

THE BOOK OF AMOS
Lesson 8, Chapter 5

We are about halfway through the Book of Amos. Surprisingly, if there is an overriding theme to Amos's prophecy at this point, it must be the matter of social injustice. I want to pause for a few minutes to highlight this, because it can be so easily overlooked due to our faith's tendency to over-spiritualize things rather than facing the tangible realities that we all face in this world. In a most famous story in the New Testament, we read this:

CJB Matthew 26:7-11 ***⁷ A woman who had an alabaster jar filled with very expensive perfume approached Yeshua while he was eating and began pouring it on his head. ⁸ When the talmidim saw it, they became very angry. "Why this waste?" they asked. ⁹ "This could have been sold for a lot of money and given to the poor." ¹⁰ But Yeshua, aware of what was going on, said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing for me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.***

"The poor you will always have with you...". If Jesus were to be interviewed by the local media in the West today, He would be labeled as insensitive and uncaring about the poor for saying such a thing. What He is said is that no matter under what circumstances, no matter under which type of human government, no matter in what era of history, there will always be a social order in which there will be the haves and the have nots. There will always be the well-do-do, and therefore there will always be the lowly and poor. This is a fact. It is a fact partly because we live in Universe of opposites. But, it also largely because fallen humanity does not live by God's system, and instead by our own base instincts. Israel should have been somewhat different as God's elect; not in the fact that there would still be rich and poor just like everywhere else, but rather that the government and the rich would make sure that the poorer of their society were treated fairly, morally, and with equal justice. Therefore, over and over in the Bible we find God's thoughts and His commands that reflect His deep concern for the poor and His love for them.

CJB Psalm 14:6 ***You may mock the plans of the poor, but their refuge is ADONAI.***

CJB Psalm 140:13 *I know that ADONAI gives justice to the poor and maintains the rights of the needy.*

Yehoveh, speaking through Isaiah, promises this about the coming Messiah:

CJB Isaiah 11:1-5 *But a branch will emerge from the trunk of Yishai, a shoot will grow from his roots. ² The Spirit of ADONAI will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and fearing ADONAI- ³ he will be inspired by fearing ADONAI. He will not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear, ⁴ but he will judge the impoverished justly; he will decide fairly for the humble of the land. He will strike the land with a rod from his mouth and slay the wicked with a breath from his lips. ⁵ Justice will be the belt around his waist, faithfulness the sash around his hips.*

I could give you dozens more examples of Scripture on the subject. The point is this: social justice is at the very center of God's concern for mankind and it is reflected in the direct meaning of His fundamental commandment to love your neighbor. And, especially with Israel, there was a sense that their poor may have been of even greater concern for God than for the rich (whom He loved equally as much), but who's needs for the most basic necessities of life were never in doubt. As for the Minor Prophets, none spoke with more passion and inspiration on behalf of the poor and needy than Amos. Yet, none also spoke so eloquently or severely against the indifferent, decadent, and morally defunct elite wealthy as Amos. Not because the wealthy were wealthy, nor because wealth was a bad thing, but rather because they didn't use a goodly portion of their wealth to show compassion to the most vulnerable of Israelite society.

Recall the devastating indictment against the rich of Israel from Amos chapter 2:

CJB Amos 2:6-8 *⁶ Here is what ADONAI says: "For Isra'el's three crimes, no, four- I will not reverse it- because they sell the upright for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes, ⁷ grinding the heads of the poor in the dust and pushing the lowly out of the way; father and son sleep with the same girl, profaning my holy name; ⁸ lying down beside any altar on clothes taken in pledge; drinking wine in the house of their God bought with fines they imposed.*

So, what was happening to the enormous population of the poverty stricken in Ephraim/Israel? The elites and the leadership were using their citizens' impoverished condition to gain more personal power and wealth. Quite literally, the rich were oppressing the poor, and thinking of their own material gains as God's blessing upon them. Amos says that their wealth is about to be confiscated because God Himself...who has repeatedly said that He will personally be the defender of the poor...is about to exact heavenly justice upon the unjust. Sadly, the poor will suffer as well not so much as collateral damage to God judging the wealthy, but because they are said to deserve it due to their perverted worship practices.

