



BOOK OF AMOS

The Prophet of Justice

“But let justice run down like water; and
righteousness like a mighty stream.”
(Amos 5:24)

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Introduction to the Book of Amos

Authorship

Amos is the author of the book. His name means “burden-bearer”. He was called upon to bear the burden to carry the oracles of Jehovah to Israel.

His home was Tekoa. “Tekoa was located six miles south of Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem.” (Hailey, 82). It was close to the wilderness of Judea where Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in fasting before being tempted of the devil (cf. Mt 4:1-11).

His occupation was that of a sheepbreeder (Amos 1:1) and a dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14). Before the figs on the sycamore tree would ripen, they had to be pierced on the bottom. It was a time-consuming tedious task. Shepherds would bring their flock into lower Galilee during the late summer after the desert pastures had dried up. Shepherds would work as a dresser of sycamore trees in exchange for using land for their sheep to graze. Scholars believe that Amos was the owner of the sheep, but not wealthy. Those who were wealthy would have outsourced this work.

Date of Composition

Bible scholars agree that the time of the writing took place between 760 BC and 750 BC. This was during the reign of King Uzziah (Judah) and King Jeroboam (Israel). Amos dates his writing two years before the earthquake (Amos 1:1; cf. Zech. 14:5). The exact date of this earthquake is unknown.

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Background

During the ninth century BC Assyria had been growing in strength and moving West to conquer the land. Assyria ran into a sixty-year low due to a weakening of man power. During this time, Jonah went to Nineveh. This time also gave opportunity for Judah and Israel to strengthen their nations. They were able to do so under the leadership of Uzziah and Jeroboam II. The nation enjoyed great wealth and luxury. Their prosperity would lead to their downfall. It was during this time of prosperity that Amos was commissioned to preach to Israel.

Theme/Purpose

The Lord had richly blessed Israel. He brought them out of the land of Egypt and brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Despite all of God's goodness, Israel turned its back on God. They had failed in their worship and devotion to God. They had also failed in their treatment of their fellow man. For these reasons they would endure the wrath of God. That is, they would be exiled. In the mind of a Jew, the nation was larger than the individual. It meant they were God's chosen and special people. All other nations were vile in their minds. To be subject to other nations was the harshest punishment that could be inflicted upon them.

Outline of the Book of Amos

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I. INTRODUCTION -1:1, 2

A. AMOS IS IDENTIFIED AS THE AUTHOR

1. His name means “burden-bearer”. He bore the burden of carrying the message of Jehovah to the people of Israel.
2. He worked as a sheepbreeder from Tekoa.
3. He lived during the time of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam of Israel.
4. His writing took place two years before the earthquake. The exact date and detail of this earthquake is not known. The earthquake is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5

B. THE COMING OF GOD’S JUDGMENT

1. His judgment is not just against Judah and Israel, but against foreign nations as well.
2. It is important to note that this judgment is from God, not from Amos. Amos is relaying the message. Today when we preach, we are not casting judgment upon others. God is the One who judges. We like Amos, are relaying God’s message to others.

II. ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS (Chapters 1:3-2:16)

A. JUDGMENT AGAINST DAMASCUS -1:3-5

1. Damascus is the capital of Syria. It is located 135 miles northeast of Jerusalem.
2. The Syrians were especially cruel to those from Gilead. “implements of iron” -vs. 3
3. Hazael killed Ben-Hadad I, the king of Syria. Then he reigned in his place. (2Ki 8:7-15)
4. The term “breaking the bar” references the lock on the city gate. To break this bar is to make the city vulnerable to attack.

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5. The Valley of Aven (Vanity) is a possible reference to the place of idolatry.
6. House of Eden is a reference to the pleasure resort for the king.
7. Kir is a walled place.

B. JUDGMENT AGAINST GAZA -1:6-8

1. The chief city is Philistia.
2. Their sin was slave traffic. They would sell entire villages or groups of people to Edom.
3. Only four of the five chief cities of the Philistines are mentioned. Gath is left out. Other passages indicate that Gaza had previously been destroyed (2Ch 26:6; Amos 6:2).

