

Yahweh calls! Return to Him!**Read Amos 3.1 – 5.17****INTRODUCTION**

1. We opened up this four-lesson survey of The Book of Amos in [Lesson 1](#). We gave you some background on Amos, the prophet, and summarized the eight indictments he delivered from Yahweh detailing and condemning the sins that the neighboring nations – including Judah and Israel themselves – had committed against Him, other peoples, and against each other.
2. We will now pick up Amos’s prophetic messages where we last left off and continue through the next section: **chapters 3.1 – 5.17**. This section will contain three messages Amos delivered in Bethel [one of Israel’s primary centers of worship / **see ch 7.10-17**].
3. Each of these messages is introduced by the same announcement:
[1] Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt... / ch 3.1
[2] Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria... / ch 4.1
[3] Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel... / ch 5.1
4. We will take them in order and describe their themes along with Yahweh’s assessments of their sins and the impending judgments He was bringing on them because of their transgressions of His covenant, righteousness, and Holy justice.

I / CHAPTER 3.1-15 / FIRST MESSAGE:**“HEAR THIS WORD THAT THE LORD HAS SPOKEN AGAINST THE WHOLE FAMILY THAT I BROUGHT UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.”**

1 / vv 1-2 / Yahweh addresses Israel as “family” – His ‘family.’ He reminds Israel that He is the One who had created them as a family [through Abraham] and nation by choosing them to be His people, redeeming them from bondage and slavery in Egypt, and delivering them to belong to Him only and exclusively.

[1] Israel had been blessed with immeasurable privileges by the Grace of Yahweh: **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth...”** This verb ‘**known**’ is so much more than mere acquaintance or familiarity; it is intimacy. It is the same verb that is used to describe marital intimacy and union [**as in Genesis 4.1, et. al.**]

[2] Yahweh had singled out the people of Israel to be His covenant people. He had not only claimed them to belong to Him and fear Him only, but He had also committed to bless them, protect them, and provide for them in every way. / **Deuteronomy 7.6-11 & 10.12-22**

[3] But with that immeasurable privilege had also come a corresponding responsibility and accountability to be faithful in their response to and use of those privileges – but they had historically and repeatedly failed to live up to those privileges. The weight of their guilt had been compounded by the riches of their privileges they had violated. So Yahweh does what His Holy justice requires: **He must and will punish them proportionately to their iniquities.**

2 / vv 3-6 / Yahweh gives them seven examples of His just ‘cause and effect’ punishments He will bring upon them. [Yahweh’s justification for v 2]

[1] Yahweh’s Holy justice is an example of Newton’s Third Law of Motion: *‘For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.’* See **Proverbs 26.2 KJV**, **“...the curse causeless shall not come...”**

[2] Yahweh will ask them seven simple questions, all answered ‘No!’ They knew the answers from their own common experience. Every question and answer will serve as a self-pronouncement of their own guilt and a vindication of Yahweh’s coming judgments. They had brought everything upon themselves ... they had been the ‘*cause*’ of all of Yahweh’s punishment ‘*effect*’ they would suffer. “Is the ‘*effect*’ of Yahweh’s judgments without the ‘*cause*’ of your iniquities? ‘NO!’”

3 / vv 7-8 / Yahweh is giving them a loud, clear, unmistakable, unambiguous, advance forewarnings of His judgments against them. Yahweh's judgments are never ambushes or sneak attacks. In truth, He had been repeatedly and persistently forewarning them for centuries what the disastrous consequences would be for their faithless breaking of His covenant (see **2 Kings 17.7-21**). He is now 'roaring' again through Amos's prophetic warnings. / **see ch 1.2: Yahweh roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem...**

4 / vv 9-10 / Yahweh even calls their equally-guilty neighbors, Ashdod [Philistia] and Egypt, to come to the mountains of Samaria and witness what He will do in punishment to His own 'family' for their covenant unfaithfulness.

