

# AMOS



LOVEISRAEL.ORG

# Amos

## For Lovelsrael.org

### Chapter 1

Amos was a prophet of the L-rd. He prophesied (around 760 BC) regarding a change that needed to be made in both the Southern kingdom of Israel (also called Judah) as well as in the Northern kingdom (called Israel). He spoke clearly regarding the fact that G-d wanted justice - not a social justice, from a worldly perspective, but rather the justice and righteousness which is from G-d. What is unique about the prophecies of Amos is that they are a call for all of the nations of the world to embrace and submit to the truth of G-d. G-d expects all nations, not only the Jewish people, to submit to His truth and to live obediently to His instructions/commandments. G-d will not only hold Israel accountable to His standards of justice and righteous....G-d will hold every nation accountable to His standard of holiness.

**Verse 1:** *“The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”*

*The words of Amos:* Amos is going to share with the people the revelation that he received from the L-rd. The L-rd revealed this revelation to Amos so that Amos could share with the people that G-d desired a change – both in Israel (North and South) as well as in all the nations of the world. G-d's plan was never just to change one people. He desired for all of humanity to be changed, and, thereby, to participate in His blessings (Genesis 12:3).

*Among the shepherds:* Amos was not a priest or a spiritual leader in the land of Israel. He was a shepherd and knew what it meant to take care of sheep. Good shepherds had to be brave, willing to fight for, and lay down their lives for, their sheep (John 10:11,15). Amos, like all the prophets, spoke sternly to the people – trusting G-d, the Good Shepherd, to deliver, defend and support him against those who were in opposition to him and G-d's message.

*Tekoa:* Tekoa was situated in the Judean hills, south of Jerusalem. Amos was, very clearly, a resident of Judah – the Southern kingdom.

*The words...which he saw:* G-d did not speak in an audible voice to Amos. He gave Amos a vision.

*Uzziah king of Judah:* See 2 Chronicles 26. Uzziah was also called Azariah (2 Kings 14:21-22)

*Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel:* See 2 Kings 13:13, 2 Kings 14:23-29

*Two years before the earthquake:* G-d uses earthquakes, Biblically, to capture the attention of people, to cause them to understand that He is giving a message that has world worldwide significance or implications. G-d's plan is that there is going to be a restoration of His purposes, in the Kingdom of G-d, and this is going to have worldwide implications - not just for one people/ethnic group but for all of humanity (John 3:16).

**Verse 2:** “*And he (Amos) said: ‘The L-rd from Zion roars and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.’”*

*Zion:* This is a word that should cause us to think of the Kingdom of G-d (‘Zion’ is the name given to Jerusalem in her glorified/completed/perfect state). This word teaches us that there are Kingdom implications to this prophecy. If we want G-d’s Kingdom to be established in our lives (Matthew 6:10) we need to take this prophecy seriously, applying the truth we find in it to our own lives.

*The L-rd...roars:* A lion roars. Yeshua is called the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah’ (Revelation 5:5). The use of this word, ‘roar’, lets us know that this text has Messianic implications. G-d is not pleased with His people (nor is He pleased with the nations around Israel). They are unjust, corrupt and neglecting His commandments. G-d called Israel to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6). ‘Light’ is related to revelation – i.e light is related to the truth of G-d. G-d gave His truth to Israel, but not so that Israel could hold on to it for themselves, but that they would be that light to the nations, that they would be a source of illumination of G-d's truth throughout the world. This has always been G-d’s objective/plan/purpose (Genesis 12:3). Israel, however, throughout history, have been unwilling to be a good source of influence (a G-dly influence) upon their neighbours.

*From Jerusalem He utters His voice:* G-d speaks through His Son – Yeshua the Messiah. Everything that Yeshua, the Word of G-d, speaks becomes a reality (John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:16-17). One of the important truths concerning the identity of Messiah is that not only do His words create order from chaos, but His words also defeat His enemies (Revelation 19:15 – the ‘sword of His mouth’ refers to His Word).

*The pastures of the shepherds mourn:* This is warning us that things are not going to be ‘business as usual’. Shepherds (businessmen, etc) are not going to be able to continue doing what they have always done (John 9:4). Through difficulty, hardship and suffering, G-d is going to bring about a change.

*The top of Carmel withers:* Carmel is one of the most fertile places in Israel. G-d’s judgment (the withholding of His rain/blessing) is going to affect even the best and the most fertile places. Prophetically we know that when G-d is pleased with His people the land is abundant and produces a great harvest. However, when G-d is displeased with His people the land becomes desolate (Leviticus 26:3-5, 27, 32-35).

**Verse 3:** “*Thus said the L-rd: “For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron.”*

*Said:* Although this had not yet happened, it was written in the past tense. What G-d has said, G-d will do. In fact, from His perspective, His words render it as good as already done.

*Three ... four:* Three speaks Biblically of the revealing of something. Four is a Biblical number that alludes to worldwide implications. 3+4=7. Seven, Biblically, has to do with the purpose of G-d. It is a number that is related to holiness.

*Transgressions:* G-d is going to punish Syria (Damascus is the capital of Syria) because they were not submissive to His purposes – they transgressed the law of the L-rd.

*Threshed:* The people in Damascus behaved improperly – constantly in allegiance with the enemies of Israel, desiring to punish (‘thresh’/stripping away from) the children of G-d and capture Jerusalem for themselves. Threshing has to do with the separating of one thing from another.

Damascus was stripping away, for their own purposes, the things that belonged to *Gilead* (part of the Promised Land – Joshua 17:1). Gilead is south of Damascus – a historic, mountainous region in modern-day Jordan. As the people of G-d, we need to make a distinction (a separation) between what is right (permissible) and what is wrong (impermissible/forbidden) - Hebrews 5:14, see also Deuteronomy 28. Damascus consistently chose to be against the purposes and people of G-d. This behaviour incurred negative consequences – which were meted out by G-d.

**Verse 4:** *“But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeal, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.”*

*Ben Hadad* was a leader in Aram (a country that we call Syria today, which still has Damascus as its capital city!). Ben-Hadad was defeated, and his son, Hazeal, succeeded him. Hazeal, in turn, had a son called ‘Ben-Hadad’ (see 2 Kings 8:7-15, 2 Kings 10:32-33, 2 Kings 12:17-18, 2 Kings 13:3-5,22-25).

**Note:** This judgment against Damascus (*‘a fire...which shall devour’*) has already been fulfilled - during the administration of Hazeal and Ben- Hadad. This is NOT a prophecy that still needs to be fulfilled in our current times. Therefore, we should not rip this prophecy out of context and apply it to a current day situation. This has no implication for today as it has already been fulfilled.

**Verse 5:** *“I will also break the (gate) bar of Damascus, and cut down the inhabitant who dwells in the Valley of Aven, and the one who holds the sceptre from Beth Eden. The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir,’ said the L-rd.”*

*The (gate) bar:* This is similar to a metal bar that is used to give strength and security to a door/gate to make it safer from invaders/thieves. This kind of locking device is no match for G-d but can be easily broken by Him. G-d is speaking about taking away the security of Damascus.

*The Valley of Aven:* There are some disagreements as to where this valley is actually located. G-d is pronouncing judgment upon its inhabitants, so we could say, with a degree of certainty, that it has to have been within the boundaries of Aram/Syria.

*The one who holds the sceptre:* The ruler.

*Beth Eden:* An ancient Aramean kingdom in northern Syria, near the Euphrates River, north of Damascus.

*The people of Syria shall go captive:* They are going to be displaced – go into exile.

**Note:** G-d is not a respecter of persons. This means that He does not show favouritism or partiality in His dealings with man (Acts 10:34). The Jewish people, in the days of Jeremiah, were taken into exile, by the Babylonians, to Babylon. They went into exile because they had transgressed the laws/commandments of the L-rd and had refused to repent. In the same way, and for the same reason (disobedience to the commandments/instructions of the L-rd – sin, iniquity and transgression), many of the nations were (and still are) taken into exile. G-d is willing to forgive those who violate His laws, but many do not turn to Him and repent, delighting, instead, in fulfilling the desires of their own flesh. For this reason, G-d is displeased with these nations around Israel and Judah. The commandments of G-d are not given to only one group of people (ie the Jewish people), but the law of G-d is for humanity.

Paul calls the law of G-d 'spiritual' (Romans 7:14). We only come alive, spiritually, through redemption. It is only when we have been redeemed (experienced salvation through Yeshua) that we can have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit of G-d within us, we can take hold of the instruction of G-d and, under the leadership of the Spirit, apply it to our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him. G-d holds the nations accountable to the same standard that Israel is held accountable to. G-d has ONE truth. That same truth is applicable for both Jew and Gentile.

*Kir*: A place of exile for Arameans (Syrians), likely near the Tigris River in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq/Iran)

*Said the L-rd*: This is written in the past tense as a promise. What G-d has said, He will do.

**Verse 6**: *"Thus said the L-rd: 'For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom.'"*

This prophecy has already been fulfilled. This is not speaking about anything currently happening in Gaza. This is a judgment that G-d brought about a long time ago.

The people in Gaza were a different people group to the people spoken of who lived in Syria - Amos 1:3-5. Damascus was north of Israel. Gaza is west/south-west of Israel.

*Three transgressions ... and for four*: This is the same prophetic language/description as that used against Damascus. As has already been mentioned, G-d is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He does not show partiality or favoritism in His dealings with man. G-d is going to act against Gaza. G-d knows that through this punishment/judgment a change is going to be brought about. G-d's righteous judgment brings about a G-dly change.

*I will not turn away*: G-d is not going to relent. He will do what He has said He will do.

*They took captive the whole captivity*: The people in Gaza aided in exiling the children of G-d from the land of Israel.

*Deliver them ... to Edom*: There is a connection (especially spiritually) between Gaza and Edom. The Philistines (the modern word used today is translated 'Palestinian') lived in Gaza; the Edomites (a different ethnic people group) lived in Edom. The Philistines have always been opposed to the plans and purposes that G-d had for Israel. They were David's archenemies. Edom (who descended from Esau) has also never been able to stand, tolerate or participate in anything that's connected to the will of G-d (Obadiah 1:14 tells us that they stood in the roads as the Israelites were exiled, making sure that they killed or recaptured everyone who tried to escape).

**Note**: Edom is a place that G-d does not like (Malachi 1:2-5, Isaiah 63:1-6). Why? Because they have always been defiant, standing against the plans, purposes and will of G-d (what G-d builds up they want to tear down. What G-d tears down, they seek to build back up). According to prophecy, G-d is going to be eternally against Edom (who is descended from Esau). Hebrews 12:16 identifies Esau as a fornicator and a profane person - an immoral and perverse man. Esau knew the standard and plans of G-d, but he was defiant, totally committed to thwarting the purposes of G-d.

**Verse 7:** *“But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour its palaces.”*

G-d promised to breach the security of Gaza, making it an unsafe place to live.

**Verse 8:** *“I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and the one who holds the sceptre from Ashkelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,’ Said the L-rd G-d.”*

*Ashdod...Ashkelon...Ekron:* These were all formerly Philistine cities, but they are all cities that belong to Israel today. The Philistines have been *cut off* from these three cities. This is a prophecy that has already been fulfilled.

*The remnant of the Philistines shall perish:* G-d delights in saving a remnant. When even the remnant perishes then we can be sure that this judgment is complete. G-d is against these Philistines, and they are not going to continue. Not even a remnant of them will remain - they are going to be judged thoroughly.

*L-rd G-d:* Adonai Elohim. The first word used here relates to G-d being the L-rd/Master – the ruler or absolute Authority. The second name of G-d speaks about Him as the Transcendent G-d - the One who was, is and will be (i.e. the One who has NO limitations).

**Verse 9:** *“Thus said the L-rd: ‘For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.’”*

*Tyre:* A port city in Lebanon, north of Israel (another ethnic people group).

*I will not turn away its punishment:* G-d is moving against these nations, surrounding Israel and Judah, not to completely destroy them but to cause them to come to repentance. G-d’s desire is that the nations also learn the truth of G-d so that they can implement it in their lives. It is only when we are living according to the truth of G-d that we will experience the blessing (promises and goodness) of G-d in our lives. G-d desires for all the nations of the world to live in His blessings – Genesis 12:3. He does not delight in punishing Israel or the nations, but desires for ALL to repent and be saved (Ezekiel 33:11).

*The whole captivity:* This speaks of something that is complete, something in its totality.

*Delivered up...and did not remember the covenant:* This speaks of betrayal. Most scholars say that there was a Lebanese leader who made a covenant with David. That covenant benefitted both Israel and Lebanon. Lebanon forgot that agreement and did not fulfil their obligations. One of the aspects of this agreement was that the materials for building the temple in Jerusalem would come from Lebanon. Lebanon, for participating in this endeavour to build the temple, could have been richly blessed, but they did not behave according to the instructions of G-d. G-d was angry with them and so was going to send them into exile where they were going to endure great hardship because of their failure to remember this agreement that they made with David (and Israel in general).

**Verse 10:** *“But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, which shall devour its palaces.”*

*Fire* is frequently a metaphor for the punishment or the judgment of G-d.

*The wall:* Unlike the walls of a house, which support the roof and designate the spaces/boundaries within a home, the walls of a city are for security.

*Palaces:* The best places in the city, where the most amount of money, effort and time have been invested. G-d is going to bring them to destruction.

**Verse 11:** *“Thus said the L-rd: ‘For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; His anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.’”*

*Edom:* Edom had a defiant spirit. They were committed to everything against the will of G-d.  
*I will not turn away its punishment:* G-d will not relent.

*He pursued his brother with the sword:* See Obadiah 1:10-14 and Ezekiel 35 (Mount Seir is the mountainous region that forms the heartland of Edom).

*Cast off all pity:* Edom did not show mercy to the children of Israel.

