**The Minor Prophets  
*of the*   
Old Testament**

**Introduction:**

These twelve books of the Old Testament are named such due to the **size** of the prophecy as opposed to the ‘Major’ Prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. To be sure, there is nothing ‘minor’ about the **content** of these twelve books. These books provide valuable insight not only to the historical situation of Israel, but also to the teaching of Eschatology *(the doctrine of the Last Days)* with special emphasis on the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah.

**Placement of the Books:** *(canonization)*   
 *(see ‘Divisions of the Old Testament’ study sheet)* From the very earliest dates, the Hebrew Bible combines all twelve of these books into one book known as the “The Twelve.” This book of ‘The Twelve’ is included in the Hebrew division of Scripture known as the *“Nebhi’im”* or “the Prophets.” A Jew would summarize his entire Bible by the expression, *“the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45, etc.).   
On one occasion, the word *“psalms”* was also added to the phrase referring to the Hebrew Bible (Luke 24:44). Judaism classifies the Prophetic books as either the ***“Former Prophets”***(Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles) or the ***“Latter Prophets”*** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve).

The individual books were produced in widely different periods of time. Among these books are some of the earliest and some of the latest of the Old Testament prophetic writings. *In neither the Hebrew nor Greek arrangement of the books within the collection have strict chronological considerations been followed.*

The twelve books come from four different periods. The earliest—**Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah**—appeared in the late ninth and early eighth centuries. This was the period prior to the rise of the great Assyrian empire. For that reason these three are sometimes called the pre-Assyrian prophets. The second three—**Amos, Hosea, Micah**—come from the eighth century, the period when the Assyrian armies were dominating the scene in the ancient Near East. The third triad—**Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk**—comes from the seventh century, when the power of the Assyrian empire faded rapidly and then was eclipsed by Babylon. The last three—**Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi**—come from the period after the exile when Judea was a province of the Persian Empire.

Arranged in the order they were written, the Book of the Twelve might look like this.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Obadiah*** | ***845 b.c.*** | ***Nahum*** | ***650 b.c.*** |
| ***Joel*** | ***835 b.c.*** | ***Zephaniah*** | ***630 b.c.*** |
| ***Jonah*** | ***755 b.c.*** | ***Habakkuk*** | ***609 b.c.*** |
|  |  |  |  |
| ***Amos*** | ***752 b.c.*** | ***Haggai*** | ***520 b.c.*** |
| ***Micah*** | ***735 b.c.*** | ***Zechariah*** | ***480 b.c.*** |
| ***Hosea*** | ***725 b.c.*** | ***Malachi*** | ***432 b.c.*** |

**Christ in the Books:**

The most important question any student of the Bible can ask is, *“How is Christ portrayed in this passage or book?”* This is surely a solid foundation upon which to build your study. *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the* ***scriptures*** *the things concerning* ***himself*** *(Luke 24:47).” {****Notice****- the ‘scriptures’ are equated with Christ ‘himself’ (John 1:14)}*

The Lord Jesus is pictured in these twelve books as:

* The Second Moses, David & Israel *(Hosea)*
* The Teacher of Righteousness *(Joel)*
* Occupant of the Tent of David *(Amos)*
* Saviour and Judge Par Excellence *(Obadiah)*
* Resurrected Prophet *(Jonah)*
* Ruler from Bethlehem *(Micah)*
* Bringer of Good Tidings *(Nahum)*
* Conqueror of Satan *(Habakkuk)*
* Witness Against the Nations *(Zephaniah)*
* Desire of All Nations *(Haggai)*
* Enthroned Priest-King *(Zechariah)*
* Sun of Righteousness *(Malachi)*

Hosea  
**“Salvation”**

Key Word- *“Return”* Key Verse- 14:9

*Summary of the Book-*

Hosea brings his message to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He is the prophet of the zero hour in the nation. What the weeping prophet Jeremiah was to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, nearly a century and a half later Hosea was to the Northern Kingdom.

It was through the troubles in Hosea’s home that he reached the consciousness of his calling. Hosea married Gomer in good faith, but her unfaithfulness and ultimate enslavement broke his heart. Israel’s apostasy was the counterpart of Gomer’s adultery. It becomes very clear as we read the book that the first three chapters belong together and the remaining chapters belong together.

The story of Hosea’s home life in the first three chapters sets the stage for our understanding of God’s relationship with His people. The prophet, through the heartbreak of his own marriage, comes to see Israel’s sin against God. Hosea represents God, our loving heavenly Father. Gomer represents the nation of Israel and the children represent the people of the nation. May God help us to see His love and our responsibility.

*Outline of the Book*

***I. Hosea’s Times (1:1)***

***II. Hosea’s Experience: A Portrayal of God’s Dealings with Israel (1:2-3:5)***

A. The symbolism of Hosea’s family (1:2-2:1)

1. Hosea’s marriage: Israel’s unfaithfulness (1:2-3a)

2. Hosea’s children: Israel’s judgment (1:3b-9)

3. The symbolism reversed (1:10-2:1)

B. Restoration through punishment (2:2-23)

1. The Lord’s punishment of Israel (2:2-13)

2. The Lord’s restoration of Israel (2:14-23)

C. The restoration of Hosea’s marriage (chap. 3)

1. The divine command (3:1)

2. Hosea’s obedient response (3:2-3)

3. The illustration explained (3:4-5)

***III. Hosea’s Message: God’s Judgment and Restoration of Israel (chaps. 4-14)***

A. The Lord’s case against Israel (4:1-6:3)

1. Israel’s guilt exposed (chap. 4)

2. Israel’s judgment announced (5:1-14)

3. Israel’s restoration envisioned (5:15-6:3)

B. The Lord’s case against Israel expanded (6:4-11:11)

1. Israel’s guilt and punishment (6:4-8:14)

2. Israel’s guilt and punishment reiterated (9:1-11:7)

3. The Lord’s compassion renewed (11:8-11)

C. The Lord’s case against Israel concluded (11:12-14:9)

1. A concluding indictment (11:12-13:16)

2. A concluding exhortation (chap. 14)

*Symbolic Types in the Book*

Hosea- God the Father (Jehovah)

Gomer- Adulterous Israel as a nation (corporately)

The Children- The individual Israelites

Jezreel- *“God Sows”*  
*(The Judgment of God upon the house of Jehu)*

Lo-ruhamah- *“Not Pitied”*

Lo-ammi *“Not My People”*

*The place of the Covenant in the Book*

The concept of a Covenant is found throughout the book of Hosea. One must have an understanding of covenant-based relationships in order to grasp the significance of Hosea’s marital situation and the lesson it was supposed to teach. The God of Israel chose to reveal Himself to His people as Jehovah (I AM). This personal Name always carries with it the fact that “He is the Covenant-keeping God of Israel.” The LORD (Jehovah) deals with man not in contracts, but in covenants.

Scripture records only TWO types of Covenants: ***CONDITIONAL*** and ***UNCONDITIONAL***

In the case of a *Conditional Covenant*, both God and man have a respective role. The actions of one (man) will determine the actions of the other (God). Key words in the following order will enable the Bible student to identify a *Conditional Covenant* - **“IF”** and **“THEN”** (Deut. 28:1-2; 15).

However, when Scripture speaks of an *Unconditional Covenant*, it is made clear that God Himself (the Initiator) will keep the covenant with no regard to the actions of men. In an *Unconditional Covenant*, the responsibility of fulfillment rests solely on the LORD (Jehovah). In this arrangement, the key words are simply – **“I WILL”** (Genesis 12:2-3).

The book of Hosea uses the *Marriage Covenant* between Hosea and Gomer to illustrate the broken *Spiritual Covenant* between God and His people (Israel). Just as the Marriage Covenant was Conditional (if you are to enjoy intimacy there must be faithfulness and purity), so was Israel’s covenant with her Husband (if the nation would serve Him only with undivided loyalty, it would experience blessing, safety and prosperity-Deut.28). Every promise of punishment upon Israel in this book was based upon the grounds of a broken covenant. God was not arbitrarily heaping chastisement upon the nation…they had failed in their obligation knowing well the consequences.

***Expositional Commentary***

**Hosea’s Times (1:1)**

1:1. In Hebrew the name Hosea (“salvation”) is the same as Hoshea, Israel’s last king (2 Kings 17:1). Hoshea was also Joshua’s original name (Num. 13:8, 16). Nothing is known of Hosea’s family background except that he was a son of Beeri.

Hosea’s ministry extended for a number of decades in the second half of the eighth century b.c. Four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) reigned when Hosea prophesied. Only one king of the north (Jeroboam II), is mentioned though Hosea’s message was directed primarily to the Northern Kingdom. Six kings of Israel followed Jeroboam II during the reigns of the four Judean kings mentioned. Perhaps Hosea omitted those six to point up the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty in Judah.

**Hosea’s Experience: A Portrayal of God’s Dealings with Israel (1:2-3:5)**

The message of the first three chapters (and of the entire book) oscillates between judgment and salvation. Hosea’s marital experiences, which included the heartbreak caused by his wife’s unfaithfulness and the joy of their renewed relationship, provide the framework for this message.

*The symbolism of Hosea’s family*

This opening section sets forth the major themes of the entire prophecy: Israel’s unfaithfulness, the certainty of judgment, and the ultimate restoration of the nation. These ideas are introduced within the context of the Lord’s command to Hosea to marry and have children.

At the outset of Hosea’s ministry the Lord instructed him to marry an adulterous woman. This relationship, characterized by infidelity on the wife’s part, was to portray Israel’s unfaithfulness to its covenant with the Lord (cf. 2:2-23). In response to the divine command Hosea… . took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.

Much debate has centered on the circumstances of Hosea’s marriage. Some have held that the marriage was only visionary or allegorical, not literal. This proposal was motivated by a desire to sidestep the supposed moral difficulty of the holy God commanding His servant to marry a woman of disreputable character. However, the account is presented as a straightforward narrative, not as a report of a vision or as a purely symbolic act (cf. chap. 3). The Lord sometimes required His prophets to carry out orders that many would consider over and above the call of duty  
 (e.g., Isa. 20:1-4; Ezek. 4:1-5:4).

*Hosea’s children to serve as symbols of coming punishment*

The divinely chosen names for Hosea’s three children served as reminders of the broken relationship between the Lord and Israel and pointed ahead to judgment. Each section on the children (vv. 3b-5, 6-7, 8-9) contains a birth notice (vv. 3b, 6a, 8), a divine word of instruction concerning the child’s name (vv. 4a, 6b, 9a), and an explanation of the meaning of the name (vv. 4b-5, 6b, 9b). God’s words (v. 7) are unique in that they qualify the announcement of judgment given (v. 6).

* **Jezreel (1:3-5)**

The first child (a son) was named Jezreel. At this point the significance of his name was not in its meaning (“God sows”), but in its association with past and future events at the place Jezreel (cf., however, v. 11; 2:22-23). Jezreel was the site of Jehu’s ruthless massacre of the house of Ahab  
 (1:4; cf. 2 Kings 9-10). In the future it would be the scene of Israel’s military demise (Hosea 1:5).

The reason for the Lord’s coming punishment on Jehu’s dynasty (lit., house) was the massacre (lit., “bloodshed”) at Jezreel (ca. 841 b.c.). Jehu’s slaughter of Jezebel and Ahab’s descendants had been prophesied by Elijah (1 Kings 21:21-24), commanded by Elisha (2 Kings 9:6-10), and commended by the Lord Himself (2 Kings 10:30). So many think the attitude expressed by the Lord (Hosea 1:4) contradicted that in the accounts in 1 and 2 Kings. But a closer examination of the historical record suggests a resolution to the problem. Jehu also killed Joram (2 Kings 9:24), Ahaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 9:27-28), 42 of Ahaziah’s relatives (2 Kings 10:12-14), and several functionaries of the Baal cult (2 Kings 10:18-28). Though the execution of Baal’s servants was certainly in accord with the Lord’s will (cf. 1 Kings 18:40), Jehu’s attack on the house of David went too far. Despite the fact that Ahaziah’s assassination could be attributed to God’s providence   
(2 Chron. 22:7), it demonstrated an underlying lack of regard for the Lord’s commands. This disregard subsequently came to the surface in other ways (cf. 2 Kings 10:29-31). So Hosea 1:4 probably refers to the slaughter of Ahaziah and his relatives. Though their deaths did not actually occur in Jezreel (cf. 2 Kings 9:27; 10:12-14), they were associated with the wholesale slaughter at that place.

**The fulfillment of this prophecy came in 752 b.c. when Shallum assassinated Zechariah, the fourth of Jehu’s descendants to rule the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 15:10), thereby cutting off Jehu’s dynasty forever.**

God told Hosea that the demise of Jehu’s dynasty was to be accompanied by the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. In a display of poetic justice the Lord would break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel, the site of Jehu’s sin. Breaking the bow refers to the destruction of the nation’s military might (cf. 1 Sam. 2:4; Ps. 46:9; Jer. 49:35).

The general fulfillment of this prophecy came in 734-722 b.c. when the Assyrians overran Israel and reduced it to a province within their empire (2 Kings 15:29; 17:3-5). The Jezreel plain in particular was probably conquered in 733 b.c. by Tiglath-Pileser III. This valley, which had been the scene of a great military victory under Gideon (Jud. 6:33; 7), again became a symbol of national disgrace and defeat, as it had been after Saul’s death (1 Sam. 29:1, 11; 31).

*\*\*Christian Life Application\*\**

Even though it was God’s will to judge the house of Ahab by the hand of Jehu, God saw that Jehu’s heart was not right toward his victims. Jehu desired vengeance and harbored unholy motives during the conquests of his life. A parallel account is found in the book of Habakkuk. Israel’s sin deserved judgment and God revealed to Habakkuk that He had destined Babylon to execute this judgment by carrying Israel away captive. However, God further reveals that He will also judge the Babylonians for the wickedness and fierceness of their heart. We could further consider the bondage of the Jews in Egypt. God foretold of the Egyptian bondage that would last 400 years because of Israel’s lack of faith in fleeing the land of promise during famine. As in the other cases, God also judged Egypt for the evil of their ways and their gross idolatry. No man can take satisfaction in oppressing God’s people by asserting that he is being used as an instrument of God (Hitler, Roman Catholic Church against Jews, etc.). *As Christians we must recognize that even while God may use us to fulfill His purposes in this world by reproving it of sin and warning of future judgment, we must seek to keep our hearts right and walk before Him in humility.* **{Matt.26:24; Prov.24:17-18}**

* **Lo-Ruhamah: *“Not loved”* (1:6-7)**

The second child received the name Lo-Ruhamah, which means “she is not loved.” Her name indicated that the Lord’s love for Israel would be cut off for a time. “Ruhamah,” from the verb *rāḥam*, describes tender feelings of compassion, such as those expressed by a parent for a child (cf. 1 Kings 3:26; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 49:15) or by a man for his younger brother (cf. Gen. 43:30). At Sinai the Lord described Himself (Ex. 34:6) as “merciful and gracious” (*’ēl raḥûm*) who is willing to forgive iniquity (Ex. 34:6). However, despite His gracious character, times come when He will no longer “clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7). Such a time had come for the Northern Kingdom.

The light of God’s grace shines through the gloom of impending judgment. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, in contrast with Israel, would experience the Lord’s love in the form of deliverance from the Assyrians. This would not be accomplished through human military might (symbolized by the bow, sword, etc.), but by the Lord’s intervention. **This promise was fulfilled in 701 b.c. when God supernaturally annihilated 185,000 soldiers in the powerful Assyrian army in one night thereby ending its campaign against Judah (2 Kings 19:32-36).**

* **Lo-Ammi: *“Not My people”* (1:8-9)**

The third child, a son, was named Lo-Ammi, which means “not My people.” In the ancient covenant formula God declared, “I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12; cf. Ex. 6:7; Deut. 26:17-18). But now that relationship was to be severed. The last clause of Hosea 1:9 (I will not be your God) is literally, ***“and I [am] not I AM (’ehyeh) to you.”*** The statement probably alludes to God’s words to Moses, *“I AM (’ehyeh) THAT I AM (’ehyeh): and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM (’ehyeh) hath sent me unto you” (Ex. 3:14).* “I AM,” which is closely related to the divine name Yahweh, points to God as the covenant Lord of Israel who watches over and delivers His people (cf. Ex. 3:16-17). However, through Lo-Ammi the Lord announced that Israel would no longer experience His special saving presence.

*The renewed promise of future blessing –* ***“In wrath remember mercy”*** *(Habakkuk 3:2)*

Immediately after pronouncing judgment, the Lord quickly reminds His covenant people of their future blessing. This is typical throughout the Old Testament; Jehovah foretells of His judgment upon Israel’s sins but quickly reminds them that He has not cast them off forever…***He remains faithful even when they are unfaithful*** (Romans 11:1-5).

Consider the ***five-fold*** blessing God promises His adulterous wife: *(Hosea 1:10-2:1)*

1. National increase (v.10a) *“the number…shall be as the sand of the sea”*
2. National conversion (v.10b) *“it shall be said…Ye are the sons of the living God”*
3. National reunion (v.11a) *“the children of Judah and Israel…be gathered together”*
4. National leadership (v.11b) *“and appoint themselves one head”*
5. National restoration (v.2:1) *“say unto your brethren…Ammi…Ruhama”*

These five blessings are identical to the promises made earlier to  
 Abraham (Gen.12) and David (2 Sam.7). God is not giving a new set of promises,  
He is simply reminding them of what they already knew but had neglected.

*\*\*Christian Life Application\*\**

God’s people need a daily exposure to Scripture to remind them of what they already know, but have forgotten. Namely, that God will judge sin without partiality and that He will also forgive and restore those who have a truly repentant heart. It is very often the “old” truths that prove the greatest blessing to God’s people (2 Peter 1:12-13).

*The judgment of a jealous husband –* ***“He is a jealous God”*** *(Joshua 24:19)*

In chapter two we find the Lord clearly detailing the specific judgments He would bring upon the Northern Kingdom for “her” spiritual adultery (idolatry).

We find God here speaking as the Husband first to the individual children, not the mother. We must remember the children represent the individual Jews of the land whereas the wife (Gomer) represents the land corporately as a whole. The second verse seems to be a message ***TO*** the mother ***FROM*** the father***BY WAY OF*** the children. The message here is highly symbolic. God is appealing to individual Jews to stand up and confront their own nation with its sins. Jehovah is looking for a few who have remained faithful to His Name to be His messengers to His beloved, albeit unfaithful wife. This too is God’s plan for all ages. What the Old Testament prophets were to Israel, so now are the New Testament pastors and teachers. God is still calling faithful children to “plead” with the wicked that they turn from their ways and return to the Father (Isaiah 58:1).

The children were to plead with their mother to: 1) put her whoredoms out of her sight and 2) take her adulteries from between her breasts. These two phrases speak to the fact that Israel had become fully engrossed in idolatry…her gaze (sight) is upon a false god and her heart (breasts) is upon a false god. At any time he could have exercised his right to execute her (Lev.20:10).

Notice carefully the punishments God would inflict upon her if she refused to return to Him-

* “lest I strip her naked” (2:3) *(Compare Ezekiel 16:37-38)*
* “make her as a wilderness”
* “set her like a dry land”
* “slay her with thirst”

These punishments become significant when you realize the concept of Baal-worship. Baal “lord” was worshipped and prayed to for primarily two things- 1) agricultural abundance and 2) human fertility. God strikes a death-blow to Baal’s ‘power’ by inflicting these specific punishments.

Her children are rebuked in verse four for their “whoredoms.” The reason for this is obvious- if a nation becomes idolatrous it is simply because the people of the nation are idolaters. The sinfulness of the mother has been transmitted to the children and they will reap the consequences.

*Gomer’s misplaced affection*

Sin always blinds. It blinds the mind to reason and the heart to affection. Gomer is completely fooled by her own adultery. Notice her statement concerning how her needs are to be met (2:5). She has trusted her “lovers” for three primary things:

* “my bread and my water” (Necessity of Food)
* “my wool and my flax” (Necessity of Clothing)
* “mine oil and my drink(wine)” (Luxuries)

She had become so irrational that she attributed these gifts to an idol which could neither see nor hear! Israel withheld praise from the One who deserved it (Deut.7:12-13; 26:10). It is becoming more obvious as to why God’s righteous anger was so kindled against His beloved.

In order to expose Baal’s impotence and inability to save, Jehovah hedges up Gomer’s way and then sets her on a “chase” for her lovers. We see her in verse seven following hard after but never overtaking those she thought loved her and provided for her. Such is the case today. Men and women give themselves and their strength to a world they though cared for them only to realize in the end that the world always proves to be unfaithful. Upon realizing the futility of continuing to serve Baal, she makes a vow to return to her husband. This resolution sounds much like that of the Prodigal Son. In both cases the wayward one has to “come to themselves” before they would “come back to the father.” Every prodigal in the world would run back home if he would only seriously consider how good it was in the father’s house.

*The heartbreaking reality*

In verse eight we see that even in her disobedience, her loving Husband had provided for her and would not allow her to go without. Consider what he gave to her while she was returning no love to him- **“corn and wine and oil”** and **“multiplied her silver and gold.”** Notice carefully that only one of these items is a necessity for life-- corn. The rest are for pleasure and luxury. **It is a fearful and dangerous practice to use the gifts of God *(financial, health, abilities and talents)* to serve Baal *(the world, the flesh and the devil)* as did Gomer in verse eight.** The goodness of God causes Him to not only supply the necessities of His people but He also delights in providing the luxuries (John 2:1-20). This truth becomes even more beautiful when we consider that He gives us all these things in the midst of our unfaithfulness to Him.

*\*\*Christian Life Application\*\**

Can any of us deny the fact of God’s faithfulness to us even in the midst of our unfaithfulness to Him? Even the lost sinner enjoys God’s goodness although he does not give God the praise. We must beware lest we ever become arrogant in thinking we have “done well for ourselves.” In truth- every good thing we have comes from above. It should break our hearts to consider the goodness of God toward us compared to our cruelty toward Him (Romans 2:4).

*The promise of chastisement continued*

**(2:9b-10)** The figurative portrayal of Israel as the Lord’s wife is carried along in these verses. Without wool and linen (cf. v. 5), which were used to make clothing (Lev. 13:47, 59; Deut. 22:11; Prov. 31:13; Ezek. 44:17), she would have no means of covering her nakedness. Through this deprivation the Lord would expose her lewdness. Her shameful behavior would become known to all through this public demonstration (cf. Hosea 2:3; Ezek. 16:36-37). “Lewdness” (*naḇlûṯ*, which occurs only here in the OT) refers to a blatant breach of covenant which disgraces the entire community. A related term (*neḇālâh*) is used of Achan’s sin (Josh. 7:15), as well as various prohibited sexual acts, including fornication (Deut. 22:21), incest (2 Sam. 13:12), rape (Jud. 19:23; 20:6), and adultery (Jer. 29:23). During this exhibition Israel’s lovers would be forced to stand by helplessly, being unable to deliver her from the Lord’s powerful grip. Then the Lord’s superiority and the lovers’ weakness (or apathy) would become apparent to her.

**(2:11)** The coming judgment would also bring the cessation of Israel’s joyous religious celebrations, including the great yearly festivals (Ex. 23:14-17), the monthly New Moons (i.e., New Moon sacrifices; Num. 10:10, 28:11-15), and the weekly Sabbath observances. These feasts had been corrupted by Baal worship (cf. Hosea 2:13) and were no longer desired by the Lord.

**(2:12-13)** The themes in verses 5-9 are repeated in verses 12-13. In implementing the covenant curses the Lord would destroy the produce (her vines and her fig trees; cf. Deut. 28:38-42; Joel 1:7; Amos 4:9), which Israel erroneously regarded as the pay given by her lovers in exchange for her services (cf. Hosea 9:1; Micah 1:7). The vineyards would be reduced to an overgrown thicket inhabited by wild animals. This would be an effect of the depopulation which would accompany the nation’s military defeat and exile (cf. Ps. 80:12-13; Isa. 5:5-6; 7:23-25; 17:9; 32:9-14; Micah 3:12).

In burning incense to the Baals (them), Israel had, as it were, seductively chased after her lovers (cf. Hosea 2:5). The rings and jewelry, though sources of delight and signs of prestige in the proper context (cf. Prov. 25:12; Ezek. 16:12-14), here represent the unfaithful wife’s efforts to attract her lovers. The plural “Baals” (cf. also Hosea 2:17; 11:2; Jud. 2:11; 1 Sam. 7:4; Jer. 2:23; 9:14) in this context probably refer to various local manifestations of the one Canaanite deity (cf. the singular Baal in Hosea 2:8; 13:1), who was represented by images in Baal shrines scattered throughout the land (cf. 13:1-2). The plurality of idols naturally suggested the comparison to many lovers.

The final statement in this section (2:2-13) summarizes Israel’s basic sin and the reason for the coming judgment: she had forgotten (*šāḵaḥ*) the Lord. **The verb here does not refer to a mental lapse or loss of knowledge; it describes a refusal to acknowledge the Lord’s goodness and authority (cf. 8:14; 13:6).** Moses had repeatedly urged the nation not to forget the Lord’s gracious deeds (Deut. 4:9; 8:11) and His demand for exclusive worship (Deut. 4:23; 6:12; 8:19; cf. 2 Kings 17:38). However, in fulfillment of Moses’ prediction (cf. Deut. 31:27-29 with Deut. 32:18) Israel throughout her history forgot the Lord and worshiped false gods (cf. Jud. 3:7; 1 Sam. 12:9-10; Ps. 78:9-11; Jer. 23:27).

*The promise of restoration after judgment*

**(2:14-23)** Having brought Israel to a place of desperation ***(wilderness)*** in which she would again look to Him (cf. v. 7), the Lord said He would take the next steps in restoring the relationship. Israel’s positive response would lead to covenant renewal and blessing.

**(2:14)** In these verses the Lord described His overtures of love and Israel’s future positive response.The Lord promised to initiate reconciliation with His wayward wife by alluring her. **Allure** refers here to tender, even seductive, speech. Elsewhere the term describes a man’s seduction of a virgin (Ex. 22:16) and a lover’s attempt to entice a man (Samson) into divulging confidential information (Jud. 14:15; 16:5). The Lord said He **will lead** Israel **into the wilderness,** where she will be completely separated from past lovers and will be able to concentrate totally on His advances. The reference to the desert recalls Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the wilderness after the Exodus. This was sometimes pictured as a time when Israel experienced the Lord’s care in a special way (cf. Hosea 13:5) and when she, in return, loved Him with the devotion of a new bride (Jer. 2:2-3). The allusion to the wilderness also represents a remarkable reversal in the use of the desert motif in this chapter. *For the Lord had threatened to make Israel “like a dry land” (Hosea 2:3).* According to verse 14 the desert will become the site of His romantic overtures to her. There He will **speak comfortably (tenderly) to her** (lit., “speak to her heart”; cf. Isa. 40:2). This Hebrew idiom refers to gentle, encouraging words, such as a man speaks to his desired bride (cf. Gen. 34:3; Ruth 2:13). *It is in this daring kind of portrayal that the passion of God becomes visible—a passion that does not hesitate at any condescension or hold back from any act for the sake of the beloved elect.*

**(2:15)** When the Lord leads Israel out of the desert back into the Promised Land, He will restore her vineyards. When Israel enters the land she will again pass through the **Valley of Achor** (lit., ***“Valley of Trouble”***), the site of Achan’s heinous sin which jeopardized the success of the Conquest (Josh. 7). However, this time the valley will be a symbol of better things to come, **a door of hope** leading to repossession of the Promised Land (cf. Isa. 65:10). The effects of the trouble caused by Israel’s past unfaithfulness will have disappeared. Instead she will respond favorably to the Lord as in thedays immediately after the Exodus (cf. Jer. 2:2). Admittedly this earlier period is idealized here, as even a cursory reading of the narratives in Exodus and Numbers reveals.

**(2:16-17)** In that day, when Israel is restored to the land, she will acknowledge the **Lord as her husband**. She will address Him as *’îšî,* my Husband, rather than *ba‘ ăli*, my Master. The word *ba‘al* would be a reminder of Israel’s former Baal worship. Therefore God will prohibit its use, and Israel will no longer use the names of the Baals (cf. the pl. Baalim or “Baals” in Hosea 2:13; 11:2).

**(2:18)** Israel’s return to the land will be accompanied by peace. The Lord will mediate a covenant between the nation and the animal kingdom. The harmful beasts of the field, which had earlier devoured the vines and fig trees (v. 12; cf. Lev. 26:22), will no longer be hostile (cf. Ezek. 34:25). Isaiah also portrayed the Kingdom Age as one of harmony between man and animals (Isa. 11:6-8; 65:25). The Lord will also cause war (symbolized by bow and sword and battle; cf. Hosea 1:7) to cease in the land of Israel. The nation will dwell safely, free from the threat of foreign invasion. This marks the reversal of an earlier judgment (cf. 1:5) and the return of covenant blessing (cf. Lev. 26:5-6, where the same expressions, “lie down” and “safely” are used).

**(2:19-20)** The restoration of the Lord’s marriage to Israel is described in terms of a betrothal. **The word ‘betroth’ marks a new beginning, with all the freshness of first love, rather than the weary patching up of differences.** It will be as though the Lord and Israel had returned to the days of courtship. Betrothal in ancient Israel was much more binding than engagement is in contemporary Western society. The Law treated a betrothed couple as though they were legally married   
(Deut. 20:7; 22:23-24). At the time of the betrothal the man would pay a price to seal the agreement (cf. 2 Sam. 3:14). The Lord’s price will consist of **righteousness… judgment … lovingkindness… mercy,** and **faithfulness.** These qualities will characterize His relationship with Israel, which will never again be disrupted (cf. Hosea 2:19). “Righteousness” (*ṣeḏeq̱*) and “judgment” (*mišpāṭ*) refer here to the maintenance of Israel’s just cause, which includes vindication through deliverance. “Lovingkindness” (*ḥeseḏ*) is an unswerving devotion which fulfills the responsibilities arising from a relationship. “Mercies” (*raḥămîm*, related to *rāḥam*, used in 1:6-7; 2:1, 4) is tender feeling which motivates one to gracious action. “Faithfulness” (*’ěmûnâh*) implies dependability and constant loyalty. In response to the divine love showered on her, Israel **shall know the Lord**. In contrast with her former tendency to forget (cf. v. 13) she will recognize His authority by demonstrating loyalty to Him. “Know” (*yāḏa‘*) often occurs in covenantal contexts with the sense of “recognize.” For example, the Lord recognized (lit., “knew”) Israel’s special relationship to Him (cf. Amos 3:2). Israel in return was to recognize (lit., “know”) only the authority of her Lord (cf. Hosea 13:4). In Hebrew thought, such recognition was not a mere mental exercise; it implied action (cf. Jer. 22:16). In Israel’s case it meant obedience to the Lord’s commandments (cf. Hosea 8:1-2). In the future all Israel will “know” the Lord because, as Jeremiah wrote, He will put His “Law in their inward parts (mind) and write it in their hearts” (Jer. 31:33). This is the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), which corresponds to the new marriage pictured in Hosea 2:19-20.

**(2:21-22)** The promise of restored agricultural blessing, mentioned briefly in verse 15, is expanded here. A series of cries and responses is envisioned as different elements of the natural world are personified. Jezreel *(the nation of Israel here)* will cry out to the corn, wine, and oil. They in turn will respond by calling to the earth from which they are produced. The earth in turn will look to the heavens, the source of the rain which makes the soil productive. The heavens will then call to the Lord, the One who ultimately controls the agricultural cycle. He will respond by providing the rain necessary for agricultural prosperity.