[1] They will see the **'tumults within her.'** These are both the internal conflicts they are waging against each other and also the disastrous destructions Yahweh will wreak upon them. They will also witness **'the oppressed in her midst,'** that is, all the injustices they are committing against one another [which Yahweh will detail as He goes on here...]

[2] Why would He call on these equally-guilty 'foreign' kingdoms to witness and witness against Samaria? [see **ch 1.6-9**]. Because it would show the foreign nations that Yahweh is also equally just to punish the same injustices and atrocities in EVERY nation and peoples. Yahweh is Sovereign Judge over ALL nations and will hold them all accountable for their conduct – even though He will judge Samaria more severely because of their greater privilege and responsibility. / **see Luke 12.35-48**

[3] **v 10 is very important: it is one of Yahweh's summary sentences against Israel: 'They do not know how to do right,' declares Yahweh, 'those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.'** He commands them **'to do right,'** but they have no interest or intention to do so.

[4] Contrast this statement with **v 2: "You only have I known [same verb] of all the families of the earth..."** And again, Yahweh will indict them in **ch 5.12: For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins – you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.** Again, this *'knowing'* is intimate, first-hand, personal knowledge ... except that Israel has betrayed and violated the intimate knowledge with which Yahweh had known them. **Yahweh commands the 'knowing' and loving of your heart for Him and His Word.**

5 / vv 11-15 / This is the 'word' that Yahweh is declaring to them – this is what He is going to do...

[1] **v 11 / Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD...:** He will bring an adversary [Assyria] to surround their land ... the defenses they had built and fortified will fall to the enemy ... their strongholds will be plundered.

[2] **v 12 / Thus says the LORD: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed."** Amos gives this interesting simile to serve as a parable ... Amos is taking this illustration from his own personal experience as a shepherd ... and it also comes ... from the Law of the LORD. **Exodus 22.10-13 / If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, ¹¹ an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. ¹² But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³ If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.** There was a code of honor among shepherds: they would never lose a sheep due to their negligence. They would defend the lives of their flocks with their own life if necessary. But if an animal they were responsible for was killed or torn by a lion or another predatory beast, they could bring back a piece of the animal that was left behind as evidence of the loss that was beyond their control, thus absolving them of personal responsibility. The meaning of which is: Yahweh will not totally annihilate Israel – He will still keep His own word to His

covenant by rescuing a faithful remnant [**‘the corner of a couch and part of a bed’**] from the devouring punishment that is coming.

[3] vv 13-15 / Yahweh will destroy the very parts of their lifestyle and works that were the evidences of their most egregious transgressions: their centers of idolatrous worship – **the altars of Bethel ... and their opulently furnished winter and summer houses** they had built with the proceeds of their injustices against the weak and poor – whom they had oppressed and taken advantage of.

II / CHAPTER 4.1-12 / THE SECOND MESSAGE:

“HEAR THIS WORD, YOU COWS OF BASHAN, WHO ARE ON THE MOUNTAIN OF SAMARIA...”

1 / vv 1-3 / SELF-ABSORPTION: Yahweh condemns them for their *self-absorption* – living opulent lifestyles from the proceeds of their injustices toward others.

[1] So, is Yahweh delivering this message to their livestock? No, actually – these **‘cows’** are the women of Samaria. Yahweh calls them **‘cows of Bashan’** because Bashan was a rich, fertile region known for the livestock that grazed there. [Psalm 22.12; Ezekiel 39.18]. It was the ‘bread-basket’ for the region.

[2] So, these self-centered, self-absorbed, narcissistic, demanding wives could have been called *‘The Real Housewives of Samaria’* or *‘Keeping Up With The Bashan-ians.’* They were real Jezebels after the example of one of their former queens. They made constant demands on their husbands to ‘feed’ their excessive tastes and appetites of the ‘high life.’ they didn’t care who their husbands had to rob, extort, or oppress to supply their luxuries: **who oppress the poor, who crush the needy**. There was also a real sense of selfish entitlement to their demands. This was their ‘right’ ... they ‘deserved’ it: **who say to their husbands, ‘bring, that we may drink!’**

[3] Yahweh pronounces judgments on them: they will be led away with **‘hooks/fishhooks’** which may have been literal hooks which the Assyrians were known for using to pierce the flesh of their captives to keep them in line as they led them away into captivity. They would be led out **through the breaches** in their walls of defenses that will be broken through by the invaders.

