

THE BOOK OF
THE PROPHET
Amos

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THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET AMOS

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The opening words of the prophecy tell us that Amos prophesied in Israel during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jereboam II, king of Israel. We also learn that the time of the prophecy was two years before the earthquake. No statement is given in Scripture from which the time of this earthquake may be deduced but we can assume it must have been a very severe one because it was still spoken about several centuries after it happened. (Zech. 14. 5.)

From the chronology compiled by Dr. Thomas, we find that Uzziah reigned during the period BC 816 to BC 764 (52 years). 2 Kings 14. 23. tells us that Jereboam II reigned in Israel for 41 years and from 2 Kings 15. 1. we learn that Amaziah ascended the throne of Judah in the 27th year of Jereboam's reign. By simple arithmetic, we deduce that Uzziah and Jereboam were contemporary for a period of 14 years. If Uzziah ascended the throne in BC 816, then he and Jereboam II occupied their respective thrones during the years BC 816 to BC 802. It was during this period that Amos preached, so the latest year in which he could have been found in Israel, was BC 802, assuming that Jereboam II died before the earthquake.

Scripture does not waste words so there must have been a reason for the mention of the earthquake. When the reader comes to the end of these notes and reads the Summary, it will be apparent that the prophecy was given before the earthquake to agree with the Type and Anti-type. How appropriate it is that at the coming of the Returned Christ, there should be an earthquake. That this is mentioned in Zechariah, is also appropriate as the student of prophecy will appreciate.

The qualities of leadership displayed by both Jereboam II and Uzziah in Israel and Judah respectively, combined to make these countries peaceful and prosperous. Both countries were at peace with each other, so they could concentrate on building up their trade channels with the habitable world at that time. Whereas Uzziah built up a powerful array of weapons for the defence of his country, Jereboam did little to help Israel in this way, nor did he do anything to restore the true worship. On the contrary, he took advantage of all that the prosperity of his country could offer him. Israel was riddled with class distinctions and inequalities. The poor were oppressed through corruption in the courts. The religion of Israel was a copy of the immorality of ritual practiced by their pagan neighbours. No facet of their wicked self-indulgent lives escaped the criticism and warning of Amos.

History has shown that where a nation gains a high degree of prosperity, a moral decline is inevitable. Within our own lifetime, Western Nations have gained a standard of living which could not have been imagined in past centuries. The working class of to-day enjoy greater comforts and pleasures than those which fell to the lot of the aristocracy in bygone days. It is usual, when such things happen, for a nation to throw aside all thoughts of God and the worship of Him. Such neglect must, inevitably, bring Divine retribution. This was the case in Israel. Amos warned them of this, but they turned a blind eye and a deaf ear.

Twenty-five years after the death of Jereboam II, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria attacked Israel and having defeated her, forced her to pay a heavy annual tribute. When this tribute was not paid, Shalmaneser V and Sargon II attacked in turn and Israel as a nation, was destroyed. For further information on the days which followed, 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chron. 28, plus Isa. 7 and 8 will prove helpful.

The Notes submitted herewith, were compiled in preparation for my lecture tour of Australia and Tasmania during the period August - November, 1968. Any study of an Old Testament Book is a different proposition from a study of a book from the New Testament. There is a multitude of books to choose from on a N.T. subject. But any student of an O.T. Book is very much on his own, starting from scratch. Therefore if any reader of these notes can point to any omission, error or additional information, please write to me so that if this goes to a reprint, such comments can be included.

THE PROPHET AMOS

SUMMARY

The message of the prophet is divided into FIVE major divisions, namely

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Declamation | Chapters 1 and 2 |
| 2. Proclamation | Chapters 3 and 4 |
| 3. Lamentation | Chapters 5 and 6 |
| 4. Revelation | Chapters 7 to 9 verse 10 |
| 5. Restoration. | Chapters 9. 11. to the end. |

The fore-going is broken down further as follows:-

1. DECLAMATION: Yahweh declares His judgment upon the nations that pass before Him. Each declamation is divided into
- (a) The announcement to each particular nation
 - (b) The reason for the judgment and a warning of judgment to come
 - (c) The sentence

Each announcement has the same form, namely:-

- (i) Divine origin - "Thus saith the LORD.."
- (ii) They have gone too far. "For three transgressions, yea for four,"
- (iii) Inevitability of the punishment. "I will not turn away the transgressions thereof,.."

- (1) Damascus (personification of Syria) Verses 3/5.
 - (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - "they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron". Brutality.
 - (c) the sentence - break her defences
take away her rulers
send the people into captivity.
- (2) Gaza Verses 6/8.
 - (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - they had delivered the Israelites to Edom as slaves.
 - (c) the sentence - destruction by fire.
inhabitants to be destroyed
the remnant to perish
- (3) Tyrus (Tyre) Verses 9/10.
 - (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - they had delivered the people of Israel to Edom as slaves.
they had disregarded a brotherly covenant.
 - (c) the sentence - destruction by fire
destruction of her defences
- (4) Edom Verses 11/12.
 - (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - fought against his brother nation) Contravening God's laws of family relationship.
cast aside all pity
would not forgive
 - (c) the sentence - destruction by fire.
- (5) Children of Ammon Verses 13/15.
 - (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - brutality for the sake of greed - extreme cruelty.
 - (c) the sentence - complete destruction by fire.
the royal house to go into captivity.
their religion to be brought to an end.

Chapter 2

- (6) Moab Verses 1/3.
- (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - he made a human sacrifice
 - (c) the sentence - destruction of the defences
removal of the ruler
destruction of their religious system.
- (7) Judah Verses 4/5.
- (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - they despised God's Laws
they disobeyed His commandments
they taught false doctrines (lies).
 - (c) the sentence - destruction by fire
destruction of her defences
- (8) Israel Verses 6/16.
- (a) the announcement
 - (b) the reason - (i) abuse of the laws of usuary by selling the poor
(ii) extreme covetousness
(iii) oppression of the meek
(iv) bringing moral laxity to the Temple of the LORD
(v) profanity
(vi) immorality at the altar
(vii) extortion
 - (c) the sentence - before passing judgment, the LORD shows the justice of the punishment which He is about to bring upon them. He reminds them that He destroyed the Amorites before them, He brought them out of Egypt to possess the land of the Amorite, He made prophets of some and Nazarites of others, yet they tried to silence the prophets, and they gave wine to the Nazarites.
As a result of all this,
The LORD was burdened by their sins, so He would now punish them in the following manner:
 - (i) there will be no place to which they can flee
 - (ii) no strength will come from God,
 - (iii) they will not be delivered (saved)
 - (iv) they will have no power nor ability to save themselves
 - (v) they will flee away without armour.

Chapter 3

2. PROCLAMATION

Each Proclamation begins in the same way, by the use of the expression, "HEAR THIS WORD..." Each is in the form of a discourse beginning with a review of their imperfections and ending with a warning of punishment.

First Discourse

The Review (a) the people of Israel addressed.
(b) their privileged position amongst the nations.

The Argument (a) The Five Parables
(i) Two walk together
(ii) A lion roars in the forest
(iii) A bird falls in the snare
(iv) A trumpet is blown in the city
(v) The lion hath roared

Summary

(b) Call to attention

(c) The LORD speaks

The evidence (a) They know not to do right...

The warning of punishment

- (a) An adversary shall destroy them
- (b) a remnant will be saved
- (c) destruction of the religious system of worship at Bethel
- (d) an end to their luxury

Second Discourse

Chapter 4

The Review (a) the oppressors are addressed

The Argument This has already been given in the Five Parables.

The Evidence They oppress the poor and crush the needy
They let go their morals

The warning of punishment

- (a) They will be taken suddenly and with violence
- (b) They will not go out at the gate but through the breaches in the wall.
- (c) An ironical call to worship.
 - (i) Strict observance to ritual is no substitute for true worship

Reminders of what God had done in the past -- yet they had not returned unto Him.

- (a) He had reminded them of their freewill offerings to false gods
- (b) He had brought famine upon them
- (c) He had brought drought upon them
- (d) He had smitten them with blasting and mildew
- (e) He had sent pestilence among them
- (f) He had slain their young men in the army and taken away their horses
- (g) He had overthrown them in earthquakes

YET YE HAVE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD Followed by THE NATURE HYMN vs 13

3. LAMENTATION

Chapter 5

Third Discourse The Lamentation

The Review (a) the people are addressed

The Argument This has already been given in the Five Parables

The Evidence (a) The virgin of Israel is fallen and shall not rise.
(b) The people have been decimated

The Appeal (a) Seek ye me and ye shall live
(b) Turn to God and not to places of worship
(c) Seek the LORD
(d) Seek him that maketh the seven stars

Amos Summary

The Demand for Justice

- (a) The people hate him who rebukes them for their own benefit.
- (b) They extort from the poor
- (c) They live in houses of great luxury
- (d) They have pleasant vineyards
- (e) They take bribes

Invitation to Life

- (a) Seek good and not evil
- (b) Hate evil and love good.

Return to Lamentation

- (a) Wailing shall be in all streets
- (b) The LORD will smite them

The first Woe See Amos 6 1. for the Second Woe

The day of the Lord is darkness and not light.

- (a) I hate your feasts
- (b) Take away the noise of your songs
- (c) Let judgment run down like waters
- (d) I will not accept your burnt offerings

They will go into captivity

Note: "I Hate.." "I despise" "I will not smell" "I will not accept" "I will not hear"

Chapter 6

The Second Woe

Those at ease in Zion - the complacent
Compare yourselves with others. Are they better than you are?
You blind yourselves to what is coming
You are indolent
You live in luxury
You indulge in music
They drink wine and anoint themselves with chief ointments

The punishment

They shall go captive
The LORD will deliver them to their captors
The calamities of the nation
Their luxuries will be taken away
A great nation will rise up against them

Chapter 7

4. THE REVELATION

The Five Visions

The First Vision

Invasion of Locusts

"It shall not be" saith the LORD.

The Second Vision

Destruction by fire

"It shall not be" saith the LORD

The Third Vision

A plumbline

"I will rise against the house of Jereboam"

Historical Interpolation.

Opposition to Amos by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel

Amaziah sends a message to Jereboam the king of Israel.

Amaziah sends a message to Amos, telling him to go home.

Amos replies

Amos establishes his ordination as a prophet as compared with the authority of Amaziah to be a priest.

Amos replies in prophetic language.

Chapter 8

The Fourth Vision

The basket of summer fruit

"they shall cast them forth with silence".

Interpolation of condemnation of insatiable greed.

The punishment - "I will never forget their works"

"I will cause the sun to go down at noon.."

"I will darken the earth.."

"I will turn your feasts into mourning.."

"I will bring up sackcloth on all loins.."

"I will make it as the mourning of an only son."

"I will send a famine in the land.."

They shall fall and never rise up again.

Chapter 9

The Fifth Vision

The Lord standing upon the altar..."

"I will slay the last of them with the sword....."

There will be no escape from

hell

heaven

top of Carmel

captivity from their enemies

THE THIRD NATURE HYMN (Amos 9. 5/6.)

(The power and dominion of Yahweh)

"The LORD is His Name"

The Judgment

Israel had become as the Ethiopians and were no longer the children of God.

The Lord will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob

The Lord will sift the house of Israel.

The Lord wants repentance

5. RESTORATION

The tabernacle and the land.

"I will raise up the tabernacle..." Vs 11

"I will raise up his ruins..."

"I will build it as in the days of old."

"That they may possess (inherit)..." vs 12

"the days come..that the plowman shall overtake the reaper.."

The people

"I will bring again the captivity of my people..." Vs 14

The people and the land

"I will plant them upon their land" vs 15

"they shall be no more pulled up."

THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 1

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Verse 1

"The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jereboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake,"

"Amos..." - the name means "Burden Bearer" and suggests at the start of his prophecy, that he was a type of which the "burden bearer" of mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ, was the anti-type. The only occurrences of his name are in his prophecy. He alone in the O.T. bears this name in this spelling but a name with an identical meaning is found in 2 Chron. 28. 12. where we find "Amasa the son of Hadlai". In view of the work done by this man in company with the others mentioned in that verse, it could very well be that this was the prophet Amos in doing a work for Judah. In the N.T. at Luke 3. 25. an "Amos" is named as one of the ancestors of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, but there is no historical record of him. In the prophecy, the name of the father of the prophet Amos is not given. The fact that the ancestry of Amos is not given has led some commentators to believe that his family was of no consequence and was one of the poorer class. There is no record that he belonged to a school of prophets. Nor is there any record that he was normally a prophet. In Amos 7. 17. he denies having been a prophet at the time of his call from God and he denies that he came from a family of prophets. All that we know of him is that while he was attending his flock at Tekoa, he received a call from God to go to Israel. (Amos 7. 15.)

"The words..." - The record states that they were the "words of Amos" but this must be regarded in connection with what follows. These words "he saw" showing that he was given visions and then wrote down what he saw. In writing them, he was the medium through which God worked and, in the words of Peter, wrote as he was moved by the Power of God, which is the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1. 21.) The Hebrew word translated as "saw" is "chazah" meaning "to perceive mentally" or "to see in a vision". A similar usage is found in Mic. 1. 1.

"who was among..." - Amos was a herdman but describes himself with all humility as "among the herdmen". There were many herdmen but he was only one of them. This statement is in keeping with his obvious humility in saying that he spoke God's words and that he was only one of many herdmen.

"herdmen..." - the Hebrew word is "noqed" meaning "a spotter of sheep or cattle". That is one who puts an identification mark upon them. In Amos 7. 14. he is described as a "herdman" but the Hebrew in this instance is "bowker" meaning a "tender of cattle". The root of this word comes from "boqer" meaning "a cattle tender" and this particular word is often used in the O.T. in connection with cattle. The point is not decided by these details for the word is also used for one who tends sheep at the present time. The same district from which Amos came, is the home to-day of a type of sheep, small, stunted in growth and very ugly. Having regard to Amos 7. 15. wherein it is stated that Amos "followed the flock", it seems reasonably certain that Amos was a tender of sheep rather than a tender of cattle. In the type, it seems appropriate that the sheep which he cared for were stunted in growth and very ugly. In the same way, Israel at that time were stunted in spiritual growth and were unpleasant in the sight of God. Just as the wool of these stunted sheep was very high in quality, so the people of Israel had a clothing of the Divine Promises and these were of the very best in quality. The high quality of the fleece was not apparent from outward appearance just as from outward appearance, the people of Israel of those days did not reflect the fact that they were the people of God.

"Tekoa..." - this is 12 miles south of Jerusalem and 6 miles south east of Bethlehem in Judah. This part of Judah is bleak and is more suited for sheep than for cattle. It is about 2,500 feet above sea level and overlooks the Dead Sea and the wilderness of Judea. The name is derived from a root meaning "to pitch a tent" or "to blow a trumpet". The occupation of a shepherd was a nomadic one and required the one who tended the flock to move from pasture to pasture and from water to water. At night they would pitch their tents, thus giving the name to the country in which they moved. Tekoa is mentioned in 2 Sam. 14. 2; 23, 26; 2 Chron. 11. 6; Neh. 3. 27; and Jer. 6. 1. Thus the future "burden bearer" was to care for his flock and lead them to spiritual pastures. Paul described him as "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched" (Heb. 8. 2.)

In regard to the meaning of "to blow a trumpet", the shepherd has for centuries summoned his flock by blowing a trumpet. In a Biblical sense, the blowing of a trumpet signifies the approach of war. Thus it will be that the Lord of Hosts, manifested in the Returned Christ, will blow the trumpet to herald the coming of war upon an erring mankind. A combination of the two possible meanings of the name suggests that whereas the nation rejected the shepherd and refused to answer his call at his first Advent, so in the days of the Second Advent, the unbelieving world will feel the power of the Lord of Hosts - Yahweh T'ziva'oth.

"concerning Israel..." - the prophet was called from his home in Judah to go north to Israel. His prophecy, then, was against Israel but not against Judah.

"in the days of Uzziah..." - this method of dating his prophetic visit was given to tie up with the "days of Jereboam, son of Joash king of Israel..." This narrows the time when these kings were contemporary to B.C. 775 to B.C. 750. The period is further narrowed by the information that it was "two years before the earthquake". This date would have been well-known to the people of Israel and Judah as the earthquake had been of such a devastating size that it was spoken of many centuries later.

"the earthquake." - In "Antiquities" 9. 10. 4. Josephus refers to this earthquake by saying that when Uzziah usurped the priest's office (as is recorded in 2 Chron. 26. 16/21.) an earthquake happened immediately. This was at the time Uzziah offered incense in the temple. The record in Chronicles does not mention the earthquake but states that as he was about to offer incense, he became leprous in his forehead and was turned out of the temple. This record would disprove Josephus because there is no clear statement that he actually offered incense. He became leprous when he was about to offer. Then he was turned out of the temple by the priests. An earthquake did not happen immediately he offered incense because the Bible record states that he was turned out of the temple immediately. If the earthquake had happened, he could not have been turned out of the temple and, at the same time, experience an earthquake.

The earthquake must have been of such a size that it left a lasting impression throughout the land. It is mentioned in Zech. 14. 5. where it is used as a comparison of what will happen when the Lord Jesus returns to this earth. This reference by Zechariah was several centuries after it had happened and it was well enough known in those days to be the subject of a comparison. The comparison was one of "fleeing from before the earthquake" and does not compare with the cleavage of the mount of Olives as fore-told in Zech. 14. 4. Nevertheless the wholesale movement of an entire population gives evidence of an earthquake of unusual severity.

Verse 2

"And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither."

"The LORD will roar..." - "The LORD" refers to Jahweh, for this is the prophetic name of God. The actual Creator will not roar from Zion but He will in manifestation. The "manifestation of God" will be the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent when he will "roar from Zion". The "Lion of the tribe of Judah" will roar (Rev. 5. 5.) When a lion roars, those that hear him tremble. Such a "roar" is the subject of several prophecies concerning Christ. See Jer. 25. 30; Hos. 11. 10; Joel 3. 16: See also the prophecy concerning Judah, by Jacob in Gen. 49. 9. Amos uses the analogy of a lion again in 3. 8. Such an analogy can be expected from a man like Amos who led a bucolic existence. The roar of a lion would mean to him that it had already attacked its prey and that the imminent destruction of the prey could not be avoided. In like manner, when the returned Christ shall roar from Zion, it will mean that his period of attack upon an unbelieving and disobedient world had begun and that nothing could stay the Lord's hand.

In another way, the "roar" of God's voice struck terror into the hearts of Israel in the past. The voice of God was as thunder. (Exod. 20. 18/19.) See Psa. 18. 13; 29. 3/9; Job 37. 5.) The ultimate effect of this prophecy is that of Divine Judgment to come and such judgment is inevitable. There will be no way of escape.

"from Zion..." - this is combined with "utter his voice from Jerusalem". Zion and Jerusalem go together in the Divine Plan for the new city of Jerusalem will be situated on Mount Zion. This will be the "city of the great king" (Matt. 5. 35.) See also Isa. 2. 2/4. and Micah 4. 2.

"the habitations of the shepherds..." - the pastures of the shepherds. The actual meaning of "habitations" is a home or a pleasant place which is beautiful. In a figurative sense, it means "pastures." In either sense, it must have meant something precious to Amos. He shows his love of home in the use of the word for "pleasant places" and he shows his care for his flock when he uses the figurative sense of "pastures". Jesus showed a similar compassion for Jerusalem and her people. (Matt. 23. 37.) The voice of the LORD warns of misery to come for the present pleasant places.

"top of Carmel..." - Mount Carmel at the head of the plain of Sharon, was noted for its pastures. There was a town of Carmel but the mention of the "top of Carmel" must indicate the mountain. It was traditionally a pleasant place with trees (Isa. 37. 24;) and fruits (Isa. 33. 9.) The prophet Isaiah spoke of its excellency. (Isa. 35. 2.) It is 1200 feet above sea level and overlooks the bay in which lies the present port of Haifa. Heavy dew at night give it a renewed freshness every day. See Nahum 1. 4. for a similar prophecy.

"shall wither." - shall dry up. This actually happened and the exceptional fertility of Carmel was never regained. The many mountain streams amongst which was one known as "the river of Elijah" dried up so that the whole area became a wilderness. The beautiful vineyards were lost. The whole valley of Sharon to the south became almost a desert of sand. In recent years, a pleasant vegetation has been restored but the former glories have not been regained.

It is to be noted that in the prophecy of this verse, the "Roaring" is continuous. The LXX has "The LORD has spoken out of Zion..." thus giving the only translation which gives the meaning in the past. Other versions are:-

R.V. "The LORD shall roar..."
 R.S.V. "The LORD roars from Zion..."
 Modern Reader's Bible (Moulton) "The LORD shall roar..."
 Knox "The Lord will speak in thunder..."
 Moffat "when the Eternal thunders out of Sion,"
 Afrikaans Bybel (Naslaan) "Die HERE brul uit Sion..." (The LORD roars...)
 Zulu Bible "UJehova uyaduma eseSiyoni..." ("The LORD thunders out of Zion..")

Most of the foregoing indicate a continuous sense. God does not utter His voice once but continues to warn Israel and Judah.

Verse 3

DAMASCUS

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:"

It must have given the people of Israel some pleasure to hear judgments of doom prophesied against their enemies. They would not at this stage, realise that they were just as wicked and merciless as the nations round about them. The first of the nations to be singled out is that of the capital city of Syria, Damascus. The capital city is chosen to represent the whole nation because as the people of the capital had behaved, so had the people of the entire nation. When hearing of the sins of others, one does not recognise the same guilt in one's self. This realisation was to come much later, in Israel. During the preceding century, Syria had posed the greatest threat to the peace and safety of Israel. The pronouncement of judgment is given in three sections, namely,

1. the formal address to a particular nation;
2. the warning of judgment to come; and the nature of the crime for which they are to be punished.
3. the nature of the sentence.

"for three transgressions...and for four,.. " - the form in the original Hebrew is more forcible with "for three transgressions YEA for four,.. " The use of the word "yea" is much more emphatic.

The phrase does not suggest that three must be added to four to make seven nor does it mean that there were three or four transgressions which must be called to mind. If either of these meanings were to apply, then it would mean that Syria had committed relatively few sins against Israel and that all other nations upon whom the Divine Judgment will come, had committed exactly the same number of sins. The suggestion is that there were an indefinite number of transgressions, but this does not entirely dispense with this Hebrew idiom. The same form is found in:-

Job 5. 19. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

Job is assured of abundance of mercy from God.

Eccles. 11. 2. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."

In Proverbs there are a number of such constructions which show that in the fourth estate, there is a significant difference. For example:-

Prov. 30. 15. "...There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:
16. The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough."

In these four, only the fourth differs in that the fire grows stronger the more it is fed. In verses 25 to 28 of this chapter from Proverbs, four creatures are compared, namely, the ants, the conies, the locusts and the spider. Only the fourth lives in human habitation. The others are in the wilds. In verse 19, an eagle in the air, a serpent upon a rock and a ship in the sea leave no trace of their presence. Far different is the way of a man with a maid.

By this usage the principle is established that there must be something different attending the final one. Applying the principle to the verse before us, we find that whereas God may have overlooked the first three, the fourth will bring retribution not only for itself but for all the preceding transgressions which hitherto have been unpunished.

It is not that there were three previous transgressions. There have been many more but, as many as there were, they are summarised in the word "three". Finally a sin is committed which brings the sinner past the point of no return and punishment follows not only for the final sin, but for all the others as well. This principle was expressed by Jesus in ---

- Matt. 23. 35. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Berechias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.
36. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon THIS generation."

The reason for the punishment was not the former sins but because they were the final ones to kill Israel's and the world's greatest prophet, Jesus. For this deed they would be punished and also for all the sins of Israel as well. The point has its exhortation for us too who live in these days. We pile up sin upon sin which God, in His Mercy, overlooks because He knows our weakness. But, if we are unrepentant, Paul has this to say:-

- Rom. 2. 5. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God:"

"transgressions..." - the word also means "revolts" and "rebellions".

"I will not turn away the punishment thereof..." - the words "the punishment" do not appear in the original Hebrew and must be omitted from our study. This leaves "I will not turn away..." - this means that nothing would induce God to turn from His purpose to punish them. In the original Hebrew of the sentence, there is no equivalent for "thereof" so it must be omitted too. The R.V. is the same as the A.V. but the R.S.V. gives "I will not revoke the punishment". This is as inexact as the A.V. and R.V. Moffat has "I will not relent". The Afrikaans is "sal Ek dit nie afwend nie;" (I will not divert with the sense of not turning away the face from).

"they have threshed Gilead..." - the act of "threshing" human beings was a diabolically cruel method of killing one's enemies. In those days there were no international agreements as to how prisoners of war were to be treated. The method is referred to in the next portion of the sentence.

"with threshing instruments of iron." - the instrument was a wagon on wheels to which were fitted other wheels, turning so that, with the iron teeth fitted to them, they caught the wheat and chaff, and cut it to pieces, thus separating the wheat and reducing the stalks to a size which enabled them to be fed to cattle. Instead of running this machine over wheat, they ran it over human beings so that the turning spiked wheels would cut them to pieces. As incredible as it may seem, this method is mentioned in Prov. 20. 26. as something which a wise king should do to the wicked. In 2 Kings 13. 7. this form of punishment was given to Israel by Hazael, king of Syria. It is thought that this was the method used to rip up women with child. (2 Kings 8. 12.)

Verse 4

"But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad."

"the house of Hazael..." - the name means "God hath seen..." God told Elijah the prophet to anoint Hazael king of Syria long before he became king. (1 Kings 19. 15.) See also 2 Kings 8. 13. In verse 15 we read that Hazael murdered his ailing father Benhadad and took the throne. From verse 12 we learn that God elevated him to the kingship for the purpose of punishing Israel.

"Benhadad." - he was the son of Hazael and the LORD delivered Israel from his hand. (2 Kings 13. 5.) Hadad was the sun-god and all kings of Syria used the title "Benhadad" which meant "son of Hadad". This should be noted as the name "Benhadad" does not always refer to the same man. For instance, the

"Benhadad" of 2 Kings 8. 7. is not the same as that of 2 Kings 13. 3. The first was the father of Hazael and the second was his son.

"A fire..." - this could be a literal fire as well as the wrath of God. The use of "a fire" as evidence of the wrath of God is found in Deut. 32. 22. The fire in the verse before us is to destroy "the house of Hazael". It would destroy literally, his dwelling but would also destroy his family. We shall see that this "fire" is to come upon all the nations mentioned in Amos' prophecy.

"palaces..." - the word means "fortresses", or "strongholds".

The prophecy by Elijah of 2 Kings 8. 12. came to pass and this was the point of no return as mentioned in Amos 1. 3. Hazael must have remembered the words of Elijah and thought, that by doing what he did, he was doing right. He was to learn that what he did was evil.

Verse 5

"I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD."