**(2:23)** The Lord Himself is pictured as engaging in agricultural endeavors. He will plant Israel in the land, where she will grow under His protective care. The nation called Lo-Ruhamah (not … loved; cf. 1:6) and Lo-Ammi (not My people; cf. 1:9) will experience God’s compassion and will be addressed as His people. They will acknowledge that He, not Baal, is their God. This passage is parallel to 1:10-2:1, where the same reversal in the significance of the symbolic names is seen.

**Hosea 2:23, along with 1:10, is quoted in Romans 9:25-26 and 1 Peter 2:10.** Paul quoted those Hosea passages to say that both Jews and Gentiles will be converted during the Church Age (cf. Rom. 9:24). This does *not* mean, however, that he equated the Gentiles with Israel and regarded the conversion of Gentiles as a direct fulfillment of Hosea’s prophecy. Paul clearly taught that national Israel would be saved as well (Rom. 11). Rather, Paul extracted from Hosea’s prophecy a **principle** concerning God’s gracious activity.

According to Hosea, *God will mercifully bring a previously rejected people into a relationship with Himself.* Paul recognized this same **pattern** in God’s dealings with the Gentiles. In Romans 9:25 Paul, then, was applying Hosea 2:23 to the Gentiles; he was not reinterpreting the verse. Likewise Peter (1 Peter 2:10) saw the language of Hosea’s prophecy as applicable to New Testament believers, who by divine mercy have been brought into a relationship with God (cf. 1 Peter 1:3).

*The restoration of Hosea’s marriage (Chapter 3)*

As Hosea’s experience with his unfaithful wife portrayed Israel’s rejection of the Lord, so the recovery of his wayward wife pictured the Lord’s love for and restoration of Israel.

**(3:1)** The Lord told Hosea to demonstrate his love to his adulterous wife once more. This gracious act would serve as an object lesson of God’s great love (’ahăḇâh) for Israel despite her gross unfaithfulness. Rather than responding favorably to the Lord, she was turning to other gods and loving (’āhaḇ) instead the sacred raisin cakes (flagons of wine), delicacies apparently employed in feasts associated with Baal worship. Perhaps they were similar to the cakes offered to the goddess Astarte “the queen of heaven” (cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:19).

**(3:2)** Hosea responded obediently to the Lord’s command (cf. 1:3). He bought his wife back for a substantial price. A homer and a half-homer *(lethek)* of barley were probably valued together at 15 shekels. So the payment with the 15 shekels of silver and the barley was equivalent to **30 shekels, the price of a slave (cf. Ex. 21:32; Matt.27:3).** The circumstances surrounding this purchase are uncertain. Whether Hosea had legally divorced Gomer is unknown. She may have become a temple prostitute or was perhaps the legal property of someone who employed her as a concubine or hired her out as a prostitute. The phrase “beloved of her friend” (Hosea 3:1) seems to suggest she was owned by another.

**(3:3)** After acquiring legal possession of Gomer, Hosea informed her that her adulterous lifestyle was over. She would remain at home *with* him, isolated from all potential lovers. The final clause in verse 3 has the meaning, *“and also I toward you.”* Some scholars understand the expression to be analogous to the preceding you are to live with me, meaning that **both parties** would devote themselves entirely to each other. *{****Note:*** *Hosea now has two legal claims upon Gomer- the first is that they were joined in* ***marriage*** *thus joining them in the sight of God. However, Hosea also “buys back” Gomer from the slave market which pictures her* ***redemption****. Just as Hosea ‘twice-owned’ Gomer, so our God has a double claim on those who are His children; He is both* ***CREATOR*** *and* ***REDEEMER*** *and thereby has absolute rights to us and our lives.}*

*The illustration explained (3:4-5)*

**(3:4)** Gomer’s lengthy period of isolation was designed to portray Israel’s exile, when the nation would be separated from its illicit institutions and practices (cf. 2:6-7). ***The absence of king and prince implied loss of national sovereignty.*** The elimination of sacrifice and sacred stones meant the cessation of formal religious activity. Sacrifices, having been commanded by the Lord, were a legitimate aspect of worship when offered with an attitude of total devotion to God. However, in Israel sacrifices had become contaminated by their association with Baal worship (cf. 4:19) and by the people’s failure to obey “the weightier matters of the Law” (Matt. 23:23; cf. Hosea 6:6; 8:11-13). “Sacred stones” (*maṣṣēḇâh*) had been a legitimate part of patriarchal worship (cf. Gen. 28:18, 22; 31:13). However, because of those stones’ association with pagan religion, Israel was forbidden to use them after entering Canaan (Lev. 26:1; Deut. 16:22). In direct violation of this covenant stipulation Israel had erected such stones as part of its Baal worship (2 Kings 3:2; 10:26-27; 17:10; Hosea 10:1; Micah 5:13).

Ephod and idol refer to methods of divination. In this context the ephod was not the garment worn by a priest, but a ***cultic object*** (cf. Jud. 8:27). Idols or ‘teraphim’ (*terāp̱îm*), sometimes found in homes (Gen. 31:19; 1 Sam. 19:13, 16) or in a king’s collection of ***divination devices*** (Ezek. 21:21), were despised by the Lord (1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24). These two items (ephod and teraphim) are also mentioned together in Judges (17:5; 18:14, 17-18, 20) as part of the belongings of an Ephraimite’s personal priest. These instruments of divination were confiscated by the Danites and used in their unauthorized worship system (Jud. 18:27-31).

**(3:5)** After Israel’s period of isolation she will repent and seek the Lord, rather than false gods (2:7; 5:15; cf. Deut. 4:29). Israel will also recognize the authority of the Davidic monarchy, which it rejected at the time of Jeroboam I (cf. 1 Kings 12). The nation will approach the Lord with a healthy sense of fear *(trembling)*, **even in the context of blessing**. In the past the nation had taken the Lord’s gifts for granted and proudly turned away from His commandments (cf. Hosea 13:6; Deut. 8:10-18). The blessings (lit., “goodness”) in view here are wealth and agricultural bounty (cf. Deut. 6:11; Isa. 1:19; Jer. 2:7; 31:12, 14 where the same word, *ṭûḇ*, is employed). The concluding phrase, in the last days, was used by the eighth-century prophets as a technical expression for the time of Israel’s restoration predicted by Moses (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1; cf. Deut. 4:30, “in latter days”).

*\*\*Christian Life Application\*\**

Just as Israel was to fear the Lord **in times of blessing** after their relationship had been repaired, even so we, **even in our justified standing before God,** must never lose our fear of Him. This type of fear towards God is not a fear that He will destroy us but it is one of **‘reverential awe.’** Biblical fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov.1:7; 3:7). Before any society comes to destruction it loses its fear of God-this truth is evidenced in the eventual collapse of every major civilization this world has known *(Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, German, etc.)* (Rom.3:18).

*Hosea’s Message: God’s Judgment and Restoration of Israel (chaps. 4-14)*

The remainder of Hosea’s prophecy expands the message of the first three chapters. Though emphasis is placed on Israel’s guilt and impending doom, each of the three major sections (4:1-6:3; 6:4-11:11; 11:12-14:9) concludes on a positive note by referring to Israel’s restoration.

*The Lord’s case against Israel (4:1-6:3)*

This first judgment-salvation cycle is comprised of three parts. Chapter 4 focuses on the sins of the Northern Kingdom, while 5:1-15a establishes the guilt of the entire nation (Judah included) and announces judgment. In 5:15b-6:3 Israel’s repentance is envisioned.

israel’s guilt exposed (chap. 4)

The guilt of the Northern Kingdom is the main theme of this opening judgment speech. The people and their leaders (prophets, rulers, and esp. priests) were the objects of God’s displeasure. While most of the verses are accusatory in tone, announcements of forthcoming judgment are also scattered throughout (cf. vv. 6-10).

*Breach of covenant*

**(4:1-2)** Hosea began this section with an indictment (charge, *rîḇ*; cf. “charge” in 12:2 and the verb *rîḇ*, “rebuke,” in 2:2) of the nation for breach of covenant. The people were devoid of the qualities that were to characterize life within God’s covenant. They failed to exhibit faithfulness and love (*ḥeseḏ*; cf. 2:19) and did not acknowledge God as their covenant Lord. (Acknowledgment translates *dā‘aṯ*, related to *yāḏa‘*, “to know”; cf. comments on 2:20.) Instead they blatantly disobeyed the Decalogue, which epitomized God’s ideal for Israelite society. Violations of five of the Ten Commandments are specifically mentioned: cursing, lying (cf. 7:1; 12:1), murder, stealing, and adultery (commandments 3, 9, 6, 8, and 7, in that order). “Cursing” does not refer to improper speech as such, but to calling down a curse on another (cf. Job 31:30). Because such imprecations (for Israelites) entailed invoking God’s name, they would be violating the third commandment when such an imprecation was unjustified (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; for an example of a justifiable curse invoking the Lord’s name, see Num. 5:19-23).

**(4:3)** Because of Israel’s sin, severe drought would sweep over the land and people would die (waste away). Drought was one of the curses threatened by the Law for breaking the   
covenant (cf. Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:23-24).

*The priests’ guilt (4:4-11a)*

The priests addressed in these verses shared the guilt of the people and therefore would not be exempt from punishment.

**(4:4)** The guilt of the population as a whole is further established. The first two lines in this verse prohibit either lawsuits among the people or formal opposition to God’s charges. In either case the reason for God’s prohibition was that all the people were guilty of rebellion. They were like those who brazenly defy God’s established human legal authorities (cf. Deut. 17:12).

(4:5a-b) Here the accusation (v. 4) is extended to the religious leaders. Stumble refers to their moral shortcomings (cf. 14:1; Isa. 3:8; Jer. 18:15; Mal. 2:8) or their coming downfall (cf. Hosea 5:5; Isa. 8:15; 28:13; 31:3; Jer. 6:21; 8:12; 20:11). These priests and prophets were attached to the official sanctuaries and royal court. Their allegiance was to their human king, not God (cf. 1 Kings 22:6-8; Amos 7:10-17), and they were characterized by self-gratification (cf. Isa. 28:7; Jer. 23:11) and greed (Jer. 6:13; Micah 3:11).

(4:5c-6) The Lord held these leaders responsible for the people’s lack of knowledge (cf. v. 1). The priests in particular had ignored their duty to communicate the Law of … God to the nation

(cf. Deut. 31:9-13; 33:8-10; Mal. 2:7). So they would be severely but justly punished. Because of their part in the people’s moral ruin mothers would be destroyed. This judgment, though unusual, appears elsewhere (cf. Jer. 22:26). In this way the source of the priestly line would be eliminated. As punishment for their rejection of knowledge, the priests themselves would be removed from their office by the Lord. Also because the priests ignored the Law, the Lord said He would ignore their children, apparently meaning they would not inherit their fathers’ office (cf. 1 Sam. 2:27-35). In this way the future of the priestly line would be cut off.

The repetition of the verb in each cycle of the announcement of judgment (**destroy … destroyed… rejected … reject … forgotten … forget**) emphasizes that each punishment fits each crime perfectly.

**(4:7)** One would expect that an increase in the number of priests would have positive effects on the nation’s moral climate. However, in Israel it only brought greater sin.

**(4:8)** In their greed the priests fed on the sins of the people by encouraging them to multiply the hypocritical sacrifices which the Lord hated (cf. 6:6; 8:11-13). The priests’ underlying motive in doing this was greed, since they received portions of the offerings which were presented (cf. Lev. 7:7-10, 28-34; Num. 18:8-19; Deut. 18:1-5).

**(4:9-10a)** Because the priests were no different from the other people, they also would experience the effects of the covenant curses. Despite their greedy schemes to accumulate food, their appetites would not be satisfied for drought would make food scarce (cf. 4:3; Lev. 26:26; Micah 6:14). Their efforts to promote fertility through cult prostitution would not succeed (cf. Hosea 2:13b; Deut. 28:18a).

**(4:10b-11a)** The priests’ sin is summarized here. They had deserted the Lord by breaking His covenant (cf. Deut. 28:20; 29:25; 31:16). In this case prostitution was a sarcastic substitution for the Lord’s commandments, which frequently appear as the object of the verb “to keep” (*šāmar*) in Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 4:2; 5:10, 29; 6:2; etc.). The Hebrew, “for the Lord they have forsaken to obey”. In this case the clause must be understood as highly elliptical, the sense being, “they have forsaken the Lord, refusing to observe His commandments.”

*The people’s guilt (4:11b-19)*

**(4:11b-14)** The scope of the accusation widened to include the people in general. Sensual pleasures had robbed them of their senses, leaving them without understanding. They engaged in pagan worship practices, including divination (seeking answers by a stick of wood), sacrificed to false gods, and engaged in cult prostitution (cf. 5:4). The Canaanite shrines, which Moses had commanded Israel to destroy (cf. Deut. 12:2-3), were located on hills and/or under shady trees (oak, poplar, and terebinth) throughout the Northern Kingdom (cf. 2 Kings 17:10-11). Here many young women (daughters) of Israel took part in sexual rites with male cult prostitutes (cf. Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:24). The intent of such acts was to ensure human and agricultural fecundity by making the fertility deities Baal and Asherah favorably inclined to their offerings and prayers. However, these women would not be singled out for divine punishment because the men frequented the shrines as well (Hosea 4:14). In response to such an obvious failure to grasp and apply the most basic principles of covenant life, the Lord cried out, A people without understanding (cf. v. 11) will come to ruin!

**(4:15)** Judah was now warned to avoid the sins of her sister Israel. This need not mean that the people of Judah were in the habit of visiting northern cultic sites, such as Gilgal (cf. 9:15) and Beth Aven. The threefold warning *(Do not go … do not go … do not swear*) is a rhetorical device designed to accentuate Israel’s guilt.

To associate oneself with Israel’s false, hypocritical worship would be contaminating. Even **Bethel** (lit., “house of God”), the site of Jacob’s dream (Gen. 28:10-19), had become **“Beth Aven”** (lit., “house of wickedness”; cf. Hosea 10:5; Amos 5:5) because of the religious practices conducted there (1 Kings 12:28-30; 2 Kings 10:29; 23:15; Amos 4:4). In the midst of this idolatrous, immoral worship the Israelites even had the audacity to employ the Lord’s name in oaths. The Law commanded Israel to swear by the Lord’s name (Deut. 6:13; 10:20). However, to make a semblance of devotion to the Lord while serving other gods was the grossest hypocrisy.

**(4:16)** Through her refusal to repent Israel had separated herself from the Lord’s protective guidance. As long as the nation responded like a young cow, stubbornly resisting His leading, God would treat her appropriately (cf. Jer. 31:18), not like a lamb which is allowed to graze leisurely in broad pastures. Stubborn refers to a rebellious attitude which the Lord finds deplorable   
(cf. Deut. 21:18-21).

**(4:17)** Because of her strong attachment to idolatry (joined to idols) Israel was to be left to herself and allowed to go to her doom. Ephraim, a prominent tribe in the Northern Kingdom, mentioned 36 times in the Book of Hosea, stands for Israel as a whole (cf. the parallelism in 5:3, 5; also cf. Isa. 7:2, 5, 8-9, 17).

**(4:18)** The accusation concludes as it began by referring to the carousing and immorality which characterized the people and their rulers (cf. v. 11). Rulers “shields,” a term which suggests the positive, protective role which a nation’s leaders should play (cf. Ps. 84:9, 11; 89:18). Israel’s rulers failed miserably in this regard, loving only shameful deeds.

**(4:19)** The result of Israel’s sin would be judgment. The first line has the idea that “the wind has enveloped her with its wings,” suggesting that she soon would be swept away. At that time the idolatrous sacrifices would prove to be only a source of disappointment and shame (cf. 10:5-6).

*Israel’s Judgment Announced (5:1-15)*

The Northern Kingdom remains the primary target group in this section. However, Judah, which had been warned to avoid Israel’s example (4:15), was now brought within the scope of God’s judgment (cf. 5:5, 8, 10, 13-14). The chapter begins with an accusation of guilt (vv. 1-5) which merges into an announcement of judgment (vv. 6-15a).

**(5:1-2)** Though the accusation en-compassed the entire nation (you Israelites), the priesthood (priests) and monarchy (royal house) were singled out for special consideration (cf. 4:4-10, 18). The leaders had encouraged the people to engage in false worship at cult sites such as Mizpah and Tabor. In so doing they were like a snare or net used to trap a bird (cf. 7:12; Amos 3:5). Mount Tabor was in northern Israel, about 12 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Mizpah in this context refers to a site either in Gilead or in Benjamite territory. If the former, then the places mentioned represent areas of the Northern Kingdom west and east of the Jordan River. If the reference is to Mizpah of Benjamin, the idea is that all cult sites from south to north were involved. In either case the selection of place names was designed to emphasize how the false worship led by the priests had permeated the land.

The rebellious priesthood (rebels) had gone to great depths (are deep) as it were, to slaughter their prey (continuing the hunting imagery of Hosea 5:1b), the people of Israel.

The “discipline” in v.2b (*mûsār*) refers here to severe punishment designed to restore one to proper behavior. As such, it is an expression of love that arises out of a close relationship (cf. Prov. 3:11; 13:24; 15:5). The **positive** goal of the Lord’s judgment is evident (cf. Hosea 2:6-7; 5:15b).

**(5:3-5)** The guilt of the nation as a whole is declared. Israel could not hide its sin from the omniscient God. The nation had become corrupt (*ṭāmā’*, “to be unclean or defiled”) through its spiritual adultery (cf. 6:10). This wording is probably drawn from Numbers 5:20, 27-28 where the same verb (*ṭāmā’*) describes the effects of adultery on the unfaithful party (cf. Lev. 18:20, 24). Sinful Israel had become so overpowered by a spirit of prostitution (Hosea 5:4; cf. 4:12) that any possibility of repentance and recognition of the Lord’s authority was precluded for the time being. The nation’s own arrogance served as a legal witness (testifies; cf. the same expression in 1 Sam. 12:3; 2 Sam. 1:16) to its guilt and, in accordance with the famous proverb (Prov. 16:18), had led to its fall (cf. stumble in Hosea 4:5). Judah had followed Israel’s example and had come to mortal ruin as well.

**(5:6)** The Lord’s punishment of His people would be expressed in two ways: **withdrawal of aid and blessing** (vv. 6-7, 15a), and **active warfare** (vv. 8-14). In the days ahead Israel in desperation would seek the Lord through sacrifices of flocks and herds. However, this hypocritical ritualism, devoid of genuine covenant loyalty, would be ineffective (cf. 6:6; 8:11-13; Isa. 1:10-17).

**(5:7)** God’s people had been unfaithful. The Hebrew verb (*bāḡaḏ*) often refers to a failure to carry out the responsibilities of a natural (cf. Jer. 12:6) or contractual (cf. Jud. 9:6, 23; Mal. 2:14-16) relationship. Here marital infidelity provides the background (cf. Jer. 3:20). As in the preceding chapters, Hosea pictured Israel as the Lord’s adulterous wife. Carrying on the figure, she had even given birth to illegitimate children, an inevitable result of her promiscuous activities. The reality behind the figure was perhaps those Israelite children whose birth was attributed to cultic sexual acts (cf. Hosea 4:13-15).

Such rituals only heightened the people’s guilt. Participation in religious festivals (here represented by the New Moon celebrations; cf. 2:11) would actually hasten their destruction, not avert it. Rather than experiencing population growth, the people would ultimately be devoured by their own sins (cf. Lev. 26:21-22; Deut. 28:62-63). The fields, for which they sought fertility through Baal worship, would be destroyed by drought, blight, and insects, and would be overrun by invading armies (cf. Lev. 26:16, 19-20; Deut. 28:17, 22-24, 33, 38-42, 51).

**(5:8-9)** The sound of battle trumpets was about to be heard in Israel. An invading force would sweep to the borders of the Southern Kingdom. Gibeah and Ramah were located a few miles north of Jerusalem in Benjamite territory in the Southern Kingdom (cf. Josh. 18:25, 28). Beth Aven (probably Bethel; cf. Hosea 4:15), though originally a Benjamite town (Josh. 18:22), was then just inside Israel’s southern border.

The desolation of Ephraim was certain to take place because it had been announced by the Lord, whose word is inviolable (“made known that which shall surely be”). This coming judgment would fulfill the covenant curse in Leviticus 26:32-35.

**(5:10)** Even Judah would not be spared ultimately (cf., however, 1:7). Its leaders were also guilty of breach of covenant. They were like those who move boundary stones for they showed no respect for God’s commands. Moving boundary stones was clearly forbidden in the Law (Deut. 19:14) and carried a curse (Deut. 27:17). The act was tantamount to theft as it obscured the legal boundary between properties and was a way of taking some land that belonged to another. Perhaps this particular crime was cited in order to allude to the acts of social injustice being carried out by the Judean upper class (cf. Isa. 5:8; Micah 2:1-2). On Judah’s sinful leaders the Lord would pour out His anger like a flood of water (lit., “like water”), possibly meaning like rainwater (cf. Amos 5:8; 9:6).

**(5:11)** According to verses 11-14, judgment had already begun. Ephraim was oppressed and trampled. Again Hosea alluded to a covenant curse (cf. Deut. 28:33). This judgment may refer to the Assyrian invasion of 733 b.c. (cf. 2 Kings 15:29). However, Israel’s troubles were ultimately attributable to her own sin, not to Assyrian imperialism.

**(5:12)** The Lord Himself was silently but effectively leading His people toward destruction. To Ephraim He was like a moth, which destroys clothing (cf. Job 13:28; Isa. 50:9; 51:8). To Judah He was like rot, which progressively causes bones to decay (cf. Prov. 12:4; 14:30; Hab. 3:16). This unusual figurative language means that God was sovereignly in control of the international scene, which He was already manipulating to bring about Israel’s demise.

**(5:13)** The nation’s response to its deteriorating condition (like a sickness with sores) was entirely misdirected. Following the path of political expediency, the Northern Kingdom turned to the invader himself, Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria, in an effort to restore national stability. This probably refers to Hoshea’s alliance with Assyria (2 Kings 17:3) at the time he usurped the throne of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 15:30). Judah had formed a similar alliance when threatened by Syria and Israel (2 Kings 16). Though Hosea 5:13b does not specifically mention Judah, the contextual references to her (vv. 13a, 14a) suggest that she was in Hosea’s mind as well. These efforts to heal the nation’s wounds would be futile. Assyria was a greedy overseer, not a physician. As soon as Hoshea withheld tribute, the Assyrians again invaded the land (2 Kings 17:3-6).

**(5:14)** The moth (v. 12) is transformed into a raging lion which violently kills its prey. The use of six first-person forms (I) in the Hebrew emphasizes God’s role in this judgment. In the final analysis the Lord Himself would be the attacker and destroyer, even though He would use foreign armies as His instruments.

For Ephraim this prophecy was fulfilled a few years later when Assyria conquered Samaria and carried the people into exile (2 Kings 17). Judah was overrun by the Assyrians in 701 b.c., but she experienced a miraculous deliverance after being severely ravaged (cf.1:7). The prophecy about Judah’s fall and exile (5:14) was eventually fulfilled through Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25).

**(5:15)** The ultimate purpose of the Lord’s judgment on His people was to restore them   
(cf. 2:5-7). Having received the just punishment for their sins, God’s people would turn to Him in repentance. God would not hear their prayers. He would go back to His place like a lion returning to its lair (cf. 5:14) till the nation underwent its punishment. In contrast with their earlier hypocritical quest for the Lord through sacrificial ritual (cf. v. 6), the people will genuinely and earnestly seek Him.

*Dialogue between Jehovah and His Wife (6:1-11)*

**(6:1-3)** These verses record the words the penitent generation of the future will declare as they seek the Lord. The message is constructed in two cycles, each containing an exhortation (vv. 1a, 3a) and a motivating promise (vv. 1b-2, 3b).

In contrast with her past folly (cf. 5:13), Israel will turn to the Lord as her source of healing and life (cf. Deut. 32:39). Assyria was not able to cure Israel (Hosea 5:13), but the Lord is able, even though like a lion (5:14) He had torn them to pieces. **The people will confidently anticipate His forthcoming restoration of their national vitality. The equivalent expressions, after two days and on the third day, refer to a short period of time, indicating they expected the revival to occur soon.** Israel will also resolve to acknowledge the Lord’s authority (contrast 4:1, 6; 5:4). Press on is literally, “pursue or chase,” which suggests the intensity of Israel’s newfound devotion.

The Lord will surely respond favorably to such loyalty. His emergence from His hiding place (cf. 5:6, 15) will be as certain as the sunrise. He will pour out His blessings on His people, as the winter and spring rains … water the earth and assure agricultural prosperity. The latter comparison was especially well chosen since **the regularity of these rains was a sign of the Lord’s favor** (cf. Deut. 11:13-15).

**(6:4)** The Lord’s argument here begins with a rhetorical question addressed both to Ephraim and Judah. The mood is one of despair and frustration. God’s people had rejected all His attempts to bring them to their senses. Their love (*ḥeseḏ*; cf. 2:19; 4:1) for the Lord was at **best transitory** (6:4b). Like the early morning fog or dew, any expression of loyalty quickly evaporated.

**(6:5)** God’s measures to bring His disloyal people to repentance had been extreme (cf. Amos 4:6-11). His words of judgment, spoken through the prophets, had brought sudden death and destruction on many people (cf. Jer. 1:10; 5:14).

**(6:6)** The reason for such severe discipline is reiterated: God’s people had failed to understand His true desire. He longed for devotion (*ḥeseḏ*, mercy) and loyalty (acknowledgment of God; cf. 2:20; 4:1, 6) expressed through allegiance to the covenant demands. Unless offered in the context of obedience, sacrifices were meaningless and even offensive (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-20; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8).

**(6:7)** Rather than pleasing God, the people had broken the covenant and been unfaithful (*bāḡaḏ*; cf. comments on 5:7) to God**. “Like men”** takes the Hebrew *’āḏām* in its widely attested generic sense, rather than as a proper name. In this case a comparison is made with fallen mankind, whose propensity to be unfaithful is well established (cf. Isa. 40:6-8, man’s *ḥeseḏ* [“glory,” Isa. 40:6] is as transitory as grass and flowers that wither in the sun).

**(6:8)** Widespread physical violence was just one example of the people’s unfaithfulness (vv. 8-9; cf. Ex. 20:13). Since Gilead was a district, not a city, the reference in Hosea 6:8a is probably to the city Ramoth Gilead, east of the Jordan. The town had become a center for wicked men (lit., “workers of iniquity”). It refers to the worst sort of men, who actively oppose righteousness and are the objects of God’s hatred. In this case they were guilty of murder (Hosea 6:8b). The city streets are pictured as being tracked with blood from the murderers’ sandals (cf. 1 Kings 2:5). The figurative language emphasizes both the extent and certainty of their guilt. Unfortunately the precise historical background for the crime cannot be determined. Perhaps oppression of the poor is in view. Elsewhere “workers of iniquity” are said to be guilty of oppressing the poor which is only occasionally associated with murder (cf. Ps. 94:4-6; Isa. 1:21-23).

**(6:9)** The background of this verse is equally obscure. Perhaps groups of priests were actually murdering travelers to Shechem. A more likely explanation is that the language is hyperbolic, perhaps pointing to the priests’ false teaching and involvement in social exploitation. The references to **(Ramoth) Gilead and Shechem are well chosen. Joshua had designated that both of these towns be cities of refuge, where manslayers could find asylum** (Josh. 20:1-2, 7-8) In this way the land would be spared outbreaks of bloodshed, and justice would be promoted. Ironically in Hosea’s day these cities had become associated with bloodshed and injustice.

The priests’ crimes were shameful. Elsewhere this word (*zimmâh*) is used of the vilest sexual sins, including incest (Lev. 18:17), cult prostitution (Lev. 19:29), rape (Jud. 20:5-6), and adultery (Job 31:9-11). This sexual connotation is probably applicable here because the priests’ breach of covenant (Hosea 6:6-7) is likened to prostitution (v. 10).

**(6:10-11)** The nation’s sin is described in powerful figurative language. The widespread breach of covenant (vv. 6-7) was a horrible thing. Jeremiah used a related term to describe rotten figs that are inedible (Jer. 29:17). Israel had become defiled by her prostitution, that is, her unfaithfulness to the Lord (cf. Hosea 5:3). The comparison of judgment to a harvest (cf. Jer. 51:33; Joel 3:13) emphasizes its certainty (appointed) and its thoroughness.

**(7:1)** The reference to the Lord’s desire to heal (cf. 6:1) His people comes near the beginning of this subunit. God longed to restore Israel to a place of blessing, but His efforts were met with new outbreaks of sin and crimes. The people’s widespread deceit and robbery epitomized their lack of regard for the covenant (cf. Ex. 20:15).

**(7:2)** To make matters worse, they disregarded God’s moral character by failing to realize that He was taking careful notice of their sin (cf. Ps. 50:16-21). Therefore like a wall their sins had completely surrounded (did engulf) them, making repentance improbable.

**(7:3)** The rulers were no different from their subjects. A godly ruler was to oppose all forms of wickedness within his kingdom (cf. Ps. 101), but these leaders delighted in it.

**(7:4)** Israel was a nation of adulterers. It is not clear whether general breach of covenant (cf. 6:10) or literal adultery (cf. 4:2, 13-14) is described here. In either case Israel’s passion for disobedience was like a fire burning low in an oven while the baker kneads the dough and waits for the leavening process to be completed. Like an oven fire, Israel’s passion might subside for a short time, but it was ever present, ready to blaze forth when kindled (cf. 7:6).

**(7:5-6)** Between 752 and 732 b.c. four of Israel’s rulers were assassinated (cf. 2 Kings 15). This political intrigue provides the background for Hosea 7:5-7. Here a description is given of how the conspirators characteristically carried out their plots.

The day of the festival of our king probably refers to a special celebration in which the ruler was the center of attention. The king caroused with his princes, who are called mockers probably because they were completely under the influence of wine (cf. Prov. 20:1). While they partied with the naive king, they plotted his overthrow.

One might paraphrase verse 6: *“When they approach the king their hearts, like an oven, contain a fire. Just as the fire burns lowly while the baker is inactive, so their scheme remains a secret. But when their time for action comes, the destructive plot is realized, just as a fire in an oven blazes forth when the time for baking arrives.”*

**(7:7)** Because the royal court of Israel was filled with such murderers, the kingship frequently changed hands. Throughout this period of palace revolt and regicide no one bothered to look to the Lord, the true King of Israel and her only Source of national stability.

**(7:8)** Instead Ephraim launched a futile foreign policy (vv. 8-12). The baking metaphor continues in verse 8 (cf. vv. 4, 6-7). Israel had formed alliances with foreign nations (cf. v. 11; 8:9). This is compared to the mixing of flour with oil to form cakes (*bālal*, mixes, is frequently used in this sense). This policy had proven self-destructive. **Israel had become like an unturned cake on hot stones—burned and soon to be discarded.**

**(7:9)** The negative effects of Israel’s foreign policy are described further in this verse. The nation is compared to an elderly man who has failed to notice the gradual effects of the aging process (loss of physical strength, graying hair). **Death is much closer than he expects.** The point was probably that Israel was experiencing loss of political autonomy. This loss was epitomized by the tribute payments that were an excessive drain on its wealth and economy (cf. 2 Kings 15:19-20; 17:3).

**(7:10)** Despite her weakened condition, Israel did not repent. The nation’s refusal (arrogance) to acknowledge the covenant God was self-incriminating (cf. testifieth to his face; also see comments on 5:5).

