

# Amos

## Introduction

**1:1** The following is a record of what Amos prophesied.<sup>1</sup> He<sup>2</sup> was one of the herdsmen from Tekoa. These prophecies about Israel were revealed to him<sup>3</sup> during the time of<sup>4</sup> King Uzziah of Judah and<sup>5</sup> King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.<sup>6</sup>

## God Will Judge the Surrounding Nations

**1:2** Amos<sup>7</sup> said:  
“The LORD comes roaring<sup>8</sup> out of Zion;  
from Jerusalem<sup>9</sup> he comes bellowing!<sup>10</sup>  
The shepherds’ pastures wilt,<sup>11</sup>

**1 tn** Heb “The words of Amos.” Among the prophetic books this opening phrase finds a parallel only at Jer 1:1 but is not that uncommon in other genres (note, e.g., Prov 30:1; 31:1; Eccl 1:1; Neh 1:1).

**2 tn** Heb “who.” Here a new sentence has been started in the translation for stylistic reasons.

**3 tn** Heb “which he saw concerning Israel.”

**4 tn** Heb “in the days of.”

**5 tn** The Hebrew text repeats, “and in the days of.” This phrase has not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

**6 sn** This refers to a well-known earthquake that occurred during the first half of the 8th century b.c. According to a generally accepted dating system, Uzziah was a co-regent with his father Amaziah from 792-767 b.c. and ruled independently from 767-740 b.c. Jeroboam II was a co-regent with his father Joash from 793-782 b.c. and ruled independently from 782-753 b.c. Since only Uzziah and Jeroboam are mentioned in the introduction it is likely that Amos’ mission to Israel and the earthquake which followed occurred between 767-753 b.c. The introduction validates the genuine character of Amos’ prophetic ministry in at least two ways: (1) Amos was not a native Israelite or a prophet by trade. Rather he was a herdsman in Tekoa, located in Judah. His mere presence in the northern kingdom as a prophet was evidence that he had been called by God (see 7:14-15). (2) The mighty earthquake shortly after Amos’ ministry would have been interpreted as an omen or signal of approaching judgment. The clearest references to an earthquake are 1:1 and 9:1, 5. It is possible that the verb הָפַךְ (*hafakh*, “overturn”) at 3:13-15, 4:11, 6:11, and 8:8 also refers to an earthquake, as might the descriptions at 2:13 and 6:9-10. Evidence of a powerful earthquake has been correlated with a destruction layer at Hazor and other sites. Its lasting impact is evident by its mention in Zech 14:5 and 2 Chr 26:16-21. Earthquake imagery appears in later prophets as well (cf. D. N. Freedman and A. Welch, “Amos’s Earthquake and Israelite Prophecy,” *Scripture and Other Artifacts*, 188-98). On the other hand, some of these verses in Amos could allude to the devastation that would be caused by the imminent military invasion.

**7 tn** Heb “he;” the referent (Amos) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

**8 sn** The LORD, in his role of warrior-king, is compared to a lion. See 3:4, 8.

**9 map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

**10 tn** Heb “gives his voice.”

**11 tn** Lexicographers debate whether there are two roots אָבַל (*aval*), one signifying “mourn” and the other “be dry,” or simply one (“mourn”). The parallel verb (“withers”) might

the summit of Carmel<sup>12</sup> withers.”<sup>13</sup>

**1:3** This is what the LORD says:  
“Because Damascus has committed three crimes<sup>14</sup> –  
make that four!<sup>15</sup> – I will not revoke my

favor the first option and have the meaning “wilt away.” It is interesting to note, however, that the root appears later in the book in the context of lament (5:16; 8:8, 10; 9:5). Either 1:2 is a possible wordplay to alert the reader to the death that will accompany the judgment (the option of two roots), or perhaps the translation “mourns” is appropriate here as well (cf. KJV, NASB, NKJV, NJPS; see also D. J. A. Clines, “Was There an ‘BL II ‘Be Dry’ in Classical Hebrew?” VT 42 [1992]: 1-10).

**12 sn** Carmel was a region known for its abundant plants and trees. See Isa 33:9; 35:2; Jer 50:19.

**13 sn** Loss of a land’s fertility is frequently associated with judgment in the OT and ancient Near Eastern literature.

**14 tn** Traditionally, “transgressions” or “sins.” The word refers to rebellion against authority and is used in the international political realm (see 1 Kgs 12:19; 2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5, 7; 8:22). There is debate over its significance in this context. Some relate the “rebellion” of the foreign nations to God’s mandate to Noah (Gen 9:5-7). This mandate is viewed as a treaty between God and humankind, whereby God holds humans accountable to populate the earth and respect his image as it is revealed in all people. While this option is a possible theological explanation of the message in light of the Old Testament as a whole, nothing in these oracles alludes to that Genesis passage. J. Barton suggests that the prophet is appealing to a common morality shared across the ancient Near East regarding the conduct of war since all of the oracles can be related to activities and atrocities committed in warfare (*Amos’s Oracles against the Nations* [SOTSMS], 39-61). The “transgression” then would be a violation of what all cultures would take as fundamental human decency. Some argue that the nations cited in Amos 1-2 had been members of the Davidic empire. Their crime would consist of violating the mutual agreements that all should have exhibited toward one another (cf. M. E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*). This interpretation is connected to the notion that Amos envisions a reconstituted Davidic empire for Israel and the world (9:11-15). Ultimately, we can only speculate what lay behind Amos’ thinking. He does not specify the theological foundation of his universal moral vision, but it is clear that Amos believes that all nations are responsible before the LORD for their cruelty toward other human beings. He also assumes that even those who did not know his God would recognize their inhumane treatment of others as inherently wrong. The translation “crimes” is general enough to communicate that a standard (whether human or divine) has been breached. For a survey of the possible historical events behind each oracle, see S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia).

**15 tn** Heb “Because of three violations of Damascus, even because of four.”

**sn** The three...four style introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2. Based on the use of a similar formula in wisdom literature (see Prov 30:18-19, 29-31), one expects to find in each case a list of four specific violations. However, only in the eighth oracle (against Israel) does one find the expected fourfold list. Through this adaptation and alteration of the normal pattern the LORD indicates that his focus is Israel (he is too bent on judging Israel to dwell very long on her neighbors) and he emphasizes Israel’s guilt with respect to the other nations. (Israel’s list fills up before the others’ lists do.) See R. B. Chisholm, “For Three Sins...Even for Four: The Numerical Sayings in Amos,” *BSac* 147 (1990): 188-97.

decree of judgment.<sup>1</sup>  
 They ripped through Gilead like threshing sledges with iron teeth.<sup>2</sup>  
**1:4** So I will set Hazael's house<sup>3</sup> on fire; fire<sup>4</sup> will consume Ben Hadad's<sup>5</sup> fortresses.  
**1:5** I will break the bar<sup>6</sup> on the gate of Damascus.  
 I will remove<sup>7</sup> the ruler<sup>8</sup> from Wicked Valley,<sup>9</sup>  
 the one who holds the royal scepter from Beth Eden.<sup>10</sup>  
 The people of Aram will be deported to Kir.<sup>11</sup>  
 The LORD has spoken!

**1:6** This is what the LORD says:  
 "Because Gaza<sup>12</sup> has committed three crimes<sup>13</sup> –  
 make that four!<sup>14</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>15</sup>  
 They deported a whole community<sup>16</sup> and sold them<sup>17</sup> to Edom.  
**1:7** So I will set Gaza's city wall<sup>18</sup> on fire; fire<sup>19</sup> will consume her fortresses.  
**1:8** I will remove<sup>20</sup> the ruler<sup>21</sup> from Ashdod,<sup>22</sup>  
 the one who holds the royal scepter from Ashkelon.<sup>23</sup>  
 I will strike Ekron<sup>24</sup> with my hand,<sup>25</sup>  
 the rest of the Philistines will also die."<sup>26</sup>  
 The sovereign LORD has spoken!

**1:9** This is what the LORD says:  
 "Because Tyre has committed three crimes<sup>27</sup> –

<sup>1</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will not bring it [or "him"] back." The pronominal object (1) refers to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 46-47. Another option (2) is to understand the suffix as referring to the particular nation mentioned in the oracle and to translate, "I will not take him [i.e., that particular nation] back." In this case the LORD makes it clear that he does not intend to resume treaty relations with the nation in view. See M. L. Barré, "The Meaning of *l' ybnyw* in Amos 1:3-2:6," *JBL* 105 (1986): 622.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "they threshed [or "trampled down"] Gilead with sharp iron implements" (NASB similar).

**sn** *Like threshing sledges with iron teeth.* A threshing sledge was made of wooden boards embedded with sharp stones or iron teeth. As the sledge was pulled over the threshing floor the stones or iron teeth would separate the grain from the stalks. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 64-65. Here the threshing metaphor is used to emphasize how violently and inhumanely the Arameans (the people of Damascus) had treated the people of Gilead (located east of the Jordan River).

<sup>3</sup> **tn** "Hazael's house" ("the house of Hazael") refers to the dynasty of Hazael.

**sn** *Hazael* took the throne of Aram in 843 b.c. and established a royal dynasty. See 2 Kgs 8:7-15 and W. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 145-60.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "it"; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>5</sup> **sn** *Ben Hadad* may refer to Hazael's son and successor (2 Kgs 13:3, 24) or to an earlier king (see 1 Kgs 20), perhaps the ruler whom Hazael assassinated when he assumed power.

<sup>6</sup> **sn** The *bar* on the city gate symbolizes the city's defenses and security.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off."

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the one who sits." Some English versions take the Hebrew term in a collective sense as "inhabitants" (e.g., KJV, NKJV, NASB, NRSV). The context and the parallel in the next clause ("the one who holds the royal scepter"), however, suggest that the royal house is in view. For this term (יֹשֵׁב, *yoshev*), see N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 512-30.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* "valley of wickedness." Though many English versions take the Hebrew phrase בְּקִיַּת אָרָם (*biq'-at 'aven*) as a literal geographical place name ("Valley of Aven," so NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT), it appears to be a derogatory epithet for Damascus and the kingdom of Aram.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Many associate the name "Beth Eden" with Bit Adini, an Aramean state located near the Euphrates River, but it may be a sarcastic epithet meaning "house of pleasure."

<sup>11</sup> **tn** According to Amos 9:7, the Arameans originally came from *Kir*. The LORD threatens to reverse their history and send them back there.

<sup>12</sup> **sn** *Gaza* was one of the five major Philistine cities (along with Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath). It was considered to mark the southern limit of Canaan at the point on the coast where it was located (Gen 10:19).

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Traditionally, "transgressions" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) or "sins" (NIV). For an explanation of the atrocities outlined in this oracle as treaty violations of God's mandate to Noah in Gen 9:5-7, see the note on the word "violations" in 1:3.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Because of three violations of Gaza, even because of four."

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word "four" in 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will not bring it [or "him"] back." The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word "judgment" in 1:3.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* "[group of] exiles." A number of English translations take this as a collective singular and translate it with a plural (e.g., NAB, NIV, NRSV).

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* "in order to hand them over."

<sup>18</sup> **sn** The *city wall* symbolizes the city's defenses and security.

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* "it"; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off."

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the one who sits." Some translations take this expression as a collective singular referring to the inhabitants rather than the ruler (e.g., NAB, NRSV, NLT).

<sup>22</sup> **sn** *Ashdod* was one of the five major Philistine cities (along with Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath).

<sup>23</sup> **sn** *Ashkelon* was one of the five major Philistine cities (along with Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath).

<sup>24</sup> **sn** *Ekron* was one of the five major Philistine cities (along with Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Gath).

<sup>25</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will turn my hand against Ekron." For other uses of the idiom, "turn the hand against," see Ps 81:14; Isa 1:25; Jer 6:9; Zech 13:7.

<sup>26</sup> **tn** *Heb* "and the remnant of the Philistines will perish." The translation above assumes that reference is made to other Philistines beside those living in the cities mentioned. Another option is to translate, "Every last Philistine will die."

<sup>27</sup> **tn** Traditionally, "transgressions" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) or "sins" (NIV). For an explanation of the atrocities outlined in this oracle as treaty violations of God's mandate to Noah in Gen 9:5-7, see the note on the word "violations" in 1:3.

make that four!<sup>1</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>2</sup>  
 They sold<sup>3</sup> a whole community<sup>4</sup> to Edom; they failed to observe<sup>5</sup> a treaty of brotherhood.<sup>6</sup>  
**1:10** So I will set fire to Tyre's city wall;<sup>7</sup> fire<sup>8</sup> will consume her fortresses.”

**1:11** This is what the LORD says:  
 “Because Edom has committed three crimes<sup>9</sup> –  
 make that four!<sup>10</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>11</sup>  
 He chased his brother<sup>12</sup> with a sword; he wiped out his allies.<sup>13</sup>

**1 tn** Heb “Because of three violations of Tyre, even because of four.”

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word “four” in 1:3.

**2 tn** Heb “I will not bring it [or “him”] back.” The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word “judgment” in 1:3.

**3 tn** Heb “handed over.”

**4 tn** Heb “[group of] exiles.” A similar phrase occurs in v. 6.

**5 tn** Heb “did not remember.”

**6 sn** A *treaty of brotherhood*. In the ancient Near Eastern world familial terms were sometimes used to describe treaty partners. In a treaty between superior and inferior parties, the lord would be called “father” and the subject “son.” The partners in a treaty between equals referred to themselves as “brothers.” For biblical examples, see 1 Kgs 9:13; 20:32-33.

