

**THE BOOK OF AMOS**  
**Lesson 14, Chapter 9 End**

We have arrived at the final chapter of Amos, and so today we will conclude our study of this eye-opening record of revealed prophecy that God, in His mercy, has left to us. It is hard for me not to be hyperbolic in urging you to see how relevant to our contemporary times these inspired words are, and how our modern age...including the Church...is nearly a mirrored reflection of the very issues so vividly brought to light through Amos. Amos was passionate in trying to get Ephraim/Israel to see the truth and reality of this series of oracles that God was communicating to them; oracles that exposed their religious hypocrisy, spiritual blindness, and heresy. But, for the most part, they refused and deflected, and then paid an enormous price for their rebellious obstinance. Let us vow not do the same. Let us begin by humbling ourselves and realizing how terribly off-track our Judeo-Christian faith has gone, beginning with Constantine's virtual takeover of the Yeshua movement in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It was Constantine along with the powerful Church in Rome who birthed the Western Church that has evolved into more than 1000 denominations. From the Catholic Church to Calvary Chapel, from Methodists to Baptists, from Protestant to Anglican, and even the Worldwide Church of God to virtually all the rest...the common root is the Roman Emperor Constantine. Thankfully, to one degree or another, the core of our faith...that Yeshua (Jesus Christ) is Lord and Savior...remains. But even that is being eroded at a rapid pace. Why? Because just like Israel had...step by step, slowly as the proverbial frog in the kettle... become overtaken with manmade doctrines that pushed out the true Word of God so it has also become in Church and Synagogue. So overwhelmed with these misguided doctrines was Israel that the Lord God Most High said He refuses to accept their worship and refuses to be their God. Has Church and Synagogue reached that same point in God's eyes, but it is not yet realized? If not, it is certainly must be at the tipping point of no return.

Alarming? Absolutely. How do we find our way back? Believe God, and believe the Bible He left for us. All of it; not just the parts we like that seem to validate what we have told to believe. Let's read Amos chapter 9.

**READ AMOS CHAPTER 9 all**

Amos has a 5<sup>th</sup> vision; and it begins with a view of the Lord God standing next to the altar. It is interesting that here Amos chooses to identify the One standing next to the altar as "The Lord" rather than as Yehoveh as he has been in the habit of doing. Likely this is because a few verses later there is quoted part of a well-known hymn of his era that in which the name Yehoveh is prominent, and Amos wanted His hearers to focus on that.

The altar being spoken of is not the legitimate one at the Jerusalem Temple; it is the illegitimate one in Bethel, the main sanctuary location for Ephraim/Israel. What follows next is God narrating a judgment against this shrine...this symbol of the perverted religion that Israel now follows... and against those who have taken up this kind of worship. It begins with God saying to "strike the capitals", or as the CJB has it, "strike the tops of the columns". The capitals were the chiseled and ornamented pieces of stone that sit on top of the support pillars that held up the building. By smashing the capitals of the pillars, the entire structure collapses. By saying to smash the capitals on the heads of the people, the visual image is of the Temple falling down and crushing those who worship there. This is meant as a symbolic representation of what is to happen to all who worship the religion of Ephraim/Israel. Those who are not crushed and killed by this event, God orders is to be killed by the sword (meaning death at the hand of the as yet to be named invader that will conquer Israel). The idea is that all of Israel's worshippers will die one way or another.

Verse 2 explains that there will be nowhere to run to escape God's wrath and fury. There is no place in the Universe, let alone on earth, to hide. So what follows are 5 statements and examples of this inability of Israel's people to escape the hand of God's anger against them. In the first and second of the 5 statements, if we were to use modern terminology to phrase the intent of this verse, instead of saying it would do no good to try to escape to Heaven and She'ol it would be Heaven and Hell. In bible scholarship this literary technique is called merism. Merism uses a couple of words to behave as bookends such that it means "this, that and everything in between". The principle is that even into the most remote parts of the spiritual and the physical realms does Yehoveh extend His reach. The third and fourth illustrations of this principle are provided in verse 3 when, using another merism, it speaks of the heights of Mt. Karmel versus the depths of the

sea. The idea is that neither ascending nor descending to the most secluded and difficult to access places on earth will work as hiding places; with this wording no doubt taken from Psalm 139.