**(7:11)** In her efforts to arrange foreign alliances, Israel could be compared to a dove, which exhibits little sense. Under Menahem (ca. 743 or 738 b.c.) Israel submitted to Assyrian demands

(2 Kings 15:19-20). Pekah (ca. 734 b.c.) joined a coalition against Assyria, which Tiglath-Pileser III violently crushed (2 Kings 15:29). Hoshea (ca. 732-722 b.c.), after acknowledging Assyrian rulership for a time, stopped tribute payments and sought an alliance with Egypt (2 Kings 17:3-4a). This act of rebellion led to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17:4b-6), the inevitable result of a foreign policy which for 20 years had been characterized by **vacillating** and **expedient measures.**

**(7:12)** Worst of all, Israel’s policy had no place for the Lord (cf. vv. 7, 10). Consequently He Himself would intervene in judgment. While Israel sought out alliances with all the *naiveté* of a dove (v. 11), the Lord would come **like a wise and well-equipped fowler** and trap them.

**(7:13)**This brief unit begins on an ominous note. Woe (*’ôy*) suggests impending doom (cf. Num. 21:29; Jer. 4:13, 31; 48:46), as the next sentence (cf. Destruction to them) clearly shows. The basis for judgment was Israel’s rebellion (cf. Hosea 8:1; 13:16) against the Lord (because they have strayed from Me and because they have rebelled against Me). Despite His desire to save them (God said, I long to redeem them), they had spoken lies against Him. The word for “redeem” (*pāḏâh*) is used frequently to describe the deliverance from Egypt (cf. Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 24:18; 2 Sam. 7:23; Ps. 78:42; Micah 6:4). **The God of the Exodus is unchanged in His will, but because of Israel’s lies there will be no ‘exodus’ from the Assyrian danger**. In this context “lies” probably refers to Israel’s practical denial of God’s redemptive ability, expressed through her attempts to find security through other nations.

**(7:14)** Israel’s rejection of the Lord is illustrated here. The nation desired a plentiful crop (grain and new wine) but refused to exhibit the wholehearted devotion to God without which agricultural prosperity was impossible. They wailed (*yālal*; lit., “howled”; cf. Joel 1:11) as they mourned over the crop failure. The prophets of Baal wailed and cried in an effort to arouse Baal, the storm god, to action (cf. 1 Kings 18:28).

**(7:15)** Israel’s rebellion also revealed her ingratitude. The Lord had trained … and strengthened them. Elsewhere the expression “strengthened their arms” can refer to divine bestowal of military might (Ezek. 30:24-25). Perhaps Israel’s past military successes (including those of Jeroboam II; cf. 2 Kings 14:25-28) are in view. Despite experiencing divine aid in battle, Israel treated God like an enemy. The phrase, **“imagine mischief against Me”** suggests intense hostility and ill will. Similar language is used to describe Joseph’s brothers’ schemes to destroy him (Gen. 50:20).

**(7:16)** Israel’s hostility toward the Lord was an expression of her unfaithfulness. Israel was like a faulty bow. *Such a weapon is unreliable because it fails to respond properly to the archer.* In the same way Israel’s hostile response to God’s grace demonstrated her unreliable, disloyal character (cf. Ps. 78:57). The nation’s leaders, who had rejected their true source of strength (cf. Hosea 7:15), would be destroyed in battle because of their pride. **“The rage of their tongue”** refers to a formal denunciation or curse. Israel’s rejection of divine aid (cf. v. 13) in favor of foreign alliances is compared to a verbal reproach against God. Ironically Israel would become an object of derision among the Egyptians, whose aid they had foolishly sought (cf. v. 11).

*Israel’s rebellion punished (Ch. 8)*

This section includes several specific illustrations of the nation’s rebellious attitude and announces God’s coming judgment.

**(8:1)** The chapter begins with a note of alarm. A trumpet must be blown to signal an impending battle (cf. 5:8). An enemy (the Assyrians) was ready to swoop down on Israel like a powerful eagle. The announcement of judgment recalls the covenant curse of Deuteronomy 28:49. The house of the Lord refers here to the land of Israel. Again Israel was said to be rebellious (cf. 7:13).

**(8:2-3)** Israel made a pretense of devotion to the Lord, addressing Him as her own God and claiming to acknowledge His authority over her. This profession, however, was mere lip service (cf. 4:1, 6; 5:4). **Her sinful actions spoke louder than her words.** In reality she had rejected what was good (the Lord’s moral and ethical requirements; cf. Amos 5:14-15; Micah 6:8). Consequently an enemy would soon pursue her. The swift retreat pictured here fulfills another covenant curse

(cf. Deut. 28:45).

**(8:4)** Two examples of Israel’s sin are given in verses 4-6. She had appointed kings and other leaders without consulting the Lord. This alludes to the series of palace revolts that plagued the Northern Kingdom after Jeroboam II’s reign (cf. 7:5-7). Israel had also made idols for themselves in direct violation of the second commandment (cf. Ex. 20:4).

**(8:5)** The **calf-idol** of Samaria (cf. v. 6) was singled out because it epitomized Israel’s idolatrous ways. Since there is no record of such an idol being erected in Samaria, the city may stand here for the Northern Kingdom as a whole (cf. 7:1; 10:7). If so, the calf-idol was probably the image set up by Jeroboam I at Bethel (cf. 1 Kings 12:28-30; Hosea 10:5). By setting up golden calves (one in Dan and one in Bethel), **Jeroboam repeated the sins of an earlier generation (cf. Ex. 32:1-4**). Probably the people associated these calves with the storm and fertility god Baal (cf. Hosea 13:1-2).

Israel had rejected (*zānaḥ*) what is good and turned to idols. The Lord responded appropriately by rejecting (*zānaḥ*) Israel’s idols. As Moses and Joshua had warned (Deut. 11:17; Josh. 23:16), the Lord’s anger burned against the idolaters. In despair the Lord asked, *How long will they be incapable of purity?*

**(8:6)** The calf-idol (v. 5) was a *product of a* ***human*** *craftsman’s skill; how, then, could it be considered a god?* (Cf. Isa. 40:18-20; 44:9-20.) The words, it is not God, were probably meant to refute Jeroboam, who said of the calves, “Behold thy gods, O Israel” (1 Kings 12:28; cf. Ex. 32:4). The destruction of this image would demonstrate the **futility** of idolatry.

**(8:7)** The phrase they sow the wind is transitional. It alludes to the futility of both **her idolatrous worship** (vv. 4-6) and her **foreign policy** (vv. 8-10). “Wind” here represents that which lacks substance and is therefore worthless and of no assistance (cf. Prov. 11:29). **Israel would reap in extra measure what she had sown.** The futility (wind) which she had planted like seed would yield a crop of destruction (represented by the whirlwind). *All her efforts directed toward self-preservation would be self-destructive.*

The agricultural metaphor continues. Israel’s crop would be worthless, containing only stalks without grain. Even if she would produce grain, foreigners would take it away and the nation would not benefit from her labor.

**(8:8)** Already Israel had been swallowed up by her foreign policy (cf. 7:8-12). Her involvement with foreigners was swiftly robbing the nation of its strength and identity as the Lord’s people. Israel had become as worthless as a broken pot (cf. Jer. 22:28; 48:38). The words, in essence, mean

**“a vessel in which no one delights.”**

**(8:9)** Israel’s attempt to ally with Assyria could be compared to the wandering of a **wild donkey, an animal well known for its desire to be independent of all restrictions** (cf. Job 39:5-8). Israel’s alliances were also compared to prostitution; like a harlot she had sold herself to lovers (i.e., foreign powers).

**(8:10)** Despite Israel’s desperate attempts to preserve herself, God’s judgment were certain. The Lord is pictured as bringing her back from her wanderings to Assyria and Egypt so that He might oppress her (cf. 7:13). The instrument of judgment would be the mighty King **(i.e., of Assyria; cf. 10:6)** from whom, ironically, they had sought aid.

**(8:11-13)** Another of Israel’s sins was its hypocritical ritualism. The people had built many altars for sin offerings. But these altars had become altars for sinning, as the religious acts conducted there were hypocritical. Sacrifices are an offense to God when not combined with a wholehearted devotion to His commandments (cf. 6:6; Isa. 1:11). Israel had built many altars, but at the same time had treated the many things of God’s Law (His covenant demands; cf. Hosea 8:1) as something alien. So the Lord would not accept the sacrifices she offered Him. Instead He would punish her for her sins by sending her into exile. Egypt stands here as a symbol for exile and bondage (cf. 9:3; 11:5; Deut. 28:68). **This highlights the appropriateness of God’s judgment. In the deliverance from Egyptian bondage Israel had experienced God’s grace. Having spurned that grace, she would return to slavery.**

**(8:14)** A final illustration of the nation’s unfaithfulness was her **self-sufficiency.** Judah is specifically included in the indictment at this point. Having forgotten (cf. 2:13) that her very existence depended on the Lord alone (cf. his Maker), God’s people proudly sought ***prominence*** (temples) and ***security*** (fenced cities) through her own efforts **(cf.Gen.15:1- God had Himself promised to be those things to Israel – ‘great reward’ (prominence) and ‘shield’ (security)).** But the Lord was about to destroy (by fire) these sources of false security, fulfilling a covenant curse (cf. Deut. 28:52). God’s judgment came through the Assyrians. **Sennacherib would indeed “come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and {take} them”** (2 Kings 18:13).

*Israel’s hostility punished (Ch.9)*

**(9:1-2)** Israel was not to rejoice in expectation of a plentiful harvest (cf. v. 2) because her unfaithfulness had pre-cluded any further divine blessing (v. 1; cf. 2:8-9). At every threshing floor Israel had erroneously attributed the prosperity of her harvests to Baal (cf. 2:5). She had become an adulteress, offering worship to Baal and receiving from Baal the wages of a prostitute. Those “rewards” were wheat (at the threshing floor), vines and figs (2:12), and food, water, wool, linen, oil, and drink (2:5). **That is, Israel believed that by prostituting herself in worship of Baal that Baal in turn blessed her crops and gave her other necessities of life.**

The plentiful harvests were about to end (9:2; cf. 2:9-12). In fulfillment of several covenant curses (cf. Deut. 28:30, 38-42, 51) the Lord would take away her grain and wine (cf. Hosea 2:9; 7:14). Winepresses (*yeqeḇ*) were used for both **grapes** and **olives** *(wine and oil)* (cf. Joel 2:24).

**(9:3)** The judgment pictured in verse 2 would be accomplished ultimately through invasion and exile. The land belonged to the Lord (cf. Ex. 15:17; Lev. 25:23), who was responsible for its fertility (cf. Deut. 11:10-12). When the people attributed the produce of the land to Baal they forfeited the blessing of living on it in peace and prosperity (Deut. 11:8-21). Egypt is again mentioned as a symbol of the place of exile (cf. Hosea 7:16; 8:13; 11:5). Assyria would be the actual location (2 Kings 17:6). There in an unclean land (cf. Amos 7:17) Israel would be forced to eat ceremonially unclean food (cf. Ezek. 4:13), rather than the fruits of God’s blessing. **The punishment fit the crime.** Israel had become defiled by her sin (cf. Hosea 5:3; 6:10). How appropriate, then, that she eat defiled food in a defiled land.

**(9:4)** In exile, opportunity for legitimate worship to the Lord would end. Again the punishment was highly appropriate. Israel’s Levitical worship had been corrupted by hypocrisy (cf. 6:6; 8:11-13). A nation that refused to conduct its formal worship in the proper spirit would be denied its privilege of worship. Wine offerings, which accompanied certain types of sacrifices (cf. Num. 15:1-12), would cease. Sacrifices offered in a foreign land would not be acceptable to the Lord. They would have the same effect on a worshiper as bread eaten by mourners, who made everything they touched ceremonially unclean because they had contacted a dead body (cf. Num. 19:14-15, 22). Such bread was not fit for use in worship.

**(9:5)** The rhetorical question in this verse emphasizes the exiles’ plight. Israel would be unable to celebrate the most important festival (feasts and days in Heb. are both sing.) on her religious calendar. Perhaps the **Feast of Tabernacles** is specifically in view (cf. Lev. 23:39).

**(9:6)** Destruction would sweep over the land (cf. 7:13; 10:14). Those who happened to escape the sword of the invading army would face exile. The reference to Egypt probably has the same meaning as in preceding verses (cf. comments on 8:13; 9:3). **Memphis**, about 20 miles south of modern Cairo, **was famous as a burial place.** Here it symbolizes the ultimate destination of the exiles—a foreign graveyard. Few would ever return to their homeland (cf. Jer. 44:1-14). Meanwhile back in Israel the exiles’ possessions (treasures of silver) and homes (tabernacles) would lie in ruins and would be overgrown by **nettles** (briers) and **thorns** (cf. Hosea 10:8; also Cf. **Gen.3:18**).

**(9:7)** The people’s hostility toward the true prophets of God was one of several reasons for judgment (vv. 7-9). ‘Madness’ refers to one who is insane (cf. 1 Sam. 21:13-15). The term is used elsewhere by godless men who ridiculed true prophets (cf. 2 Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26-27). ‘Hatred’ (also used in Hosea 9:8) refers to **intense animosity**, such as Esau felt toward Jacob after Esau had been cheated of the paternal blessing (Gen. 27:41, *“held a grudge”*).

**(9:8)** The irony of the situation is that Israel tried to ensnare the prophets God had placed as watchmen over the nation. A watchman was responsible for warning a city of an approaching enemy (cf. Ezek. 33:6). In the same way God’s prophets were to warn the people of coming judgment on sin (cf. Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7-9). The house of his God refers to the land of Israel (cf. Hosea 8:1; 9:15).

**(9:9)** The depth of the people’s sin against God is emphasized by Hosea’s reference to the days of **Gibeah** (cf. 10:9). The phrase recalls the events that involved the brutal rape and murder of the Levite’s concubine by some bisexual men of Gibeah (Jud. 19). On that occasion it was said, “There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt” (Jud. 19:30). But Hosea said that black mark on Israel’s history was now **rivaled** by Israel’s blatant sins against the Lord.

**(9:10)** This section begins with a reference to Israel’s origins, when the Lord found extreme delight in the nation (cf. 2:15). Grapes in the desert would be an unexpected source of **surprise and delight**. The delicious early fruit on the fig tree was irresistible (cf. Song 2:13; Isa. 28:4; Jer. 24:2; Micah 7:1).

However, the Lord’s attitude toward His people soon changed. When they arrived at Peor they engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite and Midianite women as part of the fertility rites associated with the worship of Baal Peor (cf. Num. 25). This deity, which God called that shameful idol, may have been a local manifestation of the Canaanite fertility god Baal. **This event in Moses’ day was mentioned here because it set the pattern for Israel’s subsequent history, characterized by unfaithfulness.** In Hosea’s day Israel had also defiled herself by making Baal her lover. Like the generation at Peor, they too had engaged in fertility rites (cf. Hosea 4:13-14).

**(9:11-14)** As punishment for Israel’s sin of involvement in the Baal fertility rites (v. 10), the Lord would bring the covenant curses of **infertility** (vv. 11, 14), **death** (vv. 12-13, 16), and **exile** (vv. 15, 17) on the nation. The name Ephraim is used in verses 11, 13, and 16 because it was associated with fertility and fruitfulness (cf. Gen. 41:52).

Ephraim’s glory, here associated with numerous offspring, would depart as swiftly as a bird. Appropriately many of those who had tried to secure fertility through Baal worship would become sterile and barren (cf. Hosea 4:10 and, in contrast, Deut. 7:14). Others would miscarry or watch their children die in the forthcoming invasion (Hosea 9:12-13; cf. v. 16b). The women’s breasts would be dry for they would have no children to nurse (v. 14).

**(9:15)** The sinful people were now the object of God’s hatred, rather than His love. The Lord had become displeased with His wife, unfaithful Israel. Such displeasure is termed hatred (cf. Deut. 22:13; 24:3, where the same verb, *śānē’*, is used). God was prepared to drive her from the household (drive them out of Mine house), withdrawing His love (His devotion and protective care as her Husband; cf. Hosea 1:6; 2:4-5). The rebellious nation, whose opposition to the Lord’s covenant was epitomized by the Gilgal fertility cult (cf. 4:15; 12:11), would be expelled from His “house” (i.e., the land; cf. 8:1; 9:8). “Drive … out” (*gāraš*) is used frequently of the conquest of Canaan, whereby the Lord gave Israel possession of His land (cf. Ex. 23:28, 31; Deut. 33:27). Now Israel was about to suffer the same fate as the Canaaanites, whose practices it had assimilated. **Hosea may also be alluding here to the sinful couple’s initial expulsion from God’s presence (cf. Gen. 3:24).**

**(9:16-17)** Ironically, because of widespread sterility and infant mortality (vv. 11-14), Ephraim, once a symbol of fruitfulness, would be compared to a withered plant incapable of bearing fruit. Because of her disobedience Israel would be rejected by God (cf. 4:6). In exile Israel’s people would become **wanderers** among the nations. “Wanderers” translates the same Hebrew word (*nāḏaḏ*) as **“strayed.”** Again the punishment fit the crime. Those who willfully strayed from the path of covenant loyalty were condemned to wander aimlessly among those outside the covenant (foreign nations). As in 9:15, the language in verse 17 may also allude to the Genesis account. The same verb (*nāḏaḏ*) is used with respect to **Cain** (Gen. 4:12).

*Israel’s “double sin” punished (Ch. 10)*

**(10:1)** As in 9:10 this prophecy employs a botanical metaphor in referring to Israel’s earlier history. The Lord planted Israel like a vine in the land of Canaan and blessed her with fruit  
(i.e., prosperity; cf. Ps. 80:8-11; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10-11). **However, as the nation prospered she erroneously attributed her success to false gods rather than the Lord (cf. Hosea 2:8; Deut. 8:8-20).** At the same time the people attempted to maintain a *semblance* of devotion to the God of Israel. The altars mentioned here probably refer to this hypocritical formalism (cf. Hosea 6:6; 8:11-13), while sacred stones allude to idolatry (cf. 3:4; 10:2).

**(10:2)** Israel’s unfaithfulness established her guilt (cf. 12:14, 13:12, 16) and necessitated her punishment. **The phrase “is divided” (*ḥālaq*) literally means “is slippery, smooth.”** Often the term is used of deceitful, unreliable speech (cf. Ps. 5:9; 12:2; 55:21). With their heart (or mind) as subject *ḥālaq* refers to the hypocrisy which characterized her approach to the Lord. Appropriately the Lord would destroy the sites of her hypocritical and false worship (cf. sacred stones in 3:4; 10:1).

**(10:3)** As a result of the approaching invasion, the nation’s political structure would be shattered and her king removed (cf. vv. 7, 15). In the aftermath of the calamity the people would recognize their own unfaithfulness (i.e., failure to revere the Lord) as the basis for judgment. The situation would become so hopeless that most would realize that even a king could bring no remedy   
(cf. 13:10).

**(10:4)** The people’s lack of respect for the Lord was illustrated by their lack of regard for legal agreements they made with each other. Their attitude toward fellow Israelites (including frequently taking each other to court) simply reflected their lack of loyalty to God.

**(10:5-6)** Some details of the approaching judgment and exile are described in verses 5-8. The calf-idol (cf. comments on 8:5) located in Beth-aven (Bethel) would be carried away by the victorious Assyrian army, causing great consternation among its worshipers. The Hebrew word *’āwen*, spelled slightly differently, is **“Beth-aven,”** the derogatory name for Bethel (cf. Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5).

Idolatrous “priests” translates a rare term (*kemārîm*), used only of priests of Baal (2 Kings 23:5; Zeph. 1:4). The reference to the Assyrian army carrying off the idols of defeated foes is abundantly illustrated in neo-Assyrian literature and art. The great king refers to Assyria’s king (cf. Hosea 8:10).

**(10:7)** Israel’s king (cf. vv. 3, 15), as well as her calf-idol, would be removed in the coming invasion. Like foam floating on the water, the nation would be swept away by the current and brought to ruin.

**(10:8)** The sites of idolatrous worship would be destroyed as well, the ruins becoming overgrown with thorns (cf. 9:6) and thistles. The reference to the destruction of the high places (*bāmôṯ*) is ironic (cf. Lev. 26:30-31). When Israel entered the land the Lord commanded her to destroy these worship centers (Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2-3). **Because of Israel’s dismal failure in carrying out this charge, the Lord chose to use a foreign army to accomplish His purpose.** In utter desperation the people would beg the mountains to fall on them. A similar plea will be made by unbelievers in the Tribulation in response to the terror of God’s wrath in the seal judgments (Rev. 6:16).

**(10:9)** Hosea referred again to the shameful incident at Gibeah (cf. 9:9). Since that time Israel had persisted in sin. How appropriate that judgment should “overtake” the city that had served as a pattern for Israel’s sinful history!

**(10:10)** At the time of the Lord’s choosing *(when He desires*) He would chastise  
 (lit., “discipline”; cf. 5:2) Israel by gathering the nations against her. The imagery is that of plowing (cf. v. 11). Israel is pictured as yoked to her sin like a heifer (cf. Isa. 5:18). Israel’s two furrows or “double sin” probably refers to Israel’s former sin (at Gibeah) and her present guilt.

**(10:11)** The comparison of Israel to a cow is continued (cf. comments on v. 10). Israel (Ephraim stands for the Northern Kingdom) was like a trained heifer that loves to thresh. A heifer would like to thresh because threshing was a comparatively light task, made pleasant by the fact that the creature was unmuzzled and free to eat … as it pulled the threshing sledge over the gathered corn. **However, Israel had abandoned this relatively easy task and had insisted on being yoked, as it were, to sin (cf. 10:10b).**

So the Lord would place a different yoke on Israel’s neck and force her to engage in the extremely arduous work of plowing. Even Judah was included in this judgment. Jacob referred to the Northern Kingdom (cf. 12:2). In this figurative portrayal the nation’s threshing corresponded to the service the Lord required within the covenant relationship, whereas the plowing referred to the hardship that would accompany the exile.

**(10:12)** A brief call to covenant loyalty is included here. Even in the midst of a message of condemnation and judgment God held out the possibility of repentance and blessing (cf. Isa. 1:18-20). Using agricultural imagery, He urged Israel to seek the Lord by cultivating righteousness   
(justice) and reaping His unfailing mercy (*ḥeseḏ*, “loyalty”). The words “rain righteousness” compare God’s future gift of righteousness (or just treatment in the form of deliverance; cf. Hosea 2:19) to abundant rain (cf. 6:3).

**(10:13)** The exhortation in verse 12 actually summarizes the appeal made by Israel’s prophets throughout her history. But the sinful nation had not responded properly, producing instead wickedness (cf. v. 15), evil, and deception. Rather than relying on the power of God, the nation had depended on her own military might. The contrast between God’s desires and Israel’s response heightens her guilt. So the call to repentance (v. 12) had a twofold function: *it testified to the Lord’s grace and contributed to the development of the prophet’s accusation.*

**(10:14-15)** In response to Israel’s pride the Lord said He would destroy a source of her false confidence (fortresses; cf. 8:14). The severity of the judgment is emphasized by a comparison with a historical incident that was apparently well known to Hosea’s contemporaries. But the identity of Shalman and the location of Beth-arbel are uncertain. The most popular identifications of Shalman have been: (a) Shalmaneser III (an Assyrian ruler who campaigned against the West),   
(b) Shalmaneser V (the Assyrian ruler, and (c) Salamanu (a Moabite king mentioned in a tribute list of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III and a contemporary of Hosea). Beth-arbel has been identified by some (e.g., Eusebius) with modern Irbid (Arbela) in the northern Transjordan region about 18 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee and by others with modern Arbel two miles west of the Sea of Galilee (Arbela in the apocryphal 1 Maccabees 9:2). At any rate this particular battle was vividly remembered for its atrocities, especially the wholesale slaughter of women and children. Bethel, which here represents the nation as a whole, would experience a similar fate because of her great sin (cf. Hosea 4:15; Amos 7:10-17). The fall of Israel’s king would signal the conquest of the nation by Babylon (cf. Hosea 10:3, 7; 2 Kings 17:4-6).

*Israel’s ingratitude punished (Ch. 11:1-7)*

**(11:1-2)** Once again the Lord recalled Israel’s early history to contrast the past with the present (cf. 9:10; 10:1). At the beginning the Lord’s relationship with Israel had been like that of a father to a son (cf. Ex. 4:22-23). *Compare this verse with Matthew 2:15.* The Lord displayed His love toward the nation by summoning her from Egypt (cf. Deut. 7:8; also cf. Hosea 12:9, 13; 13:4). However, when God subsequently called them (11:2) to covenant obedience through His prophets, the people rejected Him (cf. Jer. 7:25-26) and turned instead to false gods (cf. 2 Kings 17:13-17) including the Baals (lords) (cf. Hosea 2:13, 17). Hosea 11:2a could be paraphrased, **“The more they** [i.e., the prophets] **called them, the more they** [the Israelites] **went from them.”**

**(11:3-4)** The Lord’s goodness to Israel is further illustrated. Like a father patiently teaching a young child to walk, the Lord had established and sustained Israel (cf. Deut. 1:31; Isa. 1:2). **He also healed (restored) the nation’s strength after times of judgment**, though she failed to acknowledge His intervention. Compare this with the endless cycle of defeat and restoration in the book of Judges.

In Hosea 11:4 Israel is compared to a **work animal** (cf. 10:11). The Lord is likened to a master who gently (in kindness and love; cf. 11:1) leads his animal and removes (or perhaps repositions) its yoke so that it might eat with greater ease the food he kindly provides (Mt.11:28-30). The Lord treated Israel with compassion and love.

**(11:5-7)** Astonishingly Israel had responded to the Lord’s kindness with **ingratitude** (cf. vv. 2, 3b). Even when the Lord called her to repentance through His prophets they refused to repent (cf. v. 7). Therefore inescapable judgment would fall in the form of military defeat and exile (vv. 5a, 6). Once again Egypt is named as a **symbol** *(not another literal Egyptian bondage)* of slavery and exile   
(cf. 8:13; 9:3, 6). Israel was simply following her **“own counsels.”**

As in earlier sections of this prophecy, Hosea’s message of judgment concludes with an abrupt shift to a message of salvation (cf. 1:10-2:1; 2:14-3:5; 5:15-6:3). These verses should not be understood as a decision to withhold the judgment threatened uncompromisingly throughout the book. Instead, the words are a divine response to Israel’s suffering and exile. The Lord would not totally abandon Israel. The effects of His wrath would be tempered by His compassion, and He would ultimately call His people back from exile.

*The Lord’s love for Israel (11:8-9)*

**(11:8-9)** One of the Bible’s strongest expressions of divine emotion is in these verses. As God reflected on the severe judgment that His wrath would bring on Israel, He suddenly burst out with four rhetorical questions. They indicate that He would never completely desert His people.***Admah*** *and* ***Zeboim****, which were annihilated along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23), were symbols of complete divine destruction.*

Instead of carrying out His fierce *(burning)* anger to the fullest, God’s compassion would be aroused. The burning flame of God’s anger would be replaced, as it were, by the fire of His compassion. Ephraim would never again experience the judgment of God. This promise is reliable because it was made by the Holy One (cf. Hosea 11:12) Himself, who condescends to dwell with His people and yet continues to transcend all that is human and fallible (*He is not a man*;1 Sam. 15:29).

*Israel’s return to the Lord and concluding indictment (11:10-12)*

**(11:10-11)** In the day of national restoration Israel will follow the Lord, who will lead the people back to their homes. His lion-like roar, often associated with judgment and destruction   
(cf. 5:14; 13:7; Amos 1:2; 3:8), will become a summons to return from exile. The people will again demonstrate a healthy respect for the Lord; they will come trembling (cf. Hosea 3:5 for a similar idea), as an earlier generation did when God appeared in theophanic might at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:16, where the same Heb. word is used).

The comparison to doves is significant in light of Hosea 7:11, where Israel’s **naiveté** in seeking foreign alliances is likened to that of a dove. Here the force of the simile is positive, the reference being to the swiftness with which the dove returns to its nest (cf. Ps. 55:6-8; Isa. 60:8). Again Egypt represents exile. Restoration from Assyria is also mentioned in Zechariah 10:10-11.

**(11:12)** The entire nationhad broken her covenant with the Lord. **Lies** and **deceit** refer to **hypocrisy** and **unfaithfulness.** The word **‘deceit’** (*mirmâh*) is especially appropriate in light of the following comparison with the patriarch Jacob (cf. 12:3-4, 12). The same term was used to describe Jacob’s deception in stealing Esau’s blessing (cf. Gen. 27:35).

Ironically the nation was unfaithful to the faithful Holy One, who had always demonstrated fidelity to His covenant promises (cf. Hosea 12:9; 13:4-6). *“Compasseth about with lies”* *(rûḏ)* means to stray or roam restlessly, an apt picture of Israel’s wandering off from God to Baal and to foreign nations for help. **“Holy One” is plural here (Cf.12:4 ‘with us’)**, emphasizing the **magnitude** of this divine characteristic (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). In this context God’s holiness refers primarily to His transcendence over fallible people (cf. 11:9). The last line of this chapter gives a passing glimpse of **Judah’s faithfulness** *(temporarily)* as compared to **Israel’s unfaithfulness.** Sadly, however, the **leaven of idolatry** would also spread quickly to the Southern Kingdom.

**(12:1-2)** Israel’s unfaithfulness found expression in social injustice (‘she increaseth lies and desolation’; cf. 4:2; 7:1) and in foreign alliances with Assyria and Egypt (cf. 5:13; 7:8, 11; 8:8-9; 2 Kings 17:3-4). **Olive oil was either used in the covenant-making ceremony or given as a token of allegiance.** All this activity was **futile** and self-destructive, as the references to feeding on and pursuing the wind suggest (cf. Hosea 8:7; 13:15). The Lord had a controversy “charge” (*rîḇ*; cf. 4:1; also see comments on 2:2) against Judah and was about to punish His people for their evil ways.

*A lesson from history (12:3-6)*

Before further developing the themes of guilt and judgment (cf. 12:9-13:16), Hosea reminded the nation of her need to repent (12:5-6). In doing so he drew a lesson from the life of **Jacob** (vv. 3-4).

**(12:3-4)** Jacob’s birth gave a hint of the kind of person he would be. His grasping Esau’s heel (cf. Gen. 25:26) foreshadowed his deception of his brother in ‘stealing’ his birthright and blessing (cf. Gen. 27:35-36). **However, Jacob eventually came to a turning point.** When he faced the prospect of death at Esau’s hand on his return to the land of Canaan he wrestled with God, refusing to let go till he received a blessing (Gen. 32:22-32). Later at Bethel, the site of his dream years before (cf. Gen. 28:10-22), God appeared to Jacob again. God changed his name to Israel, blessed him, and renewed His covenant promise (cf. Gen. 35:1-14).

**(12:5-6)** Like Jacob, the deceitful nation (cf. 11:12) needed to return (12:6) to her covenant Ruler, the Lord God Almighty with tears and prayers (cf. v. 4). Genuine repentance would involve a commitment to mercy (*ḥeseḏ*) and judgment, as well as a dependence on the Lord (*wait on thy God continually*; cf. Ps. 27:14), rather than on herself.

**(12:7-8)** Israel’s **repentance** (v. 6) would necessitate a complete **reversal** in her dealings and attitudes. The nation was permeated by economic dishonesty (*mirmâh*; cf. 11:12 for the same word), oppression (defraud), pride (Ephraim boasts), and insensitivity to her sin, thinking that her wealth would hide her sin. The Old Testament frequently spoke against using scales that were rigged to weigh out less merchandise than the buyer thought he was getting (cf. Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:11).

**(12:9)** The Lord, however, would not overlook such blatant disobedience and ingratitude. As their God, He had guided the nation since her days in Egypt, leading her through the wilderness to the Promised Land. As part of His coming judgment He would bring Israel into the wilderness again, making her live in tabernacles (tents.) The wilderness experience, which the people commemorated in the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:33-43), would be realized once more in the Exile.

