**The Author and Date of Writing**

The author of the book is Amos (**1:1**), one of the ‘shepherds’ of Tekoa, a small town about ten miles south of Jerusalem and five miles south of Bethlehem.

He does not consider himself a prophet, nor are any prophets in his lineage **7:14**. The NIV records him as a **shepherd** **1:1** & **7:14** (other translations have **herdsman**) and someone **who takes care of** (**grows/cultivates/collects the fruit of**) **sycamore-fig trees** **7:14**.

Amos comes from the Hebrew word áa„mas, meaning ‘to lift a burden, to carry, burden bearer’.

Amos prophecied **two years before the earthquake** (**Amos 1:11 / Zechariah 14:5**). His writing can be dated around 760-750BC, during the reigns of kings Uzziah (Judah 792-740BC) and Jeroboam (Israel 793-753BC). This is some 150 years after the two kingdoms split following the death of king Solomon.

This is a time of great prosperity, (ironically with thanks to the Assyrian’s who had defeated Syria around 800BC, destroying Israel’s northern enemy), as well as political and military might for both countries, but it came with idolatry, immorality and judicial corruption. Consequently, Amos’ prophecies (along with others) came to fruition for the Northern kingdom in 722BC with invasion and deportation by the Assyrians.

Although Amos refers to an earthquake in **1:1**, historians have been unable to find any independent record of that earthquake, preventing a more precise date to be given.

Amos should not be confused with Amoz, the father of Isaiah (**Isaiah 1:1**).

**Overview of Book**

Despite being from Judah, Amos’ prophecy is directed at Israel, for being insular and loveless in their privileged position and unsurprisingly, this caused problems with the spiritual leaders (Amaziah). The prophecy is also aimed at the surrounding regions, Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, the Edomites and Ammonites (**1:3-15**).

Israel is not repaying God’s love for them – selling people, oppressing the poor and immorality (**2:6-8, 3:10, 4:1, 5:11-12, 8:4-6**).

Amos communicated God’s displeasure for the hypocritical lives of His people (**5:21-24**), but the Book ends with a prophetic promise.

A remnant from Judah (**9:11-15**) will be preserved and restored to their covenant blessing and political prominence, at a time that the Lord would then also draw all nations to Himself.

Within those verses Amos gives a prophecy about the Messiah being the One who will rebuild David’s dynasty (**9:11**) and who will restore His people.

**Amos 1:1 The Author
1 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa – the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash (Joash)was king of Israel.**

The prophet Amos is only mentioned within this Book. He is not referenced anywhere else in Scripture. Amoz, the father of Isaiah (**Isaiah 1:1**), is both a different person and spelling.

His name varies in meaning between burdensome, burden and burden bearer. Given the message of judgment that he had to deliver to Israel and the surrounding nations, he was a man with a burden.

**…one of the shepherds of Tekoa**. This word translated shepherd (NIV), is translated elsewhere as herdmen and sheepbreeders. Strong’s defines the Hebrew word as a spotter of cattle or sheep, i.e. the owner or one who tends them. It is the same word used of Jacob, when he was looking after Laban’s flocks.

Amos claims no formal theological or prophetic training (**7:14-15**). There was a type of school for prophets at the time, known as the ‘sons of the prophets’ (**1 Kings 20:35, 2 Kings 2:3-15, 4:1, 38)**, but Amos makes no claim to belong to this group. We can presume from the text that he was a simple farmer, who was uniquely called to this ministry, for this period.

**…the vision he saw concerning Israel**. Amos’ prophecy was primarily towards Israel, though his message includes other countries as well.

**Amos 1:2 The message of Amos.**

**2He said: ‘The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up  and the top of Carmel withers.’**

**…The LORD roars from Zion**. This is a message of the Lord’s judgment – against both the Gentile nations, then against Judah and Israel.

**…and thunders from Jerusalem**. Stating that God was speaking from Jerusalem was a reminder to the northern kingdom of Israel that they had set up centres of worship to God (in Dan, Bethel and Gilgal), in disobedience to God.

**…the pastures of the shepherds dry up**. Amos was well aware that many factors needed to all be right for the land to be able to produce its harvest and God’s judgement, in the form of weather (drought or flood), plagues (disease, locusts), or invading armies could affect that process. The certainty that the pastures would provide a crop was finely balanced.

**…the top of Mount Carmel withers**. This was a prominent mountain in the north of Israel, the site of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal **1 Kings 18:19-40**. Elijah lived prior to Amos (around 900BC), so this reference may have been to remind Israel of God’s previous victory over idolatry, but on this occasion there is no prospect of spiritual victory.

**Amos 1:3 – 2:16**

The next section of text includes eight judgements of God’s enemies.

* Damascus (1:3-5)
* Philistia (1:6-8)
* Tyre (1:9-10)
* Edom (1:11-12)
* Ammon (1:13-15)
* Moab (2:1-3)
* Judah (2:4-5)
* Israel (2:6-16)

**Amos 1:3-5 Judgment on Damascus, the capital of Syria.**

**3This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent.
Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, 4I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. 5I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Avenand the one who holds the sceptre in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,’ says the Lord.**

**…For three sins of Damascus, even for four…**. Amos uses this expression before God’s judgment against each nation. The phrasing doesn’t imply there are only three or four sins, it conveys the idea of one sin being laid continually on another.

**Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth**. Gilead was in Israel and this part of the judgement is on the Syrians for invading God’s people and His land. ‘Threshing sledges with iron prongs or teeth are probably a figure of speech used to imply both an extreme and thorough cruelty to those who opposed.’ (Hubbard) It can therefore be presumed that the Syrians were extremely harsh in their dealing with Israel.

An alternative translation of **verse 5** would include the destruction of all the inhabitants, not just the king in the **Valley of Aven** (Aven means wickedness).

**The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir**. This was fulfilled in **2 Kings 16:5-9**, when the Assyrians attacked Syria after King Ahaz of Judah paid the Assyrians. Kir can mean an enclosed space, but there are also places named Kir of Moab and Kir-Hareseth (both in Moab, to the east of the Dead Sea), so both interpretations imply the population being taken into captivity and deported.

**Amos 1:6-8 Judgment on Gaza, a city of the Philistines.**

**6This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, 7I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. 8I will destroy the kingof Ashdod and the one who holds the sceptre in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines are dead,’ says the Sovereign Lord.**

**Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom**. Gaza was a Philistine city on the coast to the west of Israel and Judah. The judgement here is because they attacked God’s people and handed them to the Edomites and this judgement is extended to other Philistine cities – **Ashdod**, **Ashkelon**, and **Ekron**.

The text implies that, ‘the condemnation here is not against slavery in and of itself, just as the previous oracle was not against war in and of itself. The crime is not that soldiers were enslaved after being taken in battle, which was the standard practice, but that the Philistines used their temporary supremacy to enslave whole populations - soldiers and civilians, men and women, adults and children, young and old - for commercial profit. Gaza did not even need the slaves. She merely sold them to Edom for more money.’ (Boice)

Again, an alternative translation of **verse 8** would include the destruction of all the inhabitants, not just the king.

**Amos 1:9-10 Judgment on Tyre, a city of Lebanon.**

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

**Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom**. Similar to the previous judgement, this is spoken at Tyre in Lebanon, to the north of Israel and again, their judgement includes **fire on the walls… that will consume her fortresses**. Tyre was dependent on the walls for both defence and security, so any breach or burning would bring potential defeat.

**Amos 1:11-12 Judgment on Edom.**

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

This judgement is because **Edom** attacked Judah **2 Kings 8:20-22**.

**Because he pursued his brother with the sword**: The Edomites descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob (Israel) and both descended from Abraham and Isaac. The Israelites and Edomites should have considered themselves as brothers, giving each other support and protection.

**…because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked**: The original Hebrew is condemning Edom for retaining their **anger** and **rage** when it should have been put aside long before - and for that God’s judgement will come.

