

Introduction to the Book of Amos
Dr. Steven R. Cook

Author: The author of the book is Amos, a prophet from the city of Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah. By profession, Amos was a rancher and farmer (Amo 1:1; 7:14-15), whom the Lord called to be a prophet.

Audience:

Amos writes to foreign nations (Amo 1:1—2:3), to the southern kingdom of Judah (2:4-5), and to the northern kingdom of Israel (2:6-16).

Date of ministry:

Amos 1:1 tells us that the prophet prophesied “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah [792-740 B.C.], and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash [793-753 B.C.], king of Israel, two years before the earthquake” (Amo 1:1). The prophet Zechariah also mentions the earthquake that occurred during Uzziah’s reign (Zec 14:5). This would place his ministry about 760 B.C. His contemporaries included Hosea, Micah, Jonah and Isaiah.

Background:

Israel was experiencing great prosperity (Amo 3:15; 6:4-6); however, they were practicing social and economic exploitation (Amo 2:6-7; 5:10-12; 8:5-6), and engaging in insincere religious activity (Amo 4:4-5; 5:21-23)

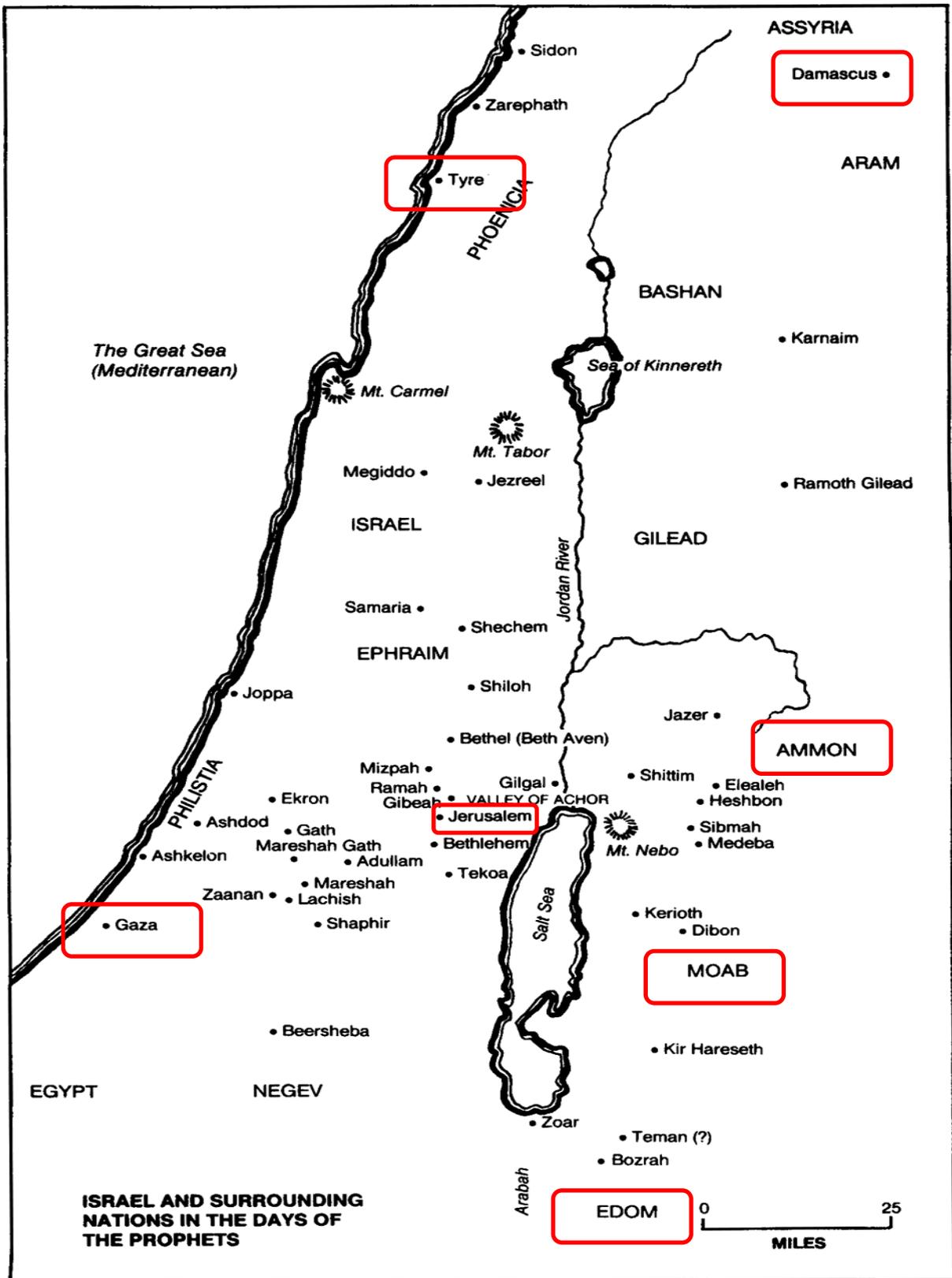
Message:

In the first two chapters, Amos reveals God as the sovereign ruler over all nations and He judges them for how they treat the nations around them. Though Amos mentions six foreign nations (Amo 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1), and the kingdom of Judah (Amo 2:4-5), his primary message is to the northern kingdom of Israel (Amo 1:1; 2:6, 11; 3:1, 12; 4:5, 12; 5:1-4; 6:1, 14; 7:8-11, 15-17; 8:2; 9:7, 9, 14). The overall message of Amos is that God is going to judge His people because of their sin, but promises a future time of blessing to a repentant remnant.

Outline:

1. Oracles of judgment against six foreign nations (Amo 1:1—2:3), Judah (Amo 2:4-5), and Israel (Amo 2:6-16).
2. Prophecies of judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel (Amo 3:1-6:14).

3. Five visions of judgment (Amo 7:1—9:10) followed by a promise of future blessing (Amo 9:10-15).



The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa [ten miles south of Judah], which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel [in the north] in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. ² He said, “The LORD [יהוה *YHWH* – God’s covenant name] roars [like an attacking lion] from Zion and from Jerusalem [in Judah] He utters His voice; and the shepherds’ pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up [agricultural judgment; see Deut. 28:20-24].” ³ Thus says the LORD [Amos begins his divine message], “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its *punishment* [grace gives way to judgment], because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron [i.e. engaged in torture practices]. ⁴ “So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael [see 2 Ki 8:7-13] and it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad. ⁵ “I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the scepter [i.e. the king], from Beth-eden; so the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir,” says the LORD [Who repays]. ⁶ Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they deported an entire population to deliver *it* up to Edom [sold helpless people into slavery]. ⁷ “So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza and it will consume her citadels. ⁸ “I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the scepter [i.e. the king], from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish,” Says the Lord GOD. ⁹ Thus says the LORD [Who repays], “For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they delivered up an entire population to Edom and did not remember *the* covenant of brotherhood [i.e. broke a vow]. ¹⁰ “So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels.” ¹¹ Thus says the LORD [Who repays], “For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because he pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion [i.e. failed to show mercy]; His anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever. ¹² “So I will send fire upon Teman and it will consume the citadels of Bozrah.” ¹³ Thus says the LORD [Who repays], “For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead [practiced cruelty] in order to enlarge their borders [to gain land]. ¹⁴ “So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume her citadels amid war cries on the day of battle, and a storm on the day of tempest. ¹⁵ “Their king will go into exile, he and his princes together,” says the LORD. (Amo 1:1-15)