**(12:10-11)** Though the Lord had communicated His will to Israel through the prophets, the people had repudiated those messages. The wickedness and hypocrisy manifested in Gilead (cf. 6:8) and Gilgal (cf. 4:15; 9:15) epitomized that of the nation. In the coming invasion the altars located there would be reduced to piles of stones (*gallîm*; cf. 10:8, *“the altars are as heaps”*).

**(12:12-13)** The Lord’s past goodness is again recalled. Going back to Jacob’s experience once more (cf. vv. 3-4), Hosea reminded the people of their humble beginnings. Their famous ancestor was once a refugee who had to tend sheep in order to acquire a wife (cf. Deut. 26:5). Later Jacob’s descendants served the Egyptians till God delivered them from Egypt (cf. Hosea 11:1; 12:9; 13:4) and protected them through His prophet Moses.

**(12:14)** However, Israel had provoked the Lord to anger with her sin. Hosea probably was alluding here to idolatry because *kā‘as*, the verb rendered **“provoked him to anger,”** is frequently used in reference to idols (cf., e.g., Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16, 21; Jud. 2:12; 1 Kings 14:9, 15). In response to this the Lord would not extend forgiveness (He would leave upon the nation its guilt;  
cf. Hosea 10:2; 13:12, 16); He would repay her for her evil.

*Impending doom (Ch. 13)*

**(13:1-3)** Ephraim’s prominent (exalted) place among the tribes of Israel was well known (cf. Gen. 48:13-20). Jeroboam I, who had led the Northern Kingdom’s secession, was an Ephraimite

(1 Kings 11:26; 12:25). However, this prominent tribe had also taken the lead in Baal worship and was as good as dead. As the Ephraimites (and the other Israelites they represent here) multiplied their idols and images, they added to their guilt. They debased themselves even further by kissing the calf-idols (cf. 1 Kings 19:18; also cf. “calf-idol” in Hosea 8:4-5; 10:5) in conjunction with their many sacrificial rites. In this case the prophet (Hosea 13:2) was emphasizing the absurdity of *men* kissing images of calves. The judgment of God would make these idolaters quickly vanish (v. 3). **Each of the four similes (cloud … dew; cf. 6:4, chaff . . smoke) emphasizes the extremely *transitory* condition of the idolaters.**

**(13:4-9)** Once more the Lord reminded Israel of His gracious deeds at the beginning of their history (cf. 12:9a, 10, 12-13). He led them from Egypt (cf. 11:1; 12:9, 13), cared for (lit., “knew”) them in the wilderness (13:5) and allowed them to feed in the Promised Land (v. 6). It describes sheep or cattle grazing peacefully. In return for such blessings they should have acknowledged the Lord as their God and Savior (v. 4). Instead they became proud and forgot Him (v. 6; cf. comments on 2:13). Like a vicious and powerful wild beast *(lion … leopard, or bear)* the Lord would attack His people (still viewed here as a helpless flock or herd, 13:7-8; cf. 5:14). Ironically the Helper of Israel would become her Destroyer because she was against Him (13:9).

**(13:10-11)** When the Lord would come to destroy (v. 9) no one would be able to save the people, not even the political leaders they had demanded from the Lord (v. 10; cf. 10:3, 7, 15). Hosea 13:11a (in My anger I gave you a king) probably refers to the Northern tribes’ part in crowning Saul (1 Sam. 8:6-9; 12:12), as well as their secession under Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:16). Hosea 13:11b refers to the cessation of Israel’s kingship with Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1-6).

**(13:12)** God had not overlooked Israel’s guilt (cf. 10:2; 12:14; 13:16). Ephraim’s sinful deeds were compared to a document which is bound up and a treasure which is stored up. Through both figures Israel’s sins were pictured as something guarded carefully till the day of retribution when they would be brought forth as testimony against the nation.

**(13:13)** Any basis for hope had all but disappeared. Israel had not responded to God’s call for repentance during the period of grace He had extended. The procrastinating nation was compared to a baby which does not come out of its mother’s womb despite her strenuous efforts in labor. **Such a delay will result in death for both mother and child.** Since the baby seemingly does not observe the proper time for his birth, he is referred to, figuratively, as without wisdom (cf. Ecc. 8:5).

**(13:14)** Traditionally verse 14a has been interpreted as an expression of hope and a promise of salvation. Compare this also with the New Testament statements concerning God’s victory over death through the experience of Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah (1 Cor.15).

**(13:15-16)** With the Lord’s compassion removed (v. 14; cf. 1:6), Israel’s prosperity *(fruitful)* would come to an end. The Lord would come like a hot east wind which dries up everything in its path. **The reality behind the figure is the Assyrian invasion, as the references to plundering and military atrocities make clear.** Thus 13:15-16 correspond to the plagues and destruction of death mentioned in verse 14. The language is that of covenant curse (cf. Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:21; 32:24-25; Amos 4:10). Again destruction would come, God said, because Israel had rebelled against Him

(cf. Hosea 7:13; 8:1).

*An appeal for repentance (14:1-3)*

**(14:1-3)** Hosea’s prophecy ends on a positive note with an exhortation to repentance (Return … to the Lord). Though this final appeal would surely be rejected by His arrogant and stubborn nation (cf. 10:12-15), it would instill hope in the hearts of a righteous remnant and provide the repentant generation of the future with a model to follow in returning to the Lord (cf. 3:5; 5:15b-6:3). True repentance would involve an acknowledgment of sin *(Say to Him, Take away all iniquity)* and a desire to praise the Lord *(so will we render the calves of our lips)*, Israel’s only Savior, God, and Helper (contrast 5:13; 7:11; 8:4-5, 9; 13:2). No longer will Israel trust in Assyria or other nations, or will she call her hand-made idols our gods.

*A promise of restoration (14:4-8)*

**(14:4-6)** In the day of Israel’s repentance the Lord will turn from His anger and demonstrate His love by healing her (cf. 6:1). At that time the Lord’s blessing will return to Israel. Like … dew it will cause the nation to blossom like a lily which was renowned for its beauty (cf. Song 2:2). This is a complete reversal of the imagery used in Hosea 13:15. Israel in her prosperity is also compared to a cedar of Lebanon, whose deep roots, luxuriant growth, and aromatic smell (cf. Song 4:11) were well known; and to an olive tree, widely recognized for its luxuriance (cf. Ps. 52:8; Jer. 11:16).

**(14:7)** His shadow (or shade) could refer to the Lord’s protection (cf. v. 8, where He is compared to a “fir tree”; also cf. Isa. 4:6). The picture of Israelites again growing grain points to the return of covenantal blessing (cf. Deut. 28:4, 8, 11; 30:9; Hosea 2:21-23; Amos 9:13-15). Once again Israel will be “like a” fruitful “vine” (cf. Hosea 10:1) which produces the best “wine.”

**(14:8)** The first statement, “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” The contrast with Ephraim’s earlier attitude is stark (cf. 2:8; 4:17; 8:4-6; 13:2). The Lord speaks in the latter half of 14:8 proclaiming His concern for Israel. The words care for translate the same Hebrew word (*šûr*) as **“observe/lurk”** in 13:7. **The same God who stealthily watched Israel like a leopard ready to pounce on its prey will become the One who carefully watches over His people to protect them!** Comparing Himself to a green fir tree, the Lord also asserted that He is the nation’s source of prosperity: your fruitfulness comes from Me.

*A word of wisdom (14:9)*

**(14:9)** The book ends with a word of wisdom. One who is wise and discerning will learn a **threefold** lesson from Hosea’s message. **The ways of the Lord** (i.e., His covenantal demands) **are right.** **The righteous walk in** (i.e., obey; cf. Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 28:9; Jud. 2:17) **them and experience the blessings of loyalty. The rebellious** (cf. Hosea 7:13; 8:1; 13:16) **stumble over (not in) them** in the sense that destruction (fall) is the direct result of disobedience. The broken commandments become the ultimate reason for their downfall (cf. 5:5; 14:1). **May all who read Hosea’s words walk, not stumble and fall!**

**Joel  
“Jehovah is God”  
 (JO)- *shortened contraction of “Jehovah”* (EL)- *prefix for ‘God’ El-Shaddai  
thus the literal meaning is* “JEHOVAH / YAHWEH is God”**

Key Word(s) -***“Day of the LORD”*** Key Verse- **2:1**

*Summary of the Book-*

Very little is known of Joel personally. **A severe plague of locusts seems to have been the event that gave occasion to Joel’s prophetic ministry.** The devastation caused by the locusts was to serve as an illustration of the future destruction that would be brought to Judah and Jerusalem by her invading enemies.

**Joel’s prophecy looks ahead to the “Day of the LORD” or the “Day of Jehovah” which is characterized as “the great day of His wrath” (Rev.6:17).**

The prophecy (message) of Joel has a TWO-fold fulfillment- *1) his present day with the (near) future of the carrying away of Judah into captivity and 2) the (distant) future day of Tribulation when Judah and all Israel will be purified through suffering and destruction.* Dual fulfillment of prophecy is not uncommon in Scripture (Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks of **both** Advents of Christ in the same passage). An element of partial fulfillment is also found in Joel (Cf. 2:28 and Acts 2:16-21).

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**Swarms typically contain 80 million locusts per   
square mile.**

*Outline of the Book*

***I. Introduction (1:1)***

***II. The Locust Plague (1:2-20)***

A. An opening appeal (1:2-4)

B. A call to mourn (1:5-13)

1. Drunkards should mourn (1:5-7)

2. The land should mourn (1:8-10)

3. Farmers should mourn (1:11-12)

4. Priests should mourn (1:13)

C. A call to repentance (1:14)

D. The significance of the plague (1:15-20)

***III. The Coming Day of the Lord (2:1-11)***

A. The nearness of the Lord’s army (2:1-2)

B. The destructive power of the Lord’s army (2:3-5)

C. The relentless charge of the Lord’s army (2:6-9)

D. The invincibility of the Lord’s army (2:10-11)

***IV. A Renewed Call to Repentance (2:12-17)***

A. An appeal for a sincere change of heart (2:12-14)

1. The appeal (2:12-13a)

2. The motivation (2:13b-14)

B. An appeal for national involvement (2:15-17)

***V. Forgiveness and Restoration (2:18-27)***

A. The Lord’s gracious response described (2:18)

B. The Lord’s promise of restored agricultural blessing (2:19-27)

***VI. Promises of a Glorious Future (2:28-3:21)***

A. Spiritual renewal and deliverance (2:28-32)

B. The judgment of the nations (3:1-16)

1. Judgment is announced (3:1-8)

2. A call to war: Judgment is described (3:9-16)

C. Israel’s ultimate restoration (3:17-21)

*The Place of the Covenant in the Book*

This book preserves the divinely inspired prophecies that Joel made during his ministry to Judah. Although the era in which he ministered is not clear, the people were evidently assuming that the coming “day of the Lord” would involve God’s judgment on the pagan nations and not on God’s people. Joel proclaimed that this view was wrong. The people of Judah would be restored only after they had been judged and repented of their sins. This method of God’s dealing with His covenant people is in perfect harmony with the promises made to David concerning Israel.

***“I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”***- 2 Samuel 7:14-16

***Expositional Commentary***

**(1:1)** The only fact given about Joel is that he was a son of Pethuel. The prophet indicated that his message was God’s Word, but did not date his prophecy in 1:1 in the reign of any king of Judah or Israel.

The opening chapter describes the effects of a severe locust plague which had swept over the land, destroying the agricultural produce on which both man and beast so heavily depended for survival. This disaster signaled an even worse calamity to come—*the destructive day of the Lord*.

**(1:2-3)** The prophet opened his message with an appeal to all who were living in the land, headed by the elders, to consider the uniqueness and significance of the disaster which had come on them. The elders were civil leaders who played a prominent part in the governmental and judicial systems (cf. 1 Sam. 30:26-31; 2 Sam. 19:11-15; 2 Kings 23:1; Prov. 31:23; Jer. 26:17; Lam. 5:12, 14).

The rhetorical question in Joel 1:2b anticipates an emphatic negative response. Nothing in the experience of Joel’s generation or that of their ancestors was able to match the magnitude of this recent locust plague. The unique event would be spoken of throughout coming generations *(your children … their children, and another generation).*

**(1:4)** The event in view was a massive invasion by locusts which completely destroyed the land’s vegetation. Four terms are used for locusts here (locust swarm, gāzām; great locusts, ’arbeh; young locusts, yeleq; and other locusts, ḥāsîl). Some have proposed that the four terms correspond to the locust’s phases of development from the pupa to full-grown stages. More likely, the terms are synonymous, used for variety’s sake and to emphasize the successive “waves” of locusts in the invasion. The threefold reference to the leftovers of one wave of locusts being devoured by the next emphasizes the thorough nature of the destruction.

Utilizing the form of a call to mourning, the prophet elaborated on the horrifying details and effects of the locust plague. This section contains four units (vv. 5-7, 8-10, 11-12, 13), each of which includes a call proper (vv. 5a, 8, 11a, 13a) followed by the reasons for sorrow (vv. 5b-7, 9-10, 11b-12, 13b). The personified land (or city?) as well as some of the groups most severely affected by the plague (drunkards, farmers, priests) were addressed.

**(1:5-7)** Drunkards were told to weep and wail because no wine would be available due to the destruction of the vineyards (v. 5; cf. vv. 7, 10, 12). Like a mighty nation an innumerable (without number) swarm of locusts had invaded the prophet’s land. Their ability to devour was like that of a lion, which can rip and tear almost anything with its powerful teeth (likened to fangs). The locusts had destroyed the vines and stripped even the bark from the fig trees… . leaving their branches white.

**(1:8)** The grammatical form of ‘lament’ in verse 8 (fem. sing.) indicates that the addressee is neither the drunkards in verse 5 nor the farmers in verse 11 (both of which are addressed with masc. pl. forms). The land itself (cf. 2:18) or Jerusalem (called Zion in 2:1, 15, 23, 32) is probably addressed here, being personified as a virgin or young woman (cf. 2 Kings 19:21, “the virgin Daughter of Zion,” and Lam. 1:15, “The virgin Daughter of Judah”). She was told to mourn bitterly, as a bride or bride-to-be would mourn over the unexpected death of the man to whom she was betrothed or married. This verse refers to an actual virgin, a betrothed woman, whose marriage had not been consummated. In this case the man could be called the husband of her youth because of the legally binding nature of betrothal. (Deut. 22:23-24 demonstrates that a betrothed woman could be referred to as both a “virgin” and a “wife”). **\*\*Also, the Church is in view 2 Corinthians 11:2\*\***

Sackcloth (cf. v. 13), a coarse, dark cloth, was worn in mourning rites as an outward expression of sorrow (cf. Gen. 37:34; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh. 9:1; Es. 4:1-4; Ps. 69:10-11; Isa. 22:12; 32:11; 37:1-2; Lam. 2:10; Dan. 9:3; Jonah 3:8).

**(1:9-10)** The primary reason for mourning in this case was the plague’s negative effect on the formal worship system (cf. v. 13). The destruction of the crops (grain, grapes, and olive oil, v. 10; cf. Hosea 2:22) had left the priests who served in the house of the Lord without the essentials for the daily grain offerings (minḥâh), which included flour and oil (cf. Num. 28:5), and drink offerings (nesek), which included wine (cf. Ex. 29:40; Num. 28:7).

**(1:11-12)** The farmers and vine growers also had reason to mourn since the fruit of their labor had been destroyed. These included grains (wheat and barley) and five kinds of fruits (grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates from palm trees, and apples). Because of the destruction of their crops they did not experience the joy of the harvest (cf. Ps. 4:7).

**(1:13)** The priests were told to take part (wail) in this lament because, as already noted (v. 9), the ingredients for certain daily offerings were no longer available. (sackcloth, see comments on v. 8.)

*A call to repentance (1:14)*

**(1:14)** The priests were told not only to mourn (v. 13) but also to call a sacred assembly at the temple for all the people. The nation was to fast and cry out to the Lord. Fasting was often associated with repentance (cf. 1 Sam. 7:6; Neh. 9:1-2; Jonah 3:5). The attitude that was to accompany this outward act is emphasized in Joel 2:12-17.

*The significance of the plague (1:15-20)*

**(1:15)** This locust plague was meaningful because of its role as a harbinger of the day of the Lord. Similarly this coming day would be one of destruction (šōḏ, related to the verb šāḏaḏ) from the Almighty (šadday; cf. comments on Gen. 17:1; this divine name was probably used here because of its similarity in sound to the word šōḏ, “destruction”).

It was natural for the prophet to see this plague as an ominous sign of an extraordinary event. In Egypt a locust plague (Ex. 10:1-20) had preceded the final plagues of darkness (Ex. 10:21-29; cf. Joel 2:2) and death (Ex. 11; 12:29-30). The Deuteronomic curses threatened locust plagues (Deut. 28:38, 42) in conjunction with exile and death (Deut. 28:41, 48-57, 64-68).

**(1:16-18)** Verses 16-20 contain a detailed description of the aftermath of the locust plague. By again concentrating on the unique nature of this particular event, the prophet supported his contention that the destructive day of the Lord was around the corner (cf. “at hand” in v. 15).

The people were all too aware (before their very eyes) that their food supply, and with it all reason to rejoice, had disappeared (v. 16). Drought had apparently set in as well, for the seeds had shriveled. The clods (v. 17) refers to “their (i.e., the farmers‘) shovels.” When the farmers dug into the ground to investigate the absence of green life, the shovels uncovered seeds that had not germinated. With no harvest available, the storehouses and granaries had been left to deteriorate. The domesticated animals *(cattle…. herds.… flocks of sheep*) were suffering from starvation.

**(1:19-20)** The prophet, who clearly identified with his suffering nation (cf. “my” which occurs three times in vv. 6-7), cried out to the Lord in his anguish. He compared the locusts to a fire (in both vv. 19 and 20) which destroys everything in its path. Even the streams had dried up, causing the dehydrated wild animals to pant for water (points to the fact of man’s sin and subsequent curse being visited upon the animals).

*The Coming Day of the Lord (2:1-11)*

In this section the theme in 1:15 is more fully developed as details about the approaching day of the Lord are given. Joel spoke of the Lord as a mighty Warrior-King leading His powerful army into battle. If one sets a pre-exilic date, the Assyrians or Babylonians may be in view. Both are pictured in the Old Testament as instruments of the Lord’s judgment (cf. Isa. 10:5-15 on Assyria; and Jer. 27:4-11; 51:20-25; Hab. 1:5-12 on Babylon).

Within this section, four units are discernible (vv. 1-2, 3-5, 6-9, 10-11), the last three being introduced by “before them” (vv. 3, 10) or “before their face” (v. 6). Verses 1-2 correspond to verses 10-11 thematically, forming a bracket around the section. These two units focus on the fearful response caused by the approaching army (vv. 1b, 10a), the darkness which accompanies it (vv. 2a, 10b), and its extraordinary size (vv. 2b, 11a). Two of these motifs appear (in reverse order) at the center of the section. Verse 5c refers to the army’s great size and verse 6 to the response of fear by people from many nations. Two motifs appear in verses 3-5a: the army is like a destructive fire (v. 3), and it charges relentlessly ahead (vv. 4-5a). Both ideas are repeated in verses 5b and 7-9, respectively.

*The nearness of the Lord’s army (2:1-2)*

**(2:1)** The section begins with a call of alarm, emphasizing the nearness of the invader. The trumpet (*šôp̱ār*) was a ram’s horn, blown by a watchman to alert the people of great danger (cf. Jer. 4:5-6; Ezek. 33:2-6). The appropriate response was fear (tremble; cf. Amos 3:6), especially in this instance since the day of the Lord was coming. ‘Holy mountain’ (cf. Ps. 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 24:3; 78:54; Dan. 9:16, 20; Obad. 16; Zeph. 3:11) refers to the temple mount.

**(2:2a)** The day of the Lord is described as a day of darkness and gloom … of clouds and blackness (cf. Zeph. 1:15). The reference to intense darkness following the locust plague of Joel 1 recalls Exodus 10, **where the same order of events appears.** Darkness and clouds—often associated with the Lord in His role as the mighty victorious Warrior (cf. Deut. 4:11; 5:22-23; Pss. 18:9, 11; 97:2)—here symbolize both judgment and destruction (cf. Jer. 13:16; Ezek. 30:3, 18; 32:7-8; 34:12; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:15).

**(2:2b)** The innumerable size of the invading force receives special attention. Like the rays of the morning sun (dawn) its hosts will cover the horizon. This army is said to be more awesome than any that had ever come or would come. The hyperbolic language may echo Exodus 10:14. If so, it emphasizes that the “locusts” of Joel 2:1-11 would be even more overwhelming than those that overran Egypt. **Something even worse than the Egyptian plagues was about to engulf the land!**

*The destructive power of the Lord’s army (2:3-5)*

**(2:3)** The invaders, like the locusts in Joel 1, are compared to a fire that consumes everything in its path (cf. 1:19). Fruitful lands, whose lush growth was comparable to the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:8-9), would become a desert waste. The reality behind this figure is the devastating effect of a huge, invading army on the land. ***The words “nothing shall escape them” may allude to Exodus 10:5, 15.***

**(2:4-5)** In the context of the overall comparison to locusts, the invading force is likened to an army (v. 5b) consisting of horses … cavalry, and chariots (vv. 4-5a). Such an association is facilitated by three facts: **(1) The heads of locusts and horses are similar in appearance. The German and Italian words for “locust” literally mean “hay-horse” and “little horse,” respectively. (2) Both locusts and human armies advance swiftly. (3) The locusts’ buzzing wings resemble the sound of chariot wheels.**

**The imagery of ‘locusts’ and warriors is used elsewhere concerning the ‘Day of the Lord.’**

***‘And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.’***[*Revelation 9:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+9:7&version=KJV)

Nothing can impede the invaders’ swift approach. They seemingly leap over the mountaintops. The Hebrew verb for “leap” (*rāqaḏ*) suggests both flying locusts and speeding chariots (on the latter, cf. Nahum 3:2, where *rāqaḏ* is trans. “jumping”).

*The relentless charge of the Lord’s army (2:6-9)*

**(2:6)** The response to this awesome army was widespread terror, for it involved nations. In **‘much pain’** (*ḥûl*) literally refers to writhing, as when a woman is overcome by labor pains (cf. *ḥûl* in Isa. 26:17; Jer. 4:31; Micah 4:10). This same response is seen elsewhere in contexts where the Lord comes to do battle (cf. Ex. 15:14; Deut. 2:25; Ps. 77:16; 97:4; Isa. 13:8; Hab. 3:10).

**(2:7-9)** Once more the relentless advance of the army is emphasized (cf. vv. 4-5a). Again the language applies both to locusts and to a literal army. Both advance in orderly fashion (vv. 7-8a), plunge through defenses (v. 8b), and enter walled cities and homes. As elsewhere in this section (cf. v. 6), Joel seemingly alluded to Exodus 10.

*The invincibility of the Lord’s army (2:10-11)*

**(2:10-11)** The army’s approach is accompanied by cosmic disorder. The entire world, from earth below to sky above, quakes (cf. shakes and trembles) before the thunderous battle cry of the divine Commander. This cosmic response is a typical poetic description of the Lord’s theophany as Warrior (cf. Jud. 5:4; Ps. 18:7; 77:18; Isa. 13:13; Joel 3:16). The darkening of the heavenly bodies (cf. 2:2, 30; 3:15) is another characteristic of the Lord’s Day (cf. Isa. 13:10; Ezek. 32:7; Zech. 14:6-7; also note Isa. 34:4). The prophet concluded with a rhetorical question *(who can abide it?)*, to suggest that no one can endure this great and dreadful day (cf. Mal. 3:2; 4:5). If the army in Joel 2:1-11 was in Joel’s day, it may foreshadow the army in chapter 3.

*Renewed Call to Repentance (2:12-17)*

Before such an invincible army the nation’s only hope was to turn immediately to the Lord in repentance. This section contains two formal appeals for repentance (vv. 12-14, 15-17). The first concludes with a motivational section.

*An appeal for a sincere change of heart (2:12-14)*

**(2:12-13a)** The Lord Himself urged the people to repent with genuine sincerity **(cf. with all your heart and rend your heart and not your garments)** accompanied by fasting and weeping and mourning. **Repentance is the desired outcome of the Lord’s judgments** (cf. Deut. 4:30; 30:1-2; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 4:6-11; this principle applies to every dispensation).

(2:13b) A recognition of the nation’s relationship to the Lord her God and of His gracious nature should have motivated His people to repent. The expression “the Lord your God” was well known to Israel (this phrase occurs 263 times in Deut.) and testified to the covenantal relationship between God and the nation. The words gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great kindness (*ḥeseḏ*, “loyal love”) recall Exodus 34:6 (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 143:8; Jonah 4:2), where the same affirmation preceded the renewal of the covenant after the sin of the golden calf. Because God’s character is merciful, He often relents from sending calamity. Again the golden calf episode is recalled. On that occasion Moses begged the Lord to “turn” and “withhold judgment” on His people (Ex. 32:12). The Lord responded favorably to his request (Ex. 32:14).

(2:14) The words who knows testify to the Lord’s sovereignty in the matter (cf. 2 Sam. 12:22; Jonah 3:9). Even if sinful Israel repented, she could not presume on God’s mercy as if it were something under their control which He had to grant automatically. They could only hope that He would turn and have pity (cf. Mal. 3:7) by averting the disaster (cf. Joel 2:20) and restoring their crops (cf. v. 25). Agricultural blessing would mark a reversal of the curse that had come on them (in the form of the locusts; cf. Deut. 28:38-42) and would make it possible for grain … and drink offerings to be presented again (cf. Joel 1:9, 13).

*An appeal for national involvement (2:15-17)*

The second part of this call to repentance is an appeal to the nation to congregate for a formal ceremony of lamentation and prayer.

**(2:15)** The opening words of verse 1, **Blow ye the trumpet in Zion**, are repeated. The fear elicited by the sound of the watchman’s trumpet (v. 1) was to prompt another sound of the ram’s horn, this time calling the people to a holy fast and sacred assembly (cf. 1:14). For the blowing of a ram’s horn was also used to call religious convocations (cf. Lev. 25:9; Ps. 81:3).

**(2:16)** The entire worshiping community (assembly) was to gather, from the oldest (elders) to the youngest (those nursing at the breast). Not even newlyweds were exempted (cf. Deut. 24:5).

**(2:17)** The priests were to lead the ceremony by weeping before the Lord in the court of the temple (i.e., between the temple porch and the bronze altar of burnt offering; cf. Ezek. 8:16) and by offering a prayer for deliverance.

The prayer was to include a petition: **spare** (*ḥûs*, “pity or have compassion on”; cf. Jonah 4:11 for the same word). If Israel, God’s own inheritance (cf. Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29; Ps. 28:9; 33:12; 78:62, 71; 79:1; 94:14; Micah 7:14, 18), were to become an object of scorn (cf. Joel 2:19), the nations might erroneously conclude that He lacked the power and/or love to save those who belonged to Him  
 (cf. Ex. 32:12; Deut. 9:26-29; Ps. 79:4, 10).

*Forgiveness and Restoration (2:18-27)*

This section marks a turning point in the argument of the book. It describes the divine response (v. 18) to the nation’s repentance and records the Lord’s comforting words to His people (vv. 19-27). The effects of the locust plague (chap. 1) are reversed (see esp. 2:25), and the threatened invasion (vv. 1-11) is averted (v. 20).

*The Lord’s gracious response described (2:18)*

**(2:18)** In response to this genuine repentance, the Lord was jealous for His land and took pity on His people. The Lord’s jealousy is His passionate loyalty toward what is His, a loyalty that prompts Him to lash out against anything that would destroy it (cf. Isa. 26:11; Ezek. 36:5-6; 38:19; Zech. 1:14; 8:2). The military protection described in Joel 2:20 is in view here.

*The Lord’s promise of restored agricultural blessing (2:19-27)*

**(2:19-20a)** The Lord’s promise began with a proclamation that the agricultural produce (grain, new wine, and oil) destroyed by the locusts (cf. 1:10) would be restored. He then announced that His people would never again be an object of scorn to the nations (cf. 2:17). Similarly (vv. 26-27) He promised they would **“no more make you a reproach.”**

The Lord next announced that the threat described in Joel 2:1-11 would be averted (v. 20a). He would turn against the very army He had been bringing against His disobedient people (cf. v. 11), driving it into the desert (a parched and barren land) and the seas (the eastern sea and the western sea, probably the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; cf. Zech. 14:8).

The carcasses’ stench would permeate the air. As in Joel 2:1-11, the language, though alluding to a literal army (cf. Isa. 34:3; Amos 4:10), applies to locusts as well. Eyewitness accounts tell how dead locusts, having been driven into the sea and then washed ashore, gave out a foul odor.

**(2:20b-21b)** The insolent pride of the invader would then be in view   
(cf. Isa. 10:5-19 for a similar view).

In the first two lines of verse 21 the personified land, which had been stripped of its produce (cf. 1:10), is encouraged to fear no longer but to be glad and rejoice.

**(2:21c-24)** Each of the three elements in verses 20b-21b is repeated and/or expanded in these verses. The repeated affirmation that the Lord has done great things is followed by the expanded charges, be not afraid (v. 22) and be glad… and rejoice (v. 23).

The first charge was directed to the wild animals, which had been affected so adversely by the locust invasion and accompanying drought (cf. 1:20). The effects of that judgment would be completely reversed. The open pastures (cf. 1:19) would again bring forth grass and vegetation. The trees and vines would again yield their fruit (cf. 1:7, 12, 19).

The second charge (2:23) was directed to the inhabitants of Zion (i.e., Jerusalem; cf. v. 1) who were earlier instructed to grieve over the destruction wrought by the locusts (cf. 1:5, 8, 11, 13). They could now “rejoice” because the Lord was prepared to restore fertility to their fields. As promised in Deuteronomy 11:14, the autumn and spring rains would come on schedule (in September-October and March-April), producing a bountiful harvest. The abundance of the harvest will be evidenced by the threshing floors and wine and oil vats being filled to capacity (Joel 2:24).

**(2:25-27)** Verse 25 nicely summarizes the overriding theme of verses 19-24. The effects of the locusts would be completely reversed. Speaking as though compelled by legal obligation, the Lord promised to repay (*šillēm*; cf. its use in Ex. 22:1; 2 Kings 4:7) the nation for the crops which His great army of locusts (cf. Joel 1:4) had devoured.

The agricultural abundance (2:26a) would prompt the people to praise the name (i.e., the revealed character) of their covenant God, who had worked wonders for them (v. 26b). This last expression placed the restoration of agricultural blessing in the mainstream of God’s miraculous historical deeds on behalf of His people (cf. Ex. 3:15; 15:11; 34:10; Josh. 3:5; Jud. 6:13; Ps. 77:14).

The nation would also acknowledge (know) His active presence and His rightful place as their God (Joel 2:27). The words “I am in the midst of Israel” recall the Pentateuchal references to God being “among” (or, “in the midst of”) His people (cf. Num. 11:20; 14:14; Deut. 7:21). The frequently used expression you will know that … I am the Lord your God also originated in the Pentateuch (cf. Ex. 6:7; 16:12). The association of that expression with the Lord’s exclusive claim to be Israel’s God (there is no other) reminds one of Deuteronomy 4:35, 39. **Through these allusions to earlier traditions, the Lord affirmed that His relationship to His people was just as vital then as it had been in Moses’ day.**

***“O LORD…in wrath remember mercy…”***  
Habakkuk 3:2

*Promises of a Glorious Future (2:28-3:21)*

**This concluding section of the Book of Joel develops more fully the eschatological element of the Lord’s promise** (cf. comments on 2:19-20a; “afterward” in 2:28; “in those days” in 3:1; “in that day” in 3:18). The deliverance experienced by Joel’s generation foreshadowed that of the end times. The day of the Lord, so narrowly averted by Joel’s repentant contemporaries, will come in full force against the enemies of God’s people (perhaps foreshadowed by the northern army of 2:20). The promises of 2:19-27 will find their ultimate and absolute fulfillment as the Lord intervenes on Israel’s behalf (2:28-32), decisively judges the nation’s enemies (3:1-16a, 19), and securely establishes His people in their land (3:1, 16b-18, 20-21).