This is a reminder for us that we need to both give our **anger** and **wrath** to God, and let Him be our avenger **Deuteronomy 32:35** & **Romans 12:19**.

**Amos 1:13-15 Judgment on Ammon.**

**13This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, 14I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. 15Her king** (or Molek) **will go into exile, he and his officials together,’ says the Lord.**

**Because they** (Ammon) **ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead…**: The area of **Gilead** was to the east of the River Jordan and to the north of the Dead Sea. The region had borders with Syria to the north and **Ammon** to the east and was attacked by those countries.

Syria has received judgement in **v3-5**.and now it is Ammon’s turn. This reference to pregnant women may have been a result of a specific incident, or just the general result of the Ammonite’s cruelty to their neighbours.

**Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together…**: Because of their attacks against Israel, God promises judgment again Ammon.

The Ammonites caused ongoing problems for God’s people; including, opposition and inter-marriage. It is even written into Scripture **Deuteronomy 23:3** that **no Ammonite… or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even the in the tenth generation**.

* The Ammonites (and Moabites) refused entry to the Israelites at the end of the Exodus, even attempting to call a curse upon the Israelites through Balaam **Deuteronomy 22-24**.
* Tobias and Ammonite, united with Sanballat to oppose Nehemiah **4:1-14**.
* Inter-marriage with the Ammonites resulted in worship of other gods **Nehemiah 13:23-24**.

Inter-marriage in itself was not forbidden, as long as the woman accepted Judaism and the children were brought up as Jews.

* King Solomon married Naamah, an Ammonite **1 Kings 14:21-31, 2 Chronicles 12:13** – their son was Rehoboam.
* God’s grace allowed this marriage (and later Ruth’s to Boaz) to be part of the Messianic lineage.

In respect of the Ammonite nation, **1 Maccabees 5** (part of the Apocrypha) includes the account of the Maccabees having a decisive victory over the Ammonites, which effectively destroyed them as a nation and people.

Note: Solomon’s marriage to Naamah, causes some Jews problems with accepting the Messiah can descend from the House of David through Rehoboam (but Scripture says that is not His lineage - **Jeremiah 22:24-30**).



**Amos 2:1-3 Judgement on Moab.**

**2 This is what the Lord says:**

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

**…For three sins of Damascus, even for four…**. Amos continues to use this expression which means a multitude of sins, rather than just three or four.

**Because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom’s king…**: God promises judgment against Moab because of their cruelty to Edom and her king.

Scholars have varying opinions about the meaning of ‘**the bones of Edom’s king**’. Theories include:

* **2 Kings 3:26-27** – where the king of Moab realised he was losing a battle against Israel and attempted to break through the Israelite lines, (to safety with to the Edomite king), with a small group of fighters. They got part way, but were unable to escape, but had in the process taken the eldest son of the Edomite, who was sacrificed (as a burnt offering).
* The Moabite’s hatred of their enemies extended to removing the bones of the rival king from the grave and treating them in an undignified manner. This was in contravention of the reverence that the tomb held for people of that time.
* Some translations indicate the bones are burned to make lime, to use to coat the walls of buildings, though some sources suggest that human bones are not good for this use. So, this verse may just be symbolism to convey the overall message of the Moabites’ lack of concern for their fellow human beings.

The last two judgements concern Israel and Judah.

**Amos 2:4-5 Judgement against Judah.**

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

**For three sins of Judah, even for four…**: It may not be a surprise given the constant lapses in following God, but it is sad to see the country that God has blessed and should be following God most closely, is also under the same type of judgement and for the same layering of sins as its neighbours.

This is a reminder from Amos that whilst it is easy to see, expose and rebuke the sins of others who are not followers of God, the same standards should be applied to God's people – ultimately, we are all under the same judgement, unless we have come to faith in Jesus as Messiah.

**Because they have rejected the law of the LORD…**: Judah's sin was that they **rejected** (some translations have despised) and disobeyed **the law of the LORD**. God has blessed His people with His regulations and commandments, so He expected them to honour and obey His word - there is a higher standard required of Judah than the other previously mentioned nations.

**…they have been led astray by false gods…**: An alternative translation of ‘gods’ in this verse can be ‘lies’. God’s Word is truth, so to reject Him for false gods is to reject the truth and believe in l**ies**.

**I will send fire on Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem**: Judgement will come to Judah in the same way as it comes to the other nations – by fire targeted towards their palaces or symbols of their strength (**1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14, 2:2**). Amos is talking of actual fire to burn material things.

Fire is used in Scripture to express judgment as well spiritual purifying or testing by God of a believer **1 Corinthians 3:13-15**, **1 Peter 1:6-7**.

**1 Peter 4:17** says**it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household…**  Peter is saying we need to examine ourselves and allow God to remove (in Amos’ language) the ‘walls’ or ‘palaces’ that stand in the way of a proper relationship with Him., so His work can develop in us without hindrance.

The remainder of this chapter deals with the sins of Israel, the blessings that they have received and how God will deal with what He is confronted with.

**Amos 2:6-8 Judgment on Israel.**

**6This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. 7They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. 8They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines.**

Israel is no different to the other nations, they have sinned like everyone else.

**…they sell the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals**: Amos is describing the injustice of the rich against the poor – taking advantage for their own gain, whether it be a lot (**silver**), or little (**a pair of sandals**).

**Father and son use the same girl**: Amos saw the sexual immorality and perversion of his day and comments on once-accepted standards that are now ignored. Amos may have been referring to the use of ritual prostitutes associated with the worship of Astarte, a goddess worshipped by the countries to the north of Israel.

**They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge**: Amos is again commenting on God’s laws being broken and the fact that God has heard the cries of those being oppressed - **Exodus 22:26-27** commands, **If you take your neighbour’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, 27because that cloak is the only covering your neighbour has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.**

In all, Amos is describing a corrupt society, where those in authority or power have no concern about others or God.

**Amos 2:9-12 God’s goodness despised**

**9‘Yet I destroyed the Amorites before them, though they were tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks. I destroyed their fruit above and their roots below. 10I brought you up out of Egypt and led you for forty years in the wilderness to give you the land of the Amorites. 11‘I also raised up prophets from among your children and Nazirites from among your youths. Is this not true, people of Israel?’ declares the Lord. 12‘But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.**

**…I destroyed the Amorites before them…**: God reminds Israel of their history - how His power and faithfulness enabled them to conquer the mighty Amorite nations when the first entered the Promised Land.

**I also raised up prophets from among your children…**: God reminds Israel of the honour He had given them in allowing His work to be done through them. This should have kept them obedient, but in their rejection of God the Israelites **commanded the prophets not to prophesy.**

**I also raised up… Nazirites from among your youths**: The Nazirite vow is described in **Numbers 6:2-21**. The vow (usually between 30-100 days in duration, but the person could set their own time), required; abstinence from wine and strong drink, refraining from cutting the hair off the head during the whole period of the continuance of the vow, and the avoidance of contact with the dead. Scripture includes only three people who were Nazarites for life, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist (**Judges 13:4-5, 1 Samuel 1:11, Luke 1:15**).

It was generally done voluntarily and should have been done to honour God, but here Amos is saying the people have rejected God by making **the Nazirites drink wine.**

In an updated form, we should all have a relationship with God based on the gratitude for what He did for us – Jesus’ death on the cross to atone for our sins.

**Amos 2:13-16 Judgement against Israel continued**

**13‘Now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. 14The swift will not escape, the strong will not muster their strength and the warrior will not save his life. 15The archer will not stand his ground, the fleet-footed soldier will not get away and the horseman will not save his life. 16Even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day,’ declares the Lord.**

Other translation record God as saying in verse 13 **I am pressed under you**: God considers Israel as a burden (the meaning of Amos), not the joy to Him that they should have been. The NIV says that the people will be crushed as if by an unstoppable heavy weight.