*His anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever:* This is referring to G-d’s anger against Edom. G-d is not going to cease to punish Edom. Edom is going to be punished eternally because he was continually defiant and against the purposes of G-d.

**Verse 12:** *“But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.”*

*Teman:* In Hebrew, this is a word that means ‘south’. In modern Hebrew this refers to the nation of Yemen. Some would say that within this context this is a reference to a geographical area in Edom (as Bozrah was a key city in Edom). G-d is going to bring devastation and destruction to Edom.

**Verse 13:** *“Thus said the L-rd: ‘for three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory.’”*

*The people of Ammon:* Another people group (of the nations). These are the people that came out of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his youngest daughter (Genesis 19:30-38). G-d was not pleased by these people who epitomised faithlessness.

*The women with child:* i.e. pregnant women. These people killed both the mother and the baby.

*That they might enlarge their territory:* The people of Ammon wanted to increase their land/borders, but they did so in a very barbaric, cruel and heinous fashion. G-d was displeased with their actions.

**Verse 14:** *“But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour its palaces, amid shouting in the day of battle, and a tempest in the day of the whirlwind.”*

*Rabbah:* Rabbah, also known as Rabbath-Ammon, was the ancient capital city of the Ammonite kingdom, located in modern-day Amman, Jordan.

*Tempest:* A large storm

*Whirlwind:* Like a tornado. A big storm or a tornado leaves destruction and chaos in its wake. This is the imagery being used here – destruction, chaos and great damage was coming to Ammon.

**Verse 15:** *“Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together,” said the L-rd.”*

*Captivity:* Exile

*Princes:* High officials. Governmental officials. G-d is promising that there is going to be a judgment on the leaders. Leaders are accountable for the actions of the people.

**Note:** In this chapter, G-d's judgment has not yet touched the Jewish people - the children of Israel. His judgment has been toward the nations surrounding Israel. G-d judges the nations because of their abundant sinfulness, their transgressions and their unwillingness to learn from Israel (who G-d has used throughout the ages as a visual example and reminder, showing the world what happens when a nation turns to G-d or when a nation turns against G-d). The G-d of Israel is the One True L-rd. His standards are what we (Jews and Gentiles alike) should be embracing. When we walk in obedience to the commandments of G-d (through the Spirit) we glorify G-d (John 14:15, 1 John 5:2-4, Ecclesiastes 12:13). Keeping the commandments bears witness, or is a testimony to the world, that we belong to the One True living G-d, the G-d of Israel.

## CHAPTER 2

Our G-d is a great provider. He, alone, provides (Kingdom) victory for His people. Redemption (victory) comes through the judgment of G-d against the enemies of His people. The nature of G-d is to bless. He wants to redeem (give victory to) all of humanity. The work of Messiah on the cross (His work of redemption on Passover) is sufficient. It was enough not just to redeem a portion of humanity, but it is sufficient for all the world (John 3:16, 1 John 2:2). However, to benefit from Yeshua's work of redemption, we must exercise faith and accept the provision that G-d has made for us to have that victory.

**Verse 1:** *"Thus said the L-rd: 'For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime'."*

*I will not turn:* G-d, as He has said in all the prophecies against the nations, will not relent. Judgment is coming upon these places because they are displeasing to G-d in that they have refused to repent and turn from their wicked ways.

*Burned the bones of the king of Edom:* We have already established the fact that G-d is eternally displeased with Edom (Amos 1:11). However, G-d's displeasure does not mean that we get to take pot shots at the object of His displeasure (Romans 12:17-21). Moab did not act against Edom in obedience to the call of G-d. Moab acted against Edom in anger. Burning bones instead of burying them is an act of shame. Moab wanted to bring contempt or shame upon their enemies. Taking delight in shaming others is contrary to the character of G-d. Moab's mindset and attitude toward their enemies was wrong.

*Lime:* A kind of whitewash.

**Verse 2:** *"But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet sound."*

*I will send a fire:* This is the judgment G-d employs against Moab as a consequence of their desire to shame the king of Edom.

*Kerioth:* The Hebrew word (in plural) for city (ie. cities). Most scholars conclude that this is referring to the major cities of Moab.

*Tumult:* Up roar. This is a large noise.

*Trumpet sound:* Literally, shofar/ram's horn. A shofar is a Biblical symbol that, every time it's mentioned in the Scripture, should remind us of the provision of G-d (Genesis 22:13-14). The use of this word, within this context, reminds us that G-d provides judgment for His enemies (those who are disobedient and who do not behave according to the character of G-d), and, thereby, provides vindication for His people.

**Verse 3:** *"And I will cut off the judge from its midst, and slay all its princes with him," said the L-rd."*

*I will cut off:* This is an expression of judgment.

*The judge:* A judge makes the ultimate/final decisions that set things in order for a nation. G-d is holding the decision maker accountable.

*Princes:* High officials. Governmental authorities.

**Verse 4:** *“Thus said the L-rd: ‘For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the L-rd, and His statutes they did not keep. Their lies lead them astray, lies which their forefathers walked after.’”*

There is a change in this verse. G-d now begins to speak against His people (first dealing with Judah, in the south, and then, later, dealing with Israel – the Northern kingdom). G-d was displeased with His people because they had not been a righteous influence (a light, a blessing) to the nations that surrounded them. G-d’s desire was for His people to be unified (Psalm 133). However, at this time, there was a divided monarchy.

*Despised:* A word that speaks of loathing, a very strong contempt.

*The law of the L-rd:* G-d’s people rejected His law. The problem with Judah was that they did not love, but they hated, the law of G-d. They were not interested in His instructions, His commandments.

*They did not keep:* They did not observe or practice the laws of the L-rd.

*Their lies lead them astray:* At the core of Judah’s problem was that she assimilated and became like the nations – she wilfully rejected the law of G-d and engaged in the idolatrous practices of the nations which surrounded her. The nations influenced Israel. Israel failed in their calling to influence the nations. ‘Lies’ refers to false religions (in our day, this could also refer to wilfully misunderstanding and distorting Messiah’s message to the church – many would prefer to cling to a prosperity gospel rather than to ‘take up their crosses’ and suffer for Christ. Many want to live in Christ’s blessings, but are unwilling to experience any suffering, and certainly would not die for their ‘faith’).

**Verse 5:** *“But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”*

Notice that G-d, who is not a respecter of person, measures out the same punishment to Judah as He does to the nations of the world. Those who do not accept Messiah (Yeshua) as their L-rd and Saviour (Jew or Gentile) all receive the same punishment – eternal damnation.  
*Fire:* Symbolic of G-d's judgment.

**Verse 6:** *“Thus said the L-rd: ‘For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.’”*

*They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor:* This is speaking of a corruption within Israel. There is no fear of G-d. No fear of G-d leads to no sensitivity to the instructions of G-d. This means that everyone does as they please, according to what seems good in their own eyes (Judges 21:25).

*The poor:* The destitute. Those who are in a desperate situation.

**Verse 7:** *“They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and the way of the humble they pervert. A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name.”*

*Pant:* This is a word for breathing. When airflow into a person’s body is restricted, the body reacts to try to increase the oxygen levels in the body (Panting, deep breathing, etc).

Panting, here, speaks of a strong desire, a desperation, for something.

*The dust of the earth:* Man is created from dust (Genesis 2:7).

*On the head of the poor:* The unrighteous inhabitants of Israel (those who had rejected the commandments of the L-rd) did not love humanity (see also Matthew 22:36-40 – we love G-d by keeping His commandments – John 14:15. Loving G-d, which is demonstrated by keeping His commandments, leads to a love for others – John 13:34-35). Panting after (showing a desperation for) the dust on the head of the poor speaks of a desperate desire to rule over others – no matter the cost.

*Pervert:* To distort or twist.

*A man and his father go in to the same girl:* The son and his father have relations with the same young woman. This is an example, used by Amos, to show us how much these wicked ones hate G-d and loathe His ways (His laws/commandments).

*To defile My holy name:* The commandments of G-d (which include both the commandments given to Moses as well as the commandments given to us by Yeshua) manifest His character. In doing what they are doing, the father and son physically show their contempt for the character and reputation of G-d.

**Verse 8:** *“They lie down on every altar on clothes taken in pledge and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.”*

*They lie down...and drink:* This verse reveals the character of the people.

*Altar:* Referring to pagan altars. These people worshipped in a way to suit their own fleshly desires, and they did so at the expense of others (using the precious things of others – exploitation - so that there would be no cost to themselves).

*Clothes taken in pledge:* Those who were in financially difficulty would give up their garment as a symbol/a pledge/a token of their sincerity when they tried to secure a loan. The law commanded that this garment had to be given back to the person at night, because, for those who were poor, this garment was the only thing that they had to keep them warm (Exodus 22:26-27). A rejection of the law of G-d leads to a lack of mercy toward others. We need to be people who look out for the needs of others – showing them mercy and grace.

*The wine of the condemned:* This is speaking of wine purchased from fines paid. These people received the money for the fines and, instead of using the money to seek justice for the condemned, they spent the money on luxuries for themselves to indulge in.

*Drink...in the house of their god:* This shows us how far away from the holiness of G-d these people are. Unredeemed humanity (Jew and Gentile – those who have no covenantal relationship with G-d – through Messiah Yeshua) has this same mentality – a loathing of the instructions of G-d and thereby a desire to profane the name of G-d.

**Verse 9:** *“Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.”*

G-d begins to remind the people of what He has done in the past for them. He reminds them of how unresponsive they were in regard to submitting to His will. G-d was faithful, they were faithless (2 Tim 2:13).

*It was I who destroyed:* The nature or character of G-d is to always operate according to what is right (good, perfect). G-d behaves righteously because He IS righteous - it is His character that defines what is righteous or good or holy.

*I...destroyed the Amorite: 2 Chronicles 20:22-24*

*The height of the cedars:* The Amorites were a very large/tall opponent – very intimidating.  
*As strong as the oaks:* Oak trees are very strong. They are powerful enough to weather many storms. These Amorites were like oak trees – powerful and strong.

*Yet I destroyed his fruit:* G-d destroyed them in order that He might bless the children of Israel. Israel, because of G-d's victory over their enemies, became the ambassadors for G-d's plan and purposes. They became vessels of G-d's revelation and His Word to all the nations (2 Chronicles 20:25-30).

*I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath:* This speaks of total victory. G-d had a plan for His people, that which was not theirs He gave to them (according to His plan). However, the children of Israel were not interested in G-d's plan. They entered into a covenant with Him, but apparently under false pretence, because they were not committed to covenantal truth.

**Verse 10:** *“Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to inherit the land of the Amorite.”*

*I who brought you up from the land of Egypt:* Being “brought up from Egypt” (i.e. the exodus) should always remind us of redemption. G-d provided that which was necessary for redemption to be experienced by the people. This again reminds us of G-d's faithfulness – G-d works on behalf of His people.

*Forty years:* Biblically, 40 is a number associated with transition/change. G-d's desire was that in that wilderness place the people would undergo a change – a change whereby they would begin to depend on and trust in Him.

*The wilderness:* The wilderness, or desert, is a place of emptiness. G-d miraculously provided for His people in a place where there was very little provision. Every time this word for wilderness appears in the Bible, it should remind us of G-d's provision and of our dependence on Him.

*To inherit:* G-d's desire was for His people to receive an inheritance. Israel needs to be in the land of Israel (the land of promise, a physical location) for G-d's Kingdom to come. This was true for Messiah's first coming (the people were gathered back to the land of Israel, after their exile to Babylon, before the birth/first coming of Yeshua) and will also hold true before Messiah's second coming. Messiah is returning to Israel (the Mount of Olives – Zechariah 14:4). The possession of the land of Israel, by the people of G-d, still remains foundational in the fulfilment of G-d's plans and purposes. (Jewish) People, going back to the land of Israel today, are fulfilling prophecy (Isaiah 43:5-6, Ezekiel 11:14-20).

**Verse 11:** *“I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?” declares the L-rd.”*

*Your sons:* The next generation.

*Nazirites:* Yeshua came from Nazareth. That made Him a Nazarene, but it did not mean that He was a Nazirite, in the strictest sense of the word. These are two very distinct things within Judaism. A Nazarene came from the town of Nazareth. A Nazirite, on the other hand, took an oath, for a period of time, to not drink wine or cut his/her hair (Numbers 6:2-5).

These two terms have frequently become confused in translation – hence why many pictures of 'Yeshua' depict Him with long hair.

When G-d says here that some of their young men He raised up as Nazirites it means that they were young men who said 'no' to temptation or to anything against G-d's will. They were men committed to the things of G-d.

*Prophets... Nazirites:* Some scholars point out that these two go hand in hand. We need to be a people who are committed (Nazirite) to the message of the prophets. This was one of Israel's major problems - throughout their generations they have rejected the prophets and, therefore, the receiving of revelation from G-d.

**Verse 12:** *"But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!'"*

G-d gave the people a good thing when He gave them prophets (His revelation) and Nazirites (people who were committed to Him). The people, however, were defiant in their rejection of what G-d had graciously given to them. It was forbidden for the Nazirites to drink wine – so the people made them drink it.

*Do not prophesy:* They did not want to hear prophetic truth.

**Verse 13:** *"Behold, I am weighing you down, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down."*

*Behold:* When we see this word in a Biblical text we need to sit up and pay attention. This is a word that indicates to us that something really important is about to be said or done.

*I am weighing you down:* G-d is promising to put a heavy burden on them and make them unstable. This was the consequence of being rebellious and for rejecting prophetic truth.

**Verse 14:** *"Therefore flight shall perish from the swift. The strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself;"*

*Flight shall perish from the swift:* Those who try to flee from this judgment will be unsuccessful. G-d does not give victory to those who are rebellious.