*Spiritual renewal and deliverance (2:28-32)*

**(2:28-29)** The Lord announced that His “day” (v. 31) would be accompanied by an outpouring of His Spirit on all people (lit., “all flesh”). The following context indicates that “all people” refers more specifically to all inhabitants of Judah (cf. the threefold use of your in v. 28, as well as the parallel passages in Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10). This will be true regardless of age, gender, or social class (Joel 2:29).

At that time recipients of the divine Spirit will exercise prophetic gifts (will prophesy … will dream dreams, and will see visions) which in the past had been limited to a select few (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10-11; 19:20-24). This is probably an allusion to Numbers 11:29, where Moses, responding to Joshua’s misguided zeal after an outpouring of the divine Spirit on the 72 elders (cf. Num. 11:24-28), declared, *“I wish that all the Lord‘s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!”* This extensive outpouring of the Spirit will signal the advent of divine blessing (contrast   
1 Sam. 3:1, where the absence of prophetic visions characterized a period of sin and judgment).

**2:30-31** The great and dreadful day of the Lord will be preceded by ominous signs (wonders) of impending judgment (cf. v. 10; see also Ezek. 32:6-8 for literary parallels). Blood and fire and pillars of smoke suggest the effects of warfare. The turning of the moon to blood refers in a poetic way to its being darkened (cf. the parallel line, The sun will be turned to darkness, and Joel 2:10; 3:15). Though such phenomena will signal doom for God’s enemies, His people should interpret them as the precursors of their deliverance (cf. Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28).

**(2:32)** At this time of universal judgment, everyone who calls on (i.e., invokes) the name of the Lord will be saved (i.e., delivered from physical danger; cf. comments on Rom. 11:26). In Romans 10:13 Paul related this passage to Gentile (as well as Jewish) salvation.

In the day of the Lord Jerusalem will be a place of refuge for the survivors whom the Lord calls. This remnant with whom the Lord initiates a special relationship (for the sense of “call” here, see Isa. 51:2) should probably be equated with the group described in Joel 2:28-29, 32a, though some see this as referring to returning exiles.

On the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 in conjunction with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:17-21). His introductory words (cf. Acts 2:16, “this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel”) may seem to indicate that he considered Joel’s prophecy as being fulfilled on that occasion. However, it is apparent that the events of that day, though extraordinary, did not fully correspond to those predicted by Joel in the complete and ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy.

In attempting to solve this problem one must recognize that in the early chapters of Acts the kingdom was being offered to Israel once more. Peter admonished the people to repent so that they might receive the promised Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38-39 where he alludes to Joel 2:32). Shortly thereafter Peter anticipated “times of refreshing” and the return of Christ in response to national repentance (cf. Acts 10:19-21). Not until later did Peter come to understand more fully God’s program for the Gentiles in the present age (cf. Acts 10:44-48). When he observed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost he rightly viewed it as the first stage in the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Apparently he believed that the kingdom was then being offered to Israel and that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signaled the coming of the Millennium. However, the complete fulfillment of the prophecy (with respect to both the extent of the Spirit’s work and the other details) was delayed because of Jewish unbelief.

*The judgment of the nations (3:1-16)*

**(3:1-3)** In the future day of the Lord Judah and her enemies will be carefully distinguished. The Lord will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, in fulfillment of Moses’ promise (cf. Deut. 30:3). At the same time God will gather the nations for judgment.

The site of the judgment will be the Valley of Jehoshaphat, mentioned only in Joel 3:2, 12. Whether such a geographical site was known by this name in ancient Israel is not certain. Some scholars suggest it is a yet-future valley, to be formed by the splitting of the Mount of Olives at the Messiah’s return (Zech. 14:4). At any rate, the importance of the name is not in its geographical location, but in its meaning, **“the Lord judges.”**

**The reason for God’s judgment is the nations’ treatment of His covenant people** (My heritage; cf. comments on Joel 2:17), My people. The nations had scattered the Lord’s people, sold them as slaves to distant lands, and divided up His land. “Scattered” (from *pāzar*, “to disperse”) seems to refer to the Babylonian Exile (cf. Jer. 50:17). Even though the Lord Himself assigned the land to Israel’s enemies (cf. Lam. 5:2; Micah 2:4), He still held these nations guilty for their failure to recognize His sovereignty and for their cruel treatment of His people.

**(3:4-6)** In verses 4-8 the Lord spoke directly to the Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon) and the Philistines, two groups that profited economically from Judah’s demise (cf. Ezek. 25:15; 28:20-24). The Lord identified Himself with His people (note Me in Joel 3:4) and denied that these nations had any justification for their actions (this is the force of the rhetorical questions in v. 4).

God then announced that He would repay them for their offenses (v. 4b). These are specified as robbery (v. 5) and slave trade (v. 6). Since neither the Phoenicians nor the Philistines are mentioned as robbing the temple treasuries during the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 25), Joel 3:5 may refer to Israel’s wealth in general.

Phoenician and Philistine involvement in slave trade (v. 6) is mentioned elsewhere (cf. Amos 1:6, 9). According to Kapelrud, the Greeks mentioned here are actually Ionians (*yewānîm*), who populated the coasts of Asia Minor. Ionian commerce was at its peak in the seventh and sixth centuries b.c. Ezekiel 27:13, 19 mentions Tyrian trading arrangements (including slaves) with the Ionians (or Greece). The trading recalled in Joel may have occurred in conjunction with Judah’s fall to the Babylonians.

**(3:7-8)** The divine judgment on these nations would be perfectly appropriate. The Lord would rouse His dispersed people and put them in the position of slave traders. *They* would sell the sons and daughters of the Phoenicians and Philistines as slaves to the Sabeans (cf. Job 1:13-15), an Arabian people noted for their commercial activities (cf. “Sheba” in Ezek. 27:22-23).

*The judgment threatened here probably was fulfilled in part, in the fourth century b.c. Allen explains, “The people of Sidon were sold into slavery by Antiochus III in 345 b.c., while the citizens of Tyre and Gaza were enslaved by Alexander in 332 b.c.”. Perhaps Jews were involved in some of the transactions. In the context (cf. Joel 3:1) the passage also carries an* ***eschatological significance*** *which any historical fulfillment merely prefigures. From this perspective Philistia and Phoenicia represent all of Israel’s enemies (much as do Moab in Isa. 25:10-12 and Edom in the Book of Obad.). At that time God’s people will gain ascendancy over their enemies (cf. Isa. 41:11-12; Amos 9:12; Obad. 15-21; Micah 7:16-17; Zeph. 2:6-7).*

**(3:9-11)** Unidentified messengers are instructed to issue a call of war to the nations (cf. “all nations” in Isa. 34:2; “all the heathen”Obad 15; Zech. 14:2). The nations are to beat their farming implements into weapons (Joel 3:10; contrast Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3) and assemble for battle (Joel 3:11a; cf. Zech. 12:9). The Lord is urged to bring down His warriors.

**(3:12-13)** The Lord Himself now repeated the summons of the preceding verses, instructing the nations to enter the **Valley of Jehoshaphat** (cf. v. 2). Employing agricultural imagery, He then commanded His warriors to destroy His enemies. The first command (Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe) probably compares judgment to harvesting grain (cf. Isa. 17:5; Rev. 14:15). The second (Come, trample the grapes) compares the annihilation of the enemies to treading grapes in a winepress (cf. Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 14:18-20). The underlying reason for the nations’ demise is that their wickedness is great.

These verses (Joel 3:12-13) plainly indicate that the judgment mentioned in this chapter will actually take the form of divine warfare against Israel’s enemies. So the event described here should be equated with **Armageddon** (cf. Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-21), rather than the judgment of the nations prophesied in Matthew 25:31-46.

**(3:14-16)** An innumerable host will be assembled in the valley of decision (also called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, vv. 2, 12). Here the divine Judge’s verdict will be executed on the nations. As in earlier passages (cf. 2:10, 31) the darkening of the heavenly bodies (3:15) serves as an ominous sign of the approaching day of the Lord (v. 14). The Lord will then emerge from His sanctuary in Jerusalem in theophanic splendor (v. 16; cf. Amos 1:2). His thunderous battle cry (cf. will roar … and thunder) will produce cosmic disorder (cf. Joel 2:10-11; Rev. 16:16, 18). He will then demonstrate that He is Israel’s Refuge (cf. Ps. 46:1; 62:8; Isa. 25:4) and Stronghold (cf. Ps. 9:9; 18:2; 27:1; 37:39; 43:2; 144:2).

*Israel’s ultimate restoration (3:17-21)*

**(3:17)** After this awesome display of divine power, Israel will recognize (know) that the Lord truly dwells among them (cf. 2:27). Jerusalem, the site of the Lord’s holy sanctuary (My holy hill; cf. comments on 2:1) will be holy in the sense that it will never again be defiled by foreign invaders (cf. Isa. 52:10-11; Nahum 1:15). ***The “Times of the Gentiles” is now concluded.***

**(3:18)** At that time *(in that day, when Messiah will reign over His people in the Millennium)* the land will be a virtual paradise, enabling the Lord’s people to enjoy His agricultural blessings to the fullest. The grape harvest will be so bountiful that wine will seemingly drip from the mountains. Milk will be just as plentiful. It too was a sign of prosperity; Canaan was described as a land “flowing with milk and honey” (cf. Ex. 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; also note Isa. 55:1). The seasonal streams will no longer run dry. This abundance of wine, milk (implying the existence of extensive herds), and water represents a complete reversal of the effects of the locust plague (cf. Joel 1:5, 18, 20).

**(3:18)** A fountain will flow out of the Lord‘s house, the Jerusalem temple. Similar imagery is employed in Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8. This fountain (and the stream it produces) will be a tangible reminder that **the Lord is the Source of the land’s fertility** (cf. Ezek. 47:8-10, 12). The valley of acacias is probably that portion of the Kidron Valley which runs through the arid wilderness to the Dead Sea (cf. Ezek. 47:8).

**(3:19-20)** In contrast with the God-given abundance of Judah (v. 18), the lands of her enemies (represented by Egypt and Edom) will be infertile (desolate and a desert waste). The reason for this severe judgment is their mistreatment of the people of Judah. Israel’s enemies are guilty of violence and of shedding innocent blood.

The security and prosperity portrayed in Joel 3:17-18 will never again be interrupted. Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited forever (cf. Ezek. 37:25; Amos 9:15; Zech. 14:11).

**(3:21)** This relates to passage of judgment on the nations (cf. v. 19) by portraying the Lord as the Avenger of Judah’s blood (“I will avenge their blood”).

The book ends with an affirmation of the **Lord’s presence in Zion** (cf. Joel 3:17). It is this fact, above all else, which will assure the nation’s glorious future, portrayed in verses 17-21.

**The Prophetic Days of Scripture**

*Different* ***‘days’*** *of the Bible are distinguished as they relate to* ***prophecy****. Each of these ‘days’ have* ***different purposes*** *as well as* ***different participants****. A refusal to understand the differences can and has led to false doctrine.*

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**\**involves primarily the nation of Israel*\**commences immediately after the Rapture and concludes with the Millennial Kingdom***

* **The Day of the *LORD***

**Isaiah** 2:12; 13:6; 13:9; **Joel** 1:15; 2:31;  
**Obadiah** 1:15; **Zeph.**1:14; 2:2; **Amos** 5:18

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**\**involves the Rapture ONLY*\**only believers will have part of this ‘Day’***

* **The Day of *Christ***

**1 Cor.** 1:8; **Phil.**1:6, 10; 2:16   
**2 Thess.** 2:2

The two-fold purpose of the Day of the LORD is 1) **Purification of Israel through suffering** 2) **Judgment executed upon the unbelieving Gentiles**

The purpose of the Day of Christ is to **remove Christ’s BRIDE** *(Church)* before the Tribulation that accompanies the   
Day of the LORD  
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:9 **“For God hath not appointed us to wrath”**

**Amos  
“Burden”**

Key Word(s) -***“Punish(ment)” (10x)*** Key Verse- **4:12**

*Summary of the Book-*

Amos, a man from Judah, was called to prophesy in Israel. **The message God gave him was primarily one of judgment, though it ended with words of hope.**

The Lord God Almighty, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, would come as a **Warrior** to judge the nations that had rebelled against His authority. Israel in particular would be punished for her covenant violations against Him.

Though the nation would be destroyed, God will preserve a repentant remnant from among the people. One day this remnant will be restored to political prominence and covenant blessing. And then, through them, God will draw all nations to His name.

*Introduction to Amos-*

**The Prophet-** Before Amos began prophesying, he had been one of the “shepherds” of Tekoa, a town in the hill country of Judah about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. The word used for “shepherds” in 1:1 is not the usual Hebrew word *rō‘eh*, but the rare word *nōqēḏ*, suggesting instead “sheep breeders.” The only other Old Testament occurrence of *nōqēḏ* is in 2 Kings 3:4 where Mesha, king of Moab, is said to have engaged in sheep-breeding on such a scale that he was able to supply the king of Israel with 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. Amos evidently managed or owned large herds of sheep and goats, and was in charge of other shepherds.

In Amos 7:14 the prophet further described himself as “an herdman” and a “a gatherer of sycamore fruit.” This word for “shepherd,” *bôqēr*, occurs only here in the Old Testament, and describes a “herdsman” or “cattleman.”

Besides overseeing his livestock operations, Amos was also occupied in growing sycamore fruit, presumably as a sideline. The sycamore-fig tree was a broad heavy tree, 25 to 50 feet high, which produced a fig-like fruit three or four times a year. The sycamore did not grow in the heights of Tekoa, but only in the warmer lowlands, as the Jordan Valley and the fertile oases by the Dead Sea. Both of these places were near enough to Tekoa for Amos to supervise the taking care of the trees (7:14)—a technical term that describes the process of slitting or scratching the forming fruit so that some juice runs out, allowing the rest of the fig to ripen into a sweeter, more edible fruit.

The three terms together indicate that Amos, as a breeder, rancher, and farmer, was a substantial and respected man in his community.

**The Times-**  Amos lived in times of material prosperity. The long reigns of Uzziah (790-739 b.c.) in Judah and of Jeroboam II (793-753 b.c.) in Israel (1:1) had brought stability, prosperity, and expansion to the two kingdoms.

The Southern Kingdom had subdued the Philistines to the west (see comments on 1:6; 6:2), the Ammonites to the east, and the Arab states to the south. Uzziah’s political influence was felt as far as Egypt (cf. 2 Chron. 26:1-15).

The Northern Kingdom, to whom Amos’ message was directed, was at the zenith of its power. Aram had not recovered from her defeat in 802 b.c. by Assyria under *Adad-Nirāri* III (811-783 b.c.). Assyria, however, had been unable to press her advantage further. A succession of inept rulers and the troublesome Urarteans to her north kept Assyria preoccupied until the accession of Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 b.c. Given a free hand, Jeroboam II was able to extend his borders northward into Aramean territory and to reclaim Israel’s lands in Transjordan (cf. 2 Kings 14:23-29; Amos 6:13).

Because of the control this gave Israel over the trade routes, wealth began to accumulate in her cities. Commerce thrived (8:5), an upper class emerged (4:1-3), and expensive homes were built (3:15; 5:11; 6:4, 11). The rich enjoyed an indolent, indulgent lifestyle (6:1-6), while the poor became targets for legal and economic exploitation (2:6-7; 5:7, 10-13; 6:12; 8:4-6). Slavery for debt was easily accepted (2:6; 8:6). Standards of morality had sunk to low ebb (2:7).

Meanwhile religion flourished. The people thronged to the shrines for the yearly festivals (4:4; 5:5; 8:3, 10), enthusiastically offering their sacrifices (4:5; 5:21-23). *They steadfastly maintained that their God was with them, and considered themselves immune to disaster (5:14, 18-20; 6:1-3; 9:10).*

**The Date-** For a period of probably no more than a year, Amos gave God’s message to the Northern Kingdom. His ministry was two years before a notable earthquake (1:1; cf. Zech. 14:5). Josephus connects the quake with the events of 2 Chronicles 26:16-20 (*Antiquities of the Jews* 9. 10. 4). Archeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria have uncovered evidence of a violent earthquake in Israel about 760 b.c.

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=prophet+amos+clipart&hl=en&sa=X&tbo=d&qscrl=1&rlz=1T4ADRA_enUS433US441&biw=1366&bih=618&tbm=isch&tbnid=IXfUVw93SVWyAM:&imgrefurl=http://www.glogster.com/oliviapresenza/amos-olivia-presenza/g-6lmmc9u380vusbqbdnjona0&docid=KBz6XsCZMAkj0M&itg=1&imgurl=http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_198-q3xQzto/TDXmzco066I/AAAAAAAAAvU/povNev4FbYg/s1600/Amos-prophet_C-1049.jpg&w=400&h=532&ei=_CD0UMqwNKTq0QHtjoHgBA&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=1128&vpy=93&dur=6720&hovh=259&hovw=195&tx=159&ty=168&sig=109433190553013647760&page=1&tbnh=140&tbnw=96&start=0&ndsp=27&ved=1t:429,r:9,s:0,i:111)

***“…Prepare to Meet Thy God…”***  
Amos 4:12

*Outline of the Book*

***I. Prologue (1:1-2)***

A. The author and date (1:1)

B. The theme (1:2)



***II. The Roar of Judgment (1:3-2:16)***

A. Judgment against the nations (1:3-2:5)

1. Judgment against Damascus (1:3-5)

2. Judgment against Gaza (1:6-8)

3. Judgment against Tyre (1:9-10)

4. Judgment against Edom (1:11-12)

5. Judgment against Ammon (1:13-15)

6. Judgment against Moab (2:1-3)

7. Judgment against Judah (2:4-5)

B. Judgment against Israel (2:6-16)

1. The broken covenant (2:6-8)

2. The spurned grace (2:9-12)

3. The resulting judgment (2:13-16)

***III. The Reasons for Judgment (chaps. 3-6)***

A. The first message (chap. 3)

***“Woe…to them that lie upon beds of ivory…”***  
Amos 6:1-4

1. The unique relationship (3:1-2)

2. The inevitable judgment (3:3-8)

3. The unparalleled oppression (3:9-10)

4. The coming catastrophe (3:11-15)

B. The second message (chap. 4)

1. Economic exploitation (4:1-3)

2. Religious hypocrisy (4:4-5)

3. Refusal to repent (4:6-13)

C. The third message (5:1-17)

1. Description of certain judgment (5:1-3)

2. Call for individual repentance (5:4-6)

3. Accusation of legal injustice (5:7)

4. Portrayal of a sovereign God (5:8-9)

5. Accusation of legal injustice (5:10-13)

6. Call for individual repentance (5:14-15)

7. Description of certain judgment (5:16-17)

D. The fourth message (5:18-27)

1. Description of certain judgment (5:18-20)

2. Accusation of religious hypocrisy (5:21-22)

3. Call for individual repentance (5:23-24)

4. Accusation of religious hypocrisy (5:25-26)

5. Description of certain judgment (5:27)

E. The fifth message (chap. 6)

1. Their boastful complacency (6:1-3)

2. Their luxurious indulgence (6:4-7)

3. The complete devastation (6:8-14)

***IV. The Results of Judgment (7:1-9:10)***

A. The swarming locusts (7:1-3)

B. The devouring fire (7:4-6)

C. The testing plumb line (7:7-17)

1. The vision (7:7-9)

2. The incident (7:10-17)

D. The culminating fruit (chap. 8)

1. The vision (8:1-3)

2. The results (8:4-14)

E. The avenging Lord (9:1-10)

1. The inescapable sword (9:1-4)

2. The universal Sovereign (9:5-6)

3. The impartial shifting (9:7-10)

V. The Restoration after Judgment (9:11-15)

A. Political renewal (9:11)

B. National purpose (9:12)

C. Prosperity, peace, and permanence (9:13-15)

***Expositional Commentary***

**(1:1)** These are the words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa, a town directly south of Jerusalem. These sayings or messages resulted from what he saw (i.e., his visions; cf. comments at 7:12) concerning Israel. They were delivered to the Northern Kingdom two years before the earthquake, during the prosperous reigns of **Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam in Israel.**

**(1:2)** Amos’ theme is that Israel and the other nations were about to be violently judged for their sins. He pictured the Lord as a lion who had roared and begun His attack (cf. 3:4, 8; Jer. 25:30; Hosea 5:14; 11:10; 13:7). *A lion’s terrifying roar paralyzes its victim with fear, making it helpless before the lion’s charge.* Then the pounce, the tearing, and death are inevitable.

God’s roar would have a similar paralyzing and withering effect. As the reverberating sound advanced from Zion, that is, Jerusalem (cf. Amos 6:1) against the nations, it would shrivel and scorch the earth. To the south, the pastures near Bethlehem would dry up as the terrifying roar passed through Judah and continued toward Gaza (Amos 1:6-8), Edom (vv. 11-12), and Moab (2:1-3). Northward, the fertile south and west slopes of Mount Carmel—some of Israel’s choicest farmland (Isa. 35:1-2; also note Isa. 33:9; Nahum 1:4)—would wither and die as the heat wave of God’s wrath moved on to engulf Damascus (Amos 1:3-5), Tyre (vv. 9-10), and Ammon (vv. 13-15). Everywhere the sound passed, moisture would evaporate, the land would turn brown, and drought would crack the earth. With pastures dried up, sheep would die and shepherds would suffer economic loss. And with crops withered farmers would face severe hardships.

The picture of drought suggests the reason for the Lord’s angry roar—the nations had violated their covenants with God. The treaty or covenant between a suzerain lord (baron) and a vassal people was common in Near Eastern societies. In exchange for the suzerain’s protection and provision, the vassal would pledge loyalty and obedience. The terms of the covenant, spelled out and mutually agreed on, were binding on both parties. Failure of the vassals to abide by the terms would cause the curses or punishments written in the treaty to descend on them. **The curse of drought appears frequently as a punishment for covenant disobedience** (cf. Deut. 28:20-24 in the Mosaic Covenant).

Those who heard Amos’ words would understand that the sovereign Lord of the universe was about to judge them for their covenant violations. (On the question of the covenant relationship of the surrounding Gentile nations to God, see comments on Amos 1:3.) The Northern tribes of Israel in particular would perceive this charge of covenant rebellion as they heard that the Lord’s roar was originating from Zion, that central holy abode from which they had revolted.

The Lord’s roar was first against **seven nations** surrounding Israel, then against Israel herself. A murmur of approval might have rippled among Amos’ hearers as they heard the denunciation of), Israel’s historic and bitter enemies. But when the focus shifted to Tyre (vv. 9-10), a sometime ally (1 Kings 5), then in turn to Edom (Amos 1:11-12), Ammon (vv. 13-15), and Moab (2:1-3), blood relatives of Israel (cf. Gen. 19:36-38; 25:29-30), the encircling review might have seemed a **noose of judgment about to tighten round their throats.** With the mention finally of Judah (2:4-5), Israel’s own “brother,” the conclusion was inescapable—*God’s judgment would be impartial.*

For each nation the pronouncement of doom follows the same pattern: (a) a general declaration of irrevocable judgment, (b) a naming of the specific violation which caused the judgment, and (c) a description of God’s direct and thorough punishment.

*Judgment against the nations (1:3-2:5)*

**(1:3)** The general declaration of irrevocable judgment occurs through the repeated phrase, *“For three transgressions of … and for four, I will not turn away the punishment”* (cf. vv. 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). The use of a number followed by the next higher number is frequent in the Old Testament (Job 5:19; Ps. 62:11-12; Prov. 30:15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 29-31). Usually the higher number is enumerated in detail, with special emphasis given the final item. Here Amos cited only the last of the crimes, the one which had finally gone beyond God’s patience; it means irrevocable judgment was pronounced on each nation for its full and complete sin. In the case of the surrounding nations, only the final and culminating sin was named. **But for Israel, the complete list of seven was given (Amos 2:6-8, 12—one in v. 6, two in v. 7, two in v. 8, two in v. 12). Israel’s panic would likewise be sevenfold in the day God judged them (2:14-16).**

The cause of judgment for each nation was its “transgressions,” its covenant violations. The word for “transgression” (peša‘) means “rebellion” or “revolt,” and was used in secular treaties to describe a vassal’s disobedience of the terms of a covenant (1 Kings 12:19; 2 Kings 1:1; 3:5, 7; 8:22; Prov. 28:2). The Old Testament prophets also used the noun peša‘ or the verb pāša‘ in denouncing Israel’s rebellion against God’s covenant with her (Isa. 1:2, 28; 46:8; 66:24; Jer. 2:8; Hosea 7:13; 8:1; Micah 1:5, 13).

Amos specifically viewed the sins of Judah (Amos 2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16; cf. 3:14; 4:4; 5:12) as violations of the Mosaic Covenant. She had failed to observe the terms of God’s Law.

But not only Israel had sinned against a covenant with God. The Gentile nations also were guilty of peša‘—rebellion against a divinely established and universally recognized agreement. Apparently Amos had in mind their rebellion against God’s universal covenant with humanity made at the time of Noah (Gen. 9:5-17). In exchange for God’s suzerain promise never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 9:11), the vassal peoples were to refrain from shedding blood because disregard for human life is an assault on God’s own image in man (Gen. 9:5-6). Human life, rather than being destroyed or curtailed, was to multiply and increase on the earth (Gen. 9:7). This mutual agreement, whereby God would preserve the earth and people would honor and extend human life, was called an **“everlasting covenant”** (Gen. 9:16).

This is the covenant, Amos charged, that the Gentile nations had rebelled against. By their acts of barbarism (Amos 1:3), their wholesale deportations of slave populations (vv. 6, 9), their unnatural and stubborn hatreds (v. 11), their sickening atrocities (v. 13), and their desecrations of the dead (2:1), they had broken the covenant that forbade such inhuman acts. Because of these sins, the earth’s sovereign Lord declared, *“I will not turn away the punishment (wrath).”*

Similarly Isaiah (Isa. 24:4-6; 26:20-21) said that God would bring a curse of drought to punish the people of the earth because they had “broken the everlasting covenant” by shedding blood. **As the New Testament confirms, though Gentiles may not have received the spoken or written Law, the requirements of human decency are nevertheless known to them, and their own accusing conscience tells them when they violate God’s standard (Rom. 2:14-15).**

The culminating sin of Damascus, the capital of Aram, is that she threshed Gilead (also mentioned in Amos 1:13) of Transjordanian Israel with sledges having iron teeth. Threshing (cutting and separating the grain from the husks) was done on a threshing floor by pulling a heavy sledge over the grain. The sledge was a pair of roughly shaped boards, bent upward at the front, studded with iron prongs or knives. The reference here could be quite literal, describing a method of torturing prisoners; it is also a figure for harsh and thorough conquest (cf. Isa. 41:15; Micah 4:13; Hab. 3:12). Aram’s armies had raked across Gilead, slicing and crushing it as though it were grain on a threshing floor. This Israelite territory east of Jordan had suffered greatly during constant battles with the Arameans, particularly during the time of Hazael (841-801 b.c.) and his son and successor Ben-Hadad III (Amos 1:4; cf. 2 Kings 8:7-12; 10:32-33; 13:3-7; note the reference to “threshing” in   
2 Kings 13:7).

**(1:4-5)** In the judgment on each of the first seven nations God is pictured as a Lord who has brought his armies to punish a vassal city for its revolt. The attack begins in each case with a fire that would eventually consume the walls and/or fortresses of the city and leave it a smoldering ruin (vv. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5). In punishing Damascus God declared He would smash the bar of the city gate and break down the gate, stripping the city of its defenses. He would destroy the rebel king who reigned over the wicked and proud nations. Valley of Aven and Beth Eden may refer to other regions of Aram, Baalbek and Bit-Adini. More likely, they are derogatory references to the area and palace of Damascus, meaning “Valley of Wickedness” and “House of Pleasure.” The house (dynasty) of Hazael would be terminated, and the Arameans would be exiled (cf. 1:15) back to their place of origin, a Mesopotamian site called Kir. In essence, this punishment would be a complete reversal of Aram’s proud history. God, who had originally brought them out of Kir (9:7), would send them back, after obliterating all they had achieved. This judgment was carried out by the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser III in 732 b.c. (cf. 2 Kings 16:7-9).

**(1:6)** In verses 6-8 four of the five cities comprising the Philistine pentapolis (5 cities) are mentioned—**Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon,** and **Ekron.** The omission of the fifth, **Gath**, may be due to its ruined condition at the time of Amos because of the batterings of Hazael in 815 b.c. and Uzziah in 760 b.c. (cf. 2 Kings 12:17; 2 Chron. 26:6; Amos 6:2). The Philistines’ crime against humanity was that they captured whole communities in slave raids and sold them for commercial profit. Defenseless people were treated as mere objects and auctioned off in the slave markets of Edom, from which they were shipped to other parts of the world (cf. Joel 3:4-8).

**(1:7-8)** For this sin, the Philistine cities would be completely annihilated—buildings, king, and people. God would turn His hand against them till the last of the Philistines was dead. This judgment was partially fulfilled in the subjugation of the Philistines to the Assyrians later in the eighth century b.c., and more completely during the Maccabean period (168-134 b.c.). **Sovereign Lord (’ăḏōnāy Yahweh) occurs 19 times in Amos, but only 5 other times in all the Minor Prophets** (Obad. 1; Micah 1:2; Hab. 3:19; Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 9:14). That title stresses both His lordship and His covenant relationship with His people.

**(1:9)** The sin of Tyre, Phoenicia’s leading city, was even more callous than Gaza’s. Not only did she sell whole communities of captives to Edom (cf. v. 6), but she did so in violation of a treaty of brotherhood, a protective covenant between two partners. If Israel was the injured partner, the reference is probably to the pact between Solomon and Hiram (1 Kings 5) or perhaps to the later relations established through the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:29-31).

**(1:10)** Tyre’s punishment is similar to that described in verse 7. Alexander the Great overran the city of Tyre in 332 b.c. after besieging it for seven months. Six thousand people were slain outright, 2,000 were crucified, and 30,000 were sold as slaves. *Tyre had sold Israelites to Edom as captives; later many Tyrians became captives.*

**(1:11)** The sin of Edom was his persistent and unfeeling hostility against his brother. “Brother” could refer to some unknown treaty partner (cf. v. 9). **But the frequent references in the Old Testament to Edom’s brotherhood with Israel suggest that this refers to the physical kinship between the two nations that began with Esau and Jacob** (Gen. 25:29-30; Num. 20:14; Deut. 2:4; 23:7). At some point in Israel’s history Edom relentlessly pursued his defeated brother with a sword (cf. Obad. 10). Without any natural feelings of compassion, Edom let his anger rage continually, like a beast tearing its captured prey. He brooded over his fury, nourishing it so it flamed unchecked.

**(1:12)** Because of this unnatural and vindictive hatred, God would send fire upon Teman and Bozrah. Teman was Edom’s largest southern city; Bozrah was her fortress stronghold in the north. The two cities thus stand for the whole nation under God’s wrath. Both were major Edomite cities (cf. references to Teman in Jer. 49:7, 20; Ezek. 25:13; Obad. 9; Hab. 3:3). Edom was subjugated by the Assyrians in the eighth century b.c., turned into a desolate wasteland by the fifth century b.c. (Mal. 1:3), and overtaken by the Nabateans, an Arabian tribe, around 400-300 b.c.