This is clearly symbolic language – ‘…our text is a figure, since God is not to be oppressed by man; all the sin that man can commit can never change His perfection… He speaks to us in the ways of man… so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt he is pressed down, until he cries out, because He can bear no longer the iniquity of those that offend against Him." (Spurgeon)

**The swift will not escape, the strong will not muster their strength…**: God’s judgement will include Israel being unable to succeed in areas that they previously saw themselves as strong. This was a time a military strength for Israel.

Without God’s blessing, **the swift** will not be fast enough, **the** **strong** will not be strong enough and **the warrior** will be unable to save his own life. Israel was confident in their own ability, but God would change that.

Paul expresses the dangers of over-confidence and believing in your own strength in **1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.**

We are able to escape God’s judgement, as Israel was able too, by acknowledging our strength is nothing without the Lord.

History tells us that Israel did not repent or return to the Lord and within 40 years the northern kingdom had been invaded by Assyria and deported from the Land. Those tribes were assimilated into the communities where they were taken and were never brought back.

**Amos 3:1-2 God's love for Israel makes judgment unavoidable.**

**3 Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the Lord has spoken against you – against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: 2‘You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.’**

**…the Lord has spoken - …against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt**: Israel has rejected God, despite having the heritage that delivered them as a nation from Egypt, a history that is a matter of pride to them.

The central OT redemptive act by God is His deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the Israelites are reminded regularly that it was God who freed them (including every Passover). God’s NT act of redemption is Jesus on the cross – we should constantly remember that act and live accordingly.

God has conclusively proved His love and care for Israel, so for Him to speak against them shows He is both disappointed in their actions and provoked into action, so whilst this may have been a reluctant act on behalf of God, He has previously been gracious time and time again on their behalf.

**You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins**: Amos links Israel’s privilege (**you only have I chosen…**) with a need to act as such, but as they did not do so, God had to act (**therefore I will punish you…**).

**Amos 3:3-6 The logic of God's judgment.**

**3Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? 4Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? 5Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything? 6When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?**

Amos asks six rhetorical questions – where the answers are obvious and he concludes by asking, **When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?** This final question reinforces the fact that the answer is also obvious, when judgment comes against the cities of Israel, everyone should know that it was the **LORD** who has **caused it** – this is no accident or fate, it will be the LORD.

**Amos 3:7-8 God will reveal His work**

**7Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. 8The lion has roared - who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken - who can but prophesy?**

**Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plans**: Amos declares that God will not act in haste or without warning. The context here is the coming judgment on Israel has been revealed and passed on, leaving Israel with every opportunity to repent. To expand the immediate context, we too have God’s warnings of coming judgement and the need to be prepared for Jesus’ return.

**The lion has roared - who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken - who can but prophesy?** Amos is declaring that he is merely the messenger of God’s Word. It is natural for a man to **fear** when a lion roars and it is natural for a prophet to **prophesy** when the **Lord has spoken**.

**Amos 3:9-10 Israel’s judgement is conveyed to the surrounding nations.**

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

**Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt**: Amos is told by God to invite surrounding countries to Israel to see her sins - **great unrest within her and the oppression among her people**.

It is reckoned that ‘the Egyptians and Philistines are chosen to be witnesses because their reputations for injustice and brutality would be such that the Israelites would consider themselves morally superior to those that God had summoned as witnesses. Israel is being judged not only by God’s commands, bur now by a level of acceptable international decency.’ (Hubbard)

**…who store up vin their fortresses what they have plundered and looted**: The rich and powerful of Israel had used that wealth and power to oppress and steal from others. God invites the nations to see the sin of Israel, so they can understand the judgment He will bring upon Israel.

**Amos 3:11-12 Prophecy of the conquest and exile of Israel**

**11Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘An enemy will overrun your land, pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses.’ 12This is what the Lord says: ‘As a shepherd rescues from the lion’s mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch.’**

**An enemy will overrun your land…**: The Assyrian invasion took place less than 30 years after Amos made this prophecy and for ten years after that, Israel was a subject state in the Assyrian Empire, before Israel was completely conquered by Assyria and the people of Israel were taken from their land and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire.

**As a shepherd rescues from the lion’s mouth…**: Amos may have been referring here to **Exodus 22:10-13**, which states that if an animal dies in the care of another man - such as a shepherd - that the shepherd must make restitution to the owner of the animal. The exception is where he can bring the remains that demonstrate the animal was attacked by a predator. ‘Amos' comparison is that when invasion strikes, Israel's devastation will be so complete that the only remains left as proof of death will be in the form of scraps of furniture.’ (Hubbard)

**Amos 3:13-15 Judgment will extend to the places used for wickedness**

**13‘Hear this and testify against the descendants of Jacob,’ declares the Lord, the Lord God Almighty. 14‘On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. 15I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,’ declares the Lord.**

**I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground**: The altars used for idol worship would also be destroyed as part of God's judgment. The **horns of the altar** were placed to represent the ‘strength’ of the altar, just as horns represent the "strength" of an animal. So, in cutting off the horns, all the power that the altar can bring has been removed.

**…the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished…**: God's judgment would also extend to places built by the people with wealth accumulated in their time of prosperity.

Prior to Jeroboam II, houses in Israel's cities were roughly the same size. Excavations at Tirzah, a city in the northern kingdom and just to the north of Shechem, show that around the 8th century BC, houses began to grow for the rich, both in physical size and also distance between neighbours. Housing for those who were poor shrink in size and neighbourhoods became more cramped. Until that time, all houses had been of a similar size and spaced equally between neighbours.

**Amos 4:1 Amos describes the indulgence of Israel.**

**4 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks!’**

**…you cows of Bashan**: The livestock n Bashan, the northern part of Israel (modern-day Golan heights), were known at that for being healthy and fat. Amos is possibly using the only thing he has knowledge about to describe Israel’s women, by comparing them to the livestock. Plumpness was considered a value and a sign of affluence, but when Amos calls these women ‘fat’, as in some translations, that is not meant as a compliment.

Both **Psalm 22:12** an **Ezekiel 39:18** mention the livestock of Bashan – neither is complimentary.

**…who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!** Wealth and affluence is not wrong in itself, but their wealth was being used for self-focused pleasure. There is an implication in the text that, ‘These women may not have been directly involved in mistreating the poor. But their incessant demands for luxuries drove their husbands to greater injustices.’ (McComiskey)

But Amos is saying God will hold them to account for the way they gained and used their wealth.

**Amos 4:2-3 God’s promise of judgement against these people**

**2The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: ‘The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks. 3You will each go straight out through breaches in the wall, and you will be cast out towards Harmon,’ declares the Lord.**

**The Sovereign Lord has sworn by His holiness**: Amos starts this statement saying the Lord has sworn it to be true by His holiness and he ends by stating this declaration is from the Lord. Amos is reinforcing the fact that God has made a very solemn oath.

‘This judgment will become a reality, because the holy God does not lie, nor can his holiness allow sin to go unpunished.’ (McComiskey)

The Hebrew word for ‘has sworn’ *shaba* is also used in

* **Deuteronomy 28:9** – where God describes the blessings He will give His people if they follow Him.
* **Psalm 110:4** - Jesus being an eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek.
* **Psalm 132:11** – that a son of David will sit on his throne for evermore.

The same word is also used in **Amos 6:8** and **8:7**.

**…you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks**: God describes to Israel the way they will be taken into exile – in pain and humiliation by the Assyrians.

It was an Assyrian practice, when they took an entire region or community into exile, they were led away (often for hundreds of miles), with the captives naked and attached together with a system of strings and fishhooks pierced through their lower lip.

In addition, God foretells the walls of the cities will have been broken through. The location of the exile is stated as being Harmon – this is the only Biblical reference to this location and no actual historical place of this name has been found to exits. The root of the Hebrew word means a hostile fortress, which would equate with captivity and exile, certainly devoid of the luxuries the people have been used to.

