

Amos 5:1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, *even* a lamentation, O house of Israel.

The prophet is calling for the people to pay attention to what he is saying even though it is not good news; it is a lamentation, a dirge, a message of judgment.

Amos 5:2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; *there is none* to raise her up.

Amos 5:3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth *by* an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

“virgin” = feminine passive participle of an unused root meaning to separate; a virgin...sometimes...a bride; also (figuratively) a city or state

Verse two is what caught my attention. It’s a declaration that Israel is going to suffer a serious fall—one from which she will not be lifted up. This brought to my mind how their history reflects a repetitive cycle.

- Falling into sin.
- God allowing them to be conquered by their enemies.
- They call out to God in repentance.
- God sends a deliverer from among their people to rescue them.

Amos is declaring God’s message that there will be no deliverer this time. They will experience His declared judgment. Verse 3 pictures the cities sending many out to battle in their defense, but very few returning home from battle.

Amos 5:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:

Amos 5:5 But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.

Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, and *there be none* to quench *it* in Bethel.

As He always does, the LORD declares that forgiveness is available; they just need to seek Him in faith and repentance. He makes the point that their sincerity will be noted by coming to Him on His terms—not at Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba. The implication—Jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to place His name and receive the sacrifices of His people. These other cities had been established as worship centers in defiance of God’s instructions and had become centers of idol worship. The coming judgment of these cities is certain.

The warning in verse 6—If you don’t turn back to me in faith and repentance, the house of Joseph (another reference to the Northern Kingdom of Israel) will be completely devoured and no one will be able to prevent it. I think this is again in reference to their impotent idols. Though the destruction of the nation is sure, the call is for the people as individuals to repent of their sin and turn back to God in faith and obedience.

It always intrigues me how we humans think we have the right to expect our Creator, The God of the universe, to accept us on our terms instead of His. So many today are convinced that if their good deeds outweigh their bad, they’ll get to go to heaven. With that statement they are conceding there is a heaven and, in

turn, a God in heaven who determines who is qualified to enter. He has clearly explained in scripture that the only qualification He will accept is faith in His Son Jesus as the sacrifice for our sin and Lord of our life. Still, many refuse to believe that He really means what He says. What an arrogant stance to take before Almighty God; and, sadly, how many are going to suffer an eternity outside His presence because they refuse to believe Him!

Amos 5:7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

I think the NLT clearly expressed the meaning of this verse.

You wicked people! You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the poor and oppressed. Righteousness and fair play are meaningless fictions to you.

Amos 5:8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Amos 5:9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

It is to be noted that the words "Seek Him" have been added by the translators. That the invitation is valid is confirmed by verse 6. At this point, however, the prophet is making a vivid contrast between the wicked people of Israel (as described in verse 7) and the God they are rejecting. It is YHWH, the Creator of heaven and earth. He created the seven stars (the Pleiades, also known as the "seven sisters") and Orion; both are well known and easily identified star groups in the skies. He established night and day using the sun and moon and rotation of the earth. He is the source of all the waters of the seas and the rain from heaven.

Amos 5:9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

Amos 5:10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

He is the One with the ability to destroy those that would mistreat others no matter how strong they may think they are or be perceived to be. These are the people who reject the message of those who dare to judge righteously and speak the truth.

I couldn't help but think of the general trend in America as I read verse 10. Our justice system is based more on personal agendas and/or the ability to pay for the best manipulators of the evidence. The judges don't know how to make righteous judgments any more because they have rejected God, Whose instruction provides the only acceptable foundation for moral discernment. It's the very same problem that permeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Amos 5:11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall

not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

Amos 5:12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*.

I thought the CJB translation was a bit clearer.

Therefore, because you trample on the poor and extort from them levies of grain; although you have built houses of cut stone, you will not live in them; and though you have planted pleasant vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how numerous are your crimes and how outrageous your sins — bullying the innocent, extorting ransoms pushing the poor aside at the gate.