**(1:13)** The terrible cruelty of Ammon was that he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead (cf. “Gilead” in v. 3). This atrocity, sometimes a feature of ancient warfare (cf. 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16; Hosea 13:16), was designed to terrorize and decimate an enemy. The Ammonites executed this crime against defenseless women and unborn children *(parallel to today’s abortion industry)*, not for self-preservation, but simply in order to extend their borders.

**(1:14-15)** Because of this heartlessness God would set fire to the walls (cf. vv. 7, 10) of Rabbah, Ammon’s capital city. Amid the engulfing flames the inhabitants would hear the war cries (cf. 2:2) of the attackers as they fell on their victims. Violent winds, symbolizing God’s own awesome power (cf. Ps. 83:15; Jer. 23:19; 30:23), would lash at the city. And the enemy would take both king and officials (cf. Amos 2:3) into exile (cf. 1:5). This judgment was fulfilled through the Assyrian conquest under Tiglath-Pileser III in 734 b.c.

**(2:1)** In ancient times much importance was placed on a dead man’s body being peacefully placed in the family burial site, so that he could be “gathered to his fathers” and find rest in the grave. To rob, disturb, or desecrate a grave was an offense of the highest order. Many surviving tomb inscriptions utter violent curses against anyone who would commit such an outrage. Moab, in a war against Edom (perhaps the incident referred to in 2 Kings 3:26-27), drove their opponents back to their own territory, opened the royal graves, and burned, as if to lime, the bones of Edom’s king. This sacrilege was so thorough that bone ashes became as fine and white as powdered chalk.

**(2:2-3)** Though this was not a crime against Israel, it was nevertheless a sin of rebellion (peša‘; see comments on 1:3) against the sovereign Lord of the universe, an assault against His own image in people. For such contempt and defilement, God would militarily annihilate Moab. A fire would consume … Kerioth, perhaps an alternate name for the capital Ar (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 15:1). In the tumult of battle, with war cries (cf. Amos 1:14) and the blast of the trumpet signaling her doom, Moab would go down—the people, ruler, and all … officials (cf. 1:15). Moab, like Ammon, fell to the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser III.

**(2:4)** The Gentile nations had rebelled against the “everlasting covenant” God made with them at the time of Noah (Gen. 9:5-17). But Judah’s sins (peša‘) were against the **Mosaic Covenant**. They had rejected the Law of the Lord. They had not observed the decrees, or stipulations, of His unique agreement with them. Instead of holding to His objective truth, they let themselves be led astray by the same false gods which had deceived many of their ancestors. The word for false god is kāzāḇ, “a lie or something deceptive.” **The idols were deceptive for they were unable to help the people**. In Deuteronomy, God constantly warned the Israelites not to follow false gods (Deut. 6:14; 7:16; 8:19; 11:16, 28; etc.).

**(2:5)** The punishment for this faithlessness would be the destruction of the nation, fulfilled in **586 b.c.** when Nebuchadnezzar, after a lengthy siege, broke through Jerusalem’s defenses, slaughtered the royal family, burned the temple, the palace, and all houses in the city, and deported almost the entire population to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-12).

Having shown that the Lord is sovereign over the universe and holds all nations accountable for their rebellion against Him, Amos now addressed the Northern tribes of Israel. His message was that God would also judge them, because they had broken His covenant, despite His gracious acts on their behalf.

Israel had violated the Mosaic Covenant in several ways, including social injustice (v. 6b), legal perversion (v. 7a), sexual sin (v. 7b), abuse of collateral (pledges) (v. 8a), and idolatry (v. 8b).

**(2:6)** The first charge against the Israelites is that they callously sold into slavery the poor who could not pay their debts (cf. 2 Kings 4:1-7). Honest people (the righteous) who could be trusted to repay eventually, were sold for the silver they owed. The desperately poor (the needy) were enslaved because they could not pay back the insignificant sum they owed for a pair of sandals (cf. Amos 8:6). *These sandals might refer to the custom of giving one’s sandals as a kind of mortgage deed or title to confirm the legal transfer of land (cf. Ruth 4:7)*. The meaning would then be that the poor were being sold for either money or land. Such hardheartedness against Israel’s own people, not against a foreign nation, was rebellion against God’s covenant which called for **generosity** and **openhandedness** toward the **poor** (Deut. 15:7-11).

**(2:7a)** Amos’ second accusation against Israel was that legal procedures were being perverted to exploit the poor. Contrary to the covenant commands (Ex. 23:6; Deut. 16:19), the courts had gone into collusion with the creditors and were denying justice to the oppressed. This oppression was so terrible and painful it was like trampling on their heads.

**(2:7b)** The third crime is that father and son were having sexual relationships with the same girl, either a temple prostitute or a servant taken as a concubine (Ex. 21:7-9; Lev. 18:8, 15). By such promiscuity the men were showing their disregard for the Lord of the covenant and were profaning (i.e., treating as common) His holy name. God’s **“name”** (see comments on Ex. 3:13-15) spoke of His character and His unique commitment to Israel. To flaunt His commandments openly was to mock His character and to disdain His special place in their lives.

**(2:8a)** Fourth, God’s Law placed restrictions on items which could be taken as collateral. Millstones were not to be taken since they were needed for grinding grain and thus were essential to sustaining life (Deut. 24:6). The cloak of a poor man was not to be kept as a pledge overnight   
(Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:10-13; also note Job 22:6); a widow’s garment could not be taken in pledge at all (Deut. 24:17). Yet the people openly and flagrantly were lying down with the forbidden garments, going so far in their contempt for the Law as to spread them at the sacrificial feasts by every altar (cf. 1 Sam. 9:12-13).

**(2:8b)** Fifth, Israel had rebelled against the most basic covenant stipulation of all—they were worshiping other gods (as Judah was doing, v. 4). The wine they had unjustly extracted from the poor as fines was being raised in honor to a heathen god.

**(2:9)** Instead of announcing the punishment immediately after the accusation, as was done in the judgments against the seven other nations, God heightened Israel’s guilt by setting her rebellion against the backdrop of His own gracious acts toward them. Israel’s existence as a nation was only because of His intervention. By themselves they could never have conquered the Canaanites. The Amorite, as the most formidable, stands for all the nations in Canaan at the time of the Conquest   
(cf. Gen. 15:16-21; Josh. 24:8-15). The inhabitants of the land were the greatest of men, tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks (cf. Num. 13:28-33; Deut. 1:26-28). Yet God uprooted them, totally destroying them, both fruit above and roots below.

**(2:10)** The Exodus from Egypt and God’s preservation of Israel during 40 years in the desert evidenced His kindness and good intentions toward her.

**(2:11)** God also raised up spiritual leaders for the nation. Prophets from among their own sons conveyed His words to them, and Nazirites, who consecrated themselves by vows for limited periods of time (cf. Num. 6:1-21), portrayed the depth of commitment that all Israel was supposed to share.

**(2:12)** But despite these gracious acts Israel added two more sins to her account. She intimidated the Nazirites (cf. v. 11) to break their vows and drink wine, and she commanded the prophets not to prophesy (cf. 7:10-16). In so doing Israel revealed her own lack of commitment to God and her unwillingness to hear His Word.

**(2:13-16)** Because of these sins God would not turn back His wrath (v. 6). He would crush rebellious Israel as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. There would be no hope in the devastating day of battle. Out of the entire army, none would be able to save his life—not **(a) the swift, (b) the strong, (c) the warrior, (d) the archer, (e) the fleet-footed soldier, or (f) the horseman. So overpowering would be the onslaught that even (g) the bravest warriors would drop their weapons and cloaks in a futile attempt to flee.** This wartime panic was **sevenfold** just as Israel’s sins were **seven** (vv. 6b-8, 12).

The history of the Northern Kingdom came to an end only a few decades later with the Assyrian Captivity in 722 b.c. (2 Kings 17:1-23).

The roar of judgment ended. The Lord, the Sovereign of the earth, had spoken. He would come as a mighty Warrior to judge the surrounding nations for their rebellion against His authority. He would judge Israel too, because she also had broken His covenant despite His grace toward her.

*The Reasons for Judgment (chaps. 3-6)*

After announcing the judgment that would come against the Northern Kingdom, Amos gave a series of five messages to explain more fully the reasons for God’s judgment. The first three messages are marked by the phrase **“Hear this word”** (3:1; 4:1; 5:1); the last two begin with **“Woe”** (5:18; 6:1). Each message describes in more detail the religious, legal, political, and social rebellion which had brought God’s wrath against the nation. Within the messages are appeals for repentance and instructions as to how individuals could escape the awful calamity that was coming.

In this message Amos declared that *Israel would be punished because of her unique relationship with God.* Her judgment was inevitable because of her unparalleled oppression of people. The message was addressed initially to both Israel and Judah (vv. 1-2), but then it was primarily directed to the Northern Kingdom (cf. vv. 9, 12).

**(3:1-2)** The reason God spoke this word … against … Israel and Judah —whom He brought up out of Egypt—was because they only had been chosen of all the families of the earth. “Known” (from yāḏa‘, lit., “to know”) was used in ancient treaties to describe a sovereign’s commitment to a vassal in a special covenant relationship. They alone were God’s people, the only nation He had ever really chosen to watch over and care for. Therefore He would punish them for their sins. Because He had chosen them, intimately revealed Himself to them, and made available to them the greatest covenantal blessings a lord ever offered a vassal (Ex. 19:3-6; Deut. 28:1-14), they should have in return wanted to know Him and please Him. **Because of His special commitment, their iniquities were even more terrible.**

God’s unmerited grace is always meant to influence one’s conduct. His special commitments and blessings often contain special chastisements to discipline and to purge (Luke 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 11:27-32; Heb. 12:4-11; 1 Peter 1:7-9; 4:17). Because His love is so great, His people must be holy.

These verses show that Israel’s punishment was inevitable. Much as there is often an inseparable link between two events in ordinary life *(cause and effect)*, so there was an inseparable link between God’s revelation to Amos and the inevitable appearance of judgment.

**(3:3)** Through a series of **seven** rhetorical questions (in vv. 3-6) Amos reminded his listeners that certain events are inseparably connected (cf. Amos’ other sevens in 2:6b-8, 11-12, 14-16). A second event does not happen unless it has been preceded by a necessary first event; once the first event has taken place the second is sure to follow.

**First**, two do not walk together along a road unless they have first met, conversed, and agreed to continue on together *(you wouldn’t simply begin to walk with a stranger)*.

**(3:4)** **Second**, a lion, does not roar in the thicket unless he has spotted his prey and begun his fearful charge (cf. Jud. 14:5). But once he has begun his savage rush, the paralyzing roar is inevitable. Third, in a similar way a lion’s contented growl in his den is a sure sign that something has been caught; a successful hunt leads to his satisfied rumble.

**(3:5)** **Fourth**, a bird does not fall into a trap unless a snare has first been baited and set. Nor, **fifth**, does a trap spring up from the earth unless something catchable has triggered it. A *captured* bird or wild animal usually means a trap was used.

**(3:6)** **Sixth**, people do not tremble unless a war trumpet has been sounded in a city; but such an alarm always produces fear and apprehension. Nor **(seventh)** does disaster finally come to a city unless the Lord has determined to cause it (cf. Isa. 45:7). But once His decision is made, the outcome is unavoidable. The “evil” could be a plague, meager harvest, or hostile attack (cf. Amos 4:6-11), **designed by God to lead the people to repent, acknowledge His sovereignty in their lives, and trust Him for deliverance (cf. Joel 1).**

The seven examples of related events began innocuously, but become increasingly foreboding. The first example (Amos 3:3) had no element of force or disaster about it. The next two (v. 4), however, concerned the overpowering of one animal by another, and the two after that (v. 5) pictured man as the vanquisher of animal prey. In the final two examples (v. 6), people themselves were overwhelmed, first by other human instruments, then by God Himself. This ominous progression, to the point where God Himself is seen as the initiator of human calamity, brought Amos to a climactic statement (vv. 7-8).

**(3:7-8)** Just as one event does not take place unless another necessary event has already happened, so the sovereign Lord does nothing regarding the history of Israel without first revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. But once this revelation has occurred—once the lion has roared and attacked (cf. 1:2; Hosea 5:14; 11:10; 13:7), once the sovereign Lord has spoken—Israel’s judgment is sure to follow.

Major changes in Israel’s history were preceded by revelations from God; He seldom acted without first giving warning through a prophet. Ahijah prophesied the schism in Solomon’s empire (1 Kings 11:29-39; fulfilled in 1 Kings 12:15-20). An anonymous prophet forecast Josiah’s reform (1 Kings 13:1-2; fulfilled in 2 Kings 23:15-20). Ahijah predicted the death of Abijah and the end of the dynasty of Jeroboam I (1 Kings 14:1-16; fulfilled in 1 Kings 14:17-18; 15:29). Elijah prophesied the deaths of Ahab and Jezebel, and the extermination of Ahab’s descendants (1 Kings 21:17-24; fulfilled in 1 Kings 22:29-37; 2 Kings 9:30-10:11). Elijah also predicted the death of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:2-4, 16; fulfilled in 2 Kings 1:17). Elisha forecast Moab’s defeat by Jehoram and Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3). Elisha repeated Elijah’s prediction of the fall of Ahab’s dynasty (2 Kings 9:7-10). Jeroboam II regained lost Israelite territory in fulfillment of an unrecorded prophecy by Jonah (2 Kings 14:25). Isaiah predicted the collapse of the Assyrians in their invasion of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:5-7, 20, 32-34; fulfilled in 2 Kings 19:35-37) and the extension of Hezekiah’s life (2 Kings 20:1-11). Judah’s exile to Babylon (fulfilled in 2 Kings 24-25) was repeatedly foretold—to Hezekiah by Isaiah (2 Kings 20:16-18), to Manasseh by anonymous prophets (2 Kings 21:10-15), and to Josiah by Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14-20). And Isaiah predicted that Cyrus would commission the rebuilding of the temple (Isa. 44:28; fulfilled in Ezra 1).

The Lord always revealed His major plans in advance to His servants the prophets. **The prediction could precede the event by years or even centuries, but the fulfillment was always certain.** Since the Lord had now roared His judgment like a lion, who could but fear the outcome? And since He had revealed His intentions to Amos, what could he do but prophesy God’s message?

**(3:9-10)** Unseen heralds were instructed to invite emissaries from Ashdod (in Philistia) and Egypt to assemble … on the mountains above Samaria and see what the city was like. These dignitaries, from countries where the art of injustice was well developed (cf. 1:6-8), would, ironically, be astonished at what they observed in Israel’s capital. Great unrest was in the city. Instead of peace and order, panic and the terrifying disintegration of the rule of law prevailed. Instead of justice, violence and oppression were rampant. By means of threats and exploitation, the rich had amassed private fortunes, hoarding the results of plunder and loot in their homes. The words “store-up” and “robbery” refer to acts of violence against persons and property, and stand essentially for “assault and robbery.” Terrorizing had become so much a part of their lives that they no longer knew how to do what was right (i.e., what was straightforward, honest, and just).

The invitation was sent to the fortresses (3:9) of the neighboring states. A “palace/fortress” was almost any building higher than an ordinary house. Containing several stories, it was constructed to be defensible, and often became part of a city’s defense system. The king’s palace usually included a fortress as part of its structure (1 Kings 16:18; 2 Kings 15:25); such buildings also served as residences of the rich and ruling class (Jer. 9:21). These residential strongholds were a national pride (Amos 6:8), a symbol of power and wealth, and therefore the special focus of God’s wrath (1:4, 7, 10, 14; 2:2, 5). *Amos summoned leaders from the palaces of Ashdod and Egypt to Samaria to see that the inhabitants of Israel’s palaces had outstripped even them in their ability to profit from oppression!* Amos’ accusation is similar to Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 5:1—**a level of sin was existing among God’s people which did not even occur among pagans.**

In three progressive declarations Amos unfolded the catastrophe that would come on Israel because of her unparalleled oppression (cf. vv. 9-10).

**(3:11)** An enemy, the sovereign Lord said, would invade and overrun the land, pulling down and plundering the nation’s defenses. The palaces (cf. v. 10) of the looters would themselves be looted.

**(3:12)** Some of Amos’ hearers might have objected to this announcement, insisting that somehow the Israelites would be saved. The word “taken” (“rescued” or “delivered”) often described God’s delivering or sparing of Israel (Ex. 3:8; 18:9-10; Pss. 54:7; 69:14; Jer. 15:21; Micah 4:10). This revealed the mistaken belief of Amos’ hearers that God would surely rescue them from such a catastrophe. To dispel this false hope, Amos repeated what the Lord said: any “saving” of Israel would be like a shepherd saving a couple of leg bones or part of an ear from the jaws of a wild animal. These little bits of “rescued” evidence were to prove that a shepherd had not stolen or sold one of the sheep, but that it indeed had been torn by a beast of prey (Ex. 22:10-13; cf. Gen 31:39). The rescued shin bones and tip of an ear only proved that the rescue had come too late and that the animal was a total loss. Those Israelites in Samaria who dissolutely lounged on their beds and couches should not dismiss Amos’ message with vague assurances of deliverance. Israel would be savagely and totally devoured.

**(3:13-15)** God addressed the Northern Kingdom as the house of Jacob, using the patriarchal name (cf. 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7; 9:8) to remind them of His early commitment to their ancestors. In times past God had been a Warrior on their behalf. But now He would lead another army against them to punish them for their sins (covenant violations). God Almighty (“God of hosts,” i.e., “Head of armies”) designates the most awesome Warrior. Throughout these chapters which describe Israel’s violations (chaps. 3-6) the Lord is repeatedly presented (3:13; 4:13; 5:14-16, 27; 6:8, 14) as a mighty Warrior-King who commands vast forces, whose power to punish rebels is both massive and irresistible.

In punishing them, God would destroy the altars of Bethel (cf. 9:1). Bethel was the royal sanctuary of Jeroboam II (7:10-13), the most popular religious center in Israel (cf. 4:4; 5:5). As the site of the golden calf erected by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:26-30; Hosea 10:5), its altars symbolized Israel’s continued rebellion against God. The horns of these altars were projections on the altars’ corners. Fugitives could grab these horns to claim asylum from their pursuers (1 Kings 1:50; 2:28; Ex. 21:12-13). Murderers, however, could not receive protection, but were torn by force from the altar (Ex. 21:14). Israel’s sin was similarly so great that God Himself was going to cut off the means of claiming asylum. There would be no sanctuary from the enemy who was coming against them.

God would not only destroy their religious center; He would also tear down the luxurious mansions which resulted from their commercial exploitation. Only kings could afford both a winter house and a summer house. For example, in the ninth century Ahab had a winter palace in the warmer plains of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:1) besides his Samaria residence. Luxury houses adorned with ivory inlay or furnishings (cf. Amos. 6:4) were likewise the province of royalty (1 Kings 22:39; Ps. 45:8). Yet the ill-gotten prosperity (cf. Prov. 10:2) of Israel’s upper classes had enabled them to build such dwellings. All these, however, would be demolished on the day God would punish Israel.

**Chapter 4-** In the second message Amos declared that God would exile the upper-class women because of their economic exploitation, and judge the nation as a whole for its religious hypocrisy and obstinate refusal to repent, despite His repeated chastisements.

**(4:1)** The upper-class were called **‘kine’** (cows) of Bashan. Bashan, in Transjordan east of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee), was famous for its lush pastures (Jer. 50:19; Micah 7:14), and its well-fed cattle (Ezek. 39:18; Ps. 22:12). Amos accused the rich women of being equally pampered, insisting that their husbands continually supplied them with intoxicating drinks. The word for “masters” is not one of the common Hebrew terms for *husband*, but a rare word meaning “lord” (cf. Gen. 18:12; Ps. 45:11). Amos scorned those husbands who were supposed to be “masters” but who in reality meekly obeyed like servants. The only way they could support their wives’ expensive tastes was by ruthlessly exploiting the poor and the needy (cf. Amos 2:6–7; 5:11–12; 8:4–6). *(Though the women are said in 4:1 to do the oppressing, apparently they did so by domineering their husbands.)* The words oppress and crush describes threats and physical harassments used to squeeze money from the helpless.

**(4:2–3)** In order to show the vehemence of His anger and the certainty of their punishment, the sovereign Lord had sworn by His holiness that every one of these society women would be dragged from the city either to captivity or to death. God had vowed the entire reality of His inmost being to this unchangeable sentence (cf. 6:8). An enemy would storm and capture the city. The destruction would be so thorough and the breaks in the wall so numerous that each woman, rather than going with others toward an exit gate, would simply be pushed straight out of the city. Once outside they would be fastened to ropes with hooks for a single-file march into Assyrian exile. Those who balked or refused to be led away would be forcibly snagged with large harpoons or fishhooks, much like fish pierced together and jerked over one’s shoulder to be carried to market. Yanked in such manner, they eventually would be cast out as corpses as the march neared Harmon. *(The use of “cast” is to depict what is done with dead bodies; cf. 8:3; 1 Kings 13:24–25; Jer. 14:16.)*

**(4:4–5)** Verse 4 is a parody of a priest’s summons to pilgrims. The usual invitation was to “come into the sanctuary to worship” (Pss. 95:6; 96:8–9; 100:2–4). But with biting sarcasm Amos exhorted Israel to go to **Bethel** and to **Gilgal** in order to sin *(i.e., to break their covenant with God)* Bethel was the chief sanctuary of the north, the place where the king worshiped. Gilgal, with its memorial stones marking Israel’s initial entrance into the land (Josh. 4), remained in the eighth century as a center for pilgrimage and sacrifice (Amos 5:5; Hosea 4:15; 9:15; 12:11).

Amos commanded the Israelites to bring the whole gamut of offerings to these shrines enthusiastically. Sacrifices were offerings in which an animal was slaughtered and consumed as part of a sacred meal (cf. 1 Sam. 1:3–5). Tithes of produce were set aside every three years in order to help the poor (Deut. 14:28–29). The purpose of the thanksgiving offerings was to express gratitude for blessings and answered prayers (Lev. 7:11–15). Freewill offerings were voluntary and spontaneous gifts, born of an inner devotion to God (Lev. 7:16; 22:17–19).

But all these offerings, Amos charged, had become a sham. The people’s religious activities were carried out to impress others, not to fellowship with God. The Israelites would brag about their devotion, but their day-to-day conduct violated the spirit of their offerings.

Some of the produce they tithed came from stolen land. Some animals they sacrificed had been fattened on unjustly seized fields. Their very worship was an offense to God as it hypocritically offered the fruits of their rebellion against His covenant (cf. Isa. 1:10–20; Micah 6:6–8).

The people had persisted in their economic exploitation and religious hypocrisy despite God’s repeated attempts to bring them back to Him (vv. 6–11). **Therefore because they would not return to Him He would come to them in final judgment.** They must prepare to meet their God (v. 12), Whose terrible greatness was inescapable (v. 13).

**(4:6)** Ancient Near Eastern covenants spelled out the curses or punishments the suzerain (lord) would bring against his vassals (subjects/renters) for disloyalty or disobedience. Verses 6–11 record how God had brought the chastisements of the Mosaic Covenant against His people in order to bring them back to Himself. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–29 had warned that God would use famine (Amos 4:6), drought (vv. 7–8), crop failure (v. 9), plagues (v. 10), military defeat (v. 10), and even burning devastation (v. 11) to punish His people for covenant violations. Solomon also foretold (1 Kings 8:33–37) that God would use these means to turn the people from their sin. The chart **“The Covenant Chastenings”** compares the covenant chastenings of Amos 4:6–11 with those predicted in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28–29, and 1 Kings 8.

With each chastisement God anticipated repentance. But Israel refused. The fivefold refrain—**“yet have ye not returned unto Me”** (Amos 4:6, 8–11)—underscores her continued obstinacy. This persistent refusal had now become an accumulated guilt. Final judgment, therefore, was inevitable.

God had given them empty stomachs **(“cleanness of teeth,” i.e., *nothing to chew on*)**. Hunger and famine had afflicted the whole land—every city and every town. But the people did not turn to God.

**(4:7–8)** Such famines were often caused by a prior drought, as God would withhold the spring rain so essential to the summer harvest. This discipline was often selective, so that one town had rain while another did not, one field was rained on but another was not. As the wells and cisterns in some localities dried up and its people staggered exhausted from town to town in search of limited drinking water, *the contrast between their judgment and another town’s favor should have caused them to ponder God’s action.* But they did not consider.

**(4:9)** God struck the vegetables and fruit trees of their gardens and the grape clusters of their vineyards. The hot blasting wind of the Arabian desert blew relentlessly, causing blight, a premature drying and scorching of the grain (cf. Gen. 41:6, 23, 27; 2 Kings 19:26). Parasitic worms brought mildew, a yellowing of the tips of green grain. Locusts devoured the leaves of fig and olive trees (cf. Joel 1:1–7). But all this did not cause repentance.

**(4:10)** Wars brought plagues and death to the nation. As populations were crowded into walled cities or assembled in camps, contagious diseases broke out and spread. The mention of Egypt has caused some to think that the “plagues” are similar to those that struck Egypt’s livestock at the time of the Exodus (cf. Ex. 9:1–7). But because of the military scenes mentioned in Amos 4:10, and because the word “pestilence” can denote an epidemic pestilence among humans (cf. Ex. 5:3; 9:15; Lev. 26:25; Jer. 14:12; 21:7, 9; Ezek. 5:17; 14:19), the most likely one is similar to the bubonic plague which spreads from rats to people by fleas. The mention of Egypt is akin to saying **“like those that happen in Egypt,”** a reference to the notorious human plagues which periodically swept that country (cf. Deut. 7:15; 28:27, 60).

During the battles God killed (i.e., caused the enemy to kill) their strong young men, the elite of their fighting force. Their horses, the strength of their chariot corps, were captured. Because of the carnage, the stench of diseased and decaying corpses filled their camps. But still Israel did not return to the Lord.

**(4:11)** Finally, God totally overthrew some of their cities with the same burning devastation He had wreaked on Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 19:23–29; Deut. 29:22–23). So thorough had been the destruction from a military siege that certain cities had ceased to exist. The whole nation had come perilously close to obliteration, *barely escaping like a burning stick snatched from the fire.* But this too had proved futile.

**(4:12)** Therefore, because Israel had resisted these chastenings and had continued her sinful rebellion, God would pronounce her sentence of doom. **“Thus will I do unto thee”** refers to God’s devastating sweep through the land as predicted in 3:11–15. The nation was commanded to get ready for this terrifying moment—**‘prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!’**

Some understand the word “prepare” as an invitation to repent before this final catastrophe. Since the word, however, was often used of war preparations (cf. Prov. 21:31; Jer. 46:14; Ezek. 38:7; Nahum 2:3, 5), “prepare to meet thy God” is most likely a military summons to an awful confrontation. *Israel was to face God’s final judgment.*

**(4:13)** Amos likened God’s terrifying approach in judgment to the darkening of a storm. The One who formed the mountains and created the wind now covered those high places with churning clouds. The early dawn turned back to eerie darkness as black swells unfolded to shroud the earth. The flash of lightning and the reverberation of thunder marked God’s ominous “tread” from one hilltop to another as He approached the Northern capital (cf. Micah 1:3–5). God had revealed His thoughts to man; His intent to judge had been made known (Amos 3:7). **Now, as the Lord, The God of Hosts, Commander of all forces in heaven and earth, He advanced against them.** *Their judgment was inescapable.*

*Description of Certain Judgment (Ch.5)*

**(5:1)** Amos summoned the people to hear his lament over their death. A “lament” was ordinarily a poem of grief sung at the funeral of a relative, friend, or leader (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17–27; 3:33–34; 2 Chron. 35:25). Prophets, however, also used this poetic form to mourn the death of a city, people, or nation (cf. Jer. 7:29; 9:10–11, 17–22; Lam.; Ezek. 19; 26:17–18; 27:2, 32; 28:12; 32:2). Though Israel was at the height of prosperity under Jeroboam II, her judgment was so certain that Amos lamented her fall as though it had already happened. **To his listeners, hearing this lament would be as jarring as reading one’s own obituary in the newspaper.**

**(5:2)** Virgin Israel had fallen. This nation which had considered itself in the full bloom of youthful vigor had been cut off before her time in violent death. “Fallen” in funeral songs means “fallen by the sword” (cf. 2 Sam. 1:19, 25, 27; 3:34; Lam. 2:21). She had died in battle in her own land. Her corpse lay unattended, deserted by God Himself. The words “none to raise her up” were often used of God’s abandoning or forsaking His people (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Isa. 2:6). There was no one to lift her up, no one to restore her to life. (Cf.1 Sam. 2:6; Hosea 6:2; Amos 9:11 for the use of “to lift up,” lit., “to raise up,” to describe God’s restoring to life.) Since the God who could help had Himself abandoned her, Israel had fallen, never to rise again.

**(5:3)** Her armies had been decimated. The city or town that had detached a military unit of a thousand or a hundred (cf. 1 Sam. 17:18; 18:13; 22:7; 2 Sam. 18:1, 4) saw only **10 percent** return from war. An army could sustain a 50 percent loss and still fight (2 Sam. 18:3). **But if 90 percent were slain, that nation had received its death sentence.** Amos lamented an Israel that would cease to exist.

**(5:4–5)** National judgment was certain, but individuals could yet seek God and live (cf. v. 6). They should not, however, seek Him at the sanctuaries, for these were doomed. Beersheba was in the southern part of Judah’s territory. Evidently northern Israelites crossed over the border to worship at a shrine associated with the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 21:31–33; 26:23–25; 46:1–4). Gilgal, the memorial of entrance into the land (Josh. 4), was to become the symbol of exile from the land. And Bethel, the “house of God,” was to become **“Beth Aven” (Heb.), a “house of nothing,”** a “house of spirits.” In Hebrew, the last part of the city’s name, “El,” meaning “God,” was changed by Amos to “Aven” (Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5), meaning *“nothing, empty, having no existence,”* a word often used to describe the powerless spirits of wickedness (cf. Isa. 41:22–24, 28–29). This sarcasm would have a stinging effect on the people.

**(5:6)** The command to seek (cf. v. 4) the Lord meant to turn to Him, not in ritual worship, but by doing good and hating evil (cf. vv. 14–15). Those who did would live: when the unquenchable and devouring fire of the invader swept through the house of Joseph (the Northern Kingdom), the seekers would be the remnant spared in mercy (v. 15).

**(5:7)** Verse 7 connects in grammar and content with verses 10–13. Verses 8–9 are inserted to highlight God’s awesome power to judge.

One reason for God’s judgment was the corruption that permeated the courts. Court officials had turned justice into bitterness and had cast righteousness to the ground. Justice was the proper functioning of judicial procedures that enabled a court to declare who or what was right in a given case. Righteousness was the behavior of one who sought this end, who did right to those involved in the case. A righteous man was willing to speak in defense of an innocent person who had been wrongly accused. Righteousness was the action; justice was the end result.

To do what was “right” and “just” on behalf of the needy was a crowning gem of human behavior (Prov. 1:3; 2:9; 8:20; Isa. 1:21; 5:7; 28:17) and proved a special relationship with God (Gen. 18:19; Ps. 72; Jer. 22:15–17).

Justice and righteousness were more than essential sacrifice and ceremony (Prov. 21:3; Amos 5:23–24). **And nowhere were righteousness and justice more crucial than in the courts.** Here the weaker members of society, those without money or influence, could receive protection from their oppressors and find fairness under the Law.

But Israel, through the alchemy of greed, had turned justice into “bitterness”— **“wormwood,”** a small plant known for its bitter pulp, usually associated with poison (cf. 6:12; Jer. 9:15; 23:15). The judicial system, instead of being like a medicinal herb to heal wrongs and restore the oppressed, had itself become a fatal poison within the nation. The description of the poison’s spread is continued in 5:10–13.

**(5:8–9)** In the midst of this denunciation of human perversity, Amos identified the God who controlled the workings of the physical universe and who surely, therefore, would overturn the injustice of men.