**7 sn** The city wall symbolizes the city's defenses and security.

**8 tn** Heb “it”; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

**9 tn** Traditionally, “transgressions” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) or “sins” (NIV). For an explanation of the atrocities outlined in this oracle as treaty violations of God's mandate to Noah in Gen 9:5-7, see the note on the word “violations” in 1:3.

**10 tn** Heb “Because of three violations of Edom, even because of four.”

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word “four” in 1:3.

**11 tn** Heb “I will not bring it [or “him”] back.” The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word “judgment” in 1:3.

**12 sn** It is likely that “brother” refers here to a treaty partner (see the note on the word “brotherhood” in 1:9). However, it is possible, if Israel is in view, that Edom's ancient blood relationship to God's people is alluded to here. Cf. NCV, NLT “their relatives, the Israelites.”

**13 tn** Or “He stifled his compassion.” The Hebrew term רַחֲמָיו (*rakhamayy*) is better understood here (parallel to “brother/treaty partner”) as a reference to “allies” which Edom betrayed. An Aramaic cognate is attested (see DNWSI 2:1069-70). See M. Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 313-18; idem, “Critical Note: Additional Remarks on רַחֲמָיו (Amos 1:11),” *JBL* 91 (1972): 391-93; and M. Barré, “Amos 1:11 reconsidered,” *CBQ* 47 (1985) 420-27. Some argue that the clause is best translated as “and destroyed his womenfolk.” רַחֲמָה (*rakhama*) means “womb”; the plural here would be a metonymy for “women” and could establish a parallel with the atrocity of 1:13. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 64-65.

In his anger he tore them apart without stopping to rest;<sup>14</sup>  
 in his fury he relentlessly attacked them.<sup>15</sup>  
**1:12** So I will set Teman<sup>16</sup> on fire;  
 fire<sup>17</sup> will consume Bozrah's<sup>18</sup> fortresses.”

**1:13** This is what the LORD says:  
 “Because the Ammonites have committed three crimes<sup>19</sup> –  
 make that four!<sup>20</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>21</sup>  
 They ripped open Gilead's pregnant women<sup>22</sup>  
 so they could expand their territory.  
**1:14** So I will set fire to Rabbah's<sup>23</sup> city wall;<sup>24</sup>  
 fire<sup>25</sup> will consume her fortresses.  
 War cries will be heard on the day of battle;<sup>26</sup>  
 a strong gale will blow on the day of the windstorm.<sup>27</sup>

**14 tn** Heb “his anger tore continually.” The Hebrew verb שָׁרַף (*sharaf*, “tear apart”) is often used of an animal tearing apart its prey. The word picture here is that of a vicious predator's feeding frenzy.

**15 tn** Traditionally, “he kept his fury continually.” The Hebrew term שָׁמַרָה (*shamarah*) could be taken as a Qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular with 3rd person feminine singular suffix (with *mappiq* omitted), “he kept it” (NASB, NKJV, NRSV). It is also possible in light of the parallelism that שָׁמַרָה (*shamar*) is a rare homonym cognate to an Akkadian verb meaning “to rage; to be furious.” Repointing the verb as שָׁמַרָה (*sham'rah*, third person feminine singular), one could translate literally, “his fury raged continually” (NIV, NJPS).

**16 sn** *Teman* was an important region (or perhaps city) in Edom.

**17 tn** Heb “it”; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

**18 sn** *Bozrah* was a city located in northern Edom.

**19 tn** Traditionally, “transgressions” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) or “sins” (NIV). For an explanation of the atrocities outlined in this oracle as treaty violations of God's mandate to Noah in Gen 9:5-7, see the note on the word “violations” in 1:3.

**20 tn** Heb “Because of three violations of the Ammonites, even because of four.” On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word “four” in 1:3.

**21 tn** Heb “I will not bring it [or “him”] back.” The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word “judgment” in 1:3.

**22 sn** The Ammonites *ripped open Gilead's pregnant women* in conjunction with a military invasion designed to expand their territory. Such atrocities, although repugnant, were not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern warfare.

**23 sn** *Rabbah* was the Ammonite capital.

**24 sn** The city wall symbolizes the city's defenses and security.

**25 tn** Heb “it”; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

**26 tn** Heb “with a war cry in the day of battle.”

**27 tn** Heb “with wind in the day of the windstorm.”

**sn** A *windstorm* is a metaphor for judgment and destruction in the OT (see Isa 29:6; Jer 23:19) and ancient Near Eastern literature.

1:15 Ammon's<sup>4</sup> king will be deported;<sup>2</sup> he and his officials<sup>3</sup> will be carried off<sup>4</sup> together."

The LORD has spoken!

2:1 This is what the LORD says: "Because Moab has committed three crimes<sup>5</sup> – make that four!<sup>6</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>7</sup>

They burned the bones of Edom's king into lime.<sup>8</sup>

2:2 So I will set Moab on fire,<sup>9</sup> and it will consume Kerioth's<sup>10</sup> fortresses. Moab will perish<sup>11</sup> in the heat of battle<sup>12</sup> amid war cries and the blaring<sup>13</sup> of the ram's horn.<sup>14</sup>

2:3 I will remove<sup>15</sup> Moab's leader;<sup>16</sup> I will kill all Moab's<sup>17</sup> officials<sup>18</sup> with him."

The LORD has spoken!

2:4 This is what the LORD says: "Because Judah has committed three covenant transgressions<sup>19</sup> – make that four!<sup>20</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>21</sup>

They rejected the LORD's law;<sup>22</sup> they did not obey his commands.

Their false gods,<sup>23</sup> to which their fathers were loyal,<sup>24</sup> led them astray.

2:5 So I will set Judah on fire, and it will consume Jerusalem's fortresses."<sup>25</sup>

### God Will Judge Israel

2:6 This is what the LORD says: "Because Israel has committed three covenant transgressions<sup>26</sup> – make that four!<sup>27</sup> – I will not revoke my decree of judgment.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** *Heb* "their"; the referent (Ammon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "will go into exile."

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Or "princes" (KJV, NAB, NASB, NLT); TEV "officers"; CEV "leaders."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The words "will be carried off" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Traditionally, "transgressions" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) or "sins" (NIV). For an explanation of the atrocities outlined in this oracle as treaty violations of God's mandate to Noah in Gen 9:5-7, see the note on the word "violations" in 1:3.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Because of three violations of Moab, even because of four."

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word "four" in 1:3.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will not bring it [or "him"] back." The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word "judgment" in 1:3.

<sup>8</sup> **sn** The Moabites apparently desecrated the tomb of an Edomite king and burned his bones into a calcined substance which they then used as plaster (cf. Deut 27:2, 4). See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 72. Receiving a proper burial was very important in this culture. Desecrating a tomb or a deceased individual's bones was considered an especially heinous act.

<sup>9</sup> **sn** The destruction of Moab by fire is an example of a judgment in kind – as the Moabites committed the crime of "burning," so the LORD will punish them by setting them on fire.

<sup>10</sup> **sn** *Kerioth* was an important Moabite city. See Jer 48:24, 41.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Or "die" (KJV, NASB, NRSV, TEV); NAB "shall meet death."

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Or "in the tumult." This word refers to the harsh confusion of sounds that characterized an ancient battle – a mixture of war cries, shouts, shrieks of pain, clashes of weapons, etc.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* "sound" (so KJV, NASB, NRSV).

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the leader" (used as a trumpet) was blown to signal the approaching battle.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* "cut off" (so KJV, NASB, NRSV); NAB "root out"; NCV "bring to an end."

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* "the leader [traditionally, "judge"] from her midst."

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* "her"; the referent (Moab) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Or "princes" (KJV, NAB, NASB, NLT); TEV, CEV "leaders."

<sup>19</sup> **tn** This is the same Hebrew term that is translated "crimes" in the previous oracles (see at 1:3). The change to "covenant transgressions" reflects the probability that the prophet is condemning the nation of Israel for violating stipulations of the Mosaic Law.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Because of three violations of Judah, even because of four."

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word "four" in 1:3.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will not bring it [or "him"] back." The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word "judgment" in 1:3.

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Or "instruction"; NCV "teachings."

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* "lies." This may very well be a derogatory term for idols (perhaps also at Ps 40:4 ET [40:5 HT]). Elsewhere false gods are called "vanities" (Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26) and a delusion (Isa 66:3). In no other prophetic passages, however, are they called "lies." The term could refer to the deceptions of false prophets (note Ezek 13:6-9; cf. Hab 2:3). See F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB), 301-6.

<sup>24</sup> **tn** *Heb* "after which their fathers walked." The expression "to walk after" is an idiom meaning "to be loyal to." See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 75-76.

**sn** Here the idolatry of the parents carried over to the children, who persisted in worshiping the idols to which their fathers were loyal.

<sup>25</sup> **map** For the location of Jerusalem see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

<sup>26</sup> **tn** For this translation see the note at 2:4.

<sup>27</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Because of three violations of Israel, even because of four."

**sn** On the *three...four* style that introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2 see the note on the word "four" in 1:3. Only in this last oracle against Israel does one find the list of four specific violations expected based on the use of a similar formula elsewhere in wisdom literature (see Prov 30:18-19, 29-31). This adaptation of the normal pattern indicates the LORD's focus on Israel here (he is too bent on judging Israel to dwell very long on her neighbors) and emphasizes Israel's guilt with respect to the other nations (Israel's list fills up before the others' lists do). See R. B. Chisholm, "'For three sins...even for four': the numerical sayings in Amos," *BSac* 147 (1990) 188-97.

<sup>28</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will not bring it [or "him"] back." The translation understands the pronominal object to refer to the decree of judgment that follows; the referent (the decree) has been specified in the translation for clarity. For another option see the note on the word "judgment" in 1:3.

They sold the innocent<sup>1</sup> for silver,  
the needy for a pair of sandals.<sup>2</sup>

2:7 They trample<sup>3</sup> on the dirt-covered  
heads of the poor;<sup>4</sup>  
they push the destitute away.<sup>5</sup>  
A man and his father go to the same girl;<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Or “honest” (CEV, NLT). The Hebrew word sometimes has a moral-ethical connotation, “righteous, godly,” but the parallelism (note “poor”) suggests a socio-economic or legal sense here. The practice of selling debtors as slaves is in view (Exod 21:2-11; Lev 25:35-55; Deut 15:12-18) See the note at Exod 21:8 and G. C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (JSOTSup). Probably the only “crime” the victim had committed was being unable to pay back a loan or an exorbitant interest rate on a loan. Some have suggested that this verse refers to bribery in legal proceedings: The innocent are “sold” in the sense that those in power pay off the elders or judges for favorable decisions (5:12; cf. Exod 23:6-7).

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Perhaps the expression “for a pair of sandals” indicates a relatively small price or debt. Some suggest that the sandals may have been an outward token of a more substantial purchase price. Others relate the sandals to a ritual attached to the transfer of property, signifying here that the poor would be losing their inherited family lands because of debt (Ruth 4:7; cf. Deut 25:8-10). Still others emend the Hebrew form slightly to נָעַלָם (*ne’lam*, “hidden thing”; from the root נָעַל, *’alam*, “to hide”) and understand this as referring to a bribe.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Most scholars now understand this verb as derived from the root II שָׁחַף (*sha’af*, “to crush; to trample”), an alternate form of שָׁחַף (*shuf*), rather than from I שָׁחַף (*sha’af*, “to pant, to gasp”; cf. KJV, ASV, NASB).

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “those who stomp on the dirt of the ground on the head of the poor.” It is possible to render the line as “they trample the heads of the poor into the dust of the ground,” thereby communicating that the poor are being stepped on in utter contempt (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 79-80). The participial form הַשֹּׁחֲפִים (*hasho’afim*) is substantival and stands in apposition to the pronominal suffix on מִכְרָם (*mikhrām*, v. 6b).

**sn** The picture of the poor having *dirt-covered heads* suggests their humiliation before their oppressors and/or their sorrow (see 2 Sam 1:2; 15:32).

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* “they turn aside the way of the destitute.” Many interpreters take “way” to mean “just cause” and understand this as a direct reference to the rights of the destitute being ignored. The injustice done to the poor is certainly in view, but the statement is better taken as a word picture depicting the powerful rich pushing the “way of the poor” (i.e., their attempt to be treated justly) to the side. An even more vivid picture is given in Amos 5:12, where the rich are pictured as turning the poor away from the city gate (where legal decisions were made, and therefore where justice should be done).

<sup>6</sup> **sn** Most interpreters see some type of sexual immorality here (cf. KJV, NASB, NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT), even though the Hebrew phrase הַלֵּךְ יַחַד (*halakh ’el*, “go to”) never refers elsewhere to sexual intercourse. (The usual idiom is בָּוֵה אֵל *[bo’ el]*). However, S. M. Paul (*Amos* [Hermeneia], 82) attempts to develop a linguistic case for a sexual connotation here.) The precise identification of the “girl” in question is not clear. Some see the referent as a cultic prostitute (cf. NAB; v. 8 suggests a cultic setting), but the term נַעֲרָה (*na’arah*) nowhere else refers to a prostitute. Because of the contextual emphasis on social oppression, some suggest the exploitation of a slave girl is in view. H. Barstad argues that the “girl” is the hostess at a pagan בָּרֵזֶה (*marzaakh*) banquet (described at some length in 6:4-7). In his view the sin described here is not sexual immorality, but idolatry (see H. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos* [VTSup], 33-36). In this case, one might translate, “Father and son go together to a pagan banquet.” In light of this cultic context, F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman argue that this is a reference to a specific female deity (“the Girl”) and correlate this verse with 8:14 (*Amos* [AB], 318-19).

in this way they show disrespect<sup>7</sup> for my  
moral purity.<sup>8</sup>

2:8 They stretch out on clothing seized as  
collateral;  
they do so right<sup>9</sup> beside every altar!  
They drink wine bought with the fines  
they have levied;  
they do so right in the temple<sup>10</sup> of their  
God!<sup>11</sup>

2:9 For Israel’s sake I destroyed the  
Amorites.<sup>12</sup>

They were as tall as cedars<sup>13</sup>  
and as strong as oaks,  
but I destroyed the fruit on their branch-  
es<sup>14</sup>

and their roots in the ground.<sup>15</sup>

2:10 I brought you up from the land of  
Egypt;

I led you through the wilderness for forty  
years

so you could take the Amorites’ land as  
your own.