**CJB Psalm 139:7-8** ***7 Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I lie down in Sh'ol, you are there.***

It's kind of interesting that God says that if they attempt to hide in the depths of the sea that He will find them and send the serpent to bite them. In all of the biblical eras the sea was a mysterious and scary place. After all, no one could see more than a few feet below its surface (no matter how pristine and clear the water), nor could a human dive to more than maybe 50 or so feet into its depth. So, the imagination runs wild at what might live there, especially when ships and their crews regularly disappeared without a trace. It was the common belief that a great monster, a giant snake-like creature, lived in that enormous watery realm that would devour people who fell into the dark water of the sea. God simply used that commonly held image to illicit terror in the hearts of all who heard this prophecy.

The fifth example is verse 4. Even being taken away into slavery and depravation to a foreign land will not save them from Yehoveh's reach. If we look at these 5 examples from the perspective of dimensions, we see that the first 4 examples had to do with the vertical dimension (up and down). This fifth one speaks of the horizontal dimension. Even if Israel's exile takes the few survivors far, far away, it won't matter; God will follow them there to complete their punishment. Unlike their belief that no god has any effect upon them outside of that god's territorial boundary lines (and that territory always coincides with the borders of a particular nation), Yehoveh says He'll find them wherever they go, fix His gaze upon them, and order those foreigners of the land of their exile to put the Israelite exiles to the sword. So, every avenue of hope of escape is cut off. Now, a question for us all that pertains to my opening statements. With this information in hand, why didn't Israel change their behavior? Or perhaps migrate immediately to Judah or even to a foreign land before God's wrath manifested with a foreign invader falling upon them? Why didn't they at least prepare in some practical, tangible way for this looming catastrophe that was promised to

happen? The answer is neither particularly scholarly nor profound; they simply did not believe what God told them. The same religious leadership that told Amos to pack his bags and go back to Judah and to stop prophesying Yehoveh's message in Ephraim's territory lied to the people and told them to pay no attention to God's warnings through Amos. After all, if the leaders were to take the message to heart, they would have to humble themselves, tell the people the truth, and get rid of nearly all of their shrines, rituals, and practices that they held so dearly. They would have to renounce many of their doctrines and repent. They may lose their power and position. And, one has to wonder what portion of the population would even accept such a radical change, if offered, when they were perfectly happy with the way things were?

What I've just described is the human reality of it. It is why the modern Church and Synagogue will probably not be rescued as the manmade religious institutions they have become. Just as with Israel in ancient times, the stakes are simply too high for the leadership for any meaningful change to be seriously contemplated, let alone enacted. The only changes that can occur within our Judeo-Christian faith institutions are at the grassroots level (just as Yeshua demonstrated). It must happen on the individual-by-individual level. A leader here, a worshipper there, perhaps even a small group occasionally. It will be difficult for us to change, because we're very aware that it will come with a cost. Yeshua, Himself, more or less said the same thing and warned us of the gut-wrenching challenge we'll face when we decide to turn away from human doctrines and manmade religion, and towards the true biblical faith.

**CJB Luke 14:25-27 <sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling along with Yeshua. Turning, he said to them, <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life besides, he cannot be my talmid. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not carry his own execution-stake and come after me cannot be my talmid.**

What is our way out of where we might find ourselves? What do we do when we begin to feel as though something isn't quite right about our faith practice and our faith leadership who teach us to rely on manmade doctrines more than biblical truth? There is one way, and one alone:

**CJB Revelation 18:4** ***<sup>4</sup> Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues,***

We must flee. We must leave behind error and deception, and it will nearly for certain be costly in terms of our most valued relationships just as Jesus warns. We won't be congratulated or admired for it, and even our own families may try to constantly drag us back into what we have left behind with a threat of our being shunned. Our earthly lives *are* indeed important: but our eternal lives are far more important. Fellow Believers, test what you are being taught against Holy Scripture...in **context**! If it doesn't match, and if what you see happening with your own eyes as concerns worship practices and instruction don't reflect the literal truth of the Bible, then leave where you are attending and don't look back as did Lot's wife. To believe you can remain in order to change your denomination's institutional beliefs is folly. Our example for what happens when we refuse to face reality and make the necessary changes...harsh as it may be... is laid out in vivid color for us in the Book of Amos.