What we also see in Amos is a history of how Israel's shameful social injustices developed over time. The path of rebellion against God's ways was always a reality in Israel. The largest factor in this rebellion was said to be the leadership; civil and religious. Therefore, God would punish Israel's leaders the most severely. As is noticed by even a casual observer: populations of people only rarely act in a concerted fashion unless they are led to do so. And, the development of a common national cultural mindset or ethos does NOT occur randomly or by accident; it is always in response to the influence of the leadership. The citizens of authoritarian societies have their national ethos forced upon them according to the whims of a tyrant, while in more democratic societies it happens according their politicians' desires to gauge the wants of the people and give them some of what they want in exchange for being put into power to accomplish whatever is their actual personal agenda. In the end, the result is essentially the same: injustice for the poor.

Amos chapter 5, then, takes us to the consequences for all of this social injustice and for Israel's rebellion and apostasy. The chapter opens with what can only be called a lament for the seriously fallen Ephraim/Israel. Let's read Amos chapter 5.

READ AMOS CHAPTER 5 all

Bible scholars sometimes approach Bible books and chapters by dividing them into literary units for the sake of study. That is, a literary unit is some verses strung together that form a train of thought on a subject. The first 17 verses of

chapter 5 are clearly such a unit. Douglas Stewart in his thoughts on this section of Amos, further sub-divides this literary unit into 5 parts. In verse 1, that is a typical traditional prophetic formal summons for Israel to hear and take heed to what Yehoveh is about to say, is 1) a description of the coming catastrophe, followed by 2) a call for Israel to react, then 3) a direct address to the people of the now-fallen Israel, 4) followed by another call to react, and then finally 5) a summons for the nation of Israel to mourn because of the coming inevitable tragedy that they have brought upon themselves.

Verse 1, then, speaks of what already is decided as far as God is concerned. Therefore, since the subject is the death of Israel as a nation, then the only appropriate thing is for a period of mourning to begin. The first 17 verses are given to us in the form of a funeral dirge sung over the corpse of Ephraim/Israel.

Verse 2 speaks of Israel as "the virgin" or as "the maiden". Recall that biblically speaking a virgin is merely the term used for an unmarried girl. Whereas in the West we tend to think of the term "virgin" mostly in the sexual sense of a person yet to having had sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex, biblically (while that is certainly an understood part of it) the idea is more that a girl is still living under her father's roof because she has yet to marry and have birthed children. So, her purpose in life has yet to be fulfilled. Israel, as a metaphorical virgin in the flower of her life, is going to be prematurely cut-off from her natural and expected destiny. And, in the form of government and order of society that she now exists, will never rise again. Her path forward is forever changed.

When we read the term "fallen" (fallen Israel) it is really shorthand for "fallen in battle"; that is, mortally wounded and left for dead. Thus, the built-in implication is that Israel's fate is to lose a military battle for their territory. Even worse, this loss will not come in a battle to expand Israel's territorial holdings, but rather it will come in the defense of their own land, in humiliating defeat and not valor. Israel is, as of now...years before the invaders arrive... powerless to alter the course of her future. Including the words "with none to lift her up" means, there is no hope for rescue...not even help from Israel's God.

Verse 3 is what we might label as a curse of decimation. This offers me yet another opportunity to reinforce the reality that everything that God is doing against Israel is based upon the Law of Moses. Deuteronomy 28 promises this:

CJB Deuteronomy 28:62-63 ***62 You will be left few in number, whereas you were once as numerous as the stars in the sky- because you did not pay attention to the voice of ADONAI your God. 63 'Thus it will come about that just as once ADONAI took joy in seeking to do you good and increase your numbers, so now ADONAI will take joy in causing you to perish and be destroyed...***