"the bar of Damascus..." - in Bible days, nations were contained within a city and the people went out during the day to plough and tend their flocks. They would come into the city at night and the gate would be closed. The gate was made very powerfully and flanked with towers from which it could be defended. The gate, or "bar", was usually the strongest of the city's defences. When the city was attacked, a battering ram was used against the walls and when a breach was made, the attackers would rush through. Their first goal would be the bar of the gate which they would throw open. From this prophecy, it is evident that the LORD would break down the defences of Damascus.

"the inhabitant..." - Heb. "Yashab" meaning one who sits as a judge. This refers to the ruler.

"Aven..." - the name means "house of vanity". In the LXX has "the plain of ON". This was the Syrian city of On which was called by the Greeks "Heliopolis" meaning "the city of the sun". It followed the Egyptian worship of the sun-god. This was put into practice by the building of temples at strategic places to catch the first glimpse of the rising sun each day. Historians have stated that Mt. Hermon in Syria was littered with temples so placed as to catch the early rays of the sun. In Ezek. 30. 17. mentions Aven but gives as a marginal note, the name "Heliopolis". In Hebrew, the sound of the name "Aven" would be very like "On". In Josh. 7. 2. a distinction is drawn between "Bethel" and "Bethaven" showing that they are not one and the same. The former means "House of God" and the latter means "house of vanity". Inasmuch as the pronunciation of "Aven" is so similar to that of "On", it is probable that "Bethaven" was really "Beth-On" meaning "the house of On" or the house of the worship of the sun-god.

"him that holdeth the sceptre..." - similar in meaning to "the inhabitant" above and means "the king".

"the house of Eden..." - the name "Eden" here has a different pronunciation from the Eden of Adam and Eve. The first "E" is short and pronounced "eh". The name means "pleasure" and the full form is "Beth-Eden". The situation is unknown but it is thought to have been situated in Lebanon.

"Kir..." - the king of Assyria carried away the people of Damascus to Kir. (2 Kings 16. 9.) This was in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah. See Isa. 15. 1; and Isa. 22. 6. The place is also mentioned in Amos 9. 7.

Verse 6

GAZA - (Philistia)

"Thus saith the LORD; for three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:"

"...Gaza..." - Gaza was one of the Five Cities of the Philistines, namely Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. Amos does not mention Gath but mentions the others as can be seen from verse 8. The reason for his omission is that at the time, Gath had been destroyed. The Philistim (Philistines) had come from Casluhim which were a people having their origin in Egypt. (Gen. 10. 13/14.) They went to Crete which was called Caphtor in early days. From there, they made an attack against the mainland and settled in the part of Palestine now called the Gaza strip. See Amos. 9. 7. They gave their name to "Palestine". The LORD used them as a means of punishment to Israel.

"carried away captive the whole captivity..." - they carried away a whole population of a city, leaving none behind. See 2 Chron. 21. 16/17. and 28. 18.

"to deliver them up to Edom:" - they delivered the whole captivity to Edom as slaves. For this they would receive a reward. The Edomites were the bitter enemies of Israel so to be delivered in this way, was a crushing blow to Israel. No mercy had been shown to the captives. As they had treated the people of Israel, so God would treat them. This was their final sin and ended an opposition to Israel which had lasted for centuries and had included attacks against Samson, Samuel, Saul and David.

Verse 7

"But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof."

"But..." - a powerful word comparing what the Philistines had done with what God would do to them.

"the wall of Gaza..." - this refers to the fortified city of Gaza, with special reference to its fortifications. Figuratively it means the city itself. To this wall was to come a fire. Gaza had been almost impregnable because of its fortifications and because of the fact that all around it was sand. It was extremely difficult to attack. This applied to others of the five towns. One can read of the subjugation of the Philistines (2 Sam. 8. 1.) but there is no record of the destruction of any of its cities before Uzziah. The prophecy here by Amos would hardly have been believed by the people of that day, yet it all came to pass. It was also subdued by Sennacherib after the prophecy by Jeremiah. See Jer. 47. 1. and the rest of that chapter. See Acts 8. 26.

Verse 8

"And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD."

"Ashdod..." - it was about this time that Uzziah attacked and subdued both Gaza and Ashdod. (2 Chron. 26. 6.) It recovered from this defeat at a later date and profane history records that it resisted the longest siege ever recorded, namely, 29 years by the Egyptians. This is why Jeremiah, in prophesying of its final destructions, mentions "the remnant of Ashdod". See Jer. 25. 20. In Acts 8. 40. it is called "Azotus".

"Ashkelon..." - See the prophecy by Zephaniah in Zeph. 2. 4.

"Ekron..." - the Philistines sent the Ark of God to Ekron. 1 Sam. 5. 10. See Jer. 25. 15/21.

"the remnant..." - those who survive the first attack.

"shall perish..." - this foretells the doom of the Philistines who did indeed, perish.

Verse 9

TYRUS (Phoenicia)

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:"

"Tyrus..." - "Tyre". This maritime city was to Israel in the days of Solomon what Great Britain was to the Jews in the days of the Balfour Declaration. They had made a covenant with Solomon as Britain had made a covenant with the Zionists. Both were to break and dishonour their pledge in the years to follow. The covenant between Hiram, king of Tyre, was one built upon a friendship which, in itself, was built upon a recognition of the God of Israel. See Hiram's letter to Solomon. 2 Chron. 2. 11/12. For Hiram's attitude to David see 2 Sam. 5. 11. "Hiram was ever a lover of David" - 1 Kings 5. 1. In 1 Kings 5. 12. it is recorded that Solomon and Hiram made a league (covenant) together. The details were not given but it must have been based upon a love for one another and a recognition of the Most High God. That the people of Tyre would, many years later, sell the Israelites to Edom as slaves, shows that the former covenant was broken and because of this, a punishment would be brought upon them.

Verse 10

"But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof."

See notes to verse 7.

The prophet Isaiah also had a prophecy of doom for Tyre. See Isa. 23.

The prophet Ezekiel also had a prophecy of doom for the maritime city. See Ezek. 26. 1/21. The prophecy is continued into chapter 27. The portion dealing with verses 3/5. were fulfilled in the first aspect when Alexander the Great invested Tyre.

Verse 11

EDOM

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever."

There are several prophecies fore-telling the punishment of Edom. See Psa. 137. 7; Ezek. 25. 12/15; Obad. 9/15; Mal. 1. 2/4. Jer. 49. 7/8; God was merciful towards Edom in the beginning because he was the brother of Jacob, his name having been Esau. (Gen. 25. 30.) The law for Israel concerning Edom was "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite..." (Deut. 23. 7.) When the children of Israel passed through the wilderness and came to the land of the Edomites, God warned them that they would not be permitted to take any portion of it and if they wanted meat from the Edomites, they would have to pay for it in money. (The Hebrew word translated as "money" is "Keceph" meaning "silver".) If they wanted water, they would also have to pay for it in "money". (Deut. 2. 4/6.) In the years which followed from this time, Israel grew in strength and became a menace to the surrounding nations. One seldom reads of one of the heathen nations going to war against another. Most reports of war cover attacks by the nations against Israel. (Psa. 83. 2/8. draws a picture for us of the combined hatred of the nations for Israel. This has a powerful present day application.) Edom is mentioned as being one of the confederate nations. In the time of David, Syria in the north, the Philistines in the South West, and the Edomites in the South East were confederate against him and the story of David's victories over them is given in 2 Sam. 8. Thus, in their later history, the Edomites forgot how God had helped them at the time of the Exodus when he warned Israel to leave them alone and pay for all that they bought. They feared Israel and tried to destroy them. When the revolt against Solomon began to gather strength, it was Hadad the Edomite who, having fled to Egypt as a child, grew up to manhood and became an adversary to Israel. (1 Kings. 11. 14/22.)

"because he did pursue his brother with the sword,.. " - this was contrary to the laws of God concerning Kinship and family relationship. That man is inclined to forget kinship after the fourth generation, is understandable, but God's Laws were written for all to know and obey. God does not forget the relationship of His creatures after a thousand years. The murder of a brother was forbidden. (Gen. 9. 5.) God put his mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. (Gen. 4. 15.) In the days of the Exodus, every man of Israel was brother to each other. (Exod. 2. 11.) See also Deut. 15. 11; and verses 12/18. The word in Hebrew translated as "pursue" goes further than the meaning given here. In the A.V. it means, simply, that Edom attacked Israel. The Hebrew word is "radaph" meaning to pursue with hostile intent; to follow after with a desire to destroy completely.

"did cast off all pity,.. " - Lit. "corrupted his compassions..." that is to say, he subordinated his natural feelings of compassion upon a fallen foe. The LORD used a similar expression to describe Tyre in Ezek. 28. 17, where it is translated "corrupted thy wisdom". The sense is one of perversion from the proper way.

"his anger did tear perpetually,.. " - he let his anger have free rein. The word "perpetually" is "continually". This description shows Edom as an enraged person who throws reason to the winds as he pursues his evil intent upon his enemy.

"kept his wrath for ever:" - the word "kept" comes from the Hebrew "shamar" meaning to guard, preserve, tend, showing that Edom would not let anger abate but whipped it up continually. "for ever" means for the age. To-day, those who occupy the land of Edom still foster a continual hatred for Israel, and it is a hatred not unto defeat but unto entire obliteration from the face of the earth. This is an unnatural hatred and is characteristic of that which was Edom's in the days of Amos.

Verse 12

"But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

"But.." - that is what you have done to My people, now this is what I will do unto you.."

"Teman..." - the country takes its name after the man who settled there. He was the son of Eliphaz, the first born son of Ezau (and Esau was Edom). (Gen. 36. 15.) In ancient times it was renowned for its wisdom. See Jer. 49. 7. The prophet Obadiah had a word to say about Teman. (Obad. 9.) Job's friend Eliphaz was a Temanite. It was one of the cities of Edom which was ruled by a duke.

"palaces..." - see note to Amos 1. 4.

"Bozrah." - This city was named after a man who was one of the first kings of Edom. (Gen. 36. 33.) He reigned in remote times as Gen. 36. 31. indicates. It would appear that the LORD gave the sons of Esau their inheritance on this earth during their life time because Esau, having sold his birthright, "was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." (Heb. 12. 17.) In the days when Amos wrote, it was one of the chief cities of Edom and its name, along with that of Teman, was used as a figure of the whole nation.

The prophet Ezekiel also has some hard words to say concerning Edom. See Ezek. 25. 12/14.

Verse 13

AMMON

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.

"Ammon..." - the two sons of Lot (or grandsons) of Lot by his two daughters, were Moab and Ben-Ammi (Ammon). (Gen. 19. 36.) Through the relationship of Lot with Abraham, (Gen. 11. 27.) the Moabites and Ammonites regarded the Israelites as kinsmen. This did not prevent them from giving way to a feeling of strong hatred for the more successful Israelites.

The people of Ammon were traditionally very cruel. Their cruelty even appalled the cruel people of their day. They worshipped Moloch (1 Kings 11. 7.) and sacrificed their children to this statue. They had been driven away from the Jordan valley by the Amorites but always regarded this land as their own even after the Israelites had taken it. In this way they tried to enlarge their border but their manner of doing it was to rip up pregnant women. This was done in Gilead. An example of their brutality is given in 1 Sam. 11. 2. where it is recorded that Nahash, the Ammonite, wanted to make a covenant with Israel where Israel would permit his men to thrust out all their right eyes. For 18 years they oppressed Israel in Gilead. (Judg. 10. 8/9.)

"enlarge their border." - one of the attempts to enlarge their border was to claim all the land "from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan:.." (Judg. 10. 13.)

Verse 14

"But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:"

"I will kindle a fire..." - same as verses 4, 7, 10 and 12. It is to be noted that the LORD promised that He would not destroy the earth again by a flood of water. The world of people in the near future are to be punished with fire. the Prophecies of Amos in this connection, must be regarded also in their application in the "latter days".

"Rabbah..." - the capital of the Ammonites. King Og's iron bedstead was there. (Deut. 3. 11.) Joab besieged Rabbah at the time of David's sin with Bath-sheba. (2 Sam. 11. 1.) See also 1 Chron. 20. 1. See David's exploits there. (2 Sam. 12. 26/31.) It was the home of Shobi who brought food for David and his companions. (2 Sam. 17. 27/29.) For the punishments to be brought upon her, see Jer. 49. 2; Ezek. 25. 5.

"the wall of..." - the city itself. When the wall fell, the city would be taken.

"shouting in the day of battle..." - the shouts of war to frighten the enemy.

"tempest in the day of the whirlwind." - figurative of the completeness of the destruction in the day of wrath. See Psa. 83. 15. God brings the whirlwind and the tempest. It signifies the rapidity with which destruction will come upon them. The destruction from God is typified by noise and a whirlwind in Jer. 25. 31/32. God brings the whirlwind and God will bring the destruction and the punishment.

Verse 15

"And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD."

"their king..." - the character of a nation often followed that of their ruler. If the king was warlike, he would lead his nation into battle. If he was peaceable, his nation would follow peaceful ways. Initiative in big matters was vested in the king. If he went into captivity, the nation would lose its head. It would be unable to take decisions or act for itself, until another ruler arose to take charge. A king ruled his kingdom with the assistance of his princes. In the days of the prophet Daniel, Darius ruled his kingdom with the assistance of 120 princes over which were three

presidents of which, Daniel was chief. (Dan. 6. 1/3.) So large a number of princes was necessary in the kingdom of Darius because it covered the whole habitable world of that time. The king of Ammon would not require as many to rule his kingdom.

The prophecy is directed against the kingdom to this extent that when destruction came, it would be without king and princes and therefore, without any government whatsoever. There would be no princes to assume the leadership. This is in keeping with the theme of prophecy of the latter days when the returned Christ will be king over all the earth and all nations shall bow down to him.

The prophecy concerning the Ammonites given in Jer. 49. 3. goes a little further by prophesying that there will be no priests. This means that there will be no one to lead them in their false worship: The Returned Christ will be both a king and a priest (Zech. 6. 13.) so there will be no place for any other ruler or priest.

THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 2

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Verse 1

MOAB

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:"

The chapter division here is translator's arrangement. In the text there is no break between the matters of chapters 1 and 2. It is a continuous series of warnings of punishments to come.

"Moab..." - one of the sons of Lot which he had by his first born daughter. The other son, Ammon, was born to him from his younger daughter. (Gen. 19. 37.) Moab was little different in character from his brother Ammon. The same spirit of antagonism towards Israel seemed to dominate them. They chose a mean time to invade Israel, when the year came in and the crops were sown. They spoiled the increase for that year. Compare 2 Kings 13. 20. with a similar action of the Midianites and Amalekites in Judges 6. 1/6.

"burned the bones..." - The Israelites attached great importance to burial, even to their enemies. The prophecy against the king of Babylon that he would not be buried in the royal burial grounds, was a dreadful thing to an Israelite. (Isa. 14. 20. When the prophet Jeremiah pronounced the LORD'S judgment against Shallum, the son of Josiah and brother of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, he said "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gate of Jerusålem." (Jer. 22. 19.) Also to Jehoiakim, the prophet said, "...his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost." (Jer. 36. 30. Such pronouncements would have been considered calamitous to an Israelite. Every man was particular about his bones and we know that Joseph gave directions as what was to be done with his. (Gen. 50. 25. compare with Josh. 24. 32.) If bones were to be burned, they would have to be burned while unburied. In the popular belief of the times, it would be thought that the king of Edom whose bones were thus burned, would not reach a blessed state of after life.

It was the utter disregard for others that made the Moabites the cruel people that they were. In the days of Elisha, Moab had to pay tribute to Jehoram, king of Israel, but rebelled. Jehoram then made an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah and the king of Edom to go against Moab to battle. When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him, he tried to get through the line of battle and go to Edom, but could not. He must have known that Israel and Judah would kill his eldest son who was next in line to his throne. Therefore he killed him by sacrificing him to his god as a burnt offering. (2 Kings 3.) This human sacrifice was a dreadful act and one of sheer brutality. How low can a nation sink when the True Faith is discarded and replaced by paganism?

Relating the two thoughts in this verse, it may be that Moab burned the bones into lime but burned the bones of the son of Edom and not of his own son. The great sin then, would be making a human sacrifice irrespective of who it was who was sacrificed. There is no record that he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime, and the son of the king of Edom could have been taken by the king of Moab when he went looking for the king. Not having found the king, he took the son and burned his bones until they turned to lime.

Verse 2

"But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die without tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:"

"devour the palaces..." - destroy the defences.

The defences of Moab was a series of cities. This meaning is contained in the name KERIOTH, which means "buildings" or "cities" or a collection of cities. The name appears in Jer. 48. 23/24. In the first of these verses, the name Keriathaim appears. This refers to the people of Keriath which appears in verse 24. "Kerioth" is mentioned again in verse 41 where the margin gives the alternate meaning of "the cities". The "strongholds (palaces) are also mentioned.

"tumult..." - the noise of an attacking host. See Psa. 74. 23; Isa. 13. 4; and Hos. 10. 14. Writing of the destruction of Moab, Jeremiah mentions "the tumultuous ones" in Jer. 48. 45. In Num. 24. 17. Balaam prophesied against Moab, foretelling its destruction and ending "destroy all the children of Sheth". The name "Sheth" is not the same as "Sheth" meaning "Seth" in 1 Chron. 1. 1. but is a different word altogether and means "tumult". Inasmuch as Balaam's prophecy concerns the destruction of latter day Moab by the returned Christ, Amos must have a similar application too.

"shouting..." - the noise of an enemy in battle. See 1. 14. It is apparent that Moab is to be destroyed in battle. Dan. 11. 41. states that "Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" shall escape out of his hand, that is, escape out of the hand of the "king of the north". Moab, therefore, with Edom and Ammon will not fall to the king of the north but will be destroyed by Yahweh Tz'vaoth manifested by the warlike Christ.

"sound of the trumpet." - traditional call to battle. The battle array against Moab will be led by Christ and his armies.

Verse 3

"And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD."

"cut off the judge..." - when "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,.." it shall "smite the corners of Moab", (Num. 24. 17.) The next verse in this prophecy by Balaam, states that Edom shall be a possession. This is another way of saying that man's judgment will cease in the land because it will be replaced by the Divine Judge of all the earth.

"slay all the princes." - All the rulers will cease. See the prophecy from Jeremiah chapter 48 and in particular verses 7 and 25.

Verse 4

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:"

The people of Israel must have been astonished that Amos should have prophesied against his own people, the people of Judah. If they had thought about this more deeply they may also have been astonished that in these prophecies there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. There is no respect of persons with God. See Rom. 2. 12.

"they have despised the law of the LORD,.." - Paul stated in Rom. 2. 12 that those who sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. The people of Judah had received the law of God, and the temple with its ritual of worship, as well as the law, statutes, judgments, precepts, ways, testimonies and commandments of God. All this they had turned into a tradition and made of none effect. (Matt. 15. 6.) Because they had rejected God, He now was about to reject them. See also 2 Kings 17. 19.

"have not kept his commandments..." - see also 2 Kings 17. 19.

"their lies caused them to err,.." - their false doctrines and immoral rituals. See the warning of Lev. 26. 14/18. For a complete list of the

abominations of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, see Ezek. chapter 26. For "lies" see Isa. 9. 15/16. These false doctrines and rituals came from idols. See also 2 Kings 17. 15; Psa. 40. 4; Isa. 28. 15 and Jer. 16. 17/21.

"after the which..." - a Middle English expression. Modern form is "after which..."

"their fathers have walked." - this always has been the character of man. He has a choice between God's Promises or God's punishments. In making his choice, man has always tended to be guided by his own lusts, pleasures, desires, pride, vanity, self-love, evil imagination and greed. In debating the choice in his mind, man lies to himself and makes these things his idols. What he once abhorred becomes something commonplace and justified. This is passed on to the children who follow in their fathers' ways without giving consideration to whether it is right or wrong. How many people have been introduced to the TRUTH of the Word of God and have turned away from it because their fathers, their mothers or their ministers would not approve. The principle then becomes that mentioned by the townclerk at Ephesus when he said, "...these things cannot be spoken against..." (Acts 19. 36.)

Verse 5

"But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem".

"I will send a fire upon Judah,..." - a similar warning is given in Isa. 17. 27; 21. 10; Jer. 37. 8/10; 39. 8; 52. 13; Hos. 8. 14.

"it shall devour the palaces..." - the defences shall be destroyed. In the send of the punishment of latter-day Judah, it means that nothing will remain of whatever man has built around Judah. Whatever the modern Jewish nation builds in the Holy Land will not stand to the glory of man when Christ comes. The earth is to be filled with the glory of the LORD (Num. 14. 21.) and nothing of the glory of man will survive.

Verse 6

"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes:"

"sold the righteous for silver,..." - there were two aspects of this sin, the actual and the metaphorical. In the actual aspect, it was permitted under the Law of Moses for a poor Hebrew person to sell himself. In such a case, a Hebrew could buy him and hold him until the year of jubilee. (Lev. 25. 39/40. He was not to be regarded as a servant but as a sojourner (boarder). See also Deut. 15. 12. If a thief had nothing with which to make restitution, he had to be sold for his theft. (Exod. 22. 3.) In the days of the return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews found themselves suffering from an abuse of these laws. Nehemiah was very angry about this situation. (Neh. 5. 1/7.) His anger was raised because it had come about through usury which is a form of oppression of the poor. It was this form of selling the debtor to the creditor that Amos objected to. The righteous had become insolvent and were sold either to others of their races or to the heathen people.

For the metaphorical sense which is a spiritual one, see Amos. 5. 11/12; 8. 4 and 6; Isa. 5. 23; 29. 21; Joel 3. 3/6; Micah 3. 2/3. The selling of the righteous was a reference to the spiritual destruction brought about by the spreading of false doctrines amongst religious people and turning them away from the Truth of the Word of God.

"the poor for a pair of shoes;" - lit. "pair of sandals..." The Hebrew women adorned themselves as much as they could and would sell a Hebrew sojourner to another in exchange for a pair of sandals which were items of luxury. In a spiritual way, the Christians were to sell themselves to the luxury of an indulgent church for the doubtful pleasure of high office.

Verse 7

"That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go into the same maid, to profane my holy name:"

"pant after..." - in one sense it means to long for. See Job. 7. 2; Psa. 119. 131; It also means to covet, to devour, to swallow up. Once the debtor had lost all his possessions, he would cast dust upon his head with grief and anxiety. The creditors however, would deny him this use of the earth on the head of the poor. It would appear at a first reading, that the poor should be the covetous ones and not the rich creditors. But this is the point covered by the prophet. It is the rich who covet more than the poor. The rich covet even the most trivial things whereas the poor know they cannot get them but just envy without furiously desiring to have. A poor man is inclined to acknowledge his poverty whereas a rich man would deny a poor man's right to have anything. This is the sinful side of human nature. See Prov. 10. 15.

"turn aside the way of the meek:..." - Solomon wrote "A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment." (Prov. 17. 23.) In his desire to "pervert judgment", the wicked person shows his hatred of the righteous. The righteous show their righteousness sometimes by their meekness and humility. Thus they make it easy for the wicked to try to pervert the ways of those whom they hate. Lions do not eat lions but eat the inoffensive buck. The wicked people of the earth do not attempt to pervert the wicked but the righteous. In this they acknowledge the great gulf between them. This was one of the many sins of Israel. Some centuries later, the wicked men of Judah were to reject the righteous and meek one. They sold him for thirty pieces of silver. There was no pity in the hearts of the Jews at that time and there was no pity in the hearts of the Israelites to whom Amos was sent. There was no justice in anything they did. By regarding this as part of the first section - "pant after..." discussed above, we see a further sin which Isaiah mentions in Isa. 3. 15. This is grinding the faces of the poor. In perverting the poor they attempted to destroy them.

"the same maid." - This was not forbidden under the Law except that a man may not marry his son's widow. (Lev. 18. 15, see also verse 8.) nor may a son marry his father's widow. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the Law, such an abomination would be understood to be illegal. By being guilty of this act, the one was being an example of evil to the other. This is mentioned in these notes as a matter of interest only but it does not concern the matter which Amos speaks about. This is connected with the religious prostitution which was so much a character of the Canaanite ritual. The heathen religion was a religion of nature in which fertility of crops and of humans was an important factor. This led to a worship of everything connected with procreation. Fathers would be pleased to send their daughters to the Temple to act as religious prostitutes. The great sin of this practice was not that the people used to go to Canaanite temples for the ritual but that they brought it to Israel and set up such revolting practices in the "house of God". In the A.V. the words are "the SAME maid..." but the word "same" is in italics showing that it was not in the original. The expression should be "THE MAID" with reference to a particular maid. This means the maid who had been set apart for this dreadful practice. The prophets expressed horror at this abomination. (Jer. 2. 20/21; Hos. 4. 12/19. See also Exod. 34. 14/16; Isa. 1. 21; Ezek. 16. 15; Hos. 3. 3.

Relating the words of Amos to modern times, the attitude of one sex to another amounts to what in Biblical days would have been regarded as a "sex cult" in which sexual restraint was non-existent. Powerful nations do not arise from sexual licence but from sexual restraint. The gratification of animal instincts is a destroying influence and led to the decline of both the Grecian and the Roman empires. If laxity in such matters angered the LORD in the days of Amos, it will anger Him now so the warnings of Amos are as important to us now as they were to Israel in those days.

"to profane my holy name:" - The Israelites preferred the practices just described to the worship of God as laid down in the Law of Moses. In these latter days, much the same attitude is prevalent amongst the nations. Women are not honoured by men and men are not respected by women. By analogy, the Truth Faith is no longer regarded and the teachings of Christ have little influence upon men.

Verse 8

"And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god."

The rich had taken the clothes of the poor as a security for a debt. The Law expressly forbade the keeping of a pledge such as this after sunset. The clothes which was a big enfolding cloak, was used as bedding during the night, so it had to be restored to the pledgor before he went to bed. See the teaching of Exod. 22. 26/27; and Deut. 24. 12/13.

"by every altar..." - the pursuit of unmentionable practices was a form of idolatry for Israel. They used the clothes of the poor as a bedding and as an altar for their lewd practices, thinking that they were resting within the security of the temple worship. Ezekiel had strong words to say in this connection. See Ezek. 23. 41/44. See also the words of Isaiah in Isa. 57. 7/9. Having made sex their god, every bed then became an altar. The words of Hosea tell of the sinfulness of multiplying altars in this way. Hos. 8. 11.

"they drink the wine of the condemned..." - "the condemned" means those poor people who have been fined, or from whom money has been extracted by dishonest means. This money went to purchase wine which the people drank during their night orgies.

"in the house of their god." - not only did they do these wicked things but they disported themselves in the house of their god. The hebrew original of the word "god" is "elohim" which is often used for God. The use of the lower case "god" is translators' usage but could well be applied to the House of God which the people had turned into the house of their idol worship.