2:11 I made some of your sons prophets  
and some of your young men Nazirites.<sup>16</sup>  
Is this not true, you Israelites?<sup>17</sup>  
The LORD is speaking!

2:12 “But you made the Nazirites drink  
wine;<sup>17</sup>

you commanded the prophets, ‘Do not  
prophecy!’

2:13 Look! I will press you down,  
like a cart loaded down with grain presses  
down.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Or “pollute”; “desecrate”; “dishonor.”

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “my holy name.” Here “name” is used metonymically for God’s moral character or reputation, while “holy” has a moral and ethical connotation.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** The words “They do so right” are supplied twice in the translation of this verse for clarification.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* “house.”

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Or “gods.” The Hebrew term אֱלֹהֵיהֶם (*’elohehem*) may be translated “their gods” (referring to pagan gods), “their god” (referring to a pagan god, cf. NAB, NIV, NLT), or “their God” (referring to the God of Israel, cf. NASB, NRSV).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I destroyed the Amorites from before them.” The translation takes מִפְּנֵי *[mipp’ney]* in the sense of “for the sake of.” See BDB 818 s.v. פָּנָה II.6.a and H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia), 134. Another option is to take the phrase in a spatial sense, “I destroyed the Amorites, [clearing them out] from before them [i.e., Israel]” (cf. NIV, NRSV).

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “whose height was like the height of cedars.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* “his fruit from above.”

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and his roots from below.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Or perhaps “religious devotees” (also in the following verse). The Hebrew term נַזִּיר (*nazir*) refers to one who “consecrated” or “devoted” to God (see Num 6:1-21).

<sup>17</sup> **sn** Nazirites were strictly forbidden to *drink wine* (Num 6:2-3).

<sup>18</sup> **tn** The precise meaning of this verse is unclear. Various suggested meanings have been proposed (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 94): (1) One option is to relate the verb to an Arabic verb, meaning “to hinder; to hamper,” and translate, “I am making you immobile, like a cart filled with grain is immobile.” In this case, the LORD refers to Israel’s inability to escape his coming judgment (see vv. 14-16; NJPS). (2) Another view relates the verb to a different Arabic verb meaning “to cut in pieces,” translating “I will cut you in pieces as a cart cuts in pieces [the earth],” referring to the ruts and rifts in the

**2:14** Fast runners will find no place to hide;<sup>1</sup>  
strong men will have no strength left;<sup>2</sup>  
warriors will not be able to save their lives.  
**2:15** Archers<sup>3</sup> will not hold their ground;<sup>4</sup>  
fast runners will not save their lives,  
nor will those who ride horses.<sup>5</sup>  
**2:16** Bravehearted<sup>6</sup> warriors will run away  
naked in that day.”  
The LORD is speaking!

*Every Effect has its Cause*

**3:1** Listen, you Israelites, to this message  
which the LORD is proclaiming against<sup>7</sup>  
you! This message is for the entire clan  
I brought up<sup>8</sup> from the land of Egypt:  
**3:2** “I have chosen<sup>9</sup> you alone from all  
the clans of the earth. Therefore I will  
punish you for all your sins.”  
**3:3** Do two walk together without having  
met?<sup>10</sup>  
**3:4** Does a lion roar in the woods if he has  
not cornered his prey?<sup>11</sup>  
Does a young lion bellow from his den if  
he has not caught something?

ground caused by an earthquake. (3) Some relate the verb to an Arabic root meaning “to groan” with the idea that the LORD causes the ground underneath Israel to groan (cf. NLT). (4) The translation connects the verb to an Aramaism signifying to “press down” (cf. NIV, NRSV). Some English versions translate the verb in an intransitive sense as “I am weighted down” (cf. NASB, NKJV) or “I groan beneath you” (NEB). For this last option, see F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB), 334.

<sup>1</sup> **tn Heb** “and a place of refuge will perish from the swift.”  
<sup>2</sup> **tn Heb** “the strong will not increase his strength.”  
<sup>3</sup> **tn Heb** “the one who holds the bow.”  
<sup>4</sup> **tn** For the idiom of “holding [or “standing”] one’s ground” in battle, there is a similar phrase in Ezek 13:5; also related is the expression “to hold one’s own against” (or “to withstand”) in Judg 2:14; 2 Kgs 10:4; Dan 8:7 (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 97). Other options include “will not endure” or “will not survive.”  
<sup>5</sup> **tn** The last two lines read literally, “The one fast in his feet will not rescue [his life], and the rider of the horse will not rescue his life.” The phrase “his life” does double duty in the parallelism and should be understood in both lines.  
<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or “the most stouthearted” (NAB); NRSV “those who are stout of heart.”  
<sup>7</sup> **tn** Or “about.”  
<sup>8</sup> **tn** One might expect a third person verb form (“he brought up”), since the LORD apparently refers to himself in the third person in the preceding sentence. This first person form, however, serves to connect this message to the earlier indictment (2:10) and anticipates the words of the following verse.  
<sup>9</sup> **tn Heb** “You only have I known.” The Hebrew verb יָדָע (*yada*) is used here in its covenantal sense of “recognize in a special way.”  
<sup>10</sup> **sn** The rhetorical questions in vv. 3-5 expect the answer, “No, of course not!” Those in v. 6 anticipate the answer, “Yes, of course they do/he is.” They all draw attention to the principle of cause and effect and lay the logical foundation for the argument in vv. 7-8. Also note the progression from a general question in v. 3 to the “meetings” of two animals (v. 4), to that of an animal and a human trap (v. 5), to a climax with the confrontation with the LORD (v. 6). Each of these meetings is disastrous.  
<sup>11</sup> **tn Heb** “without having prey [or “food”].”

**3:5** Does a bird swoop down into a trap  
on the ground if there is no bait?  
Does a trap spring up from the ground  
unless it has surely caught something?  
**3:6** If an alarm sounds<sup>12</sup> in a city, do  
people not fear?<sup>13</sup>  
If disaster overtakes a<sup>14</sup> city, is the LORD  
not responsible?<sup>15</sup>  
**3:7** Certainly the sovereign LORD does  
nothing without first revealing his plan  
to his servants the prophets.  
**3:8** A lion has roared!<sup>16</sup> Who is not afraid?  
The sovereign LORD has spoken! Who  
can refuse to prophesy?<sup>17</sup>

*Samaria Will Fall*

**3:9** Make this announcement in<sup>18</sup> the for-  
tresses of Ashdod  
and in the fortresses in the land of Egypt.  
Say this:  
“Gather on the hills around Samaria!<sup>19</sup>  
Observe the many acts of violence<sup>20</sup> tak-  
ing place within the city,<sup>21</sup>  
the oppressive deeds<sup>22</sup> occurring in it.”<sup>23</sup>  
**3:10** “They do not know how to do what  
is right.” (The LORD is speaking.)  
“They store up<sup>24</sup> the spoils of destructive  
violence<sup>25</sup> in their fortresses.  
**3:11** Therefore,” says the sovereign LORD,  
“an enemy will encircle the land.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>12</sup> **tn Heb** “If the ram’s horn is blown.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Or “tremble” (NASB, NIV, NCV); or “shake.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn Heb** “is in”; NIV, NCV, NLT “comes to.”

<sup>15</sup> **tn Heb** “has the LORD not acted?”

<sup>16</sup> **sn** The roar of the lion is here a metaphor for impending judgment (see 1:2; cf. 3:4, 12). Verses 7-8 justify Amos’ prophetic ministry and message of warning and judgment. The people should expect a prophetic message prior to divine action.

<sup>17</sup> **sn** *Who can refuse to prophesy?* When a message is revealed, the prophet must speak, and the news of impending judgment should cause people to fear.

<sup>18</sup> **tn Heb** “on” or “over” (also later in this verse).

<sup>19</sup> **sn** *Samaria* might refer here both to the region and to the capital city (later known as Sebaste). On the other hand, there actually are hills that surround the mound upon which the city was built. The implication is that the nations can come and sit and see from those hills the sin of the capital city and its judgment.

**map** For location of the city see Map2-B1; Map4-D3; Map5-E2; Map6-A4; Map7-C1.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** The Hebrew noun carries the nuance of “panic” or “confusion.” Here it refers metonymically to the violent deeds that terrorize the oppressed.

<sup>21</sup> **tn Heb** “in her midst” (so NAB, NASB); NIV “among her people.”

<sup>22</sup> **tn** The translation assumes the form is an abstract plural (see Job 35:9; Eccl 4:1). Another option is to understand the form as a substantival passive participle and translate, “the oppressed” (so KJV).

<sup>23</sup> **tn Heb** “within her.”

<sup>24</sup> **tn Heb** “those who.”

<sup>25</sup> **tn Heb** “violence and destruction.” The expression “violence and destruction” stand metonymically for the goods the oppressors have accumulated by their unjust actions.

<sup>26</sup> **tc** The MT reads “an enemy and around the land.” It is also possible to take the MT as an exclamation (“an enemy, and all about the land!”; see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia],

He will take away your power:<sup>1</sup>  
your fortresses will be looted.<sup>2</sup>

**3:12** This is what the LORD says:  
“Just as a shepherd salvages from the  
lion’s mouth a couple of leg bones or a  
piece of an ear,  
so the Israelites who live in Samaria will  
be salvaged.<sup>2</sup>

They will be left with just a corner of a  
bed,<sup>3</sup>  
and a part<sup>4</sup> of a couch.”

**3:13** Listen and warn<sup>5</sup> the family<sup>6</sup> of Ja-  
cob!<sup>7</sup>

The sovereign LORD, the God who com-  
mands armies,<sup>8</sup> is speaking!

**3:14** “Certainly when<sup>9</sup> I punish Israel for  
their<sup>40</sup> covenant transgressions,<sup>11</sup>  
I will destroy<sup>12</sup> Bethel’s<sup>13</sup> altars.

The horns<sup>14</sup> of the altar will be cut off  
and fall to the ground.

**3:15** I will destroy both the winter and  
summer houses.<sup>15</sup>

The houses filled with ivory<sup>16</sup> will be  
ruined,  
the great<sup>17</sup> houses will be swept away.<sup>18</sup>  
The LORD is speaking!

**4:1** Listen to this message, you cows of  
Bashan<sup>19</sup> who live on Mount Samaria!  
You<sup>20</sup> oppress the poor;  
you crush the needy.

You say to your<sup>21</sup> husbands,  
“Bring us more to drink!”<sup>22</sup>

**4:2** The sovereign LORD confirms this oath  
by his own holy character.<sup>23</sup>  
“Certainly the time is approaching<sup>24</sup>  
when you will be carried away<sup>25</sup> in  
baskets,<sup>26</sup>

118; NJPS; cf. NLT). Most scholars and versions emend the text to יִסְבֹּב (y<sup>s</sup>sovev, Polel imperfect), “will encircle.”

**1 tn** Heb “He will bring down your power from you.” Some emend the text to read “Your power will be brought down from you.” The shift, however, from an active to a passive sense also appears at 3:14 (“I will destroy Bethel’s altars. The horns of the altar will be cut off.”) The pronouns (“your...you”) are feminine singular, indicating that the personified city of Samaria is addressed here. Samaria’s “power” here is her defenses and/or wealth.

**2 sn** The verb translated *salvaged*, though often used in a positive sense of deliverance from harm, is here employed in a sarcastic manner. A shepherd would attempt to salvage part of an animal to prove that a predator had indeed killed it. In this way he could prove that he had not stolen the missing animal and absolve himself from any responsibility to repay the owner (see Exod 22:12-13).

**3 tn** Heb “with a corner of a bed.”

**4 tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word דְּמִשְׁקָה (d<sup>m</sup>mesheq), which occurs only here, is uncertain. If not emended, it is usually related to the term דְּמִשְׁקָה (dammeseq) and translated as the “Damask linens” of the bed (cf. NASB “the cover”) or as “in Damascus” (so KJV, NJB, NIV). The differences in spelling (Damascus is spelled correctly in 5:27), historical considerations, and the word order make both of these derivations unlikely. Many emendations have been proposed (e.g., “a part from the foot [of a bed],” based on a different division of the Hebrew letters (cf. NEB, NRSV); “on the edge,” based on a Hebrew term not attested in the Bible (NKJV). Some suggest a resemblance to an Akkadian term which means “sideboard [of a bed],” which is sometimes incorrectly rendered “headboard” (NJPS; see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 121-22). Most likely another part of a bed or couch is in view, but it is difficult to be more specific.

**5 tn** Or “testify against.”

**6 tn** Heb “house.”

**7 tn** These words are spoken to either the unidentified heralds addressed at the beginning of v. 9, or to the Egyptians and Philistines (see v. 9b). Another possibility is that one is not to look for a specific addressee but rather appreciate the command simply as a rhetorical device to grab the attention of the listeners and readers of the prophetic message.