Therefore, verse 3 shows that in every institution of Israel the human loss will be in the 90% range. Of the cities and villages only a remnant...about 10% ... will remain. Of an army of 1000, only 100 will survive. Out of an army of 100, only 10 will survive. What we need to notice is that all that Israel thought would make them immune from such a possible disaster (their God and their army) will not. Israel is deceived, and has a false sense of security. But even so, verse 4 offers a ray of hope. This begins the second sub-unit of this lament for Israel that Stewart calls "a call to react". What ought to be Israel's reaction to learning about what is going to happen to them and why? It ought to be to change; to change by realizing their predicament and preparing for what lies ahead. Preparation for a disaster is an admission that we don't control everything. Preparation comes from a proper humility. God says that the first step in that preparation process is "to seek Me". Those who will seek Him have a greater chance of survival. In other words, Israel's salvation is conditional on seeking God. And, although offered (but it is not going to be accepted), should enough individuals within the nation of Ephraim/Israel repent and seek God, then the nation of Israel can still be saved. The point here is not that Israel is going to take this invitation for deliverance and act upon it (they won't and God foreknows it), it's that a principle and a God-pattern is reaffirmed. It is that while God's decision is open to some degree of change, it is always dependent upon His people realizing and admitting their wrong, and changing to what is right. I'll say it again: salvation has always been conditional.

Israel was already a redeemed people; it had been so since God rescued them from Egypt. But soon thereafter they began their rebellion. In up and down swings, their rebellion had been continuous. A section of Israel had crossed a

line-in-the-sand and God's wrath would be unleashed upon them for their covenant violation. Israel went from redeemed, to rebel, and now had a second chance for redemption...IF they took hold of it. If they did not, then their fate would be just as though they had never at one time been redeemed. Let me assure you that even with the advent and sacrifice of Yeshua on the cross, nothing has changed.

CJB James 1:22-25 ***²² Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it! ²³ For whoever hears the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, ²⁴ who looks at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But if a person looks closely into the perfect Torah, which gives freedom, and continues, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does.***

CJB James 5:19-20 ***¹⁹ My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return, ²⁰ you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.***

I'll preach to you for a minute. I have railed before about the false Church doctrine (among some denominations) of once-saved-always-saved. This is classically unscriptural and is instead the epitome of manmade doctrine. In fact, it is in a futile defense of this untenable doctrine that the Church has (over the centuries) removed, re-inserted, and then removed again the entire Book of James from the New Testament. Only since the early 1800's has most Bibles re-inserted it. Today, the basic defense for the once-saved-always-saved proponents against what James says is that it is merely a hypothetical statement that is impossible to happen in reality; an unneeded warning. If this wasn't such a dangerous doctrine, I'd not be so intent on shining a light on it. The idea that once we say the sinner's prayer that we become permanent members of the Kingdom regardless of what we do or believe afterward defies everything said to the contrary in the whole of the Bible. Salvation is indeed conditional; it is conditional on us maintaining that salvation by continuing our devotion to God that includes sincerely intending to obey His commands. Disobedience to His commands is called sin; that, too, has not changed. It is one thing to acknowledge God's commands as valid and relevant to us, and then to fail occasionally in following them; it is quite another to declare that His commands

no longer matter or perhaps no longer exist for us, and so we are free to behave however we like or to make new rules to replace the former ones. Or even that although we at one time believed however we no longer do, doesn't matter. That we only believed if but only for a day our salvation remains guaranteed. This is not true and I fear millions who feel safe and secure are going to find out a different eternal destiny than they have been told awaits them. What we're reading in Amos is precisely what I'm speaking about. Israel knew they had been redeemed at one time in their past, and so were certain that they could rely on that event regardless of their current behavior or their deceived disregard for obeying God's commandments. Today's Church more resembles Amos's Ephraim/Israel than it does the 1st century Jesus movement among the Jewish people, and reform is desperately needed.

Verse 5 tells Israel that IF they truly desire to seek God, they should not seek Him in Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. These 3 places are the 3 most visited sanctuaries used by the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim. In fact, they are to avoid those places. It's not that of themselves these were inherently evil or pagan places. What's the problem, here? It is that the leadership of Ephraim/Israel had established these locations as worship centers based upon the hybridized religion they had fashioned for themselves. I'm sure these places seemed, on the surface, perfectly legitimate to the Ephraim/Israelites. All were steeped in happenings from the Hebrews' ancient historical past.

Bethel was named by the Patriarch Jacob and it was a legitimate holy site. But Jeroboam turned Bethel into a perverted worship center as a substitute for going to the Temple in Jerusalem. Gilgal was the first place Israel encamped upon crossing the Jordan to enter into Canaan. It was where Joshua had that generation encamp that would be the first to occupy the Promised Land, and it was where a mass circumcision ceremony took place. Beersheba is associated primarily, of course, with Isaac and his father Abraham. By Amos's time all of these locations had been co-opted and now represented rebellion against the Covenant of Moses.