C. JUDGMENT AGAINST TYRE -1:9, 10

1. Tyre was known for its sea commerce.
2. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel also prophesied against Tyre.
3. They delivered the whole captivity to Edom.
 - a. This could be the Israelites that were captured by them.
 - b. They may have sold their own people over to the Edomites.
 - c. Most believe it was Israel that was sold by them.
4. They did not remember the covenant with their brother.
 - a. Many different theories, but nothing for certain.
 - b. The most popular belief references the close association held between Tyre and King David and King Solomon.

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5. The destruction of Tyre was attempted by Nebuchadnezzar but failed. It was Alexander the Great that destroyed the city.

D. JUDGMENT AGAINST EDOM -1:11, 12

1. The Edomites were descendants of Esau.
2. There was constant tension between Israel and Edom from the beginning of their history.
3. The sin that is mentioned is their perpetual hatred.
4. God would therefore reign down fire upon Teman and Bozrah.
 - a. It is believed that Teman was the capital city.
 - b. Both however were chief cities.

E. JUDGMENT AGAINST AMMON -1:13-15

1. The nations of Ammon and Moab originated from incest between Lot and his two daughters -Gen. 19:30-38
2. Ammon ripped open women with child to enlarge their boundaries.
3. Rabbah was the capital city. This was the place where David sent Joab to kill Uriah (2Sa 11:1-ff). The city would be destroyed.

F. JUDGMENT AGAINST MOAB -2:1-3

1. One sin that is listed is "...he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime"
 - a. "The Targum elaborates beyond the text that the lime was used for plaster on his house." (Lewis, 553)
 - b. "The people could probably point to a building erected to their god and say, 'The king of Edom is in here, his bones went to make up the lime in the mortar.'" (Hailey, 95)

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Possibly referring to some brutality; such as opening the grave of one of the Idumean kings, and calcining his bones. It is supposed by some to refer to the fact mentioned 2 Kings 3:26, when the kings of Judah, Israel, and Idumea, joined together to destroy Moab. The king of it, despairing to save his city, took seven hundred men, and made a desperate sortie on the quarter where the king of Edom was; and, though not successful, took prisoner the son of the king of Edom; and, on their return into the city, offered him as a burnt-offering upon the wall, so as to terrify the besieging armies, and cause them to raise the siege. Others understand the son that was sacrificed to be the king of Moab's own son.—Adam Clarke's Commentary

2. Due to their sins, they would be destroyed
 - a. Kerioth -one of the chief or prominent cities of Moab.
 - b. The land of Moab would be destroyed in the midst of war.

G. JUDGMENT AGAINST JUDAH -2:4, 5

1. Amos now turns to the people of God.
2. Because of their sins, they too would endure the wrath of God as a heathen nation.
3. Their sin:
 - a. They despised the law of the Lord. Consequently, they did not keep His commandments.
 - b. They were led away by lies.
4. The application:

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- a. Men today despise the truth of God's word - 2Th 2:9-12
- b. It is our love for Christ that motivates our obedience -Jn 14:15; 1Co 16:22

H. JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL -2:6-16

- 1. Amos now turn his focus from all the other nations, to the central core of his message; the proclamation against Israel.
- 2. The apostacy of Israel -vs. 6-8
 - a. They were oppressing the poor. A poor Israelite could sell himself to one of his own people. He was to be treated as a hired servant and not as a slave -Le 25:39-46
 - b. There was sexual immorality -vs. 7. "Their flagrant immorality was demonstrated in their idolatrous feasts and worship where a man and his son would go in to the same religious prostitute." (Hailey, 97)
 - c. They would keep the cloths taken in a pledge - vs. 8. This was a violation of the law -De 24:12, 13.
- 3. It was God who gave them the land -vs. 9-12
 - a. It was God who conquered the land of Canaan when the earlier generation were grasshoppers in their own sight -Nu. 13:33.
 - b. It was God who delivered them from Egypt and not an idol.
 - c. He gave them prophets that they did not want to hear -cf. Amos 7:12, 13
 - d. They corrupted the Nazirites. They made the vow (Nu 6) on a voluntary basis. It symbolized the people of God being separate and apart from the world. Yet, they were corrupted by the people.