The latter-day application is to be found amongst the people who go to church regularly without knowing anything about the Word of God. They disport themselves during the week and then, having presented themselves before their god, they go home feeling that they have absolved themselves from all guilt in the eyes of God. In Hebrew poetry of great beauty, Amos shows the people of Israel that they have acquired the complacency which follows upon the drinking of wine and that this complacency in the face of their wickedness was acquired in the house of their god where they profaned the name of the LORD.

Verse 9

THE MARVELLOUS ACTS OF GOD

"Yet destroyed I the Amorites before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath."

"Yet..." - In spite of their tendency to turn away from God, He had helped them. Contrast this now with what they were doing for him. The word "Yet" is a powerful link between what the people had done for God and what He had done for them.

"the Amorites..." - this reference to the Amorites could very well be a reminder of past history when the LORD told the people through Moses, that "Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us." (Deut. 1. 20.) and the record of the peoples' reply, "...Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us." (Deut. 1. 27.) This is the first reference by Moses to a nation whom God subdued for His peoples' sake. Joshua also referred to the Amorites being subdued by God for His people. (Joshua 24. 8.)

The Amorites came from the fourth born son of Canaan, the son of Ham who was cursed by God. (Gen. 10. 6 and 16.) They were among the seven traditional enemies of Israel which the Israelites were instructed to drive out. (Josh. 24. 11.)

"whose height was like the height of the cedars..." - the giant children of Anak dwelt where the Amorites were. (Num. 13. 28/29.) see also verses 32/33. Deut. 1. 27/28.

The LORD destroyed the Amorites. (Num. 21. 21/28; Deut. 2. 24/35; Josh. 24. 8.)

"them,..." - some codices have "you".

"strong as the oaks,..." - in the imagery of the Hebrew language, the cedars were regarded as a symbol of height. They were very tall trees and stretched forth their arms for shade and shelter. The oak was a symbol of strength. As long as they had God with them, they were indeed as tall above other nations as the cedar is above the trees and they were as strong as the oak. Nevertheless, when they forsook the LORD, the Prophet Ezekiel spoke against them, using the analogy of a cedar in regard to Israel. They would be plucked up by the roots; and the branches were cropped. Ezek. 17. 1/10. The lesson in the verse before us is that as tall as the Amorites were and for all their strength, they could not prevail against Israel with God on the side of His people.

Verse 10

"Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite."

"Also I..." - emphatic form, impressing upon Israel that again God had done a great work for Israel.

"brought you up from the land of Egypt,..." - the Law and the prophets regarded the Exodus from Egypt as the greatest event in all history of any nation, where God showed His love and care for His people. See Lev. 11. 45; 18. 3; 19. 34/37; 22. 33; 23. 43; 25. 38, 42, 55; 26. 12, 45; see also Hos. 11. 1; Mic. 6. 3/4.

"forty years through the wilderness,..." - a journey through the wilderness such as the people of Israel undertook, without preparation, without supply lines, provision for food and water and without knowing exactly where they were going, was possible only if God had been with them. Otherwise they must have perished entirely before they had gone far. (Deut. 32. 10/12.) The wilderness journey was a trial for them and, because of their wickedness, it was a punishment too by being extended to forty years.

Any bringing out of Egypt is UP in Scripture. People went DOWN into Egypt but came UP out of it. See Gen. 13. 1. and compare with Gen. 12. 10. The principle involved here was that God had chosen them to be His people and had led them UP and out of Egypt. After that he had led them through the wilderness. In consideration for what God had done for them, they had no right to turn away from HIM and worshipping others gods for by so doing, they were going back DOWN into Egypt.

Verse 11

"And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD."

"I raised up of your sons for prophets,..." - The Law of Moses had specific instructions for the Levitical priesthood in regard to their behaviour. These are contained in Lev. 9. 10/11. If the priesthood had behaved throughout their generations, there would have been no need for the prophets of Israel. When the priesthood failed in their duty, God sent His prophets to teach the people and warn them of His judgments.

"your young men for Nazarites..." - the priests were of a holy order and had been ordained of God for their position. They were all descendants of

Levi and had descended from Aaron who was of the tribe of Levi. Apart from them, the Law also provided for a lay priesthood, the members of which were known as the Nazarites. The Law for them was similar to that for the priesthood in regard to behaviour. See Num. 6. 2/21. The Law for both stated that strong drink must be avoided. The symbolism here was that any false doctrine had to be rejected.

Verse 12

"But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying prophesy not."

"But..." - "as opposed to what God did for His people, for both priest and lay person, see what you did..."

"ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink..." - you undid what God had done. The symbolism here is that God had established the True Faith, but man tried to undo what God had done. They set up teachers to draw others after them. Acts 20. 29/31.) This wine is the "wine of her fornication" (Rev. 17. 2.) The Nazarites were ordinary men without any priestly line of descent who taught the Word of God. They were corrupted by men who were opposed to religion. The latter day application is obvious. Ministers in churches have cast doubt upon the Scriptures. Many people are opposed to any religion at all. The Rechabites of Jer. 35. 1/19. determined to come out of the world altogether and obey the laws of their fathers, thereby fore-shadowing a body of people in the latter days who would endeavour to come out of the world of latter-day Babylon and would retain the purity of their faith.

This is the way of mankind. Instead of listening to those who preach the Truth and warn of things to come, man tends to oppose the Truth and compel those who preach to forsake their preaching. Men will listen to those who prophesy good things but will disregard any who preach of punishment from God. See Jer. 38. 1/6.

Verse 13

"Behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."

A similar thought is expressed by God through His prophet Isaiah. See Isa. 43. 24. The R.S.V. says, "Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down." This indicates that God will crush the nation as a cart well laden crushes the grain under its wheels when it is pulled across the sheaves on the threshing floor. (Isa. 28. 27/28.) The A.V. states that God feels the burden of Israel's sins.

The story of the disobedience of the people of Israel and the anger and mercy of God towards them, is given in Psalm 78. This Psalm gives a terrible record of ingratitude, disobedience and defiance of the people and, at the same time, a record of the infinite mercy, love and patience of the LORD God.

In the A.V. the figure drawn is very beautiful. One can imagine a cart under a huge load of hay, weighed down under the load, yet carrying it all the same. Thus was God burdened with the continual disobedience and wickedness of His people. See also Isa. 1. 14; 7. 13; 43. 24; Ezek. 6. 9; 16. 43; Mal. 2. 17.

Verse 14

"Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:"

"Therefore..." - Because of what has just been said, the following things will happen...

"the flight shall perish from the swift,..." - Moffat puts it thus, "...flight shall fail the swift..." When the wrath of God comes, there will be no place to which they can flee. Therefore flight will be useless.

"the strong shall not strengthen his force..." - all strength comes from God and God will not help in that day.

"neither shall the mighty deliver himself." - If God withdraws His care all shall perish. Psa. 33. 12/22.

Although the prophet does not say so, he must be referring to an invasion from another nation. This would be Assyria. Applying this to the latter days, the invasion is that of "Gog of the land of Magog". (Ezek. 38. 2. et seq.) When that big invasion comes, there will be no place to which anyone can run. Strength will fail unless God gives it and the mighty nations of the world will find that their own strength will fail them.

Verse 15

"Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself."

"Neither shall he stand..." - see Nahum 2. 8. This verse is a continuation of the teaching of the previous verse. The word "himself" comes from the Heb. "nephesh" meaning "life" and translated very often as "soul".

No man has the ability nor power to save his own life nor to prolong it in the face of his enemies if God turns away from him. Isa. 30. 16; Jer. 9. 23/24.

Verse 16

"And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD."

"courageous..." - Heb. "strong of heart". Jer. 48. 41.

"shall flee away naked..." - shall flee away without armour. Metaphorically they shall be put to flight and shall be utterly defenceless. The prophet Isaiah was made to walk naked as a sign to Judah of the punishments that God would bring upon them for their wickedness. See Isa. 20. 2/4. Micah. 1. 5/9; The poetic language of Habakkuk foretells of the same disaster. Hab. 3. 9.

It will be noted that the warnings against Israel are very much wider than those directed against the other nations. The warnings against Judah cover two verses. The warnings against Israel cover 11 verses. The Jews were to become an astonishment, an hissing and perpetual desolations. Jer. 25. 9. Verse 18 of that chapter adds the word "curse". Jer. 42. 18. adds the words "execration", and "reproach". The severity of this fate was due to the fact that God had selected them, He had nursed them through their tender years as the children of God; he had led them out of the world that was Egypt; He had given them His laws, and sent the leader Moses to direct them; He had cared for them during the wilderness journey and had led them against their enemies. Latterly they had disregarded the prophets whom He had sent to warn them. The final act of indiscretion was to crucify His Son, the Lord Jesus. For all this, they were to be punished such as no nation has ever been punished. It would have been better for them to have been destroyed altogether but God chose not to destroy them. They were His people and He had sworn to Abraham that he would give his descendants the land of Canaan. Their punishment was an example to all nations, kindreds and tongues who read these words from Amos.

THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 3

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That Israel had prospered was not due to any merit which they had in themselves or their behaviour. The favour that God had given them served only to increase their responsibility to Him. The prophet is now about to remind them about this and each of his next three chapters starts off with the arresting phrase - "HEAR THIS WORD..."

Verse 1

"Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

This verse is incomplete and is to be read in conjunction with verse 2. The recently uttered indictments had been against Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and Israel, yet the present words which they were called upon to hear were directed against ISRAEL. By implication, the words were also spoken against Judah, and, by further implication, against every True Christian Believer in this world of Latter-day Babylon. Having warned other nations of the punishments awaiting them for having turned against Israel, the people of the LORD, God now directs a more powerful warning against Israel. Their sin was greater than that of other nations because they knew the God of Israel, or should have known Him because of His many mercies towards them, and because He had called them out of Egypt to be His own special people. Many wonders had been performed before them, The ten plagues of Egypt showed that the God of Israel was supreme and the parting of the Red Sea showed God's care for His people. They heard His voice at Sinai and had trembled. They were given His laws and throughout their wilderness journey, they had been given manna and water. Their shoes had not worn out nor had their clothes worn thin. Yet in spite of these things, the people had turned away from God and had bowed the knee to gods of wood and stone which had been fashioned by man's hands.

God would punish Israel and sift His people as wheat. They would be scattered and peeled yet for all that, God would not destroy them but would preserve a remnant for David's sake because of His promise which He had made unto the fathers.

"Hear this word..." - God speaks to His people. See Isa. 48. 1. Hos. 4. 1; 5. 1;

"spoken against you..." - they are now to hear the things which God has determined against them.

"against the whole family..." - This is an import distinction. When God prophesied against the nations, they were nations and nothing else. Now the people of Israel were also a nation but at the same time they were also a family which had God as their Father. This gave them a privileged position above all other people on earth. God was a Father to Israel. (Hos. 11. 1.)

"which I brought up..." - God had brought them. They had been brought UP to a higher position than they had had before.

Verse 2

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

"You only have I known..." - See Exod. 19. 4/6. Deut. 7. 6/8; 10. 15; 26. 16/19; The point here is that whereas God knew them, they refused to know him. (Psa. 147. 19/20.) The Hebrew word "to know" has a wide application but it is usually used to indicate a knowledge arising out of personal acquaintance and intimate relationship. It was because God "knew" His people that He elected them to the high calling of being the People of God. There were many people on earth for God to choose from, but He chose the people of Abraham's descent. The reason that God gave was that He loved them. (Deut. 7. 8.)

"I will punish you for your iniquities." - the people had been warned of this when their journey started. (Exod. 32. 34.) Just as God would have blessed them and prospered them had they remained obedient, (Deut. 28. 2/14;) so He would also punish them for their disobedience. (Deut. 28. 15 et seq.)

Verse 3

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

This is the first of five parables which follow. All are in the form of a question, the answer to which, is obvious, and is in the negative.

"be agreed." - Heb. "ya'ad" is used here only and in no other place. It means to meet by appointment at a stated time or to meet for marriage. This implies an invitation on the one side and an acceptance on the other. The R.S.V. has it, "Do two walk together, unless they have made an appointment?" Two men do not walk together unless they have a common interest and have met for the pre-determined purpose of walking together. In other words, the effect of walking together must have had a determinable cause.

Verse 4

"Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?"

The figure of speech here is known as "erotesis" where a question is asked but no answer is expected. See Gen. 13. 9; Psa. 35. 10.

Does God utter His voice to no purpose? Does He speak if he has no reason to speak? Therefore, the lesson continues, if God speaks now there is a good reason for speaking. He is not wasting words but will perform that which He says He will do. Again there is a determinable cause for the effect.

Verse 5

"Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?"

God multiplies His metaphor. If Israel are punished will it not be because God hath set forth that punishment to overtake them? If they are overtaken in a punishment, will it not be that God has laid it? Yet again the effect must have a determinable cause and this cause is God bringing to pass the many warnings which have been given in the past.

Verse 6

"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"

"a trumpet be blown..." - denotes the approach of war. God now indicates that one of His punishments to be brought upon them will be war.

"evil in a city..." - "calamity in a city..." see 5. 13. The sense is one of dire trouble.

"not be afraid..." - the Hebrew word is "charad" meaning "shudder with terror"; "quake with fear"; "tremble with anxiety."

It is clear from these questions, that when the punishment comes, it will be from war and will be something to be dreaded with a great fear.

"the LORD hath not done it?" - Amos points out that God brings about disasters whether these be of nature or of men by war. This confirms the principle mentioned by Daniel the prophet when he says, "...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." (Dan. 4. 17.)

Verse 7

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

This is a very important statement to all who are servants of the LORD. God reveals His innermost counsels to His prophets before such things come to pass. This had been the character of Biblical history as we see from:-

- (a) God revealed to Noah the destruction of the wicked; (Gen. 6. 7.)
- (b) God revealed to Moses the judgements which were to come upon Egypt. (Exod. 7. 3/5.)
- (c) God revealed to Moses the punishments which would come upon Israel if the people were to turn away from Him. (Deut. 28. 15/68.)
- (d) God revealed to Jonah the punishment which was to come upon Nineveh. (Jonah 1. 2. and 3. 4.)
- (e) God revealed to Jeremiah the coming Babylonian captivity and the duration thereof. (Jer. 25. 11.)

The principle was carried forward into New Testament days when the Lord Jesus gave notice to his disciples of what was to happen. (John 13. 19. and 14. 29.) Applying this principle to ourselves, we read in the Bible of the commandments of God and of Christ. We know of the punishment of disobedience. The lesson to be learned is that given in Psa. 19. 11. "Moreover by them (the words of God) is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

If the "secret counsels" of God are revealed to the prophets, then the only way in which we may know them is to study the prophets. Likewise, in the days of Amos, Israel was now warned to pay attention to the words of God spoken by His servant Amos. The verse contains more than a statement here. It is a warning.

Verse 8

"The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

"The lion hath roared..." - this is the last of a series of five parables, the first appearing in verse 3 which is a single application. The others are doubles where the second part asks a similar question. The second part explains the first. In this parable, the "lion" is God who hath spoken.

"who will not fear?" - God reveals His secret counsels through His servants. If Israel were to hearken unto the warnings, then who will not fear? If anyone does not fear (take heed to) what God says, then they have not listened to His prophets.

"the Lord GOD hath spoken..." - "the LION has roared" therefore all should hear his voice and tremble. If God hath spoken, then, in terms of what has just been said, He must roar through His prophets. But Amos is His prophet, therefore hearken to what Amos says for he speaks the Words of God. It is better to hearken now than wait to see what happens. The prophet then proceeds to utter the Word of God. What was about to be said was the innercounsel of God. The people of Israel knew how to react to the roar of a lion and the snare upon the earth. They knew how to react to the trumpet being blown. The lion was now roaring through His prophet. Would the people hear?

Verse 9

"Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof."

"Publish..." - the use of this word follows upon the prophet's statement of the previous verse that when God speaks, who can resist to utter His words. As Jeremiah said in Jer. 20. 9. "his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones,..". In this command "Publish...", Amos was commissioned by God to speak.

"in the palaces..." - in the fortresses. These were high flat topped buildings from which announcements could be made and all would hear.

"Ashdod,..." - Azotus of Acts 8. 40. This was in the lowlands of southern Judah. God had pronounced a sentence upon Ashdod in Amos 1. 8.

"Egypt,..." - this was further south still. In those days it was almost the limit to the South of the civilized world. In the anti-type applicable to our day, it refers to the rest of the world outside Judea. God's punishment will extend to the farthest corner of the earth. The people of Judah were inclined to go to Egypt in their troubles. (Hos. 7. 11; 12. 1.) They turned to Egypt for profit.

"Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria,..." - fortresses built in the mountains of Samaria were almost impregnable. To get to them, an invading army would have to wind through deep valleys. A defensive position could be held by a handful of men. Metaphorically, any fortress impregnable to man would not be safe from the wrath of God. All will be thrown down.

"behold,..." - the Biblical use of this word is to indicate something surprising which follows. Something is about to happen which no one would think was possible.

"tumults,..." - occurs here and in Zech. 14. 13. Heb. "mehuwamah" meaning "destruction arising from confusion and panic". This was the character of the punishment meted out to Israel not long after this prophecy. It is also to be the character of the people of this world when, in the anti-type at the return of Christ, God's wrath comes upon them.

"oppressed,..." - see margin "oppressions". this is the only occurrence of this word. It means "tyranny arising from cruel acts and fraud". See Lev. 19. 13; Deut. 24. 14; for Divine Laws prohibiting such things.

Verse 10

"For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces."

"they know not to do right,..." - Heb. "they have not known to do right". The reason is that dishonesty has been going on for so long that they accept it as a way of life and have not known any other way. This thought is allied to "the oppressed" of the previous verse. If regarded as the A.V. translation of "oppressed", it refers to those who suffered under this dishonesty. The word "oppressions" refers to the methods of dishonesty.

"violence,..." - Heb. "chamac" meaning violence but, by metonymy, "unjust gain".

"robbery." - that taken by force and not only by fraud.

"in their palaces." - this relates to what is "stored up". Their fortresses were set in the middle of the city and every city, for defensive purposes, was built upon a hill to give it height. They stored up their spoil ("robbery" see margin) in their fortresses. The real message by the prophet went deeper than this. They "stored up" treasures in their sense of self security and did not trust in God. Paul had something to say of this in Rom. 2. 5. They were symbolically storing up the wrath of God against themselves. See also the words of Jesus in Matt. 6. 19/21. and Luke 12. 16/21.

Verse 11

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled."

"Therefore..." - Because of what has gone before, and as a result thereof..."

"An adversary..." - Heb. "tsar" meaning "opponent", "enemy" and, if used figuratively, "trouble". This "enemy" or "trouble" was of their own making through their wicked ways. It was everywhere throughout the land.

"he shall bring down..." - in the literal aspect, the enemy would be the king of Assyria who was to take Israel captive. He took away the sovereignty from Israel. See 2 Kings 17. 3 and onwards. Israel was never to regain her former glory. (2 Kings 18. 9/12.)

For the figurative aspect, the phrase "bring down" means to bring to a lower level with reference to pride. The word is used in Joel 3. 2. in the practical meaning but in Obad. 4. the figurative meaning of lowering the pride is used. In Isa. 63. 6. it is used to signify a reducing of strength.

"thy palaces shall be spoiled." - those palaces in which they stored their spoil and their treasures. The Hebrew word translated as "spoiled" is "bazaz" which is used in Isa. 24. 3. in the sense of complete destruction. In other words, that which they had heaped up to themselves would be completely destroyed. If they had heaped up to themselves the wrath of God, this would come with complete destruction.

Verse 12

"Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch."

"Thus saith the LORD;.." - having regard to the fore-going introduction, now hear the pronouncement of God upon you.

"the shepherd..." - the one who cares for his flock. In Gen. 48. 15. God is described as having "fed" Israel all his life. In Psalm 80. 1. an appeal is made to God as a "shepherd" to Israel. The Word "fed" means "shepherded" so the same idea is given in these two verses of God being a shepherd to Israel. In Psa. 77. 20. it is said that God led His people Israel like a flock. See a similar expression of this teaching in Psa. 78. 52. In Jer. 31. 10. it is prophesied that God who had scattered His people Israel will gather them again "as a shepherd does his flock". See also Micah 7. 14.

An analogy is now being drawn of God, the shepherd to Israel, saving out of the mouth of the lion, two legs or a piece of an ear. This was the habit in the days of Amos when any sheep was killed by a marauding animal. It was easy for the owner of a flock to accuse the shepherd of having sold the sheep for his own gain. Therefore the shepherd would rescue a piece of evidence to prove that the animal was indeed killed. In the analogy, this was evidence in advance that Israel would indeed be destroyed when the wrath came and God would do the destroying.

"two legs, or a piece of an ear;.." - it is said that the shepherd "taketh". The Heb. word means "rescueth". The "legs" mentioned here are those parts of the leg from the knee to the ankle. (The shank). This was the worthless part on which there was no meat. Likewise the ear had no nutritional value at all and was not used as food.

A further analogy is that of a broken Israel which shall be saved from

complete annihilation. A remnant would be saved. With their two legs, they had not walked before God in a manner pleasing to Him; with their ears they had not listened to His word. The analogy is that in the years to come, Israel will be saved and will then, by the power of God, walk in His paths and listen to His word. (Jer. 31. 13 et seq.,) The people to whom Amos spoke would not have understood this analogy. To them, the analogy would be that of a shepherd bringing evidence of the complete destruction of an animal over which he had charge.

"out of the mouth of the lion..." - God would save a remnant out of the power of the destroying king of Assyria. In like manner, in the last days, God will save a remnant of Israel from the destroying king of the north. (Zech. 13. 8.)

"so shall the children of Israel be taken out..." - showing the analogy.

"dwell,..in the corner of a bed,.. " - dwell in a divan... The bed referred to here is a couch with a canopy which was used for resting by idle people. By analogy, the city of Damascus, situated as it was on a rounded hill, was a bed of idleness. The Heb. is "in the damask of a couch".

"and in Damascus in a couch." - The Hebrew is difficult here because on the surface of it, it does not make sense. Alternatively it can be rendered "in Damascus, a couch".. Some scholars put "in the damask of a couch" with reference to that cloth which has taken its name from Damascus. There is no reason to believe that damask cloth was made in those days. The reference is to the city and the similarity of its shape to that of a couch with a canopy. It represents, symbolically, idleness - the idleness made possible by extortion from the poor or the idleness which comes from a failure to study the Word of God.

Verse 13

"Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,"

This is an incomplete verse which comes to its finality in the next verse.

"Hear ye,.. " - an address to Israel to "Hear" the words of God. One must first hearken unto the LORD when He speaks.

"and testify..." - having heard, then tell what you have heard. The word is continuative and means "testify a gain and again".

"in the house of Jacob,.. " - Heb. "unto the house of Jacob. Jacob had his name changed to Israel. The lesson then, must be heard in all Israel and this is a warning to Jacob. What was to happen to Israel was a taste of what could happen to Judah.

"the God of hosts". - Heb. "the God of Armies". This is "Yahweh Tz'vaoth", meaning God in His warlike character. This character will be manifested in the Returned Christ when he comes to bring vengeance upon them that know not God. (2 Thess. 1. 8.)

Verse 14

"That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground."

Now comes the message which the people had to hear, and, having heard, had to bear witness of again and again.

"I shall visit the transgressions of Israel..." - see margin. "I will

punish Israel for her transgressions.." God's patience is now at an end. He is "slow to anger" (Nahum 1. 3.) But there is a point of no return which His people had passed. Punishment was now inevitable. The idea of "visiting a sin upon a people" is seen in Exod. 32. 34.

"visit the altars of Bethel:.." - Bethel means "the house of God" (Gen. 28. 19. margin). It was a place where God spoke to Jacob (Israel) and gave a promise to him. (Gen. 35. 9/15.) The prophecy of destruction which Amos uttered must have been given because the people of Israel had desecrated Bethel with false worship. The altars were the centres of worship.

"horns of the altar..." - It was the custom for many centuries to regard the horns of the altar as a place of refuge. These horns were jutting out portions attached to the altar. If the people were in trouble or in danger from their enemies, they would catch hold of the horns of the altar in the belief that no one would touch them. Adonijah and Joab both did this when their lives were threatened. (1 Kings 1. 51; and 2. 28.) The lesson of the prophecy is that when God brings His wrath upon the people, there will be no way nor place of escape. The "horns shall be cut off" indicating the hopelessness of their position.

In the spiritual aspect, the blood of the slain animal was sprinkled on the horns of the altar as an atonement. (Exod. 29. 12.) That there was not going to be "horns" meant that even if they kept the Mosaic Law of sacrifices, there would be no horns upon which to sprinkle the blood and therefore, no atonement for them.

It will be noticed that Amos refers to "the altars" - plural, showing the plurality of altars in Israel. It was an essential feature of Mosaic worship that there was only ONE ALTAR. If the people of Israel had multiplied unto themselves altars, then they had copied the heathen ritual of having many altars. In the significance of the altar, it was a mediator between the worshipper and God. There could be only ONE mediator in so far as Israel was concerned. Relating this teaching to the latter days, we find that there are many different churches all claiming to worship God yet Paul stated emphatically that there is only ONE FAITH. (Ephes. 4. 5.) The modern Christian churches all have altars except the True Christian Faith which has an altar who is Christ and Christ is in heaven acting as their mediator. See Heb. 13. 10/15. and 1 Tim. 2. 5.

"and fall to the ground..." - be utterly cut off and destroyed. A similar occurrence is given in 1 Sam. 5. 3/4. where Dagon, the fish god, fell in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant. It fell to the ground and was broken. This symbolised the future destruction of false worship. In the first aspect at the time of giving the prophecy by Amos, the destruction was to come within a short time but false worship would continue outside of Israel.

Verse 15

"And I will smite the winter house with the summer house: and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD."

Such was the luxury in which the people lived, that they had separate houses for summer and winter. Historians have said that the people had their summer house facing north and the winter house facing south so as to temper the heat and cold. Jehoiakim is recorded as having had a winter house. (Jer. 36. 22.)

"ivory" houses had panelling of ivory or had ivory inlaid into the wood of the doors and walls. It is recorded of Ahab that he had an ivory house. (1 Kings 22. 39.) Archaeologists have unearthed many articles in beautifully carved ivory sometimes decorated with gold leaf and inlaid with precious stones. The designs are purely pagan and show evidence of having come from Egypt. These have all been unearthed in Samaria where Amos speaks.

It is thought that the craftsmen were Phoenicians. In their wealth, the people had a "winter house" in which would be burning a fire for warmth. (Jer. 36. 22. Where they did not have a "summer house", they had a parlour for cooling. (1 Kings 22. 39. see margin). Although the people were very wealthy in worldly goods, they had no spiritual wealth.

"great houses..." - very large houses in which many servants were employed. Rooms were set aside for entertainment. These would all be destroyed.

"shall have an end..." - in the prophecy before us, this remark is said in regard to the "great houses". They can however, apply to all the types of houses because they were all one unit of indulgence in so far as the nation was concerned.