He who made the constellations Pleiades and Orion (cf. Job 9:9; 38:31—the rising of Pleiades before daybreak signaled the return of spring while the rising of Orion after sunset heralded the onset of winter), He who controls the 24-hour cycle of day and night, turning blackness into dawn and day into night, He who controls the elements of nature, gathering by evaporation the waters of the sea and draining them out over … the land—this great Sovereign of the universe is also Israel’s covenant God. The Lord (Yahweh) is His name. And He would judge their covenant faithfulness.

This God whose dominion was unchallenged in heaven was also irresistible on earth. Nothing could withstand His destruction—not the mightiest stronghold or the most fortified city.

**(5:10–13)** Verses 10–13 continue the denunciation begun in verse 7. Because of their zeal to profit illegally through the courts, they hated any righteous judge who reproved their injustice, and despised any righteous witness who told the truth in defense of the innocent. Their venom and intimidation were so severe that many felt the prudent thing to do was to keep quiet in such times (v. 13). The abusers, thus freed of any rebuke or opposition, found corrupt judges to take bribes and deprive the poor of justice (v. 12b; in contrast with the covenant Law of Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:18–20; cf. 1 Sam. 12:3). Rich landowners successfully manipulated legal proceedings to trample on the poor, gain ownership of his fields, and force him to give a large fee of grain to remain a tenant on the land (Amos 5:11a; in violation of the covenant Law of Ex. 23:2, 6; cf. Amos 2:6–7; 4:1; Isa. 10:1–2).

But God knew how many were their offenses (peša‘, “covenant violations”). He knew how great were their transgressions (lit., their acts of “missing the mark” of His standard). Therefore, though they had built stone mansions fit for kings and had planted lush vineyards in the fields that once belonged to small farmers, they would neither live in the houses nor drink the wine (Amos 5:11b–12a). Their Lord would invoke the treaty punishments against covenant disobedience (Deut. 28:30, 38–40; cf. Micah 6:14; Zeph. 1:13). Their greed would be met with poetic justice: as they had stripped the poor, so God would strip them.

**(5:14–15)** *The possibility still existed, however, for individuals to separate themselves from their guilty nation (cf. vv. 4–6).* If people would seek good, not evil, they might yet live. If they would go counter to the prevailing corruption—if they would hate evil instead of hating the righteous (v. 10), if they would maintain justice in the courts instead of trampling it (vv. 11–12)—then the Lord God Almighty, the great Warrior (God of hosts) would be their Defender instead of their Judge. He would indeed be with them, just as they were claiming He was.

“The Lord is with us” was Israel’s ancient shout of assurance that their powerful God would fight for them in battle (Num. 23:21; Deut. 20:4; 31:8; Jud. 6:12; Isa. 8:10; Zeph. 3:15, 17) and defend them in adversity (Pss. 23:4; 46:7, 11). But in the time of Jeroboam II this shout had become an empty slogan. Their assurance, Amos insisted, was a delusion. God was no longer “with them.” The guilty nation had been abandoned (cf. Amos 5:2).

Their external prosperity was misleading; it had bred a false security (cf. 6:3; 9:10; Micah 3:11). In reality, there would be only a brief respite before their Sovereign would sweep them away in judgment. If a handful, however, would turn and passionately seek the Lord, perhaps the great Godwould have mercy on that small repentant remnant of the Northern Kingdom, here called Joseph.

**(5:16–17)** Amos concluded his third message by returning to his opening lament and its staggering death statistics (vv. 1–3). After the Lord God Almighty had decimated their forces, the land would be full of funerals. There would be wailing … and cries of anguish throughout the cities (5:16) and the fields (v. 17). So many would be dead that there would not be enough professional mourners to wail; the farmers would have to be summoned from their fields to weep. (The poor who had suffered the injustice would be called in to bury their oppressors!) The vineyards, often places of laughter and harvest merriment (Isa. 16:10), would be silent except for the sound of wailing (cf. Amos 5:16). The mourning among all the buildings of the city and all the vineyards of the fields would fulfill the verdict of God’s judgment (cf. v. 11).

Wailing would fill the land because God would pass through their midst. *Their God, who once “passed over” Israel in order to “pass through” Egypt (Ex. 11:4–7; 12:12–13), would now “pass through” them on a similar errand of death.*

In this fourth message Amos declared that because of Israel’s religious hypocrisy **“the day of the Lord”** would be a day of exile rather than exaltation. Repentant individuals, however, could escape this disaster.

**(5:18)** **“Woe”** was ordinarily the wail of grief over the dead (cf. 1 Kings 13:30 Jer. 22:18; 34:5) Pronounced over the living, “woe” was a prediction of death (cf. Amos 6:1; Isa. 5:8–24; 10:1–4; Micah 2:1–5) or an interjection of distress in the face of present or coming calamity.

The “woe” was addressed to those who were eagerly longing for the day of the Lord. Their earnest desire, Amos warned, was ill-founded, for that day would be a day of darkness, not light (cf. Amos 5:20).

In Israel’s thinking, “the day of the Lord” was to be the time of God’s culminating vengeance against her enemies, the day when their mighty Sovereign would fight on their behalf (Isa. 34:1–3, 8; Jer. 46:10). On that day, she thought, He would turn His wrath on the wicked nations, punishing with disaster and death those who had threatened His people (Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 14:1–3). On that day Israel would be permanently secured from danger, and exalted among all nations of the earth (Isa. 24:21–23; Joel 3).

Amos’ hearers eagerly anticipated that day. They did not realize, however, that its horrors would fall, not only on the nations, but also on them. Israel mistakenly believed that their Sovereign was “with” her and that on His day of conquest He would eradicate her enemies. The truth, Amos declared, was that **Israel herself had become God’s enemy.** Her continual sins against His covenant had made her one of the adversaries. “The day of the Lord,” therefore, would not be the expected day of happiness. It would be instead the LORD’s day of vengeance against the rebels within His kingdom (cf. 8:9–10; 9:1–10).

**(5:19)** Their experience on that day would be like that of a man running from a **lion** who then meets a **bear**. Somehow eluding this second threat, he managed to flee to his house where he rested his hand on the wall in exhaustion and relief. But there, in the supposed safety of his home, a **poisonous snake** bit him. Similarly Israel would find **no haven from God’s judgment.**

**(5:20)** The day of the Lord, Amos repeated (cf. v. 18), would be a day of darkness, not light (Joel 2:1–2, 10–11; Zeph. 1:14–15), a day of pitch-dark gloom, without a ray of brightness or hint of hope.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of another brighter “day of the Lord,” a day after the exile, when a chastened and impoverished remnant returned to the land, a day when God will restore His people’s fortunes and turn their hearts toward Him (Jer. 30:8–11; Hosea 2:16–23; Amos 9:11–15; Micah 4:6–7; Zeph. 3:11–20).

**(5:21–22)** God’s burning anger was directed mostly against Israel’s religious hypocrisy. **He hated, He despised** (the repetition indicates vehemence and passion) their religious feasts—the three pilgrimage festivals of Unleavened Bread, Harvest (Weeks), and Ingathering (Tabernacles) which were celebrated annually at the sanctuary (Ex. 23:14–17; 34:18–24; Lev. 23; Deut. 16:1–17). He could not stand (lit., “smell”) the offerings of their assemblies. Though they continually brought Him burnt offerings (Lev. 1) and grain offerings (Lev. 2), He would not accept them as legitimate sacrifices. Though they brought choice fellowship offerings (Lev. 3), He would have no regard for or awareness of them. He loathed every part of their religious worship.

In verses 23–24 the verbs “away” and “let … run down” are singular, whereas in verses 21–22 the pronouns “your” and “ye” are plural. This indicates a shift from **national accusation** (vv. 21–22) to **individual invitation** (vv. 23–24).

**(5:23)** God appealed to individuals to take away the burdensome noise of their praise songs. He would not listen to the accompanying music of their harps. Having shut His nostrils He would also stop His ears.

**(5:24)** Instead of ritual and performance, God wanted a relentless commitment to justice and righteousness. He wanted a passionate concern for the rights of the poor, a concern that would roll on like an ever-flowing river … like a never-failing stream that did not run dry. God wanted a day-to-day life of surging integrity and goodness. Only this outer evidence of inner righteousness could offer the Israelites the possibility of survival in the day of the Lord (cf. vv. 6, 14–15).

**(5:25)** God returned to His denunciation of Israel’s religious hypocrisy by reminding them that their sacrifices and rituals had been an affront to Him throughout their history. From the very beginning their worship had been falsely directed. It was often not to Him, but to a golden calf, to the sun, moon, and stars, and to Molech and other false gods that many of them brought sacrifices and offerings during their 40 years in the desert (cf. Stephen’s reference to Amos 5:25–27 in Acts 7:39–43).

**(5:26)** Since then their worship had further degenerated as they began to honor “the star of your god ” (Acts 7:42; 2 Kings 21:3–5; 23:4–5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5), in violation of their covenant Law (Deut. 4:19; 17:3). They lifted up the shrine of their false deity (their king), raised the pedestal on which their idols perched, and held high the star symbol of their god.

**(5:27)** Because of this idolatry and hypocrisy in their worship, God said He would send Israel into exile beyond Damascus, toward the direction of Assyria (cf. 4:3). The horror of “exile” was more than the ruin of defeat and the shame of capture. For Israel, it meant being removed from the land of promise, the land of God’s presence. Exile, in effect, was excommunication. Yet this was the judgment of their sovereign Lord, the mighty Master whose covenant they had spurned.

*The fifth message (Ch. 6)*

In this message Amos pointed again to the reasons for Israel’s judgment, declaring that God would completely devastate both the Southern and Northern Kingdoms (vv. 1, 14), partly because of their boastful complacency and luxurious indulgence.

**(6:1)** Woe was again uttered, this time against those who were complacent in Zion and those who felt secure on Mount Samaria. Amos included Zion, capital of the South, in his opening lament, for they too were beginning to awaken God’s wrath. The remainder of his message, however, was addressed to the careless pride of the Northern Kingdom.

The leaders of Samaria considered themselves the notable men of the foremost nation. Their nation was militarily and economically dominant, and they were its most distinguished citizens. All the people of Israel looked to them for guidance and for handling the nation’s affairs.

**(6:2)** But God directed these proud men to go to cities which once also considered themselves great, and to learn from their fall. Calneh (also called Calno, Isa. 10:9) and Hamath were city-states in northern Aram. They had been overrun by Assyria during Shalmaneser III’s campaign in 854-846 b.c. Gath in Philistia had been devastated in 815 b.c. by Hazael, king of Aram, and again in 760 b.c. by Uzziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 12:17; 2 Chron. 26:6; cf. comments on Amos 1:6). Was Israel any better prepared to fend off an attack than were those powerful kingdoms? No. Was their land larger than Israel’s? Yes. Those cities and their surrounding districts were greater in size than proud Samaria, yet they still were unable to stave off disaster.

**(6:3)** Israel, arrogant and foolishly confident of its own prowess (cf. v. 13), put off the evil day. They scornfully dismissed any thought of coming calamity. But all the while, by their sinful actions, they were approaching a reign of terror. “A reign of terror” aptly describes the last years of Israel’s history before her captivity by Assyria (2 Kings 15:8–17:6). In the 31 years after Jeroboam II, Israel had six kings, three of whom seized power by political coup and assassination. The fear and violence in this period is reflected in the atrocities of 2 Kings 15:16.

**(6:4–6)** Rather than heed the prophet’s warnings of judgment, the leaders of Samaria instead gave themselves to a decadent hedonism. They reclined on expensive beds whose wood was inlaid with ivory (cf. 3:15). At their opulent feasts they lounged on their couches. The Hebrew word for “lie” *(saraḥ)* conveys a sprawled stupor of satiation and drunkenness, with arms and legs hanging over the side. They ate gourmet food—choice lambs and fattened calves —the tastiest and tenderest meat they could get. In their drunken revelry they imagined themselves strumming like David as they attempted to improvise music at their parties. Yet they were vastly different from David! Not content to drink wine from goblets, they consumed it by the bowlful. Only the finest lotions would do for their skin.

Their sole concern was for their own luxurious lifestyle. They did not grieve over the coming ruin of Joseph, the Northern Kingdom (cf. 5:6, 15). They had no concern for their nation’s impending doom.

**(6:7)** Therefore they, the first men of the first nation (v. 1), would be among the first to go into exile. Their festivities and drunken stupors would end. The sound of revelry would fade into bitter silence as they headed into captivity.

**(6:8)** Israel’s sovereign Lord had sworn by Himself, binding the full force of His integrity to a solemn oath (cf. 4:2; 8:7), that He would utterly destroy the land. He abhorred their pride as they said their national fortunes resulted from their own strength (6:1, 13). Jacob, like Joseph, is a synonym for the Northern Kingdom (see comments on 3:13). God detested the fortresses which were filled with the results of their oppression against the poor (see comments on 3:9–10).

Therefore, as a great Warrior, He would storm their city, and deliver up everyone and everything in it.

**(6:9–10)** So completely would God “deliver up” the city that even if 10 men should huddle in one house to escape the sword, they would die of pestilence. A relative who came to take the bodies to burn them would be so afraid of death that if he discovered a survivor hiding in the house he would quickly beg him not even to mention the Lord’s name in any way (not in lament or in anger for the slaughter or in praise for having survived). For in such a situation, to “mention the name” of Him who had so terribly destroyed the city might draw His attention to those whom He had overlooked, and cause Him to slay them also.

**(6:11)** After killing the inhabitants, the conquering Suzerain would then command His forces to smash … great and small houses into bits. The dwellings of both rich and poor would be totally demolished. All that would remain would be a field of debris.

**(6:12)** Two preposterous images expose the utter perversity of Israel’s leaders. That horses would run on the rocky crags, or that one would plow those perpendicular cliffs with oxen was unimaginable. Israel, however, had done the unimaginable! They had turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness. The judicial process, designed to preserve the nation’s health, had become a lethal “poison” within its body. The “fruit” of fairness and integrity, intended to refresh and delight, had become instead a corrupt bitter pulp.

**(6:13)** Israel’s leaders considered themselves immune to disaster, as the evidence of their might was obvious to them (vv. 1–3). Under Jeroboam II they had won an unbroken string of military victories (2 Kings 14:25). They had even recovered all their lands east of the Jordan. But Amos subtly and intentionally mispronounced the name of one of the captured towns, Lo Debar (a town east of the Jordan River, mentioned in 2 Sam. 9:4; 17:27), so that it came out in Hebrew as “Lo Dabar,” which means “nothing.” And with biting sarcasm he stressed the name of another subdued city, Karnaim, whose literal meaning of “horns” symbolized the “strength” of a bull. Amos scoffed that they were rejoicing over what was really “nothing,” and were falsely imagining that they had seized “strength” by means of their own strength.

**(6:14)** Their air of invincibility would be shattered by their mighty Master. God too would do the unimaginable—He would stir up a nation against His own people. He would raise a scourge against His own people Israel, and they would be “oppressed.” The word oppress deliberately evoked and promised again the bitter experiences of Egypt (Ex. 3:9) and the time of the Judges (Jud. 2:18; 4:3; 6:9; 10:11–12; 1 Sam. 10:17–18); Israel would again descend into slavery. All the territory they so boastfully held—from the northern frontier of Lebo Hamath to the southern border of the Arabah, the valley extending from the Sea of Kinnereth to the Dead Sea (2 Kings 14:25)—would be swallowed by the invading foe. Then Israel would know whose “strength” really determined the destiny of nations.

**The Results of Judgment (Ch.7)**

In chapters 3–6 Amos had documented the reasons for God’s judgment against Israel—legal injustice, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy, luxurious indulgence, and boastful complacency. Because of these covenant violations “the Lord God Almighty,” the great Warrior at the head of His armies, would crush His rebellious servants. Individuals who repented might yet be spared, but the nation as a whole was irrevocably doomed.

In chapter 7 Amos began to describe the results of this coming judgment. **Through a series of five visions (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; 9:1**), he pictured God’s total destruction of the land, its buildings, and its people.

**(7:1)** In the first of five visions Amos saw God actually preparing swarms of grasshoppers at the nation’s most vulnerable time of the year!) The grasshoppers were being loosed on the land after the king’s share had been harvested and just as the second crop was coming up. The king had the right to claim the first cutting of the grain for his military animals (cf. 1 Kings 18:5). The “second crop”—either what grew after the first cutting or a separate late planting—was the final growth of the season before the summer’s dryness. If it were lost the people would have nothing to eat until the next harvest.

An insect swarm was one of the most dreaded plagues of the ancient East. As a swarm made its ravenous way across the land, people despaired because it was an enemy against whom they were helpless. When the plague was past, suffering and death by famine followed. This misery was intensified in Israel, for grasshoppers (and locusts) were recognized as God’s instrument of punishment for covenant violations (Deut. 28:38, 42; cf. Amos 4:9; Joel 1:1–7).

**(7:2)** In his vision Amos saw that the insects stripped the land clean of all vegetation—both seeded crops and wild growth. Knowing that the nation would die if this vision became a reality, Amos begged the sovereign Lord to forgive the people of their sins. Though Israel was unrepentant, though her guilt was overwhelming, and though the punishment was just, Amos nevertheless pleaded with God not to bring this punishment on the nation. Jacob would never survive it. Jeroboam’s proud people might think themselves invulnerable (6:1–3, 8, 13; 9:10), but when viewed in the face of God’s awesome might and wrath they were in reality so small, so helpless, so pitiable. By calling Israel “Jacob,” Amos perhaps meant to remind God of His early commitment to the ancestor when he was at Bethel, a site still hallowed by his descendants (Gen. 28:10–22; Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5–6; 7:13). Jacob is mentioned in 3:13; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7; 9:8.

**(7:3)** Moved by the prophet’s prayer, the Lord repented and promised that the swarm of grasshoppers would not happen. (The word “repent” suggests a turning away and a relief from an earlier decision because one has been deeply stirred by the appeal of another; cf. Ex. 32:11–14.)

The nation was not forgiven, but this particular punishment was withdrawn. Amos did not ask for forgiveness again (cf. Amos 7:2 with v. 5), for some judgment on Israel was inevitable. *But by his prayers he was able to affect what* ***form*** *that judgment would take (2 Samuel 24:12-15).*

**(7:4)** In a second vision the sovereign Lord showed Amos a second terror—a judgment by fire. God intensified the blazing summer heat till all grasslands and trees became tinder-dry. Then fires broke out and spread in every direction with incredible speed (cf. Joel 1:19–20). Attempts to combat the sweeping inferno were futile, for the great deep, the subterranean waters that fed all springs (Gen. 7:11; 49:25; Deut. 33:13), had dried up. With the source of all waters consumed, the rivers and streams disappeared, and the flames raged unchecked until they had devoured the land (cf. Deut. 32:22).

**(7:5–6)** Again, distraught by the vision, Amos begged God to stop, and the Lord repented a second time. Neither would fire be the means by which He would punish the nation.

**For the third time the prophet was shown a vision of judgment. This time the sentence was unalterable.**

**(7:7–8)** The Lord held in His hand a plumb line. A plumb line was a cord with a lead weight used by builders to make sure that walls were constructed straight up and down. A plumb line was also used to test existing walls to see whether they had settled and tilted, needing to be torn down.

God was setting a plumb line (possibly the covenant Law and its requirements; cf. **Isa. 28:17**) among His people Israel. The nation had been built “true to plumb,” but now was out of line and needed to be torn down.

God quickly precluded any appeal from His prophet. The matter was settled; He would spare them no longer. This was the form His judgment would take.

**(7:9)** Having failed the test of the plumb line, the nation’s chief “structures”—both religious and political—would be demolished. The numerous high places (hilltop shrines) of Isaac would be destroyed. Like “Jacob” and “Joseph” “Isaac” was a name for the Northern Kingdom. The larger official sanctuaries of worship, such as Bethel and Gilgal, would be ruined (cf. 3:14; 4:4; 5:5–6; 7:13). And the house (political dynasty) of Jeroboam would crumble under the stroke of God’s sword (cf. 2 Kings 14:29; 15:10).

The incident recorded in verses 10–17 is integrally tied to Amos’ third vision (vv. 7–9) in two ways. First, it reveals the immediate historical reaction to the vision’s content. The fact that certain words appear in both the vision and the incident, but nowhere else in the book after 1:1 (viz., “Isaac” in 7:9, 16; “sanctuaries” in vv. 9–11), indicates that the episode was an immediate response to the revelation.

Second, the historical incident is linked to the vision because it represents a concrete example of the “plumb line” in operation, this time as a test of individuals. The vision had revealed that Israel’s institutions, both **religious** and **political**, had failed the test and would have to come down. Now, in the incident with Amaziah, the sovereign Lord drew near to measure two men—one a **prophet**, the other a **priest**. One was accepted; the other was not. One heard and obeyed the voice of the Lord; the other refused to hear.

**(7:10–13)** As Amos began publicly to recount his vision of ruined sanctuaries and dynastic demise, he was challenged by Amaziah the priest of Bethel.

Bethel was one of the two state sanctuaries established by Jeroboam when in 931 b.c. he broke from Jerusalem and the kingdom there (1 Kings 12:26–33). In order to unite the 10 tribes around his rule, Jeroboam created a new shrine and a duplicate religious system. The purpose of the calf, altar, priesthood, and festivals of Bethel was to give credence and stability to Jeroboam’s Northern Kingdom.

In Amos’ day the shrine at Bethel was the king’s sanctuary and the temple (lit., “house,” but frequently used as a synonym for “temple”; cf. 1 Kings 6; 8:6–66; 2 Chron. 2:1) of the kingdom (Amos 7:13). Besides being the site where Jeroboam worshiped, it was, more importantly, the religious symbol which rallied political commitment to the kingdom. As the temple in Jerusalem drew devotion to the lineage of David, so the existence of Bethel implied God’s sanction and support of the Northern monarch. To denounce Bethel and its system of worship (cf. 3:14; 4:4–5; 5:5–6, 21–26; also note 7:9; 9:1) was to attack the very foundation of the kingdom.

Amaziah was evidently Bethel’s chief priest, in charge of worship and personnel (cf. Jer. 20:1–2; 29:26). Hearing Amos’ forboding words against the sanctuary and the monarch, Amaziah sent a message to Jeroboam charging Amos with raising a conspiracy against the king in the very heart of the Northern Kingdom. He warned Jeroboam that the land could not bear such repeated messages of catastrophe: the people would be demoralized or sooner or later some dissident rebel would be prompted to fulfill the predictions. On previous occasions a prophet’s words against a king had been followed by internal revolt and by a change in dynasties (1 Kings 11:29–12:24; 16:1–13; 2 Kings 8:7–15; 9).

Amaziah refused to acknowledge in any way the divine source of Amos’ prophecies, choosing instead to view him as a political agitator. In his report to Jeroboam he prefaced the threatening quote (Amos 7:11) with, This is what Amos is saying, rather than with, “This is what God has said.” In quoting Amos, the priest deliberately omitted the prophet’s words about God’s claim of personal action, “I will rise against … Jeroboam” (v. 9). Amaziah substituted the simple fact, Jeroboam will die. He reported Amos’ words in a form designed to incite the king, twisting the prediction of the dynasty’s fall (v. 9) into a threat against Jeroboam himself (v. 11), and highlighting the announcements of national exile (v. 11; cf. 4:3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; cf. 7:17). Amaziah chose to see Amos as a menace to the status quo rather than as a messenger from the God of Israel.

Having dispatched his letter to the king, Amaziah then confronted Amos with the strong directive, Get out, you seer! Claiming authority over the activities at Bethel, the priest ordered Amos to go back to his home in Judah (cf. 1:1) and do his prophesying there.

A “seer” (7:12) was another name for a prophet (1 Sam. 9:9; 2 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 29:10). This title called attention to the prophet’s activity of beholding or “seeing” visions (Isa. 1:1; 2:1; Obad. 1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:1; Amos 1:1). These visions were “seen” by the prophets mentally and spiritually. Amaziah, reacting to Amos’ “visions” (7:1, 4, 7), used the word in a derogatory sense. His scornful advice to earn your bread in Judah implied that Amos was a professional predictor who made his living selling prophecies (Micah 3:5, 11; cf. the women of Ezek. 13:17–20 who prophesied “for a few handfuls of barley and pieces of bread”).

The stress in Amaziah’s words fell on the location or geography of Amos’ activity: “Go to Judah, earn your bread there, do your prophesying there, but don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel.” In his authority as the king’s priest he commanded Amos, “Leave Israel!” Amos’ response, however, was that a greater Authority had commanded him to prophesy in Israel.

**(7:14–15)** Amos denied that his ministry was self-generated, insisting that it was solely the result of God’s initiative. Amos had not chosen the calling of a prophet nor had he trained for it by becoming a prophet’s son (i.e., a member of a prophetic school under the tutelage of a “father”; cf. 2 Kings 2:1–15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1–7; 9:1). On the contrary, he had been profitably and contentedly occupied as a shepherd, and as a grower of sycamore-fig trees. But one day the Lord took him—the same verb is used for God’s calling the Levites (Num. 18:6) and David (2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70)—from tending the flock, and the Lord (the words “the Lord” are repeated in Heb.) commissioned him to **Go**, prophesy to My people Israel. **God had commanded him not only what to say but also where to say it.** The authority was not Amaziah’s, but the Lord’s. The place, therefore, would not be Judah, but Israel. The Lord had spoken, and Amos would prophesy as He directed (cf. 3:8; Acts 5:27–29).

**(7:16–17)** Now this same Lord had a word for the priest who had dared to forbid what He had commanded (cf. 2:11–12). Because Amaziah had rejected God’s word against the nation, he and his family would suffer the full fate of the nation. When the divine sentence of exile was carried out (cf. 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11; 9:4), he would be among those swept away from their native land. His wife would be forced to make a living as a prostitute in the very city where once she had been among the most distinguished women. His posterity and name would come to an end as the sword claimed the lives of his sons and daughters. His estate would be measured and divided up among foreigners (cf. 2 Kings 17:24; Jer. 6:12), and he himself would die in a polluted (lit., “an unclean”) country. He would be stripped of his office, bereft of a shrine, and defiled by the unclean food of a heathen land (cf. Ezek. 4:13; Hosea 9:3–4).

Had Amaziah responded differently, had he repented at Amos’ word, he might have been spared (Amos 5:4–6, 14–15). But instead he chose to align with an earthly monarch, to embrace the national mood of pride and security, and to assert his authority against God’s messenger. So the Lord quietly withdrew the plumb line. He would spare Amaziah no longer.

The Ripened Fruit of Judgment (Ch. 8)

**(8:1–2)** The sovereign Lord appeared a fourth time to Amos, this time asking him to identify an object. When Amos answered that it was a basket of ripe fruit … the Lord then replied, The time is ripe (lit., “The end has come”) for My people Israel.

The meaning of the Lord’s reply lay in the similar sound and significance of the words “**ripe** fruit” (v. 1) and “time is **ripe**” (v. 2). “Ripe fruit” (qāyiṣ) was **“summer fruit”** or “end-of- the-year fruit”—the last fruit of the season, fully ripened, with a short edible life. “Ripe time” (qēṣ) was “end time” or “cutting time”—the “reaping time” of death.

Israel was ripe for a dreadful harvest; her end had come. There would be no stay of execution, no last-minute reprieve. The Lord would spare them no longer.

**(8:3)** On the day *(“the day of the Lord”)* when God would judge Israel’s life (cf. 5:2–3; 6:9–10), the songs in the temple would turn to wailing (cf. 8:10; 5:16–17). Hymns of joy and trust in the Lord would turn to howling chants of lamentation and disbelief at what His hand had done to them. The cause of their grief would be the many, many dead bodies lying everywhere. So great would be the slaughter that there would not be enough people or places to bury the dead. Innumerable corpses would lie on the ground, to be eaten by dogs and birds, or to become fertilizing dung for the fields (1 Kings 14:11; Jer. 8:2; 9:22; 16:4).

When the weary mourners would finally cease their weeping, when they would lift wet eyes and questioning faces to seek a reason for the sorrow that engulfed them, they would find only silence. No answer would come. God would have no more words to say.

**(8:4–6)** Israel’s businessmen single-mindedly pursued a profit, and did not care that they were trampling the needy and doing away with the poor of the land (cf. 2:6–7; 5:11). Preoccupied with making money, the businessmen begrudged the interruptions caused by the monthly feast of the New Moon and the weekly observance of the Sabbath. They impatiently fidgeted till these days of rest and worship (Ex. 20:8–11; 23:12; 31:14–17; 34:21; Num. 28:11–15; 2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13–14; Ezek. 46:1–6; Hosea 2:11) were over so that they could resume their aggressive dealings.

They cunningly found ways to add to their profits—skimping the standard measure so that customers got less than they paid for, boosting the price by substituting heavier shekel-weights so that customers were overcharged, and cheating with dishonest scales by tampering with the cross beam of the balances. Not content with these covenant violations (Lev. 19:35–36; Deut. 25:13–16; cf. Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23; Hosea 12:7; Micah 6:10–11), they compounded their sin by deceptively selling an inferior product—the sweepings of soiled and trampled grain mixed and packaged with the clean pure wheat. They cared nothing about human suffering or the inability of the poor to pay their prices. Instead, they forced the needy into slavery in exchange for insignificant sums.

**(8:7–8)** The Lord, however, had sworn by Himself. God swore that He would never forget any of the evil things they had done. Because of their heartless greed and dishonesty, because of these covenant violations, their Warrior-God would advance against them and the land would tremble under His steps. The quaking tremors would be so violent that the whole land would rise … and then sink like the annual swelling and receding of the Nile … the river of Egypt. The shattered ruins of farms and buildings would cause all who lived in the wake of His path to weep and to mourn.

**(8:9–10)** That day of punishment would be a day of darkness (cf. comments on 5:18–20), for the sovereign Lord would bring about eclipses; the sun would go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. **Eclipses in 784 b.c. and 763 b.c. would have enabled Amos’ hearers to imagine the eerie fear and panic of such a time.**

Then in the midst of earthquake (8:8) and darkness the avenging Lord would begin His decimation of the people (cf. 5:2–3; 6:9–10; 8:3). The sword of their God would bring unprecedented grief on the land as He turned their feasts into funerals, and all their glad singing into weeping laments (cf. v. 3). The loss of life would be so widespread that every family would grieve and every home would observe the rites of mourning. God would cause all of them to wear sackcloth (a coarsely woven material, generally made of goats’ hair) against their bodies (Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kings 6:30; Job 16:15–16; Dan. 9:3) and shave their heads as a sign of sorrow (Job 1:20; Isa. 3:24; 15:2–3; Jer. 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:30–31; Micah 1:16). The intensity of their grief would be like the most tragic mourning of all—the mourning for an only son, whose death ended every hope for a family’s future (Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10).

The end of that day would not be the end of their grief. Instead, its culmination would usher in another bitter day—the mourners’ own “bitter day” of death. (For the day of one’s death as a “bitter day”; cf. 1 Sam. 15:32; Job 21:25; Ecc. 7:26.) After a day of mourning for others, the mourners themselves would die.

This agony of human grief would be even more unbearable in the face of God’s awful silence (v. 3).

**(8:11–12)** Since Israel had rejected all His words (2:11–12; 7:10–13, 16), they would hear His words no more. The sovereign Lord would send a famine, but this would not be a famine of food as before (cf. 4:6), but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. They would desperately inquire of Him, but He would not answer—not by dreams, not by Urim, not by prophet (1 Sam. 28:6; cf. 1 Sam. 3:1). Men would stagger to every corner of the land, wandering in a complete circuit of Israel’s territory (from the Dead Sea in the south to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and from the north to the east), searching for the word of the Lord—a word of explanation, of forgiveness, of hope. But they would not find it. When their grief would finally drive them to “seek the Lord” (Amos 5:4–6), the Lord would not be found. It would be too late.