2 / vv 4-5 / SELF-DECEPTION: Yahweh condemns them for their *self-deception* – their hypocritical, lifeless, and self-serving exercises of worship.

[1] Amos kinda mocks them as he issues this ‘call to worship’: **‘Come to Bethel...to Gilgal...’** In fact, they were doing just that. They were being very ‘religious’ in their exercises. But they were doing all this religious activity for their own aggrandizement ... to assuage their guilt ... and to ‘secure’ their place in Yahweh’s favor. But Yahweh not only rejects their self-serving religious activities – He actually says it has the effect of **‘multiply transgressions.’** Yahweh saw through and rejected their hypocrisies.

[2] Both **Bethel and Gilgal** were historic places where Yahweh had revealed Himself to them and where His covenant with them had been memorialized and renewed over the previous generations. But they had deceived themselves into believing that there was some kind of ‘lucky charm’ inherent in just frequenting these places and going through the motions of their self-made preferred traditions. Both **Bethel and Gilgal** will come up again in **ch 5.4-5**.

3 / vv 6-13 / SELF-DELUSION: Yahweh condemns them for their *self-delusions* – they had deluded themselves into believing that none of these calamities that had previously come upon them were at all associated with any fault or guilt of their own faithlessness ... nor did they hear the ‘roaring’ of Yahweh when he had sent all these catastrophes on them.

[1] NOTE: how Yahweh repeats five times: **“...yet you did not return to Me, declares the LORD.” / vv 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.** This is why I have titled this section of Amos’s messages **“Yahweh calls! Return to Him!”** These are just more of the often-repeated forewarnings and disciplinary measures Yahweh had administered over the previous generations to try to get their attention so they would repent, turn away

from their transgressions, iniquities, and injustices, and return to Him. But, **“yet you did not return to Me, declares Yahweh.”**

[2] There are eight specific calamities Yahweh had brought upon them to call them to return to Him:

- v 6 / **Famine: ‘cleanness of teeth’** ... because they had nothing to eat...
- vv 7-8 / **Drought:** rains were critical to their growing seasons – but Yahweh withheld their rains...
- v 9a / **Blight and mildew:** spoiling what little would and did grow ... ruined crops...
- v 9b / **Locusts:** they would devour and strip bare their essential and staple crops...
- v 10a / **Plagues and Diseases:** maybe Bubonic Plague...
- v 10b / **War and Corpses:** multitudes of bodies of young men and horses left to rot...
- v 11 / **Fires and Wastelands:** landscapes burned, maybe salted, and left uninhabitable...
- v 12 / **Coming Final Desolations: “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”**

[3] NOTE: that in all these previous desolations – and especially in those yet to come – they were not just ‘random flukes of nature.’ NO! Yahweh says of each one: **“I...I...I...I...I...I...I...”** until He declares that the day is coming when **“Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”** He had sent all the calamities of the previous generations upon them to urgently, insistently, pleadingly call them to **‘Return to Me!’** But, they would not. **“Therefore,”** Yahweh says, **“if you will not return / come to Me, I will come to you ... in my judgments! Get ready! Prepare to meet Me!”** And it will not be pretty ... it will not go well.

[4] Further, to conclude this **‘word’** from Yahweh, He makes it clear to Israel who He is ... who this God is ... who is calling them ... and whom they will meet:

- He is **Israel’s God** – the Giver of all their incalculable privileges
- He is the **Creator of Israel and of all the elements of the physical world**
- He is the **One who has known them intimately** – their most private thoughts and hearts
- He is the **One Sovereign True Judge of Israel** ... and all the nations of the earth
- He is **Yahweh, the God of armies**
- That is **His Name!** And they will know it when He comes!