**8 tn** Traditionally, “the God of hosts.”

**9 tn** Heb “in the day.”

**10 tn** Heb “his.” With the referent “Israel” here, this amounts to a collective singular.

**11 tn** Traditionally, “transgressions, sins,” but see the note on the word “crimes” in 1:3.

**12 tn** Heb “punish” (so NASB, NRSV).

**13 map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

**14 sn** The horns of an ancient altar projected upwards from the four corners and resembled an animal’s horns in appearance. Fugitives could seek asylum by grabbing hold of these corners (see Exod 21:14; 1 Kgs 1:50; 2:28). When the altar’s horns were cut off, there would be no place of asylum left for the LORD’s enemies.

**15 tn** Heb “the winter house along with the summer house.”

**sn** Like kings, many in Israel’s wealthy class owned both winter and summer houses (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1,18; Jer 36:22). For a discussion of archaeological evidence relating to these structures, see P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 64-65.

**16 tn** Heb “houses of ivory.” These houses were not made of ivory, but they had ivory panels and furniture decorated with ivory inlays. See P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 139-48.

**17 tn** Or “they,” cf. NAB “their many rooms.”

**18 tn** The translation assumes the form is from the Hebrew verb שָׁפַח (safah, “to sweep away”) rather than סָוַף (suf, “to come to an end”), which is the choice of most versions. Either option effectively communicates the destruction of the structures.

**19 sn** The expression cows of Bashan is used by the prophet to address the wealthy women of Samaria, who demand that their husbands satisfy their cravings. The derogatory language perhaps suggests that they, like the livestock of Bashan, were well fed, ironically in preparation for the coming slaughter. This phrase is sometimes cited to critique the book’s view of women.

**20 tn** Heb “the ones who” (three times in this verse).

**21 tn** Heb “they.”

**22 sn** Some commentators relate this scene to the description of the *marzeah* feast of 6:3-6, in which drinking played a prominent part (see the note at 6:6).

**23 tn** Heb “swears by his holiness.”

**sn** The message that follows is an unconditional oath, the fulfillment of which is just as certain as the LORD’s own holy character.

**24 tn** Heb “Look, certainly days are coming upon you”; NRSV “the time is surely coming upon you.”

**25 tn** Heb “one will carry you away”; NASB “they will take you away.”

**26 tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word translated “baskets” is uncertain. The translation follows the suggestion of S. M. Paul (*Amos* [Hermeneia], 128), who discusses the various options (130-32): “shields” (cf. NEB); “ropes”; “thorns,” which leads to the most favored interpretation, “hooks” (cf. NASB “meat hooks”; NIV, NRSV “hooks”); “baskets,” and (derived from “baskets”) “boats.” Against the latter, it is unlikely that Amos envisioned a deportation by boat for the inhabitants of Samaria! See also the note on the expression “fishermen’s pots” later in this verse.

every last one of you<sup>4</sup> in fishermen's pots.<sup>2</sup>  
**4:3** Each of you will go straight through the gaps in the walls;<sup>3</sup> you will be thrown out<sup>4</sup> toward Hermon.<sup>5</sup>  
 The LORD is speaking!

*Israel has an Appointment with God*

**4:4** "Go to Bethel<sup>6</sup> and rebel!<sup>7</sup> At Gilgal<sup>8</sup> rebel some more! Bring your sacrifices in<sup>9</sup> the morning, your tithes on<sup>10</sup> the third day!  
**4:5** Burn a thank offering of bread made with yeast!<sup>11</sup> Make a public display of your voluntary offerings!<sup>12</sup> For you love to do this, you Israelites." The sovereign LORD is speaking!

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Or "your children"; KJV "your posterity."

<sup>2</sup> **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew expression translated "in fishermen's pots" is uncertain. The translation follows that of S. M. Paul (*Amos* [Hermeneia], 128), who discusses the various options (132-33): "thorns," understood by most modern interpreters to mean (by extension) "fishhooks" (cf. NASB, NIV, NRSV); "boats," but as mentioned in the previous note on the word "baskets," a deportation of the Samaritans by boat is geographically unlikely; and "pots," referring to a container used for packing fish (cf. NEB "fish-baskets"). Paul (p. 134) argues that the imagery comes from the ancient fishing industry. When hauled away into exile, the women of Samaria will be like fish packed and transported to market.

**sn** The imagery of catching fish in connection with the captivity of Israel is also found in Jer 16:16 and Hab 1:14.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* "and [through the] breaches you will go out, each straight ahead."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The Hiphil verb form has no object. It may be intransitive (F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* [AB], 425), though many emend it to a Hophal.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** The meaning of this word is unclear. Many understand it as a place name, though such a location is not known. Some (e.g., H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* [Hermeneia], 204) emend to "Hermon" or to similarly written words, such as "the dung heap" (NEB, NJPS), "the garbage dump" (NCV), or "the fortress" (cf. NLT "your fortresses").

<sup>6</sup> **sn** *Bethel* and *Gilgal* were important formal worship centers because of their importance in Israel's history. Here the Lord ironically urges the people to visit these places so they can increase their sin against him. Their formal worship, because it was not accompanied by social justice, only made them more guilty in God's sight by adding hypocrisy to their list of sins. Obviously, theirs was a twisted view of the Lord. They worshiped a god of their own creation in order to satisfy their religious impulses (see 4:5: "For you love to do this"). Note that none of the rituals listed in 4:4-5 have to do with sin.

**map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** The Hebrew word translated "rebel" (also in the following line) could very well refer here to Israel's violations of their covenant with God (see also the term "crimes" in 1:3 [with note] and the phrase "covenant transgressions" in 2:4 [with note]; 3:14).

<sup>8</sup> **sn** See the note on *Bethel* earlier in this verse.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Or "for."

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Or "for."

<sup>11</sup> **sn** For the background of the *thank offering of bread made with yeast*, see Lev 7:13.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* "proclaim voluntary offerings, announce."

**4:6** "But surely I gave<sup>13</sup> you no food to eat in any of your cities; you lacked food everywhere you live.<sup>14</sup> Still you did not come back to me." The LORD is speaking!

**4:7** "I withheld rain from you three months before the harvest.<sup>15</sup> I gave rain to one city, but not to another. One field<sup>16</sup> would get rain, but the field that received no rain dried up.  
**4:8** People from<sup>17</sup> two or three cities staggered into one city to get<sup>18</sup> water, but remained thirsty.<sup>19</sup> Still you did not come back to me." The LORD is speaking!

**4:9** "I destroyed your crops<sup>20</sup> with blight and disease. Locusts kept<sup>21</sup> devouring your orchards,<sup>22</sup> vineyards, fig trees, and olive trees. Still you did not come back to me." The LORD is speaking!

**4:10** "I sent against you a plague like one of the Egyptian plagues.<sup>23</sup> I killed your young men with the sword, along with the horses you had captured. I made the stench from the corpses<sup>24</sup> rise up into your nostrils. Still you did not come back to me." The LORD is speaking!

**4:11** "I overthrew some of you the way God<sup>25</sup> overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The Hebrew construction is emphatic (pronoun + verb). It underscores the stark contrast between the judgments that the Lord had been sending with the God of blessing Israel was celebrating in its worship (4:4-5).

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* "But I gave to you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of food in all your places." The phrase "cleanness of teeth" is a vivid way of picturing the famine Israel experienced.

<sup>15</sup> **sn** *Rain...three months before the harvest* refers to the rains of late March-early April.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* "portion"; KJV, ASV "piece"; NASB "part." The same word occurs a second time later in this verse.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** The words "people from" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* "to drink."

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Or "were not satisfied."

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* "you." By metonymy the crops belonging to these people are meant. See the remainder of this verse, which describes the agricultural devastation caused by locusts.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** The Hiphil infinitive construct is taken adverbially ("kept") and connected to the activity of the locusts (NJPS). It also could be taken with the preceding sentence and related to the Lord's interventions ("I kept destroying," cf. NEB, NJB, NIV, NRSV), or it could be understood substantively in construct with the following nouns ("Locusts devoured your many orchards," cf. NASB; cf. also KJV, NKJV).

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Or "gardens."

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* "in the manner [or "way"] of Egypt."

<sup>24</sup> **tn** *Heb* "of your camps [or "armies"]."

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Several English versions substitute the first person pronoun ("I") here for stylistic reasons (e.g., NIV, NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

<sup>26</sup> **tn** *Heb* "like God's overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah."



You were like a burning stick<sup>4</sup> snatched from the flames.  
Still you did not come back to me.”  
The LORD is speaking!

**4:12** “Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel.

Because I will do this to you,  
prepare to meet your God, Israel!<sup>2</sup>

**4:13** For here he is!

He<sup>3</sup> formed the mountains and created the wind.

He reveals<sup>4</sup> his plans<sup>5</sup> to men.

He turns the dawn into darkness<sup>6</sup>  
and marches on the heights of the earth.

The LORD, the God who commands armies,<sup>7</sup> is his name!”

### *Death is Imminent*

**5:1** Listen to this funeral song I am ready to sing about you,<sup>8</sup> family<sup>9</sup> of Israel:

**5:2** “The virgin<sup>10</sup> Israel has fallen down and will not get up again.  
She is abandoned on her own land with no one to help her get up.”<sup>11</sup>

**5:3** The sovereign LORD says this:

“The city that marches out with a thousand soldiers<sup>12</sup> will have only a hundred left;

the town<sup>13</sup> that marches out with a hundred soldiers<sup>14</sup> will have only ten left for the family of Israel.”<sup>15</sup>

**5:4** The LORD says this to the family<sup>16</sup> of Israel:

“Seek me<sup>17</sup> so you can live!

**5:5** Do not seek Bethel!<sup>18</sup>

Do not visit Gilgal!

Do not journey down<sup>19</sup> to Beer Sheba!

For the people of Gilgal<sup>20</sup> will certainly be carried into exile;<sup>21</sup>

The divine name may be used in an idiomatic superlative sense here, in which case one might translate, “like the great [or “disastrous”] overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

**sn** The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is described in Gen 19:1-29.

**1 tn** *Heb* “like that which is burning.”

**2 tn** The LORD appears to announce a culminating judgment resulting from Israel’s obstinate refusal to repent. The following verse describes the LORD in his role as sovereign judge, but it does not outline the judgment per se. For this reason F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman (*Amos* [AB], 450) take the prefixed verbal forms as preterites referring to the series of judgments detailed in vv. 6-11. It is more likely that a coming judgment is in view, but that its details are omitted for rhetorical effect, creating a degree of suspense (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 149-50) that will find its solution in chapter 5. This line is an ironic conclusion to the section begun at 4:4. Israel thought they were meeting the LORD at the sanctuaries, yet they actually had misunderstood how he had been trying to bring them back to himself. Now Israel would truly meet the LORD – not at the sanctuaries, but face-to-face in judgment.

**3 tn** *Heb* “For look, the one who.” This verse is considered to be the first hymnic passage in the book. The others appear at 5:8-9 and 9:5-6. Scholars debate whether these verses were originally part of a single hymn or three distinct pieces deliberately placed in each context for particular effect.

**4 tn** Or “declares” (NAB, NASB).

**5 tn** Or “his thoughts.” The translation assumes that the pronominal suffix refers to God and that divine self-revelation is in view (see 3:7). If the suffix refers to the following term אָדָם (*adam*, “men”), then the expression refers to God’s ability to read men’s minds.

**6 tn** *Heb* “he who makes dawn, darkness.” The meaning of the statement is unclear. The present translation assumes that allusion is made to God’s approaching judgment, when the light of day will be turned to darkness (see 5:20). Other options include: (1) “He makes the dawn [and] the darkness.” A few Hebrew mss, as well as the LXX, add the conjunction (“and”) between the two nouns. (2) “He turns darkness into glimmering dawn” (NJPS). See S. M. Paul (*Amos* [Hermeneia], 154), who takes שָׁחָר (*shakhar*) as “blackness” rather than “dawn” and עֵיפָה (*efah*) as “glimmering dawn” rather than “darkness.”

**7 tn** Traditionally, “God of hosts.”

**8 tn** *Heb* “Listen to this word which I am about to take up against you, a funeral song.”

**9 tn** *Heb* “house.”

**10 tn** Or “young lady.” The term “Israel” is an appositional genitive.

**11 tn** Or “with no one to lift her up.”

**12 tn** The word “soldiers” is supplied in the translation for clarification.

**13 tn** *Heb* “The one.” The word “town” has been used in the translation in keeping with the relative sizes of the armed contingents sent out by each. It is also possible that this line is speaking of the same city of the previous line. In other words, the contingent sent by that one city would have suffered a ninety-nine percent casualty loss.

**14 tn** The word “soldiers” is supplied in the translation for clarification.

**15 tn** *Heb* “for/to the house of Israel.” The translation assumes that this is a graphic picture of what is left over for the defense of the nation (NEB, NJB, NASB, NKJV). Others suggest that this phrase completes the introductory formula (“The sovereign LORD says this...”; see v. 4a; NJPS). Another option is that the preposition has a vocative force, “O house of Israel” (F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* [AB], 476). Some simply delete the phrase as dittography from the following line (NIV).

**16 tn** *Heb* “house.”

**17 sn** The following verses explain what it meant to seek the LORD. Israel was to abandon the mere formalism and distorted view of God and reality that characterized religious activity at the worship sites, as well as the social injustice that permeated Israelite society. Instead the people were to repent and promote justice in the land. This call to seek the LORD echoes the challenge in 4:13 to prepare to meet him as he truly is.

**18 sn** Ironically, Israel was to seek after the Lord, but not at Bethel (the name Bethel means “the house of God” in Hebrew).