**(8:13–14)** In that day (cf. vv. 3, 9) even lovely young women and strong young men—those capable of enduring and persisting in the search the longest—would faint because of an unrelieved thirst to hear God’s Word. Those who had perverted the worship of God, who had seen in the idol-calves of Samaria (Hosea 8:5–6) and Dan (1 Kings 12:28–30; 2 Kings 10:29) and in the image of Beersheba (Amos 5:5) a symbol of His power, would flock to the capital or traverse to the farthest points in a desperate appeal. Samaria’s idol is called its shame or more literally, its guilt, because the idol-worship resulted in the Samaritans being guilty before God. (The expression “from Dan to Beersheba” encompasses the full extent of the land; Jud. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25; 2 Chron. 30:5.) But their imploring would be futile. God would remain silent; and they would fall.

***The Inescapable Sword (Ch.9)***

**(9:1)** When a large congregation had assembled at the sanctuary at Bethel, and the Northern monarch had approached the altar with his sacrifice (1 Kings 12:31–33), Amos saw the Lord standing by the altar. The Lord was indeed “with them” (Amos 5:14), but to destroy and to kill, not to bless. The “end” had come for the altar, the sanctuary, and the people (3:14; 5:5–6; 8:1–3).

The Lord commanded, Smash the tops of the pillars so that the crashing roof would cause even the great stone thresholds to shake. The thresholds were massive foundation stones on which the doorposts were fixed (Isa. 6:4; Ezek. 40:6).

In his vision Amos apparently saw the entire structure collapse, killing most of the gathered worshipers (cf. Jud. 16:29–30), for a second command came quickly, Cut off the heads of all the people who yet remain alive. The Lord was determined that not one would get away; none would escape (cf. 1 Kings 18:40). Those who survived and fled the disaster He would pursue and kill with the sword (cf. Amos 9:4, 10).

**(9:2–4)** Even if they could flee to the outer reaches of the universe, He would find them and slay them. Neither the depths of the grave nor the heights of the heavens could separate them from the wrath of God (cf. Ps. 139:7–8; and **note the contrast in Rom. 8:38–39**). Though they hid in the dense forests of Mount Carmel (cf. Amos 1:2) or in some of its many limestone caves, He would hunt them down and seize them. If they somehow could hide from Him at the bottom of the sea, they would discover that there too He ruled, for the serpent would obey His command. This serpent is a sea monster, sometimes called Leviathan or Rahab, the personification of the sea’s defeated power (cf. Job 26:12–13; Pss. 74:13–14; 89:9–10; Isa. 27:1; 51:9–10). Even if enemies captured them and herded them like cattle into exile, to be under the protection of a foreign king and god, no foreign power could shield them from God’s relentless sword (cf. Amos 9:1, 10). Escape was impossible, for wherever they went God would fix His eyes on them for evil and not for good. He was determined to destroy them.

**(9:5–6)** The One Amos saw by the altar (v. 1) was the Lord Almighty, the great Warrior whose power was irresistible (cf. comments on 3:13). As the Sovereign, not only of Israel and the other nations (1:3–2:16; 3:9; 9:4, 7) but also of the vast universe, He could speak with certainty that there would be no escape for Israel anywhere in His universe. He whose finger merely touches the earth, causing the mountains to quake and “melt” (i.e., “flatten”; cf. Micah 1:3–4; Nahum 1:5), the whole land to flood like the Nile, and the inhabitants to mourn (cf. Amos 8:8), would surely possess a powerful hand to seize (9:2–3) rebels from any spot on earth. He who built His lofty palace in the heavens could not fail to reach any who sought refuge in the heavens (v. 2). He who controls the waters of the sea (cf. 5:8) would surely be obeyed by its inhabitants (9:3). The Lord is His name. His majesty and His power over creation means that they would not be able to escape Him. And as the Lord (Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God), He would keep His Word and judge those who had disobeyed Him. Interestingly the two verses in Amos that include the exclamation “The Lord is His name” speak of His sovereignty over the universe (5:8; 9:6).

**(9:7)** Israel’s special position as His people would not save them from punishment (cf. 3:1–2). God would act toward them as toward any other nation within His universal domain. They would be the same to Him as the Cushites, who lived in what is today southern Egypt, all of Sudan, and northern Ethiopia. *In Israel’s thinking, the Cushites were a foreign and unimportant people living at the periphery of the known world.*

God is the Sovereign of every nation. He had not only brought Israel up from Egypt (cf. 2:10; 3:1), but had also guided the historical migrations of their archenemies—the Philistines from Caphtor (cf. Jer. 47:4; Zeph. 2:5), probably another name for the island of Crete, and the Arameans from Kir (cf. Amos 1:5), a location in Mesopotamia. And as God had determined to reverse the destinies of those two nations (cf. 1:3–8), so He had determined to send Israel into exile (4:2–3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; 9:4). He would punish rebellion **wherever** it occurred.

**(9:8–10)** Having declared that He would make no distinction between Israel and other nations, God then solemnly uttered His final edict of death. Verses 8–10 are the three final statements of judgment in the Book of Amos. They vow an impartial and certain death to all the sinners of the land.

Though these three statements seal the nation’s doom, they also look forward to the final section of the book (vv. 11–15) where God speaks of a restoration after judgment. The first two statements (vv. 8–9) each conclude with a brief allusion to a spared remnant. The third statement (v. 10) is followed by God’s full promise of renewal and covenant blessing.

The eyes (cf. v. 4) of the sovereign Lord were keeping close watch on the sinful kingdom (Israel) to make sure that the judgment came. His purpose was to destroy it from the face of the earth. Their master would fulfill the covenant curses until no trace of the nation remained. Yet God would not totally destroy the house of Jacob (i.e., the Northern Kingdom; cf. Amos 3:13–14; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7). Some would be spared. The earlier possibility of a remnant (see “it may be” in 5:15) was now made certain. God would indeed have mercy on those who repented (cf. 5:4–6, 14–15, 23–24).

Wherever His people were scattered among all the nations, God would impartially shake them as grain is shaken in a sieve. But not a kernel would fall to the ground. As a fine-meshed sieve lets the chaff and dust go through, but catches the good grain, so God would screen out and save any righteous among His people.

All the sinners among His people would then die by His inescapable sword (cf. Amos 9:1, 4). Their self-confident boasting would finally end (cf. 6:1–3, 13) for the promised disaster would destroy them.

After all God’s judgments are past, when the nation has received full punishment for her sins, the Lord will move in mercy to renew and refresh His people. God will restore David’s kingdom over both the North and the South, and through it He will bless all nations of the earth. He will reverse the covenant curses and bring unprecedented prosperity to the land. Dispersed Israel will be returned to her land, there to dwell securely and enjoy its goodness. Then He who has always claimed them as “My people” (7:8, 15; 8:2; 9:10, 14; cf. Hosea 2:23; Zech. 8:8; 13:9) will once again take the title “thy God” (Amos 9:15).

**(9:11)** In that day (cf. Isa. 4:2; Micah 4:6; 5:10) God will restore David’s fallen tent. Previous references in Amos to “that day” had spoken of it as a day of darkness and destruction (Amos 2:16; 3:14; 5:18–20; 8:3, 9, 11, 13). But when Israel’s ordeal is finally over, “that day” will also become the day of her renewal.

God will reestablish David’s “tabernacle” over both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. A “tent” (lit., “booth”) or awning was made by setting up a simple frame and spreading branches over it. Its primary purpose was to shelter those under it, whether troops in the field (2 Sam. 11:11; 1 Kings 20:12–16), a watchman at post (Jonah 4:5), or pilgrims at the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles, Lev. 23:33–42). David’s dynasty, which had been a protective canopy over all the people of Israel, had “fallen” with the great schism of the 10 Northern tribes from the 2 Southern tribes (1 Kings 12). This booth had been broken in two. But God promised to unite the two kingdoms once again under Davidic rule (cf. Jer. 30:3–10; Ezek. 37:15–28; Hosea 3:4–5).

He will restore the sheltering tent, repair its broken places, building it as it used to be. God will carry out His good promise to David that He would raise up a Descendant after him and establish His rule forever (2 Sam. 7:11–16, 25–29).

**(9:12)** The united kingdom under its Davidic King will then become the source of blessing to all Gentiles. Edom, a nation perpetually hostile toward God’s people (cf. Num. 20:14–21; Ps. 137:7; Obad. 1; see comments on Amos 1:11–12), and therefore representative of all Israel’s enemies, will become a sharer in the promises to David: Israel will possess the remnant of Edom (cf. Obad. 19). In fact, all … nations will be brought under the dominion of the Davidic King, for they too bear God’s name. To “bear someone’s name” meant to be under the protection of that individual (cf. Deut. 28:9–10; 2 Sam. 12:26–28; 1 Kings 8:43; Isa. 4:1; 63:19; Jer. 15:16; Dan. 9:18–19). All nations belong to God (cf. Amos 1:3–2:16; 3:9; 9:4, 7) and therefore will be included in the blessings of the future kingdom.

From the beginning, God’s plan has been to provide salvation for the Gentile nations. His promise to Abraham was that through his descendants all peoples on earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; cf. Gen. 18:18; 22:17–18; 26:3–4; 28:13–14). Through Isaiah God continually affirmed that a united Israel under its Davidic King, the Messiah, will bring light, justice, and full knowledge of the Lord to all nations on the earth (Isa. 9:1–7; 11:1–13; 42:1–7; 45:22–25; 49:5–7; 55:1–5). When God restores the kingdom (the Millennium) under David’s Son, both Jews and Gentiles will bear the name of the Lord.

At the Jerusalem Council, James cited Amos 9:11–12 as proof that the Gentiles of his day need not be circumcised and live as Jews in order to be saved (Acts. 15:1–20). James was aware that Israel’s judgments were not yet over (cf. the Lord’s statements regarding the coming destruction of the temple and renewed persecution and death, Matt. 24:1–22; Luke 21:5–24, and that the restoration had not yet begun; cf. Acts 1:6–7). But James also knew from Amos’ succinct statement and from extended passages in other prophets (cf. “prophets” in Acts 15:15; also note Isa. 42:6; 60:3; Mal. 1:11) that when the promised kingdom would come, the Gentiles will share in it as Gentiles and not as quasi-Jews. Since this was God’s millennial purpose, James concluded that the church should not require Gentiles to relinquish their identity and live as Jews. James was not saying the church fulfills the promises to Israel in Amos 9:11–12. He was saying that since Gentiles will be saved in the yet-to-come Millennium, they need not become Jews in the Church Age.

**(9:13)** The days are coming when God will remove all curses and restore covenant blessings to the land (cf. Lev. 26:3–10; Deut. 28:1–14).

Instead of drought and famine (Amos 1:2; 4:6–8), there will be unending prosperity (9:13; cf. Lev. 26:3–5, 10; Deut. 28:4–5, 8, 11–12).

Instead of the turmoil of war (Amos 2:13–16; 3:11, 15; 4:10–11; 5:2–3; 6:9–10; 7:17; 9:1, 10), there will be unbroken peace which will enable Israel to enjoy the fruit of her labor (v. 14; cf. Lev. 26:6; Deut. 28:6).

Instead of the fear of exile (Amos 4:2–3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; 9:4), Israel will confidently defend herself from every foe and remain in the land (v. 15; cf. Lev. 26:7–8; Deut. 28:7, 10).

In the days when God restores Israel, the land will be so productive (cf. Isa. 27:6) that the plowman who starts in October will have to wait for the reaper who should have finished in May. The one who treads grapes in July will find the planter still sowing new seed into the ground broken by the long-delayed plowman. The grapes will hang so heavy in the mountain vineyards that the hills will drip and flow (lit., “melt”) with new wine (cf. Joel 3:18). So much juice will drip from the vines or overflow from the vats that the mountains will appear from a distance to be “dissolving” as softened mud will ooze down the slopes.

**(9:14)** God’s restored people Israel will live in peace and be able to enjoy lavish abundance. The frustration and insecurity of war will be a thing of the past (cf. Isa. 2:4: Micah 4:3). They will build houses (cf. Amos 5:11) and even whole cities and live in them (cf. Isa. 32:18). They will drink and eat and take pleasure in the labor of their hands.

**(9:15)** God will plant Israel in her own land, never again to be uprooted and exiled from the land He has given them (cf. Gen. 13:14–15; 17:7–8; Deut. 30:1–5; 2 Sam. 7:10; Jer. 30:10–11; Joel 3:17–21; Micah 4:4–7). The land will be inhabited by Israel (cf. Ezek. 37:25; Joel 3:20; Zech. 14:11).

The Lord will certainly do these things (Amos 9:12), for He is the One who had been, was then, and always will be their God.

**C**ONCLUSION OF **V**OLUME **O**NE  
**HOSEA – AMOS**



***“Thy Word is Truth”***

**Obadiah  
“Servant of the LORD”**

Key Word(s) -***“Pride”*** Key Verse- **1:3**

*Summary of the Book-*

The vision of God’s prophet here concerns itself primarily with the pride and eventual destruction of Edom- the descendant nation of Esau. A much wider application, however, is presented here…any nation is vulnerable to God’s righteous judgment.

*Introduction to Obadiah-*

**The Prophet-** The name Obadiah (“servant of the LORD”) was common in ancient Israel. At least twelve others by this name appear in the Old Testament. Jewish tradition identifies the prophet Obadiah with the steward of King Ahab who hid a hundred prophets in caves during the Jezebelian persecution (1 Kgs 18:4). Others have suggested that the prophet Obadiah may have been the Obadiah sent out by King Jehoshaphat to teach the Law of God in the countryside of Judah (2 Chr 17:7). **The Minor Prophet Obadiah, however, most likely is distinct from all the others by that name in Scripture.**

Practically nothing is known about this prophet. He was probably a native of Judah. He lived through a humiliating sack of Jerusalem. He had tremendous faith to see the ultimate glory of God’s kingdom. His personality, however, lies hidden in shadow. The message rather than the man is the focus of this book.

**The Message-** The message of Obadiah might be titled “A Tale of Two Mounts.” In this book Mt. Zion represents the people of God. Mt. Esau represents the adversaries of God’s people. The same contrast is found in the terminology **“House of Jacob”** and **“House of Esau.”** For the first group the present is bleak, but the future is bright. On the other hand, the adversaries of God’s people have no future at all.  
 There are ten distinct predictions in the Book of Obadiah. Seventeen of the twenty-one verses—*81% of the contents*—are predictive. The more important predictions are these: *(1) Edom will be brought low; (2) Edom will be permanently cut off; (3) God’s people will consume the Edomites and possess the Philistines; and (4) in due time the LORD will be sole ruler over all.* While some of the prophecies of Obadiah find fulfillment in the messianic age, there is no personal messianic prophecy in the book.  
 **The Date-** Since the Bible gives no facts about the life or background of the man who wrote the Book of Obadiah, the date of its writing has been debated. Three suggestions for the date have been made: (a) in the reign of Jehoram (848–841 b.c.), son of Jehoshaphat, (b) in the reign of Ahaz (731–715 b.c.), and (c) in 585 b.c., soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586.

**Historical Background-** The animosity between the Edomites and the Israelites is one of the oldest examples of discord in human relationships. The conflict began with a struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb of their mother Rebekah (Gen. 25:21–26). Years later, when Esau was hungry, he readily traded his birthright to Jacob for some red stew. For that reason Esau was also called Edom (Gen. 25:30), which means red. Also when Esau was born his skin appeared red (Gen. 25:25). Later Esau moved to the land of Seir (Gen. 36:8–9), the red sandstone area southeast of the Dead Sea. There his descendants, the Edomites, displaced the Horites (Deut. 2:12, 22). Interestingly the Hebrew word for Seir (*śē‘îr*) is similar to the word for “hairy”(*śē‘ār*), the meaning of “Esau” (*‘ēśāw*). “Seir” and “Mount Seir” became synonyms for Edom (2 Chron. 20:10; 25:11; Ezek. 35:15).

Edom refused to let the Israelites pass through their land when Israel was on the way to the Promised Land (Num. 20:14–21). But God told Israel not to hate Edom since they were related (Deut. 23:7). However, hostility developed and continued for centuries (Ezek. 35:5). Saul (1 Sam. 14:47), David (2 Sam. 8:13–14), Joab (1 Kings 11:16), and Solomon (1 Kings 11:17–22) all had problems with the sons of Edom. Jehoshaphat of Judah and Joram of Israel joined with Edom in an attack against Moab (2 Kings 3). Also in Jehoshaphat’s reign Edom joined the Ammonites and the Moabites in an attack against Judah, but the attack ended with the Ammonites and Moabites defeating the Edomites (2 Chron. 20:1–2, 10–11, 22–26).

In the reign of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s son, Edom revolted against Judah and crowned their own king (2 Kings 8:20–22; 2 Chron. 21:8). Later Amaziah, king of Judah, crushed Edom, and changed the name of the city Sela to Joktheel (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11–12). Later Edom attacked Judah during Ahaz’s reign (2 Chron. 28:17). In 586 b.c. Edom encouraged Babylon to destroy Jerusalem (Ps. 137:7).

In the late sixth or early fifth century b.c. the Nabateans, from northern Arabia, worshipers of gods and goddesses of fertility and the celestial bodies, drove out most of the Edomites. Apparently some remained in Edom and were absorbed by the Nabatean Arabs. The Nabateans were the renowned stone-carvers of Petra. The expelled Edomites settled in Idumea, the Greek name for southern Judea. Later (ca. 120 b.c.) the Edomites there, then called Idumeans, were subdued by John Hyrcanus, a Maccabean, who forced them to be circumcised and to follow Judaism (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 13. 9. 1; 14. 7. 9). Herod the Great, king of Judea from 37 b.c. to 4 b.c., was an Idumean (Edomite).

The Idumeans joined the Jews in their rebellion against Rome in a.d. 70, but were almost obliterated by Titus, the Roman general. Only a few Idumean refugees escaped. The Edomites then faded from history.



***The Rock fortress-city of Petra and home of the Edomites.***

**Obadiah 1:3**

*Outline of the Book*

***I. Edom’s Destruction (vv. 1–9)***

A. The call to the nations to destroy Edom (v. 1)

B. The prophecy of Edom’s destruction (vv. 2–9)

1. Edom’s pride to be debased (vv. 2–4)

2. Edom’s wealth to be plundered (vv. 5–7)

3. Edom’s people to be slaughtered (vv. 8–9)

***II. Edom’s Crimes (vv. 10–14)***

A. Violations in attitudes (vv. 10–12)

B. Violations in actions (vv. 13–14)

***III. God’s Judgment on Israel’s Enemies (vv. 15–16)***

***IV. God’s Blessings on Israel’s People (vv. 17–21)***

A. The deliverance of Israel (vv. 17–18)

B. The delineation of Israel’s territories (vv. 19–20)

C. The establishment of the Lord’s kingdom (v. 21)

***Expositional Commentary***

Edom’s Destruction (vv. 1–9)

*The call to the nations to destroy Edom (v. 1)*

**(1:1)** The word vision is also used in Isaiah 1:1, Micah 1:1, and Nahum 1:1 to introduce those prophetic books (cf. Dan. 1:17; 8:1; 9:24; Hosea 12:10). It suggests that the prophet “saw” (mentally and spiritually) as well as heard what God communicated to him. Nothing is known of the background or life and ministry of Obadiah. His name was a common one, meaning “Worshiper of the LORD.” This prophet received a direct communication from the Sovereign (*’ădônāy*) Lord (*Yahweh*). The word “Sovereign” stresses His rule over all nations and “Lord” speaks of His covenant relationship with Israel.

Concerning Edom … the Lord gave a message (or a report). It came through a representative He sent to the nations, telling them to unite in humiliating Edom. The nations that had a part in destroying the Edomites included the Nabateans, the Jews (under John Hyrcanus), and the Romans. This points up a truth seen throughout much of the Bible: God sovereignly employs nations to accomplish His will on earth.

*The prophecy of Edom’s destruction (vv. 2–9)*

**(1:2)** Edom prided herself in her great wealth (obtained by trading, looting, and by iron and copper mining in the region) and in her almost impregnable position geographically.

Yet God said He would cause her to be made small (emphatic in the Heb.) in contrast with her self-exaltation, and to be … despised (also emphatic in the Heb.).

**(1:3–4)** Her pride would be her undoing, for it would deceive her into thinking that no one could conquer her. “Pride” translates *zeḏôn*, from *zîḏ*, “to boil up, to be presumptuous.” This recalls Jacob’s cooking (*zîḏ*) the stew (*nāzîḏ*) which Esau bought with his birthright (Gen. 25:29). The Edomites’ arrogance was presumptuous, whelming over their bounds, portrayed by the stew their ancestor ate.

Contributing to this self-deception was the supposed security of Edom’s geographical location in the mountains of Seir. She trusted in the natural protection provided by the clefts of the rocks. Living in caves high (on the heights) above the ground level she felt totally safe from enemy attacks. Some of the Edomites had settled in such high caves and other places up in the mountains that it was as if they, hyperbolically speaking, were soaring like the eagle and nesting among the stars.

In response to Edom’s self-confident, arrogant question, Who can bring me down to the ground?… the Lord answered that *He* would bring them down! God, like an eagle, would swoop down (Jer. 49:22) on those who thought they were safe as eagles. Though Edom was almost impregnable to man, she was not inaccessible to God. **Edom prided herself in her wealth (v. 6), her alliances with her neighbors (v. 7), her wisdom (v. 8), and her soldiers (v. 9).** Edom’s fertile valleys had been developed through irrigation, and she had become a center in foreign trade routes.

**(1:5–6)** Obadiah now filled in details about Edom’s coming judgment. First, he spoke of thieves stealing at night … only as much as they want. Second, he likened her humiliation to field workers gathering grapes, who leave a few grapes for the poor to glean. By contrast, in Esau’s disaster *nothing* would be left. Thieves and grape pickers normally do not take everything, but those who would plunder Esau would leave nothing. **Esau is used here as a synonym for Edom, much as Jacob is often used as a synonym for Israel.** The nation of Edom would be ransacked, and she would be stripped of her wealth. The invaders would find treasures, probably hidden in caves, and carry them all away, leaving her desolate.

**(1:7)** Edom prided herself in the alliances she had with her neighboring countries. Perhaps they became her allies to gain favorable trade relations with her. But those allies, in whom Edom trusted, would become her enemies. They would pursue her to her border, deceiving her and overpowering her. Ironically Edom, deceived by her own pride (v. 3), would then be deceived by her allies! What an alarming strategy—not an attack by a known enemy, but an ambush by an ally. Those who eat your bread refers to friends or allies (cf. Ps. 41:9).

Another point of irony in Obadiah 7 is that Edom, known for her wise men (cf. v. 8; Jer. 49:7), would be totally ignorant of her allies’ deceptive scheme. The downfall referred to here probably occurred in the late sixth or early fifth century b.c. when the Nabateans (see “Historical Background” in the *Introduction*) went to the Edomites who took them in for a banquet. Once welcomed inside Edomite territory, the Nabateans turned against their ally and killed the guards.

**(1:8–9)** God had said He would debase Edom (v. 2), bringing her down from her pride (v. 4), and destroy her. Now He said He would destroy the wise men of Edom and her men of understanding. Her wise leaders would be unable to rescue her. Even Edom’s warriors would be in complete dismay, and all Edomites who sought safety in Esau’s mountains (cf. vv. 19, 21) would be slaughtered.

Teman, Edom’s capital named for Esau’s grandson (Gen. 36:10–11), represented the entire nation (cf. Amos 1:12).

Edom’s arrogance led to her complete humiliation. Her security and wealth would be gone, and her wise leaders, soldiers, and others would all fall under God’s mighty hand. Nothing could render her safe—not her geographical position or military power or wisdom. What a false hope pride gives unbelievers who try to find security in their own strength apart from God.

Edom’s Crimes (vv. 10–14)

Obadiah, sensing the intensity of God’s judgment on Esau’s descendants, then stated the reasons for God’s condemnation. The prophet spoke of the Edomites’ sinful attitudes (vv. 10–12) and their actions against Judah (vv. 13–14).

*Violations in attitudes (vv. 10–12)*

**(1:10)** Edom, God predicted, would be covered with shame, contrasting starkly with her arrogance (cf. v. 3), and she would be destroyed (cf. vv. 7–8), because of her violent, hurtful, oppressive cruelty (cf. Joel 3:19) against her brother Jacob, that is, Jacob’s descendants. Obadiah intentionally spoke of the Judahites as Edom’s “brother” to suggest the awfulness of violence against one’s own blood relatives. Strikingly the Hebrew words for “violence” and “brother” are together in this verse.

**(1:11–12)** When foreign forces went against Judah, they cast lots to see who would plunder which parts of Jerusalem. Edom, because of her indifference (she stood aloof) was no different from the strangers who went against her own relatives. Then in a downward spiral, the indifference was followed by (a) gloating over the misfortune of her brother (cf. v. 10), (b) rejoicing over Judah’s destruction, and even (c) boasting of her trouble.

*Violations in actions (vv. 13–14)*

**(1:13–14)** Edom’s crimes against Judah went beyond being spectators who rejoiced over Judah’s misfortune. Because of wrong attitudes, sinful actions followed. Edom even entered Jerusalem’s gates, looking down (cf. v. 12) in arrogance on God’s people in their calamity. Edom looted their wealth, killed those who tried to escape, and handed over any survivors to the attacking armies. The threefold repetition of *‘in the day of their calamity’* (v. 13) heightens the effect of the calamity Judah experienced. Violence, harbored in the heart, gave birth to violent acts.

When did all this happen? This probably took place when the Philistines and Arabians attacked Jerusalem in the days of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s son (2 Kings 8:20–22; 2 Chron. 21:16–17). Since Obadiah told Edom not to do such things again, he was probably writing about a time *before* Jerusalem’s total destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

God’s Judgment on Israel’s Enemies (vv. 15–16)

**(1:15)** Edom illustrates God’s judgment to come on all nations (cf. Isa. 34:2) who rebel in arrogance against God. The day of the Lord may refer to any time God judges by entering into world affairs. Most frequently, though, it refers to (a) God’s judgments in the Great Tribulation and at the return of Jesus Christ in glory, and/or (b) God’s establishing of the Millennium. In other words the Lord’s “day” is when He will bring all things under His rule.

Edom’s humiliation foreshadows what the Lord will do to all nations who similarly mistreat Israel. Besides her past humiliation, Edom will be repopulated in the future and with other nations will again come under God’s wrath in the forthcoming day of the Lord when Christ returns to establish His reign.

God’s judgments on Edom corresponded to her crimes. What she had done to Judah would then be done to her: (1) She looted Jerusalem (v. 13), so she was looted (v. 6; cf. Jer. 49:10). (2) Edom killed Judean fugitives (Obad. 14; cf. Amos 1:11), so she was slaughtered (Obad. 8; cf. Isa. 34:5–8; Ezek. 32:29; 35:8). (3) She handed over Judean survivors to the enemy (Obad. 14; cf. Ezek. 35:5), so Edom’s allies expelled her (Obad. 7). (4) Edom rejoiced over Judah’s losses (Obad. 12; cf. Ezek. 35:15), so she was covered with shame and destroyed (Obad. 10).

**(1:16)** Edom had been involved in a drunken celebration in Jerusalem (My holy mountain; cf. Ps. 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 24:3; 78:54; Dan. 9:16, 20; Zeph. 3:11) when she entered the city (Obad. 13). Other nations that oppose Israel will also reap God’s judgment, often pictured as a cup to drink (cf. Isa. 51:17, 21–23; Jer. 25:15–33; Hab. 2:16; Rev. 14:9–10; 16:19; also see Isa. 63:6). Those nations will be so completely destroyed when Jesus Christ returns to the earth (Rev. 19:15, 17–18, 21) that it will be as if they had never existed. Edom will be included in that judgment. For though Edom ceased to exist as a nation when the Romans conquered Idumea, some of the Edomites’ descendants will again populate their land in the future. Even today that land, now a part of Jordan, is not totally desolate. But the Edomites will then be completely wiped out (cf. Obad. 18) and their land in the Millennium will be occupied by Israelites (vv. 19, 21).

God’s Blessings on Israel’s People (vv. 17–21)

**(1:17–18)** Though Esau will be destroyed by God’s wrath, Israel in God’s grace will experience deliverance. Israel will be freed from her enemies. Mount Zion (cf. v. 21), a synonym for Jerusalem, though desecrated by Edom (Obad. 13), will be holy (cf. Isa. 52:1; Zech. 14:20–21), and the land promised to Israel (Gen. 15:18–21) will be occupied by the house (descendants) of Jacob (cf. Obad. 19–20). God’s covenant people who trust Him will finally be delivered; they will be set apart to God. Jacob (the Southern Kingdom) and Joseph (the Northern Kingdom) will be united (cf. Ezek. 37:15–23), and will destroy Edom (the house of Esau; cf. Obad. 6) like a flame easily setting stubble … on fire (cf. Zech. 12:6; Mal. 4:1). Then the Edomites, Israel’s longtime enemies, will finally be wiped out. Edom will have no survivors, in reprisal for her treatment of Judah’s survivors (Obad. 14). The certainty of this truth is affirmed by the words, “The Lord hath spoken it”. Since He has said it, none should question it.

**(1:19–20)** Here Obadiah described some of the territories to be restored to God’s people. People in the southern desert portion of Israel (the Negev) will inherit Edom (the mountains of Esau; cf. Obad. 8, 21). This will fulfill the prophecies in Numbers 24:18, Isaiah 11:14, and Amos 9:11–12. Israelites in the western foothills will move south to the land of the Philistines with its coastal plains. Central Israel (Ephraim and Samaria) will be claimed, and small Benjamin will extend its borders to Gilead, east of the Jordan. Exiles sold into captivity will return and possess the land as far north as Zarephath. Others exiled from Jerusalem to Sepharad, will possess … the Negev. Suggestions on the location of Sepharad include two countries (Spain, Media) and two cities (Hesperides in Libya, and Sardis in Asia Minor). Sardis seems preferable. It may be the same as the Akkadian *Sapardu*. If Sepharad is to be identified with Sardis, then Jews there will be returning a distance of almost 400 miles to the Negev. At the beginning of the Millennium Israelites will return to their land from these and other lands, and their territory will be expanded.

*The establishment of the Lord’s kingdom (v. 21)*

**(1:21)** From Jerusalem (Mount Zion; cf. v. 17) saviours (judges) will … govern the people who will have occupied the mountains of Esau (cf. vv. 8, 19). In the Millennium, the kingdom will belong to the Lord (cf. Zech. 14:9). Israel will be restored as a nation (Obad. 17), she will occupy the land (vv. 18–20), and she will be ruled by her King, the Lord Himself (v. 21).

The short Book of Obadiah presents a powerful message. It shows what happens to those who reject God’s Word and His grace, rebelling in foolish pride. During Edom’s prosperity many in Israel could have asked, ***“Why do the wicked prosper?”*** (cf. Ps. 73:3) But the voice of Obadiah comes thundering through the pages of the Old Testament, and is echoed in the New: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal. 6:7). Obadiah’s words underscore the fact of God’s justice. “*For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*  (Heb. 10:30–31).

One who responds in obedience to the grace of God has everything to gain, but a person who spurns His grace in pride has everything to lose.

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/Isaiah_(Bible_Card).jpg&imgrefurl=http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah&h=861&w=771&tbnid=10BHZX_wD6bhcM:&zoom=1&docid=udvao0lWYRtKNM&hl=en&ei=elBMU-PyLuP42AWvg4CQDQ&tbm=isch&ved=0CKECEIQcMDo&iact=rc&dur=636&page=4&start=55&ndsp=20)

**“For the day of the   
LORD is near…”**  
Obadiah 1:15