**Amos 4:4-5 Israel continues to worship and sacrifice – in vain**

**4‘Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. 5Burn leavened bread as a thank-offering and brag about your freewill offerings – boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,’ declares the Sovereign Lord.**

**Go to Bethel and sin**: Rival centres of worship to Jerusalem, in **Bethel** (Ephraim) and **Gilgal** (Dan), had been set up by the northern kingdom kings, in an attempt to stop their people going to Judah to offer their sacrifices **1 Kings 12:25-33**. However, despite offering sacrifices at these places, because they were not made in total obedience to God, it was considered a **sin**.

**Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years**: **Deuteronomy 14:28** speaks of a tithe that was to be brought every three years. Amos is saying, that despite the appearance of complying with the daily sacrifice and other offerings such as tithes, the Lord will not accept them, as they are merely an outward show, without a real desire to follow Him.

**Burn leavened bread as a thank-offering**: Only the wave offering at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), included **leaven**. Amos is making a point that all the sacrifices have become corrupted, as they make offerings that contain **leaven**. Whether the leaven is real or pictorial, God is condemning their offerings as unacceptable.

**…for this is what you love to do**: The Israelites loved their worship, even if it had become corrupted and unacceptable to God – it was certainly disobedient in action (due to the location) and in heart (because of their continued sin with repentance).

That is an illustration and warning to us too – our worship, in whatever form, should be done reverently, to honour God and to place Him at the centre. We should not be using it as a ‘feelgood’ exercise, before returning to our previous sinful ways, rather measure it by how it honours God.

**Amos 4:6-8 God withholds the rain from Israel**

**6‘I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me,’ declares the Lord. 7‘I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up. 8People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me,’ declares the Lord.**

**I gave you empty stomachs in every city**: This statement appears to be grammatically in the ‘prophetic present’ - future events spoken of in the present tense. At the time of Amos’ prophecy, Israel had financial prosperity, which would have equated to agricultural prosperity as well, but Amos foretells of a time where there will be hunger, with no food because of the drought God will send.

**I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another**: The implication is that the provision of rain will be so specific, the people will know it is by God’s hand. This is a further opportunity, given by God, for Israel to repent and return to Him.

**…yet you have not returned to Me**: This is God’s desire – that His people will return to Him, but they continue to go their own way.

**Amos 4:9-11 More judgments on Israel**

**9‘Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew.
Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me,’ declares the Lord. 10‘I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me,’ declares the Lord. 11‘I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me,’ declares the Lord.**

God lists the things that He will bring against Israel in an attempt to get them to return to Him – b**light, mildew, locusts, plagues, death by the sword…** The fact that Amos mentions Egypt in the list should have been a warning to the people as the Exodus was part of their heritage and spoken about yearly at Passover.

‘This wasn't a demonstration of God's anger, but of His love. He starts His chastisement slow and increases it incrementally, so that He can use the smallest amount of discipline necessary to turn our hearts back to Him. If we will not turn back the hand of chastisement grows heavier and heavier, out of loving desire to see our repentance.’ (Guzik)

‘Blight is the work of the east wind that dries and scorches the grain prematurely so that it turns brown. Mildew is the product of parasitic worms which turn pale the tips of green grain.’ (Hubbard)

**You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to Me**: God still offers Israel redemption, to remove them from a judgment similar to that given to Sodom and Gomorrah – although they were not judged by physical fire, they were completely destroyed as a nation.

**Amos 4:12-13 God vows to perform what He has promised.**

**12‘Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God.’ 13He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth – the Lord God Almighty is his name.**

**…prepare to meet your God**: This is a sober warning to Israel, but also to every person throughout all ages, as we will all have to face God at the judgement. God is warning everyone to be prepared for that time.

There are three ways commentators have applied this text:

* As a challenge
* As an invitation
* As a summons

The challenge - God invites even His enemies to prepare to meet Him. ‘The prophet makes an ironic challenge to rebels, to meet in arms the God whom they have despised. Let them prepare to fight it out with him whom they have made to be their enemy and against whose laws they have so continually revolted.’ (Spurgeon)

The invitation - this is a blessing. In the beginning, meeting God was a blessing for Adam, but since the fall we must prepare ourselves by putting our trust in Jesus as Saviour, so that our meeting will not be one to fear, but something to look forward to,

The summons - one day we will stand before God and give account.

‘Think awhile upon who it is that you have to meet! You must meet your God – the One whose laws you have broken, whose penalties you have ridiculed… You must meet your God; to be examined by unblinded omniscience. He who has seen your heart, read your thoughts, remembered your idle words… the God who will see through the veils of hypocrisy and all the concealments of formality. There will be no making yourself out to be better than you are before him.’ (Spurgeon)

**The LORD God Almighty is His name**: Amos concludes what has been designated the end of a chapter for us, with a reminder who God truly is. He is Almighty and to be treated seriously.

* He is the God of all creation - **He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind…**
* He is the God who is absolutely sovereign over man - **who reveals His thoughts to mankind…**
* He is the God who controls nature – **who turns dawn to darkness…**
* He is the God who rules above everything – **and treads on the heights of the earth…**

**Amos 5:1-3 Coming exile and captivity.**

**5 Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you: 2‘Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up.’ 3This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Israel: ‘Your city that marches out a thousand strong will have only a hundred left; your town that marches out a hundred strong will have only ten left.’**

**Fallen is Virgin Israel**: Other translations state that Israel has fallen and been forsaken - Amos sees Israel as a young woman who has no one coming to her aid, amid the impending violence of invasion.

**Virgin** ‘depicts the vulnerability of Israel and the special sadness that accompanies her death, as though she should have had a whole life of live and fruitfulness before her.’ (Hubbard)

**Your city that goes out a thousand strong shall have only a hundred left…**: Amos predicts that events will be for Israel that when the enemy comes, the army will be decimated. ‘Only a handful of ragged, war-weary men will be left of Israel's proud army.’ (McCuskey)

**Amos 5:4-9 Seek the Lord**

**4This is what the Lord says to Israel: ‘Seek me and live; 5do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.’ 6Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them and Bethel will have no one to quench it. 7There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground. 8He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land – the Lord is his name. 9With a blinding flash he destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin.**

**Seek Me and live**: Even at the final moment, God is inviting Israel to seek Him, but that would involve seeking Him in the right place – not worshipping Him in disobedience at places like **Bethel** and **Gilgal** and other rival centres of worship to Jerusalem.

**Bethel**, **Gilgal**, and **Beersheba** are places associated with the Israelite’s spiritual heritage, but now any worship offered there is worthless.

* **Bethel** was the place where God met Jacob **Genesis 28:11-19, 35:1-7**.
* **Gilgal** was the place where God’s disapproval of Israel's behaviour in the desert was removed **Joshua 5:1-12**.
* **Beersheba** was connected to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **Genesis 21:22-33, 26:23-33, 46:1-5**.

There is apparently a play on words in the phrase **for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing**. It doesn't come across in the English translation, but a Hebrew speaker may understand Amos is twisting the meaning of ‘roll away’ (as used in Jeremiah 51:25), where the word for ‘roll away’ is *galal*. So, Amos is saying God will sweep, or roll Gilgal away.

There is also a word play going on when he say’s **Bethel will be reduced to nothing**. Some versions may include the term Beth Aven in place of Bethel (as Hosea called it in **Hosea 4:15** & **10:5, 8**). This was derogatory term where Beth Aven means ‘house of wickedness or house of vanity’, whilst Bethel, means ‘house of God’. Some commentators claim that some Bible versions (*I can’t find one*), drop the ‘Beth’ part of Beth Aven, so this place should no longer be called ‘house of vanity,’ but now should be called ‘vanity’.

**…turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground**: Amos speaks out against the legal system in Israel, which has become corrupt legal system. He is saying, j**ustice** had been ruined and **righteousness** is affectively dead.