Thus says the LORD [Who repays], “For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime [desecrated the dead]. ² “So I will send fire upon Moab and it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; and Moab will die amid tumult, with war cries and the sound of a trumpet. ³

“I will also cut off the judge from her midst and slay all her princes with him,” says the LORD. (Amo 2:1-3)

Summary:

The book of Amos opens with the information concerning the prophet himself and the place where he resides. Amos is described as a shepherd from Tekoa, a city ten miles south of Jerusalem. Amos received visions from the Lord concerning Israel to the north. He tells us he prophesied “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel” (Amo 1:1a). Interestingly, he mentions that he received his visions “two years before the earthquake” (Amo 1:1b). There is no historical record about this earthquake, but apparently it was well known to his audience. Amos then presents God by His covenant name, “the Lord”, and pictures Him as a roaring lion who is about to attack His prey; this is a picture of divine judgment. This judgment will affect the land itself, as “the shepherds’ pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up” (Amo 1:2b). In Amos 1:3—2:3, God reveals Himself as the sovereign Lord over all people and renders judgment upon six Gentile nations for their abuses against the people of surrounding nations. “For each nation the pronouncement of doom follows the same pattern: (a) a general declaration of irrevocable judgment, (b) a naming of the specific violation which caused the judgment, and (c) a description of God’s direct and thorough punishment.”¹ God does not mention each nation’s previous sins, only the one that crossed the line of grace and brought God’s judgment. The nations and their sins include:

1. Damascus – practiced human torture (Amo 1:3).
2. Gaza – enslaved and sold whole communities for commercial profit (Amo 1:6).
3. Tyre – who practiced slavery and broke a promise (Amo 1:9)
4. Edom – who failed to show mercy in war (Amo 1:11)
5. Ammon – who killed innocent mothers (Amo 1:13)
6. Moab – who desecrated the dead (Amo 2:1)

Though Gentiles did not possess God’s special revelation in written form—like Judah and Israel—God still held them accountable for their behavior based on the divinely instilled moral code which is written on their hearts (Rom 2:14-15). This is still true today when God judges Gentile nations. Those nations who possess His Word are held to a higher standard than those who do not; for the principle is true, “everyone who has been given much, much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

¹ Donald R. Sunukjian, “Amos,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1428.

Amos 2:3-16

Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its *punishment* [grace gives way to judgment], because they rejected the law [תּוֹרָה *torah* – instruction, teaching, law] of the LORD and have not kept His statutes; their lies [כָּזָב *kazab* – a lie, deception, falsehood – here a departure from God’s Word] also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked [the false ways were handed from one generation to the next].⁵ “So I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem [which occurred in 586 B.C.]” (Amo 2:4-5)

Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its *punishment* [grace gives way to judgment], because they sell the righteous [i.e. innocent before the law] for money and the needy for a pair of sandals [unwilling to forgive a small debt; cf. [Mat 18:21-35](#)].⁷ “These who pant after the *very* dust of the earth on the head of the helpless [or – “those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth” ESV]”] also turn aside the way of the humble [i.e. the oppressed who cannot help themselves]; and a man and his father resort to the same girl [*girl* = perhaps a temple prostitute, or an act of incest – cf. [Lev. 20:12](#)] in order to profane My holy name [God’s reputation is connected with His people].⁸ “On garments taken as pledges [see [Ex 22:26-27](#)] they stretch out [perhaps in fornication] beside every altar [the place of worship], and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined [i.e. enjoyed the items illegally obtained].⁹ “Yet [when Israel was enslaved, poor and helpless] it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them [i.e. defeated the arrogant enemy], though his height *was* like the height of cedars and he *was* strong as the oaks [too powerful for them]; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below [totally destroyed in order that His people would enter the Promised Land].¹⁰ “It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt [released from slavery], and I led you in the wilderness forty years [safely guided] that you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.¹¹ “Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets [to reveal God’s Word] and some of your young men to be Nazirites [to live dedicated lives to the Lord; see [Num. 6:1-21](#)]. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD [calling them to remember their history of slavery, poverty and helplessness].¹² “But you made the Nazirites drink wine [and break their vow], and you commanded the prophets saying, ‘You shall not prophesy!’ [i.e. to suppress the voice of God; see [Amo 7:10-14](#)].¹³ “Behold, I am weighted down beneath you as a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves [or – “Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down” – ESV)].¹⁴ “Flight will perish from the swift, and the stalwart will not strengthen his power, nor the mighty man save his life.¹⁵ “He who grasps the bow will not stand *his ground*, the swift of foot will not escape, nor will he who rides the horse save his life.¹⁶ “Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day [human effort cannot save from God’s judgment],” declares the LORD. (Amo 2:6-16)

Summary:

Unlike the six Gentile nations who were judged by the law of God in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15), the Lord judged Judah, “because they rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept His statutes” (Amo 2:4a). Having rejected God’s Word they were governed by deception, as the Lord declared, “their lies also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked” (Amo 2:4b). Apparently, their false ways had been handed down from parent to child for several generations; and though God displayed tremendous patience over the years (Ex 34:6), there came a time when grace gave way to judgment.

After pronouncing judgment upon Judah, Amos turned his attention to Israel—the ten northern tribes—and listed several of the sins they were guilty of and the judgment that God would send upon them because of their perpetual disobedience. The wealthy within Israel—rather than showing compassion to the poor (Deut. 15:7-11)—were treating the innocent and needy as cheap commodities to be sold for things such as sandals (Amo 2:6). In addition to trampling on the helpless and humble (Amo 2:7a), a father and son were copulating with the same girl—either a temple prostitute or a family member—and profaning God’s holy name (Amo 2:7b). It’s possible the father and son were committing sexual immorality while lying on garments they’d received as pledges from the poor, in places of worship, while drinking wine that had been obtained from illegal fines (Amo 2:8). God recalls Israel’s history and reminds them of a time when they were enslaved, poor and helpless. The Lord, who is great and powerful, did not abuse them in their helpless state, but showed great compassion and rescued them from slavery in Egypt and led them into the Promised Land, defeating the enemy that was too powerful for Israel alone to defeat (Amo 2:9-10). Once in the land, God raised up prophets to reveal His will and Nazarites to model holiness to the Lord (Amo 2:11). However, rather than appreciate the Lord for His goodness, many within the Jewish community rebelled and forced Nazarites to break their vows and silenced the voice of the prophets (Amo 2:12). Over time they forgot their history and spurned the God who rescued them and began to oppress the humble and helpless. As a result, God promised to press them down, much like “a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves” (Amo 2:13). Just as God destroyed the powerful and arrogant Amorites (vss. 9-10), so He would bring judgment upon arrogant Israel and the people, no matter how strong, would not be able to protect themselves from His judgment (Amo 2:14-16).