**map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

**19 tn** *Heb* “cross over.”

**sn** To worship at Beer Sheba, northern worshipers had to journey down (i.e., cross the border) between Israel and Judah. Apparently, the popular religion of Israel for some included pilgrimage to holy sites in the South.

**20 tn** *Heb* “For Gilgal.” By metonymy the place name “Gilgal” is used instead of referring directly to the inhabitants. The words “the people of” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

**21 tn** In the Hebrew text the statement is emphasized by sound play. The name “Gilgal” sounds like the verb גָּלַח (*galah*, “to go into exile”), which occurs here in the infinitival + finite verb construction (גָּלַח יִגְלַח, *galoh yigleh*). The repetition of the “ג” (g) and “ל” (l) sounds draws attention to the announcement and suggests that Gilgal’s destiny is inherent in its very name.

and Bethel will become a place where disaster abounds.<sup>1</sup>

**5:6** Seek the LORD so you can live! Otherwise he will break out<sup>2</sup> like fire against Joseph's<sup>3</sup> family,<sup>4</sup> the fire<sup>5</sup> will consume and no one will be able to quench it and save Bethel.<sup>6</sup>

**5:7** The Israelites<sup>7</sup> turn justice into bitterness,<sup>8</sup> they throw what is fair and right<sup>9</sup> to the ground.<sup>10</sup>

**5:8** (But there is one who made the constellations Pleiades and Orion; he can turn the darkness into morning and daylight<sup>11</sup> into night.

He summons the water of the seas and pours it out on the earth's surface. The LORD is his name!

**5:9** He flashes<sup>12</sup> destruction down upon the strong so that destruction overwhelms<sup>13</sup> the fortified places.)

**5:10** The Israelites<sup>14</sup> hate anyone who arbitrates at the city gate,<sup>15</sup>

they despise anyone who speaks honestly.

**5:11** Therefore, because you make the poor pay taxes on their crops<sup>16</sup> and exact a grain tax from them, you will not live in the houses you built with chiseled stone, nor will you drink the wine from the fine<sup>17</sup> vineyards you planted.<sup>18</sup>

**5:12** Certainly<sup>19</sup> I am aware of<sup>20</sup> your many rebellious acts<sup>21</sup> and your numerous sins.

You<sup>22</sup> torment the innocent, you take bribes, and you deny justice to<sup>23</sup> the needy at the city gate.<sup>24</sup>

**5:13** For this reason whoever is smart<sup>25</sup> keeps quiet<sup>26</sup> in such a time, for it is an evil<sup>27</sup> time.

**5:14** Seek good and not evil so you can live!

Then the LORD, the God who commands armies, just might be with you, as you claim he is.

**sn** That the people of *Gilgal* would be taken into exile is ironic, for *Gilgal* was Israel's first campsite when the people entered the land under Joshua and the city became a symbol of Israel's possession of the promised land.

**1** **tn** Heb "disaster," or "nothing"; NIV "Bethel will be reduced to nothing."

**sn** Again there is irony. The name *Bethel* means "house of God" in Hebrew. How surprising and tragic that Bethel, the "house of God" where Jacob received the inheritance given to Abraham, would be overrun by *disaster*.

**2** **tn** Heb "rush." The verb depicts swift movement.

**3** **sn** Here Joseph (= Ephraim and Manasseh), as the most prominent of the Israelite tribes, represents the entire northern kingdom.

**4** **tn** Heb "house."

**5** **tn** Heb "it"; the referent (the fire mentioned in the previous line) has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

**6** **tn** Heb "to/for Bethel." The translation assumes that the preposition indicates advantage, "on behalf of." Another option is to take the preposition as vocative, "O Bethel."

**7** **tn** Heb "Those who"; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity. In light of vv. 11-13, it is also possible that the words are directed at a more limited group within the nation – those with social and economic power.

**8** **tn** There is an interesting wordplay here with the verb הִפְךָ (*hafakh*, "overturn, turn"). Israel "turns" justice into wormwood (cf. 6:12), while the LORD "turns" darkness into morning (v. 8; cf. 4:11; 8:10). Israel's turning is for evil, whereas the LORD's is to demonstrate his absolute power and sovereignty.

**9** **tn** Heb "they throw righteousness."

**10** **sn** In v. 7 the prophet begins to describe the guilty Israelites, but then interrupts his word picture with a parenthetical, but powerful, description of the judge they must face (vv. 8-9). He resumes his description of the sinners in v. 10.

**11** **tn** Heb "darkens the day into night."

**12** **tn** The precise meaning of the Hebrew verb בָּלַג (*balag*, translated here "flashes") is uncertain.

**13** **tn** Heb "comes upon." Many prefer to repoint the verb as *Hiphil* and translate, "he brings destruction upon the fortified places."

**14** **tn** Heb "they"; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

**15** **sn** In ancient Israelite culture, legal disputes were re-

solved in the *city gate*, where the town elders met.

**16** **tn** Traditionally, "because you trample on the poor" (cf. KJV, ASV, NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT). The traditional view derives the verb from בָּטַח (*bis*, "to trample"; cf. Isa. 14:25), but more likely it is cognate to an Akkadian verb meaning "to exact an agricultural tax" (see H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena* [SBLDS], 49; S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 172-73).

**17** **tn** Or "lovely"; KJV, NASB, NRSV "pleasant"; NAB "choice"; NIV "lush."

**18** **tn** Heb "Houses of chiseled stone you built, but you will not live in them. Fine vineyards you planted, but you will not drink their wine."

**19** **tn** Or "for."

**20** **tn** Or "I know" (so most English versions).

**21** **tn** Or "transgressions," "sins." See the note on the word "crimes" in 1:3 and on the phrase "covenant violations" in 2:4.

**22** **tn** Heb "Those who."

**23** **tn** Heb "turn aside." They "turn aside" the needy by denying them the justice they deserve at the city gate (where legal decisions were made, and therefore where justice should be done).

**24** **sn** Legal disputes were resolved in the *city gate*, where the town elders met.

**25** **tn** Or "the wise"; or "the prudent." Another option is to translate "the successful, prosperous" and understand this as a reference to the rich oppressors. See G. V. Smith, *Amos*, 169-70. In this case the following verb will also have a different nuance, that is, the wealthy remain silent before the abuses they perpetuate. See the note on the verb translated "keeps quiet" later in this verse.

**26** **tn** Or "moans, laments," from a homonymic verbal root. If the rich oppressors are in view, then the verb (whether translated "will be silenced" or "will lament") describes the result of God's judgment upon them. See G. V. Smith, *Amos*, 170.

**27** **tn** If this is a judgment announcement against the rich, then the Hebrew phrase אֵת רֵיחַהּ (*'et ra'ah*) must be translated, "[a] disastrous time." See G. V. Smith, *Amos*, 170.

5:15 Hate what is wrong, love what is right!

Promote<sup>1</sup> justice at the city gate!<sup>2</sup> Maybe the LORD, the God who commands armies, will have mercy on<sup>3</sup> those who are left from<sup>4</sup> Joseph.<sup>5</sup>

5:16 Because of Israel's sins<sup>6</sup> this is what the LORD, the God who commands armies, the sovereign One,<sup>7</sup> says: "In all the squares there will be wailing, in all the streets they will mourn the dead."<sup>8</sup>

They will tell the field workers<sup>9</sup> to lament and the professional mourners<sup>10</sup> to wail.

5:17 In all the vineyards there will be wailing, for I will pass through<sup>11</sup> your midst," says the LORD.

### The Lord Demands Justice

5:18 Woe<sup>12</sup> to those who wish for the day of the LORD!

Why do you want the LORD's day of judgment to come?

It will bring darkness, not light.

5:19 Disaster will be inescapable,<sup>13</sup>

as if a man ran from a lion only to meet a bear, then escaped<sup>14</sup> into a house, leaned his hand against the wall,

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb "set up, establish." In the ancient Near East it was the responsibility especially of the king to establish justice. Here the prophet extends that demand to local leaders and to the nation as a whole (cf. 5:24).

<sup>2</sup> **sn** Legal disputes were resolved in the *city gate* (see the note in v. 12). This repetition of this phrase serves to highlight a deliberate contrast to the injustices cited in vv. 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Or "will show favor to."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Or "the remnant of" (KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); CEV "what's left of your people."

<sup>5</sup> **sn** Joseph (= Ephraim and Manasseh), as the most prominent of the Israelite tribes, represents the entire northern kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Heb "Therefore." This logical connector relates back to the accusation of vv. 10-13, not to the parenthetical call to repentance in vv. 14-15. To indicate this clearly, the phrase "Because of Israel's sins" is used in the translation.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Or "the Lord." The Hebrew term translated "sovereign One" here is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Heb "they will say, 'Ah! Ah!'" The Hebrew term הוֹי (*ho*, "ah, woe") is an alternate form of הוֹי (*hoy*), a word used to mourn the dead and express outwardly one's sorrow. See 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5. This wordplay follows quickly, as v. 18 begins with הוֹי ("woe").

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Or "farmers" (NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb "those who know lamentation."

<sup>11</sup> **sn** Professional mourners are referred to elsewhere in the OT (2 Chr 35:25; Jer 9:17) and ancient Near Eastern literature. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 180.

<sup>12</sup> **sn** The expression *pass through your midst* alludes to Exod 12:12, where the LORD announced he would "pass through" Egypt and bring death to the Egyptian firstborn.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The term הוֹי (*ho*, "woe") was used when mourning the dead (see the note on the word "dead" in 5:16). The prophet here either engages in role playing and mourns the death of the nation in advance or sarcastically taunts those who hold to this misplaced belief.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** The words "Disaster will be inescapable" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Heb "went" (so KJV, NRSV).

and was bitten by a poisonous snake.

5:20 Don't you realize the LORD's day of judgment will bring<sup>15</sup> darkness, not light –

gloomy blackness, not bright light?

5:21 "I absolutely despise<sup>16</sup> your festivals! I get no pleasure<sup>17</sup> from your religious assemblies!

5:22 Even if you offer me burnt and grain offerings,<sup>18</sup> I will not be satisfied; I will not look with favor on your peace offerings of fattened calves.<sup>19</sup>

5:23 Take away from me your<sup>20</sup> noisy songs;

I don't want to hear the music of your stringed instruments.<sup>21</sup>

5:24 Justice must flow like torrents of water, righteous actions<sup>22</sup> like a stream that never dries up.

5:25 You did not bring me<sup>23</sup> sacrifices and grain offerings during the forty years you spent in the wilderness, family<sup>24</sup> of Israel.

5:26 You will pick up your images<sup>25</sup> of Sikkuth,<sup>26</sup> your king,<sup>27</sup>

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Heb "Will not the day of the LORD be."

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Heb "I hate"; "I despise."

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Heb "I will not smell." These verses are full of vivid descriptions of the LORD's total rejection of Israelite worship. In the first half of this verse two verbs are used together for emphasis. Here the verb alludes to the sense of smell, a fitting observation since offerings would have been burned on the altar ideally to provide a sweet aroma to God (see, e.g., Lev 1:9, 13, 17; Num 29:36). Other senses that are mentioned include sight and hearing in vv. 22-23.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Heb "burnt offerings and your grain offerings."

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Heb "Peace offering[s], your fattened calves, I will not look at."

<sup>20</sup> **tn** In this verse the second person suffixes are singular and not plural like they are in vv. 21-22 and vv. 25-27. Some have suggested that perhaps a specific individual or group within the nation is in view.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** The Hebrew word probably refers to "harps" (NASB, NIV, NRSV) or "lutes" (NEB).

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Traditionally, "righteousness."

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Heb "Did you bring me...?" This rhetorical question expects a negative answer. The point seems to be this: Since sacrifices did not characterize God's relationship with Israel during the nation's formative years, the people should not consider them to be so fundamental. The LORD places a higher priority on justice than he does on empty ritual.

<sup>24</sup> **sn** Like Jer 7:22-23, this passage seems to contradict the Pentateuchal accounts that indicate Israel did offer sacrifices during the wilderness period. It is likely that both Amos and Jeremiah overstate the case to emphasize the relative insignificance of sacrifices in comparison to weightier matters of the covenant. See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 428.

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Heb "house."

<sup>26</sup> **tn** This word appears in an awkward position in the Hebrew, following "Kiyyun." It is placed here for better sense.

<sup>27</sup> **tn** The Hebrew term סִכְּוֹת (*sikkut*) apparently refers to Sakkuth, a Mesopotamian star god identified with Ninurta in an Ugaritic god list. The name is vocalized in the Hebrew text after the pattern of שִׁיֻּקֹּת (*shiqqut*, "detestable thing"). See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 195-96. Some English versions, following the LXX, translate as "tent" or "shrine" (NEB, NIV), pointing the term as סִכְּוֹת (*sukkat*; cf. 9:11).

<sup>27</sup> **tc** LXX, Vulgate, and Acts 7:43 read "Moloch" (cf. KJV). The Hebrew consonants are the same for both "king" and "Moloch" (מֹלֶכְךָ; *molekh*).

and Kiyyun,<sup>1</sup> your star god, which you made for yourselves,  
**5:27** and I will drive you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD.  
 He is called the God who commands armies!