**He who made the Pleiades and Orion… the Lord is His Name**: Amos follows immediately by explaining why God should be sought and why He can save Israel from their approaching judgement. It is because He is the God mighty and wise enough create the universe and keep the constellations in the sky.

But God is also able to judge and will do so, if we are not following Him and worshipping Him – **He destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin**. No one is able to stand against God’s power, either in creation or judgement.

**Amos 5:10-15**

**10There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. 11You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. 12For I know how many are your offences and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. 13Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil. 14Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.**

**There are those who hate the one who upholds justice…** Amos gives further reason for the coming judgment - the way that the Israelites treat on another, the rich taking advantage by imposing oppressive **taxes**, as well as corrupting the law.

The **gate** was the law-court in ancient cities. Israel's courts had become so corrupt that anyone with wealth could influence or purchase the required outcome, rather than what was right by God’s law.

The effect of this culture of injustice was that **the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil** - godly and righteous people did not speak out either fearing retribution or knowing it would do no good.

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

**…though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them**: Amos predicts God’s act of judgement will mean the rich will find they are rich for only a short time.

**Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you**: Amos again states that Israel can return to God, if they just seek Him. In that seeking will be a transformation of the courts so that justice will return.

**Amos 5:16-20 The resulting Day of the Lord**

**16Therefore this is what the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, says: ‘There will be wailing in all the streets and cries of anguish in every public square. The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail. 17There will be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through your midst,’ says the Lord. 18Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. 19It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. 20Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?**

**The farmers will be summoned to weep and the mourners to wail.** This refers to the Jewish practice of hiring professional mourners to wail at a funeral, with the numbers of mourners being seen as a sign of status. But here Amos is describing God’s judgment will be so widespread that a shortage of mourners (**skilful lamenters** in some translations), will result in the people hiring farmers to weep (presumably unskilled in professional mourning).

**Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light**: The people looked forward to the Day of the Lord, thinking it would bring freedom from the surrounding nations and would bring the Messiah. However, Amos rightly warns them that they are misguided, as **the day of the LORD** will bring them judgment, not mercy. They will end up worse off than before, it **will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear…**

**Amos 5:21-27 Religious ceremonies will not save the people from justice**

**21‘I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. 22Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. 23Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! 25‘Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings for forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? 26You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god – which you made for yourselves. 27Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,’ says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty.**

**I hate, I despise your religious festivals**: Amos would have won few friends with this statement. He would have offended most. The people of Israel believed they were honouring God and pleasing Him by their observance of the **festivals** and **assemblies**, however, God was offended as the celebrations were about ceremony, rather than using them to truly worship God or as an opportunity to seek Him.

Amos expresses the same idea Jesus relays in **Matthew 5:23-24‘Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.**

**But let justice run on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream**: Amos declares our religious ceremonies should not be separated from our treatment of others. Because of the arid conditions, **a never-failing stream** would be prized as it could be relied upon, even in the summer heat. God is saying He would rather have justice, rather than meaningless offerings and worship, which He would not accept.

**You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god – which you made for yourselves**: Other version of this verse have:

* **…lifted up Sakkuth your king and Kaiwan your idols, your star-gods…**
* **…lifted up the shrine of Molek and the star of your god Rephan, their idols…**

**Rephan** was an Egyptian deity related to the planet Saturn). These were pagan deities Israel brought with them from Egypt into the Promised Land. God reminds Israel that though they sacrificed to Him in the wilderness, they also hung on to their idolatry. It didn't please Him then and He has not changed his viewpoint.

**Therefore I will send you into exile…**: Israel's extreme sin merited an extreme correction, nothing less than exile (**beyond Damascus**). This was worse than exile as some translations say it would be **captivity**, a route by which the people never returned.

**Amos 6:1-7 Israel compared to the neighbouring countries**

**Woe to you who are complacent in Zion and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come! 2Go to Kalneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours? 3You put off the day of disaster and bring near a reign of terror. 4You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. 5You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. 6You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. 7Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end.**

 **Woe to you who are complacent in Zion**: Some translations have the country is ‘**at ease**’. Israel has become complacent, or at ease, because of the prosperity caused by the economy - though that was probably not enjoyed by all. Whilst this wealth in itself was not a sin, in this case the country was not giving thanks to God for the blessing it was receiving.

Rest is not necessarily sinful, if it is a Godly rest.

* **Matthew 11:28-29** shows that Jesus wants us to rest, but only in Him - **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**
* There is a rest waiting for the people of God – **Hebrews 4:9-11** There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

Amos is, however, speaking of another kind of rest, which was sinful - it involved being idle, indifferent to the surrounding people, whilst being indulgent themselves.

Spurgeon said of self-indulgence – ‘…this is the God of many! They live not for Christ - What do they for him? They live not for his Church - What care they for that? They live for self and for self only. There are such among the poor as well as among the rich, for all classes have this evil leaven.’ (Spurgeon)

This complacency even affected King David when he stayed behind when it was time for kings to go off to war, resulting in adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah her husband to cover up his immorality **2 Samuel 11**.

**Are they better off than your two kingdoms?** God rebukes both Israel (**Samaria**) and Judah (**Zion**) by including them with their pagan neighbours – Kalneh (a city in Babylonia), Hamath (a city in Syria) and Gath (one of the main Philistine cities).

God wants to show His people that they aren't so great after all. These cities had judgements pronounced against them (Hamath **Isaiah 36:19**, Gath **Micah 1:10**) so, as they were already under the judgment of God, maybe God’s people would acknowledge they were no better and were in danger of being judged as well.

**You put off the day of disaster… You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments… You drink wine by the bowlful… but you do not grieve…** Amos points out the lack of concern that Israel has for God’s purposes during their time of prosperity – we all have an obligation to use whatever God gives us (riches and gifts), to glorify Him, not indulge ourselves.

**Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile…** Conquering forces usually took the entire population into captivity, with the exception of the poorest (**2 Kings 24:14**, **Jeremiah 39:10** – both record the same incident). If there was more than one deportation, those capable of fighting and those who were skilled were taken first. Amos is saying he is speaking to those who were the rich and prosperous, so by implication those who were ruling the country, or had influence over the ruling of the country and it is that group that will lead the exile when the Assyrians finally conquer the country. (See also **Amos 4:2**).

**Amos 6:8-11 God’s hatred of pride**

**8The Sovereign Lord has sworn by himself – the Lord God Almighty declares: ‘I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it.’ 9If ten people are left in one house, they too will die. 10And if the relative who comes to carry the bodies out of the house to burn them asks anyone who might be hiding there, ‘Is anyone else with you?’ and he says, ‘No,’ then he will go on to say, ‘Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord.’ 11For the Lord has given the command and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small house into bits.**

**…I abhor the pride of Jacob…** This is a very strong statement when we remember that the people of Jacob are God’s chosen people. But no matter how much God loves someone, He will not tolerate sinful behaviour indefinitely. God warns of an army that will come to destroy the country and people.

God’s dislike of pride is laid out in **Proverbs 3:34 He mocks proud mockers. but shows favour to the humble and oppressed**. It is reinforced by being requoted in **1 Peter 5:5** and **James 4:6 God opposes the proud, but shows favour to the humble**.

**Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD** ‘When a relative of one of the dead comes to burn the corpses, should he find one person still alive, that person will not permit his mentioning the name of the Lord for fear that the Lord will turn his wrath on him.’ (McComiskey)

**Amos 6:12-14 The reason for judgement is explained further**

**12Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness – 13you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debarand say, ‘Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?’ 14For the Lord God Almighty declares, ‘I will stir up a nation against you, Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.’**

####

**Do horses run on the rocky crags?** The implication is that horses do not run well over rough rocks and in the same way, Israel can't expect a good result when they turn **justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood**. The word wormwood here is the same as used in **Revelation 8:11** – albeit being Greek rather than Hebrew – on both occasions it is used in terms of bitterness. The Hebrew relates to a word that has its root meaning as ‘cursed’ and from that comes the word for hemlock, which is poisonous.

