **Amos 5:4-6 / Amos 5:14-15**. The nation will go, but a remnant will remain, **1 Kings 19:10 / Romans 11:4**.

Israel is shaken like a sieve and scattered among the nations, **Amos 9:9**. In other words, God is going to separate the righteous from the sinful. Through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, God would send His people as captives into many nations, **Amos 9:10**. Those who are complacent will be destroyed, but there is hope for the righteous and those who repent.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Those who are the boldest and most incredulous, especially they who despise my warnings, and say the evil day shall not overtake nor prevent us; they shall die by the sword. There is no evidence of a man’s safety that he is presumptuously fearless. There is a blessing to him who trembles at God’s word.’

ISRAEL’S RESTORATION

‘In that day “I will restore David’s fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the LORD, who will do these things.’ Amos 9:11-12

Up to this point, Amos has painted a bleak picture for Israel. Now there is a word of hope for the future. We read of the restoration of David’s fallen tent, **Amos 9:11**. This is a metaphorical statement that refers to the church of the living God.

The rule of David ended with the division of the kingdom, but this will be restored; the broken places will be repaired by the Messiah, the son of David, **Jeremiah 30:3-10 / Ezekiel 37:15-28 / Hosea 3:4-5**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘After the Babylonian captivity, Israel did indeed return to their land (not the northern kingdom, but the Davidic branch of it, the southern kingdom), but they did not restore the ‘fallen tabernacle’ at all, but merely built another

temple, a far different thing, the difference being that God had given the plans and specifications of the tabernacle to Moses; but the temple was planned and built by men, **Acts 7:44-47.**'

The kingdom will be a worldwide kingdom, a Messianic kingdom as predicted here, **Acts 2:30-31. Amos 9:11-12** is quoted by James in **Acts 15:15-18**. The passage is used in the New Testament as justification for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. In other words, this prophecy was fulfilled in the establishment of the church.

Bales, in his commentary, says the following.

'The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David was evidently not a rebuilding of the Mosaic system, but the restoration of a king on David's throne; and that Christ is now on David's throne we have shown in another chapter. The Mosaic system will not be rebuilt; its mediator has now been replaced by Christ, **Deuteronomy 18:15-17 / Acts 3:22-26**. The old Covenant was to pass away, and it has passed away, **Jeremiah 31:31-34 / Hebrews 8:5-10 / Hebrews 8:16**. Its sacrifices have ceased for the Lamb of God has been offered once for all to bear the sins of the world.'

The building of the tabernacle, that is, the church, would be built in 'all nations' that bear His Name, **Isaiah 60:14 / Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:15-16**.

Motyer, in his commentary, says the following.

'The warlike metaphor in many of these passages is, of course, to be understood in terms of the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the missionary expansion of his Church. This is the interpretation authorised by the New Testament, **Acts 15:12-19.**'

'The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. "They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.' **Amos 9:13-15**

Here we have a picture of prosperity and security. God will return the captives of His people and restore their fortune in their land. The planting and harvesting will overlap; the harvest will be so abundant that the people will be reaping at the same time as re-planting, **Amos 9:13-14**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'When threatened with great evils, **Amos 5:11**, it is said, 'They shall plant pleasant vineyards but shall not drink the wine of them.' Previously to their restoration, they shall labour for others; after their restoration, they shall labour for themselves.'

Because God was bringing to an end the nation of Israel, with the captivity, the permanent restoration here to the land was not in reference to national Israel, but to the spiritual Israel of God, the church.

Kercheville, in his commentary, says the following.

'The new Messianic era will usher in a time of abundance and a reversal of fortunes. This is exactly the promise God made to Moses in **Deuteronomy 30:1-3**. After the disobedience of the nation and its judgment, God would restore the kingdom yet again.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Throughout the world, amid the desert of Heathendom, which was formerly deserted by God, Churches of Christ have arisen, which, for the firmness of faith, may be called cities, and for the gladness of hope which needeth not to be ashamed.'

The certainty of the message is given in the final words, 'says the LORD your God', **Amos 9:15**.