The “gate” is a reference to where the people went to seek justice in matters that needed legal judgment. Scripture is full of statements regarding God’s awareness of the mistreatment of the righteous, the poor, and widows and orphans and His intent to avenge them.

Psa. 9:17-18 The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.

Psa. 1:6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Amos 5:13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

When evil and wicked men are in authority, those who are wise will keep silent to avoid unjust and/or cruel treatment.

This is a word of practical advice for the righteous. It does not, however, override God’s direction to speak out in the manner of the prophets and apostles according to His leading. We should never refrain from sharing the gospel message out of fear; however, neither should we step out foolishly without God’s leading. If we act outside of His leading, we chance accomplishing nothing vs. waiting on His timing and accomplishing His purpose. Missionaries in Muslim countries are well aware of this truth.

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Amos 5:15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Many are the verses in scripture encouraging us to “seek” and/or “love” what is good and to avoid or “hate” what is evil.

Psa. 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Psa. 37:27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

Rom. 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

1Pet. 3:10-11 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

3John 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.

When you have God's mindset toward good and evil, you will practice righteous discernment in judgment. Again, the Lord offers hope. If you choose to hate evil and love good, maybe God will bless a remnant even as He destroys the nation (the Northern Kingdom).

We do know from scripture that during the days of Rehoboam there were those from the Northern Kingdom who escaped to the Southern Kingdom because they wanted to serve YHWH.

2Chr. 11:16 And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.

I think it is probably reasonable to assume that some out of the Northern Kingdom would again respond to God's invitation. We know that He is preserving a remnant from all the tribes, since He will appoint 12,000 witnesses from each tribe to preach His message during the 70th week of Daniel, the seven years we normally refer to as the tribulation. (See Revelation 7.)

Amos 5:16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

Amos 5:17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.

These verses are an exclamation point on the fact that Israel is going to face judgment—"for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD."

Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

Amos 5:19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

We know that both Amos and Isaiah prophesied in the days of Uzziah the king, and both use the phrase "the day of the Lord" to describe a time of God's judgment. Both prophets also declare this time to be a terrible time of darkness. As the enemy began to threaten the Northern Kingdom, they evidently began hoping for the day of the Lord to come with the expectation that it would be a time when God would intervene to destroy their enemies. They did not even understand that the coming day of judgment was to be against them—not their enemies. Scripture is clear that the day of the Lord is descriptive of God's judgment against His enemies—and the Northern Kingdom had positioned itself as an enemy of God. They would seek safety, but would only meet with more danger. This day would be very dark; there would be no light of deliverance show up on their behalf.

Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Amos 5:22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

Amos 5:23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

In these verses the prophet is trying to get them to understand that they are now enemies of God. He takes absolutely no pleasure in their empty religious gatherings and rituals. He sees through to their hearts. There is absolutely nothing He sees that qualifies as obedience or worship from a heart of love and faith. They are going through the motions, and thinking that their faithless works are pleasing to God. The prophet Samuel proclaimed this same message.

1Sam. 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

I am so afraid that there are many in the “church” today that have that same erroneous thinking.

Amos 5:24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

What God wants to see in His people are actions that evidence their love for Him and their desire to please Him. He wants to see justice and righteousness as the identifying traits of His people.

Amos 5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Amos 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts.

We know that the answer to the question in verse 25 is yes, but now Amos tells us more that God revealed to him. It would seem that even though they were following Moses lead and giving the appearance of obeying God, many had actually continued worshipping self-made idols they brought with them from Egypt as well—Moloch and Chiun. Since His people have insisted on continuing to worship false gods, the LORD is going to send them into captivity among the heathen that worship these gods. There are many places in scripture that illustrate the truth that God will eventually give one over to their desires if they continue to reject Him. This is true of both individuals and nations.

Emphasis is given to the fact that the LORD, YHWH, is The God of hosts. In other words, He is the one and only all-powerful living God.