**Does one plough the sea with oxen?** Clearly describing something that is pointless. Some translations substitute **sea** with **plough there**, meaning to plough rocky areas. This difference is based on the way words are divided in the Hebrew Masoretic Text, but the meaning remains the same.

**…you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debarand say, ‘Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?’** ‘Lo Debar’ means nothing. ‘Karnaim’ means horns, here symbolising strength.

Spurgeon said regarding these verses, Amos ‘puts together two proverbs which were commonly used to signify that men do not, as a rule, continue to labour in vain and spend their strength for nought. Wise men do not send their horses to run upon the rocks; and they do not send their oxen to plough where all their toil would be wasted: 'Shall horses run upon the rock?' 'Will one plough rocks with oxen?' The answer implied is, 'Certainly not,' and it meant that, if a thing cannot be done, it is not worth doing, but if it can, it will be well for us not to attempt to do it.’ (Spurgeon)

**I will stir up a nation against you, Israel…** Amos returns to his theme of warning - because of Israel's great and deep sin, judgment is coming through a conquering nation.

**Chapters 7:1-9** & **8:1-9:10** contain five visions that were given to Amos. These are followed by promises that relate to the restoration for Israel **9:11-15**.

## The layout of these chapters is:

## A Vision of Devouring Locusts (7:1-3)

## A Vision of Fire (7:4-6)

## A Vision of a Plumb Line (7:7-9)

## An Historical Interlude: Opposition from the Priest of Bethel (7:10-17)

## A Vision of a Basket of Summer Fruit (8:1-14)

## A Vision of the Lord Judging (9:1-10)

## The Promise of Restoration for Israel (9:11-15)

**Amos 7:1-3 The vision of locusts.**

**7 This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts after the king’s share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up. 2When they had stripped the land clean, I cried out, ‘Sovereign Lord, forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!’ 3So the Lord relented. ‘This will not happen,’ the Lord said.**

**…the Sovereign Lord showed me** This is a Divine revelation received by Amos.

**He was preparing swarms of locusts…** This was late in the harvesting period. The locusts are due to arrive **after the king’s share**, which means the royal court has already taken their share of the crop, as payment of taxes, implying there will be nothing left to live on if the later harvest fails or is destroyed in some way.

‘If the first cutting went to the court and the second crop to the locusts, Israel would be left destitute indeed.’ (Hubbard)

**Sovereign Lord, forgive! How can Jacob survive?** Amos’ heart is moved to compassion at this vision of judgment, so he calls on God to consider Israel's people and relent.

‘Israel is called Jacob, a reminder that he was the smaller, younger one to Esau in Isaac's family; God had deliberately chosen him and therefore was obligated to stand by him in his helplessness.’ (Hubbard)

**So the LORD relented**: In response to the prophet's prayer, the **LORD relented**. We are being told that Israel is saved, on this occasion, because of the prayers of Amos alone. If Amos had not prayed or done so with the same earnestness, we must believe that the LORD would not have **relented**.

This is not the only occasion recorded in the Bible where it appears a human has been central to God changing His mind and His course of action:

* **Genesis 18:20-32** - prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
* **Exodus 32:9-14** – God threatens to destroy the Israelites as they worship the golden calf.

‘This is another amazing example of how much rests upon prayer. We may debate endlessly how this incident reflects on the issues of predestination and human responsibility, but clearly we are left with the impression that the plague either came or was held back based on the prophet's prayer.’ (Guzik)

**Amos 7:4-6 The vision of fire.**

**4This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: the Sovereign Lord was calling for judgment by fire; it dried up the great deep and devoured the land. 5Then I cried out, ‘Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!’ 6So the Lord relented. ‘This will not happen either,’ the Sovereign Lord said.**

**The Sovereign Lord GOD was calling for judgement by fire** Next Amos pleads for mercy after seeing the vision of fire.

**So the LORD relented**: As before, God **relented** at the prayer of the prophet and again, Amos is apparently the only one praying.

**Amos 7:7-9 The vision of the plumb line.**

**7This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8And the Lord asked me, ‘What do you see, Amos?’**

**‘A plumb-line,’ I replied. Then the Lord said, ‘Look, I am setting a plumb-line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 9‘The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.’**

### The NIV footnote for verses 7 and 8 states the meaning of the Hebrew for plumb and plumb-line is uncertain. The Hebrew word used is related to the word meaning ‘narrow’. It is further related to an Arab word that means to be thick, troublesome or slow (which they also use to describe the properties of lead). Arabs, Ethiopians and Syrians use the same root word ‘*anak*’, for lead.

**…I am setting a plumb-line among My people Israel** A **plumb line** is used to check that a wall is a built vertically straight. So, here God is holding this measure against Israel, to see if they are ‘straight’ against His standards.

**The high places of Isaac will be destroyed…** ‘The references to Isaac are the only places in the Old Testament where Isaac stands for the nation of his descendants rather than for the patriarch himself. Amos seems to have in mind the special veneration for Isaac which the members of the Northern Kingdom displayed… Amos may be announcing and lamenting the tragic break with the covenantal past.’ (Hubbard)

**…with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam** Israel does not measure correctly (straight) against the **plumb line** of God, so Israel and her leadership will be judged **with the sword**.

Jeroboam I (931-910BC) was the first king of the Northern kingdom of Israel, whilst Jeroboam II (782-753BC) was reigning during Amos’ ministry. Six kings followed Jeroboam II between 753 and 712BC, before the kingdom fell in 722BC and was finally taken into captivity in 712BC. Whichever Jeroboam is chosen, all subsequent kings could be classed as the **house of Jeroboam**.

The remainder of chapter 7 is a break between the visions that Amos sees for the country. He is challenged by Amaziah the priest, to which Amos replies and then God does likewise.

**Amos 7:10-13 Amaziah's words against Amos.**

**10Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: ‘Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11For this is what Amos is saying: ‘“Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.”’ 12Then Amaziah said to Amos, ‘Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. 13Don’t prophesy any more at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.’**

**Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel** Amos identifies Amaziah as the priest of Bethel, one of the centres of Israel's idolatrous worship. The inference is **Amaziah** is a wicked man. **He sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel**, who was a successful king by worldly standards, but a wicked king in God’s eyes.

**Amos is raising a conspiracy against you…** Amaziah claims Amos is undermining both the king and the country. He says **the land cannot bear all his words**, meaning Amos’ message was too hard for the country to take. In a way Amaziah was right, neither the land or its people can stand against God’s judgement if they continue to sin, both in their conduct and by failing to worship God in the right way.

**Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there** Amaziah was offended that Amos came to Bethel and prophesied, so he does his best to send him back to Judah. He also indicates that some prophets did their work for financial gain only.

‘Hireling priests of this kind have ever been the great enemies of the true prophets of God; and when they could bring no charge of false doctrine or immorality against them, have accused them of conspiring against the government; and because they have preached against sin, have held them up as exciting insurrection among the people.’ (Clarke)

**Amos 7:14-15 Amos replies**

**14Amos answered Amaziah, ‘I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. 15But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.”**

Along with **1:1**, these verses supply us with detail about who Amos was – his family history, his secular occupation (as a herdmen, sheep breeder and one who looked after Sycamore trees) and that he has no formal theological or prophetic training.

**I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet…** Amos replies to Amaziah by noting he is not a prophet by profession. He was previously involved in farming, so was unlikely to be involved in a conspiracy against the king and country.

**But the Lord took me from tending the flock…** God called Amos to do a task and he did as he was asked in faith that the Lord would be with him. Amos speaks for God, using his experience from within the world of agriculture to provide his illustrations. Amos was prepared to be used by God. His only desire for the country was to see it return to worshipping God in the right way.