Although the houses gave the nation protection against heat and cold, they would offer no protection from a God of Hosts.

THE PROPHET AMOS

CHAPTER 4.

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Verse 1

"Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink."

"Ye kine of Bashan,.. " - The pastures of Bashan were known to be rich. The name means "soft rich soil" and is used here as symbolical of the fat, indulgent manner of life of the people to whom this prophecy is addressed. Regarding the quality of Bashan as a fat stock producing region, see Deut. 32. 14; Psa. 22. 12; Ezek. 39. 18. These references show that the fat cattle of Bashan had two characteristics, namely, FATNESS and FEROCITY. The prophet now applies these characteristics to "Ye kine of Bashan..." The "kine" here is feminine therefore the prophet was addressing the "women of Samaria." He addresses them as "Ye cows of Bashan".

"which oppress the poor..." - this they did by extortion and heavy taxation. This was forbidden by the Mosaic Law. (Exod. 22. 21.)

"which crush the needy..." - by taking away from them all that they have.

"their masters,.. " - their husbands who supplied their every need. They demanded more and more of their husbands, forcing them to extract something from the poor. It was all for self-indulgence and their husbands were invited to participate.

"let us drink." - This was their indulgence. The sight of a drunken woman is repulsive.

When the women of a nation let go of a high moral standard, the nation itself is doomed. If they are cruel or unkind, the nation is the same. By their lack of strength, mentally and physically, women take a minor part in a nation's affairs yet their influence is profound. As the woman, so the man. See 1 Tim. 5. 6. for Paul's admonition to women with his "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

Verse 2

"The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks."

"The Lord GOD hath sworn..." - When God swears by Himself or by His holiness, then it is to emphasise the absolute certainty of His word. See Amos. 6. 8; and 8. 7. Israel were God's own family. In behaving as they did, they profaned His Holy Name. Therefore, it was by that same holiness that God now made His oath. One cannot help but contrast that with the unholiness of the women the prophet has just described. See Heb. 6. 6. and 13.

"lo,.. " - a warning that what is to follow will surprise them. In their confident self-indulgence, they could not imagine that all this would be taken away.

"the days shall come..." - the days of reckoning are coming and their coming is inevitable. Nothing can stop them.

"take you away with hooks..." - In the obvious meaning, they would be taken suddenly and with violence as a fish is hooked and suddenly taken out of the water with speed and violence. In the next application of the words, they would be taken in great pain by having hooks through the lips. Manasseh, king of Judah, was taken to Babylon in this manner. (2 Chron. 33. 11. where "among

the thorns" means that hooks were driven through his lips while he had to follow in great pain.) See also 2 Kings 21. 1/18.

"fishhooks..." - In his teaching, Jesus used the analogy of fishers to illustrate the work of God in taking out certain people, either for reward or punishment. The taking was inevitable and the fish could not get away. Likewise, in a prophecy concerning the bringing back to Israel of His people in the latter days, God used his prophet Jeremiah to utter the same prophetic parable. (Jer. 16. 16.)

"your posterity..." - let them not think that their posterity would survive them. They would be taken away too.

Verse 3

"And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD."

"the breaches..." - ancient cities had high and powerful gates and walls. An attacking host would not bother to break down a powerful gate which was usually well defended from the battlements, but would use the ram against the walls. Once the walls were broken and a breach was made, they would enter the city and open the gates from the inside. The prophet assumes that the breach will be made and that when the women are taken into captivity, they will not go out by the gate but by the breaches. This shows that in the prophetic outcome, so many breaches will be made in the walls that it will not be necessary to open the gates.

"every cow..." - every fat women.

"that which is before her..." - like a herd of cows which look neither to the right nor the left, the women will go out at the nearest gate. There will be no need to look for a breach because there will be one in front of her.

The words "cow at that which is" has been supplied by the translators and is not in the original. This arises from the supposition that verse 1, being addressed to "ye kine of Bashan", was directed to the women and not to the men. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to the translators to supply "cow" to carry on the idea of women from "kine". Leaving out the words in italics, we get "every(one) before her" meaning everyone will come out and not look either to this side or that. (Afrikaans Bybel has "weg to kyk" - without looking away, this side or that.) How could they turn their heads to look if they had hooks in the lips?

"ye shall cast them into the palace,.." - This is the A.V. rendering. The R.S.V. says "and you shall be cast forth into Harmon". The R.V. says, "ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon.." Moffat says, "each of you headlong, chased to mount Hermon." Bullinger supplies the explanation that a difficulty has arisen as a result of similar spellings. An alternative translation, he suggests, is, "ye shall be cast forth toward Ha-Harmon". No place with the name Ha-Harmon is known so, with different points in the Hebrew, it could mean "Ha-Harmonah" which means "into exile". This gives the sense, "ye women of Bashan (Ye prize cows of Bashan) who live a life of luxury by oppression, will go into exile by being taken there with hooks in your lips so that you will not be able to turn your head one way or the other."

"saith the LORD." - this is part of the pattern of this verse. In his poetic style, Amos concludes each stanza of his poem with a "saith the LORD" to emphasise that this is God's Word and cannot fail.

Verse 4

"Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply your transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:"

Amos turns to irony to drive home a lesson. The people had been particular about their worship at Bethel but it was unacceptable in the sight

of God. There was a history attached to Bethel which made it an important centre for worship. Abraham pitched his tent first at Bethel. (Gen. 13. 3.) The actual place was between Bethel and Hai. Thus his pilgrimage started between two places, one meaning "The house of God" (Bethel) and the other meaning "ruin" (Hai or Ai). When Jacob rose after his dream, he took the stone that he had used for his pillow and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon it. Then he called the place "Bethel". Its former name was Luz. The name of Bethel, therefore, is full of significance and refers to the worship of God in His house. When God gave His message through His prophet Amos, he called upon the people of Bethel to transgress. This could not have failed to strike home through the conscience. If they had sinned where they were, and if they had ignored all the appeals to turn from their sin, how would they behave at Bethel.?

"at Gilgal..." - after the crossing of the river Jordan and after the setting up of the twelve stones, the people encamped in Gilgal. (Josh. 4. 19.) Here it was that God "rolled away the reproach" of Egypt from off them. (Josh. 4. 19.) Because of this "rolling away of the reproach", the place was called, "gilgal".

In the vision which the prophet Ezekiel saw, there were a number of wheels from which came a voice saying, "O, Wheel". The Hebrew for this word is "Galgal" being similar to Gilgal. Thus the vision in this respect, represents the body of Christ from which has been rolled away the reproach of the latter-day Egypt in which they led their spiritual lives.

Thus Yahweh, with great irony, calls upon His people to come to the place of rolling away of the reproach, and when they get there, to transgress. Did they think then that God would once again roll away their reproach? Could they go on sinning forever without punishment? This warning was a very powerful one.

"bring your sacrifices every morning..." - this is addressed with irony and sarcasm to an idolatrous people who worshipped in the pagan "high places" every morning. The pagans were sun worshippers who rose early each morning to worship the sun as it appeared above the horizon. If they built their altars on the top of mountains, they would see the sun rising before the people in the valleys or plains could see it. This was their morning sacrifice. Here is God telling His people to bring their sacrifice to a pagan ritual of worship. The force of the irony of it would strike hard at their conscience.

"and your tithes..." - the Mosaic Law of tithing had been ignored. The people paid their tributes to pagan temple worship. How much better it would have been to have brought their tithes to Bethel to where Jacob had promised to bring a tithe. (Gen. 28. 22.) In telling them to do this, God was showing them how they loved to make a show of their worship instead of doing such things secretly and in humility. For the lesson from Jesus in this connection, see Matt. 6. 1/5.

The lesson is that strict observance to ritual is no substitute for righteous living. They were still under the obligation to behave as the people of God. They were a "holy nation" (Deut. 7. 6.) and should have behaved as such. The going to Bethel should have been motivated by a sincere desire to worship God and should not have been done merely for the sake of doing it. They had no sincere motive in their hearts.

"after three years," - Heb. "after three years of days". Under the Law they were obliged to bring their tithes every three years. Deut. 14. 28. The Law in that verse ends with "and lay it up within thy gates". The people were not laying it up but were using all their wealth for their own fleshly indulgence. When they did go, they made a show of it instead of having the sincerity of true worship in their hearts.

Verse 5

"And offer a service of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD".

"a service of thanksgiving with leaven,..." - the law on this sacrifice is given in Lev. 7. 11/18. This portion of the Law applied to the priests, the law for the people being contained in Lev. 3. 1/17. There were three types of Peace offerings, namely, Thanksgiving, Vow offering and Voluntary offering. The Peace offerings had to be accompanied by unleavened cakes mingled with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour and fried, as well as leavened bread. Without going into great detail, it is sufficient to say that with the Thanksgiving offering, the sacrificer was permitted to eat part of the offering, thus showing him that he was in the privileged position of having fellowship with God. It was a privilege not given to other nations. It belonged to Israel.

"the free offerings..." - the freewill offerings which were not compulsory but could be offered whenever the worshipper had a desire to make an offering. When this happened, then he had to follow the ritual laid down in the law.

There is a powerful lesson in this. The people had turned away from God and had come out of fellowship with Him. God now reminds them of this. They would know well enough what it meant to be called to make a thanksgiving offering and a freewill offering, the latter being made because of one's love for God.

"for so liketh you." - Heb. "so ye love." The people did love to make freewill offerings but they were making them to pagan gods and not to the God of Israel. Also, if they were made to the God of Israel, they were doing it because of show and not because of a genuine desire to worship God.

Verse 6

"And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the LORD"

God now recounts the calamities which He has brought upon Israel which should have caused her to repent.

"cleanness of teeth..." - their teeth had been clean because of famine. Famine was one of the punishments God had warned Israel of when He gave them His Law. (Lev. 26. 26. Deut. 28. 38;) This had come to pass in the days of Elijah. (1 Kings 17. 1.)

"yet ye have not returned unto me,..." - the warnings had been ignored. If the people did not know of the warnings, it would be due to the fact that they had not read their Scriptures. They had not paid attention to the Laws of God. See Isa. 9. 13; Jer. 5. 3; 8. 7; Hos. 5. 15; 6. 1; 7. 14; Joel 2. 12/13; Hag. 2. 17; Zech. 1. 3.

Verse 7

"And also I have withholden the rain from you, when things were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered."

"I have withholden the rain from you..." - as warned in Deut. 28. 24. The rainy season in Israel begins at the end of October and continues through the winter months until the end of April. It is a Mediterranean climate having its rain in winter. The first rains are called the "former rain" and the other are called the "latter rain". If God were to withhold rain for this period, they would get no more for the rest of the year.

"three months to the harvest:..." - this would mean no rain during the time when rain is badly needed to fatten the grain. This would mean crop failure and then famine.

"rain upon one city..." - this happens in mountainous territory such as Judah and Israel. Nevertheless, if it were pronounced, it would be known that this was the hand of God.

"not to rain upon another city:.." - This phenomenon is mentioned by God in His speech to Job. See Job, 38. 26. As in Job so in Amos. Such an event is undoubtedly the work of God. It is a phenomenon which appears in Israel to this day where the cities of the mountains receive rain and the cities of the plains do not. God gives the rain and causes it to fall where He chooses.

"the piece whereupon it rained not withered." - for the sake of clarity it would have been better had the editors or translators inserted a comma between "not" and "withered". This calamity is known to this day and has been known for centuries. The rain falls and the plants respond. Then the rain does not fall and the shoots which came forth as a result of the former rain, are now burnt by the sun and wither. All these things would be a sign to the people that there was a God in heaven and that they should turn to Him for help. The pagans were worshippers of the things of nature, that is, the things of the handiwork of God. If the people of Israel were to turn to pagan gods, then they should learn that even the materials of which these pagan gods were made, were materials made by God. God also controlled all the forces of nature which they worshipped. God was supreme and all-powerful above all these things.

Verse 8

"So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

This verse is a continuation of the previous verse and should be read in conjunction with it.

The picture drawn is one of people wandering from one city to another in search of water. The verb translated as "wandered" has the meaning of "staggered" showing that the people will go with weak and uncertain steps. The lack of water would reduce them to a people without strength. The figurative meaning is there too, namely, that having had no rain, they would not have had that refreshing intake of the Word of God through their neglect of Him. Therefore the time would come when His wrath visited them, that they would go from one to another seeking the LORD but would not find him.

"but they were not satisfied..." - they found little water. Figuratively they would seek for the LORD in vain. See Amos. 8. 11. for the same theme.

"yet..." - in spite of this warning...

"ye have not returned to me." - the impenitent character of Israel.

Verse 9

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD".

"blasting and mildew..." - as warned of in Deut. 28. 22. All the punishments mentioned in this verse were referred to in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple and recorded in 1 Kings 8. 37. Solomon prayed that if these things came to pass and the people turned unto God in prayer, God would forgive. Now this situation had arisen in Israel. The people must have known the inference of Yahweh's words here. With all these troubles upon them, the heathen gods had no solution but in their Scriptures was the great appeal for forgiveness by Solomon, provided the people turned unto God.

"vineyards..." - the vine refers to spiritual Israel. At one time in their history they had increased, but their religion was to die out through their neglect and the invader would destroy their temple.

"fig trees..." - the fig tree refers to political Israel. In the days of Solomon they had been the world's most illustrious kingdom. Now, through their wickedness, they had been reduced to a vassal state.

that he had multiplied unto himself horses. This had been forbidden under the Law of Moses. (Deut. 17. 16.) See the warnings stated in Ezek. 17. 15. See also 1 Kings 4. 26. for the sin of Solomon in this way. Solomon did this to strengthen his cavalry and help him in war. He should have trusted in God rather than in horses. See Psa. 33. 17. for this principle. In the verse before us God tells Israel that He has taken away their horses so as to leave them weak before their enemies. They would have had nothing to fear if they had trusted in Him.

"the stink of your camps..." - See Amos 8. 3. This is a figure of the ravages of war. Their youth had been slain, their horses upon which they had relied for strength had been captured and their camps had reeked of dead bodies. See Joel. 2. 20. The stink in the camps means that their dead would not be buried. This was sufficient for the people of Israel to know that their defeat would be complete. There would be none left to see to burial. The Israelites were very particular about burying the dead and even attended to this act in regard to their enemies. That the dead would be left to lie and rot so that their stink would be noticed meant that Israel would be completely destroyed. Unburied dead was a dreadful thought to Israel.

Verse 11

"I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

Palestine, Lebanon and Syria are earthquake areas. Earthquakes must have occurred in the past and some must have been accompanied by volcanic eruption. Apart from these natural occurrences, there had been other calamities which had caused a large number of deaths comparable with that of the death rolls of Sodom and Gomorrah. Furthermore, the manner of the calamity to come would be the same as that of Sodom and Gomorrah. It would come without warning, suddenly and unexpectedly. A pestilence grows gradually and in the growth period, gives warning of death. A famine comes after a prolonged drought which should warn the people of famine. An earthquake however, gives no warning. It comes and its effect can be devastating. This would be the nature of the punishment of the future.

"a firebrand plucked out of the burning:.." - here again Amos gives a hint of a remnant being saved. The remnant would not restore the kingdom but it would nevertheless be a remnant which would not die. Such remnants had been found in the past when calamity overtook the nation, yet they showed no gratitude to God for this.

"yet have ye not returned unto me,.." - the same pattern of condemnation. This is the FIFTH of such statements. See verses 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Since such calamities had not had the effect of causing them to acknowledge their guilt and turn unto their God, greater punishments than the calamities of the past would overtake them. The prophet comes to this warning in the next verse.

Verse 12

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

"Therefore..." - "because of this..." The prophet now brings the final warning. The people have been reminded of what God did to them in the past. These things were done because they had turned away from Him. Now the end had come.

"thus will I do unto thee..." - in the manner described in the foregoing troubles, God would no longer punish by examples but would bring the full force of His anger to bear upon Israel. The past calamities were numerous and Israel should have asked for pardon. This she had not done. Now God would bring punishment instead of pardon.

Israel was not told what character the punishment would take but she was reminded of the punishments of the past. These had been:-

Verse 6	"cleanness of teeth" (famine)
7	"drought"
9	"blasting and mildew" (locusts)
10	"pestilence"
11	"earthquake" figurative for war.

There is now no call for repentance but a dreadful warning of-----

"prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." - This is the most frightening warning of all Scriptures: The meeting was to be one of judgment. If they had not recognised the hand of God in the past calamities, they would certainly be quite sure that they were meeting Him when the judgments came. See Hos. 13. 7/8.

How was Israel to prepare for such a meeting? The meeting was something greatly to be feared. In Heb. 10. 31. we read, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" and in Heb. 12. 29. "For our God is a consuming fire." There is no man so full of sin that he cannot repent and turn again to God. It is not that God destroys man but that man destroys himself through his wickedness. See the words of the Prophet Hosea "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me (God) is thine help." (Hos. 13. 9.) There was only one answer and that was "turn unto God". Whatever the repentance was, there would be no escaping the punishments which were now certain. But, there was the great promise of "the firebrand plucked out of the burning" - a remnant would be saved.

Verse 13

"For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the mornings darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."

"Lo,..." - the Biblical usage of this expression means a surprise to follow.

"he that formeth the mountains,..." - the heathen were worshippers of nature and Israel had foresaken the God of Israel to worship the heathen gods of nature. Those gods whom the heathens worshipped, namely, the god of the mountains did not make those mountains. Or that mountain which the heathen worshipped as though it were a god, did not make itself. It was the God of Israel who made the very mountains which the people worshipped. See Job chapter 38. Psa. 65. 6/7; Isa. 40. 12; Zech. 12. 1;

"createth the wind..." - see Psa. 135. 7; 147. 18; Jer. 10. 13; 51. 16.

"declareth unto man what is his thought..." - declares to man what is God thinking about. That is to say, God declares to man His Plan and Purpose. The gods of wood and stone of the pagans looked vacantly into space and told mankind nothing of a Plan and Purpose. The mountains, the wind and other phenomena of nature declared nothing unto man of a Plan and Purpose. But the God of Israel did.

"maketh the morning darkness..." - "maketh the dawn and the darkness.." The pagans had their gods of the sun (Ra, the sun-god of Egypt) and ascribed light to him. But it was God, the God of Israel who had created darkness at the time of the Exodus. (Exod. 10. 22; 14. 20;) God could bring darkness upon the earth as He had done against Pharaoh. See Jer. 13. 16. for a declaration of the power of God in this connection. See also Isa. 45. 7.

"the high places of the earth..." - see Deut. 32. 13; 33. 29; Micah. 1. 3; Hab. 3. 19; The pagans worshipped on the high places yet all of these belonged to God. He had created them.

"the LORD,.. " - Yahweh, the memorial name. The Divine Plan and Purpose.

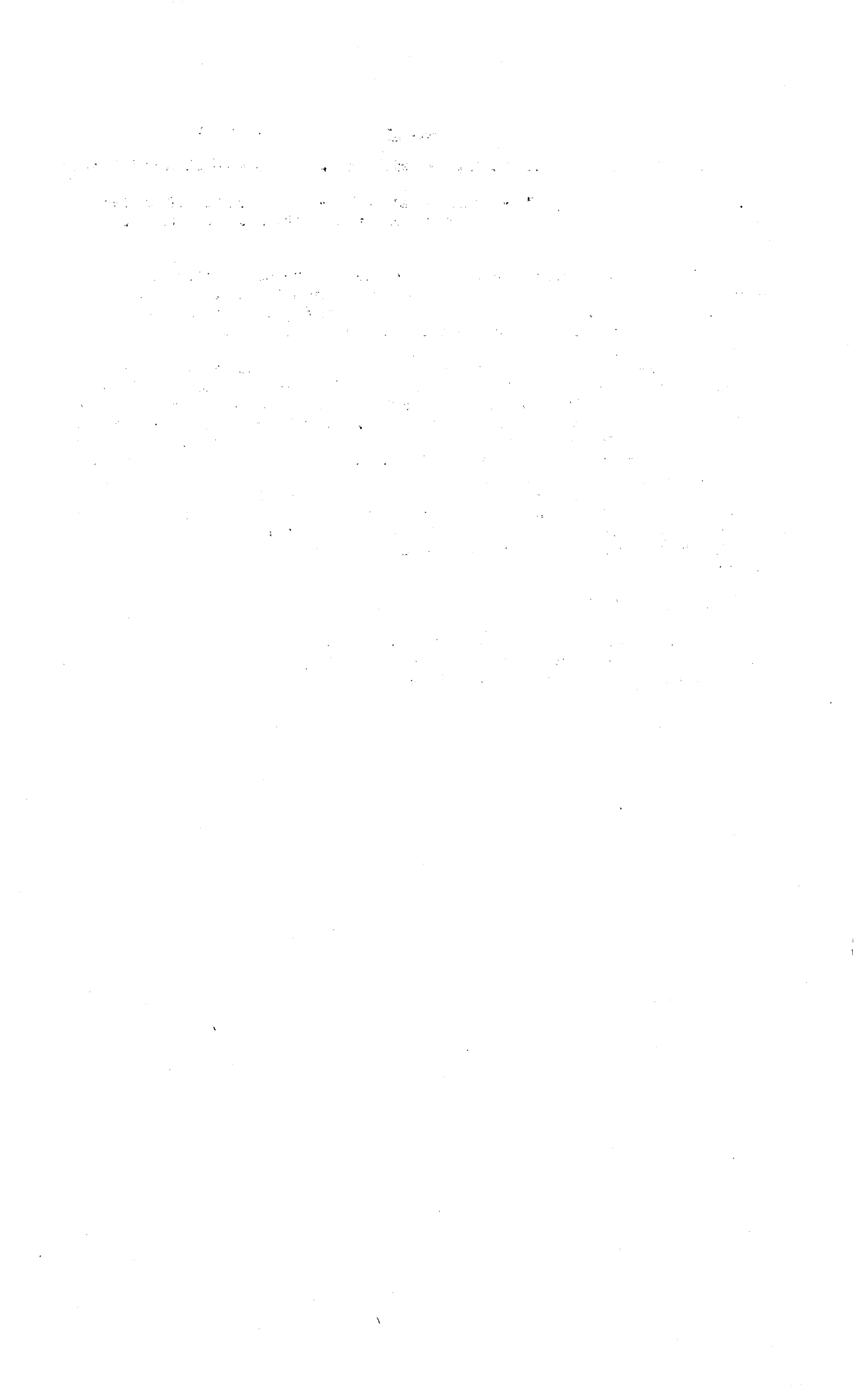
"The God of hosts,.. " - Yahweh Tz'vaoth - the Lord God of Armies. This is the warlike title of God to be manifested by the returned Christ. See 2 Thess. 1. 7/12.

Scholars have expressed doubts as to the genuineness of this last verse and have stated that since it is so out of character with the rest of the chapter, that it must have been inserted at a later date. Most are now agreed as to its antiquity but feel that it was not the work of Amos.

We cannot agree with this view. It is fully in agreement with the character of what has gone before. God has told His people of the warnings He gave them in the past but they did not listen, neither did they repent and turn to Him. Therefore He was going to punish them. And, because of these things, He now had a surprise for them. Whereas the pagans had worshipped the things of nature, God had created all these things, even the phenomenon of light and darkness. Now not only Israel would know, but the whole world would know that there was a God in heaven because of the warlike nature of the punishments to come upon them. This is quite in keeping with the character of other prophets who, uttering the word of God, have ended a prophetic phrase with a statement that the whole world would know that there was a God in Israel. See Ezek. 37. 28; 38. 23;

THE FIRST NATURE HYMN:

Verse 13 which we have just studied, is said to be a "Nature Hymn" and praises God for His power in nature. There are three such hymns, the other two being found in Amos. 5. 8/9; and 9. 5/6.



THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 5

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A LAMENTATION FOR THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

The three verses which follow (vs 1 - 3) are written in what is known in Hebrew as the Qinah Metre. The word "Qinah" is a Hebrew word meaning a "dirge" or a "lamentation". The scansion of the metre is a 3-2 rhythm in alternate lines. That is to say, the first line has three syllables and the second line two. This is repeated in the third and fourth lines and so on to the end of the poem. The effect is to give a halting step as if one is engaged in a funeral march. The nation is sick unto death and Amos is now composing their funeral dirge. While the funeral dirge was in progress, the mourners would beat the breasts or, if accompanied by musical instruments, there would be a solemn beat of a drum.

Verse 1

"Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel."

"Hear ye this word..." - see notes to Amos 3. 1.

"which I take up against you..." - dirges and lamentations were usually taken up for a deceased person. Now Israel is invited to hear its own funeral dirge.

"a lamentation,..." - Heb. "Qiy nah" or "qinah" as explained above. The word occurs in 2 Sam. 1. 17; 2 Chron. 35. 25 (twice); Jer. 7. 29; 9. 10 and 20; Ezek. 2. 10; 19. 1, 14; 26. 17; 27. 2, 32; 28. 12; 32. 2, 16; Amos 8. 10. and in the verse before us. The word "lamentation" appearing in verse 16 comes from a different word, being "nehiy" meaning a "wailing", which is a different thing altogether.

In regard to the phrase "I take up...", Bullinger suggests that the meaning is "I lift up as a burden..." It appears that God takes up a lamentation against Israel but it is a burden to Him. It gives Him no pleasure to condemn His people.

"O house of Israel." - In 3. 1. the whole family of Israel is addressed and the reference there clearly indicates the whole twelve tribes. It must be the same here and includes Judah in the south.

Verse 2

"The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up."

"The virgin of Israel..." - Israel had committed spiritual adultery by following the ritual of the pagan religions. Few people had kept themselves spiritually pure. Those who were unadulterated by false religion and ritual would be regarded as "spiritual virgins" or, as it has been put here, "The virgin of Israel".

"is fallen:..." - spiritual purity had died out in Israel. The tense here is perfect "has fallen" and indicates that her falling has already taken place.

"she shall no more rise:..." - in continuity from the previous phrase - "never to rise again". This prophecy has been fulfilled. The northern kingdom did not rise again. However, this must be read in conjunction with verse 3.

"forsaken upon her land;..." - "lies forsaken upon her land" or "lies cast out upon her land..."

Verse 3

"For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel."

The theme of this particular verse is that found in Deut. 4. 27. which warns Israel of decimation if they forget the covenant and make themselves any graven images. This would be the same as turning to a false worship which the people had done.

That "an hundred" in the first instance and "ten" in the second are to be left shows that Israel would not be completely wiped out but that a remnant would be left. This is the burden of a similar prophecy by God through His prophet Isaiah in Isa. 1. 9. See also Ezek. 12. 16. and Isa. 10. 22. quoted by Paul in Rom. 9. 27.

The suggestion of this verse is that although the punishment would be very great indeed, nevertheless there would be a small remnant left. See Jer. 31. 7/9.

Note that in each case, ONE TENTH shall be left. This was prophesied through Isaiah in Isa. 6. 13.