Amos 3:1-15

Hear this word [of judgment; cf. Amo 4:1; 5:1] which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel [who were in a covenant relationship with God], against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt [i.e. rescued from slavery and oppression]:² “You only have I chosen [יָדָעַ *yada* – to know – in a special way] among all the families of the earth [to be in special relationship with God]; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities [their special relationship and knowledge meant they were held to a higher standard; Lu 12:47-48].”³ Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment? [walking together follows an agreement]⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? [the roar follows the spotting of prey] Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured *something*? [the growl follows the capture of prey]⁵ Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it? [a trapped bird follows when it goes for bait] Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? [a trapped animal follows when an animal steps in it]⁶ If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? [the trembling people follows the trumpet sound for an attack] If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it? [disaster follows the Lord’s decision to judge; cf. Isa. 45:7]⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets [cf. 2 Ki 17:13; Jer. 7:25; 25:4-7].⁸ A lion [God] has roared! Who [sinful Israel] will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! [and revealed His judgment] Who can but prophesy? [Amos must speak; cf. Jer. 20:8-9]⁹ Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt [cities where injustice was common] and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria [overlooking Israel] and see *the* great tumults within her and *the* oppressions in her midst [i.e. look upon the sin of Israel].¹⁰ “But they do not know how to do what is right,” [ignorance defaults to wrongdoing] declares the LORD, “these who hoard up [like treasure] violence and devastation in their citadels.”¹¹ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “An enemy [directed by God], even one surrounding the land [probably the Assyrians], will pull down your strength from you and your citadels will be looted.”¹² Thus says the LORD, “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear [remnants of a life; see Ex. 22:12-13], so will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria [after the Lord is done tearing them to pieces] be snatched away [by an invader]-- with *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch! [i.e. remnants of a former life]¹³ “Hear and testify against the house of Jacob [Israel],” declares the Lord GOD [אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה - *Adonai Yahweh* = the sovereign Lord], the God of hosts.¹⁴ “For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel [the places of pagan calf worship]; the horns of the altar will be cut off and they will fall to the ground [i.e. not be available to claim asylum; see 1 Ki 1:50; 2:28].¹⁵ “I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish and the great houses will come to an end,” [i.e. the luxurious houses built with unjust gains] Declares the LORD.

Summary:

Amos chapter 3 opens with the first of three oracles against the ten northern tribes of Israel (Amo 3:1a; cf. 4:1; 5:1). God identifies Himself as the One who rescued them from Egypt and entered into a special relationship with them (Amo 3:1b; cf. Ex. 19:1-8). As a result of their special relationship with the Lord, Israel was held to a higher standard of behavior than the surrounding nations, and when they failed, He would punish them more severely (Amo 3:2). God sets forth a series of questions that point to an event that naturally follows a previous action, and the events move from the harmless (two men walking together) to the destructive (calamity on a city). Amos reveals two people do not walk together unless they have an agreement (Amo 3:3), a lion does not roar unless he's seen his prey (Amo 3:4a), a young lion does not growl except he's captured something (Amo 3:4b), a bird is not drawn to a trap unless there's bait in it (Amo 3:5a), a trap does not spring without something to trigger it (Amo 3:5b), the people of a city are calm unless a warning trumpet is blown (Amo 3:6a), and calamity does not fall on a city unless the Lord does it (Amo 3:6b). But calamity does not happen to God's people, Israel, without His warning them first through His servants, the prophets (Amo 3:7; 2 Ki 17:13; Jer. 7:25; 25:4). Amos reveals that God's judgment is coming, for "A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?" (Amo 3:8). As God's people who possessed God's special revelation, Israel should have walked with God and modeled excellent behavior among the Gentiles. But instead, God calls the pagan people of Ashdod and Egypt to come and look at the acts of violence and oppressive deeds going on in Israel (Amo 3:9), declaring of Israel, "they do not know how to do what is right...these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels" (Amo 3:10). God then pronounces judgment upon Israel, stating, "An enemy, even one surrounding the land, will pull down your strength from you and your citadels will be looted" (Amo 3:11). This most likely refers to the Assyrians, who would destroy the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. As an illustration of Israel's destruction, God refers to the shepherd who retrieves limbs and pieces of a lamb that is attacked and consumed by a lion to Israel, who will "be snatched away—with *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch!" (Amo 3:12b). That is, Israel's destruction will be so severe they will only be left with remnants of their former life of luxury. Describing their judgment in solemn language (Amo 3:13), God promises to destroy their places of pagan worship, which they regarded as places of refuge (Amo 3:14). Finally, the Lord declares, "I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish and the great houses will come to an end" (Amo 3:15). In this way, God would judge them for the wealth they'd obtained unjustly, which was used for extravagant and selfish living. Though America is not a theocratic nation, we are a country that has been blessed with God's Word, which informs us of the nature and character of God, and the moral behavior He expects from those who know Him. Certainly, we would be remiss to ignore God's message through Amos, that God's people must be just, loving, gracious, and openhanded toward the poor and helpless in society.

The Sins of Jeroboam
Dr. Steven R. Cook

Israel became a theocratic kingdom when God delivered them from Egypt and entered into a covenant relationship with them (Ex 19:1-8). God directed them directly, as well as through His prophets and Judges. However, after nearly four centuries, Israel asked God to give them a king, which He did (1 Sam 8:1-22). The kingdom of Israel was united under their first three kings, which were Saul, David and Solomon. Saul started his kingship well by walking with the Lord, but then turned away from God and ended poorly. David walked with God and, though he had his failings, was an ideal king. Solomon did well throughout much of his kingship; however, his final days were given over to worshipping idols (1 Ki 11:1-8). As an act of divine discipline, the Lord promised to divide the kingdom after Solomon's death (1 Ki 11:9-13). Just prior to splitting the kingdom, the Lord spoke to Jeroboam and promised him rulership over ten tribes, even blessing his house if he would rule well and lead the people into God's will (1 Ki 11:28-38). The kingdom was divided into two parts after the death of Solomon, with Rehoboam ruling in the south and Jeroboam ruling in the north (1 Ki 12:1-24). However, Jeroboam rejected God's offer and turned to idolatry, leading God's people into sin.