Verses 5 and 6 are a portion of an ancient hymn that extols the glory of God. The power of God over nature and over the course and history of humanity are at the core of it. When Yehoveh but touches the earth, it melts and quakes under the weight.

**CJB Zechariah 14:1-4** ***Look, a day is coming for ADONAI when your plunder, [Yerushalayim], will be divided right there within you. <sup>2</sup> "For I will gather all the nations against Yerushalayim for war. The city will be taken, the houses will be rifled, the women will be raped, and half the city will go into exile; but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." <sup>3</sup> Then ADONAI will go out and fight against those nations, fighting as on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup> On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies to the east of Yerushalayim; and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, to make a huge valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south.***

Further into verse 5 the convulsing of our planet when God arrives is illustrated by the rise and fall of the Nile River. The idea is to say that both the land and the waters of our planet are shaken by the Holy One as He executes judgment.

Verse 6 reminds Israel (and us) that He is not just the ruler over the Universe, He is the Creator of it all. First He built Heaven, then He built earth. His upper dominion is Heaven, His lower dominion is earth...but He rules over both.

Next in verse 7 is something that can be startling. On the one hand, Israel was indeed given special privileges, and a mission unlike any other. On the other hand, says Yehoveh, "Are you not like the Ethiopians to Me..?" First, the word "Ethiopians" doesn't appear there. What the Hebrew says is "***bene Kushi***" or in English "sons of Cush". Only much later would there be a place called Ethiopia that harbors but some of the sons of Cush. This is presented in the form of a rhetorical question that ought to be answered with "yes"; however, it is one which Israel in reality says "no". This is meant to shock Israel because Ephraim/Israel had so elevated their own importance before God that they felt He had no interest in any other people. After all, was He not Israel's national god... and no one else's? Didn't He did lead them up out of Egypt and give them the Torah...like no one else? Thus, no other people could possibly matter as much...if at all... to God than Israel. But Yehoveh sets them straight by saying, oh yes, I did indeed bring you up out of Egypt. But, guess what, I also brought the Philistines from Caphtor (Caphtor is better known today as Crete and it was the ancient name of an island nation that the Philistines originally came from); and did I also not bring the Arameans (that is, the residents of Edom) from Kir? In other words, I helped these nations as well because, even though they didn't realize it, I am their God, too, and I care deeply about them... as much as I care about you, Israel.

What a bitter pill to swallow for Israel! The Arameans and the Philistines were longtime enemies of Israel. So, it's bad enough to burst their balloon that Yehoveh wasn't exclusively dedicated to them but also to others as well; and that at least some of those "others" were Israel's sworn enemies! God is essentially putting Ephraim/Israel on par with the Arameans and the Philistines when it comes to His mercy and grace.

Now, in verse 8, after this humbling revelation that Israel isn't God's only concern, a ray of hope emerges. Yes, says The Lord, His gaze *is* directly focused on Israel at the moment; and it is a gaze of anger and wrath. He will destroy the

Northern Kingdom as a political entity, a nation, until it no longer exists on earth. HOWEVER...God says He will not *totally* destroy the House of Jacob (the people). That is, a remnant will be allowed to survive...even in exile...so that these 10 tribes of the North will not become extinct. Long ago Yehoveh made a promise that extinction will never be Israel's fate, although they may deserve it.