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4. The judgment of God brought forth -vs. 13-16
 - a. His judgment is certain and coming.
 - b. No one would be able to escape His wrath.
 - c. Even the mighty and strong would be helpless to escape.
 - d. Those who trust in horses and military weapons will not prevail.
 - e. Courage would be lost -vs. 16

III. ORACLES AGAINST ISRAEL (Chapters 3-6)

A. AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE - 3:1-8

1. "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you..."
 - a. This message is from God. It did not originate in the mind of Amos.
 - b. God had brought His people up from the land of Egypt to be His own special people.
 - c. God has to be true to His own nature. Sin has to be punished. Therefore, they will be punished for their own iniquities.
2. A brief series of questions from Amos:
 - a. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? There are several interpretations of this passage given its context.
 - 1) Some believe it is a reference to God and Amos agreeing on the message presented.
 - 2) Others believe this references the walk between God and Israel that had been hindered on the account of their sin.
 - b. "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?"
 - 1) There is the imagery of a lion about to pounce on its prey. There is nothing the

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prey can do to deliver himself from such a calamity.

- 2) Likewise, God is about to bring judgment against Israel, and nothing can stop Him.
- c. “Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it?”
- 1) Just like birds can fall into a snare, Israel had been trapped by their own sins.
 - 2) James refers to this same snare for man today -Ja 1:12-16
- d. “If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?”
- 1) When calamity was coming against a city, there would be a sound of alarm. (Similarly, we have tornado sirens to warn our city of impending danger.)
 - 2) Amos was acting as an alarm for the people to turn back to God while there was still time.
- e. “A lion has roared! The Lord God has spoken!”
- 1) Today, we do not have modern day prophets to warn us of impending danger.
 - 2) Instead, we have the word of God that teaches us what He expects of us. It also provides for us examples of those who had fallen into destruction because of their own sins.

B. THE OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE OF ISRAEL -3:9-12

1. Two heathen cities are called upon to witness the wickedness of Samaria.
 - a. Ashdod (of the Philistines) and Egypt (where they were formally slaves)

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- b. They would see great tumults in her midst. (ie. Confusion among the people)
- c. The people had lost their sense of moral value by taking advantage of the poor.
2. God is bringing an adversary against them.
 - a. While Amos does not mention the adversary by name, Hosea later identifies their enemy as Assyria.
 - b. Assyria would do three actions against them (vs. 11):
 - 1) Surround their land
 - 2) Take their strength from them
 - 3) And plunder their palaces.
3. The Lord gives the imagery of a shepherd taking only two legs or an ear out of the mouth of a lion. This indicates that only a remnant of the people would be spared -vs. 12

C. THE REMOVAL OF IDOLS AND WEALTH - 3:13-15

1. When the Lord executes judgment upon the land, it will include the altars of Bethel. This was one of the places where Jeroboam I put one of the golden calves (1Ki 12:29).
2. All of their luxury homes would be destroyed. They were living well while oppressing the poor.

D. JUDGMENT AGAINST THE WOMEN -4:1-3

1. Amos addresses them as “cows of Bashan” -vs. 1
 - a. Psalms 22:12 uses the term “bull of Bashan” indicating fighting power.
 - b. “Animal comparisons are used in the compliments of the Song of Songs. However, Amos’ intent is not certain” (Lewis, 592)
2. They were guilty of oppressing the poor

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- a. It was through their desire for luxurious living that they would desire their husbands to provide all the more.
- b. To provide better for their wives, the poor would be further oppressed.
3. They will be taken away with fishhooks
 - a. This would happen to them and all their wealth.
 - b. Manasseh was similarly taken away with hooks to Babylon -2Ch 33:11
4. They will be cast into Harmon
 - a. The exact identification of this word / place is not certain.
 - b. “The Septuagint seems to have read a text having Mount Hermon as the direction toward which the women would be cast. Hermon, located about ninety miles north of Samaria, is 9,232 feet in elevation, and lies in the general direction of Damascus (see 5:27).” (Lewis, 595)

E. ISRAEL’S PERVERTED RELIGIOUS PRACTICE -4:4, 5

1. These two verses contain some sarcastic overtones regarding their worship practices.
2. Bethel and Gilgal had become central places for their idol worship.
3. The Israelites loved the feasting and religious ceremony but showed no true loyalty to God.