Verse 4

"For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:"

This verse gives the exhortation which follows the warning of the prophet. This is a statement of mercy from God to His people and is similar to that given in the opening words of verse 6. See also Deut. 30. 1/10; 1 Chron. 28. 9; 2 Chron. 15. 2; Isa. 55. 6/7; Jer. 29. 12/13; Lam. 3. 25; Zeph. 2. 3; They had to seek God above all else.

Here is another of the multitudinous references to the infinite mercy of God who still makes an appeal to His people to turn to Him.

Verse 5

"But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought."

"seek not Bethel,.. " - in contrast to the exhortation of verse 4. Seek God but seek not Bethel, the house of God. See Amos. 4.4. where the people were told to "come to Bethel and transgress..."

"nor enter into Gilgal,.. " - see Hos. 4. 15. and Amos 4. 4. Bethel, Gilgal and Beer-sheba were centres of idolatrous worship. See Hos. 9. 15. In the Hebrew text, there is a figure of speech called Paronomasia which is a rhyming of words in a sentence. The sound of the words is the same but the meanings are different. It reads, "haggilgal galoh yigleh covaith el yiheyeh leawen" which means "Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall surely come to nought". Gilgal, the roller, will roll away.

"pass not to Beer-sheba..." - one would have to "pass through" to get to Beer-sheba in the extreme south. An expression is "from Dan to Beer-sheba" giving the sense of "from north to south". Beer-sheba means "the well of the oath". (Gen. 21. 31. margin.)

The teaching is "turn to God" and do not turn to these places of idolatrous worship for they will come to nought. Also, the Israelites were not prepared to go to Jerusalem to worship because they said it was too far, yet they were prepared to go to Bethel and the other places which were much further away.

Verse 6

"Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it; and there be none to quench it in Bethel."

"Seek the LORD,.. ." - again the exhortation of verse 4.

"ye shall live,.. ." - the promise of verse 4 repeated. It is God's desire that His creatures shall live. "The Lord...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3. 9.)

"lest he break out like fire..." - God will not destroy again by water as in the Flood but will destroy by fire. This will be the punishment if the people do not turn to God. Such a punishment would be brought about by destruction from the enemies which God would bring against His people."

"the house of Joseph,.. ." - Ephraim received the inheritance of Joseph. (Gen. 48. 14.) The northern kingdom was also called Ephraim. Here it is called "Joseph". See 2 Sam. 19. 20; 1 Kings 11. 28; Ezek. 37. 19; Zech. 10. 6.

"there be none to quench it..." - once God begins His punishments, no power on earth can stop it. Therefore the time to seek the LORD is NOW.

"in Bethel." - Bethel was the centre of their idol worship. None of their idols could help them against the GOD of heaven.

Verse 7

"Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth."

An incomplete sentence which ends in verse 9.

"Ye who turn judgment to wormwood..." - It is evident that the gaudy and extravagant ritual followed in the places of worship in Israel, did nothing for the honesty of the people. Their pagan deities were worshipped in ritual only and not in a sincere endeavour to cast out that which was evil and replace it with good. Justice which should be closely adhered to by every worshipper of God, had been turned by the people of Israel into wormwood. This was the symbol of bitterness. Their interpretation of judgment, and their unfair dealing and oppression was bitterness to the poor people of Israel. See Isa. 5. 7; 10. 1; 59. 13/14;

"leave off righteousness..." - righteousness had been cast down to the earth. See Psa. 36. 3; 125. 5; To cast down to the earth is to discard with contempt.

The exhortation for the present day is that there are many regular church goers who will cast down judgment during the week. They may be the honourable of the earth but the honour in which they are held by their fellowmen is due to their wealth and not to their regard for justice. On a smaller scale, those who are ready to speak about others behind their backs, are guilty of injustice, and so to speak is unrighteousness before God. In Rom. 1. 30. "backbiters" are classified with "haters of God". The practice of anything unfair comes under this heading.

Verse 8

The second Nature Hymn. (see verses 4. 13 and 9. 5/6.)

"Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: the LORD is his name:"

Although this verse, in the grammar of its setting, is part of one long sentence starting at verse 7 and ending at verse 9, it is also an interpolation to emphasise the constancy of God. The people have been asked to "turn to God" (verse 6) then they are shown the unrighteousness of their way towards others,

and now the warning of verse 6 is emphasised. If they were to look up into the heavens, they would see the constellation known as the "Pleiades", here given the name of "the seven stars". They would also see the mighty nebula in Orion, one of the few island universes visible to the naked eye. The pagans worshipped these as deities. The Canaanites considered that Baal was the god of the storm and the giver of rain. Now the people are asked to consider these things again. They are the works of God. He created them and He controls them. The prophet shows the people the immense power of God. God also controls the forces of nature. He turns day into night and night into day. He brings the rain and causes it to fall upon the earth. This was the power of the God of Israel. The same power that controls all these things is the same power that will destroy them who turn away from Him.

"Seek him..." - the exhortation continued.

"the seven stars..." - the Pleiades, a well known star group. The Hebrew word translated here as "seven stars" means "cluster". In the R.V. it is rendered "Pleiades". See Job. 9. 9; 38. 31.

"the shadow of death..." - "darkness" of night. God turns the dark night into the brightness of the day, and makes the day dark by bringing night.

"calleteth for the waters of the sea..." - see Amos 9. 6; which is almost a repetition of this verse. See Job. 38. 34; The routine of evaporation followed by rain is also given in Eccles. 1. 7.

"poureth them out..." - causeth it to rain upon the earth. There may be a reminder here of the punishment in the past by the Flood.

If Israel did not "know" God in their hearts, they could, at least, recognise Him in His handiwork. What idol could make the stars or cause rain to fall upon the earth? This was the LORD'S work. More frightening still is the fact that the Great Creator who can do all these wonderful things can also turn His power to punishing His people Israel.

Verse 9

"That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress."

The R.S.V. renders this verse thus:-

"who makes destruction flash forth against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress."

"strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong,.." - Bullinger translates as "that makes destruction to come suddenly to flash upon the strong."

"so that the spoiled..." - so that what happened to the strong will also happen to the fortress, the capital of Israel, and their armies.

The LORD would bring their enemies against them, those enemies whom they had defeated in the past. They would destroy them who had once been strong. This idea is also conveyed in Jer. 37. 10.

Verse 10.

THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

"They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly."

"They hate him that rebuketh..." - the people hated him that "rebuketh". The Hebrew word translated as "rebuketh" is "yakach" meaning "to be right" or, he who speaks the truth. Therefore, it is plain that the people hated the prophets who spoke the truth as they stood in the "gate".

"the gate,.." - this was the place of the greatest concourse. Here one

could meet the greatest number of people at one time because it was the meeting place of judges, kings and traders in the market. Here it was that the nation's announcements were made. It was here that the elders dispensed "justice". See Deut. 25. 7. Job. 5. 4; 31. 21/22; 2 Sam. 15. 2; Prov. 22. 22; Isa. 29. 21; The king of Israel and the king of Judah met at the gate for a consultation 1 Kings 22. 10; and 2 Chron. 18. 9. The Word of God is styled "wisdom" by Solomon. See his remarks about preaching this wisdom in the "chief" place of concourse" In Prov. 1. 20/22.

The prophet Jeremiah was instructed by God to preach in the concourse known as the "gate". Jer. 17. 19; 19. 2; The prophet Isaiah was well aware of the danger of preaching from the "gate". He pointed to the fact that people lay a snare for him who preaches in the "gate". Isa. 29. 21.

The message of Amos can be understood to mean that the people hated him who spoke the TRUTH of the Word of God in the gate. They not only hated the TRUTH which he spoke but they hated him for speaking it. The rulers of the people hated them. Writing as the spirit of Christ within him, David said, "They that sit in the gate speak against me;.." (Psa. 69. 12.) Jesus spoke many words of TRUTH in the gate and the people as well as the council (Sanhedrin) hated him for it.

"abhor him..." - this point is made in the form of a parallelism for emphasis. They abhorred him because he spoke "uprightly". The word translated as "uprightly" comes from "tamiym" meaning "entire" with particular reference to "integrity" and "truth". The meaning is that the people hated the prophets because they spoke in public and gave forth the words of absolute TRUTH, these being God's Words which they spoke.

Verse 11

"Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them."

"Forasmuch therefore..." - For the reason that you have rejected God... by taking advantage of the poor.

"your treading is upon the poor,..." - The poor had been reduced to poverty and the people had made their poverty greater by taking from them..

"burdens of wheat:.." - the word translated as "burdens" means anything lifted up as hands in prayer. This refers to wheat lifted up as a present, either voluntary or enforced. The poor offered presents of wheat, hoping for mercy and lenience. Or, they enforced such presents from the poor, by suggesting that such gifts would bring mercy.

"ye have built houses..." - the houses in this reference were houses of hewn stone. Houses would be built of stone but if hewn stone was used, where each stone was cut to fit another and shaped for that purpose, then the cost of such a house would have been very high indeed. They were able to afford such luxury because of the extortions from the poor. The Divine sentence was that they would not dwell in them because their nation was to be destroyed.

"pleasant vineyards,.." - "vineyards of desire" (see margin)

"ye shall not drink wine of them." - This was Divine retribution. In the past, God had decreed that a man was entitled to live in the house that he had built and was entitled to drink the wine from his vineyard. See Deut. 20. 5/6; Now God reverses His former law because of the wickedness of the people. There is a similarity here with the sin of Ahab who was not permitted

to drink the wine from the vineyard of Naboth. (1 Kings 21. 18/19 and 24.)

There is also a reference to the Law here. See Deut. 28. 30 and 39. where both warnings are given. They would build houses but not live in them. They would plant vineyards but not eat of them.

Verse 12

"For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right."

"transgressions..." - Heb. "pasha" meaning revolt or rebellion against lawful authority. Psa. 51. 13; Prov. 28. 21; Isa. 43. 27. where the rebellion was against God.

"mighty sins..." - the "sins" here come from the Hebrew "chata" which means "to miss the mark" as in Judges 20. 16. Also "to stumble and fall" as in Prov. 19. 2. with the word "sinneth".

"they afflict..." - a continuation of the accusation of affliction.

"take a bribe..." - See Num. 35. 31/32 where the word "satisfaction" means a bribe. This was forbidden by the Law. Exod. 23. 6; Deut. 16. 19. This is allied with "they afflict" in the same verse. The poor were brought before the judges at the gate of the city where they were put on a mockery of a trial. That they were "afflicted" means that they were regarded as being guilty before and during the trial. If they had enough, they could bribe the judges to let them go. This was not uncommon and we find a similar motive in the case of Paul and Felix, the governor before whom he was brought. See Acts. 24. 26.

"turn aside..." - defrauding the poor of justice.

"from their right." - Supplied by the translators and not in the original. It appears to fit the context.

Verse 13

"Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time."

When God's wrath comes upon the people for their sins, it will be a time of calamity. The prudent will keep silent in those days. Eccles. 3. 7; and Micah. 7. 5. The time will be so evil that the wise will not make any protest as to what is happening. At all times the prudent make no comment upon the ways of the wicked. If the prudent made any complaint about the injustice of the courts, they would bring unfair judgments upon themselves. So under the judgments of men or the judgments of God, the prudent keep silent knowing there is no mercy to be expected from man, and with God, His judgments are right.

Verse 14

Invitation to life

"Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken."

"Seek good,.." - the exhortation. In verses 4, "seek ye me"; verse 6 "Seek the LORD"; verse 8 "seek him"; (The LORD is his name) and now "seek good".

"the LORD, the God of hosts shall be with you..." when the day of wrath comes, the LORD God of armies will have mercy upon those that seek him now. The seeking must be done NOW and not when the day of wrath comes.

Complacency in religion can lead to destruction for him who is complacent. In the days of John the Baptist, he said to the people, "think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." The people of Israel in the days of Amos, knew that they were the chosen of God, therefore they looked to God whenever they were in trouble, to help them. But when not in trouble, they made no effort to seek Him. The exhortation for to-day is that we should not comfort ourselves with the knowledge that we are the "seed of Abraham" in terms of Gal. 3. 27/29. The "seed of Abraham" have been called to a high calling and should behave as though they were the "children of God". This behaviour is not solely to be found in religious attendance but is also to be found in the state of one's mind toward God.

Verse 15

"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

"Hate the evil, and love the good,.. " - see Psa. 34. 14; and Psa. 97. 10. Thus the third exhortation comes to an end. One cannot hate the evil without loving the good, and one cannot love the good without hating the evil. One must be put away at the expense of the other. Evil must be condemned in one's heart for the evil that it is. The people hated him who spoke to them, He spoke to them to bring them good. They hated both him and the good which he spoke. They should have hated the evil and not him who had the evil.

"establish judgment in the gate:.." - man would expect the utmost fairness at the Judgment Seat. Therefore it is just that man should try to exercise justice himself. He can try to accomplish this by being fair in all things.

"it may be..." - Amos suggests a slight possibility that Israel, whom he refers to here as "Joseph" once more, may be saved. He may have remembered the words of Moses who was aware of the difficulty Israel would have in turning from her evil ways. Exod. 32. 30.

"the remnant of Joseph." - see note to 5. 6.

Verse 16

Return to lamentation

"Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! Alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing."

This is the third successive verse in which Amos ascribes the authority for his message to "the LORD God of hosts". See verses 14 and 15. Up to the words "saith thus;.." the prophet uses prose. Thereafter he returns to the funeral Qinah metre. This continues into and including verse 17. His terms are

"LORD..." - YAHWEH

"God of hosts..." - Yahweh Tz'vaoth (The God of Armies)

"the Lord,.." - Adonai.

"all the streets..." - all the open places.

"wailing..." - this refers to the mourning for one who has died. See below where "wailing" occurs again in this verse.

"they shall call the husbandman..." - although the singular "husbandman" is used here, it is applicable to many. Not only would the people of the city mourn in the streets, but the farmers too would mourn, and lament. That is to say, the whole nation will be lamenting.

"skilful of lamentation to wailing." - for many centuries, there were

professional mourners who made a business of attending a funeral and crying as though they really meant it. In modern times, this practice has died out but was in evidence in Ireland until recently. Such professional mourners were called "keeners". We find them in the N.T. in Acts. 9. 39. and Mark 5. 38. See also Matt. 9. 23.

The effect of the prophecy of this verse is that such will be the calamity unnamed as yet, which will befall them that mourners, both natural and professional, will be lamenting and wailing, in the streets. Everyone, even the farmers will join in.

Verse 17

"And the vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD".

"The vineyards..." - A vineyard was traditionally, a place of rejoicing and where wine was drunk so as to make one merry. Now it would be a scene of lamentation.

"I will pass through thee,.." - here is the reason for the lamentation. "to pass through" is used in Exod. 12. 12. when God said He would pass through the land and smite all the firstborn of Egypt. As a result of this passing through, "...there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead." (Exod. 12. 30.) It was on that dreadful occasion that God passed OVER the houses of the Israelites. On this occasion of which Amos speaks, the LORD God of hosts will pass THROUGH Israel without slaying the first-born. But the land is to be filled with lamentation and wailing as in a funeral dirge.

Verse 18

THE TWO WOES see Amos 6. 1. for the second "Woe"

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light."

The prophet now turns to two WOES of which this one is the first. The other will be found when we come to chapter 6 verse 1.

"the day of the LORD!.." - this day which is known only to God, is mentioned in Isa. 2. 12; 13. 6 and 9; Ezek. 13. 5; Joel 1. 15; 2. 1; 3. 14; Amos. 5. 18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1. 7; 1. 14; Mal. 4. 5; Also Joel 2. 11 and 31; Ezek. 30. 3; Zech. 14. 1; It is a day which is said to be "near" or "at hand". See also 1 Thess. 5. 2; 2 Thess. 2. 2; 2 Pet. 3. 10; Rev. 1. 10;

It is a day upon which God takes vengeance upon His enemies. On this day, the wrath of God comes upon erring mankind and punishment is more the theme than deliverance. In the day to which Amos points, the destruction is that of the invading hosts of the king of Assyria. But Amos wrote for all ages and his words are as powerful now as they were then. The "day" of the Lord is not far from all of us even now.

"to what end is it for you?.." - The exhortation for us is that we should think again when earnestly desiring to see this great day. None will be worthy to stand before the Returned Christ. "What is it going to avail us?" unless the Great Judge exercises Divine Mercy.

The Hebrew word translated as "desire" is "avah" meaning "to desire for oneself". As Amos points out, the fault lies in the people themselves. They desire this great day of liberation from the enemies of God without realising that they themselves, were counted amongst the enemies of Yahweh. The people knew of the great day of the LORD God Almighty, but they comforted themselves that it was a long way off and would not affect them. This was the message of Ezekiel. See Ezek. 12. 25/28.

"the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light." - This day which the people knew about, they knew of in ignorance. It was a day of darkness to them. They did not realise how seriously they were affected by it. This is also an

exhortation here for those of us who are living in the latter days of Gentile times. If we do not prepare ourselves for the coming of that day, and try to be presentable to the Lord when He comes, it can be regarded as a day of darkness to us. Those who speak of the coming of the Lord without having a knowledge of the Gospel message, must be regarded as seeing that day in darkness. The analogy here is drawn from Exodus 14. 20. where the Pillar of cloud and of fire was a cloud of darkness to the following Egyptians but was a cloud of light to believing Israel.

Verse 19

"As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."

The nation could not avoid the calamity which was overtaking them. If they avoided one calamity, another would overtake them. Amos now draws upon his knowledge of the open country.

"a man did flee from a lion,.. " - God was that lion and the nation had tried to flee from Him.

"a bear met him;.." - Bullinger states that the Syrian bear was fiercer than the lion which used to inhabit that country. Thus, a hint is given regarding the identity of the invader, namely, Assyria. God was gentle but the Assyrian was fierce. The bear referred to inhabited the mountainous regions in the north.

"went into his house,.. " - a natural refuge for the invaded people but there would be no safety there.

"a serpent bit him." - In those days, a serpent's bite was fatal. The message is that death awaited the fugitives.

Verse 20

"Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

The day of the LORD was not understood by the people of Israel. If they thought about it at all, they would consider that God would, on that day, overcome all His enemies and establish Israel. Their own conscience was insufficient for them to realise how sinful they were. Therefore, the day of the LORD was a day of darkness to them.

"even very dark,.. " - the same theme is followed by Isaiah in Isa. 13. 11/12. This is the theme of not knowing the Word of God. But the theme goes a lot more deeply at this stage. The prophet repeats the teaching given by Ezekiel when he shows that in the day of the LORD, no one may be able to rely upon any righteousness he may have had during his lifetime. If he has turned away from God, he will be punished. See Ezek. 34. 12. The way Amos expresses the warning is "very dark, and not brightness in it". There will be no way of escape.

Verse 21

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell your solemn assemblies."

"I hate,.. " - a serious statement to all believers. God hates the worship of the wicked. This is taught in Prov. 21. 27. the last sentence of which is better translated, "...when he bringeth it with evil intent" or "for a wicked purpose". The feast days of the people were the feast days of the heathen. Many were held to induce a god to give the people what they desired. A proper service to God is that which He not only desires but has commanded.

See the comments made by Isaiah in Isa. 1. 11; 66. 3; Jer. 6. 20; Hos. 8. 13;

"I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." - "I will not smell your holy days." That is to say, their worship would not be a sweet smelling savour unto the LORD. See Exod. 29. 18; Lev. 2. 12; 3. 5, 16; 4. 31; and many others. Their solemn assemblies did not give God pleasure.

Verse 22

"Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts."

"meat offerings..." - Heb. "meal offerings..." The Divine rejection of their ritual is continued into this verse.

Note the emphasis of rejection here. "I hate", "I despise", "I will not smell..." "I will not accept..." "I will not regard..." "I will not hear..." The combined effect is to render their entire form of worship unacceptable to God.

Verse 23

"Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

"Take thou away from me..." - lit. "Take thou away from upon me..." giving the sense of "remove the burden from me..." or "your hymns are such a burden I want you to take them off me like removing a burden."

"viols." - probably a form of harp. God did not want to hear their hymns. If any hymn of praise was sung, who was it in praise of? Surely not the God of Israel upon whom Israel had turned their backs. Any hymn of praise would be disregarded. See Isa. 1. 13; See also Amos 8. 3 and 10. God would cut off His people completely from Him because of their wickedness.

The people must have been astonished at the message of Amos in this portion of his prophecy. What were the people to do? They attended the ritual of service. They sung hymns. All was rejected by God. What was the answer to their problem?

Verse 24

"But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

"Let judgment run down..." - man would expect justice from God. Can man then not expect justice from man? He cannot expect such from men because men are evil. Prov. 21. 3; Hos. 6. 6; Micah 6. 8;

From the references quoted, it is seen that mercy towards one's fellow beings must go with acceptable service before God. The principle is that men are the creatures of God. God made them. Therefore any crime committed against men is a crime against the creatures of God and as such, a crime against God. It is true that some men become rich and others remain poor. Those who prosper, do so because of the mercy of God. If man has a talent above others, it is a talent which God gave him and not one which he made for himself. Therefore let those who have been favoured by God have a thought for those not so favoured. It could be that the talent one is given is a trial by God to test a man whether he is humble, whether or not he acknowledges His God and His mercy. Therefore it is not for man to boast that he is some one. He should walk humbly before God and try to help those who are not as favoured as he is.

"as waters,..." - let judgment flow as does water. It flows in a manner which gets around all obstacles. It is not turned aside by bribery. A flow of water has no personal ambition. It satisfies the thirst of the rich as well as the poor.

"the mighty stream." - this was a stream which does not dry up when the rain does not fall. It flows all the year through. Let judgment be like that.

Verse 25

"Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?"

Not all codices regard this verse as a question. If the verse is a question, the obvious answer is "No". If it is a statement, it is in the negative.

"Have ye offered unto me..." - a reminder of the mercy which God extended to them during their wilderness journey. Yet they turned against God. Deut. 32. 17/19; See also Josh. 24. 14. If they did offer such ritual, they did so because they had to and not because of any desire in their hearts.

Verse 26

"But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves."

The translation here is unfortunate because it does not give the true rendering of the Hebrew. The R.S.V. has - "You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images which you made for yourselves."

"Sakkuth..." - this is another name for the Assyrian war-god named Adar-Malek-Saturn who is also known as Ninurta.

"Kaiwan..." - this is also a star-god and was the same as the Babylonian "Saturn", or "Stur".

Both these deities were star-gods invented by the pagans. They must have been recent adoptions by Israel or may have been adopted by their fathers of a previous generation. Such deities were not worshipped by Israel during the exodus. The R.S.V. gets over the difficulty by putting the verb in the future tense but this makes the passage illogical from a point of view of the warnings of Amos. He was pronouncing against them for what they had done and not for what they would do.

"which ye made to yourselves." - compare with God who made everything. The people had to manufacture their own gods. These gods may have been small portable ones similar in size to those made many centuries later by Demetrius and sold at Ephesus. See Acts 19. 24.

Verse 27

"Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts."

The penalty for their sins is to be exile beyond Damascus. Israel was about to be destroyed as a nation and the exact place of their exile was not stated in precise terms. "Beyond Damascus" was all they were to know until the exile happened as it did as recorded in 2 Kings chapter 17.

"beyond Damascus." - see 2 Kings 17. 6.

This time of destruction would be another of the expression "day of the LORD."

"the LORD...the God of hosts." - YAHWEH TZ'VAOTH, the military title of God. The title which when used, indicates the outpouring of the wrath of God upon His enemies. Israel had become the enemies of God through their false worship and their oppression of the poor.

"the mountain of Samaria..." - See note under this heading on 3. 9. The defensive position of Samaria made it as safe as any place could be in those days. It was considered to be impregnable and would foster the feeling of complacency in those who lived there. They trusted in the natural defences of the mountain rather than in God. They felt it would protect them from armies having chariots. 1 Kings 20. 23. Historically it is recorded that it held out against the king of Assyria for three years. (2 Kings 17. 5.)

"named chief of the nations,..." - the Hebrew word translated as "named" is "naqab" meaning "perforated", "punctured", "pierced". This has reference to the "marked" men of society, the upper strata of the highest rank of society. If any had known the words of Moses, they might have given a thought to such "marked men" as appear in Num. 1. 5/16. where the names of "the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel" are given. They were the first of the nation in those days and it is recorded that "the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses". (Num. 1. 54.) It could be that on a bitter note, Amos now compared the present notable ones with the former and showed that they were the "first of the nation" in turning away from God and disobeying Him.

"to whom the house of Israel came." - the people came to such men for advice, justice and help. They also came for instruction in the commandments of God. Could the people of the days of Amos do the same?

Verse 2

"Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?"

The people are invited to look north and to the south and compare certain cities which they see there with their own city.

"Pass ye unto..." - lit. "pass ye over..." i.e. the river Euphrates.

"Calneh..." - called "Calno" by Isaiah. (Isa. 10. 9.) and "Canneh" by Ezekiel. (Ezek. 27. 23.) This was one of four cities built by Nimrod in the land of Shinar, the other three being Babel, Erech and Accad. (Gen. 10. 10.) It lay on the river Tigris (Hiddikel".

"go ye to Hamath the great:..." - this was a Canaanite kingdom. See Gen. 10. 18. It is described in Num. 34. 8. as being a Canaanite city. See also Josh. 13. 5. where it is so described. In describing the apportionment of land between the twelve tribes in the future Kingdom of God, Ezekiel states that Hamath will be in Joseph's portion. (Ezek. 47. 16.)

"Gath of the Philistines,..." - this city lay in the south relative to Samaria. The name means "winepress" and is indicative of the nature of the country. Rehoboam turned it into a border fortress to defend Judah. (2 Chron. 11. 8.) In later years it fell into the hands of the Philistines and later still, was broken down by the young king Uzziah. (2 Chron. 26. 6.) This attack must have destroyed the city because it is not mentioned by Amos in 1. 6/8. See note headed "Gaza..." on 1. 6. Since Amos mentions it now and not in his prophecy of the future of Gaza, Gath must have been in existence at this time.

"be they better than these kingdoms?..." - did the people think that Israel and Judah were better than the three powerful cities just mentioned? A better rendering of the phrase is "Are these kingdoms better than you"?

"their border greater than your border?" - was their territory greater than yours? If they are to be destroyed, how then can you survive? Calneh was destroyed by Assyria about B.C. 701; Hamath fell about B.C. 720; and Gath was destroyed about B.C. 711 by Uzziah, king of Judah.

Verse 3

"Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;"

They put away the evil day deliberately because its warnings were distasteful to them. They put it away by ignoring it and convincing themselves that if it happened at all, it would not be in their lifetime. If it did happen in their lifetime, it would not happen to them.

"the evil day,.. " - the day of calamity.

"cause the seat of violence to come near." - by ignoring the warnings in regard to the evil day, they were hastening its advent. They blinded themselves to the coming of that day so that they could sin in peace without having to deal with a conscience. This wilful ignoring of God's warnings would hasten the coming of the day of retribution.