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Peniel. ²⁶ Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. ²⁷ "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem [the proper place of worship], then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah [an irrational fear contrary to God's promises; see 1 Ki 11:37-38]." ²⁸ So the king consulted [i.e. sought counsel from others], and made two golden calves, and he said to them [Israelites], "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods [אֱלֹהִים *elohim* – God, gods], O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt [see Ex. 32:1-6]." ²⁹ He set one in Bethel [where Jacob met God; see Gen 28:10-18], and the other he put in Dan [a pagan worship center created by Moses' grandson; see Jud 18:30]. ³⁰ Now this thing became a sin [see 1 Ki 14:9, 16], for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. ³¹ And he made houses [of worship] on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi [in violation of God's command; see Deu 18:1-8]. ³² Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah [mimicking the Day of Atonement in the seventh month and tenth day; see Lev 16:29-30], and he went up to the altar [to practice his new religion]; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made [idolatry]. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. ³³ Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which

he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense. (1 Ki 12:25-33)

Summary:

Though Jeroboam had opportunity to walk with God and establish his kingdom, he rejected divine viewpoint and let fear dominate his heart. Driven by fear, and functioning from a merely humanistic viewpoint, Jeroboam sought to control those under his rule by creating a new religion (a corruption of the worship of Yahweh), which included:

1. Generating new gods of worship (1 Ki 12:28a).
2. Revising Israel's history (1 Ki 12:28b).
3. Creating new places of worship in Dan and Bethel (1 Ki 12:29-30).
4. Instituting a new priesthood (1 Ki 12:31).
5. Establishing a new religious holiday (1 Ki 12:32).
6. Personally participating in the new religion (1 Ki 12:32-33).

Israel accepted Jeroboam's new religion, which was adopted by subsequent kings, namely **Nadab** (1 Ki 15:25-30), **Ahab** (1 Ki 16:30-31), **Jehoram** (2 Ki 3:1-3), **Jehu** (2 Ki 10:28-29), **Jehoahaz** (2 Ki 13:1-2), **Jehoash** (2 Ki 13:10-11), **Jeroboam** (2 Ki 14:23-24), **Zechariah** (2 Ki 15:8-9), **Menahem** (2 Ki 15:17-18), **Pekahiah** (2 Ki 15:23-24), and **Pekah** (2 Ki 15:27-28). God repeatedly called Israel back to Him many times through His prophets, but the rulers and people would not turn back to Him and perpetuated their false religion. Israel continued for two centuries, from the time the kingdom was divided (ca. 930 B.C.) until He brought about their destruction by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. A snapshot of this is recorded in Scripture as follows:

When He had torn Israel from the house of David [[dividing the kingdom](#)], they [[the ten northern tribes](#)] made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin [[through his false religion](#)]. ²² The sons of Israel walked [[by choice](#)] in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them [[for two centuries](#)] ²³ until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day. (2 Ki 17:21-23)

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan [known for being well-fed; cf. Psa 22:12; Ezek 39:18; here an idiom for portly wives] who are on the mountain of Samaria [i.e. the capital of Israel], who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands [אֲדוֹנָי *adon – lords*; cf. Gen 18:12], “Bring now, that we may drink!” [self-indulgent wives demand their husbands accommodate their luxuriant lifestyle at the cost of the poor and needy] ² The Lord GOD [אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה - *Adonai Yahweh = the sovereign Lord*] has sworn by His holiness [i.e. making a promise], “Behold, the days are coming upon you when they [the Assyrians] will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks. [i.e. drag them away like an animal] ³ “You will go out *through* breaches in the walls, each one straight before her, and you will be cast to Harmon,” declares the LORD. ⁴ “Enter Bethel [the place of pagan worship] and transgress [i.e. continue to sin]; in Gilgal multiply transgression [through religious worship]! Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days [tithes were given annually or triennially; see Deut. 14:22-29]. ⁵ “Offer a thank offering [which was born out of spontaneous gratitude; see Lev. 7:16] also from that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, make them known. For so you love *to do*, you sons of Israel,” Declares the Lord GOD [They hypocritically adhered to religious practices, probably to manipulate God, while denying His commands regarding social justice]. ⁶ “But I gave you also cleanness of teeth [נִיֻּקַּיֹן *niqqayon – innocent, clean = i.e. no food to dirty the teeth*] in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places, yet you have not returned to Me [they did not respond to divine discipline],” declares the LORD. ⁷ “Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you while *there were* still three months until harvest [see Deut. 28:23-24]. Then I would send rain on one city and on another city I would not send rain; one part would be rained on, while the part not rained on would dry up. ⁸ “So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, but would not be satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me [they did not respond to divine discipline],” declares the LORD. ⁹ “I smote you with scorching *wind* and mildew [see Deut. 28:22]; and the caterpillar [אַזְמָה *gazam – locust*; see Deut. 28:38] was devouring your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; yet you have not returned to Me [they did not respond to divine discipline],” declares the LORD. ¹⁰ “I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt [see Deut. 28:27]; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses [military defeat; see Deut. 28:48], and I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me [they did not respond to divine discipline],” declares the LORD. ¹¹ “I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah [a proverbial picture of severe judgment; cf. Isa. 1:9], and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; yet you have not returned to Me [they did not respond to divine discipline],” declares the LORD. ¹² “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel [as an enemy; cf. Isa. 63:10].” ¹³ For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind [omnipotent] and declares to man what are His thoughts [omniscient], He who makes

dawn into darkness [reverses the order of life] and treads on the high places of the earth [omnipresent], the LORD God of hosts [armies] is His name.

Summary:

Amos opens his message to the fat wives of wealthy Israelite men, who demand of their husbands (lit. their lords), “bring now, that we may drink” (Amo 4:1). Here is a picture of self-indulgent women demanding their husbands accommodate their luxuriant lifestyles at the expense of the poor and needy. God assured these women, who were captive to their desires, that a day would come when an enemy would lead them away into captivity with hooks, much like dead cattle and fish are carried by means of meat hooks (Amo. 4:2-3). God sarcastically called these Israelites to enter their familiar places of worship and offer their sinful sacrifices, tithes, and freewill offerings (Amo 4:4-5a); which were really given to impress others, not God (Amo 4:5b). At this time, Israel was continuing in the sins of Jeroboam and their abuses of the poor and needy were the byproduct of their departure from God and their failure to follow His instructions in the Mosaic Law. Like many other Israelites, they were worshipping a god of their own creation, which allowed them to live for themselves and abuse others. The religious offerings were sinful, in part, because what was given was the stolen fruit of the poor and needy. Their rebellious ways brought God’s warning discipline upon the nation by famine, drought, scorching winds, locusts, plagues and military defeat (Amo 4:6-10; cf. Deut. 28:15-68), yet, on five separate occasions, they did not respond properly by returning to Him (Amo 4:6, 8-11). Their sinful rebellion would bring them into great judgment; not with another drought, famine, locust invasion, or nearby enemy; but rather, face to face with God, as the Lord tells them, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel” (Amo 4:12). Amos then reveals the God Who will judge them is “He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are his thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth, the LORD God of hosts is His name” (Amo 4:13). This omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God shall come as an invading army to judge His people, and there shall be no escape.

