

A Study of the Minor Prophets
The Book of Amos ~ Chapter 5-7
Lesson 4

- I. Chapter 5:8-9 : This is the second hymn in Amos. It draws attention to the role of Yahweh as Creator. Although the broader context of judgment is still in play, the hymn in 5:8–9 also praises God as capable of forgiving the repentant as well as establishing justice in the land. This is illustrated by the contrast between Israel, who turns “justice into wormwood,” and Yahweh, who “turns darkness into dawn”.
- II. Chapter 5:10-13: This section is an announcement of judgement and once again is based on the theme of social justice.
- III. Chapter 5:14-15: Repeating the call to repentance, Amos affirms that seeking Yahweh is not a matter of religious ritual and location, but of seeking “good and not evil.” The chiasmic structure of the unit pictures the image of “turning” in repentance, and with such turning came the hope of God’s grace to Israel (v. 15).
- IV. Chapter 5:16-17: The lament announced in Amos 5:1 formally closes in verses 16–17, with the Hebrew term for “wailing” repeated three times for emphasis. So expansive will the death toll be that professional mourners will not be sufficient to mourn for all the dead; even farmers will be called to mourning . The lament closes with a chilling promise from the voice of Yahweh: “For I will pass through you”. Although this language is repeated later in Amos’s visions (7:8; 8:2), the more significant point is the allusion back to the Exodus Passover.
- V. Chapter 5:18-27: In these verses Amos powerfully transforms the “Day of the Lord” from a day of salvation to a day of judgement against Israel. In contrast to Israel’s expectation, the Day of the Lord would be a day when Yahweh would fight against Israel, not for her. Amos describes the day not as a day of joyful light, but of dreaded darkness. In no uncertain manner, God declares his feelings (“I hate, I despise”) toward the rituals Israel pursued so expectantly (v. 21).
- VI. Chapter 6:1-10: Chapter six continues the judgment oracles with a “woe to you” speech leveled against the first-class citizens of Israel.
- VII. Chapter 6:11-14: Authenticating the surety of God’s judgment, Amos concludes the broader series of judgment speeches with a clear prophetic statement of what lies in Israel’s near future. Amos again states that it is God who brings judgment at the command of his voice (compare 3:15 to 6:11). Then, using rhetorical disputation, Amos asks, “Do horses gallop on cliffs; does anyone plow there with oxen?” The implied answer is “no, that would be absurd . . .” Yet just as absurdly, Israel has managed to “turn justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood”. For reason of Israel’s own pride, God would raise up a nation against her who would afflict her from the entrance of Hamath (in the north) to the Brook of the Arabah (in the south). For Amos’s contemporaries, such a description would have been quite shocking, as Jeroboam II had just expanded the territory of Israel to these very boundaries (2 Kgs 14:25). Just

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one generation later, God would raise up the Assyrians to conquer the territory that had become the pride of Israel.

VIII. Chapter 7 is the start of a series of visions. The first two show the prophet interceding for the nation. Two important points can be gleaned from the visions. First it was not enough for Amos, as a prophet, to proclaim the coming judgment of God. Rather, in the pattern of Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Amos fulfills his prophetic calling by interceding on behalf of the people. In the second two visions (7:7–9; 8:1–3), instead of simply seeing an anticipated event and responding, Amos sees a symbolic picture and is prompted to dialogue with God over its interpretation.