Verse 4

"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stalls;"

"Lie upon beds of ivory,.. " - ivory is not a material of which beds can be made but it can be used to be inlaid upon the materials of the bed. This would be of enormous expense as Ivory had to come from Dedan. (Ezek. 27. 15.) The "beds" here are "couches" upon which the people reclined lazily as they had their meals. This was considered to be the height of luxury. In former days, people sat at a table to eat. Judges 19. 6; 1 Sam. 20. 5; 2 Kings 4. 10. The attitude in which the people reclined upon couches was one in which no muscular effort was expended at all.

"lambs out of the flock,.. " - this was the choicest food.

"calves out of the midst of the stall." - the youngest veal that could be bought. This was from calves that were the choicest and were kept in the inner part of the stalls where they would be safer from thieves. All this is evidence of the flashily indulgence of the wealthy classes. The poor people could not afford meat but the wealthy people not only bought meat but bought the most expensive meat they could buy. They were given over to a life of complete self-indulgence.

Verse 5

"That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;"

"chant to the sound of the viol,.. " - they gave vocal utterance to an accompaniment by the viol (lute or harp).

They tried to be like the illustrious king David who lived in splendour and comfort. He sang Psalms and played musical instruments. In trying to be like David, they could not, or would not copy him in his humility and his love of God.

"invent to themselves instruments of musick." - composed songs and psalms. They could not match the Psalmist of Israel in this. His music and lyrics were in imperishable verse and his music had an architecture about it. Amos states that they "chant to the sound..." which means that they gave a hurried jumble of words which had little meaning and it was all done to a rhythmic beat.

Relating this to the days in which we are living, we associate it with the cacophony of sound and jumble of words which characterises modern music. The accent is on what is called "beat" (rhythm). It is alarming to realise that

debased music is a sign of a nation's decay. It is also something which hastens the decay. Paul realised the power and influence of music when he wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians, encouraging them to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. (Ephes. 5. 19; Col. 3. 16.) David invented and devised instruments of music for the worship and praise of God. These people did the same for the indulgence of themselves.

Verse 6

"That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

"drink wine in bowls,.. " - the bowls mentioned here are the same as the "basins" used in temple services at the altar. See Exod. 27. 3; 38. 3; Num. 4. 14; 1 Kings 7. 40; 2 Chron. 4. 8, 11, 22. Neh. 7. 70. They are translated as "bowls" in Num. 7. 84; 2 Kings 25. 15; 1 Chron. 28. 17; Jer. 52. 18; Zech. 9. 15; 14. 20. These were the bowls which were used in the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice. There was no deliberate sacrilege in this because the temple worship had ceased long before. The bowls were now available for other uses so instead of being used in the LORD'S service, they were used to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

"anoint themselves with the chief ointments:.." - the act of anointing the body was a customary practice in the Middle East of those days. See 2 Chron. 28. 15; It was when one was in mourning that anointing was not done. (2 Sam. 14. 2.) The oil of the olive tree was the oil used for anointing the body. (Deut. 28. 40.) The ointment for religious anointing of the ark and other things was made from a complicated formula which is given in Exod. 30. 23/25. This ointment was not to be poured upon man. (Deut. 30. 32.) under pain of death. (vs. 33.)

In so far as the people of Israel were concerned, luxury and self-indulgence vied with religion. The wealthy class would spend enormous sums on the most expensive ointments. These were not for health but for personal adornment. Such things had to be brought from foreign countries at great expense. They were bought with money extracted from the poor.

"they are not grieved:.." - they do not care at all. Their thoughts were on themselves and not on others.

"the affliction of Joseph." - When Joseph was stripped of his coat of many colours, he was thrown into a pit in which there was no water. Having done this dastardly deed, his brothers "were not grieved" but "they sat down to eat bread:.." (Gen. 37. 23/25.) Wealth when applied to one's self, shuts out a realisation of the needs of others. It persuades one that if others are alive, they must have enough to eat.

There are two lessons which we who are living in the latter days can learn. They are:-

1. The story unfolded here by Amos reminds us of the banquetting of the king of Babylon as told by Daniel. The message from God was much the same as that which God delivered through Amos. It was, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." (Dan. 5. 26.) "Though art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." How much a similar condemnation applied to Israel. Here was indulgence as "the day of the LORD" approached. Here was an utter disregard of the power of the Most High God of Israel who had given wealth to Belshazzar. The king failed to give God the glory.
2. Let those of the Household of Faith not be complacent in all this. We are of great wealth spiritually. Do we keep this to ourselves and fail to give some of our spiritual riches to others? We are not grieved by the lack of knowledge of the spiritually poor.

Combining the lessons we find that the modern believer may be lying upon his bed of spiritual riches, making no effort to put into practice those things

which he has learnt. How self-indulgent can we be? How spiritually complacent can we be? How lethargic in teaching the Word of God unto others! How unaware of the signs of the times pointing to the return of Christ! We can all listen carefully to the herdsman of Judah, the prophet Amos.

Verse 7

"Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed."

Now, like Belshazzar, their revelry had come to an end and they would go into captivity.

"Therefore..." - this word is often used in Scripture and has a particular application. It means that because of all that the people had done which was unseemly and because of all the things which they should have done but hadn't, the wrath of God was to come upon them. The uses which Amos makes of this word are found in Amos 2. 14; 3. 2, 11; 4. 12; 5. 11, 13, 16, 27; 6. 7, 8; 7. 16, 17; all of which are worthy of study in this way.

"the first that go captive,.." - they were the first of all the nations in wealth will be the first to go into captivity. Ezekiel had this theme too. See Ezek. 9. 6. The captivity would begin at the sanctuary. Israel would go into captivity by those nations whom she had, in the past, held captive. This was also prophesied of Babylon by Isaiah. (Isa. 14. 2.)

"the banquet..." - Heb. "mirzach" meaning "scream" probably of joy as in revelry. The prophet's meaning is that those who scream in revelry will be the first to go into captivity.

"shall be removed." - shall be cut off altogether. A similar usage is found in Hos. 9. 12. translated there as "I depart from them" where God warns that He will depart from them (Ephraim).

Verse 8

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

"the Lord GOD hath sworn..." - God utters an oath by Himself. Since God could not swear by any greater than He, He swore by Himself. For men verily swear by the greater: (Heb. 6. 13 and 16.)

"by himself,.." - Heb. "nephesh" which is translated as "soul" and "life" amongst many other meanings. The essential basis of this word is LIFE so when we read that God has sworn by Himself, we understand that it is like "as the LORD liveth" - "as sure as God lives..."

"I abhor the excellency of Jacob,.." - Jacob is Israel. God hated the exalted state of Israel. It was the pride of Israel that was sinful for it was an unjustifiable pride. It was better to be proud of being a servant of the Most High God rather than be proud of being wealthier than one's fellowmen.

"his palaces:.." - his fortresses. Israel was proud of her impregnability and her military strength.

"will I deliver up..." - lit. "shut up" so that there will be no escape. See Gen. 7. 16. where Noah and his family went into the ark and God "shut him in". God will shut up the city with all that is therein so that none shall escape and nothing can be taken out. All will go into captivity.

"the city..." - wherein was their strength. The place upon which they relied for security. The place of their indulgences.

Verse 9

"And it shall come to pass, if there remains ten men in one house, that they shall die."

"if there remains..." - the sense is more powerful and threatening. It is "if there survive..." which is indicative of a calamity to come. This is a pestilence which is to sweep the city during the siege. (The three year siege. See Note under heading "the mountain of Samaria..." on Amos 6. 1.)

"ten men..." - see Gen. 18. 32. for the promise of God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous men were found there. Amos however, does not mention righteousness in connection with these men. It is not that ten men will be found in a city but ten men in one house. Such was the measure of the wickedness of Israel that after the pestilence, the ten men who might be found would not turn to God - they would not learn their lesson. The reference to "ten men" might have been a reminder to Israel of the mercy of God towards righteousness.

"men..." - in Hebrew, the word here is "enosh" meaning man in his weakness of character and his mortality. Other Hebrew words used to denote "men" are - "adam" meaning of the ground (adamah); "ish" referring to man as a sex; and "geber" meaning man in his strength, a mighty man.

"they shall die". - the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6. 23.)

Verse 10

"And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there any yet with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD."

"a man's uncle shall take him up..." - R.S.V. "And when a man's kinsman, he who burns him,..."

The Israelites, as it was with the people of Judah, were very particular about burial. No dead body would lie unburied if there was any opportunity to bury it. This applied even to the dead bodies of their enemies. (1 Kings 11. 15.) So important was burial to the Jew that he would bury the same day, in haste. It would be wrong to permit the body to corrupt while still unburied. This accounts for the apparent haste in burying Ananias. Acts 5. 6. and verse 10. It was also a calamity for anyone not to be buried when dead.

"he that burneth him,..." - he who cremates the remains. Cremation was not a Hebrew ritual but would be used in this case when so many had died of a pestilence. In Josh. 7. 25. the burning mentioned there refers to the man's possessions being burned and not the man himself. Yet when Saul's head had been removed from his body and sent around the land of the Philistines, the Israelites burned Saul's body. (1 Sam. 31. 12.) Josiah, king of Judah, destroyed the altars of paganism to which Judah had sunk and burnt bones thereon to defile it. (2 Kings 23. 16.) This had been prophesied of him in 1 Kings 13. 2.

"to bring the bones out of the house,..." - this would be the intention of the relative - to enter the house and remove the bones for burial.

"say unto him..." - speak to the survivor whom he found there.

"that is by the sides of the house,..." - the survivor who is found in the farthest part of the house. He alone has survived amongst the ten.

"Is there any yet with thee?..." - "Are there any survivors other than you?"

"he shall say, No!" - he was the last of the ten of a family. All had died and only his uncle, a kinsman, was left to bury the dead.

"Hold thy tongue!.." - an appeal for silence. Great calamities bring a realisation of the power of God. The wicked are angry because of it and turn away in fear.

"we may not make mention of the name of the LORD." - this was the interpretation of the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain,..". (Exod. 20. 7.) The Law did not prevent the use of the Name but forbade the misuse of it. Nevertheless, the Jews still to this day, do not utter the Memorial Name of Yahweh. (LORD). The caution may have been announced in case one of them wanted to use the Name in stating who had brought the calamity upon them. Perhaps this tragedy had come about because of the misuse of the Name and this was no time to incur the wrath of the LORD again. It has been suggested that the people of Israel were buried "in the name of the LORD" so in case this was to be asked for, the petitioner had better not use the memorial name.

Verses 9 and 10 were written in prose which is a change from the normal style of Amos who wrote in verse. The prose sections are 1. 1; 3. 1; 3. 12; 5. 25/27; 6. 9/10; 7. 1 and a portion of 2; 7. 4; 7. 7 and a portion of 8; 7 verses 10, 12/14. 8. 1 and a portion of 2; This change of style plus the severity of the judgments pronounced upon Israel, have led some scholars to deny that Amos wrote these words. The use of prose however, coming suddenly as it does in the prophecy, makes the judgments stand out in sharp outline, drawing the attention to the serious state of man who disobeys God and who turns away from Him. These certainly are the words of Amos.

Verse 11

"For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts."

"behold,..". - a word used in Scripture to indicate that which is to follow immediately upon the use of this word, is something which is unexpected.

"the LORD commandeth,..". - the unexpected is that the LORD will command that the houses be destroyed as well as the people who live in them.

"breaches...". - these are used to indicate big breaks in a wall.

"clefts...". - these are the small breaks. Big breaches for big houses and small clefts for the small houses. It can also mean that as a result of this calamity, the houses would not be inhabited so they would fall into decay. The big houses would have big rents in them and the small houses would have cracks all over.

Verse 12

"Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:"

Two questions are asked and both demand a negative answer except that men do plough with oxen. The sense is, do horses run upon the rocks - No! They would fall and hurt themselves. Without a cloven hoof, they have no stability in their feet. Secondly, do men plough (upon those rocks) with oxen? No! if they did they would damage the plough. They would achieve nothing of value. The prophet is now using metaphorical language when he draws attention to the fact that the people of Israel did just that very thing. They worked to no advantage to themselves because they turned judgment into a gall of bitterness for the people who were judged. They had changed the equitable laws of God into a gall of bitter oppression for the poor people. They had received the fruit of righteousness from God but had turned it into the destroying poison of sin.

The R.S.V. translates this verse as "you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood." Instead of benefitting themselves, they had done irreparable damage. They may as well have made horses

run upon rocks or tried to plough upon those rocks. Both would be stupid things to do. Their behaviour before the God of Israel was foolishness indeed.

"gall..." - the same as in Deut. 29. 18. Heb. "rosh".

"hemlock." - the same as wormwood in Deut. 29. 18.

These references from Deut. 29. verse 18. are very apt indeed in view of the teaching and warning which follows in verses 20 onwards in that chapter. The "rosh" reminds us of the "Rosh" of Ezek. 38. 2. (see margin) and this relates the latter days to the spreading influence of Russia over the earth. Amos could well be painting a picture of the world at the present time when the "day of the LORD" is so near for us all. This world of wickedness is to be destroyed as effectively as was the world to which Amos prophesied.

Verse 13

"Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?"

Some regard the expressions "thing of nought" and "horns" as names of towns (Lodebar of 2 Sam. 9. 4; and Karnaim of Gen. 14. 5.) which Israel had captured. They then boasted that they had taken them by their own strength. The R.V. agrees in its translation with the A.V. but the R.S.V. and MOFFAT translate the names of the cities mentioned.

"horns..." - same as the horns of an altar. The meaning here is that the two cities taken were strong defensive positions and were of advantage to Israel.

Yet, as much as they boasted in their own strength, and for all the strength which they had, they would not be able to withstand the wrath of God when it is poured out upon them. For her boasting, Israel was to be humbled.

Verse 14

"But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness."

"raise up against you a nation..." - God raises up men to do His will, as he raised up Hadad against Solomon; (1 Kings 11. 14;) as well as Rezon. (1 Kings 11. 23.) God has raised up judges; (Judg. 2. 16.) deliverers, (Judges 3. 9.) prophets (Deut. 18. 18.) kings (2 Sam. 7. 8.) priests (1 Sam. 2. 35.) All these men were raised up to perform a certain work for the LORD. This applied to Pharaoh too in the days of the exodus. (Exod. 9. 16.)

"the LORD, the God of hosts..." - the military title of God showing that the nature of the punishment will be that of war and all that follows a war such as pestilence and famine.

"Hamath..." - see note on verse 2.

"unto the river of the wilderness..." - the boundary of the invader from the north. This could not be far enough south to take in Judah and Benjamin. It must then be the river on the east which is the Jordan. This flows north and south from Hebron to the Dead Sea as is described by Moses in Deut. 3. 17. and 4. 49. This is the "sea of Arabah" and Arabah is the name given to the deep depression from Galilee to the Dead Sea.

This invasion took place some forty years later under Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria and the kingdom of Ephraim or, as it was called, Israel, came to an end.

With this prophecy, Amos concludes Part 2 of his work.

THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 7

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P A R T 3 Chapter 7. 1. to 9. 15.

The prophet now tells of FIVE VISIONS which he had received from God. In each case he introduces the visions with the words, "the LORD shewed me." Only the Fifth Vision differs from the usual pattern because the vision is of the LORD Himself. It would be a similitude. These visions commence with chapter 7 at verse 1 and continue to chapter 9 verse 10. In chapter 7 verses 10/17. there is an historical interpolation.

Verse 1

"Thus hath the LORD God shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings."

"he formed grasshoppers..." - God brought locusts...

"in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth..." God had brought these locusts at a time of the late spring when the second shoots of grass had begun. It was this pre-winter crop that helped the people to last through to the next spring. Having out the spring crop, they would take another crop before winter stopped all further growth.

"the latter growth..." - the growth which started after the spring reaping.

"after the king's mowings." - They had not enjoyed all the spring crop because the king had taken tribute from them. This was part of their spring crop. Therefore, the king had taken the first fruits as it were, and now the locusts were about to take that which was so essential to their winter survival. The joy of receiving the first rain after giving away the first mowing is expressed in the expression, "like rain upon the mown grass." (Psa. 72. 6.) In this prophecy, the Psalmist tells of the time when the Returned Christ will restore plenty to a troubled world. The early rain was that which fell during October and is called "the former rain". (Joel. 2. 23.) This would have to keep the crops growing throughout the winter. In summer, in April, the latter rain would fall. See also Joel 2. 23. See also the notes to Amos 4. 7.

The symbol is now complete and the prophet turns to his intercession on behalf of Israel.

Verse 2

"And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."

"they had made an end of eating the grass..." - this statement is a bridge between the vision of verse 1 and the intercession which Amos is about to make. He had seen the full vision and noted the complete destruction of Israel as foretold by the vision. This destruction was as complete as the devastation caused by a swarm of locusts "when they had made an end of eating the grass."

"O, Lord GOD, forgive,..." - the intercession on behalf of Israel. It is important to note that the prophet did not ask that the destruction of the latter growth shall not take place as in the vision. He asked that Israel may be forgiven at the time of the intercession. If such forgiveness was given, the punishment would be withheld.

NOTE: The LXX has an interesting translation of verse 1 which reads, "Thus has

the Lord God shewed me; and, behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog."

In the double aspect of prophecy, this could apply to Israel of the latter days when she is invaded by Gog of the land of Magog according to Ezekiel chapter 38. A further tie-up is found in Joel 1. 4. where the prophet foretells of the time when God will restore the damage which had been caused to Israel throughout her history. In verse 6 of Joel's prophecy, it is written, "For a nation is come upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion." This nation is not Gog of the latter days but Rome with particular reference to Roman Catholic influence. This influence had corrupted the world of Christianity by taking doctrines from Babylon and giving them a Christian character. Likewise, the people of Israel had followed Babylonian beliefs and ritual, thus bringing the wrath of God upon them. The Gog of the latter days is to be brought against Israel because of their spiritual wickedness.

"by whom shall Jacob arise?.." - Margin - "who of Jacob shall stand?" or "who shall raise up Jacob?" Moffat has, "How can Jacob recover?" The Afrikaans is, "Hoe sal Jacob staande bly?" ("How shall Jacob survive?") If God is against Israel, how shall it stand? How can it survive?

"for he is small." - LXX "small in numbers". This does not refer to the small size of Israel as a nation but the small number who would be left after Divine Judgment.

Verse 3

"The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD."

Yahweh repents. The word "repent" means to change one's mind. Here is an indication of the compassion of God for His people. The Divine decree has already gone forward to destroy Jacob and only God could arrest that progress of destruction. Therefore the Divine decree after the change of mind is given, "It shall not be."

Verse 4

THE SECOND VISION

"Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part."

The Second Vision starts with the words, "Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me:.." Whereas the First Vision was destruction by locusts, this is a destruction by fire.

"to contend by fire,.." - fire is the great destroyer. It consumes everything and nothing is left. It is used as a symbol of Divine Judgment at the last day. (2 Pet. 3. 10.) In bringing to a conclusion the great attack on Israel by Gog of the land of Magog, God "will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." (Ezek. 38. 23.) Natural fire is to be feared but when the fire is that brought by God, nothing can withstand it.

"the great deep,.." - Whereas the Hebrews were aware that the earth was poised in space, (Job 26. 7.) they thought that the earth floated upon a vast subterranean ocean which they called "the great sea". This derived its water from the ocean but it was the source of rain, rivers and all surface water. (Eccles. 1. 7.) If this should dry up through fire, all flesh would die. Such an event would cause a great drought and nothing would grow. See Exod. 20. 4. and Gen. 1. 7.

"did eat up a part." - the whole world would not be destroyed but only a part. The word for "part" here is also translated as "portion". In Deut. 32. 9. we get, "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." In this sense, the prophet Jeremiah said, (speaking as the

mouthpiece of God), "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness." (Jer. 12. 10) The particular portion which God intended should come under the fire of His wrath was not identified here but history has shown that it was the boundaries of Israel as then constituted in the northern kingdom.

The sentence is in the past tense but this is not the meaning in the Hebrew original. It is "would have eaten up a part". This would have happened unto it had Amos not intervened and had not God turned away His wrath.

Verse 5

"Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."

Once again the prophet intercedes. The plea is the same as that given in verse 2. How could the remnant of Israel survive if God did not withhold His hand? So few would be left that recovery would be impossible.

Verse 6

"The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD."

Once again Yahweh arrests His judgment. Compare with verse 3.

History records that Tiglath-Pileser invaded the country and laid it waste. He destroyed as fire destroyed, this being characteristic of the savagery in combat of those days. It is to be observed that modern savagery is just as intense although not by the same primitive means. The bombing of cities and the wholesale slaughter of women and children is no better than the appalling mass slaughter of Bible days. Having conquered Israel, the invader turned away to devote his attention to other lands, thus leaving the capital city untouched. When it all happened over 40 years later, many would find a political or military reason for sparing the city but few would see in it the hand of God, answering the prayers of Amos of long ago.

Verse 7

THE THIRD VISION

"Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand."

The vision was of the Lord standing on or by a wall with a plummet in his hand. A "plumbline" is a line with a lead at the bottom, to hold the line taut and indicate the vertical. (Taken from "plumbum" being Latin for "lead".) That the Lord stood on or by the wall with a plumbline in His hand showed that God had made the wall upright. His standing by or on it showed Divine guidance to whatever was represented by the wall. Now He was going to destroy it. Walls built without mortar to hold the constituent stones together, would fall apart. The stones would shift in time so it was dangerous to leave them unattended. It was better to break them down.

"Thus he shewed me..." - God knew the wall had shifted out of true but he had to shew Amos that it was out of line.

"with a plumbline in his hand." - God was testing Israel. In all strata (or courses) of society, God was testing them. He found imperfections and blemishes in "the fat women of Israel" ("ye kine of Bashan") (4. 3.) the indolent wealthy class ("that lie on beds of ivory") (6. 4/7.) the judges ("afflict the just, they take a bribe,..") (5. 12.)

A plumbline shows the true vertical. One cannot argue against it. For this reason, Amos could see for himself that Israel was wicked and corrupt. He did not intercede. He was content that the judgment of God to come upon the people of Israel was justified. The wall indeed, was about to collapse and rather than build it up by repairing it, God would destroy it altogether.

Verse 8

"And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:"

The "plumbline" in Scripture, is used as a symbol of punishment and judgment. (2 Kings 21. 13; Isa. 28. 17; Zech. 4. 10;) This is a figure of the judgment determined upon Israel for their wickedness. The house of Israel had been built upright in the beginning. Now it was out of true. The LORD would destroy an edifice which was no longer worthy to stand.

"in the midst of my people Israel:" - this was where the plumbline was to be set. But the vision at the beginning, showed the Lord standing on or by a wall. Therefore, connecting the two statements, we see that the "wall" was "His people Israel".

"I will not again pass by them any more." - "I will not deliver them any more". The word for "pass" is the Heb. "abar" meaning to carry over, to bring over.

Verse 9

"And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise up against the house of Jereboam with the sword."

"the high places..." - a copy of heathen worship where the people used to climb to the top of the mountain to see the sun rise. Being sun worshippers, they built "high places" in the high places. Thus, in the prophecy before us, the false worship of Israel was to be destroyed. This would cover the houses of worship at Bethel and Dan which were now to be contrasted with the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem.

"Isaac..." - God refers to Isaac by calling Israel by his name. This could very well be a reference to the meaning of his name - "laughter" - with reference to the Great Promise of God to His people in the days of Isaac. The people had forgotten these promises. Now they were to get a bitter reminder.

"the sanctuaries of Israel..." - the places set apart for worship. The ritual followed was of pagan origin. See Amos. 4.4. where Bethel and Gilgal are held in contempt for the worship offered there.

"the house of Jereboam..." - Israel at that time was ruled by Jereboam the 2nd. He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. (2 Kings 14. 24.) Nevertheless, in spite of this, God saved Israel through Jereboam's hand (vs 27). The people of Israel no doubt, gave the credit to Jereboam II but they were to learn that without God's help, the house of Jereboam II would not survive.

"with the sword." - an invader would come against Israel, to battle, and Israel would be defeated.

Verse 10

THE HISTORICAL INTERPOLATION

"Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jereboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words."

"Amaziah the priest of Bethel..." - the ordained priesthood was in Judah so Amaziah must have been an idolatrous priest, elected in Israel according to the rules laid down by Jereboam I as recorded in 1 Kings 12. 31/33. For the iniquitous nature of Bethel see Amos 3. 14; 4. 4; and 5. 5; The priest must have seen in the warnings of Amos a threat to his exalted position of high priest.

"hath conspired against thee (the king Jereboam II)"... - Amaziah uses deceit and twisting of words to silence Amos. If Amos had really conspired

against the king, he could have been put to death. In N.T. times, we read of a man named Demetrius who saw in the preaching of Paul a threat to the continuance of his business as a manufacturer of gods for purpose of worship. See Acts 19. 24/27. When Jeremiah prophesied that those who remained in Jerusalem would die and those who went into the Chaldean (Babylonian) captivity would live, the princes of the provinces said to the king, "...let this man be put to death.." (Jer. 38. 4.) And again, in N.T. days, the same distortion was tried against Jesus by suggesting that he was speaking words against Caesar. (John 19. 12.) See also the unfair distortions uttered against Paul and his companions in Acts 16. 20/21; and 17. 6/7.

"in the midst of Israel,.. " - in the middle of the nation, openly, for all the people to hear. It was because of this that the words of Amos had come to the ears of Amaziah.

"the land is not able to bear all his words." - the people cannot endure all his prophecy. No one likes to hear doom. It is much better to hear good things.

It is interesting to note the poetic style of Amos in this verse. It is Amaziah who speaks and he does not speak God's words. Therefore Amos records his words in prose and not in verse. In the next verse, (vs 11) Amaziah quotes the words spoken by Amos and, in recording this portion, Amos goes back into verse again.

Verse 11

"For thus Amos saith, Jereboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land."

Amaziah now repeats his version of what Amos said. He turns it directly to the king. There is no doubt that this is what Amos uttered but the point to observe is that although Amos did the uttering, it was God who spoke through him. Amos had made it abundantly clear on many occasions, "And the LORD said unto me,.. " and "Then said the LORD,.. " (vs 8. above). Amaziah was a fraudulent priest and saw only fraud in others. He did not interpret the true message of God through Amos but distorted it.

"Jereboam shall die by the sword..." - Israel represented by their king would die by the sword. That was the message. Amos did not refer to the king only but to his "house". This meant Israel, personified by their king.

"Israel shall surely be led away captive..." - this is true but it is a distortion. It should have been quoted in its entirety by adding the reasons for such a punishment - the oppression, the bribery, the injustice, the overburden of taxation upon the poor, the indolence and self-indulgence of the people, and, above all, their false worship. By withholding this essential back-ground to what Amos had said, Amaziah sought to establish his own position and obviate the necessity of his having to supply a reason as to why he did not call the people to account for their wrong-doings and their false worship. It is insufficient to tell the truth. To establish the true position, the WHOLE TRUTH must be told.