*The Party is over for the Rich*

**6:1** Woe<sup>2</sup> to those who live in ease in Zion,<sup>3</sup>  
 to those who feel secure on Mount Samaria.  
 They think of themselves as<sup>4</sup> the elite class of the best nation.  
 The family<sup>5</sup> of Israel looks to them for leadership.<sup>6</sup>  
**6:2** They say to the people:<sup>7</sup>  
 “Journey over to Calneh and look at it! Then go from there to Hamath-Rabbah!<sup>8</sup> Then go down to Gath of the Philistines! Are they superior to our two<sup>9</sup> kingdoms? Is their territory larger than yours?”<sup>10</sup>  
**6:3** You refuse to believe a day of disaster will come.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** The Hebrew term כִּיּוּן (*kīyyun*) apparently refers to the Mesopotamian god Kayamanu, or Saturn. The name, like “Sikkuth” in the previous line, is vocalized in the Hebrew text after the pattern of שִׁקְיָוִט (*shiqyūts*, “detestable thing”). See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 195-96. Some versions translate as “pedestal” (NEB, NIV), relating the term to the root כּוּן (*kun*).

<sup>2</sup> **tn** On the Hebrew term הוֵי (*hoy*; “ah, woe”) as a term of mourning, see the notes in 5:16, 18.

<sup>3</sup> **sn** Zion is a reference to Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The words “They think of themselves as” are supplied in the translation for clarification. In the Hebrew text the term נִבְיָיִם (*nīqveyy*; “distinguished ones, elite”) is in apposition to the substantival participles in the first line.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Heb “house.”

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Heb “comes to them.”

<sup>7</sup> **tn** The words “They say to the people” are interpretive and supplied in the translation for clarification. The translation understands v. 2 as the boastful words, which the leaders (described in v. 1) spoke to those who came to them (v. 1b). Some interpret v. 2 differently, understanding the words as directed to the leaders by the prophet. Verse 2b would then be translated: “Are you (i.e., Israel and Judah) better than these kingdoms (i.e., Calneh, etc.)? Is your border larger than their border?” (This reading requires an emendation of the Hebrew text toward the end of the verse.) In this case the verse is a reminder to Judah/Israel that they are *not* superior to other nations, which have already fallen victim to military conquest. Consequently Judah/Israel should not expect to escape the same fate. Following this line of interpretation, some take v. 2 as a later addition since the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser III conquered Calneh, Hamath, and Gath after the time of Amos’ ministry. However, this conclusion is not necessary since the kingdoms mentioned here had suffered military setbacks prior to Amos’ time as well. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 201-4.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Or “Great Hamath” (cf. NIV); or “Hamath the great” (cf. KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV); the word “rabbah” means “great” in Hebrew.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Heb “to these,” referring to Judah and Israel (see v. 1a).

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Both rhetorical questions in this verse expect the answer “no.” If these words do come from the leaders, then this verse underscores their self-delusion of power (compare 6:13). The prophet had no such mistaken sense of national grandeur (7:2, 5).

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Heb “those who push away a day of disaster.”

but you establish a reign of violence.<sup>12</sup>  
**6:4** They lie around on beds decorated with ivory,<sup>13</sup>  
 and sprawl out on their couches.  
 They eat lambs from the flock,  
 and calves from the middle of the pen.  
**6:5** They sing<sup>14</sup> to the tune of<sup>15</sup> strunged instruments,<sup>16</sup>  
 like David they invent<sup>17</sup> musical instruments.  
**6:6** They drink wine from sacrificial bowls,<sup>18</sup>  
 and pour the very best oils on themselves.<sup>19</sup>  
 Yet they are not concerned over<sup>20</sup> the ruin<sup>21</sup> of Joseph.  
**6:7** Therefore they will now be the first to go into exile,<sup>22</sup>  
 and the religious banquets<sup>23</sup> where they sprawl on couches<sup>24</sup> will end.  
**6:8** The sovereign LORD confirms this oath by his very own life.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Heb “you bring near a seat of violence.” The precise meaning of the Hebrew term שֵׁבֶת (*shevet*, “seat, sitting”) is unclear in this context. The translation assumes that it refers to a throne from which violence (in the person of the oppressive leaders) reigns. Another option is that the expression refers not to the leaders’ oppressive rule, but to the coming judgment when violence will overtake the nation in the person of enemy invaders.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Heb “beds of ivory.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew verb פָּרַט (*parat*), which occurs only here in the OT, is unclear. Some translate “strum,” “pluck,” or “improvise.”

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Heb “upon the mouth of,” that is, “according to.”

<sup>16</sup> **sn** The strunged instruments mentioned here are probably harps (cf. NIV, NRSV) or lutes (cf. NEB).

<sup>17</sup> **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew phrase הִשְׁבּוּ לָהֶם (*khoshvu lahem*) is uncertain. Various options include: (1) “they think their musical instruments are like David’s”; (2) “they consider themselves musicians like David”; (3) “they esteem musical instruments highly like David”; (4) “they improvise [new songs] for themselves [on] instruments like David”; (5) “they invent musical instruments like David.” However, the most commonly accepted interpretation is that given in the translation (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 206-7).

<sup>18</sup> **sn** Perhaps some religious rite is in view, or the size of the bowls is emphasized (i.e., bowls as large as sacrificial bowls).

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Heb “with the best of oils they anoint [themselves].”

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Or “not sickened by.”

<sup>21</sup> **sn** The ruin of Joseph may refer to the societal disintegration in Israel, or to the effects of the impending judgment.

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Heb “they will go into exile at the head of the exiles.”

<sup>23</sup> **sn** Religious banquets. This refers to the מִרְזֵאֵחַ (*marzeakh*), a type of pagan religious banquet popular among the upper class of Israel at this time and apparently associated with mourning. See P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 137-61; J. L. McLaughlin, *The “Marzeah” in the Prophetic Literature* (VTSup). Scholars debate whether at this banquet the dead were simply remembered or actually venerated in a formal, cultic sense.

<sup>24</sup> **tn** Heb “of the sprawled out.” See v. 4.

<sup>25</sup> **tn** Heb “swears by his life”; or “swears by himself.”

The LORD, the God who commands armies, is speaking:  
 "I despise Jacob's arrogance;  
 I hate their<sup>4</sup> fortresses.  
 I will hand over to their enemies<sup>2</sup> the city of Samaria<sup>3</sup> and everything in it."

**6:9** If ten men are left in one house, they too will die. **6:10** When their close relatives, the ones who will burn the corpses,<sup>4</sup> pick up their bodies to remove the bones from the house, they will say to anyone who is in the inner rooms of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" He will respond, "Be quiet! Don't invoke the LORD's name!"<sup>5</sup>

**6:11** Indeed, look! The LORD is giving the command.<sup>6</sup>

He will smash the large house to bits, and the small house into little pieces.

**6:12** Can horses run on rocky cliffs?  
 Can one plow the sea with oxen?<sup>7</sup>  
 Yet you have turned justice into a poisonous plant,  
 and the fruit of righteous actions into a bitter plant.<sup>8</sup>

**6:13** You are happy because you conquered Lo-Debar.<sup>9</sup>  
 You say, "Did we not conquer Karnaim<sup>10</sup> by our own power?"

**6:14** "Look! I am about to bring<sup>11</sup> a nation against you, family<sup>12</sup> of Israel."  
 The LORD, the God who commands armies, is speaking.  
 "They will oppress<sup>13</sup> you all the way from Lebo Hamath<sup>14</sup> to the Stream of the Arabah."<sup>15</sup>

### *Symbolic Visions of Judgment*

**7:1** The sovereign LORD showed me this: I saw<sup>16</sup> him making locusts just as the crops planted late<sup>17</sup> were beginning to sprout. (The crops planted late sprout after the royal harvest.<sup>18</sup>) **7:2** When they had completely consumed the earth's vegetation, I said,

"Sovereign LORD, forgive Israel!<sup>19</sup>  
 How can Jacob survive?<sup>20</sup>  
 He is too weak!"<sup>21</sup>

**7:3** The LORD decided not to do this.<sup>22</sup> "It will not happen," the LORD said.

**7:4** The sovereign LORD showed me this: I saw<sup>23</sup> the sovereign LORD summoning a shower

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Heb "his," referring to Jacob, which stands here for the nation of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** The words "to their enemies" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Heb "the city"; this probably refers to the city of Samaria (cf. 6:1), which in turn, by metonymy, represents the entire northern kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The translation assumes that "their relatives" and "the ones who will burn the corpses" are in apposition. Another option is to take them as distinct individuals, in which case one could translate, "When their close relatives and the ones who will burn the corpses pick up..." The meaning of the form translated "the ones who burn the corpses" is uncertain. Another option is to translate, "the ones who prepare the corpses for burial" (NASB "undertaker"; cf. also CEV). See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 215-16.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** This verse is notoriously difficult to interpret. The Hebrew text literally reads, "And he will lift him up, his uncle, and the one burning him, to bring out bones from the house. And he will say to the one who is in the inner parts of the house, 'Is there [anyone] still with you?' And he will say, 'Be quiet for not to invoke the name of the LORD.'" The translation assumes that the singular pronominal and verbal forms throughout the verse are collective or distributive. This last sentence has been interpreted in several ways: a command not to call on the name of the LORD out of fear that he might return again in judgment; the realization that it is not appropriate to seek a blessing in the LORD's name upon the dead in the house since the judgment was deserved; an angry refusal to call on the LORD out of a sense that he has betrayed his people in allowing them to suffer.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or "is issuing the decree."

<sup>7</sup> **tc** Heb "Does one plow with oxen?" This obviously does not fit the parallelism, for the preceding rhetorical question requires the answer, "Of course not!" An error of fusion has occurred in the Hebrew, with the word יָם (*yam*, "sea") being accidentally added as a plural ending to the collective noun בָּקָר (*baqar*, "oxen"). A proper division of the consonants produces the above translation, which fits the parallelism and also anticipates the answer, "Of course not!"

<sup>8</sup> **sn** The botanical imagery, when juxtaposed with the preceding rhetorical questions, vividly depicts and emphasizes how the Israelites have perverted justice and violated the created order by their morally irrational behavior.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Heb "those who rejoice over Lo-Debar."

**sn** Lo-Debar was located across the Jordan River in Gilead, which the Israelite army had conquered. However, there is stinging irony here, for in Hebrew the name Lo-Debar means "nothing." In reality Israel was happy over nothing of lasting consequence.

<sup>10</sup> **sn** Karnaim was also located across the Jordan River. The name in Hebrew means "double horned." Since an animal's horn was a symbol of strength (see Deut 33:17), the Israelites boasted in this victory over a town whose very name symbolized military power.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Or "raise up" (KJV, NASB); NIV "stir up."

<sup>12</sup> **tn** Heb "house."

<sup>13</sup> **sn** Once again there is irony in the divine judgment. The oppressive nation itself will suffer oppression. The verb "oppress" (לָחַץ, *lakhats*) in this verse is not the same as that used in 4:1 (אָשַׁק, *ashaq*).

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Or "from the entrance to Hamath." The Hebrew term לְבוֹאֵי (לְבוֹאֵי) can either be translated or considered a part of the place name.

<sup>15</sup> **sn** Lebo Hamath refers to the northern border of Israel, the Stream of the Arabah to its southern border. See 2 Kgs 14:25. Through this invader the Lord would reverse the victories and territorial expansion Israel experienced during the reign of Jeroboam II.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** Heb "behold" or "look."

<sup>17</sup> **sn** The crops planted late (consisting of vegetables) were planted in late January-early March and sprouted in conjunction with the spring rains of March-April. For a discussion of the ancient Israelite agricultural calendar, see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 31-44.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Or "the mowings of the king."

**sn** This royal harvest may refer to an initial mowing of crops collected as taxes by the royal authorities.

<sup>19</sup> **tn** "Israel" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb "stand" (so ASV, NAB, NASB, NRSV).

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Heb "small."

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Or "changed his mind about this."

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Heb "behold" or "look."

of fire.<sup>1</sup> It consumed the great deep and devoured the fields.

7:5 I said, “Sovereign LORD, stop!  
How can Jacob survive?<sup>2</sup>  
He is too weak!”<sup>3</sup>

7:6 The LORD decided not to do this.<sup>4</sup> The  
sovereign LORD said, “This will not  
happen either.”

7:7 He showed me this: I saw<sup>5</sup> the sovereign  
One<sup>6</sup> standing by a tin<sup>7</sup> wall holding tin in his  
hand. 7:8 The LORD said to me, “What do you see,  
Amos?” I said, “Tin.” The sovereign One then  
said,

“Look, I am about to place tin among my  
people Israel.  
I will no longer overlook their sin.<sup>8</sup>  
7:9 Isaac’s centers of worship<sup>9</sup> will be-  
come desolate;  
Israel’s holy places will be in ruins.  
I will attack Jeroboam’s dynasty with the  
sword.”<sup>10</sup>

*Amos Confronts a Priest*

7:10 Amaziah the priest of Bethel<sup>11</sup> sent this  
message<sup>12</sup> to King Jeroboam of Israel: “Amos  
is conspiring against you in the very heart of the  
kingdom of Israel!<sup>13</sup> The land cannot endure all  
his prophecies.<sup>14</sup> 7:11 As a matter of fact,<sup>15</sup> Amos  
is saying this: ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and  
Israel will certainly be carried into exile<sup>16</sup> away  
from its land.’”

7:12 Amaziah then said to Amos, “Leave,  
you visionary!<sup>17</sup> Run away to the land of Judah!  
Earn your living<sup>18</sup> and prophesy there! 7:13 Don’t  
prophesy at Bethel<sup>19</sup> any longer, for a royal temple  
and palace are here!”<sup>20</sup>

7:14 Amos replied<sup>21</sup> to Amaziah, “I was not  
a prophet by profession.<sup>22</sup> No,<sup>23</sup> I was a herds-  
man who also took care of<sup>24</sup> sycamore fig  
trees.<sup>25</sup> 7:15 Then the LORD took me from tend-  
ing<sup>26</sup> flocks and gave me this commission,<sup>27</sup> ‘Go!  
Prophesy to my people Israel!’ 7:16 So now lis-  
ten to the LORD’s message! You say, ‘Don’t

<sup>1</sup> **tc** The Hebrew appears to read, “summoning to contend with fire,” or “summoning fire to contend,” but both are problematic syntactically (H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* [Hermeneia], 292; S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 230-31). Many emend the text to לִרְבֵּב אֵשׁ, “(calling) for a shower of fire,” though this interpretation is also problematic (see F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* [AB], 746-47).