F. ISRAEL HAD IGNORED PAST JUDGMENTS - 4:6-11

1. God had proclaimed the judgments against Israel in effort to motivate repentance.
2. Judgments brought against them:

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- a. Cleanness of teeth -vs. 6
- b. Withheld rain -vs. 7, 8
- c. Blight, mildew, and locust -vs. 9
- d. Plague in the manner of Egypt; war in the land -vs. 10
- e. He overthrew some of them like Sodom and Gomorrah. Some commentators speculate earthquakes. It is however uncertain. -vs. 11

G. "PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD, O ISRAEL" - 4:12, 13

1. This statement indicates that the judgment of God will be more severe than what they had previously experienced. If ever there was a time to repent, it was now.
2. Amos gives the imagery of the majesty of God. His majesty confirms the coming judgment -vs. 13

H. LAMENT FOR ISRAEL -5:1-3

1. The next two chapters cover the judgment that God will bring against Israel unless they repent. If they do repent, calamity can be avoided -cf. 5:4, 6
2. "The virgin of Israel" -vs. 2
 - a. Virgin does not mean moral purity within this context.
 - b. Virgin here refers to Israel being unconquered thus far. These days, however, are fleeting.

I. CALL TO REPENTANCE 5:4-15

1. Seek the Lord and live -vs. 4-7
 - a. If they repent, the Lord will have mercy. It must be done on His terms, not on theirs.
 - b. Bethel and Gilgal will not save them. These were now locations of their idol worship. This would not save them.

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- c. No one can quench the judgment of God! –vs. 6, 7
 2. The power of God is before them -vs. 8, 9
 - a. Another reason for them to repent comes from an understanding of the great and awesome power of God.
 - b. He is the One who has created all things
 - c. He has the power to bring the mighty to ruin.
 - d. Remember that it is God who brings forth government -Ro 13:1-ff
 3. Hatred against those who speaks uprightly -vs. 10-13
 - a. Judges were at the gate of the city. They would hear cases between the citizens.
 - b. The judges were to be upright by not perverting justice or accepting bribes. (cf. Ex. 23:6-9; De 16:18-20)
 - c. Because they did pervert justice and accepted bribes, the houses they had built for themselves no longer be theirs. God is the Almighty righteous Judge who will not allow their corruption to continue.
 4. Final plea to repent -vs. 14, 15
 - a. They are to “seek good and not evil”.
 - b. That is to love what is good and hate what is evil. (cf. Ro 12:9)
 - c. The manifestation of such obedience would be seen in justice in the gate.
- J. THE DAY OF THE LORD -5:16-27
1. The day of the Lord is not for their good -vs. 16-20
 - a. This message is again from the Lord God of host; not Amos.

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- b. There will be great wailing among the people. This would take place both in the streets and in the vineyards. Vineyards were usually a place of rejoicing, but not in the day of the Lord.
- c. “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!”
 - 1) Israel thought the day of the Lord would bring calamity upon their enemies and great blessings for them.
 - 2) However, God was going to punish Israel for their wickedness.
- d. There is no escape -vs. 19
 - 1) Flee from a lion; killed by a bear
 - 2) Make it home and lean against the wall thinking you are safe; killed by a serpent.
- 2. Their worship is despised by the Lord -vs. 21-27
 - a. God will not accept their worship for a couple of reasons:
 - 1) Their heart is far from Him -cf. Mt 15:8, 9; Is 29:13
 - 2) Their heart was filled with idolatry
 - b. Worship to God must never be merely external, but come from the heart -Jn 4:24
 - c. God greatly desires His people to be rich in “justice” and “righteousness” -vs. 24
 - d. During the forty years they worshipped God, but not Him alone.
 - 1) They carried with them pagan deities; idols that were man-made.
 - 2) Because of this, their gods would not be able to deliver them from the hand of Almighty God. He would send them into Assyrian captivity. (Assyria is not specifically mentioned by Amos, but he