Verse 12

"Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:"

"O thou seer,.. " - one finds it hard not to feel that this statement was uttered in a contemptuous manner. Beforetime, a prophet was called a "seer" (1 Sam. 9. 9.)

"go, flee thee away..." - there are two instructions here. One is to go, (depart, go away) and the other is to flee. Again Amos records this speech by Amaziah in prose. Amos is told to go, to get away from Israel and he is also told how to go. He must run away as if from the danger threatening his life.

The Hebrew word "barach" translated as "flee" means to depart with haste, suddenly, without wasting a moment. This would tell Amos that his life was immediately threatened so he had better leave Israel without delay.

"there eat bread,.. " - Amaziah was under the impression that Amos prophesied for a living or he was in the pay of the king of Judah to come north and upset Israel. Amos is told, "Hurry back to Israel and earn your living there. You cannot earn that sort of living here."

"and prophesy there." - teach those things which interest you but teach them in Judah and not here. Bethel, the "house of God" is not the place in which to preach the Word of God.

In his criticism of Amos, Amaziah was condemning himself. He earned a good living being a High Priest in Israel and he did not want his living threatened by such as Amos. The accusation he hurled at Amos was now bouncing back at him. He should have been teaching the Word of God in the House of God (Bethel) but he did not know the Word of God so could not preach it.

When we look back into past history, we realise that there have been many such as Amaziah who have threatened the lives of those who preached the Gospel. The Inquisition was a scourge which should not have been associated with anyone who pretended to be a Christian. Before Christ comes, the latter-day application of the prophecy of Amos indicates that the saints in Christ Jesus will be called to account for preaching those things which are unpalatable to an unbelieving world.

Verse 13

"But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court."

This verse is in the form of a parallelism without being expressed in metric form. It is still in prose. "Prophesy there but do not prophesy here". "There you can earn your living, but here you will die." Now follows the parallelism of this verse. "Bethel is not the place for the word of God; Bethel is the place where the king's voice is heard."

"the king's chapel..." - the king's sanctuary.

"the king's court." - a state church. The Hebrew word "bayith" translated as "court" is also translated as "palace" in many other references. e.g. 2 Chron. 9. 11; The King's palace however, was at Samaria so it cannot refer to his court or the palace where the court was. It carries the sense of being a place where the king is present and figuratively, this makes Bethel a place of worship belonging to the State and not to God. In like manner, the Roman Catholic cathedrals which are found in profusion over Europe, are owned by the Church but the religion is a State religion and no one belonging to any other religion, is permitted to work for the State. In countries like Spain, it is a crime against the state to preach the tenets of any religion other than Roman Catholic. If we apply this principle to the words of Amaziah, we see that he is reminding Amos that the religion in Israel is a State religion and the things that Amos was preaching, are not believed in by the State. Therefore, Amos is not allowed to preach in this manner and certainly not at Bethel. This is the heart of the State Religion and no one who is not ordained by the State to preach, may preach there. Put in another way, what Amaziah said was, "Do not preach at Bethel because it is the centre of our State religion and you are not ordained to preach in our sanctuaries."

Verse 14

"Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:"

Amos does not show any fear of the priest. He establishes his authority and shows how he was called to his work by God. He was not a prophet by

profession but by his calling by God. The Hebrew form of word order is interesting because of its emphasis on what Amos was. This is shown by the position of the pronoun "I". The order is, "No prophet I, and no prophet's son, I; for a herdsman I, and dresser of sycomores." (See Zech. 13. 5. for similar words.) There is no verb in the Hebrew original, so it is not known whether it is in the past or present tense that the prophet says "No prophet I". From the context, it should be obvious that Amos is speaking about the past. He WAS no prophet and he WAS not a prophet's son, but he WAS a herdsman when God called him. The A.V. supplies the past tense but the R.S.V. gives the present. The R.V. gives the past in the translation but the present as a margin reference. The Afrikaans is in the past tense. Moffat prefers the present.

"a prophet's son;.." - Amos denies that he was "a prophet's son". This does not refer to filial descent from a father who had been a prophet. It means that Amos was not a member of a school of prophets, a prophetic guild. This association was known in O.T. days as "a company of prophets" in 1 Sam. 10. 5; "all the prophets" in 1 Kings 22. 10; and in verse 12; and "sons of the prophets" in 2 Kings 4. 38. These prophets were men who were taught Judaism as it was then understood and they preached accordingly. It was not necessary for them to prophesy continually to qualify for the title of "prophet". They did not have to fore-tell future events.

It is to be noted that Amos did not deny that he was a prophet now. This would substantiate our assumption that this verse is in the past and not in the present. It was considered a great honour in those days to be called by God to be a prophet. Amos prophesied with full vigour and courage and would certainly have claimed to have been a prophet in the past if this had been the case. Amos is not concerned with what he had been in the past. He makes the most of what he is now to draw a neat comparison between himself as the prophet ordained of God, and Amaziah, the priest ordained by Jereboam II. This now supplies a challenge to Amaziah not to interfere with the work that Amos had been called upon to do but to listen to his message and learn from it. If he hinders the work of God through the prophet Amos, retribution will come upon Amaziah. It is interesting to note how Amos develops this argument.

"gatherer of sycomore fruit." - cultivator of fig mulberries.

Verse 15

"And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."

An echo of this development in the debate is found in Acts 5. 29. where Peter and the apostles had been forbidden to preach the gospel. Their reply was "We ought to obey God rather than men."

As Amos followed the flock, he was called by God to tend another and wayward flock, the people of Israel.

"my people Israel." - Amaziah had told Amos that there was a State religion at Bethel which meant that, spiritually, the people belonged to the State. But now God had told Amos that the people of Israel were "my people". Who then had the greater authority over them?

Verse 16

"Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac."

Once again a parallel with that of a previous verse. Yahweh called him from his flock and told him to come to God's flock. You Amaziah have told me to go back to my flock and not to talk to God's flock.

God sent Amos to Israel.	Amaziah sends Amos back again.
God said, Prophesy;	Amaziah said Do NOT prophesy.

As Amos develops his reply, Amaziah is shown that he has a choice between

continuing in the office to which he was ordained by Jereboam II or resigning that Office and serving the God of Israel whom he pretended to serve. Either he submitted to God or he stood in opposition to Him. If he silenced Amos, he silenced God.

"drop not thy word..." - "drop" is used here as in Ezek. 20. 46. and 21. 2; Joel 3. 18. Amos uses it again in Amos 9. 13. A prophet dispenses the Word of God a drop at a time and does not flood the listeners with much speaking at one time. The message is long, continuous and pleasant to the ears.

Verse 17

"Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of this land."

"Therefore..." - a word to be feared when it comes from God. See note on 6. 7.

Having told Amaziah of his calling by God and how it would be wrong for him to interfere with God's work, Amos now turns the prophecy against the priest. Amaziah had told Amos what he must do - he must flee, he must cease from preaching the Word of God. Amos now tells Amaziah something about himself. His short statement is a masterpiece of condensation. Note the following groups, "thy wife...thy sons...thy daughters...thy land...thou... Israel." The punishments are, "an harlot...fall by the sword...divided by a line...die...go into captivity."

From this Amaziah would learn that

1. his wife would be raped,
2. his sons would be slain,
3. his daughters would be slain,
4. his land would be divided,
5. he would die,
6. the land would be polluted,
7. Israel would go into captivity.

The seven punishments show the completeness of the retribution to come. All these are the horrors of war. The Assyrians did not normally kill women but took them off as wives for the soldiers. With Amaziah's wife and daughters however, they were to die. Furthermore whereas Amaziah thought Amos was polluting the land of Israel, the land would indeed be polluted by the invader and Amaziah would die in such a land.

Amaziah must have wished above all other things at this stage that he had not remonstrated with Amos. One can imagine that he was left speechless for it is not recorded that he said a word.

In the anti-type, a similar punishment awaits an unbelieving and disobedient world which is wrongly led by their priests who do not know God.

THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 8

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Verse 1 THE FOURTH VISION The basket of summer fruit.

"Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit."

After the historical interlude of Amos 7. 10/17. the prophet continues with the Fourth of the Divine Visions which were given to him. The vision of "summer fruit" is difficult to understand at the first reading because it would appear to refer to something pleasant. The lesson lies in a play on words. In Hebrew, "summer fruit" is "kayis" and it represents the end ("kes") of Israel. There would be no more pleasure after the gathering of the summer fruit. See verse 2.

The Middle East and in particular the land occupied by Israel at that time, was a hot, dry and dusty land during the summer. At the end of that summer, any plant which had survived would yield its fruit and, after the picking, would be bare and stripped. It would then await the first rains of the rainy winter and these would fall in October/November. It was at this time that the people of Israel started their New Year. It was then that the new life-giving rains would fall.

Verse 2

"And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."

As explained above, the Hebrew for "summer fruit" contains a play on words which is carried on into the word "end" which the LORD said had come upon His people of Israel. This people who had lived in the pursuit of pleasure had now taken all the pleasure they were to get out of Israel. The last basket of summer fruit had been picked and the trees were bare and stripped. They looked as bleak and parched as the country in which they grew. The people would wait in vain for the former rain. The life-giving showers would not come. Jeremiah had a similar lament for the people of Judah. (Jer. 8. 20. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.")

There is a possibility that Amos preached this Woe at a time when the people had come to Bethel to celebrate their New Year festival. There is good reason to think so in view of the reference to "the songs of the temple" in the next verse. At a time when all Israel would be assembled, looking for the "former rain" which would herald the New Beginning, Amos came with his prophecy saying, "It is the end for Israel! It is the end!"

In this verse the prophet is addressed by name. It appeared once before in 7.8. when God spoke, using the prophet's name. It is interesting to note that at the end of the two verses where God addresses the prophet by name, the warning is given, "I will not again pass by them any more:" There is a suggestion here that the final warning shows that God is gradually becoming unwilling to forgive the continual disobedience of Israel. Therefore he calls upon the prophet by name so as to make use of his name. This means little to us in English unless we regard the use of the word in Hebrew. In this language, it would read, "What do you see Burden Bearer? I will not again pass by them any more." Put this way, we see that God is leading the prophet up to the time when God's people of Israel will have to bear their burden of punishment because God will not pass them by any more. They had indulged in pleasure and had filled themselves with the luxuries of the land. This was symbolised in the "basket of summer fruit". This would be brought to an end - the end of summer and the end of the fruit season, the end of the product of summer and the end of the pleasure that fruit brings. The end of the pleasure, luxury and wealth had come for Israel. (Note: Fruit was part of the food of the wealthy, and meat was the other part.) The time was now ripe.

Verse 3

"And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence."

"songs..." - the Hebrew ("shuwr") can be used for "minstrels" or "singing women". See 1 Sam. 18. 6. for this usage. See also 1 Chron. 15. 16. and 2 Chron. 35. 25. The "singing women" who gave pleasure would howl in that day.

"dead bodies..." - corpses which would be left for burial.

"cast them forth with silence." - the dead bodies would be cast out without a proper burial. This clause ends with a poetic style of great drama - "they shall cast them forth -----HUSH!" indicating that after the assault, there will be silence over all Israel.

The songs of joy will suddenly be replaced by shrieks of misery. The scene is in the temple, the highest point of the city and a place which was thought to be powerful enough to resist assault. Here would come their misery. That the city once thronged with life and would suddenly be still with dead bodies everywhere was symbolised in the fruit trees, stripped of their fruit, and were now threadbare and barren.

Verse 4

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,"

This is an incomplete verse which is continued into verse 5. The prophet develops the theme of the Fourth Vision. He shows why this terrible judgment would come upon them. In this verse, it was because they had exploited the poor and the needy.

"ye that swallow up..." - Heb. ye that pant after. As a wild beast pants after its prey.

"the poor of the land..." - Heb. the meek of the land. That means those people who through poverty and simplicity, could not defend themselves. The poor are described as being "of the land". It does not say, "the poor of Israel" but the poor of the land. This means that to divide the land between them and lay boundary to boundary, the wealthy had to eject the poor and the meek and lay claim to the land themselves. This was contrary to the Law of Moses which forbade the interference with the neighbour's landmark. Deut. 19. 14; 27. 17; Prov. 22. 28; 23. 10; See also Job. 24. 2.

Verse 5

Insatiable Greed

"Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"

When will the new moon be gone..." - The people attended the temple for the ritual of worship because they had to. It was the proper thing to do but they did not go there with any desire in their hearts. During new moon they had a festival during which no business could be conducted. How could they sell corn at New Moon when a festival had to be attended on that day? The same with the sabbath. How could they sell wheat when they had to remain indoors all day. Their religion was a burden to them and interfered with the making of money.

They thought more of gaining a gain (profit) than gaining a knowledge of the Word of God.

"making the ephah small..." - The ephah was a measure equal to about one and one-tenth an English bushel.

"the shekel great,.." - a shekel was fixed by weight. In 1 Kings 20. 39. it is said "thou shalt pay a talent of silver." The margin has it, "thou shalt weigh a talent of silver." Thus money was fixed by weight. They made the shekel great by asking a certain weight of money then, when it was weighed out, they would falsify the weights to get more shekels.

"falsify the balances..." - Balances could be adjusted so as to appear to be in balance whereas they were loaded on one side to the advantage of the seller. The weights which were added to one side of the balance were hollowed so as to be lighter than they should be. All this was done by deceit.

All these things were an abomination to the LORD. This is set out very clearly in Deut. 25. 13/16.

The prophet associates these dishonest practices in the same verse with an impatience regarding prescribed days of worship such as new moon and sabbaths. This is appropriate because it is found that if a man is dishonest about his religion he is dishonest about his business life. Fraud and an irreligious life go hand in hand. If a man cannot be honest with his God he cannot be honest with his fellow men.

Verse 6

"That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"

"buy the poor for silver..." - the answer is now given to the question asked at the beginning of verse 5, "when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? By doing as many dishonest things as possible, they had deprived the "poor" (the afflicted) of their land and their goods. Now they could buy that same afflicted person for silver. See notes under this heading on 2. 6.

"a pair of shoes;.." - see notes on 2. 6. "Shoes" here means "sandals".

"the refuse for wheat?" - lit. "the falling of wheat" This referred to that which fell through the sieve either as bran or as empty wheat shells with no food in them at all. This would normally be fed to animals for bulk but was being sold to the poor and oppressed people. There were no Food Adulteration laws in those days.

Verse 7

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

"the excellency of Jacob,.." - the glory of Jacob. God was the Glory of Israel. He was their Strength. (1 Sam. 15. 29.) Therefore in swearing by the excellency of Jacob, God is swearing by Himself.

"I will not forget their works." - As long as Israel kept their evil heart, the LORD would not forget their evil ways. Once they showed a change of heart, He would remember their iniquity no more. (Jer. 31. 34.) The "oath" mentioned here shows the Divine Determination not to allow Israel to go unpunished.

This accusation which Amos levels against Israel of his day can also be addressed to the world in which we now live. The cases are parallel. This is the age of the "take-over bid" to monopolise and to maintain prices at a fictitious level. Retail Price Maintenance is the practice in many industries to ensure that the best possible return is derived from the sale of goods. False advertising leads people to buy that which they do not want nor need. Attractive labelling and packaging induces people to buy at a price which is

above true value. High pressure advertising by radio and screen find the gullible who will part with their money. This business dishonesty is accepted by all as a normal way of business life.

Verse 8

"Shall not the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt."

"Shall not the land..." - "Will there not be an earthquake..." A great calamity such as this would make the whole land tremble and the metaphorical land, (the people) to tremble with fear. The trembling would be continued as a river in flood. It would not be momentary but would last for some time.

"it shall rise up..." - the "rising" is stated to be as a flood. It would burst its banks like a river. This must be understood to be metaphorical of a calamity which is to strike Israel. The analogy of a flood arising from the burst banks of a river is used in Scripture to indicate an attack by a powerful nation. (See Isa. 8. 7/8.) The analogy of an earthquake refers to a clash of arms between nations. This is found in Revelation 6. 12; 11. 13; and 16. 18. It can also describe a revolution.

"it shall be cast out and drowned..." - Israel will be destroyed by this calamity.

"as (by) the flood of Egypt." - In the same manner as the river of Egypt, the Nile, overflows its banks and nothing can prevent it from doing so. In like manner, nothing can prevent the coming of the invader who will take time over his visitation as a flood takes time before it subsides.

Verse 9

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:"

This verse is part of a whole sentence which ends at verse 10.

"the sun to go down at noon..." - there had been a total eclipse of the sun at Nineveh in B.C. 763. It must have been talked about for some years later so the people would not be unaware of the analogous meaning of the prophet's words. Yahweh is not warning the people of another total eclipse to come but is warning them of an even more dangerous form of darkness. This would be a collapse of the system of worship and a withdrawal by God from His people.

That the sun was to go down at "noon" showed that the spiritual darkness to come would be at its greatest. Furthermore, if the people worshipped the sun on the "high places" as the heathen did, there would be a sign for them that the Lord GOD of Israel was more powerful than anything that the heathen people worshipped.

The "signs in the sun, moon and stars" is an analogy used in Scripture to warn the people for their wickedness in turning to false faiths. See Isa. 13. 10; 59. 9/10; Jer. 15. 9; Joel 2. 2; 3. 15; Amos 5. 18; Micah. 3. 6; Matt. 24. 29; Luke 21. 25; Rev. 6. 12; 8. 12.

Bishop Ussher stated that a few years after this prophecy (he says about 11 years) there were two great eclipses, one at the feast of tabernacles and the other just before the passover. These however, were not the subject of this prophecy. God is more concerned with the spiritual wickedness of Israel and the prophecy foretells the great punishment that is to come upon them.

"darken the earth in a clear day." - The LORD would bring a spiritual darkness upon His people. The day would be "clear". That is to say, the WORD of God would be shining in Israel if the people would care to turn to it but

in spite of this, God would withdraw understanding from His people because they had shewn that they preferred darkness to light.

Verse 10

"And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day."

"your feasts..." - see Exod. 12. 14; 23. 15/16; Lev. chapter 23. If the people turned to God with prescribed feasts, God would not accept them. See Amos 5. 22. In the law concerning the feast of tabernacles, (Deut. 16. 13/14.) the people were instructed to rejoice in their feast.. Now they would have no cause for rejoicing but would mourn for that which had been lost.

"I will bring sackcloth..." - this is the sign of mourning for that which is lost. That God would bring the sackcloth shows that God would bring the punishments upon them and cause the mourning. God would take away that which they would then consider as lost.

"baldness upon every head;.." - another sign of mourning. It was the custom of those days to shave the head as a sign of mourning. It is interesting to note that the Zulus for centuries, have shaved the head as a sign of mourning for a near relative.

"mourning of an only son..." - the extreme form of grief. See Jer. 6. 26. for "...an only son, most bitter lamentation." See also Zech. 12. 10. God would have grief too over the wickedness of Israel which, at one time, was His only son.

"the end thereof as a bitter day." - the whole period will be as a day of extreme bitterness.

Verse 11

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."

The famine which God had warned, would not be a literal famine but a metaphorical one. It would be a famine in the sense that just as in a famine people crave for food, so at this time, the people would earnestly desire the spiritual food from the LORD but would not get it. God would turn away from them as they had turned away from Him.

In the past, the people of Israel had attempted to silence the prophets. Now they were going to seek the prophets but would find no one to teach them. The same message was given to Judah by the prophet Ezekiel. His message is to be found in Ezek. 3. 26/27; and 7. 26/27.

"the words of the LORD." - the Hebrew word from which "words" is translated is the same as that translated "message" in Judg. 3. 20. when Ehud came to slay Eglon, king of Moab. Also 1 Kings 20. 12; (see margin) and Prov. 26. 6; The Hebrew "dabar" with the vowel sound as in "horse", means "message". It rhymes with "doorbore".

Verse 12

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it".

"they shall wander from sea to sea..." - there will be an eager yet fruitless search. From "sea to sea" indicates from one side of the country to the other, from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

"from the north even to the east,.." - from the place of proverbial darkness, the north, to the place of the sun's rising, the origin of light, the

east. Between darkness and light they will find nothing.

"to and fro..." - indicates the intensity of the search.

"the word of the LORD,..." - the Hebrew word "dabar" again.

"shall not find it." - the end would come to Israel.

We cannot leave this prophecy of Amos without a thought for the days in which we are living now. There is indeed a famine of hearing the Word of the LORD. The churches are unable to help, being ignorant of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. They cannot help the seekers after Truth. From one end of the habitable world to the other, there is a dire ignorance of the Divine Plan and Purpose. As the Lord Jesus asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 8.)

Verse 13

"In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst."

"the fair virgins and young men..." - These are they who have forsaken God and have turned their allegiance to Ashimah of Samaria. This will be discussed in the notes on the next verse.

The youth of those days (virgins and young men) would strive very hard but would fail. They have the most physical vigour yet they would turn away and go to false worship. A nation is vigorous if its youth is vigorous. A nation will decline if the standards, moral or religious) of its youth fail. Deut. 32. 25/26. Youthful vigour must be channelled along the right lines. Psa. 144. verses 12 and 15. Because of their wealth and ease, Israel had not bothered to educate their youth in the Law with the result that youth had turned to apostacy. They had fainted in their quest for Truth.

Verse 14

"They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again."

"They that swear..." - the virgins and young men who have turned to apostacy.

"by the sin of Samaria,..." - they worship Ashimah of Samaria. This is a better translation than the A.V. Ashimah was a goddess which was worshipped by the men of Hamath (2 Kings 17. 30.)

"and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth;..." - this is the second oath in this verse. The men of Israel have sworn by the god of Dan and by the way of Beersheba. This was another way of saying that idolatry was rampant from one end of the land to the other, "from Dan even unto Beersheba" - from the extreme north to the south. Dan and Beersheba were both centres of pagan worship, the one (Dan) being in the extreme north and the other (Beersheba) in the extreme south.

What a tragedy it was that their virgins and their young men fainted. How different from the promise of God through Isaiah to those of youth who would not faint. See Isa. 40. 29/31. How different was Israel. The worship of calves started with Jereboam I when he set up two, one at Bethel, and the other at Dan. (1 Kings 12. 28/29.)

"the manner..." - Heb. "derek" means a road marked out. Used figuratively, it means a way of life. When applied to religion, or to a particular faith, it means a conviction which arises as a result of faith in the things believed in. In the N.T., this is expressed in the word "way". See Acts 9. 2; 19. 9; and 23; 22. 4; and 24. 14;

When applied to Beersheba, it could also mean that path which had been trodden by the pilgrimage to Beersheba, which means the "well of the oath". See Gen. 21. 31. Thus, all the pilgrimages to Beersheba and all the oaths which they took by pagan gods, or by the god of Dan (the god of Judgment) would not help them. "they shall fall and never rise".

In the days of Josiah, king of Judah, when he destroyed the false worship of the pagans, it is recorded that "he gathered all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places, where the people sacrificed from Gebah to Beersheba." (2 Kings 23. 8.)

In this chapter, Amos refers to "the day" under different terms. Consider the following:-

verse 9	a day of darkness;
10	a day of lamentation; a bitter day.
11	a day of famine;
12	a day of wandering up and down the land;
13	a day of fainting and thirst;
14	a day of falling and not rising.

All these are summarised in the "day of the LORD". Amos 5. 18 and 20. At this time too, it is a time of silence from God.



THE PROPHET AMOS

Chapter 9

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Verse 1

THE FIFTH VISION 1 - 4

"I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered."

"I saw the Lord..." - this would be a manifestation of God and not the Great Creator Himself. (John 1. 18.)

"standing upon the altar:.." - standing over the altar. This may have been the altar where Jereboam once stood. (1 Kings 13. 1; Amos 3. 14.)

"and he said,.." - God speaks but no longer asks Amos what he saw. God does not show him the instruments of destruction but shows him the actual destruction.

"Smite the lintel of the door,.." - in the days of the exodus from Egypt, the lintel of the door and the doorposts were things upon which the sprinkled blood was put. This gave assurance of deliverance from the wrath to come. This time, however, the lintel and the posts were to be smitten. There was no assurance of deliverance. But the homes are not referred to here. It is the temple, the false worship that is condemned and to be brought to an end.

"that the posts may shake:.." - the shaking of the posts is thought by some to indicate an earthquake which God uses as an agency of destruction. The lintel is struck by the shaking of the posts so that everything falls down.

"cut them in the head,.." - probably by falling upon them. The word "them" describes a particular class of people. These are the idolaters.

"all of them:.." - none will escape. Those in the temple will be the teachers of apostacy.

"I will slay the last of them..." - this is how Israel is to meet its doom. That a sword is to be used shows that the people will be slain by the sword in war. A nation will be brought against them.

"he that fleeth..." - he that seeks to save his life by running away, will not be able to run away from God.

"he that escapeth..." - he that escapes from captivity will not get away.

Verse 2

"though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:"

Wherever the people hide, Yahweh will drag them forth to suffer the punishment He will bring upon them. The Psalmist acknowledged the power of God and confessed that escape from His presence and His knowledge was impossible. See Psalm 139. 7/8.

"hell..." - Heb. "sheol" lit. the realm of the dead. This is the death state and does not refer to the hole in the ground known as a grave. The hole which is dug for the purpose of burial is "qeburah" a burial place. See Gen. 35. 20. where Jacob set up a pillar on Rachel's grave. The meaning of this portion of the prophecy is that people would seek the death state

to escape the punishment of God. If they hid amongst the dead thinking that it would not be visited as it was defiled ground, God would bring them out.

"though they climb up to heaven,.. " - though they fortify themselves with high walls, the LORD will break down their defences. See Jer. 51. 53. for a similar prophecy concerning Babylon. See also Obad. 4. in connection with a prophecy against Edom.

See the Psalmist's confession in Psa. 139. 8.

Verse 3

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

"in the top of Carmel,.. " - Carmel is a mountain which rises abruptly from the Mediterranean Sea and has, on its coastal slopes, the modern port of Haifa. It is composed of a number of mountains which run into one unit so that there are a number of summits. All over the mountain there are said to be a large number of caves, said to be over 1000, and in one section, about 400 close together. Some are so small as to barely admit a man. They are close enough together for voices to be heard, but it would not be known without a long search, from which cave the voice came. Apart from caves, there are a large number of clefts in which a man could hide and in which he would be very difficult to find. It is possible that the prophet Elijah lived on Carmel all during the years that a diligent search was made for him by king Ahab. Had Elijah not been told by God to shew himself to Ahab, it is likely that he would never have been found. (1 Kings 18. 1/2.) Again in those days, 100 prophets were hidden in a cave. (1 Kings 18. 13.) The prophet states that although men hid themselves in Carmel, God would search them out.

"in the bottom of the sea,.. " - Psa. 139. 9/10. The "sea" is used in Scripture figuratively to mean "nations" or "people". Coupled in this instance with the "serpent", shows a reference to the sin power of this world.