Amos 5:1-15

Hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge [קִינָה *qinah* - a funeral song], O house of Israel: ² She has fallen [in death], she will not rise again-- the virgin Israel [virgin = defenseless, without a husband]. She *lies* neglected on her land; there is none to raise her up [a proleptic statement concerning Israel's future judgment]. ³ For thus says the Lord GOD [concerning future judgment], "The city which goes forth a thousand *strong* will have a hundred left [10% left], and the one which goes forth a hundred *strong* will have ten left to the house of Israel [10% left]." ⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "Seek Me that you may live [likely an individual call to repentance]. ⁵ "But do not resort to Bethel and do not come to Gilgal, nor cross over to Beersheba [the Lord is not in those worship centers]; for Gilgal will certainly go into captivity and Bethel will come to trouble [God will destroy these false worship centers]. ⁶ "Seek the LORD that you may live [repeats His call to return to fellowship], or He will break forth like a fire [a picture of judgment], O house of Joseph, and it will consume with none to quench *it* for Bethel, ⁷ for those [religious rebels] who turn justice into wormwood and cast righteousness down to the earth [i.e. disregard God's righteousness]." ⁸ He who made [creates] the Pleiades and Orion and changes [controls] deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day *into* night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth [i.e. the One who sovereignly controls water and sends rain on the earth also controls and sends judgment upon His people], the LORD is His name. ⁹ It is He who flashes forth *with* destruction upon the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. ¹⁰ They [religious abusers] hate him [the righteous judge; cf. Ex 23:2, 6] who reproves in the gate [the place of court], and they abhor him who speaks *with* integrity [i.e. the honest witness who speaks in defense of the abused poor; cf. Isa 10:1-2; 29:20-21]. ¹¹ Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor and exact a tribute of grain from them [i.e. abuse the helpless], *though* you have built houses of well-hewn stone [i.e. a luxurious home], yet you will not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine [because they had taken away from the poor, God would take away from them; cf. Deu 28:30]. ¹² For I know [omniscient] your transgressions are many and your sins are great [speaking to unjust judges], *you* who distress the righteous [i.e. oppress those who walk according to the law] *and* accept bribes [i.e. accept money to pervert justice] and turn aside the poor [i.e. refuse to hear the case of the one who cannot defend himself] in the gate [gate = the place where judgments were decided]. ¹³ Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent [for fear of attack], for it is an evil time [because those in power oppress others; cf. Pro 11:10; 29:2]. ¹⁴ Seek good and not evil [turn to the Lord and obey His word], that you may live; and thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said! [i.e. as they had been claiming] ¹⁵ Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate [i.e. the court]! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph [i.e. to the obedient few who are faithful].

Summary:

Amos opens his message as a funeral dirge, a proleptic song concerning Israel's future destruction (Amo 5:1). He describes Israel as a lonely virgin who has fallen with no one raise her up again (Amo 5:2). The prophet is speaking of Israel's destruction, which will eventually come by the hand of the Assyrians who will defeat them militarily; and the casualty rate of their soldiers will be a devastating 90%, from which they will not be able to recover (Amo 5:3). Though Israel, as a nation, would face certain destruction, God calls individuals to turn to Him that they might live (Amo 5:4). They should not seek for God at false places of worship, such as Gilgal, Bethel, or Beersheba (Amo 5:5); rather, they were to seek the Lord directly (Amo 5:6a), or He would consume them like a fire (Amo 5:6b). Who were those who should seek the Lord? It is those who make justice bitter rather than sweet, and who cast righteousness down rather than elevate it up (Amo 5:7). God then describes Himself as the powerful Lord who created the stellar constellations, namely Pleiades and Orion, which were used to mark seasonal changes, which God controlled (Amo 5:8). This sovereign God is the One who will create disaster and bring His rebellious people in judgment, as Amos writes, "It is He who flashes forth *with* destruction upon the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress" (Amo 5:9). The unrighteous who abuse the poor came to despise judges who would not adjudicate in their favor, and they also hated the honest person who spoke in defense of the victim (Amo 5:10). The specific abuses included excessive rent on the poor, as well as additional payments of grain (Amo 5:11a). The idea here could be that the rich gained control of the poor person's land—perhaps through unjust judges—and then demanded heavy rent and grain taxes from them to remain a tenant. God informs these abusers that their wealth will not bring lasting pleasure, for He will destroy their homes and vineyards (Amo 5:11b). God would frustrate those who acquire wealth through unjust means and who seek to perpetuate pleasure by abusing the helpless. Not only were their sins the abuse of the poor, but the corruption of justice in the courts by means of bribery. The Lord states, "For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, *you* who distress the righteous *and* accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate" (Amo 5:12). Because the evil is so advanced and systemic, the prudent person sees what's happening and keeps silent (Amo 5:13). God calls individuals within the nation to "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said!" (Amo 5:14). Hating evil and loving good means His people will "establish justice in the gate!" (Amo 5:15a). If they would do this, then "Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Amo 5:15b). That is, He would preserve the faithful few from going to total destruction. God expects His people to operate according to the moral lines He's set forth in His word, and the obedient-to-the-word believer will care for the poor and helpless.

Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts [אָרְצָה *tsaba* – *army, war, warfare*], the Lord [who stands in judgment of them], “There is wailing in all the plazas, and in all the streets they say, ‘Alas! Alas!’ They also call the farmer to mourning and professional mourners to lamentation [because of the destruction].¹⁷ “And in all the vineyards *there is* wailing, because I will pass through the midst of you [like He did with the Egyptians when He judged them; see Ex 12:12-13],” says the LORD.¹⁸ Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD [which many in Israel thought would come only on Gentiles], for what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light;¹⁹ as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him [judgment will be inescapable].²⁰ *Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?²¹ “I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies [referring to the false worship system established by Jeroboam].²² “Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*; and I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings [God does not honor false worship].²³ “Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.²⁴ “But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream [i.e. follow God’s laws and let them guide their actions].²⁵ “Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? [This they did, as Moses led]²⁶ “You also [in addition to worshipping God] carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images [idols], the star of your gods which you made for yourselves [many engaged in polytheism while in the wilderness].²⁷ “Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus [to Assyria],” says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

Summary:

God identifies Himself as the God of hosts, which is literally, the “God of the armies” (Amo 5:16a). He is the One who stands in judgment over His people and is poised to bring destruction upon them because of their disobedience. He describes the day of judgment as a day of wailing in all the plazas, streets, and vineyards (Amo 5:16b-17a). Israel is here being judged because of their disobedience to the Mosaic Law, specifically regarding their false religious practices, their abuses of the poor and judicial corruption (see Jam 1:27). Israel, who had once been poor and helpless and suffered under the abusive hand of the Egyptians, had now become the oppressive persecutors of the poor and helpless among their own people. God, who opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (Pro 3:34; 1 Pet 5:5), now took up the defense of the abused. Just as God had judged the Egyptians during the time of the exodus by passing through the land, so He would judge His own people, saying, “I will pass through the midst of you” (Amo 5:17b; cf. Ex 12:12-13; 22:21-24). Amos’ teaching challenged some of the false views that were prevalent in his day; specifically, their false view of “the day of the Lord”, in which many