*Not strengthen...nor...deliver:* G-d is displeased with Judah and Israel, and He is also displeased with the nations around them. For this reason, His judgment is coming.

**Verse 15:** *"He shall not stand who handles the bow. The swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself."*

There will no victory over their enemies, only defeat. If we are not trusting in G-d, if we are not in His will or committed to His purposes, then we too will not experience victory over our enemies.

**Verse 16:** *"The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day," declares the L-rd"*

*Courageous:* Literally, those who have strengthened their hearts.

*Men of might:* Literally, heroes. These are the ones who do not usually back down.

*Shall flee naked:* Whenever nakedness is mentioned in the Bible, it expresses one thing: shame (humiliation).

*In that day:* Whenever we see this expression in the Bible, it should remind us of Judgment Day.

*Declares the L-rd:* This is a phrase of a promise. When G-d declares something, it means that He is making a promise. When G-d makes a promise, we can be sure that what He has promised IS going to happen.

## Chapter 3

To be 'a chosen people' (1 Peter 2:9) does not mean that we are more highly favoured by G-d. The G-d of Israel is NOT a respecter of persons, and He does not show favouritism (Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34-35, Ephesians 6:9). When G-d called Israel (or the church) 'a chosen people' it meant that they were uniquely created to serve G-d, to be a vessel used by Him to bring blessing (light/truth) into this world - potentially for every nation and every person. This has always been the plan/will of G-d in regard to His people – those who are in covenant with Him. Most of humanity will reject the plans and purposes of G-d.

**Verse 1:** *"Hear this word that the L-rd has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:"*

*Hear:* This is a word that demands a response. We 'hear' in order to respond and, with faith, obey.

*You:* Written in the plural. G-d is speaking to the children of Israel.

*I brought up from the land of Egypt:* G-d is referencing a great work (redemption) that He did for His people - not only for the Jewish people but also for those Gentiles who responded to Him (a mixed multitude – Exodus 12:38). Everyone who left Egypt had had a Passover experience – the blood of a lamb, by faith, painted upon the doorframe of their homes.

**Verse 2:** *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you for all your iniquities."*

*Known:* This word for 'known' speaks of knowing something thoroughly and intimately. This is not just knowing about something from hearsay. This is knowing through personal experience. In Egypt the people had displayed faith when they had painted their doorframes with the blood of the lamb in order to receive salvation from death. However, in the wilderness their faith was no longer evident. The L-rd revealed Himself to the people at Mount Sinai but they had not responded to Him in obedience. They did not desire a relationship with G-d, but asked that Moses would act as an intermediary between them and G-d.

*I will visit upon you:* This is a word of punishment. G-d is fully committed to His people. Because G-d is fully committed to His people, we can expect that He will thoroughly bless or thoroughly punish - depending upon our behaviour (whether we are operating with or without faith – Romans 14:23). The people knew the truth, but they chose to not behave according to it. G-d was displeased with the rebelliousness of His people.

**Note:** It is important to take note of the fact that the people who left Egypt experienced a physical redemption and not a spiritual one. They did not leave Egypt and become "new creations". Those who have believed in Messiah Yeshua experience a spiritual redemption. Unlike the children of Israel, who were unchanged by the blood of the Passover lamb, we have experienced the blood of a better sacrifice – and through Messiah (a spiritual Lamb – Revelation 5:6) - we have become "new creations" (2 Corinthians 5:17). As a new creation, with the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we have a greater ability, than the children of Israel had, to obey G-d (see Hebrews 8:6).

**Verse 3:** *"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"*

If two people are going to the same destination they can walk together. If one person is going to a different location, then they cannot walk together. G-d has a plan, and this is NOT going to change (Malachi 3:6). If we reject G-d's plan for salvation (Messiah Yeshua) then we cannot walk with Him, we cannot have intimacy with Him.

**Verse 4:** *“Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?”*

The answer to both these questions is ‘no’. A lion will roar to announce his success and to intimidate other animals so that they will not steal his catch from him. If a lion has caught nothing he will not roar. The outcome of success is a response (a roar). Being unsuccessful elicits no response. G-d responds to our successes (blessings and reward – Matthew 25:23). He responds in a different way to non-success. G-d's silence should cause us to pay attention. G-d's silence does not necessarily signify His approval (1 Samuel 3:1, Psalm 50:21).

**Verse 5:** *“Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all?”*

The answer to these two questions is again ‘no’. Both these questions relate to cause and effect – one thing leads to another.

*No trap:* No incentive. A bird is motivated by an incentive. If there is no reward (in the trap) the bird would not fly into the trap. In a similar way (not that it is a “trap”), we too have incentives (rewards and blessings) that motivate us to obey the L-rd. The consequence for disobedience is a lack of reward (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

**Verse 6:** *“If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people tremble? If there is evil in a city, will not the L-rd have done it?”*

*Trumpet:* Literally, ‘shofar’ – the ram's horn. The shofar was also sounded to announce impending battle.

*Evil:* That which is against the will of G-d. Not everything that happens is the will of G-d. This does not in any way attack G-d's sovereignty. Because of free will, G-d allows things to happen (eg sin). This in no way means that G-d approves of sin or that it is His will for anyone to sin.

*Will not the L-rd have done it:* The L-rd does not cause evil, but He does allow it. G-d is always faithful to His Word. If we obey His Word, we can expect a good result – i.e. a blessing. However, the same G-d who is faithful to bless obedience is the same G-d who is faithful to punish disobedience (i.e. He allows calamity). It was not G-d's perfect will or plan, from the beginning, to punish. G-d's perfect will was to bless mankind. But G-d is holy. His Word and plan were violated when sin entered into this world. G-d, being holy, had to then deal with sin. Therefore G-d allows punishment. When we do evil (that which is against G-d's will), we can expect to experience evil (that which is against G-d's will).

**Verse 7:** *“Surely the L-rd G-d does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”*

*The L-rd G-d does nothing:* G-d is slow to respond and bring punishment upon people (2 Peter 3:9), as He does not want anyone to perish but wants all to come to repentance. Decades before the L-rd would act (in the Old Testament) He would send prophets to the people to warn them about what they could expect if they did not repent and turn from their wicked ways. G-d gave the people years to repent before He acted. G-d is loving and merciful. He desires to forgive those who approach Him with truly contrite hearts. Before G-d's judgment comes, He first reveals it to the prophets so that they might speak up and warn us that judgment is coming so that we have opportunity to repent.

**Verse 8:** *"A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The L-rd G-d has spoken! Who can but prophesy?"*

*A lion has roared! ...The L-rd G-d has spoken:* Man is without excuse. G-d has revealed/announced His intentions/plans to us. If we do not listen, we will suffer the consequences.

*Fear:* To fear, within this context, means to give priority to. In our lives we need to give G-d priority. If we know G-d is displeased with us, we need to repent. We need to be people who, above ALL else, are obedient and submissive to the instructions of G-d (2 Chronicles 7:14).

*Who can but prophesy:* When we hear a lion roar, we cannot help but respond with fear and trembling (this happens to us instinctively). When G-d has spoken, we cannot help but speak (Jeremiah 20:9). G-d never hides His intentions (Genesis 6:13-14, Genesis 18:16-22, etc). He has revealed, through His servants, all of His plans and purposes to us. This is G-d's mercy in action. G-d reveals, ahead of time, what He is planning to do. G-d does not have to do this. However, according to His great love and abundant mercy, He does. G-d desires to reveal to us what He is up to and what He is getting ready to do. He gives us time to repent. If we do repent, then G-d stays His hand/judgment and does not bring upon us the calamity He warned us about.

**Verse 9:** *"Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: 'Be gathered against the hills of Samaria; see great disturbances in her midst, and the oppressed within her.'"*

*Ashdod...Egypt:* This is referring to two different groups of people. Ashdod was one of the cities of the Philistines (an enemy of Israel). Likewise, Egypt was also a continual enemy of Israel. In this verse, we see that the Philistines and the Egyptians are being called by G-d to come and render punishment upon the children of Israel (the Northern kingdom – *Samaria* being the capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel).

*Great disturbances:* Great confusion. These ones in the Northern kingdom would act without a clear plan. G-d was going to bring something terrifying to the people, because they had rejected His instructions, and they were not going to know how to respond.

*The oppressed:* The people were demonstrating faithlessness. Their lack of faith led to disobedience. This, in turn, caused them to become oppressed.

**Verse 10:** *"'They do not know how to do right,' declares the L-rd, 'who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.'"*

*Do not know how to do right:* The people have been blinded by sin. Because of their rebellious spirits, they do not operate with discernment. This is a spiritual principle. When G-d's people, including His New Covenant people, engage in rebelliousness (i.e. not doing His will, making decisions based on fleshly wants and desires, etc) we are going to find ourselves in a spiritual condition whereby we will not have any discernment – we will not have G-d's perspective and so won't be able to make wise decisions. If our behaviour does not change, this will eventually lead to us receiving punishment/discipline from G-d.

*Violence:* This word in Hebrew is the word 'hamas'. It is a word that speaks about violence for the sake of, and for the love of, violence. Those who do this violence take great delight and enjoyment in inflicting pain on others.

*Robbery:* These ones are motivated by wealth. They are willing to do great violence for the purpose of being able to capture wealth. G-d is displeased with the people because they are making poor decisions. They are making decisions based upon their financial desires and not according to righteousness and holiness

**Verse 11:** *"Therefore thus said the L-rd G-d: 'An enemy shall be all around the land; He shall sap your strength from you, and your palaces shall be plundered.'"*

*An enemy shall be all around the land:* Due to their rebellion, idolatry and lack of repentance, G-d is warning the people that an enemy is coming, and the presence of this enemy will be felt or experienced across the whole nation.

*Strength:* Power.

**Verse 12:** *"Thus said the L-rd: 'As a shepherd saves from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be saved who dwell in Samaria—In the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch!'"*

*Saves...two legs or a piece of an ear:* Not much will remain.

*In the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch:* Literally: (saved) with the corner of the bed and in Damascus a couch (see Biblehub.com). Most of the commentators agree that this is foreshadowing exile. These people are going to be plundered and taken into exile. What will remain of them will not be found in the land of Israel, but only a very small portion of them will be preserved in Damascus – i.e. outside of the Promised Land.

**Verse 13:** *"Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,' declares the L-rd G-d, the G-d of hosts."*

*Hear and testify:* G-d was commanding the people to not only hear this word, but to talk about it and proclaim it to others. G-d wanted them to know what He had prophesied. When all of this became a reality, He wanted the people to remember that this is exactly what He had said – He is faithful to carry out His Word (Jeremiah 1:12). It was not by chance that the people became a victim of their enemies. G-d made it very clear to them that it was because of their rebellion and faithlessness (worshipping idols rather than worshipping G-d). *The G-d of hosts:* There is a slight change in this phrase. Changes in the text should always remind us to pay attention. Most frequently G-d is called the 'L-rd of hosts'. Here He is called the 'G-d of hosts'. The name used for 'G-d' here is a name related to judgment. G-d heads up

the heavenly armies ('hosts' is another name for 'armies'). He is going to use His armies, which are in heaven, to render this judgment upon His people.

**Verse 14:** *"That in the day I visit Israel for their transgressions, I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground."*

*Visit Israel for their transgressions:* G-d rewards or punishes His people according to their behaviour (This is very clearly spoken of in Revelation 2 and 3 – "I know your works..."). G-d knows our works. We are not saved by our works (we do not enter into the Kingdom of G-d based on what we have or have not done), but once we are saved (once we are IN Messiah – through faith in His work of salvation that HE did on our behalf on the cross) our works testify that we are saved (our works are a fruit of salvation).

*Bethel:* Literally translated 'House of G-d'. These altars, which were central places for worship and sacrifice, were not being used to worship the G-d of Israel. Idolatrous practices were being enacted on them. Biblical worship always emphasizes a commitment in giving of oneself, in a sacrificial way, for the purposes of G-d (Romans 12:1). G-d responds to the sacrifices made on His behalf.

*The horns of the altar shall be cut off:* When fugitives (this, however, did not include murderers – Exodus 21:14) grabbed the horns of the altar they were hoping that they would find mercy and divine protection (1 Kings 1:50). The horns of the altar being cut off allude to there no longer being any mercy or divine protection afforded to those who engaged in idolatry.

**Verse 15:** *"I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end," declares the L-rd*".

*Winter house...summer house; the houses of ivory...the great houses:* These people were very wealthy. Their prosperity was not pleasing to G-d. Their wealth showed a commitment to themselves and to their own comfort, but it did not show any commitment to the Word of G-d (For example: James 1:27).

**Note:** This judgment against Samaria and the Northern kingdom has already taken place. G-d used the Assyrians to carry off Israel (the 9.5 tribes) into exile. The exile of Judah (the Southern kingdom) happened at the hand of the Babylonians. However, after 70 years the Babylonian exile ended, and the people of Judah returned to the land of Israel. Unlike the Babylonian exile, this Assyrian exile, which began around 721 BC, has never ended. In the last days (and we have seen this happening in our days – almost 3000 years after the fact) this long exile will come to an end – Ezekiel 36 and 37. The same G-d, who was faithful to punish His people for their transgressions, is the same G-d who will be faithful to restore them.

## Chapter 4

Just because we can do something does not mean that it is the right thing to do. Often, we have opportunities to act and achieve what we want, but if it is not what G-d wants then we ought not to do it. We need to learn how to practice restraint – saying ‘no’ to the things that do not glorify G-d. If we are people who are committed to the desires of our flesh, we will do things to please ourselves. If this is the case, G-d and others play second fiddle to our desires – we “love” them as long as they dance to our tune. Those who are committed to the desires of their flesh do not hesitate to oppress others in order to achieve their own desires. On the other hand, those who are committed to the law of the L-rd place themselves under the administration of the law – desiring to demonstrate their love for G-d. If we truly love G-d we are going to manifest that love by loving our neighbour as ourselves. We are no longer going to be motivated by what we can get but rather our motivation is going to be based upon what we can do to demonstrate our love for G-d by loving others as ourselves.