III / CHAPTER 5.1-17 / THE THIRD MESSAGE:

“HEAR THIS WORD THAT I TAKE UP OVER YOU IN LAMENTATION, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL...”

This third message [**“Hear this word...”**] has several distinctive characteristics:

- It is a **lamentation** – that’s what Amos himself calls it. That’s what he wrote it to be. A lamentation is dirge – funeral dirge – that is written and delivered to mourn the death of someone. Like David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan in **2 Samuel 1.17-27**; or more famously, Jeremiah’s lamentations over the fall and death of Judah and Jerusalem in **The Lamentations of Jeremiah**. When Amos delivered it in Bethel [maybe even at one of the public services he refers to in **ch 4.4-5**], he may have even composed a minor key tone or tune and delivered it by singing or chanting it.
- It is also a literary masterpiece. It is what is called a *chiasm* [from the Greek alphabet character ‘X/chi’ to mark with a chi]. That means that the verses [or stanzas] are laid out in a symmetrical pattern of statements and reiterations. The first line [or stanza] corresponds with the last line [or stanza]. The second line corresponds to the next-to-last line. And so on – until the climax of the *chiasm* is written in the middle stanza.

So in the case of this lamentation:

A-vv 1-3 are repeated in other words in vv 16-17.

B-vv 4-6 are repeated in other words in vv 14-15

C-v7 is repeated in other words in vv 10-13

D-HYMN TO YAHWEH is smack in the middle as the climax/theme of the lamentation

So when we outline this *chiasm*, it will flow like this:

A-Lament of the death of the nation / vv 1-3

B-Call to seek Yahweh and live / vv 4-6

C-Charges of no justice / v 7

D-HYMN TO YAHWEH / v 9

C'-Charges of no justice / vv 10-13 [now we're working our way backward toward the beginning]

B'-Call to seek Yahweh and live / vv 14-15

A'-Lament of the death of the nation / vv 16-17

Now let's summarize the messages in each of these stanzas...

A / vv 1-3 / Lament of the death of the nation, 1st part [couple with vv 16-17]

[1] Amos sees forward and projects his message into the inevitable and soon-to-come future when Israel and Samaria will fall in defeat and death to the Assyrians.

[2] Samaria has **fallen, no more to rise**; she has been **forsaken...with none to come to her aid and raise her up again**. Those cities and villages that **sent out their thousand** troops to fight in Samaria's defense will have **maybe a hundred left** ... and those who **sent a hundred** will have **maybe ten left**. Utter decimation.

B / vv 4-6 / Call to seek Yahweh and live, 1st part [couple with vv 14-15]

[1] Two times in this stanza, Yahweh calls to Israel: "**Seek Me and live / Seek Yahweh and live.**" He calls on those who were frequenting and running to their historical cities of worship: *Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba*. Everyone one of these cities had a long and illustrious legacy of places where Yahweh had promised He would be with them, or where Yahweh had given them promises of His blessing.

[2] But now, for centuries, they had prostituted those same sites with their idolatries. Now they think they can run back there and somehow these places will have magical, mystical, talisman powers – like a 'good luck charm.' Or maybe they thought that Yahweh would be obligated to deliver them and save them just because He had given them covenant promises and blessings – even though they had egregiously violated every one of His commandments, conditions, and privileges over and over again...

[3] Their cries for help and their expectations of entitled deliverance **shall come to nothing**. / see **Proverbs 1.20-33**

C / v 7 / Charges of no justice 1st part [couple with vv 10-13]

O you who turn justice to wormwood [a bitter fruit] and cast down righteousness to the earth!

[1] This is another summary indictment/judgment as in **ch 3.10**, "**They do not know how to do right, declares Yahweh.**" / see also **ch 2.6-8; 4.1**.