"Every prophet has a manner and style peculiarly his own. Although God speaketh through them all, yet they lose not their individuality or originality of character. The breath which causes the music is the same, but no two of the instruments give forth precisely the same sound. It is true they all utter the words of God; but each voice has its own special cry, so that though God is pre-eminently seen, yet the man is not lost." (Spurgeon)

**…the vision he saw concerning Israel**. Amos’ prophecy was primarily towards Israel, though his message includes other countries as well.

**Amos 7:16-17 An answer from the LORD.**

**16Now then, hear the word of the Lord. You say, ‘“Do not prophesy against Israel and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.” 17‘Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘“Your wife will become a prostitute in the city and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.”’**

**Your wife become a prostitute in the city and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword** God's response to Amaziah, through Amos, is that disaster will come upon Amaziah and his family.

Amos speaks of the land being divided up by the conquering forces and Amaziah will be deported and die in that pagan (unclean) country.

**And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land** This happened within forty years and in a way was the fulfilment of Amos’ ‘conspiracy’ against Israel.

Given Amos was accused of a conspiracy and his prophecies of God’s destruction were heard by the hierarchy of the country, he showed great faith in delivering this unpopular message to the political and spiritual hierarchy of the land.

**Amos 8:1-3 The basket of fruit**

**This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. 2‘What do you see, Amos?’ he asked. ‘A basket of ripe fruit,’ I answered. Then the Lord said to me, ‘The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 3‘In that day,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘the songs in the temple will turn to wailing.Many, many bodies – flung everywhere! Silence!’**

**…a basket of summer fruit**: This implication is that the summer fruit is ripe and would not keep for long - in the same way, time is short for Israel before judgement comes.

In translation, English misses the strong point that Amos is conveying. The NKJV/ESV translate the latter part of **v2** as, **And he said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them.**

In the original Hebrew, the word used for ‘summer’ is pronounced *qayits*, whilst ‘the end’ is pronounced *qets*. Amos uses this word play to emphasise his point of the coming judgement.

‘When Amos replies to the Lord that he sees a basket of ripe *qiyas*, God replied "*Qis!*" An end is to come upon Israel.’ (Boyce)

**The time is ripe for my people Israel / The end has come upon My people Israel… Many, many bodies – flung everywhere…** Ripe fruit is close to being **thrown out** - a similar judgment will be brought against the rottenness of Israel.

**Amos 8:4-6 Dishonesty and cheating the poor in Israel.**

**4Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, 5saying, ‘When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?’– skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, 6buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.**

**…who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land…** Amos again addresses the need for social justice amongst the people. On this occasion, he refers to those who make money by exploiting the poor and vulnerable.

**When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain?** The whole of God’s people were required to observe the **New Moon** and **Sabbath** occasions (**Numbers 10:10**) and along with the other festivals, they were times for remembering the Lord. The Israelites had reduced their observance to an outward appearance only and these verses indicate the people couldn't wait until they were over, so they could get back to trading.

**…skimping on the measure, boosting the price…** Some versions have …**making the ephah small and the shekel large**. Corruption and cheating were everywhere and God saw all of it. It was common practice that when sales were made (even inedible wheat – **sweepings**), a small measure (**skimping**) was used, but when buying or giving change, a large measure was used.

**Amos 8:7-8 The certainty of judgment.**

**7The Lord has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: ‘I will never forget anything they have done. 8‘Will not the land tremble for this and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.**

**I will never forget anything they have done**. Time does not erase sin - only the atoning blood of Jesus can do that for us.

Contrast **Amos 8:7** with **Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.** God will not forget the good works of His people, but He will not forget the evil of those who reject Him.

**The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.** The Nile River rose and fell regularly and Amos compares the land and people of Israel so shaken by judgment that they **will be stirred up and sink** as the Nile waters rise and fall.

**Amos 8:9-10 The extent of judgement**

**9‘In that day,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.**

**I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight**. This is the third of Amos’ visions. There are two theories at the forefront to explain this verse.

* It refers to a solar eclipse – ‘Two such eclipses have been calculated to have occurred in Amos' lifetime: one in 784 B.C., the other in 763 B.C.’ (Hubbard) We do not know when Amos died, so this event may have been outside his lifetime, but before the deportation.
* Amos is describing a bigger celestial event, that is yet to occur, but will do so during the Day of the Lord (within the Tribulation period).

**I will make that time like mourning for an only son**. The death of an only son would mean the family lineage would cease. It would mean lack of security for the family as the next generation would not be available to support parents/grandparents. It may have also been seen as a curse from God.

Here, Amos is using the phrase to describe the deep sorrow the people will endure when this solar event takes place.

With mourning may come regrets and some commentators link this verse to **Zechariah 12:10** (albeit they were written nearly 250 years apart), in terms of Israel being humble as they recognise and worship the Messiah - **And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.**

**Amos 8:11-14 The famine of hearing the Word of God.**

**11‘The days are coming,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.
12People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. 13‘In that day ‘the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst. 14Those who swear by the sin of Samaria – who say, “As surely as your god lives, Dan”, or, “As surely as the god of Beersheba lives”– they will fall, never to rise again.’**

**I will send a famine through the land - not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD**: Amos says there is a worse famine than lack of food – it is a lack of God’s Word. Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3** when being tested in the account in **Matthew 4:4 It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.** That being true, makes a famine of hearing God's Word worse than a famine of bread.

God’s Word is not lacking, it is the **hearing** where the problem lies. ‘The condition described is that of being deaf to the words of Jehovah, not able to hear them. It is not a case of God withholding His revelation; but of people being in such a state that they do not see it, do not hear the words.’ (Morgan)

1 Thessalonians 2:13 describes the right way to hear the Word of God: …**when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.**

**People will… wander… searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it**: There is a danger that in leaving God’s Word purposely, it may be that it can’t be subsequently found. ‘Jesus alluded to this principle in the Parable of the Soils and the Sower: ‘**Consider carefully what you hear,’ he continued. ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them Mark 4:24-25**. When we seek God, it generally becomes easier to find Him. When we push away God, it generally becomes more difficult to hear and receive His Word.’ (Guzik)

**Those who swear by the sin of Samaria… they will fall, never to rise again**: God promises that the people of Israel shall face lasting judgment.

## Amos 9:1-4 God's inescapable judgment

**9 I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: ‘Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape. 2Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down. 3Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. 4Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. ‘I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good.’**

**I saw the Lord standing by the altar**: This is the fifth and final vision of Amos, where he sees the Lord by the altar, which by inference means He is in the temple, supervising His work of judgment. This is an illustration that God is not detached from His ongoing work – whether it be of blessing or judgment.

**Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake**: The **threshold** (ESV – lintel) is one of the structurally strongest parts of a house, supporting the weight of everything above it, distributing that weight around the weak door space. If the **pillars** are broken, the lintel is no longer supported and the whole house may fall. Amos is describing this to illustrate total destruction.

**Not one will get away, not one will escape**: God says, ‘You can run, but you can't hide.’ Even if you tried to **dig down to the depths** or **climb up to the heavens above**, you can't escape your responsibility before God. A high mountain (**Carmel**) or the **bottom of the sea** can't hide you from judgment. This is similar to **Psalm 139:7-12**, where David acknowledges he cannot escape from God.

**I will keep My eye on them for harm and not for good**: Part of the original Covenant included the promises of blessings or curses **Deuteronomy 28**, **Leviticus 26**. If Israel was in disobedience to God, they should expect His eye toward them would be **for harm and not for good**.

**Deuteronomy 28:**

* **15 However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you**
* **63 Just as it pleased the Lord to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.**

**Leviticus 26**

* **23-25a If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, 24I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. 25And I will bring the sword on you to avenge the breaking of the covenant.**

Much better is to live under God’s blessing. **Romans 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?** Because of God’s grace, all the **harm** we deserve has been taken by Jesus’ blood being spilt on the cross.