Israelites thought they would be spared from God's wrath, believing it would be for Gentiles only. But Amos states it will be a day of "darkness and not light" (Amo 5:18), informing his audience it would include all who deserve God's wrath. He declared it would be a time of inescapable judgment, "as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him" (Amo 5:19). With this understanding, the Lord poses the question to His people, "*Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?" (Amo 5:20). Why would God's judgment come upon His people? Because of their false religious practices that led them into idolatry and immoral behavior. The Lord states, "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies" (Amo 5:21). Religious festivals and solemn assemblies do not impress the Lord, as these were connected with the sinful practices which were instituted by Jeroboam. The Lord further states, "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*; and I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings" (Amo 5:22). Sacrifices were to take place in Jerusalem, not in substituted centers of worship. Lastly, He will not accept their worship, stating, "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps" (Amo 5:23). Religious festivals, sacrifices and worship are all meaningless unless they conform to God's expectations and reveal a compassionate moral heart for others. Instead, there were more important matters God pressed upon His people, namely, they were to "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amo 5:24). This, of course, meant justice and righteousness as it related to dealing with the poor, who were being abused. There was to be morality with religious practice, not without it. Israel's behavior did not occur in a vacuum, but was directly connected with their sinful idolatry which had infested the land. But this idolatry had a long history with Israel, as God reminds them of their time in the wilderness, in which they carried along other gods of worship (Amo 5:25), stating, "You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves" (Amo 5:26). This had been clearly spoken against by God (Deu 4:19; 17:3). Because they had thoroughly violated their covenant with the Lord, He declared, "I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus" (Amo 5:27). This occurred in 722 B.C. when God sent His people into Assyrian exile.

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion [i.e. Jerusalem] and to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria [i.e. the capital of the northern kingdom], the distinguished men of the foremost of nations [i.e. leaders of the greatest nation at that time], to whom the house of Israel comes [i.e. for wisdom and justice].² Go over to Calneh and look, and go from there to Hamath the great, then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they [Israel and Judah] better than these kingdoms, or is their territory greater than yours? [these kingdoms were destroyed, which means Israel can be too]³ Do you put off the day of calamity [ignore the threat of judgment?], and would you bring near the seat of violence [i.e. the throne of abuse]?⁴ Those who recline on beds of ivory [a picture of opulence] and sprawl on their couches [laziness or drunkenness], and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall [the finest food],⁵ who improvise to the sound of the harp, and like David have composed songs for themselves [or “invent their own musical instruments like David” (CSB)],⁶ who drink wine from sacrificial bowls [perhaps bowls used in calf worship] while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils [care for themselves], yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph [just as Joseph’s older brothers were hostile toward him and without empathy, so the leaders of Israel had not grieved over their brethren whom they’d ruined; cf. Gen 37:23-25; 42:21].⁷ Therefore, they [Israel’s leaders] will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, and the sprawlers’ banqueting will pass away.⁸ The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared: “I loathe the arrogance of Jacob [Jacob = Israel], and detest his citadels; therefore I will deliver up *the city* and all it contains.”⁹ And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.¹⁰ Then one’s uncle [i.e. close relative], or his undertaker [the one who prepares the dead for burial; perhaps the close relative], will lift him up to carry out *his* bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, “Is anyone else with you?” And that one will say, “No one.” Then he will answer, “Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned [perhaps out of fear that calling on the Lord may bring further judgment].”¹¹ For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.¹² Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? [or “Can one plow the sea with oxen?” NET – doing something unnatural] Yet you [behaving in a morally unnatural way] have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,¹³ you who rejoice in Lodebar [לֹדְבָרַי לֹא *Lo Debar – nothing – i.e. nothing of value*], and say, “Have we not by our *own* strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?” [a boastful claim of military power]¹⁴ “For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you [the Assyrians], O house of Israel,” declares the LORD God of hosts, “And they will afflict you [the oppressors will be oppressed] from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah.”

Summary:

Though Amos prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel, he included Jerusalem in the south, perhaps because they were guilty of the same sins as their relatives in the north. Samaria and Jerusalem were the capital cities of each nation, and were the places where the people came to their leaders for guidance and justice. Though Amos mentions Jerusalem, the focus of his message is toward Israel's leaders, whose self-worth and self-interest led them to degrade and mistreat others. Apparently Israel's leaders thought they were big stuff and too important to be destroyed (Amo 6:1). Arrogance blinds the mind to one's own values, actions and vulnerability to downfall. But God directs Israel's leaders to look at surrounding nations which once thought and lived like them and to notice that they're now destroyed (Amo 6:2). Israel's leaders ignored God's warnings of judgment (Amo 6:3), by indulging in all the pleasures at their disposal. They lounged on luxurious beds and ate gourmet foods (Amo 6:4), composed songs and compared themselves with David (Amo 6:5), drank lots of wine from sacrificial bowls and covered their bodies with the finest oils (Amo 6:6a); yet they ignored the nation's spiritual decay and "have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph" (Amo 6:6b). Just as Joseph's older brothers were hostile toward him without compassion (cf. Gen 37:23-25; 42:21), so Israel's leaders had not grieved over their brethren whom they'd ruined. Because Israel's leaders were the first to sin, they would be the first to go into exile (Amo 6:7). God's judgment upon His people was set forth as a solemn oath, in which He states, "The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself" (Amo 6:8a), declaring to His people, "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, and detest his citadels; therefore I will deliver up *the* city and all it contains" (Amo 6:8b). The acquisition of wealth is not wrong, as long as it is by just means. However, God's people accumulated wealth by sinful means that abused the helpless and was hoarded for selfish purposes (cf. 1 Tim 6:9-10; Jam 5:1-6). God's judgment would be severe and normal places of refuge, such as a home, would not protect (Amo 6:9). Should one be left hiding in the corner of a house at the time when a close relative, or undertaker, comes to take away the bodies, he will be advised, "Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned" (Amo 6:10b). This might suggest a fear of mentioning God's name, lest He return and bring more judgment upon those who are left. God will then complete His judgment by destroying all the houses of the city, "For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments" (Amo 6:11). Amos cites the preposterous when asking, "Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen?" (Amo 6:12a). Even though one would not consider doing something so unnatural, yet Israel's leadership had "turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood" (Amo 6:12b). The very qualities and practices that would naturally bring health to a nation were turned into poison and made bitter to its residents. Those leaders who rejoiced in their military accomplishments, assuming it was

by their own power (Amo 6:13), would face a foreign nation God would send to destroy them, which will afflict all Israel (Amo 6:14).