**Verse 1:** *“Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, “Bring (wine), let us drink!”*

*Hear:* This is a word that requires a response – hear in order to respond.

*This word:* Referring to the Word of the L-rd.

*Cows:* Referring to the people who had abundant resources and opportunities.

*Bashan:* Bashan is located in the Golan Heights. It is an elevated and very fertile place. The cows who grazed in this area were strong and healthy. These cows lived luxuriously. G-d provided abundantly for His people. However, they did not use His provision to glorify Him, but they, unaware and unconcerned about the will of G-d, used it to pursue their own fleshly desires.

*The mountain of Samaria:* Israel (the Northern kingdom) had chosen Samaria to be their capital city (they had rejected Jerusalem – despite G-d having caused His name to dwell there).

*Oppress the poor:* These individuals were powerful. They had great resources and opportunities, but they used these resources and opportunities to oppress those who were exceedingly poor, those who had meagre sustenance and virtually no opportunity to change their condition.

*Needy:* The destitute.

*Wine:* Some of the Bible translators insert the word ‘wine’ into the text. The word for ‘wine’ is not stated in the original text. Drinking in order to celebrate is implied in the text. These ones celebrated that they were able to exploit, abuse, crush and take advantage of those who were poor and needy. This is not behaviour that pleases G-d. G-d had blessed these individuals and given them great opportunities. Instead of using these opportunities to help, to demonstrate love, to show righteousness and justice they use them simply to increase their wealth. Increasing their wealth was their primary concern.

**Verse 2:** *“The L-rd G-d has sworn by His holiness: ‘Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will lift you up with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.’”*

*Holiness:* Holiness is related to the purpose of G-d.

*Lift you up with fishhooks:* Like a fisherman hunts down fish, G-d is promising here to hunt these people down. Judgment is coming to those who oppress the poor and who ignore the suffering of others. When we behave in a way that is not in agreement with the character of G-d, we can expect punishment. We can expect a difficult change to be experienced in our lives, as G-d's desire is to bring us to repentance - to cause us to look at others and to treat them as G-d would want us to. We are called to be a blessing to others. Those who ignore the needs of others have a hard heart.

**Verse 3:** *“You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,’ declares the L-rd.”*

*Broken walls:* A breach in their security.

*Harmon:* This is speaking about a location that has to do with the high places – the mountains and high hills. It is not easy to live in the mountainous places. It is difficult to find shelter and safety in the mountains.

*Declares:* G-d is promising to judge the people. Those who do not live in such a way as to reflect the glory of G-d (and we reflect His glory by doing His will) are going to suffer difficult consequences.

**Verse 4:** *“Come to Bethel and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days.”*

**Note:** Most scholars see this verse as a kind of mocking of the people. The prophet understands that the people have been rebellious and uninterested in the things of G-d.

*Come to Bethel and transgress:* Obviously the people should not go to Bethel – the house of G-d – and sin. But this is what the people had been doing. They had gone to the house of G-d, but had neither worshipped nor obeyed G-d there.

*Bring...your tithes every three days:* See Deuteronomy 14:28 (some scholars see this as ‘three years of days’ – ie referring to the third-year tithe). One of the primary purposes of the third-year tithe had to do with celebrating, with worship. People were able to use their resources, that G-d had given to them, to go to Jerusalem and to celebrate in the L-rd's presence. This was not only a time for rejoicing, but it was also an opportunity to bless the poor – the orphans, widows and destitute.

**Verse 5:** *“Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, proclaim and announce the freewill offerings; for this you love, you children of Israel!” says the L-rd G-d.”*

**Note:** This verse is also set within the context of worship.

*Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven:* The people were doing their own thing, making up their own rules for worship. Leaven was not allowed in the temple area. Leaven in an offering tainted the offering. This verse continues to mock the people. The people were rebellious. They were committed to transgression. They were not committed to worshipping G-d in a way that pleased Him.

*Freewill offerings:* Donations. These people loved to announce their ‘generosity’ (Matthew 6:2-4). G-d loves it when His people are generous. But He is not pleased when we use generosity as a means to glorify or elevate ourselves in the eyes of others.

**Verse 6:** *“Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the L-rd.*”

*Cleanness of teeth:* The people are going to have no food with which to dirty their teeth. G-d is going to stop blessing the people abundantly. They are going to suffer and fall into famine – having nothing to eat.

*Lack of bread:* The people had been uninterested in the suffering of others. Now they were the ones who were experiencing suffering.

*You have not returned:* Although G-d had allowed the people to experience lack, they were unwilling to amend their ways. They were not interested in executing righteousness. The people remained in bondage to themselves - they wanted what they wanted and they wanted it now. Their attitude caused them to stand in line to receive opposition from G-d.

**Verse 7:** *“I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered.”*

*Withheld rain:* Water is an important concept in the Scriptures. Water, frequently, symbolizes life. Rain, more often than not, symbolises blessing. When G-d withholds the rain, it is an indication that He is not willing to bless a group of people due to something offensive in their lives. G-d's desire is to bless. It is our rebellion and disobedience that prohibits us from being blessed by G-d. G-d will not compromise His character. When we reflect a behaviour that is against the character of G-d we can be assured that we are not going to be blessed.

*Still three months to the harvest:* This is speaking of the withholding of the latter rains. This rain was key to ensuring that there would be a good harvest. A lack of the latter rains ensured a poor harvest. A good harvest led to great joy and provision. These people were going to receive neither.

*I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city:* G-d is revealing something very important here. He is revealing that He makes a distinction between people. He blesses (rains upon) those whom He finds reflecting His character, obeying His word or demonstrating His will/purposes. Those who behave contrary to Him, He does not bless. G-d is able to make a distinction between the faithful and the faithless.

*One part:* A portion of the land.

*Where it did not rain the part withered:* This dryness produces a lack, which in turn hinders the harvest. G-d is going to frustrate these individuals. Many times, when we are spiritually frustrated, we get angry with G-d. We should not. If we are spiritually frustrated it is because of ourselves. Spiritual frustration should cause us to examine our lives and repent when we see anything in our lives that does not reflect the character of G-d.

**Verse 8:** *“So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the L-rd.*”

*Wandered to another city:* The people know that something needs to change. Instead of changing their behaviour, they change their location – thinking that the problem lies in their location.

*They were not satisfied:* Changing their location did not change their situation. Restlessly wandering from place to place does not satisfy spiritual frustration. It is only when we turn to the L-rd (with a contrite and submissive heart) that we will be satisfied. Repentance is agreeing with G-d. Repentance involves commitment to the will and purposes of G-d. When we are committed to the things of G-d, He is the One who moves in our lives to bring about the change that we desperately need.

**Verse 9:** *“I struck you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the L-rd.”*

**Note:** G-d’s punishment/discipline gets progressively more and more intense. G-d’s desire and end goal, with this discipline, is that the people recognise and deal with their sin – through repentance and turning from their wicked ways to embrace His ways.

*Blight:* The word used here is a word related to a scorching wind – heat that withers the plants and kills them. Blight, as has been translated here, refers to a disease that withers and kills plants. These both, ultimately, lead to famine.

*Mildew:* In Hebrew this is a word that can be translated ‘green’. Green is a colour, Biblically, which is related to suffering and pain. This could be talking about a plague – a judgment from G-d that manifests His displeasure. G-d’s desire is to bless. However, He cannot bless people who rebel against Him.

*Your gardens increased:* People think that when their possessions etc increase G-d must be blessing them. This is not necessarily the case. These people did not benefit from their increase (*the locust devoured them*).

*You have not returned:* The people still did not repent.

**Verse 10:** *“I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the L-rd.”*

*A plague:* Pestilence. A word of disease/sickness.

*I sent... yet you have not returned to Me:* G-d is upset – He is not pleased with His people. He is withholding blessing from them and striking them, but they are not interested in repenting. They have no desire to return to G-d. The people reject the will of G-d because they are committed to their own wills. They are in bondage to sin and so are doing what they desire.

**Verse 11:** *“I overthrew some of you, as G-d overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like an ember saved from the fire; yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the L-rd.”*

*Some of you:* G-d is not going to destroy Israel, but He is going to bring suffering to them (Jeremiah 30:5-7, Zechariah 13:7-9).

*An ember saved from the fire:* If this ember had been left in the fire it would have been completely burned up. G-d, however, is gracious and faithful to Himself and His Word. He is going to save a remnant of Israel.

**Verse 12:** *“Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your G-d, O Israel!”*

*Prepare:* In reality, outside of Messiah, we cannot prepare ourselves for the judgment of G-d. Preparation can only happen through repentance and redemption. The good news about G-d’s judgment is that it brings about a change – a vindication for the people who belong to G-d. When G-d’s judgment begins to fall, the remnant of Israel is going to understand and be changed by the mercy and faithfulness of G-d. They will realise that they are in rebellion and that G-d should not help them, but because of the power of His covenant, because of what He has promised prophetically, G-d is going to move in the midst of the people in order to save them.

**Verse 13:** *“For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind, who declares to man what his thought is, and makes the morning darkness, who treads the high places of the earth—the L-rd G-d of hosts is His name.”*

*Who declares to man what his thought is:* There is a debate as to whether this is referring to G-d declaring to us what we are thinking about (G-d reveals to us our rebellion, our selfishness, the foolish decisions we make, etc) or whether it is about G-d revealing His thoughts to us. G-d reveals His thoughts to us through prophecy. Prophecy brings us into a place, spiritually, where we can catch a glimpse into the mind of G-d – able to understand what the thoughts of G-d are in regard to His people (as an individual, as a group or as a nation).

*Makes the morning darkness:* Makes the dawn gloomy.

*Treads the high places:* This is speaking about judgment. The ‘high places’ relate to idolatry. G-d walks in these places for the purpose of judgment.

*L-rd G-d of hosts:* This is a name of G-d that reminds us that G-d is at the head (He is in charge, first-in-command) of the vast heavenly armies. He is the One who can make a threat of judgment, and He has the ability to carry it out.

## Chapter 5

When we read prophecy, we need to understand to whom that prophecy is addressed. In this chapter, G-d is speaking to Israel. There are a few different ways to understand the term 'Israel' from an Old Covenant perspective. Often, we speak about Israel simply as 'the people of G-d'. After the reign of King Solomon, the nation was divided into two different and separate nations - one in the South called Judah (with Jerusalem as its capital city) and one in the North called Israel – with Samaria as its capital city. Both of Joseph's sons – Ephraim and Manasseh – were part of the tribes that made up that Northern kingdom (Israel). Frequently, the Northern kingdom, prophetically, is called 'Ephraim' (Hosea 7:8, Hosea 11:8, Jeremiah 31:9, Isaiah 11:13, etc). Sometimes this Northern kingdom is called 'the house of Joseph' (as we see in Amos 5:6), or 'the remnant of Joseph' (Amos 5:15). Some references in this chapter relate to the Southern kingdom. We can therefore draw the conclusion that in this chapter G-d is speaking to ALL of Israel (all of His people) in general – North and South.

**Verse 1:** *"Hear this word which I am lifting up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel:"*

*Hear:* The word used here, in the Hebrew text, turns this into a commandment. The people of G-d are commanded to hear what G-d is saying. We 'hear' in order to respond. What we have 'heard' from G-d needs to be applied to our own lives so that we are able to make G-dly decisions.

*This word:* A word of prophecy. G-d, through the prophet Amos (G-d's servant), is revealing prophetic truth to His people.

*Lamentation:* A dirge. A proclamation of sadness and suffering. G-d is revealing to His people that something is coming that will bring great suffering, pain and devastation upon His people – due to their lack of repentance.

*House of Israel:* Referring to all of G-d's people, in a general sense (both the North and the South kingdoms).

**Verse 2:** *"The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; there is no one to raise her up."*

*The virgin:* Prophetically, the word 'virgin', in regard to a nation (specifically Israel), refers to a people that had not fallen into idolatry. Often, when the word 'virgin' is used, it is not speaking of it in a physical or sexual way but in a spiritual way.

*Fallen:* G-d was displeased with His people because they had fallen into idolatry - they were no longer pure or holy but had become corrupt through their idolatrous practices.

*She lies forsaken:* Abandoned. The word used here speaks of someone who has walked away from the responsibility of caring for her needs. This is what G-d is saying He is going to do to Israel – He is going to leave them alone and no longer care for them. G-d's lack of care caused Israel to fall.

*There is no one to raise her up:* The situation for Israel is very bleak. G-d is saying here that He is (proverbially) 'washing His hands' of them – G-d is cutting ties with them and no longer wants to be involved in the mess they have created for themselves, by their rejection of Him. G-d very frequently voices these sentiments prophetically, but soon thereafter we usually find Him calling them to repentance and giving to them a proclamation of hope.

**Verse 3:** *“For thus said the L-rd G-d: ‘The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.’”*

This verse speaks of a great reduction in population (only a tenth will remain). This reduction of population happened due to exile – the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Every city (large or small) was affected by exile.

*House of Israel:* G-d was displeased with His people, in a general sense, because Israel had gone after other gods in defiance of the covenantal relationship that they had with the only true G-d – the G-d of Israel.

**Verse 4:** *“For thus said the L-rd to the house of Israel: ‘Seek Me and live;’”*

*Seek Me and live:* In the commentary in Amos 5:2 we noted that G-d very frequently voices cutting off ties with His people but soon thereafter we usually find Him calling them to repentance and giving to them a proclamation of hope. Here we see a proclamation of hope. This is something we see consistently in the prophets - bad news followed by a declaration of hope.

**Verse 5:** *“But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.”*

*Bethel:* A sacred and important place in Israel’s history.