"the serpent..." - See Isaiah 27. 1. where the "serpent" is also called "leviathan". This word is derived from "Levi" the third son of Leah. When he was born she called his name "Levi" meaning "joined" because, as she said, "Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons:.." (Gen. 29. 34.) Psa. 104. 26. mentions "leviathan" in connection with the sea, thus indicating that it is a multi-jointed body in the sea. The multi-jointed body of Christ is opposed to the sin power and in its opposition, all the parts, fitly framed together, groweth unto a temple in the Lord. (Ephes. 2. 21.) The head of the spiritual body is Christ. (Col. 1. 18.) but the head of the figurative body of leviathan, the creature of the sin-power (the sea) is the pope and the many joints are the ministers who preach his false doctrines.

The serpent has been the symbol of the sin power since the beginning and the seed of the serpent is always in conflict with the seed of the woman represented by Christ and His Body. Having considered these analogies, we can now apply the teaching to the prophecy before us. If the people of Israel sought to hide themselves amongst the people of the sin-power, God would cause the religious side of that sinpower to bite them and they would die at the hands of their captors.

The prophecy of Isa. 27. is given against Israel and their connection with Egypt. This is suggested by verses 12 and 13 of that chapter. In the days of Hezekiah, the people were warned not to trust in Egypt.

2 Kings 18. 21. "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him."

The same principle is expressed in this verse from Amos. The people were not to trust on the nations round about them to deliver them. If they did, they would be destroyed by those whom they trusted.

Verse 4

"And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."

Such is the inevitability of their punishment that if they went into captivity, God would send the sword after them that they would be slain.

God's purpose with Israel will be for evil for them and not for anything good.

The doom of Israel is determined by Yahweh. Therefore nothing could change it. The attitude of God towards the righteous compared with His attitude to those who do evil is clearly stated in Psa. 34. 15/16.

The "evil" referred to in this verse is to be understood in the sense of something calamitous. It does not refer to evil as opposed to good. Alternative meanings are "adversity", "affliction", "distress", "harm", "misery", "sorrow", "trouble", and "wretchedness". This sense appears in Amos. 3. 6.

Verse 5

THE THIRD NATURE HYMN

5 and 6

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

This verse with verse 6 is regarded by some scholars as a later introduction by an unknown editor and is not regarded as having been written by Amos. A close examination will show, however, that the opening phrase of verse 5 is related to the closing phrase of verse 6. The teaching of the verses is in agreement with the teaching of the chapter, so the evidence is in favour of it being in order. Another consideration is that the verses are written in the poetic style of Amos and there is no drop in poetic skill in these two verses.

"toucheth the land, and it shall melt,.. " - "the land" is used here figuratively to represent PEOPLE. "melt" is used to represent destruction of the people. See this teaching in Psa. 46. 6; 144. 5; Isa. 64. 1/2; Micah. 1. 3/4; Nahum 1. 6; Hab. 3. 10;

"mourn:.." - from here on, the verse is almost an exact replica of Amos 8. 8. See the notes on 8. 8. See also Jer. 12. 4; Hos. 4. 3. These references show tragic sorrow for the sins of the past.

"it shall rise up..." - see notes under this heading on 8. 8.

"as by the flood of Egypt." - see notes under this heading on 8. 8. The overflowing of a river signifies an attack by a foreign power. The prophecy of Isa. 8. 7/8. fore-tells of the attack by the king of Assyria - "he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks" - which is to say that he will rise up as a river in flood. It is a comparison and not an historical event.

The teaching of this verse is a fitting summary of the description of the immense power of God as described in preceding verses. The Dominion of God extends beyond the earth. He is all-powerful everywhere and there is no place on earth nor in heaven where one may escape Him. If the remarks of Amos are studied against a back-ground of pagan mythology, it will be seen that Amos adds a lesson for the heathen by saying that God is superior to the pagan gods of the heavens. He is more powerful than the god of the mountain and the god of the sea. He is more powerful than all their enemies.

"It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name."

The THIRD NATURE HYMN is continued in this verse. The description given of God in this verse is similar to those given in the other two Nature Hymns, namely, 4. 13 and 5. 8/9.

"that buildeth his stories in the heaven,..," - that buildeth the vaults of heaven,..," or "buildeth the chambers in the heaven," R.S.V. has "builds his upper chambers in the heavens,..," The LXX has "It is he that builds his ascent up to the sky, and establishes his promise on the earth:"

"hath founded his troop in the earth;.." - the Heb. translated as "troop" means "bundle". The sense is "builds the vault of heaven starting from the earth." The "bundle" can be regarded as the "host of heaven" meaning the stars comprising the vault of heaven.

The opening sentence up to the first semi-colon is praise of God who has created the mighty heaven in which He dwells and rests the canopy thereof on the earth. The vault of heaven comprises the mighty array of stars and the vast unfathomable depths of space.

"calleth for the waters of the sea,..," - God causes the sea to evaporate so that the water is again poured upon the earth in the form of rain. The Canaanites worshipped Baal as the god of storm and the giver of rain. Amos states emphatically that it is Yahweh who controls all these things.

"The LORD is his name." - "Yahweh is His Name."

Verse 7

"Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"

"Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians..." - The question is posed in regard to their present state. Before, when Israel had been called out of Egypt, they were then a special people unto the LORD above all people that were upon the face of the earth. (Deut. 7. 6.) Such was their subsequent wickedness that they had now become of no greater importance than the children of Ethiopia.

"Hath I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?.." - It was most certainly God who had brought the children of Israel up out of the land of Egypt. But did this now qualify them for special mercy at the hand of God?

"and the Philistines from Caphtor,..," - although God had brought the children of Israel up out of Egypt, He had also brought the Philistines from Caphtor. Caphtor might have been Crete. It was the traditional home of the Philistines. (Gen. 10. 14.) The Philistines and the country of Caphtor are mentioned together in Jer. 47. 4. God had brought them from the island to the mainland. There was no need to boast that God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. God had also brought the Philistines from Caphtor.

"and the Syrians from Kir." - Kir was the land to which the Aramaeans of Damascus were deported by the Syrians. (2 Kings 16. 9.) See Amos 1. 5. The whereabouts of Kir is unknown.

It is to be noted that Amos showed that God had withdrawn from Israel because they had rejected Him. Several centuries later, the Lord Jesus was to state that because the Jews were rejecting him, the gospel would now be taught to the Gentiles. (Matt. 21. 43.) See also Paul's warnings in Acts 13. 46; 18. 6; 28. 28; In this speech by Amos, the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles is fore-shadowed. The Jews of the days of Jesus had no right to consider that they were the chosen of God and that their precious promises should not be shared with the Gentiles. These words from Amos should have

warned them that their blood line descent from Abraham gave them no monopoly over the Divine Promise.

Verse 8

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth: saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord."

"the sinful kingdom..." - all heathen kingdoms in those days were sinful in the eyes of God. But God looks to His people, Israel. They are referred to here. God was determined to destroy it from off the face of the earth but, at the same time, He would not destroy Judah in the south. For the sake of the fathers and for David's sake, God would not wholly destroy the house of Jacob (Israel of the twelve tribes.)

This statement spelt the death sentence upon the northern kingdom. The verb "destroy" here is the same as that used in Amos 2. 9. which referred to the destruction of the Amorites. God is the destroyer in both cases. As He destroyed the one so He will destroy the other. This powerful prophecy of doom was fulfilled to the letter. (2 Kings 17. 4/18.)

Verse 9

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

The scholars are all agreed that verse 8 marks the end of the work of Amos and that the script from verse 9 onwards is an addition made by an unknown writer. It is pointed out that the theme from verse 9 onwards is too lenient in character to fit the general theme of the work of Amos. With this view we cannot agree. In every period of history, there have always been a few who have known the Word of God and who have adhered to God's commandments. God would not have been merciful towards the poor and the oppressed if they had been wicked too. It is characteristic of the poor, the needy and the oppressed to seek consolation in the Word of God. The poor and oppressed of Israel would have been no exception to the general rule. Amongst those poor, there must have been some who were worthy of survival. Another thought for consideration is how would God divide the land between the twelve tribes when Christ returns, if all Israel had been annihilated? We feel that this is what happened. There were some survivors of the punishments and that they are held in mind in the closing verses of God's Word uttered by His prophet Amos.

"I will command..." - lit. "I am commanding..."

"I will sift the house of Israel..." - In His severity, God is compassionate and forgiving. See Hos. chapter 11. in which He expresses His mercy towards Israel. God will sift them so that all the chaff shall fall to the ground but the good grain shall be saved. In doing so, God will scatter them among all nations. (Jer. 9. 16.)

"yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." - The sifting will be carefully done but any grain worth keeping will not be allowed to fall upon the earth. The chaff would be scattered to the four winds.

It is to be noted that in the Hebrew, the word translated as "grain" is "tseror" meaning "a pebble". In this meaning, there is no interpretation which can apply to the passage and make sense. It can mean, however, a stone in the sense of a kernel of a nut or fruit, and, in this sense, a grain of wheat.

Verse 10

"All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us."

"All the sinners..." - the warning is addressed to "all the sinners" which suggests that not all the people will be sinners. In this connection, read the note against verse 9.

"shall die by the sword,.." - this sentence shows the futility of hoping for God's Mercy without repentance.

"the evil shall not overtake,.." - this is a false hope upon which it would be fatal to rely. God wants REPENTANCE and a TURNING TO HIM in Truth. Shutting one's eyes to what is coming upon the face of the earth will not help anyone. In these days in which we are now living, one should not be complacent thinking it cannot happen to us. It can, so we should take a lesson from Amos and repent, turning unto the LORD with all our hearts.

Verse 11

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:"

There has been a subsidiary theme all the way through Amos that there will be a remnant that will be saved. This has been hinted at time and time again. Now the statement is clear. God will rebuild the temple of David. The whole prophecy of woe is now being summed up on a note of hope. The kingdom of Israel was doomed and would not be restored. But the tabernacle of David which was in Judah would yet be restored to its former glory.

"the tabernacle of David..." - this could mean the "booth" as it is translated in Jonah 4. 5. or could have reference to "the beloved of God" which is the translation of "David" and not necessarily to David the king of Israel. This would then make the promise of restoration applicable to the Returned Christ who is the beloved of God, the "David".

"that is fallen,.." - at the time of the prophecy, it had not fallen. But the prophecy concerns "that day" in the opening words of the verse. That is to be the great day of restoration of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. At that time, it will have been fallen for many centuries.

"close up the breaches thereof;.." - breaches are breaks in a wall. These are repaired by adding new stones. The household of David represented by the Jewish people had made breaches in the household of Faith at the time of Jesus by rejecting him. Nevertheless, God caused the Gospel to be taught to the Gentiles so that there will be stones enough to add to the breaches and repair the walls.

"raise up his ruins,.." - the kingdom of God gave place to the kingdom of men. When Christ returns, the opposite will happen and the kingdom of men will fall and the kingdom of God, after having lain in ruins for many centuries, will be raised up.

"build it as in the days of old." - this refers to the method of building and not to the building itself. The prophet Ezekiel has given the architecture of the tabernacle which is to be built. The method of building it will be to enlist the skill of the Gentile nations as David enlisted the skill of the men to Hiram, king of Tyre.

Verse 12

"That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this."

"That they may possess,.." - "That they may inherit..."

"the remnant of Edom,.. " - when the Jews acknowledge the returned Christ there will be a great work for them to do with their Lord and Master, their Messiah. The prophet Isaiah is clear upon this in writing his 11th chapter. See Isa. 11. 12/16.

"All the heathen which are called by my name,.. " - not only the Jews and the reconciled sons of Esau, but also the Gentile people who have obeyed the gospel and have taken upon themselves the sin-covering name of Jesus Christ.

The quotation of Amos 9. 11/12. which is given by James in Acts 15. 16/17. is the Septuagint Version which is almost identical. In Acts, James refers to "the residue of men" whereas Amos spoke about the remnant of Edom, which was Esau, the brother of Jacob and his great enemy. The reference by Amos of "the heathen" correspond with James' reference to the "gentiles". The "residue of men" corresponds with the "remnant of Esau" and applies to those Jews who will have made the "second exodus" described in Ezek. 20. 33/44. Only the remnant who have completed that journey will partake of the blessings spoken of by Amos. The point Amos makes is the same as that made by James in that when Christ comes, the Gentiles will have a part in his kingdom and so will the remnant of the Jews who will be reconciled to him.

Verse 13

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

"the days come,.. " - lit. "the days are coming,.. "

"the plowman shall overtake the reaper,.. " - here is the fulfilment which is to come of that mentioned in Lev. 26. 5. but this was conditional upon "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments". This Israel have never done. Nevertheless when they receive their inheritance in the kingdom of God on earth, they will then have had a new heart put in them, (Jer. 31. 31/40.) See also Heb. 8. 8/12. This new heart will be put in them after they have made their second exodus and have endured unto the end. They will then be fit people to meet their Messiah.

The earth will give forth the increase to such an extent that the reaper will not have harvested all the natural increase which God will give before it will be time to plough for the next season's plantings. See Psa. 72. 16. this Psalm being a word picture of the future kingdom of God.

"the mountains shall drop sweet wine,.. " - there will be no more barrenness. The earth will give forth its riches and the curse of Adam will no more be on the earth. "...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." See Gen. 3. 17/19. The prophet Joel has a similar message to that of Amos. See Joel 3. 18. Such messages refer to a coming kingdom ON EARTH. They could never apply to any salvation being found in heaven. The restoration of David's tabernacle will be on earth. One could not imagine ruins being rebuilt and repaired in heaven.

Verse 14

"And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities; and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them."

"the captivity"... - Heb. "shebiyth" which has a figurative sense of "a former state of prosperity". If there is to be captivity in the ordinary sense, it will be a captivity by the Returned Christ who will rule over the whole earth.

"they shall build the waste cities,.. " - lit. "they shall build waste cities,.. " Former towns which have been waste for many centuries will be rebuilt.

"and inhabit them;.." - lit. "and inhabit:.." The word "them" is understood from the context. The teaching of this statement is that they will not build as if for a conqueror who uses them as slaves. They will build for their own benefit because they will inhabit that which they build. (Isa. 66.21)

"they shall plant vineyards,.." - the teaching behind this statement and those which follow in this verse, is that the children of Israel will be reconciled to Christ and will live a mortal existence in the kingdom of God on earth. They shall no longer be without a king or a country, (Hos. 3. 4.) but they will come under God's mercy and will live in His sight. Ezekiel has a word to say on this. (Ezek. 28. 25/26.) See also Isa. 62. 8/9; Hos. 14. 7; Joel 3. 18; Micah, 4. 4; The teaching of this verse is the opposite of the punishment warned of by God through Zeph. 1. 13; Forgiveness will come to the people of Israel in those days.

The application of Mic. 4. 4. is to be understood in a figurative way as well as in the actual sense. The world to come will certainly be a pastoral world rather than a highly industrial world such as we live in now. It will be a world in which it will be "full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11. 9.) There will be no glory of men in those days therefore it is highly unlikely that there will be vast passenger carrying aircraft and other wonders of man's creations. The tempo of living will slow down considerably. Where Micah said that "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree;.." (Mic. 4. 4.) it can hardly mean that every Jew will have a vine and a fig tree. The vine is a biblical symbol of a Faith and a fig tree is a symbol of political Israel. Therefore we have here two symbols belonging to Israel, the vine for the religion of Israel. See the parable of the "vine" in Isa. chapter 5 and compare with the parable of the Lord's in Matt. 21. 33/41. where the Lord used the same theme. The fig tree is political Israel as we see from Judges 9. 10. In this same chapter from Judges the olive tree is shown as a symbol of Israel as a people (vs 8) and the vine is shown as spiritual Israel. (vs. 12.) Using these symbols, the words of Micah. 4. 4. mean that when Christ comes, the people of Israel will have a new religion (vine tree) and a new form of Government (fig tree) where Christ will rule. It cannot be applied to teaching that every man will have to get up every day and go outside to sit under his vine or his fig tree. The words of Amos too, in which he uses these symbols, must also be studied in this manner.

Verse 15

"And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall be no more pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."

"I will plant them upon their land,.." - the people of Judah were planted upon their land when they returned from the Babylonian captivity, but their occupation of the land was terminated in A.D. 70 when the Romans defeated them and they were scattered throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Therefore this prophecy from Amos must apply to the time when Christ returns. It has not been fulfilled since the day it was uttered and must await fulfilment in the days of the kingdom. The land was "God's land so banishment from Israel meant banishment from the "sight of God". Similarly, a return to the land, must mean a return to God's favour. Although God has blessed them by being "a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. 11. 16.) so that they did not die out as a people but still survive as the people of God, they have not yet had that full blessing which will be theirs when Christ comes.

"they shall be no more pulled up..." - they shall be no more plucked up. This refers to when they are established in the land "which I have given them". See Isa. 60. 21; Jer. 24. 6; 32. 41/42; Ezek. 34. 20/31; 37. 25; Joel 3. 20; Obad. 17; Mic. 2. 12/13; Zeph. 3. 15; Zech. 3. 10;

With these words, Amos the prophet of woe, brings his prophecy to a close with the LORD'S promise of the kingdom for those who turn to Him in repentance, remorse but in a renewed spirit.

THE PROPHET AMOS

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A SUMMARY OF THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE

At first reading, the Book of the Prophet Amos appears to be an indictment against the people of Israel for their many sins, coupled with severe warnings from the prophet as to the wrath of God which was to come upon them as a result of those sins. Much of the prophet's message contains a description of the history of the people of Israel in which the prophet tells them what has happened, and supplies the reason why it happened.

A closer study of the prophet's writings will show that throughout his work, there is a double meaning. This emerges in what is known as "prophetic analogy". This means that what happened in the past is a type of what is yet to happen in the future. This aspect of the prophecy would be of no interest to the people of Israel to whom it was addressed. They would look at the more practical aspect. It is to the Bible student of the latter days of Gentile times that this secondary character is directed. It is for him, then, to study the latter day character of the Word of God as revealed through His Prophet, Amos. It is not without significance that the prophet's name means "burden bearer" because it is in the latter days of Gentile times that we may expect the appearance of the Burden Bearer of the sins of mankind.

Chapter 1 to Chapter 2 verse 3. The prophecies in this section are directed to Israel against the Gentile nations which surrounded them. It would have been a source of comfort to Israel to hear the pronouncement of Divine Judgment against the Gentiles whom they hated. There are SIX such prophecies, each containing about 3 verses. Whereas in Biblical Numerology, SIX is the number of MEN, we can understand that such prophecies were given against this world in which there is so much wickedness, and in which there has been so much persecution of the Jews. The verses could well apply to the world in which we are now living.

Chapter 2 verses 4 to 5. Israel must have been astonished and delighted to listen to a severe prophecy against Judah and to hear that God will destroy her by fire and that He will devour the palaces of Jerusalem. How astonishing it must have sounded to them to hear a prophet like Amos, proclaim this announcement from God upon his own country. In this case, only two verses are used. In the secondary aspect, this can apply either to Israel as it is now entrenched in the Promised Land or it can apply to the house of "spiritual Judah" which is undoubtedly complacent during these dangerous yet stirring times.

Chapter 2 verse 6 to the end of the Book. If Israel had been pleased about the prophecies of woe against the Gentiles and against Judah, they would certainly be greatly shocked when the prophet's address turned against them. It is not a matter of two or three verses now, but it covers all the rest of the prophet's message. The people of Israel had been the Covenant People and unto them had the oracles of God been committed. They held an extremely privileged position in the eyes of God and in His Plan and Purpose. After many warnings from His prophets, they had turned away from the God of Israel. For this they were to be destroyed.

In similar vein, the Gentiles had also become the holders of the Word of God. When the Jews turned against Jesus and rejected him, God caused the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. They took to it at the beginning but soon, in the words of Paul given in Acts 20. 29/31. "grievous wolves entered in among them, not sparing the flock, and men arose speaking perverse things, thus drawing disciples after them," Thus a great apostacy arose, filling the world of religion with false doctrine, and distorting the Scriptures to support such false doctrines. Is there any reason why they should be better treated than God treated Israel after the days of Amos?

Chapter 3 This chapter is addressed to that family of people of which God said, "you only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." But in verse 7, Yahweh has a tremendous message for His people, spiritual Israel. He said, "Surely

The Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. If we regard the word "prophet" as a Teacher rather than one who tells what is going to happen in the future, we shall get a key which fits the door of our own Household of Faith. From our studies of the Word of God, much has been revealed to us and we should publish these things to those who do not know, for "they know not to do right".

Chapter 4 The time is upon us when the world has gone after gain, not only in wealth, but also in luxury of living, and to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. In the world there is a spiritual drought of hearing the Word of God. People may seek for religion but they will not find it. Religions multiply one upon the other but there has been no seeking after TRUTH. The world has been given ONE Great World War which caused tremendous destruction, yet the people of the world did not turn unto God. There was a great pestilence in 1919 (the Influenza epidemic) in which several millions died, yet the people of the world did not turn unto God. When it was all over, the people sought pleasure rather than TRUTH. God sent the SECOND World War yet after that, there was no refreshing intake of the Word of God. The people did not turn unto God. The Jewish people have had one pogrom after another, yet they have ignored the warnings of Deuteronomy 28 and have disregarded the prayer of Solomon when he asked Yahweh to forgive His people IF THEY CONFESSED THEIR SIN AND TURNED TO HIM. This they had not done. God sent them the ghastly Hitler terror in which SIX MILLION DIED, yet they did not confess their sin neither did they turn to Him.

More than once have Israel been "a firebrand plucked out of the burning" yet they have not returned unto God. Therefore the prophet's message comes loud and clear,

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL!"

After this terrible warning, the chapter closes with the First Nature Hymn in which Yahweh declares that He makes the dawn, the period of light. He also makes the period of darkness for those that love darkness. He describes himself as "Yahweh, Yahweh Tz'vaoth" - the Lord God of Hosts. This is the military title of God manifested by the returned Jesus Christ in a warlike attitude. Here is a warning of judgments to come upon those who will not turn to God.

Chapter 5 The spiritual purity of Israel is lost. One tenth have returned as was prophesied in Isa. 6. 13. Now Yahweh makes an appeal:- "SEEK YE ME, and ye shall live". Israel has returned to the Land which God gave them, yet they do not acknowledge that it was through His power that they are there.

An appeal is made to Israel in the Second Nature Hymn in which Yahweh shows that He alone can make the darkness of the shadow of death in which they live, into the light of the morning. He it is who brings the nations of the earth against them. YAHWEH is His Name.

But Israel hate correction. They hate to be reminded of their obligation towards God. They are more concerned with MONEY and with POWER. Yahweh calls upon them to "seek good, and not evil, that they might live".

To Israel and to the rest of the world, the "day of the LORD" will be darkness and not light. They will not understand. Because of the blindness of their hearts, God will not accept their worship. He despises their feast days; He refuses their offerings; He will not hear their hymns; and because of this Yahweh will bring once again the captivity of His people Israel.

Chapter 6 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that trust in their own ability to defend themselves. Israel praises its own feats of arms, not realising that it was Yahweh who fought their battles for them. Are they any better than other armies that God has overthrown? Let them remember the

impious feast of Belshazzar, King of Babylon. He also praised his own power and the strength of the fortress which he had built. Yet it was overthrown suddenly as Israel will be overthrown.

The work that Israel has done within her borders will be of no avail to her. Yahweh will raise up a powerful king from the north who will come up against them as Tigleth-Pileser did in the days of old. Let all Israel take note.

Chapter 7 The FOUR VISIONS represent events yet to come. Twice there were visions, the first being locusts and the second, Fire. On both occasions Yahweh relented and the punishments did not come.

THE THIRD VISION is directed to AMOS, the "burden bearer". Is it correct to translate "Amos" here? Should it not be that the vision of a future event is given to the true "burden bearer" the Lord Jesus Christ? "I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel" "I will not again pass by them any more:" Now the final judgment is to take place against Israel. Verse 9 tells of the destruction that is to come upon Israel from this northern invader.

THE SUDDEN INTERRUPTION AND INTERPOLATION:

The speech by Amaziah, priest of Bethel, is full of prophetic significance. He claimed to have a political appointment to serve Israel as priest. He complained against Amos and instructed the prophet not to prophesy any more in Israel but to return to the land from whence he came.

The prophet announced to Amaziah that if Amaziah had received his appointment from the king, he, the "burden bearer" had received his appointment from God. And God had said to him, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel". The prophet added in so many words, "You tell me to stop prophesying to Israel! I am telling you that you and all you stand for are going to be utterly destroyed.

In the anti-type, the Returned Christ is opposed by the Pope of the Roman Catholic church who claims to have his appointment from the State. He alone is God's Vicar on earth. He will not know that Christ is really the Christ but will regard him as an impostor. He will tell Christ to "Get out" and leave the spiritual guidance of the world to him. Christ will tell him that he has had his appointment from God and that God has told him to come to His people. The Pope and his people are not the people of God. Therefore he and his will be destroyed.

Chapter 8 THE FOURTH VISION: This is also given to "Amos" which should have been translated "burden Bearer" because it also affects the Returned Christ. Yahweh said, "The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more". As God had passed by Israel at the time of the Passover, He will not do so on this occasion. Israel is to be punished as no nation has been punished. The whole world will be overwhelmed with trouble. There will be a spiritual darkness over the whole world. The people who did not return to God after past calamities will now turn unto him with all their hearts but they will not find Him. THE TIME IS NOW. Then it will be too late. The invaders of Israel will fall, never to rise again.

Chapter 9 THE FIFTH VISION: Here is a description of the Passover, where the provisions of the Passover of the days of Moses will not apply. There will be no Divine protection for Israel. Wherever the people of Israel may flee, God will find them. If they try to lose themselves by absorption into Gentile nations, God will seek them out and the Gentiles will turn against them.

All nations that come against God's Land will be destroyed. He will rise up against them like a flood.

THE THIRD NATURE HYMN: Here follows a word picture of Yahweh in His Power and Majesty. The King of Heaven and Earth. He it is who brings life giving rain to the earth. This is the "latter rain" which is full of

significance for the Bible student. The prophet is gradually leading up to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Yahweh will bring vengeance upon the "sinful kingdom" - that church system which has deceived the whole world with its false doctrines. As for Israel, they are not to think that they are any better in the eyes of God than the other nations. God will "sift" them as He will sift the other nations.

CONCLUSION: Verse 11/15. The picture which the prophet now draws is one in which the returned Christ is shown establishing His throne in Jerusalem. It is not only the throne to be restored but also the "tabernacle". That is to say, inasmuch as a tabernacle represents a place where Yahweh is worshipped, so the Returned Christ will restore the True Worship of God.

The prophet closes his prophecy with a description of the plenteous nature of the Kingdom to come. He shows the restoration of God's people, Israel, and their final settlement in the land which He promised to their fathers.

Thus the Glory of the LORD will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.