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alludes to it. "...beyond Damascus" vs. 27a)

K. WOE TO THE LEADERS -6:1, 2

1. The leaders of Israel were at ease. Their trust was misplaced (ie. In Mount Samaria).
2. This message is addressed to the leaders of Israel. (Israel is called the "chief nation")
3. They are to consider three other nations: Calneh, Hamath, and Gath.
 - a. "Calneh and Hamath were destined to suffer at the hands of the Assyrian power, if they had not already suffered." (Hailey, 113)
 - b. The city of Gath fell sometime earlier by King Uzziah -2Ch 26:6
 - c. Israel was called to be better, sacred, or set apart. However, they were not acting any better than the other nations. Therefore, destruction was coming.

L. WOE TO THE WEALTHY -6:3-6

1. They were caught in the own desire for wealth and pleasure
 - a. This is made evident by their beds of ivory and the extravagant feasting.
 - b. They had "their depraved spirits lulled and soothed by lascivious songs and music" (Hailey, 114).
 - c. They drank wine and anointed themselves with the best ointments.
2. They were not grieved with the affliction of Joseph. (ie. They were not moved by the poor and suffering of their brethren) -vs. 6

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M. ISRAEL'S DESTRUCTION -6:7-14

1. Because of Israel's sins, the Lord is bringing destruction upon them -vs. 7, 8
 - a. He has sworn by Himself.
 - b. He has despised their pride and their palaces.
2. Death is coming -vs. 9, 10
 - a. It was not customary for the Jews to burn the bodies of the dead.
 - b. This was part of the affliction God was putting on His people for their disobedience. Under the current stress, they would not be able to reach the cemetery in time. Therefore, burning the bodies would become necessary.
 - c. None mentions the name of the Lord out of fear that more disaster would come upon them.
3. Horses do not run upon the rocks. Men do not plow with oxen in the rocks either (cf. Amos 6:12 NASB)
 - a. Men know better than to make these foolish mistakes.
 - b. However, they have turned "the fruit of righteousness into wormwood" -vs. 12b.
 - c. Wormwood is a plant found in Palestine that is often used as a symbolic reference to bitterness. It can also indicate poison.
4. Their improper rejoicing and destruction -vs. 13, 14
 - a. Lo Debar -means "Nothing". All their material wealth would become nothing.
 - b. Karnaim means "horn". It was a symbol of military strength. Their strength would also come to nothing.
 - c. God would raise up a nation to come against them.

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IV. THE VISIONS OF AMOS (Chapters 7-9)

A. VISION OF LOCUSTS -7:1-3

1. Amos sees a vision of locusts destroying the land.
 - a. This was probably not a literal coming of locusts as in the case of Joel.
 - b. The “king’s mowing” could refer to the king’s horses and mules, that were used in war, taking the first of the grass. It could also indicate the king taking of the firstfruits of the land. However, neither of these practices cannot be confirmed.
2. Amos intercedes for the people and disaster is diverted for a time. This demonstrates the great power of prayer from God’s faithful people (cf. James 5:16).

B. VISION OF FIRE -7:4-6

1. Amos’ second vision was that of consuming fire. It has devoured the deep and was heading to land.
2. Amos again intercedes and disaster is diverted.

C. VISION OF THE PLUMB LINE -7:7-9

1. The plumb line was used in the building of a wall to ensure that it was vertically upright. It was also used to check the stability of older walls.
2. Since Israel had not been upright (spiritually speaking), God would bring judgment against them.
 - a. Amos does not intercede for them this time.
 - b. The time of mercy has now past.
 - c. Due to their idolatry worship, the land would be invaded with the sword. Their land would be made desolate.

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3. The sword will come against the house of Jeroboam -vs 9b
 - a. This could reference the entire nation of Israel, or it could be a reference to the royal house of Jeroboam.
 - b. Jeroboam did not die by the sword himself. Instead, he died on natural causes (2Ki 14:29). However, his son Zechariah was assassinated after six months as king -2Ki 15:8-10. This fulfilled the promise made by the Lord to Jehu -2Ki 10:30.