*Gilgal:* It was in Gilgal that things began for the children of Israel, when they crossed the Jordan River and entered into the Promised Land (Joshua 4:19-24, Joshua 5). The people could not go back to their beginnings and start again. G-d wanted to do something new (different) in their lives. They could not have a new beginning, but they could have a new and different life through what G-d was communicating to them – to seek Him so that they could live. The Word of G-d gives life.

*Beersheba:* Another important place in Jewish history – a place that is connected to Abraham (Genesis 21).

*Come to nothing:* The literal interpretation for the Hebrew word used here is the word ‘trouble’ or ‘evil’ or ‘wickedness’. Bethel was going to become a place of wickedness.

**Verse 6:** *“Seek the L-rd and live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, with no one to quench it in Bethel—”*

*Seek the L-rd and live:* It is G-d who is the source of life. G-d does not promise us a new beginning or a fresh start. In our flesh, we would continue to mess up our lives – no matter how many ‘fresh starts’ we were given. When we seek G-d, entering into a covenant with Him, through His Son, He gives us the Holy Spirit so that we could live an altogether new life – become a ‘new creation’.

*The house of Joseph:* Referring to the Northern kingdom.

**Verse 7:** *“You who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to the earth!”*

*Turn:* A word of change. They changed justice into something that was bitter, deadly poison (wormwood).

*Lay righteousness to the earth:* This is an idiom in Hebrew. It means that they ascribe no value to righteousness. The people were corrupting justice and ignoring righteousness. They were not concerned with demonstrating what G-d has created humanity to do – to reflect His character (a just and righteous G-d).

**Verse 8:** *“He makes the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth; the L-rd is His name.”*

*Makes:* In Hebrew, this is written in the present tense. The present tense is very seldom used in the Biblical text and so, when it is, it is used for the purpose of emphasis.

*Pleiades and Orion:* Most commentators say that these relate to constellations in the sky. People would look to the sky to know when to celebrate appointed times, holidays, seasons, etc (Genesis 1:14).

*The L-rd is His name:* Only G-d can do these things. G-d is able to put things into perfect order. The created order reflects His glory.

**Verse 9:** *“He rains ruin upon the strong, so that fury comes upon the fortress.”*

G-d is also able to put things into order to bring about His judgment, wrath and displeasure.

*Ruin:* Loss. This could come with suffering and pain, sometimes violence.

*Fortress:* From a physical standpoint, a fortress is strong and impregnable. In a moment, G-d is able to cause it to suffer loss and defeat.

**Verse 10:** *“They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.”*

The problem in Israel was that the people were not interested in the character of G-d being manifested among the people of G-d.

*Rebukes:* The people hated any rejection or displeasure aimed at their behaviour. They did not want anyone to reprove or correct them. They did not want to be rebuked for what they were doing.

*The gate:* The elders in the city/town would sit at the gates of that city/town and they would render judgment there. These elders were tasked to ensure that justice and righteousness were upheld in their cities or towns.

*Abhor the one who speaks uprightly:* To ‘speak uprightly’ is a G-dly character trait. The people hated those who displayed G-dly characteristics.

**Verse 11:** *“Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them.”*

*Poor:* The word used here refers to those who are excessively poor – they have very little means for survival.

*Take grain taxes:* Those (poor) who have laboured hard to produce grain, with the expectation of selling it and finding provision, are denied that grain as it is taken away from them from others who are more powerful.

*Hewn stone:* The best stone. They have built the most luxurious homes for themselves. They take from the poor in order to become more wealthy. This is a perversion of justice.

*Not dwell...not drink:* This is speaking about a type of spiritual frustration. What they have done will be of no benefit to them. What goes around comes around. There is going to be a righteous retribution upon those who are unrighteous.

**Verse 12:** *“For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate.”*

*Manifold:* Their sins are many.

*Mighty:* Their sins are strong – serious.

*Afflicting...diverting:* Justice has been perverted.

**Verse 13:** *“Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.”*

*It is an evil time:* G-d's will is not being done. The behaviour of the people is against G-d's character and commands. The people are doing that which is an abomination to the L-rd.

**Verse 14:** *“Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the L-rd G-d of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken.”*

*Good...evil:* The word ‘good’ relates to G-d's will. The word ‘evil’ is that which is contrary to G-d's will (that which is in defiance to what G-d has said).

*As you have spoken:* The ones who seek ‘good’ (those who seek the will of G-d for their lives) are the ones who read and proclaim the Word of G-d – specifically the promise that G-d will be with them (Immanuel).

**Verse 15:** *“Hate evil, love good; obtain justice in the gate. It may be that the L-rd G-d of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”*

*Hate:* To treat something as insignificant, to give no thought to it, to make no provision for it. We should not have anything to do with anything which is contrary to G-d's will.

*Love:* G-d so loved the world that He gave. ‘Love’ is a word of giving. It is a word of commitment. We need to be committed to the will of G-d (‘good’) in our lives.

*Obtain justice in the gate:* This is a commandment.

*Gracious to the remnant:* G-d always works with a remnant. The expectation we can have is that, if we hate evil and love good, G-d will be gracious and merciful toward us. Grace does not only save us, but grace also brings about a mighty change in our lives.

It teaches us to say 'no' to ungodliness (Titus 2:11-14). Grace brings about a restoration in our lives – restoring us to the will of G-d. Grace not only works in our lives to save us - bringing about forgiveness and reconciliation to G-d, but it also brings about a hunger, a desire, to do the will of G-d and obey His commandments.

**Verse 16:** *“Therefore the L-rd the G-d of hosts, the L-rd, said this: ‘There shall be wailing in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, ‘Alas! Alas!’ They shall call the farmer, the mourners, and skilful lamenters to wailing.”*

*The L-rd:* This is not the sacred name of G-d, but it is a name that refers to G-d as Master. G-d is perfect in every way. He is the One who controls the universe. Creation submits to Him. So should we.

*Wailing:* Sadness and misery (emotional pain and distress) are evident in a public way.

**Verse 17:** *“In all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass in the midst of you,’ Says the L-rd.”*

*Wailing:* Lamenting. Sorrow.

*I will pass in the midst of you:* The L-rd’s punishment is the source of their sorrow, the reason why they are wailing and lamenting. Why is the L-rd punishing them? For their idolatry. Idolatry is rooted in the will of man and is opposed to the will of G-d. When we seek to do our own wills (behaving in such a way as to fulfil our own desires) nothing good will come from it. There is a disastrous outcome (physically, spiritually, emotionally) when we pursue the desires of our flesh. G-d is displeased because the people are not acknowledging Him for who He is – their Master.

**Verse 18:** *“Woe to you who desire the day of the L-rd! For what good is the day of the L-rd to you? It will be darkness, and not light.”*

*Woe:* A person who rides horses knows that when you want a horse to stop you say ‘Whoa’. This is the same concept at play here. G-d wants the people to stop what they are doing and change direction. If they do not, the consequences will be dire.

*The day of the L-rd:* The Day of G-d’s wrath. The remnant (of those who are faithful) will be spared on the day of the L-rd (1 Thessalonians 5:9). However, many, many peoples (nations, tribes and tongues) will not be spared on this day. Israel had been called to be a light to the nations. Because they have not been that light, the day of the L-rd will come upon those nations. This will not be a day of joy. It will be a day of condemnation – an indictment regarding Israel’s failure to reach the world.

*It will be darkness, and not light:* This wrath of G-d will reveal His power. G-d’s wrath shows that He is supreme, that He is L-rd (Master), and that He is all powerful. His wrath shows His displeasure. Sadness, hardship and destruction are the outcome of G-d's wrath.

**Verse 19:** *“It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!”*

*A man fled from a lion, and a bear met him:* This man might have appeared successful at a time, but it did him no good in the end. He came to the same end.

This is an illustration that lets us know that the unrighteous man cannot escape the wrath of the L-rd. The Day of the L-rd will visit all those who are not in a New Covenant relationship with G-d through Messiah.

*A serpent bit him:* There is NO escape when G-d moves against a nation, or a people.

**Verse 20:** *“Is not the day of the L-rd darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?”*

*Very dark:* This word refers to a gloomy, thick darkness that paralyzes the person caught in it – to such a degree that they cannot move or escape from it (Exodus 10:21-23).

*No brightness:* No light. No illumination. No revelation from G-d for those on whom His wrath falls.

**Verse 21:** *“I hate, I loathe your festivals, and I do not savour your sacred assemblies.”*

*I loathe your festivals:* G-d does not recognise, and nor was He pleased with, their appointed days or sacred assemblies. The people loved their festivals, but G-d wanted no part in them.

*Savour:* A word related to smell. Their festivals are not a pleasing fragrance in the nostrils of G-d.

**Verse 22:** *“Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.”*

G-d rejects their worship because their deeds were not pleasing to Him.

**Verse 23:** *“Remove from Me the abundance of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.”*

This verse is emphasising that G-d is rejecting the worship of the people. G-d is totally opposed to the people (their festivals, their sacrifices and their praise and worship) because of their idolatry and sin. Instead of repenting, the people persist in their rebellion. Their festivals, sacrifices and praise and worship are according to their own desires, and not according to the instructions of G-d.

**Verse 24:** *“But let justice be revealed as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”*

Like water flowing down, G-d desires that the people will show forth (reveal) justice and righteousness.

*Stream:* The word used here speaks of a dry riverbed that is full in the wintertime, the rainy season. That which is empty (in the summer) is transformed. The blessings of G-d (symbolised by ‘waters’) are there to transform us. When G-d blesses us, it encourages us and motivates us to continue in paths of righteousness.

**Verse 25:** *“Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?”*

The time that the children of Israel spent in the wilderness was a time of disobedience. They did not walk by faith, and nor were they true to the instructions of the law. They doubted G-d and His provision, tending to make decisions apart from G-d's revelation. They did it for 40 years in the wilderness, and they were still doing it in the days of Amos. There had been no transformative change in their lifestyles.

**Verse 26:** *“But you have lifted up Sikkuth as your king and Chiun your images, the star of your G-d, which you made to yourselves.”*

*Lifted up Sikkuth:* This clearly indicates idolatry. Sikkuth was a pagan god that the people were worshipping.

*Chiun:* This is a word that means ‘to be established’. The people believed that they would be established by false gods, rather than by the true G-d.

*You made to yourselves:* Rather than obeying G-d and putting His truth into action, the people walked faithlessly, defiantly and rebelliously. This displeased G-d and so He did not want any part of them. Those who engage in idolatry do not connect with G-d. Instead, they worship gods that they themselves have created and that they can control. False gods are conformed to human images and desires, rather than to the image of G-d and His holiness, righteousness and justice.

**Verse 27:** *“Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus,’ Says the L-rd, the G-d of hosts is His name.”*

*I will send you into captivity:* Their rebellion and idolatry lead them into exile – a separation, a ‘time out’, whereby the people were put away from G-d, for a limited period of time, until they understood the consequences of their sin and were willing to humble themselves and repent.

*Beyond Damascus:* Further than Damascus.

*The G-d of hosts:* This is a prophetic term concerning the G-d of Israel. The word ‘host’ refers to an army. The L-rd is the G-d of the (heavenly) armies. G-d's armies are always victorious. They are never outmatched or outnumbered. They are never overpowered. G-d is able to accomplish what He says.

## Chapter 6

G-d's call in regard to Israel was for them to influence the world (the nations) regarding G-d's purposes, plan and will (Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 49:6, see also Matthew 5:14-16). Israel did not do what G-d had called them to do. This led to G-d not being pleased with Israel, but it also left Him not pleased with the world – as they did not understand the message of G-d and nor did they repent of their ways (Romans 10:14-15). Israel fell into idolatry. In other words, instead of Israel influencing the world what we see is Israel being influenced by the world and falling into their same sins (primarily idolatry). G-d's standards do not change from one group of people to another. G-d's standard for Israel is the same standard that He has for the nations. G-d has one truth. And His truth is for all of creation (i.e. for every nation). The commandments of G-d are not, in a unique way, only for Israel. The commandments of G-d set out His standard of righteousness. This standard is applicable to ALL – not as a means for salvation, but as a fruit of salvation (see John 14:15, 21 and 1 John 5:3-4).

**Verse 1:** *“Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, notable persons in the chief nation, to whom the house of Israel comes!”*

*Woe:* G-d wants change in our lives [Matthew 5:48 – by the indwelling and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (for those who are IN Christ), this is our potential]. If there is no change, the outcome is going to be disastrous. We often fall short of G-d's standards for our lives (being perfect like He is perfect), but that does not mean that G-d changes His standards. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, He enables us to raise the standard in our own lives.

*At ease:* Complacent. The world, primarily Israel in this text, is complacent with regard to the things of G-d.

*Zion:* The term 'Zion' reminds us of Jerusalem in her perfected/final state in the Kingdom. Complacency puts us at odds with the standards of G-d, the character of His Kingdom, and with the quality of life that we should be living. Our lives should be lived according to a holy or righteous standard. This is G-d's standard for our lives. G-d is displeased with us (His people and those who are in the world) when we do not live according to His standards.

*Who are at ease in Zion:* Those who are 'at ease in Zion' are those who are not grieved by the corruption (lack of justice and righteousness) that they see in Jerusalem/in the world. These ones (complacently) leave it be, doing nothing about it.

*Zion... Mount Samaria:* We see a transition here. Jerusalem is the place that is dear to G-d – the place He chose for His name to dwell (Deuteronomy 12:5, 2 Chronicles 6:6). Jerusalem, even today, is at the very heart of G-d's plans and purposes in relation to His Kingdom (Yeshua, at His second coming, is returning to Jerusalem. The headquarters of the millennial Kingdom, so to speak, will be from out of Jerusalem – Isaiah 2:3). Israel (the Northern kingdom) rejected Jerusalem, choosing instead to establish a new capital city in Samaria. Israel was selfish (they were committed to themselves). They were not interested in the plans and the purposes of G-d (His will).