It might be a little hard for us to grasp just what the people of Ephraim/Israel thought when Amos told them that they were to no longer go to these places to worship. The lesson being taught is that seeking God is not the same as seeking

their traditional sanctuaries. No doubt such an instruction was confusing and most troubling. I'll put it in modern terms; if Amos were standing before us he would say that seeking God is not the same thing as attending Church or Synagogue. The many ritual observances at the various cult sights were not what Israel was supposed to depend upon for righteousness; rather, Amos said they were to relinquish those observances that had up to now actually blocked their return to God. In fact, Bethel and Gilgal were soon to disappear from the pages of history.

When God threatens to break out against the house of Joseph, this is speaking about the 2 tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Together, they held the most territory in the Promised Land and both were located in the Northern Kingdom. So, the house of Joseph, Ephraim/Israel, and the Northern Kingdom were synonymous terms. Bethel would be destroyed along with the Northern Kingdom.

Amos continues in verse 7 (which begins the next subsection that is a direct address to the people of fallen Israel) and brings social injustice back into the focus as the chief characteristic, and the reason for the punishment, of the fallen house of Joseph. The entire concept of justice, as overseen by Israel's appointed Judges, has been lost. They have taken the beautiful moral thing of justice and turned it into something bitter. When wormwood comes into contact with water, it makes the taste so bitter it is undrinkable so that is the metaphor that is used. The result of injustice is that the intended outcome of Godly justice as righteousness is destroyed.

Verse 8 has been judged by many Bible scholars as a fragment of an ancient hymn to Yehoveh (from before the time of Job) that Amos seems to have known and inserted. It is even suggested that Amos actually sang this portion of his message to his audience. While that might sound strange to us, it would have seemed quite appropriate for his era. The hymn affirms the power and majesty of Israel's God. The Pleiades and Orion are two well-known constellations, both of which Amos says that God made. Because the placement in the sky of the Pleiades and of Orion had been used for centuries to indicate the change of the winter and summer seasons, then for the ancient Israelites it means that God is the one who controls seasons and sets signs into the sky. Next the hymn credits

God with changing day to night and night to day. The reference to water and to the seas is essentially about floods and rainfall, which God also controls. So, in verse 9, God not only controls the sky and nature, He also is the one who determines the direction and fate of all the nations on earth. He can determine such fate using destructive power that can, at His will, include flattening the vaunted fortifications of nations that they think are impregnable.

Verse 10 picks up again with the issue of social justice. The "they" here is referring to Israel's leaders. It is they who don't want justice and have no interest in the truth. When Amos speaks of justice at the gate it is referring to the standard ancient practice of holding court at some designated meeting area just inside the city walls at the entry gate. The idea was that the court was open and public for all to witness. Let's take just a moment to talk about the concept of truth.

In modern times, the term "truth" is, I think, mostly misused. We tend to mix together...or think as synonymous...the terms fact and truth. While they are used that way in Western society, from a biblical perspective fact and truth are quite different things. Speaking objectively, I also think that in this 21st century world that is rapidly evolving to a state of nearly universal amorality equating truth with fact is but a manifestation of a lack of concern for morality. What is amorality? The common definition of it is: an absence of, indifference towards, disregard for, or incapacity for morality. Here's what I'm getting at. From God's standpoint, truth expresses the nature of His moral code. Therefore, for anyone to declare something as "truth" that is outside of, or in disagreement with, God's moral code cannot be truth. Truth operates similarly to wisdom. The Bible explains that wisdom's source is heaven; in fact, Wisdom is literally spoken of in the Bible as a living divine entity in the same way that the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Word, etc. are all living divine entities. So, from a standard Christian perspective, wisdom is as much God as is those other divine entities that Christian Trinity doctrines refer to as "persons" of God. If we follow that same line of vocabulary, thinking and logic, then truth is also the manifestation of a living divine entity, whose source can only be Heaven (something coming from outside the sphere of the finite) and whose substance can only be God.