D. AMAZIAH COMPLAINS AGAINST AMOS -7:10-16

1. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reported to King Jeroboam the words of Amos against Israel.
 - a. He did not mention that these were not Amos' words, but rather the word of the Lord.
 - b. He also failed to mention the way to avoid destruction also spoken by Amos -cf. (5:4, 6, 15)
2. Amos is expelled from the land -vs. 12, 13
 - a. Amos was not killed or persecuted but told to leave.
 - b. "Eat bread" can indicate earn a living or simply dwell there.
 - c. Prophecy is not withheld from Amos, just do it someplace else.
3. Amos' response -vs. 14-16
 - a. He was not a prophet formally, nor was he the son of a prophet.
 - b. It was God who had called him into service to proclaim the message unto Israel.
 - c. Therefore, Amaziah was not rejecting Amos, he was rejecting God.

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4. The word of the Lord -vs. 17
 - a. The consequences that would come upon Amaziah include: his wife becoming a harlot in the city and his sons and daughters would fall by the sword.
 - b. The people of God would be taken out of the land and die there. The land would not be holy. Proper worship to God would not be possible there.
 - c. Amos reaffirms the words spoken in vs. 11.

E. VISION OF THE SUMMER FRUIT -8:1-3

1. Summer fruit represent ripeness. The sin of Israel was now ripe for their destruction.
2. Their songs would be turned into mourning.
3. Because of their sin, dead bodies would be scattered everywhere.

F. INDICTMENT AGAINST ISRAEL -8:4-14

1. They longed for the religious festivals to end so they could return to their corrupt business practices.
2. Destruction was coming. “Jehovah would not be true to Himself and to His infinite holy character were He to pass over or ignore their iniquities.” (Hailey, 120, 121)
3. Amos gives three figures of Israel’s destruction:
 - a. Earthquake -vs. 8:8a
 - b. Flood -vs. 8:8b
 - c. Eclipse -vs. 8:9
4. It is stated again that their feast would be turned into mourning.
5. “This is a terribly black picture, but one painted by divine brush and palette from oils and pigments provided by the people themselves. How sorely

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do nations of today need to get the message of Amos!" (Hailey, 121)

6. A famine for God's word -vs. 11-14
 - a. The spiritual nourishment that only God can provide would be lacking in those days.
 - b. Today, the word of God is at our fingertips. It is available twenty-four hours of everyday. We can read the word of God anywhere (ie. Cell phone, tablets, computers, or hardcopy.) The only famine for God's word today is self-inflicted.
7. Those who have placed their trust in false deities will fall and not rise again.

G. THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL -9:1-10

1. The vision of the sanctuary -vs. 1-4
 - a. The Lord is standing by the altar.
 - b. He breaks the thresholds so that all people would be destroyed.
 - c. There is no place to hide from the destruction God is bringing upon the people.
2. The great and awesome power of God is visualized -vs. 5, 6
3. Because of the sins of Israel, they were no better than those from Ethiopia.
4. God brought Israel from Egypt. However, He also brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir.
5. The sinful kingdom would be destroyed from the face of the earth. However, there would be a remnant. That is, He would not completely destroy the house of Jacob -cf. Jer. 30:11; 46:28.
6. Sifted in a sieve -vs. 9, 10
 - a. The good grain would be separated from the small pebbles and debris.

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- b. All of the sinners would die by the sword.
- c. However, some placed their confidence in their heritage. Ie. God would not destroy them based on their lineage. They were wrong.

H. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL -9:11-15

- 1. This was fulfilled under the Christian dispensation
 - a. James addressing the Jerusalem council -Ac 15:11-15
 - b. Peter speaking about all the prophets who spoke about what would be accomplished through Christ -Ac 3:24-26
- 2. The blessings refer to spiritual vitality rather than the physical -vs. 13-15

Conclusion:

- 1. Amos was called by God to be a prophet. He was bold and courageous when speaking against sinful Israel. He did not shy away from God's purpose, nor did he back down in the face of adversity.
- 2. If the people of God would hear the message of Amos and repent, God would be rich in mercy toward them.
- 3. We have a message to preach today. It is not always popular, but it is needed. When people hear and respond to it, they will find rest for their souls.

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