Amos 7:1-17

Thus the Lord GOD showed me [in a vision], and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm [Deu 28:38, 42] when the spring crop began to sprout [the first harvest]. And behold, the spring crop *was* after the king's mowing [the "king's mowing" may have been a tax the farmer paid to the king].² And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said [on behalf of God's people], "Lord GOD, please pardon [A pardon implies guilt]! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?" [Prophets commonly prayed for the Lord to suspend judgment; see Ex 32:11-14; Num 14:13-20; 1 Sam 7:8; 12:23; Ps 99:6; 106:23; 1 Jo 5:16]³ The LORD changed His mind about this [in response to Amos' prayer]. "It shall not be," said the LORD [who spared His judgment].⁴ Thus the Lord GOD showed me [in a vision], and behold, the Lord GOD was calling to contend *with them* by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land.⁵ Then I said [on behalf of God's people], "Lord GOD, please stop! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?"⁶ The LORD changed His mind about this [in response to Amos' prayer]. "This too shall not be," said the Lord GOD [who spared His judgment].⁷ Thus He showed me [in a vision], and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand [used to measure straightness].⁸ The LORD said to me, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A plumb line." [A plumb line was an external standard used to measure buildings for straightness] Then the Lord said, "Behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel [here, the plumb line represents God's righteous standards by which He measure Israel's conformity]. I will spare them no longer [prayer will not stop God's judgment; neither the prophet's prayer cf. Jer 7:16; 14:10-11; 15:1; nor the people's prayers; Isa 1:15; Zec 7:8-13]."⁹ "The high places of Isaac will be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword [see Deu 28:49-50]."¹⁰ Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel [perhaps the chief priest], sent *word* to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words."¹¹ "For thus Amos says, 'Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile [correctly states Amos' message; see Amo 4:2-3; 5:5, 27; 6:7].'"¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! ["eat bread" = get your livelihood somewhere else; cf. 2 Ki 4:8; Mic 3:5, 11]"¹³ "But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence."¹⁴ Then Amos replied to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet [by profession], nor am I the son of a prophet [i.e. not part of a prophetic guild]; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs [by trade; therefore, not depending on his ministry for income]."¹⁵ "But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me [divine calling], 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'¹⁶ "Now hear the word of the LORD [speaking to Amaziah]: you are saying, 'You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.'¹⁷ "Therefore, thus says the LORD [in judgment], 'Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line

and you yourself will die upon unclean soil [in captivity]. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile [in 722 B.C].”

Summary:

Amos chapter seven contains three visions from God, as well as a dialogue between the prophet and a corrupt priest associated with the calf worship in Israel. The first vision was of a locust plague which God was intending to send upon Israel because of some unnamed sin. But Amos prayed for his people that God would not send the judgment and the Lord changed His mind (Amo 7:1-3). God revealed a second vision to Amos in which He intended to send fire upon Israel to judge them. However, the prophet prayed again, asking God to spare His people, and again, the Lord changed His mind and did not send the judgment (Amo 7:4-6). “Some things that God intends to do are not firmly determined by Him; He is open to changing His mind about these things. However, He has decreed other things and no amount of praying will change His mind about those things (cf. Acts 1:11; Rev 22:20). It is, therefore, important that we understand, from Scripture, what aspects of His will are fixed and which are negotiable.”² The third vision was of God standing next to a vertical wall holding a plumb line in His hand (Amo 7:7-8a). A plumb line was an external standard used to measure buildings for straightness. Here, the plumb line represents God’s righteous standards by which He would measure Israel’s conformity to His character and laws. Because Israel was so far out of line with God’s will, the Lord declared, “I will spare them no longer” (Amo 7:8b). God then specifies the judgment, saying, “The high places of Isaac will be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword” (Amo 7:9). This occurred in 722 B.C. when God sent the Assyrians to destroy Israel and take them away into captivity. After God’s declaration against Israel, Amos was approached by Amaziah, an apostate priest at Bethel who was associated with pagan calf worship and who was directly connected with king Jeroboam II. Amaziah went to the king and told him that Amos had conspired against him (Amo 7:10), saying, “Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile” (Amo 7:11). Amaziah then turned on Amos, saying, “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence” (Amo 7:12-13). Amos replies to Amaziah and corrects his misunderstanding that Amos was part of a prophetic guild and that he earned his wages through his prophetic ministry. Amos informs Amaziah that he had a true calling from the Lord to prophesy to Israel and that his personal needs were met through his business as a herdsman and farmer (Amo 7:14-15). Amos then prophesies against Amaziah—who was telling him not to prophesy against Israel—and told him, “Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover,

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Am 7:3.

Israel will certainly go from its land into exile” (Amo 7:17). Part of the conflict between Amaziah and Amos arose from competing loyalties. Whereas Amaziah was loyal to Jeroboam II who had probably appointed him priest and paid his salary, Amos was loyal to God who had called him into ministry. In the end, Amaziah was judged for trying to stifle the word of God as it was being communicated by Amos, the Lord’s prophet.

Thus the Lord GOD showed me [vision # 4], and behold, *there was* a basket of summer fruit [summer fruit = ripe to consume].² He said, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer [they are ripe for divine judgment].³ “The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day [of judgment],” declares the Lord GOD. “Many *will be* the corpses [in Israel]; in every place they will cast them forth in silence [silence = probably from shock].”⁴ Hear this, you who trample the needy [who should have been helping them; see [Deu 15:7-11](#)], to do away with the humble of the land,⁵ saying [within themselves], “When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain [working mentally rather than relaxing], and the sabbath [a day of rest], that we may open the wheat *market* [anxious to work], to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger [double scam, selling less for more], and to cheat with dishonest scales [a violation of God’s Law; see [Lev 19:35-36](#); [Deu 25:13-16](#); [Pro 11:1; 16:11](#)],⁶ so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals [treating people as a commodity], and *that* we may sell the refuse of the wheat?” [refuse = cheaper grade wheat]⁷ The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob [which does not change; cf. [Amo 4:2; 6:8](#)], “Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.⁸ “Because of this will not the land quake and everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, and it will be tossed about and subside like the Nile of Egypt [God’s judgment will rise and fall like the flooding of the Nile].⁹ “It will come about in that day [of judgment],” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight [a metaphor of judgment descending upon Israel during a time of prosperity].¹⁰ “Then I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth [funeral clothes] on everyone’s loins and baldness on every head. And I will make it like *a time of mourning* for an only son [only son = no hope for one’s future], and the end of it will be like a bitter day.¹¹ “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD [causing spiritual famine].¹² “People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east [i.e. travel to all parts of the country]; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find *it*.¹³ “In that day [of judgment] the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst [i.e. faint spiritually, despair of soul, because there is no word from God to give hope and sustain them].¹⁴ “*As for* those who swear by the guilt of Samaria [אֲשַׁמָּה *ashmah* – guilt, probably a reference to the goddess אֲשַׁמָּה *Ashima*; see [2 Ki 17:30](#)], who say, ‘As your god lives [calf worship; see [1 Ki 12:28-30](#)], O Dan,’ and, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives,’ [Dan to Beersheba = all the land] they will fall and not rise again.”