*Notable persons:* Referring to those who were first of the nations (leaders), the ones who were first chosen by G-d, the ones who were given priority by Him. G-d's punishment was coming upon those who were complacent or at ease in regard to the things of G-d.

**Verse 2:** *“Go over to Calneh and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory?”*

*Calneh:* Most scholars believe that this city was within the Babylonian territory – a notable city in the past. The land of Babylon was known for its prosperity and success. It was a major power at the time of Amos.

*See:* Observe it. Pay attention to what can be seen in this city. Take note of it.

*Hamath the great:* This was a place in Northern Israel – near Syria of today. It was a very fertile place (a place of preference).

*Are you better than these kingdoms?* After observing all these places, this is a question that G-d wanted Israel to answer.

*Is their territory greater (more abundant)?:* The answer to this question is ‘no’. G-d wanted Israel to compare themselves to other countries so they would see that they had not been shortchanged by G-d. G-d had not given them an inferior land in comparison to the nations around them. G-d was generous when He gave land to His people.

**Verse 3:** *“Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near;”*

*Put far off:* Delay. Wander away from. These people would prefer to live with their heads in the sand – ignoring what G-d is going to do (His judgment).

*The day of doom:* Most scholars believe that this is talking about G-d's judgment.

*The seat of violence:* The word used here – ‘hamas’ – is also found in Genesis 6:13. It is this kind of violence (the delighting in harming others) that was the basis for the flood. The flood represents G-d's consuming wrath/judgment. At this stage, the nation of Israel was characterised by violence (people trying, at all cost, to get what they desired). The nation was not characterised by grace, mercy or kindness.

**Verse 4:** *“Who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall;”*

*Beds of ivory:* Luxurious, expensive places of rest.

*Eat lambs...calves:* These lambs and calves were meant to be fattened up (traditionally) for sacrificing to G-d, not fattened up to be eaten by man. That which was supposed to belong to G-d, the people took for themselves. The people thought that the way to enjoy life was to pursue the things that brought them pleasure. They did not pursue that which was holy and righteous. They were not interested in these things.

**Verse 5:** *“Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;”*

In contrast to David, who used his harp/musical instruments to praise G-d, these people used their instruments for their own enjoyment - in order to serve themselves.

**Note:** The people gave no thought to G-d (Psalm 14) and this led them into rebellious behaviour.

**Verse 6:** *“Who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”*

*Bowls:* This word alludes to an abundance of wine.

*Grieved:* This word has to do with being physically sick.

*Affliction:* A destruction or a catastrophe.

*Joseph:* Synonymous with the Northern kingdom of Israel. The people were not concerned about the spiritual condition of their kingdom. They were only concerned about what they wanted.

**Verse 7:** *“Therefore they shall now go into exile as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.”*

*The first:* At the beginning. At the head of. They were going to be the first ones to go into exile.

*Banquets:* This was not a banquet or a festival unto the L-rd. This was a banquet (of excessive eating and drinking) that was rooted in selfish pleasure – the gratification of the flesh.

**Verse 8:** *“The L-rd G-d has sworn by Himself, the L-rd G-d of hosts says: “I abhor **the pride of Jacob**, and hate his palaces; therefore I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.”*

*Sworn by Himself:* This promise was rooted in the very essence of who G-d is.

*I abhor:* This was an abomination to G-d. He detested what they were doing.

**The pride of Jacob:** This is at the heart of the message of the book of Amos. G-d was displeased with the people because of their pride. Pride is the pursuit to glorify and exalt oneself. This is the exact opposite of being in submission to G-d and worshipping Him. G-d hates pride and the fruits of pride.

*Palaces:* These allude to wealth and luxury.

*I will deliver up the city:* G-d is reinforcing what He has said - punishment is coming. G-d is going to act, and the people are going to go into exile. This exile (the Northern kingdom being taken captive by the Assyrians) happened in 721BC.

**Verse 9:** *“Then it shall come to pass, that if ten men remain in one house, they shall die.”*

This verse speaks of the seriousness of G-d’s judgment. These ten men have ‘escaped’ and are in hiding in this house. But their enemy is G-d, and they cannot hide from Him.

**Verse 10:** *“And when an uncle of the dead, with one who will burn the bodies, picks up the bodies to take them out of the house, he will say to one inside the house, ‘Are there any more with you?’ Then someone will say, ‘None.’ And he will say, ‘Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the L-rd.”*

*Are there any more with you?:* Is anyone else in this house alive, beside you?

*Hold your tongue:* Be silent.

*We dare not mention the name of the L-rd: They do not want to even recognize the source of their suffering, pain and destruction. They are in denial and do not want to deal with anything that has to do with the L-rd.*

***Verse 11:*** *“For behold, the L-rd gives a command: He will break the great house into bits, and the little house into pieces.”*

Big or small, significant or insignificant, G-d promised to deal with His people (breaking to pieces what they had wrongly assumed were their safe spaces).

***Verse 12:*** *“Do horses run on boulders? Does one plough there with cattle? Yet you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,”*

The answer to those two questions is “no”.

*Wormwood:* Poisonous and extremely bitter. Justice and righteousness have been replaced by something poisonous – fatal for human consumption.

***Verse 13:*** *“You who rejoice over Lo Debar, who say, ‘Have we not taken Karnaim for ourselves by our own strength?’”*

*Lo Debar:* This word simply means ‘Without a word’ (No word) – without a reason. There is nothing there that should cause them to be glad. Some translators think of ‘Lo Debar’ as the name of a city that, presumably, the children of Israel conquered.

*Karnaim:* This is the plural form of the word ‘horn’ (ie horns – of salvation, see Psalm 18:2, Luke 1:69). In Hebrew, the word ‘horn’ is related to victory, success. These people are boasting about being victorious in their own strength or power. They are intimating that they do not need G-d for victory/their salvation. They are defiant. Unwilling to repent. They are solely committed to doing what they want to do.

***Verse 14:*** *““For, behold, I am rising up against you a nation, O house of Israel,’ declares the L-rd G-d of hosts; ‘And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah.””*

*A nation:* G-d raised the Assyrians up against the Northern kingdom of Israel.

*Declares the L-rd:* This is a term that lets us know that G-d is making a promise.

*Afflict:* A word of stress, a word of anxiety and of intense suffering. Israel was going to suffer loss because of their lack of commitment to the purposes of G-d.

*From the entrance of Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah:* They will not be able to go where they want to go – neither the north nor the south. They will go into exile.

## Chapter 7

In this chapter, G-d reveals, through Amos, three visions. Each of these visions relate to destruction. G-d, who is merciful and full of grace, is going to relent. The change that He promised (a new beginning) is going to come. Without that change, which G-d would use to humble the people and bring them back to faithfulness, Israel would not become the people that G-d commanded them to be.

**Verse 1:** *“Thus the L-rd G-d showed me: Behold, He forms locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop; behold it was the late crop after the king’s mowings. ”*

*L-rd G-d:* This name for G-d reveals His authority (G-d is our L-rd, our Master) as well as His power – He is the ultimate Judge, who will hold all people accountable.

*The L-rd G-d showed me:* Amos is receiving revelation from the L-rd. Amos received a vision, and he, by means of revelation, was going to learn something from G-d.

*Behold:* A word that reminds us to pay attention, as what is to follow is extremely significant.

*Forms:* In the original, this word is written in the present tense. The present tense is so seldom used in the Old Testament that it also reminds us to pay attention. What follows is important.

*Locust swarms:* Locusts are a destructive plague.

*The late crop:* The latter harvest. This harvest, in Israel, is in the fall/autumn. This is a season of change/transition.

*The king’s mowings:* This is probably a reference to the time of the shearing of the sheep. This is also significant as it again refers to a transition or a change. The sheep’s old coat is removed to make room for the new.

**Verse 2:** *“And so it was, when it had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: ‘O L-rd G-d, forgive, please! Who is Jacob that he should stand, for he is small!’”*

*It:* Written in the singular and referring to the swarm of locusts. These locusts were united – they acted as one.

*Grass:* Vegetation.

*I said:* The prophet has direct communication with G-d.

*Forgive:* Amos sees the massive destruction that takes place and He asks G-d to forgive the people.

*Please:* This is a polite word of petition or request.

*Jacob:* Referring to Israel.

*Who is Jacob that he should stand:* Amos was concerned about Israel. He knew that if G-d’s full wrath and destruction was poured out on Israel, Israel would not be able to get through the harsh punishment – there would be no future for Israel.

*Small:* Insignificant.

**Verse 3:** *“So the L-rd relented concerning this. ‘It shall not be,’ said the L-rd.”*

*Relented:* The root of this word is the same root as the word used for 'comfort'. G-d was comforted when He heard Amos the prophet (who had a great love for Israel) asking Him to forgive.

*It shall not be:* This punishment, complete annihilation and destruction of Israel, was not going to happen. G-d was comforted and so did not carry this punishment out to its full extent.

**Verse 4:** *"Thus the L-rd G-d showed me: Behold, the L-rd G-d calls for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great abyss and devoured the territory."*

*Showed:* This is the second vision that Amos saw.

*Fire:* G-d uses fire to refine and purify. This fire is going to cause great destruction. But this great destruction will lead to great change.

*The great abyss:* This fire is going to be so intense that it not only impacts this world, but it impacts the underworld as well (G-d is going to totally "clean house").

*Territory:* The portion/region allotted to Jacob/Israel.

**Verse 5:** *"Then I said: 'O L-rd G-d, cease, please! Who is Jacob that he should stand, for he is small!'"*

Amos has almost the same response to this vision as he did to the first.

*Cease:* Amos changes the word 'forgive' to the word 'cease'. Amos is saying that if this punishment happens to this degree (not only in this world but also in the underworld) then it will bring about a destruction of the plans of G-d.

*Small:* Insignificant, compared to what is going on in regard to G-d's destruction. If G-d pours out His wrath, Israel will be annihilated and will not be able to endure. Amos is revealing to us that he understands how central Jacob (Israel) is to the plans and the purposes of G-d. Amos the prophet is interceding for his people, as a prophet should (as Moses also did for his people so that they would not be consumed by G-d's judgment – Exodus 32:30-32). There remains a purpose, an anointing and a call upon the Jewish people (and upon the land of Israel) to bring blessing to all the families of the earth.

**Verse 6:** *"So the L-rd relented concerning this. 'This also shall not be,' said the L-rd G-d."*

*The L-rd relented:* The L-rd was comforted by this prayer that Amos prayed.

*This also shall not be:* Twice Amos has interceded for the people and twice G-d has changed His mind.

**Verse 7:** *"Thus He showed me: Behold, the L-rd was standing on a wall with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand."*

*He showed me:* This is the third vision that Amos receives.

*A wall:* The walls are for security. They are an element of defence.

*A plumb line:* The plumb line is used for the purpose of making level foundations. It is a tool of building.

G-d, well pleased because of the intercession of Amos, is going to make a new foundation, give His people a new beginning (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). G-d is again going to build His people (Romans 11:25-32).

*Plumb line:* This word is repeated. Repetition shows emphasis. G-d is going to rebuild on a level and proper foundation – see 1 Corinthians 3:10-11.

**Verse 8:** *“And the L-rd said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb line.’ Then the L-rd said: ‘Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.’”*

*My people Israel:* G-d is identifying Himself through this people. G-d, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, does not change. He does not choose another people group and nor does He replace Israel. Romans 11:26 still identifies the people of G-d (Jew or Gentile – all those who have accepted Messiah Yeshua as their L-rd and Saviour) as “Israel”.  
*I will not pass by them anymore:* Most scholars see this as a term of forgiveness. Israel is going to be held accountable. G-d is not going to ignore their sinfulness, idolatry or selfishness. He will respond to punish. But His judgment will not lead to their complete annihilation.

**Verse 9:** *“The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam.”*

*Isaac:* This is a name associated with laughter and is a word that is tied to playfulness. There is a bit of a play on words here. It was on the high places that Israel “rose up to play” (Exodus 32:6) – committed idolatry. G-d promises here to lay waste these places linked with improper and sinful behaviour – behaviour that was displeasing to Him.

*The sanctuaries of Israel:* This is a problem. There should not have been unsanctioned sanctuaries in Israel. G-d only sanctioned two sanctuaries – the tabernacle in Shiloh (Joshua 18:1) and the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 6:5-6). These high places and these sanctuaries were displeasing to G-d (the worship being performed in them was not authentic worship) and He vowed to destroy them – including the temple in Jerusalem.

*The sword:* A sword is synonymous with war. G-d was going to use this war, this exile to Assyria, to bring about a new beginning - to put the people on a new and different footing (a pleasing foundation).

**Verse 10:** *“Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, ‘Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.’”*

*Amaziah the priest:* Amaziah was a spiritual leader. He lived in Bethel – a name which means ‘the house of the L-rd’. This man was rebellious. He was not faithful to the things of G-d. He rejected the prophecy that the L-rd gave to Amos. Amaziah had access to King Jeroboam.

*Jeroboam king of Israel:* 2 Kings 14:23-29

*Bear:* Endure. Sustain.

*Amos has conspired against you:* Conspiracy theories were alive and well even in that day and age.

*The land is not able to bear all his words:* Amaziah was counselling Jeroboam that the words of Amos should not be tolerated, as they would bring destruction to the nation. G-d wanted to bring about a new beginning for His people, a fresh start, but that would involve a response of the people to G-d's prophetic truth. This priest of Bethel did not want to hear the truth of G-d.

**Verse 11:** *“For thus Amos has said: ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.’”*

*Jeroboam shall die by the sword:* Amos, the prophet, was revealing that G-d was very displeased with Jeroboam. A sword, Biblically, is often synonymous with war. Amos was revealing to Jeroboam that he was marked to die in this war that was coming.