Fact, on the other hand, comes from within the finite 4-dimensional Universe; the physical world in which we all live. It is an expression of the believed and actual existence, or perhaps the actual current state, of a physical object or as something existing or happening in reality whether it is tangible or not. For instance: it is a fact of nature that rain comes from clouds. It is a fact that human speech is the movement of air waves. It is a fact of human biology that there are two sexes, male and female, each with distinguishing characteristics. It is a fact of history that Adolf Hitler was a dictator of Germany that led the world into war. Fact (generally speaking) has no moral element to it; it is amoral in its substance. Facts can be proved to be accurate or inaccurate, or believed at one time to be accurate only later to be proved inaccurate. That the earth is flat was a fact according to scholars and clergy of the 15th century and earlier. Later this was proved to be inaccurate so the shape of the earth is now factually stated as being round. Since the shape of the earth is not a moral issue, then whatever the claim of its shape might be, it ought to be spoken of in terms of fact and not truth. Truth, however, is never wrong and it never changes.

So, to be clear: in Amos 5:10 the issue is not about justice being administered improperly according to Judges who were not interested in collecting the correct facts of the case; rather it is that Israel's Judges were not interested in proper morality...truth...as the basis for rendering a verdict. There's only one place to look for a written code of God's definition of morality... truth...and that's His moral code that is called the Law of Moses. In Amos, as we see God judging pagan nations based on God's laws, then we learn that there is only one moral code for all of humanity; not one for Israel and another for everyone else. This then means there is only one truth, and all else is falsehood. If one is not interested in truth, then righteousness falls to the ground. Bottom line: from God's perspective no interest in the Law of Moses as mankind's guide to justice, equals no interest in truth.

When vs. 11 begins with "therefore", it means that a consequence or outcome is about to be announced. As consequence for the wealthy oppressing the poor and unjustly taking away from them so-called taxes on their field crops to which they are not entitled according to Torah standards, the wonderful mansions that the rich build for themselves (the money for which has come from those taxes) shall be for naught as they won't get to live in them. This is called a futility curse. A

futility curse describes a reversal...an opposite outcome... of a person's expectations. Again, all of these curses...or punishments...are taken precisely as the prescribed punishments for prescribed crimes in the Law of Moses.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:15 ¹⁵ "But if you refuse to pay attention to what ADONAI your God says, and do not observe and obey all his mitzvot and regulations which I am giving you today, then all the following curses will be yours in abundance:

Then, a few verses later in the listing of curses we find:

³⁰ You will get engaged to a woman, but another man will marry her. You will build a house but not live in it. You will plant a vineyard but not use its fruit.

So, all of a person's hard work and gains will be brought to nothing by God for violating His laws and principles in order to have made those material gains. Here in chapter 5 verse 11, the wealthy house-builders and vineyard owners will face complete frustration because of their immoral treatment of the poor. They not only won't get to live in their own homes, they won't get to enjoy the wine that comes from their vineyards. So now, just as Ephraim/Israel's elite have become wealthy at the expense of others, so will others become rich at their expense.

In verse 12 God says that He is quite aware of the wealthy's numerous crimes (meaning violations of God's morality code...the Law of Moses). God sees as they bully people who (unlike themselves) are actually innocent of crimes. He watches as they extort and take from the helpless. So, however it is that these Israelites believed that perhaps they could do these things in secret such that Yehoveh would not see or care, they are learning that nothing can be hidden from His sight. He has seen and remembered every sin and shameful act they have committed, and now it is time to pay the piper for it.

The next verse says: "At times like these the prudent person stays silent, for it is an evil time". Exactly what this is talking about is uncertain. So uncertain that nearly unanimously Bible scholars see this as a gloss or more likely just a scribal mistake that either was written down wrong (so we really have no idea what the intended point was), or (and much more likely) a later editor accidentally

dropped this verse from somewhere else into this spot. I confess I have no better insight on this than anyone else, but this verse does seem to interrupt the flow of the passage so strangely that it cannot belong here. So, we'll just move on to verse 14.

"Seek good and not evil so that you will survive". God, again, offers the prospect of life when so far the people have only been guaranteed death. Again, the principle that salvation and deliverance are expressed as purely conditional based upon a person straightening up and flying right...or not. The first time God told the people that the option of seeking Him to avoid death included how NOT to go about seeking Him (by NOT ever again going to the illegal cult centers of Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheva), now He speaks about seeking Him in terms of what TO do. Essentially God defines "seeking Him" as living a moral and ethical life. Let me say that again in a different way: what we do (our deeds), our choice of lifestyle, whose values and morals we go by, the way we practice our faith, our attitude towards the poor...this is what it means to seek God. Seeking God doesn't mean to have a super-warm feeling in our heart for Him. Seeking God doesn't mean doing all kinds of religious rituals, or walking through the doors of our church or synagogue at every opportunity. It means to seek His ways and to do them.