**Amos 9:5-10 Israel sifted among the nations.**

**5The Lord, the Lord Almighty – he touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn;
the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt; 6he builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth; he calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land – the Lord is his name. 7‘Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?’declares the Lord. ‘Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtorand the Arameans from Kir? 8‘Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob,’ declares the Lord. 9‘For I will give the command and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve and not a pebble will reach the ground. 10All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, “Disaster will not overtake or meet us.”**

**The Lord, the Lord Almighty - He touches the earth and it melts**: Amos is reminding the Israelites that God is Almighty and Glorious, they should act accordingly to Him.

The title **Lord GOD** is used 12 times in **Amos 7-9**, emphasising His Sovereignty. ‘That sovereignty is symbolised in the name of God - *Lord God*, literally 'My Master Yahwheh.'’ (Hubbard)

**…He builds His lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth…** Commentators consider this is a difficult passage to translate, agreeing the NKJV does well in getting the context and spirit of what is intended - **He who builds His layers in the sky and has founded His strata in the earth; Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth - The LORD is His name.**

‘It is hard to catch the exact picture of what Yahweh is building in **v6**. The heavenly construction may be a 'staircase' or a 'roof-chamber'… The earthly component is even more difficult to define precisely.’ (Hubbard)

**Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom**: Israel has sunk to the status of sinful kingdom. God is telling His people they cannot presume upon His mercy or because they were previously ‘chosen’.

**Cushites** is translated as **Ethiopians** (NKJV) – they were considered to be remote and insignificant as far as Israel was concerned. But God says, **‘Are you not Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?’** God reminds Israel that He brought them out of Egypt, but He also says He brought **the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir**. (Crete and Mesopotamia). The inference is they are not so special that they can become proud, they remain in God’s sight a **sinful kingdom**.

**…I will shake the people of Israel among the nations**: God will use Israel's exile among the nations to **sift** His people – to purify rather than destroy them. The process of sifting the chaff from the wheat, when done skilfully, resulted in no wheat being lost. God says, in His sifting process **not a pebble will reach the ground**. Other translations have **grain** instead of pebble.

It will be only **all the sinners amongst My people…** who shall be guilty and judged.

"I think I see you, poor believer, tossed about like that wheat, up and down, right and left, in the sieve, and in the air, never resting. Perhaps it is suggested to you, 'God is very angry with me.' No, the farmer is not angry with his wheat when he casts it up and down in the sieve, and neither is God angry with you; this you shall see one day when the light shall show that love ruled in all your griefs." (Spurgeon)

The last five verses of Amos’ Book deliver a complete change of emphasis. The message of judgement and rebuke changes to become one of promise, for the rebuilding of David’s line and the arrival of a Saviour (Messiah).

‘Without this last passage and change of tone, the book of Amos would be incomplete. It is now declared that the reason of the divine judgment is not revenge, but the only way in which it is possible to usher in the restored order on which the heart of God is set.’ (Morgan)

**Amos 9:11-12 The house of David restored to Israel.**

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

**I will restore David’s fallen shelter…**: Some translations have **I will restore the tabernacle of David** – despite rejecting the rightful royal house of David, God promises a restoration. As that clearly didn’t happen to the Northern Kingdom before they went into exile, this is taken as a prophecy which will be fulfilled by the Messiah, Jesus, who is of **David’s fallen shelter / the tabernacle of David**.

**I will repair its broken walls… and will rebuild it as it used to be**: ‘Amos knew that Israel was ruined, because he speaks of restoring **the tabernacle of David** instead of the house of David. A **tabernacle** is a house, but a humble one. The house of David has become a dilapidated shack; in Amos' time the Davidic dynasty had fallen so low that it could no longer be called a house." (McComiskey)

God promised to take what was ruined and to **restore** and **rebuild** it. Sometimes God works in a completely new way, letting the old die and doing a work of new creation, such as in sending the Messiah (although that was long promised), but on other occasions He rebuild and restore what has been previously present.

**…all the nations that bear my name Gentiles who are called by My name**: The NKJV translates these words as **all the Gentiles who are called by My name**. In this case the inference seems to be that the rebuilding will be through the Messiah and His message which will be to all people. **Gentiles** will come under **the tabernacle of David**, a promise fulfilled in Jesus.

James, the brother of Jesus, quoted **Amos 9:11-12** at the Council of Jerusalem, which took place around 50AD and concluded that God promised to reach the Gentiles and to bring them into His kingdom under the Messiah, not under Israel.

**Acts 15:13-21 13When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. 14Simonhas described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. 15The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 16“‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17that the rest of mankind\* may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ - 18things known from long ago. 19“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. 21For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”**

**Acts 5:17** translates Edom as mankind - the Septuagint, the ancient translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, translated **Edom** as ‘*Adam’* – ‘mankind’.

**Amos 9:13-15 Israel’s abundance restored**

**13‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, 14and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.‘They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. 15I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,’ says the Lord your God.**

**The days are coming**: God inspires Amos to finish his Book on a note of hope, looking forward to a time of great prosperity and abundance in Israel. Under the reign of Jeroboam II, they *had* material abundance, but not in the LORD. God promises to restore them to prosperity from and in Him.

**…when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman…**: The harvest will be so abundant that the ploughmen will be ready, before the full crop is brought in.

‘When God releases blessing and restoration, the work is blessed - but it is still work. The **ploughman**, the **reaper**, the one **treading grapes** and those planting seeds still have their work to do. God doesn't just do it all for them, but under God's blessing and restoration the work is done with energy and joy. The **ploughman** doesn't just wait around; he gets busy even if he starts bumping into the **reaper**! One sign of a true revival, and indeed an essential part of it is the increased activity of God's labourers.’ (Spurgeon)

‘However, even if it is not a time of remarkable blessing and restoration, the work of God still deserves our energy and effort. We are not to think, if God withholds the dew, that we are to withhold the plough. We are not to imagine that, if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result. The church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward.’ (Spurgeon)

**I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them**: So many of the warnings from the prophet Amos are about the threat of coming captivity and exile, but he ends with God’s promise of restoration, looking to the day when Israel will never again **be uprooted from the land**.

**~~~~**

**Other Biblical references to Amos**

Outside this Book, the only other Biblical reference to Amos is in **Luke 3:25**, where a different Amos is included in the lineage of Jesus through his father, Joseph. He is eight generations prior to Joseph.

**~~~~**

**Other Biblical references to Tekoa**

* **2 Samuel 14:2, 4, 9** - Account of Joab sending for a wise woman from Tekoa, to approach King David in order for a dispute to be adjudicated. This was a deceit to allow David’s son Absalom to return to Jerusalem.
* **2 Samuel 23:26** & **1 Chronicles 11:28** - …Ira son of Ikkesh from **Tekoa**… (included in the list of David’s ‘Thirty’ mighty warriors).
* **1 Chronicles 2:24** - After Hezron died in Caleb Ephrathah, Abijah the wife of Hezron bore him Ashhur the father of **Tekoa**. (mentioned in context with the descendants of Judah, son of Jacob).
* **1 Chronicles 4:5** - Ashhur the father of **Tekoa** had two wives, Helah and Naarah (as above).
* **1 Chronicles 11:6** - listed as a town built to assist in the defence of Jerusalem.
* **2 Chronicles 20:20** - Early in the morning they left for the Desert of **Tekoa**. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.’ (listed as a location used by Jehoshaphat in his defeat of Moab and Ammon).
* **Nehemiah 3:5**, **27** - listed in relation to the origin of those repairing the walls of Jerusalem, although ‘the nobles’ refused to assist.
* **Jeremiah 6:1** - ‘Flee for safety, people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem! Sound the trumpet in **Tekoa**! Raise the signal over Beth Hakkerem! For disaster looms out of the north, even terrible destruction. (Mentioned in relation to Jerusalem being under siege).