[2] Their transgressions, iniquities, and sins were not only spiritual faithlessness, idolatry, and covenant-breaking against Yahweh ... but also all their injustices against their neighbors and one another. And they not only committed injustices themselves, but they also colluded with and profited from others who did so also. There was a power structure that abused all those who were weaker than they were.

[3] Yahweh keeps accounts of it all, and He will call them into account for it all.

D / vv 8-9 / HYMN TO YAHWEH [this is the crux, climax, core theme of the chiasm]

[1] The constellations **Pleiades and Orion** were associated with the new year and the change of the winter and summer growing seasons. And of course, their agricultural cycles were dependent on the consistency of those seasons. If **the waters of the Mediterranean Sea** did not form into clouds and **pour their rains on the earth** at the proper times, nothing is going to grow.

[2] Yahweh was in control of it all! He created it all, He commands it all, He provides it all. But He declares in His justice that He will punish them by sending upon them instead **destruction** and **destroy their fortresses** in which they were trusting.

C' / vv 10-13 / Charges of no justice, 2nd part [see how we're working our way backward toward the beginning ... couple with v 7]

[1] Here are more charges of their social injustices against their neighbors – those who were weaker, poorer, who had no advocates to plead their cases on their behalf against these who were oppressing them.

[2] Not only what they were doing against those weaker than they were, but also **“They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth.”**

[3] Amos himself would certainly have been included in these who were the targets of these rich and powerful people's attacks against anyone who would dare confront or challenge them.

B' / vv 14-15 / Call to seek Yahweh and live, 2nd part [couple with vv 4-6]

[1] NOTE how Yahweh turns these commands, promises, and warnings every way they can be turned – how He expresses them every way they can be expressed: **“Seek good, and not evil, that you may live... / Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate** [where their town councils, trials, hearings, community affairs took place]...”

[2] If they will return to Him, if they will repent, if they will learn to **‘do good’** as He commands, then He will give them what they want: **“that you may live; and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you as you have said ... it may be that Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”**

[3] What is the **‘good’** Yahweh seeks in our social and public conduct? One of Amos's contemporary prophets, Micah, tells us: **“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” / Micah 6.8**

[4] But, in these cases also, they will continue to do what they have been doing for generations: **“yet you did not return to Me, declares Yahweh.”**

A' / vv 16-17 / Lament of the death of the nation, 2nd part [couple with vv 1-3]

[1] So there is no other recourse but to suffer Yahweh's just and pronounced punishment. Once again, Amos returns to mourn and lament the coming destruction and death of Samaria and Israel at the murderous hands of the Assyrians...

[2] There will be wailing and lamenting in every community, every activity, every sector of their society: in all the squares, in all the streets, the farmers, the poets, artists, singers, in all vineyards – everybody will be mourning the destruction and death that will overtake them.

[3] Remember how Yahweh reminded them in verse 1 that they are **the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt**. You also remember what the last plague was that Yahweh stuck Egypt with: it was the death of all their firstborn. **“But I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I AM the LORD.” [Exodus 12.12]**. The people of Israel were spared because they obeyed Yahweh and sprinkled the blood of the Passover lamb [Christ] on their houses.

[4] But now, because they have defied Yahweh and have stubbornly rejected His Word through His prophets, and have stubbornly refused to repent of their sins and return to Him, NOW He says, **“for I will pass through YOUR midst, says Yahweh.”**

[5] Now, THEY will be the ones who are destroyed by His justice and consumed by His wrath.

But ... this is not the end of the story by any means! Amos laments in ch. 5.1, “Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel; forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up.” But Yahweh promises in ch. 9.11 “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old...” That is the promise of Christ who will come! (see Acts 15.12-17). He will satisfy the justice of Yahweh by His perfect obedience to the Covenant! And He will justify His people by suffering the just punishments of our sins upon Himself! (see Isaiah 53.10-12). IN CHRIST...WE HAVE BEEN RAISED & RESTORED!