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Heb “stand.”

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Heb “small.”

<sup>4</sup> **tn** Or “changed his mind about this.”

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Heb “behold” or “look.”

<sup>6</sup> **tn** Or “the Lord.” The Hebrew term translated “sovereign One” here and in the following verse is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

<sup>7</sup> **tn** The Hebrew word תֵּן (*anakh*, “tin”) occurs only in this passage (twice in this verse and twice in the following verse). (Its proposed meaning is based on an Akkadian cognate *an-naku*.) The tin wall of the vision, if it symbolizes Israel, may suggest weakness and vulnerability to judgment. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 233-35. The symbolic significance of God holding tin in his hand and then placing tin among the people is unclear. Possibly the term תֵּן in v. 8b is a homonym meaning “grief” (this term is attested in postbiblical Hebrew). In this case there is a wordplay, the תֵּן (“tin”) of the vision suggesting the תֵּן (“grief”) that judgment will bring upon the land. See F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB), 759. Another option is to maintain the meaning “tin” and understand that the LORD has ripped off a piece of the tin wall and placed it in front of all to see. Their citadels, of which the nation was so proud and confident, are nothing more than tin fortresses. The traditional interpretation of these verses (reflected in many English versions) understands the term תֵּן to mean “lead,” and by extension, “plumb line.” In this case, one may translate: “I saw the sovereign one standing by a wall built true to plumb holding a plumb line in his hand. The LORD said to me, ‘What do you see, Amos?’ I said, ‘A plumb line.’ The sovereign one then said, ‘Look, I am about to place a plumb line among my people...’” According to this view, the plumb line symbolizes God’s moral standards by which he will measure Israel to see if they are a straight or crooked wall.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** Heb “And I will no longer pass over him.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** Traditionally, “the high places” (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); NLT “pagan shrines.”

<sup>10</sup> **tn** Heb “And I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with a sword.”

<sup>11</sup> **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The direct object of the verb translated “sent” is elided in the Hebrew text. The words “this message” are supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** Heb “in the middle of the house of Israel.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Heb “words.”

<sup>15</sup> **tn** Or “for.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** See the note on the word “exile” in 5:5.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Traditionally, “seer.” The word is a synonym for “prophet,” though it may carry a derogatory tone on the lips of Amaziah.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Heb “Eat bread there.”

<sup>19</sup> **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Heb “for it is a temple of a king and it is a royal house.” It is possible that the phrase “royal house” refers to a temple rather than a palace. See S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia), 243.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** Heb “replied and said.” The phrase “and said” is pleonastic (redundant) and has not been included in the translation.

<sup>22</sup> **tn** Heb “I was not a prophet nor was I the son of a prophet.” The phrase “son of a prophet” refers to one who was trained in a prophetic guild. Since there is no equative verb present in the Hebrew text, another option is to translate with the present tense, “I am not a prophet by profession.” In this case Amos, though now carrying out a prophetic ministry (v. 15), denies any official or professional prophetic status. Modern English versions are divided about whether to understand the past (JB, NIV, NKJV) or present tense (NASB, NEB, NRSV, NJPS) here.

<sup>23</sup> **tn** Heb “for.”

<sup>24</sup> **tn** Heb “gashed”; or “pierced.”

**sn** For a discussion of the agricultural background, see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 128-29.

<sup>25</sup> **sn** It is possible that *herdsmen* agreed to care for *sycamore fig trees* in exchange for grazing rights. See P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 116-17. Since these trees do not grow around Tekoa but rather in the lowlands, another option is that Amos owned other property outside his hometown. In this case, this verse demonstrates his relative wealth and is his response to Amaziah; he did not depend on prophecy as a profession (v. 13).

<sup>26</sup> **tn** Heb “from [following] after.”

<sup>27</sup> **tn** Heb “and the LORD said to me.”

prophesy against Israel! Don't preach<sup>1</sup> against the family of Isaac!

7:17 "Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets<sup>2</sup> and your sons and daughters will die violently.'<sup>3</sup>

Your land will be given to others<sup>4</sup> and you will die in a foreign<sup>5</sup> land. Israel will certainly be carried into exile<sup>6</sup> away from its land."

*More Visions and Messages of Judgment*

8:1 The sovereign LORD showed me this: I saw<sup>7</sup> a basket of summer fruit.<sup>8</sup>

8:2 He said, "What do you see, Amos?" I replied, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end<sup>9</sup> has come for my people Israel! I will no longer overlook their sins.<sup>10</sup>

8:3 The women singing in the temple<sup>11</sup> will wail in that day."

The sovereign LORD is speaking. "There will be many corpses littered everywhere!<sup>12</sup> Be quiet!"

8:4 Listen to this, you who trample<sup>13</sup> the needy, and do away with<sup>14</sup> the destitute in the land.

8:5 You say, "When will the new moon festival<sup>15</sup> be over,<sup>16</sup> so we can sell grain? When will the Sabbath end,<sup>17</sup> so we can

open up the grain bins?<sup>18</sup> We're eager<sup>19</sup> to sell less for a higher price,<sup>20</sup> and to cheat the buyer with rigged scales!<sup>21</sup>

8:6 We're eager to trade silver for the poor,<sup>22</sup> a pair of sandals<sup>23</sup> for the needy! We want to mix in some chaff with the grain!"<sup>24</sup>

8:7 The LORD confirms this oath<sup>25</sup> by the arrogance of Jacob:<sup>26</sup> "I swear<sup>27</sup> I will never forget all you have done!<sup>28</sup>

8:8 Because of this the earth<sup>29</sup> will quake,<sup>30</sup> and all who live in it will mourn. The whole earth<sup>31</sup> will rise like the River Nile,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* "sell grain." Here "grain" could stand by metonymy for the bins where it was stored.

<sup>19</sup> **tn** Here and in v. 6 the words "we're eager" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* "to make small the ephah and to make great the shekel." The "ephah" was a unit of dry measure used to determine the quantity purchased, while the "shekel" was a standard weight used to determine the purchase price. By using a smaller than standard ephah and a heavier than standard shekel, these merchants were able to increase their profit ("sell less for a higher price") by cheating the buyer.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* "and to cheat with deceptive scales"; NASB, NIV "dishonest scales"; NRSV "false balances."

<sup>22</sup> **sn** *Rigged scales* may refer to bending the crossbar or shifting the center point of the scales to make the amount weighed appear heavier than it actually was, thus cheating the buyer.

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* "to buy the poor for silver."

<sup>24</sup> **sn** The expression *trade silver for the poor* refers to the slave trade.

<sup>25</sup> **tn** See the note on the word "sandals" in 2:6.

<sup>26</sup> **tn** *Heb* "The chaff of the grain we will sell."

<sup>27</sup> **tn** Or "swears."

<sup>28</sup> **sn** In an oath one appeals to something permanent to emphasize one's commitment to the promise. Here the LORD sarcastically swears by the *arrogance of Jacob*, which he earlier had condemned (6:8), something just as enduring as the LORD's own life (see 6:8) or unchanging character (see 4:2). Other suggestions include that the LORD is swearing by the land, his most valuable possession (cf. Isa 4:2; Ps 47:4 [47:5 HT]); that this is a divine epithet analogous to "the Glory of Israel" (1 Sam 15:29); or that an ellipsis should be understood here, in which case the meaning is the same as that of 6:8 ("The LORD has sworn [by himself] against the arrogance of Jacob").

<sup>29</sup> **tn** The words "I swear" are not in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation because a self-imprecation is assumed in oaths of this type.

<sup>30</sup> **tn** Or "I will never forget all your deeds."

<sup>31</sup> **tn** Or "land" (also later in this verse).

<sup>32</sup> **tn** It is not clear whether the speaker in this verse is the LORD or the prophet.

<sup>33</sup> **tn** *Heb* "all of it."

<sup>34</sup> **tc** The MT reads "like the light" (כְּאוֹר, *kha'or*; note this term also appears in v. 9), which is commonly understood to be an error for "like the Nile" (כְּיַאֲד, *ki'or*). See the parallel line and Amos 9:5. The word "River" is supplied in the translation for clarity. If this emendation is correct, in the Hebrew of Amos "Nile" is actually spelled three slightly different ways.

<sup>35</sup> **sn** The movement of the quaking earth is here compared to the annual flooding and receding of the *River Nile*.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** The verb, which literally means "to drip," appears to be a synonym of "to prophesy," but it might carry a derogatory tone here, perhaps alluding to the impassioned, frenzied way in which prophets sometimes delivered their messages. If so, one could translate, "to drivel; to foam at the mouth" (see HALOT 694 s.v. רָבַב).

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* "in the city," that is, "in public."

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* "will fall by the sword."

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* "will be divided up with a [surveyor's] measuring line."

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* "[an] unclean"; or "[an] impure." This fate would be especially humiliating for a priest, who was to distinguish between the ritually clean and unclean (see Lev 10:10).

<sup>6</sup> **tn** See the note on the word "exile" in 5:5.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* "behold" or "look."

<sup>8</sup> **sn** The *basket of summer fruit* (also in the following verse) probably refers to figs from the summer crop, which ripens in August-September. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 115.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** There is a wordplay here. The Hebrew word קֵץ (*qets*, "end") sounds like קַיִץ (*qayits*, "summer fruit"). The summer fruit arrived toward the end of Israel's agricultural year; Israel's national existence was similarly at an end.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* "I will no longer pass over him."

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Or "palace" (NASB, NCV, TEV).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* "Many corpses in every place he will throw out." The subject of the verb is probably impersonal, though many emend the active (Hiphil) form to a passive (Hophal): "Many corpses in every place will be thrown out."

<sup>13</sup> **tn** See the note on the word "trample" in 2:7.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Or "put an end to"; or "exterminate."

<sup>15</sup> **sn** Apparently work was prohibited during the *new moon festival*, just as it was on the Sabbath.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* "pass by."

<sup>17</sup> **tn** The verb, though omitted in the Hebrew text, is supplied in the translation from the parallel line.

it will surge upward<sup>1</sup> and then grow calm,<sup>2</sup> like the Nile in Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

**8:9** In that day,” says the sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun set at noon, and make the earth dark in the middle of the day.<sup>4</sup>

**8:10** I will turn your festivals into funerals,<sup>5</sup> and all your songs into funeral dirges.

I will make everyone wear funeral clothes<sup>6</sup> and cause every head to be shaved bald.<sup>7</sup> I will make you mourn as if you had lost your only son;<sup>8</sup>

when it ends it will indeed have been a bitter day.<sup>9</sup>

**8:11** Be certain of this,<sup>10</sup> the time is<sup>11</sup> coming,” says the sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land –

not a shortage of food or water but an end to divine revelation!<sup>12</sup>

**8:12** People<sup>13</sup> will stagger from sea to sea,<sup>14</sup>

and from the north around to the east. They will wander about looking for a revelation from<sup>15</sup> the LORD, but they will not find any.<sup>16</sup>

**8:13** In that day your<sup>17</sup> beautiful young women<sup>18</sup> and your<sup>19</sup> young men will

faint from thirst.<sup>20</sup> **8:14** These are the ones who now take oaths<sup>21</sup> in the name of the sinful idol goddess<sup>22</sup> of Samaria. They vow,<sup>23</sup> ‘As surely as your god<sup>24</sup> lives, O Dan,’ or ‘As surely as your beloved one<sup>25</sup> lives, O Beer Sheba!’ But they will fall down and not get up again.”

**9:1** I saw the sovereign One<sup>26</sup> standing by the altar<sup>27</sup> and he said, “Strike the tops of the support pillars,<sup>28</sup> so the thresh-olds shake!

Knock them down on the heads of all the people,<sup>29</sup>

and I will kill the survivors<sup>30</sup> with the sword.

No one will be able to run away;<sup>31</sup> no one will be able to escape.<sup>32</sup>

**9:2** Even if they could dig down into the netherworld,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>20</sup> **tn** It is not clear whether the speaker in this verse is the LORD or the prophet.

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* “those who swear.”

<sup>22</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the sin [or “guilt”] of Samaria.” This could be a derogatory reference to an idol-goddess popular in the northern kingdom, perhaps Asherah (cf. 2 Chr 24:18, where this worship is labeled “their guilt”), or to the golden calf at the national sanctuary in Bethel (Hos 8:6, 10:8). Some English versions (e.g., NEB, NRSV, CEV) reposit the word and read “Ashimah,” the name of a goddess worshiped in Hamath in Syria (see 2 Kgs 17:30).

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* “say.”

<sup>24</sup> **sn** *Your god* is not identified. It may refer to another patron deity who was not the God of Israel, a local manifestation of the LORD that was worshiped by the people there, or more specifically, the golden calf image erected in Dan by Jeroboam I (see 1 Kgs 12:28-30).