Summary:

Amos chapter eight opens with a vision from God in which He shows Amos a picture of summer fruit (Amo 8:1). Just as fruit naturally ripens over time and becomes ready for harvest and consumption, so Israel—because of sin—has become ripe for God’s judgment,

and God declares, “The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer” (Amo 8:2). God’s judgment would turn palace songs into mourning as an enemy force would come against them (Amo 8:3a), and “Many *will be* the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence” (Amo 8:3b; cf. Deu 28:47-50). God then turns His attention to the corrupt merchants in Amos’ day, “who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land” (Amo 8:4). These abusers were a part of the community and even participated in the feasts and religious holidays; however, their hearts were elsewhere. God reveals their thoughts, saying, “When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales, so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, and *that* we may sell the refuse of the wheat?” (Amo 8:5-6). Feasts and holidays were merely interruptions to their financial activities and cruel practices. These wealthy merchants were unmoved by God’s Law, which promoted economic justice rather than abuse (Lev 19:35-36; Deu 25:13-16; Pro 11:1; 16:11). Valuing spiritual health more than material wealth would have prevented such inhumane abuses (Deu 15:7-11). In a statement of irony, God swore by the pride of Jacob, saying, “Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds” (Amo 8:7). An oath was commonly made by something unchangeable (Heb 6:16-18), and the Lord had previously sworn by His unchanging holiness and character (Amo 4:2; 6:8), and here, ironically, swears by Israel’s unchanging pride. God’s judgment would come in the form of a military invasion that would cause the land to quake and be tossed about like the rising and falling of the Nile (Amo 8:8), and it will be a day of darkness upon the land (Amo 8:9), and festivals will cease and there will be deep mourning, like the mourning that comes when one loses an only son (Amo 8:10). In addition, God would send a famine upon the land, “Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD” (Amo 8:11). Because Israel had rejected God’s messages through His prophets (Amo 2:11-12; 7:10-13; cf. 1 Sam 3:1; 2 Ch 36:15-16; Jer 25:3-4), He now withdrew His word and left them to starve. Though people travel all across the land, they will not find His nourishing word (Amo 8:12), and the youth—noted for beauty and strength—will faint spiritually (Amo 8:13), and those who turn to their idols “will fall and not rise again” (Amo 8:14). “When the word of God is not believed, people will believe anything and the cults will grab the young, taking them by the hand in order to take them by the throat, till they *fall* and cannot *rise again*.”³ God’s Word, daily consumed, results in spiritual health and inner strength, but the soul famished cannot weather the storms of life. God desires to give His Word to grow, guide, and strengthen us; but the word rejected becomes the word denied.

³ J. A. Motyer, “Amos,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 805–806.

I saw [vision # 5] the Lord standing beside the altar [probably at Bethel], and He said, “Smite the capitals [head of central pillar of the roof] so that the thresholds [foundation stones] will shake, and break them on the heads of them all [the worshipers inside]! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; they will not have a fugitive who will flee, or a refugee who will escape [as He’d promised; see Amo 8:1-3].”² “Though they dig into Sheol [under the earth], from there will My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down [cf. Ps 139:7-8].”³ “Though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; and though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, from there I will command the serpent and it will bite them [judgment is inescapable].”⁴ “And though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword that it slay them, and I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”⁵ The Lord GOD of hosts [who is able to accomplish His will], the One who touches the land so that it melts, and all those who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises up like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt [rises and falls in destruction];⁶ the One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens and has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, the LORD is His name [יהוה YHWH – Yahweh, the covenant keeping God who does not break His word].⁷ “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me [Israelites regarded Ethiopians as unimportant], O sons of Israel?” [the sovereign God will judge them both] declares the LORD. “Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? [God sovereignly controls the migration of all people, whether Israelites or Gentiles; cf. Acts 17:26]”⁸ “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth [by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.]; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” Declares the LORD [God will preserve a remnant because of the Abrahamic covenant].⁹ “For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among all nations as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground [none will escape God’s judgment].”¹⁰ “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us [a false boast].’”¹¹ “In that day [in the future] I will raise up the fallen booth of David [i.e. the kingdom of David that served as a shelter], and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old [restoring the city];¹² that they may possess the remnant of Edom [a nation that was hostile to Israel; see Num 20:14-21] and all the nations [גויִם *goy* - Gentile nations] who are called by My name,” declares the LORD who does this.¹³ “Behold, days are coming [in the millennial kingdom],” declares the LORD, “when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved.”¹⁴ “Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel [return them to the land], and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and

make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ “I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,” Says the LORD your God.

Summary:

Amos chapter nine contains both cursing and blessing. Amos opens with His fifth vision from the Lord in which he saw God standing beside an altar in a temple and He commanded it be struck so that it will fall on the worshippers (Amo 1:1a). God would pursue all the guilty, and no matter where they flee, whether in grave or sky, in forest or sea, or by captivity in a foreign land, they cannot escape His presence or judgment, for He will find them and set His “eyes against them for evil and not for good” (Amo 9:2-4). It is God who controls all things, who touches the land so that it melts, or causes the Nile to rise and fall, who created the heavenly atmosphere and calls for oceanic waters to fall as rain upon the earth (Amo 9:5-6). Though Israel had a special relationship with God and enjoyed many privileges, they injured their relationship with Him by pursuing idols and acting like the pagan nations around them (cf. Amo 3:2). Because of their sinfulness, God declared, “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?” (Amo 9:7a). The Ethiopians—or Cushites—lived in a remote region, yet they were under God’s watchful eye. More so, God controls the destiny of all nations, and He does this, in part, by directing their migration from one place to another, whether it is His own people, Israel (coming out of Egypt), or that of the Philistines or Arameans (Amo 9:7b). All kingdoms are under God’s scrutiny, and “the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth” (Amo 9:8a); yet, the Lord states, “Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob” (Amo 9:8b). God had repeatedly promised to send the Israelites into captivity because of their sinful practices and violation of the Mosaic covenant (Amo 4:2-3; 5:27; 6:7; 7:11, 17); yet, He would spare those who responded to His call to righteousness (see Amo 5:4-6, 14-15, 23-24). God’s judgment would be precise and separate out the innocent from the guilty, as He will “shake the house of Israel among all nations as *grain* is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground” (Amo 9:9). His judgment would screen out the righteous and punish the wicked, as He declares, “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword” (Amo 9:10a), even those who think they are innocent and will be spared, who say, “The calamity will not overtake or confront us” (Amo 9:10b). Amos’ message turns to a hopeful future in which God promises to restore His people to their land and shower them with blessing. This will happen when Jesus, the Messiah, returns to the earth and establishes His kingdom. “In that day” God will “raise up the fallen booth of David” (Amo 9:11a), which will serve as a protective canopy over His people, and even Israel’s enemies will experience millennial blessings, even “the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name” (Amo 9:12). The future blessings would be so abundant that “the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed” (Amo 9:13a), and even the uncultivated mountains will offer produce (Amo 9:13b). And God

declares, “I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them” (Amo 9:14-15). Here, God’s promise would nourish the souls of the faithful remnant and sustain them during difficult times. The promise of a future hope nourishes and sustains believers today (2 Pet 3:13).