*Israel shall...be led away captive:* The people did not want to hear bad news. They did not want to hear that they would be going into exile. They would rather be misled by false information than believe the truth or know what G-d was going to bring about.

**Note:** G-d's people were rebellious and unwilling to repent. They were uninterested in the things of G-d. They were committed to what they wanted. They only wanted leaders over them who told them what they wanted to hear. G-d used exile as a way to bring His people back into alignment with His truth.

**Verse 12:** *“Then Amaziah said to Amos: ‘Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.’”*

*Seer:* Someone who receives visions. The Rabbinical scholars point out that Amaziah understood that Amos was getting visions from G-d. However, Amaziah was not interested in what G-d had to say. He was only interested in speaking and doing according to what the people wanted. And the people were not interested in hearing from G-d.

*Go...flee:* Amaziah wanted Amos to leave the Northern kingdom. Neither Amaziah nor the people wanted to hear what Amos was tasked to prophesy. This outlines for us how far removed that Northern kingdom was from the plans, purposes and will of G-d.

*The land of Judah:* In Judah, at this time, the people were still interested in hearing the word of the L-rd.

**Verse 13:** *“But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the royal residence.”*

*Bethel:* Bethel was not the capital of the Northern kingdom (Samaria was its capital), however Bethel was a significant spiritual centre within it.

*The king's sanctuary, and...the royal residence:* The king worshipped and dwelt in Bethel.

What Amos was prophesying was upsetting to the king, and he could not tolerate the words of the L-rd to him and to his kingdom. This king's kingdom was not about the word of G-d, the purposes of G-d, or the will of G-d. This was a kingdom that was all about pleasing man.

The king and the spiritual leaders in the Northern kingdom had been deceived. They were not committed to holiness or righteousness. They were not committed to being a blessing to others. They had removed themselves from G-d's call. This is why they were going to experience judgment (exile).

**Verse 14:** *“Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah: ‘I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit.’”*

*I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet:* Amos was not brought up as a prophet and nor did he have a prophetic heritage. This was not a problem to G-d. G-d called Amos and made him to be a prophet. Being a prophet was not Amos’s idea. He did not volunteer to be a prophet or seek it out. Nevertheless, G-d called him, gave him a word and commanded him to share it with the people in the Northern kingdom. Amos chose to obey G-d’s call. *I was a sheep breeder:* Amos was going in one direction (he was a farmer of animals and fruit), but G-d brought about a change in his life’s occupation. Similarly, Israel was going in one direction and G-d wanted to bring about a change.

**Verse 15:** *“Then the L-rd took me as I followed the flock, and the L-rd said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel.’”*

*The L-rd took me:* G-d was at work.

*The L-rd took me as I followed the flock:* The L-rd removed him from doing the work of a shepherd. Being a prophet was not something that Amos did of his own initiative - in order to please himself. He did not choose to be a prophet. G-d chose him. Amos chose to be committed and faithful to the call of G-d for his life – even though it was unfamiliar and unknown territory for him.

**Verse 16:** *“Now therefore, hear the word of the L-rd: You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’”*

*Now therefore:* In Biblical Hebrew this is a phrase that hints at doing something urgently. *Isaac:* In Hebrew, this is not the normal way to write ‘Isaac’, but it is a play on words. This word relates to playfulness in an inappropriate manner. This ‘play’ pleases oneself rather than G-d. G-d is displeased with Israel. He points out they are playing rather than serving. Their goal is to serve themselves, rather than to obey and serve G-d. ‘Isaac’ relates to promise. The real problem is that the people were not interested in the promises of G-d but were misled and committed to the false promises of this world.

**Verse 17:** *“Therefore thus said the L-rd: ‘Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.’”*

*Your land shall be divided:* Made small and insignificant.

*Harlot:* A prostitute, one who engages in sexual immorality. She is going to show a lack of faithfulness for the marriage covenant.

*Your wife...your sons and daughters:* Amaziah’s family was very negatively impacted under his leadership. Falsehood and idolatry lead to death – spiritual and physical death. Amos is prophesying disaster to Amaziah’s family.

*Survey line:* Like a measuring tape.

*You shall die:* Not only will Amaziah’s family die, but he, also, will die – in an unclean land.

*Israel shall surely be led away captive:* Israel will go into exile. This means that they will be living outside of the Promised Land – outside of the blessings and promises of G-d.

G-d does indeed punish, but for the remnant there is restoration. This is a message of hope. No matter where we might be spiritually, no matter how far we have strayed from G-d, He invites us back to Him. If we repent, He is willing to restore. Repentance is simply turning to G-d, affirming/agreeing that we desire to submit to His Word and to His standards. In the natural, we cannot submit to G-d's Word and standards. This is only possible through redemption – becoming that 'new creation', whereby we can obey G-d. It is only through obedience that we receive the blessings and promises of G-d.

## Chapter 8

If we live in a way that displeases G-d, we are going to live lives of great disappointment. G-d is generous. He loves to bless. But He only blesses those who are found in His will and doing His will.

**Verse 1:** *“Thus the L-rd G-d showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit.”*

*Behold:* A word that reminds us to pay attention. What follows this word is very significant.  
*Summer fruit:* 1. In Israel, the first harvest (primarily barley) occurs in the springtime. The latter (late/summer) harvest occurs in late summer and in the fall/autumn. If fruit is not ready to be harvested at the springtime harvest, the farmer delays harvesting it until this latter harvest. The farmer has a hope and an expectation that the fruit that was not mature becomes mature given more time.

2. There is a play on words in this verse. The word ‘end’ shares the same root as the word for ‘summer’. If there is no change (no good, no ripened or no matured fruit at the summertime/latter harvest), the people will come to a destructive end. G-d is giving the people time to repent (2 Peter 3:9, Romans 2:4). Like the farmer giving the fruit time to mature, from spring to summer, G-d, too, has an expectation that if He gives His people time, they will mature and grow and produce good fruit that will be harvestable and useable. However, if the people persist in their disobedience (remaining stunted and immature), then judgment/their end is coming.

**Verse 2:** *“And He said, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ So I said, ‘A basket of summer fruit.’ Then the L-rd said to me: ‘The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.’”*

*He:* The L-rd

*Amos, what do you see?:* G-d is, personally, speaking to the prophet. He asks Amos a question.

*My people:* These are people who belong to G-d. That, however, does not mean that He treats them differently to other people. G-d still evaluates His people for fruitfulness (their ‘works’) and He responds to them accordingly – see 1 Corinthians 3:15. The people of G-d, who have been entrusted with His revelation, have a greater responsibility to produce ‘good fruit’ (Luke 12:48).

*I will not pass by them anymore:* G-d will no longer ignore what His people are doing. The time of waiting is over and judgment is at hand. G-d evaluates His people at ‘the end of summer’ and He sees no change – their works are fruitless.

**Verse 3:** *“And the songs of the temple shall be wailing in that day,’ declares the L-rd G-d— ‘Many dead bodies everywhere, they shall be thrown out in silence.’”*

*The temple:* This was, in a unique way, where the Presence of G-d dwelt.

*The songs...shall be wailing:* There is going to be a change. Songs of praising will turn to songs of mourning.

*Wailing:* Howling. Lamentation.

*That day:* This refers to a specific day – a day of judgment. G-d is making it very clear that He is displeased with the people and that His judgment is at hand.

*Many:* An abundance.

*Dead bodies everywhere:* These dead bodies are going to be visible. G-d is the One who is causing their death, and He is the One who is casting them out.

*Silence:* G-d is gracious and merciful. He is longsuffering. However there comes a point in time where G-d says 'enough'. It is at this point that prayers are ineffective. People can cry out (weep, mourn, wail) but G-d will not listen. G-d will silently do what He needs to do in order to maintain righteousness and holiness.

**Verse 4:** *“Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail,”*

*Swallow up:* They desire to bring an end to the poor of the earth. This means that they do not desire to bless the poor. They do not want to help them to change their financial situation. Instead, they want to stamp them out, remove them and take what little they have for their own benefit (exploitation).

*Needy:* Those who are exceedingly poor.

**Verse 5:** *“Saying: ‘When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the scales by deceit,’”*

*When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell:* The people really did not want to worship or serve G-d. They were not wanting to be under His authority or His timetable. Unlike the Sabbath, there were no restrictions upon the New Moon celebrations. It was a time of joy and celebration. It was a time of thanking G-d. The implication is that we want to be on G-d’s timetable. We want to submit to His calendar. The worship of G-d was an inconvenience to the people. These people just wanted to get the ‘worship’ of G-d over with, as quickly as possible, so that they could go back to work – to buying and selling.

*The Sabbath that we may trade wheat:* The people chafed at any restrictions being placed on them. Even though these ‘restrictions’ were in place for their own good.

*The shekel:* This is the monetary currency in Israel today. In Amos’s day, the shekel was simple a unit of measurement. The ephah was also a unit of measurement (today we use grams/ounces for smaller measurements and kilograms/pounds for larger measurements. A similar principle is at play here with the ephah and shekel).

*Falsifying the scales:* They were not using legitimate weights to find out the value, or the price, of something. They were making the weight of an item more than it actually was so that they could charge premium and turn a higher profit.

*Deceit:* Dishonest traders.

**Verse 6:** *“That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— even sell the bad wheat?”*

*Bad wheat:* They took shortcuts with the threshing of the wheat. Instead of only selling the grain, they would mix in the chaff (so as to increase the weight and, therefore, the price) and pass it off as saleable.

**Verse 7:** *“The L-rd has sworn by the pride of Jacob: ‘Surely I will never forget any of their works.’”*

*Pride:* This is the problem. The people were not wanting to bless and help other. They were not concerned with honesty. They had no fear of the L-rd. All they were interested in was making profit. They exploited the poorest of the poor in order to build up their own coffers. *I will never forget any of their works:* This shows us that G-d has a special love and concern for those who are poor - those who are in very difficult financial situations. G-d cares for the poor, and, in His time, He will provide for them.

*Their works:* Their self-centred works were deceitful and displeasing to G-d.

**Verse 8:** *“Concerning this, will not the earth be trembling, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the River, heave and subside like the River of Egypt.”*

*Trembling:* This is not (necessarily) referring to trembling in fear (because judgment is coming), but it could also be referring to trembling in anger. Trembling is a word of great emotion.

*Everyone (will) mourn:* There will be no exceptions. G-d’s judgment is coming upon those who do not respond to Him in the proper way. The people have not matured. They are not producing fruit. They are not committed to the plans and purposes of G-d.

*All of it:* When the Nile is in flood, every part of the river is affected. To a certain degree, a loss takes place (mud and debris, as the waters subside, also add to the disaster).

*Swell like the River:* This was a very well-known occurrence in the land of Egypt. The Nile River would flood and swell its banks. And then its waters would recede (subside). What G-d is revealing to the people, through Amos, is that His judgment, like the Nile, would swell and then recede, causing great disaster and change in its wake. We cannot deceive G-d and think we will get away with disobedience. At no point in time does G-d not know our spiritual condition. He desires for us to turn from our wicked ways and repent. However, if we do not repent, His judgment (although seemingly delayed) will come upon us and we will suffer loss.

**Verse 9:** *“‘And it shall come to pass in that day,’ declares the L-rd G-d, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight;’”*

*That day:* This refers to a day, which has been set aside, uniquely, for judgment. Those who do not have a G-dly perspective would think that this day is a terrible thing. However, those who understand Biblical prophecy know that this day is good. It is a day of refinement. It is G-d’s judgment that brings things into His order. Judgment is the catalyst that brings about a righteous and G-dly change among the people, if they are willing to submit, repent and embrace the truth of G-d.

*Make the sun go down:* This is referring to the setting of the sun.

*At noon:* The sun sets every day, but it does not set at noon. For the sun to set at noon is a miraculous and unique event. Yeshua was crucified in the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour (Mark 15:25). This is around 9 o’clock in the morning. He was still alive and hanging on the cross at the 6<sup>th</sup> hour – which would have been 12 o’clock – noontime (see Mark 15:33-34). It was at this hour (noon) that the world became dark (and it stayed dark until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour – i.e. 3pm).

There is a connection between darkness and redemption – G-d struck Egypt in the middle of the night (Exodus 12:29) and after that they experienced redemption. Ruth went to Boaz on the threshing floor at night (Ruth 3:8). After this, Ruth experienced redemption, etc. *I will darken the earth in broad daylight:* When we expect it to be light, there will be darkness. G-d is going to give supernatural revelation.

**Verse 10:** *“I will turn your festivals into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.”*

*Turn:* This has to do with change. This word ‘to turn’ can refer to judgment (the turning upside down of something) or it can refer to a righteous/G-d pleasing change (turning something to make it right – the ‘right side up’). For example: G-d told Jonah that He would overturn Nineveh in 40 days (Jonah 3:4). This ‘overthrowing’ initially had a negative connotation attached to it and referred to judgment. However, because the people of Nineveh repented, G-d did overturn them, but an overturning toward righteousness and righteous behaviour.

*Turn your festivals into mourning:* The people in Israel were not living according to the truth that these festivals pointed to. These festivals were instituted by G-d as reminders to the people of His work in their lives – past, present and future (Colossians 2:16-17). The people were not glorifying G-d in the way they celebrated these feasts, and so G-d was going to turn them from times of celebration into times of mourning.

*Songs:* Songs of worship.

*Lamentation:* Songs of mourning, a dirge.

*Sackcloth...baldness:* Sackcloth and baldness symbolised repentance. Through judgment, G-d was going to set a repentant spirit upon the people.

*A bitter day:* G-d's teaching the people the consequences of their sins. He is teaching them how displeasing sin in their lives is to Him, as well as how destructive sin can be. Sin never leads to a good outcome.