Lest I forget mentioning the critical act of prayer...and prayer is certainly an important part of seeking God... prayer ought to be the beginning act of seeking that leads to doing...not prayer as a substitute for doing. Seeking God indeed has a spiritual element to it, but according to Amos it more amounts to the proper divine motivation for what we do. So, for the Prophet, "seeking" involves our total dedication to determining the "good" and doing it. And, here this is speaking almost entirely about human-to-human relationships... loving your neighbor...that can only happen if one follows God's moral law code with the right heart attitude.

The result of seeking God in this way is expressed in the second half of this verse. "Then Yehoveh God of hosts will be with you, ***as you say He is.***" For the Israelites at this time in history, this expressed thought is very nearly a catchphrase. "God with us" is grounded in the idea of their national God providing well-being, prosperity, and victory in battle. If Yehoveh is with Israel, then good things

happen. If He is not, the opposite occurs. Because Ephraim/Israel is still at peace and is quite prosperous at the time of Amos's prophecy, then they say it can only be because "God is with us". They are wrong and are but a few years away from finding out in living color how very wrong they have been in such an assumption; an assumption that Amos is taking apart piece by piece. We must never let appearances fool us. Much of the modern Western world is so very prosperous; and in many Western Churches (and in the minds of the congregation members) this prosperity is the proof that God must be with us. I personally find it quite hard to accept that when we see the Western world (often with the agreement of the Church) frantically attempting to reverse every moral standard we have lived by up until now; denouncing traditional moral standards that in times past we have had no compunction...as a national culture... about confessing that our morals and ethics are biblically based (even if at times they were not). Goodness: even the USA's Supreme Court building has an etching of Moses and the Law on its impressive entry to convey that principle.

If my assessment is even partially correct, and we have become like Ephraim/Israel as a culture, then we need to heed Amos's message: acknowledge our situation, repent, and prepare. Prepare by first seeking God (meaning to change our behavior), and prepare by taking practical measures to better assure the basic needs of everyday life can be met for that moment when shortages and catastrophes strike us unexpectedly...which they surely will.

God began in verse 14 to show His worshippers what to do and how to prepare, and it continues into verse 15. It begins with conscious, tangible choices to embrace what God calls good and to shun what God calls evil. It is only through that means that the Lord will restore the blessings of the covenant terms. One more time: it is all about the covenant God-worshippers have with Yehoveh. We will be judged by it, and God will treat us accordingly. Shalom M. Paul puts it this way:

Conversely, concern and devotion to good is not sufficient; they (Israel) must sincerely love good. To love good is then practically interpreted to mean a way of life that is counter to their present manner of behavior.

Repentance in and of itself is not magical. Our repentance cannot force God to forgive us, or to forgo discipline upon us. Mercy is God's and God's alone to determine. Paul, who is using the Torah as his guide, says this:

CJB Romans 9:14-16 ***¹⁴ So are we to say, "It is unjust for God to do this"? Heaven forbid! ¹⁵ For to Moshe he says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will pity whom I pity." ¹⁶ Thus it doesn't depend on human desires or efforts, but on God, who has mercy.***

In every case, whether in Israel's or in ours, our ultimate destiny is dependent upon God's response to our cry for mercy. No amount of ritual or prayer or declaration can coerce God to forgive.

Verses 16 and 17 conclude this literary unit with a call to mourn. Yehoveh's wrath means destruction and death for Ephraim/Israel. Everywhere within the Northern Kingdom, at every level of society, will suffer. Even the vineyards that are traditionally a place of joy will join in the lament. When God says through Amos the final words of verse 17... "...I will pass through among you.." it is meant to recall this same God decimating the Egyptians.

CJB Exodus 12:12 ***¹² For that night, I will pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both men and animals; and I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt; I am ADONAI.***

We'll end it here and take up at verse 18 next time.