

'Amos - Part 7

This, the last significant segment of **'Amos**, is in four sections. First, **God** accused the merchants and the wealthy class of cheating people in the sale of grain and of enslaving people for the sake of trifling debts (8:4–6). Next, there is a judgment in which **God** swears an oath, the land heaves like the **Nile River**, people mourn, and there is a famine for the **Word of God** (8:7–14). For the third section, another judgment passage follows: **God** stands by the altar (in effect, swearing another oath), the **Israelites** are hunted down, and the land heaves again like the **Nile River** (9:1–6). In the final section, **Isra'el** is compared to the nations to which it must go in exile. Still, abruptly, the judgment is reversed, and **Isra'el** becomes predominant among all the nations and very prosperous (9:7–15). Other parallels also bind this passage together. For example, there is a focus on food and crops. In 8:5, the merchants deceitfully sell grain, in 8:11–14, there is a famine, and finally, in 9:13, there is a plentiful harvest. Also, in 9:1–4 **God** hunts down and kills every **Israelite**, but in 9:14–15 there is an abundant population. Finally, 8:9 and 9:6 both refer to **God's** power over the heavens.

Unethical Religion

⁴ Listen, you who swallow the needy and destroy the poor of the land! ⁵ You say, "When will Rosh-Hodesh be over, so we can market our grain? and Shabbat, so we can sell wheat?" You measure the grain in a small Eifah¹, but the silver in heavy shekels, fixing the scales, so that you can cheat, ⁶ buying the needy for money and the poor for a pair of shoes, and sweeping up the refuse of the wheat to sell!"

Three accusations are combined here: contempt for the **Shabbat**, cheating customers when selling them food, and enslaving people who could not pay even the smallest debts.

Promise of Punishment

⁷ Adonai swears by Ya'akov's pride, "I will forget none of their deeds, ever. ⁸ Won't the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn, who lives in the land? It will all rise, just like the Nile, be in turmoil, and subside, like the Nile in Egypt.

The **pride of Ya'akov's** could be taken in two different ways: it could be a reference to **God** himself (see 6:8), or it could be a literal reference to **Isra'el's** insupportable pride in its strength and wealth (see also 6:8). **'Amos** sees the coming destruction to be like the annual flooding of the **Nile**. The flood is inevitable, covering everything and leaving destruction in its wake.

⁹ "When that time comes," says Adonai Elohim, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. ¹⁰ I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into wailing; I will make you all put sackcloth around your waists and shave your heads bald in grief. I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day. ¹¹ "The time is coming," says Adonai Elohim, "when I will send famine over the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Adonai. ¹² People will stagger from sea to sea and from north to east, running back and forth, seeking the word of Adonai; but they will not find it. ¹³ When that time comes, young women and men will faint from thirst. ¹⁴ Those who swear by the sin of Shomron, who say, 'As your God, Dan, lives,' and, 'As the way of Be'er-Sheva lives' - they will fall and never get up again."

¹ Bushel dry measure.

For all of this, the **Lord** will punish **the land** with fearful earthquakes. Darkness will cover the earth during the day, and **mourning** will visit every house. People will long to hear **the word of the Lord**, but it will be withheld from them. **Famine** and drought (of **God's word**) will prevail. Idolatry will bring severe drought on **Isra'el's** most attractive **young** people and destruction on **those who swear by** false gods. Men will seek a message from their idols but will not receive it.

Vision of the Altar

9¹ I saw Adonai standing beside the altar, and He said, "Strike the tops of the columns until the thresholds shake! Smash them to pieces on the heads of all the people! Those who remain I will kill with the sword; not one of them will succeed in fleeing, not one of them will escape. ² If they dig down to Sh'ol, my hand will haul them out; if they climb up to heaven, I will bring them down. ³ If they hide themselves on the top of the Karmel, I will search them out and capture them there; If they hide from me at the bottom of the sea, I will order the serpent to bite them there. ⁴ If their enemies herd them into exile, I will order the sword to kill them there. I will fix my gaze on them for harm and not for good." ⁵ For Adonai Elohim-Tzva'ot is the one who can melt the earth with his touch, and make all who live on it mourn. It will all rise, just like the Nile, and then subside, like the Nile in Egypt. ⁶ He builds his upper rooms in heaven and establishes his sky-vault over the earth. He summons the waters of the sea and pours them out over the earth. Adonai is his name. ⁷ "People of Isra'el, are you any different from the Ethiopians to me?" asks Adonai. "True, I brought Isra'el up from Egypt, but I also brought the P'lishtim from Kaftor, and Aram from Kir. ⁸ Look, the eyes of Adonai Elohim are on the sinful kingdom. I will wipe it off the face of the earth, yet I will not completely destroy the house of Ya'akov," says Adonai. ⁹ "For when I give the order, I will shake the house of Isra'el, there among all the Goyim, as one shakes with a sieve, letting no grain fall to the ground. ¹⁰ All the sinners among my people who say, 'Disaster will never overtake us or confront us,' will die by the sword.

Adonai is seen beginning His judgment at **the altar**, perhaps the false altar at **Bethel**. The people find no way of ultimate escape; the sword pursues them wherever they try to flee. Even hypothetical places of "refuge" would elude them: **hell, heaven, on top of Mt. Carmel, the bottom of the sea, captivity before their enemies**. The seriousness of **God's** anger against them is seen in the words: **"I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good."** In no uncertain terms, the people of Israel are told that they are in big trouble! Who can withstand **the Lord God of hosts** with His almighty power? The **layers** of Earth's atmosphere and the strata of rock in the Earth itself were **built** and **founded** by the same **Lord**. **Isra'el** is compared here to heathen **Ethiopia** and called **"the sinful kingdom"** by **God Himself** - strong language indeed! They had forfeited any special place of privilege. He would punish **the sinners** but save a remnant **as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain** would **fall to the ground**. Although most would be destroyed, those found worthy by the **Almighty** would be spared.

Promise of Restoration

¹¹ "When that day comes, I will raise up the fallen sukkah (temporary shelter) of David. I will close up its gaps, raise up its ruins and rebuild it as it used to be, ¹² so that Isra'el can possess what is left of Edom and of all the nations bearing my name," says Adonai, who is doing this. ¹³ "The days will come," says Adonai, "when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the one treading grapes the one sowing seed. Sweet wine will drip down the mountains, and all the hills will flow with it. ¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Isra'el; they will rebuild and inhabit the ruined cities; they will plant vineyards and drink their wine, cultivate gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will

plant them on their own soil, no more to be uprooted from their land, which I gave them,” says Adonai your God.²

Just as **God** had promised to bring famine to **Isra’el** and nearly to exterminate the nation, He promises in these verses to give them abundant crops and a large population. The statement that ***the plowman will overtake the reaper*** is hyperbole for fruitfulness and served to assure the people that they would enjoy eternal well-being.

As you ponder Amos 8, you might notice a growing materialism in your family, with a prioritization of possessions over generosity. To combat this, host a 'declutter and donate' day. Together with your family, go through items in your home and identify what can be given away to those in need. Turn this into a family tradition, sharing stories about the impact your donations have. This not only cleans your home but cultivates a spirit of giving and gratitude among family members.

In our next post, we will continue to learn more about the **Prophecy of Obadiah**.

² Amos 8:4-9:15.