**Verse 11:** *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the L-rd G-d, ‘That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the L-rd.’”*

*Declares the L-rd G-d:* G-d is making a promise.

*The land:* This could be referring specifically to Israel, but it can also be understood to be broader than that – the whole world/earth. It is more likely referring to the latter, as G-d’s judgment will have worldwide implications.

*A famine...of hearing the words of the L-rd:* As we move closer to the last days, many false teachers are going to rise up who are not going to share the truth of G-d’s Word but will teach whatever the itching ears want to hear (they will sensationalize the Word of G-d in order to increase their following).

**Verse 12:** *“They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the L-rd, but shall not find it.”*

*They:* A remnant. This remnant is going to be hungry for the Word of the L-rd, and they are going to show commitment in their pursuit of it.

*Shall not find it:* There is going to be a lot of deception in the world, especially in the last days (2 Thessalonians 2:11). The truths of the Word of G-d will not be taught correctly and will not be functioning within the society in those days.

**Verse 13:** *“In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst.”*

*That day:* This sets the text within the context of judgment. ‘That day’ refers to Judgment Day’. The people are not hearing the Word of G-d and nor are they committed to Scriptural truth. This is why G-d is going to judge them.

*Fair:* Beautiful

*Faint (collapse) from thirst:* They will thirst for the Word of G-d, but they will not receive it. Those who focus on teaching and living according to the Word of G-d are going to be rare.

*Thirst:* Amos initially speaks of a famine (a lack of food), but now he talks about thirst – a lack of drink. A thirst for water is a stronger desire than a hunger for bread. This desire for the Word of G-d increases in intensity – hunger changes to thirst. And this need is not going to be met.

**Verse 14:** *“Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, ‘Your G-d lives, O Dan!’ and, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’ They shall fall and never rise again.”*

*Swear:* Take an oath, make a promise. This talks about commitment.

*Swear by the sin of Samaria:* In the midst of these times, the people are going to reaffirm their commitment to Samaria – i.e the capital for idolatry. There will be a strong spirit of idolatry (selfishness and pride) present in the world in these days. Idolaters are those who worship at the altars of their own desires.

*Dan:* The tribe of Dan were unwilling to take possession of the inheritance that the L-rd gave to them, as they did not want to fight the Philistines living in that place. The tribe of Dan carved out their own place of residence according to their own desires (Judges 18). Dan (in Northern Israel) became a centre of pagan worship.

*The way of Beersheba:* Beersheba was in Southern Israel. All of Israel – north to south – was full of idolatry and people committed idolatry.

*They shall fall and never rise again:* Through judgment, G-d is going to bring about a dramatic change. Sometimes G-d works judgment with His own hands (eg the plagues in Egypt) and sometimes G-d uses the enemy to put forth His judgment (He used the Babylonians to take the people captive to Babylon. In the last days, G-d is going to use the antichrist, as well as the works of His own hands, to bring about His righteous judgment – see Psalm 119:164). Through judgment, G-d is able to bring salvation to the remnant of His people.

## Chapter 9

G-d has commanded us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). When we worship G-d, in spirit and in truth, we are pleasing to Him. However, when we worship G-d according to how WE want to worship Him, in a way that seems right in our own eyes, then G-d is very displeased with us, and we will experience His discipline. Although the children of Israel were in a covenantal relationship with G-d, they did and said many things that were offensive to Him and, despite being in a covenantal relationship, G-d dealt with them in order to discipline them and bring them (the remnant who responded faithfully to Him) back into line. Likewise, when the church thinks and behaves in the way the children of Israel did (with pride, selfishness, worshipping G-d in ways that seem right in their own eyes, etc) G-d also disciplines us. Many people in the church think that because we are in a covenantal relationship with G-d – through Messiah Yeshua – nothing bad will ever happen to us. G-d's will is to bless us. However, if we are acting in a way that is contrary to G-d's will, He allows those things which are against His perfect will (an attack from the enemy, etc) to happen to us. Why? Because G-d is displeased with His people (their thoughts and behaviour) and He wants to bring about a change in their lives.

**Verse 1:** *"I saw the L-rd standing by the altar, and He said: 'Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake and perform on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword. He who flees from them shall not get away, and he who escapes from them shall not be delivered.'"*

*Altar:* The altar is the central place for worship. We worship G-d by offering Him sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15-16).

*Strike:* This is a strong word for punishment. It can mean to bring about the destruction of whatever is struck.

*Doorposts:* Pillars. Often referring to beautifully decorated columns that hold up a building.

*Perform on the heads of them all:* G-d is going to take aim at the heads of His people (either the leadership or on the head of each individual).

*He who escapes...shall not be delivered:* Those who try to flee will be unsuccessful. None will be able to escape.

**Verse 2:** *"Though they dig into hell, from there My hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down;"*

*Dig:* A word of contending or striving.

*Hell:* Literally 'Sheol'. In Amos' day (before the resurrection of Yeshua), Sheol was a place that housed Hades as well as Paradise (Abraham's bosom).

*My hand shall take them:* Even if the people have already died and gone to this place, they cannot escape the punishment of G-d. G-d is in control.

*Though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down:* Man is inadequate. He is insufficient in controlling his future, his eternity. G-d is in control. No one is going to be able to determine, by their effort or works, where they will spend eternity.

**Verse 3:** *“And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them; “*

*Carmel:* The Carmel mountain range consists of many mountains. One of the preferred places within this mountain range is a mountain called ‘Carmel’. It is close to modern Haifa of today.

*Top...bottom:* Noone can hide from G-d. He will find us in the highest heights and the deepest depths (Psalm 139:7-10).

*I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them:* Noone will escape G-d’s punishment.

**Verse 4:** *“Though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword, and it shall slay them. I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good.”*

*Captivity... I will command the sword:* Even in exile, G-d is not going to go easy on His people.

*Harm:* Literally ‘evil’ – that which is against G-d’s will. G-d does not create man and then choose for some to receive good and some to receive evil. G-d loves the world (John 3:16) and desires that ALL will be brought to life. G-d has even provided the means (the blood of His Son, our consciences, etc) for ALL to receive life (Romans 1:18-20). G-d’s will is that every person will choose to submit to Whom He has provided. It is NOT His will that people will reject Him. He will never force people to reject Him. However, many choose to reject what G-d has provided. They choose to not submit to the will of G-d. G-d’s perfect will is to bless, but, if people do not walk in His will, He does not act to bless (which is what His perfect will desires to do) but He acts to curse (not His perfect will). Because of the choices that the people have made (their faithlessness and rejection of G-d’s revelation), G-d, a holy and righteous Judge, is going to turn them over to evil - that which He never intended for them – condemnation and eternal damnation.

*Good:* That which is done according to G-d’s will.

**Verse 5:** *“The L-rd G-d of hosts - He who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell there mourn; All of it shall swell like the River, and subside like the River of Egypt;”*

This verse is very reminiscent of Amos 8:8. It is alluding to a flood and the destruction that a flood brings. G-d is ALWAYS faithful to do what He has promised to do - no matter what the people do. Those who deserve G-d’s wrath are going to receive G-d’s wrath. Those who have entered into a covenantal relationship with Him, through Messiah Yeshua, are going to receive eternal life.

**Verse 6:** *“He builds His layers in the heavens, His band upon the earth lays the foundation; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land— the L-rd is His name.”*

*Band:* In Hebrew, this is a military term that refers to a battalion or a group that is organised together for a purpose.

*Pours them out:* The L-rd is able to bring about destruction upon those whom He deems appropriate to destroy with His wrath. G-d alone makes this decision.

It is futile to think that we can do something to avoid it - other than to take hold, by faith, of the provision that G-d has given to us (i.e. the gospel).

**Verse 7:** *“Are not you Israelites the same to Me as the Cushites,” declares the L-rd. ‘Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?’”*

*The same to Me:* G-d is not a respecter of persons. This means He does not have favourites. G-d has ONE standard for all of humanity. He revealed this standard to the Jewish people, and they in turn were tasked (called) with revealing this standard to the world. The Jews are judged according to this standard. The nations of the world are judged according to this standard. All who receive the gospel (Jew or Gentile) receive eternal life. All who reject the gospel (Jew or Gentile) receive eternal death.

*Cushites:* The Ethiopians.

*Bring...up:* G-d has the ability to reshuffle people. Not only did G-d cause the migration of the Jewish people, but He has also, throughout time, caused the migration of various people groups. G-d has not limited His work to be exclusive to the nation of Israel. He has also worked within other nationalities and within other nations.

*Caphtor:* Probably referring to the island of Crete – or some of the surrounding islands in the Mediterranean Sea (See also Genesis 10:14).

*Kir:* A place related to Syria.

**Verse 8:** *“Behold the eyes of the L-rd G-d are against the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the L-rd.”*

*The eyes of the L-rd G-d are against the sinful kingdom:* This is a summary statement. G-d is against nations that are sinful and governments that are corrupt.

*Yet:* There is an exception. G-d is not going to completely or totally destroy (see Micah 5:7-8, Isaiah 10:21-22, and Romans 11:5).

*I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob:* Why? Because of a covenant. G-d is Sovereign. G-d will, in the end, bring about a fulfilment of His Word, His promises, to that remnant of the house of Israel – those who demonstrate the same faith as Abraham demonstrated.

*Declares the L-rd:* This is a promise.

**Verse 9:** *“For behold, I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.”*

*As grain is shaken in a sieve:* There is going to be a sifting. G-d promised to sieve Israel into the nations. However, one of the last days prophetic promises of G-d is that He will pick out the remnant of Israel from out of the nations (to which He exiled them) and they would return to their own land.

*Not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground:* Not one Jew will be ignored. In Matthew 24:31, the angels gather the elect (the lost sheep of the house of Israel – Matthew 15:24) from one end of the earth to the other. After a great tribulation and judgment, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26-27).

**Verse 10:** *“All the sinners among My people will die by the sword, all those who say, ‘Calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.’”*

*Sinners:* The faithless ones.

*Calamity shall not overtake nor confront us:* The leadership in Israel were proclaiming these fraudulent words (false ‘positive proclamation’) leading up to the Babylonian exile, despite Jeremiah telling them that G-d was revealing to him devastation, judgment, exile and death in their future. The people only wanted to hear what their itching ears wanted to hear – nothing negative, only positive.

**Verse 11:** *“On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old;”*

*That day:* Judgment Day. This word sets this text within the context of judgment.

*I will raise up:* A marvellous and righteous change is going to take place on this day of judgment. The people are going to be restored to the order of G-d.

*Tabernacle:* This is NOT referring to the temple but is referring to a booth (temporary dwelling) used during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the ‘Feast of Booths’ or ‘Feast of Ingathering’. The Feast of Tabernacles reminds the people of Israel of the faithfulness of G-d. He provided for them for 40 years in the wilderness – a place of very limited provision. In this desert, G-d kept His people alive through supernatural means (eg: manna, water from a rock, etc). We only find sustenance through G-d's provision, and His greatest provision is Messiah Yeshua. In the last days, G-d is going to restore faith.

*David:* Like David, we need to learn to trust, depend and rely upon G-d (ie demonstrate faith). This is the restoration that G-d wants to bring about among His people.

**Note:** In this verse, G-d is not talking about the restoration of a physical structure. He is promising to restore Israel, the remnant of the people, back to G-d.

**Verse 12:** *“‘That they may inherit the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ declares the L-rd who does this thing.”*

*They:* The people of G-d.

*They may inherit the remnant of Edom:* Neither Esau nor his descendants will inherit whatever is left over from Edom. The remnant of Israel, together with the Gentiles who are called by G-d's name (ie believers/Christians), will inherit it.

*This thing:* This refers to G-d's primary purpose, His objective. He has promised to do this, and it is through judgment that He will fulfil this promise.

**Verse 13:** *“‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the L-rd, ‘When the ploughman shall overtake the harvester, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.’”*

*Declares the L-rd:* Terminology of promise.

*The ploughman shall overtake the harvester:* What we find here is that there is a time of great abundance coming.

The harvest is so plentiful that by the time it is all reaped it is already the season to immediately start planting again for the next season. The PEOPLE of G-d (Jew and Gentile) are going to experience this abundance from G-d.

*Sweet wine:* Wine of the highest quality. Wine in the Bible, according to Jewish Rabbis, symbolises joy. When things are done in a way that pleases G-d, when people demonstrate their faith and trust in Him, G-d causes them to be full of joy, full of abundance, full of His blessing.

*The hills shall flow with it:* Overflowing abundance which cannot be contained.

**Verse 14:** *“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the desolate cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.”*

*I will bring back:* This is another promise.

*Bring back the captives of My people Israel:* This does not lend itself to replacement theology. G-d has not replaced Israel with the church. G-d is a covenant keeping G-d. He has a covenant with Israel. If G-d breaks covenant with Israel, what guarantee do we have that He would keep His covenant with us?

*They shall build the desolate cities and inhabit them:* After almost 2000 years of exile in the nations, the Jewish people started going back to Israel around 1948. They have rebuilt cities and have settled in them. They have planted vineyards and, after 2000 years, many of them are again eating the fruit produced in the land of Israel.

**Verse 15:** *“‘I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,’ said the L-rd your G-d.”*

*Them:* The house of Israel.

*Their land:* G-d has promised the Jewish people (through Abraham) that the land of Israel will belong to them...forever (Genesis 12:7, 15:7-21, 17:8)...an ‘everlasting possession’. People who hate Israel, hate (and rarely, if ever, teach) the prophetic word of G-d. Those who love Israel will love prophecy. We want to be people who agree with G-d, people who align ourselves to His truth – even if it is unpopular in this day and age.

*The land I have given them:* G-D gave the Jewish people the land of Israel as their inheritance.

*Said:* Written in the past tense. If G-d has said it, we can consider it done – even if it has not yet taken place. G-d is faithful to His Word. He is faithful to do what He has said He will do.