<sup>25</sup> **tc** The MT reads, “As surely as the way [to] Beer Sheba lives,” or “As surely as the way lives, O Beer Sheba.” Perhaps the term דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*, “the way”) refers to the pilgrimage route to Beersheba (see S. M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia], 272) or it may be a title for a god. The notion of pilgrimage appears elsewhere in the book (cf. 4:4-5; 5:4-5; 8:12). The translation above assumes an emendation to דֹּדֶיךָ (*dod'ekh*, “your beloved” or “relative”; the term also is used in 6:10) and understands this as referring either to the LORD (since other kinship terms are used of him, such as “Father”) or to another deity that was particularly popular in Beer Sheba. Besides the commentaries, see S. M. Olyan, “The Oaths of Amos 8:14” *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel*, 121-49.

<sup>26</sup> **tn** Or “the Lord.” The Hebrew term translated “sovereign One” here is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

<sup>27</sup> **sn** The altar is perhaps the altar at Bethel.

<sup>28</sup> **tn** Or “the capitals.” The Hebrew singular form is collective.

<sup>29</sup> **tn** *Heb* “cut them off on the head of all of them.” The translation assumes the objective suffix on the verb refers to the tops of the pillars and that the following prepositional phrase refers to the people standing beneath. Another option is to take this phrase as referring to the pillars, in which case one could translate, “Knock all the tops of the pillars off.”

<sup>30</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the remnant of them.” One could possibly translate, “every last one of them” (cf. NEB “to the last man”). This probably refers to those who survive the collapse of the temple, which may symbolize the northern kingdom.

<sup>31</sup> **tn** *Heb* “a fugitive belonging to them will not run away.”

<sup>32</sup> **tn** *Heb* “a survivor belonging to them will not escape.”

<sup>33</sup> **tn** *Heb* “into Sheol” (so ASV, NASB, NRSV), that is, the land of the dead localized in Hebrew thought in the earth’s core or the grave. Cf. KJV “hell”; NCV, NLT “the place of the dead”; NIV “the depths of the grave.”

<sup>1</sup> **tn** Or “churn.”

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Or “sink back down.” The translation assumes the verb שָׁקַד (*shaqa*), following the Qere.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** The entire verse is phrased in a series of rhetorical questions which anticipate the answer, “Of course!” (For example, the first line reads, “Because of this will the earth not quake?”). The rhetorical questions entrap the listener in the logic of the judgment of God (cf. 3:3-6; 9:7). The rhetorical questions have been converted to affirmative statements in the translation for clarity.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “in a day of light.”

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* “mourning.”

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I will place sackcloth on all waists.”

**sn** Mourners wore sackcloth (*funeral clothes*) as an outward expression of grief.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and make every head bald.” This could be understood in a variety of ways, while the ritual act of mourning typically involved shaving the head (although occasionally the hair could be torn out as a sign of mourning).

**sn** Shaving the head or tearing out one’s hair was a ritual act of mourning. See Lev 21:5; Deut 14:1; Isa 3:24; 15:2; Jer 47:5; 48:37; Ezek 7:18; 27:31; Mic 1:16.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “I will make it like the mourning for an only son.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and its end will be like a bitter day.” The Hebrew preposition כִּי (*kaf*) sometimes carries the force of “in every respect,” indicating identity rather than mere comparison.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* “behold” or “look.”

<sup>11</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the days are.”

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “not a hunger for food or a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the LORD.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “they”; the referent (people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** That is, from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea in the east – that is, across the whole land.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* “looking for the word of.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** It is not clear whether the speaker in this verse is the LORD or the prophet.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the.”

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Or “virgins.”

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the.”



my hand would pull them up from there.  
 Even if they could climb up to heaven,  
 I would drag them down from there.  
**9:3** Even if they were to hide on the top of  
 Mount Carmel,  
 I would hunt them down and take them  
 from there.  
 Even if they tried to hide from me<sup>1</sup> at the  
 bottom of the sea,  
 from there<sup>2</sup> I would command the Sea  
 Serpent<sup>3</sup> to bite them.  
**9:4** Even when their enemies drive them  
 into captivity,<sup>4</sup>  
 from there<sup>5</sup> I will command the sword to  
 kill them.  
 I will not let them out of my sight;  
 they will experience disaster, not prosper-  
 ity.<sup>6</sup>  
**9:5** The sovereign LORD who commands  
 armies will do this.<sup>7</sup>  
 He touches the earth and it dissolves;<sup>8</sup>  
 all who live on it mourn.  
 The whole earth<sup>9</sup> rises like the River  
 Nile,<sup>10</sup>  
 and then grows calm<sup>11</sup> like the Nile in  
 Egypt.<sup>12</sup>  
**9:6** He builds the upper rooms of his pal-  
 ace<sup>13</sup> in heaven

and sets its foundation supports<sup>14</sup> on the  
 earth.<sup>15</sup>  
 He summons the water of the sea  
 and pours it out on the earth's surface.  
 The LORD is his name.

**9:7** "You Israelites are just like the Ethio-  
 pians in my sight,"<sup>16</sup> says the LORD.  
 "Certainly I brought Israel up from the  
 land of Egypt,  
 but I also brought the Philistines from  
 Caphtor<sup>17</sup> and the Arameans from Kir.<sup>18</sup>  
**9:8** Look, the sovereign LORD is watching<sup>19</sup>  
 the sinful nation,<sup>20</sup>  
 and I will destroy it from the face of the  
 earth.  
 But I will not completely destroy the  
 family<sup>21</sup> of Jacob," says the LORD.  
**9:9** "For look, I am giving a command  
 and I will shake the family of Israel to-  
 gether with all the nations.  
 It will resemble a sieve being shaken,  
 when not even a pebble falls to the  
 ground.<sup>22</sup>  
**9:10** All the sinners among my people will  
 die by the sword –  
 the ones who say, 'Disaster will not come  
 near, it will not confront us.'

**1** tn Heb "from before my eyes."

**2** tn Or perhaps simply, "there," if the ׀ (*mem*) prefixed to the adverb is dittographic (note the preceding word ends in *mem*).

**3** sn If the article indicates a definite serpent, then the mythological Sea Serpent, symbolic of the world's chaotic forces, is probably in view. See Job 26:13 and Isa 27:1 (where it is also called Leviathan). Elsewhere in the OT this serpent is depicted as opposing the LORD, but this text implies that even this powerful enemy of God is ultimately subject to his sovereign will.

**4** tn Heb "Even if they go into captivity before their enemies."

**5** tn Or perhaps simply, "there," if the ׀ (*mem*) prefixed to the adverb is dittographic (note the preceding word ends in *mem*).

**6** tn Heb "I will set my eye on them for disaster, not good."

**7** tn The words "will do this" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

**8** tn Or "melts." The verb probably depicts earthquakes and landslides. See v. 5b.

**9** tn Heb "all of it."

**10** tn Heb "the Nile." The word "River" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

**11** tn Or "sinks back down."

**12** sn See Amos 8:8, which is very similar to this verse.

**13** tc The MT reads "his steps." If this is correct, then the reference may be to the steps leading up to the heavenly temple or the throne of God (cf. 1 Kgs 10:19-20). The prefixed ׀ (*mem*) may be dittographic (note the preceding word ends in *mem*). The translation assumes an emendation to אֲלֵיָתֵר (‘*aliyyato*, "his upper rooms").

**14** tn Traditionally, "vault" (so ASV, NAB, NRSV). The precise meaning of this word in this context is unclear. Elsewhere it refers to objects grouped or held together. F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman (*Amos* [AB], 845-46) suggest the foundational structure of a building is in view.

**15** sn Verse 6a pictures the entire universe as a divine palace founded on the earth and extending into the heavens.

**16** tn The Hebrew text has a rhetorical question, "Are you children of Israel not like the Cushites to me?" The rhetorical question has been converted to an affirmative statement in the translation for clarity. See the comment at 8:8.

sn Though Israel was God's special covenant people (see 3:2a), the Lord emphasizes they are not inherently superior to the other nations subject to his sovereign rule.

**17** sn Caphtor may refer to the island of Crete.

**18** tn The second half of v. 7 is also phrased as a rhetorical question in the Hebrew text, "Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?" The translation converts the rhetorical question into an affirmation for clarity.

**19** tn Heb "the eyes of the sovereign LORD are on."

**20** tn Or "kingdom."

**21** tn Heb "house" (also in the following verse).

**22** tn Heb "like being shaken with a sieve, and a pebble does not fall to the ground." The meaning of the Hebrew word גִּירֹר (*ts'ror*), translated "pebble," is unclear here. In 2 Sam 17:13 it appears to refer to a stone. If it means "pebble," then the sieve described in v. 6 allows the grain to fall into a basket while retaining the debris and pebbles. However, if one interprets גִּירֹר as a "kernel of grain" (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT) then the sieve is constructed to retain the grain and allow the refuse and pebbles to fall to the ground. In either case, the simile supports the last statement in v. 8 by making it clear that God will distinguish between the righteous (the grain) and the wicked (the pebbles) when he judges, and will thereby preserve a remnant in Israel. Only the sinners will be destroyed (v. 10).

*The Restoration of the Davidic Dynasty*

**9:11** “In that day I will rebuild the collapsing hut<sup>1</sup> of David.

I will seal its<sup>2</sup> gaps,  
repair its<sup>3</sup> ruins,  
and restore it to what it was like in days  
gone by.<sup>4</sup>

**9:12** As a result they<sup>5</sup> will conquer those  
left in Edom<sup>6</sup>

and all the nations subject to my rule.<sup>7</sup>  
The LORD, who is about to do this, is  
speaking!

**9:13** “Be sure of this,<sup>8</sup> the time is<sup>9</sup> coming,” says the LORD,  
“when the plowman will catch up to the  
reaper<sup>10</sup>

and the one who stomps the grapes<sup>11</sup> will  
overtake<sup>12</sup> the planter.<sup>13</sup>

Juice will run down the slopes,<sup>14</sup>  
it will flow down all the hillsides.<sup>15</sup>

**9:14** I will bring back my people, Israel,<sup>16</sup>  
they will rebuild the cities lying in rub-  
ble<sup>17</sup> and settle down.<sup>18</sup>

They will plant vineyards and drink the  
wine they produce;<sup>19</sup>

they will grow orchards<sup>20</sup> and eat the fruit  
they produce.<sup>21</sup>

**9:15** I will plant them on their land  
and they will never again be uprooted  
from the<sup>22</sup> land I have given them,”  
says the LORD your God.

<sup>1</sup> **tn** The phrase translated “collapsing hut” refers to a temporary shelter (cf. NASB, NRSV “booth”) in disrepair and emphasizes the relatively weakened condition of the once powerful Davidic dynasty. Others have suggested that the term refers to Jerusalem, while still others argue that it should be repointed to read “Sukkoth,” a garrison town in Transjordan. Its reconstruction would symbolize the rebirth of the Davidic empire and its return to power (e.g., M. E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 71-74).

<sup>2</sup> **tc** The MT reads a third feminine plural suffix, which could refer to the two kingdoms (Judah and Israel) or, more literally, to the breaches in the walls of the cities that are mentioned in v. 4 (cf. 4:3). Some emend to third feminine singular, since the “hut” of the preceding line (a feminine singular noun) might be the antecedent. In that case, the final *nun* (נ) is virtually dittographic with the *vav* (ו) that appears at the beginning of the following word.

<sup>3</sup> **tc** The MT reads a third masculine singular suffix, which could refer back to David. However, it is possible that an original third feminine singular suffix (ת-, *yod-hey*) has been misread as masculine (ת-, *yod-vav*). In later Hebrew script א ת (he) resembles a ת- (*yod-vav*) combination.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and I will rebuild as in days of antiquity.”

<sup>5</sup> **sn** *They* probably refers to the Israelites or to the Davidic rulers of the future.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* “take possession of the remnant of Edom”; NASB, NIV, NRSV “possess the remnant of Edom.”

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* “nations over whom my name is proclaimed.” The Hebrew idiom indicates ownership, sometimes as a result of conquest. See 2 Sam 12:28.

**sn** This verse envisions a new era of Israelite rule, perhaps patterned after David’s imperialistic successes (see 2 Sam 8-10). At the same time, however, the verse does not specify how this rule is to be accomplished. Note that the book ends with a description of peace and abundance, and its final reference to God (v. 15) does not include the epithet “the LORD who commands armies,” which has militaristic overtones. This is quite a different scene than what the book began with: nations at war and standing under the judgment of God.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “behold” or “look.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the days are.”

<sup>10</sup> **sn** *The plowman will catch up to the reaper.* Plowing occurred in October-November, and harvesting in April-May (see P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 109.) But in the future age of restored divine blessing, there will be so many crops the reapers will take all summer to harvest them, and it will be time for plowing again before the harvest is finished.

<sup>11</sup> **sn** When the grapes had been harvested, they were placed in a press where workers would stomp on them with their feet and squeeze out the juice. For a discussion of grape harvesting technique, see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 110-12.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The verb is omitted here in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation from the parallel line.

<sup>13</sup> **sn** The grape harvest occurred in August-September, planting in November-December (see P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 109). But in the future age described here there will be so many grapes the workers who stomp them will still be working when the next planting season arrives.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** Or “hills,” where the vineyards were planted.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and all the hills will melt.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** This line can also be translated “I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel” and is a common idiom (e.g., Deut 30:3; Jer 30:3; Hos 6:11; Zeph 3:20). This rendering is followed by several modern English versions (e.g., NEB, NRSV, NJPS).

<sup>17</sup> **tn** Or “the ruined [or “desolate”] cities.”

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Or “and live [in them].”

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* “drink their wine.”

<sup>20</sup> **tn** Or “gardens.”

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* “eat their fruit.”

<sup>22</sup> **tn** *Heb* “their.” The pronoun was replaced by the English definite article in the translation for stylistic reasons.