**CJB Leviticus 26:43-44** ***<sup>43</sup> For the land will lie abandoned without them, and it will be paid its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; and they will be paid the punishment for their misdeeds, because they rejected my rulings and loathed my regulations. <sup>44</sup> Yet, in spite of all that, I will not reject them when they are in the lands of their enemies, nor will I loathe them to the point of utterly destroying them and thus break my covenant with them, because I am ADONAI their God.***

I want to pause and interject something that must be addressed. Perhaps one of the most fundamental Church doctrines taught for more than 1000 years, and embraced by the bulk (although, not all) of Christianity, is that God is through with Israel. But even more, that God dissolved His covenant with Israel when He exiled them and formed a new one; one the Church calls the New Covenant. A New Covenant that was given to the gentile Church, but not for Israel. That is a totally false manmade doctrine, biblically dishonest, and that deceptively makes God either schizophrenic or a liar. It is one of many, and it is why we must carefully listen to what we are being taught from pulpit and bema to see if it's the truth. And if not, we must run from it as fast as our legs can carry us because our eternal souls are at stake. Right here in Leviticus God says that a day will come when Israel is so unfaithful that He will eject them from their land, and they will be punished severely.....for what reason? Specifically for rejecting His rulings and loathing His regulations. In other words, disobeying His Torah, His Tanach (the Old Testament) perhaps even to the point of declaring it abolished and replaced. This is precisely what has happened today within much of traditional Christianity. God's commands are rejected and hated, and instead humanly devised denominational doctrines are created to replace them. In this same passage in Leviticus, God also promises that He will NOT utterly destroy Israel because to do so would essentially amount to breaking His covenant with them. God keeps His word, even when we don't. Yet that promise is a 2- edged sword. He will indeed

always hold to His covenant, but that covenant contains both blessings and curses.

Verse 9 is a message wrapped around an agricultural metaphor. God says He will shake Israel as one shakes with a sieve. A special sieve was used to sift the grain, in order to get the chaff and small stones and other debris out of it. The grain stalks were laid on a compacted dirt floor, and animals pulling a kind of heavy sled walked back and forth over it to separate the kernels from the stalks. One can imagine the sorts of items that got mixed in with the grain. So, a sieve was used as more or less the final step of grain harvesting (after winnowing). The sieve allowed the small grain kernels (representing the righteous Israelites) through it, leaving behind things like small pebbles. The rebellious of Israel are the pebbles...they are the unwanted debris. However, notice it speaks of how the Israelites will be among the *goyim*...the gentiles. This means that the gentiles will be sifted and shaken as well. This seems to be speaking of a time of a widespread political and social disorder out of which Israel's punishment will come. Verse 10 addresses a specific group of Israelites: those who say that disaster will never come upon them. This is speaking of the prideful and the arrogant. Self-assured people who are certain that their ways are better than the ways their ancestors practiced. These are unteachable people who believe that they having nothing to learn.

Now, beginning in verse 11, it's as though the sun is finally appearing after weeks of rain clouds. The words "on that day" indicate a time of judgment or redemption. In this case, it is of redemption. In the fullness of time, Yehoveh says He will raise up the fallen tent of Jacob. That is, the descendants of the exiles of Israel will receive God's mercy and a process of restoration will begin. Sadly, in order to protect these several centuries of uninspired Church doctrines, many Christian Bible scholars declare that these are not original words in Amos; rather, they were added far later probably by a sympathetic Judean editor. Is there any evidence of this whatsoever to back-up that claim? None. It's only that this promise of restoration flies in the face of Church doctrines to the contrary. So, the way it has been historically handled is to simply question the authenticity of the biblical passage that disputes their doctrine. Ironically, other Bible scholars...even including some agnostics (who have no axe to grind in this debate)...say what I just said: there is no evidence at all for this assertion. All of

their arguments for removing this passage from our Bibles are ideologically driven, and not on any evidence of any kind.

There are some important biblical facts and history that helps us to understand what is being proposed, here, regarding restoration. First, we are witnessing a promise for the restoration of the Davidic Dynasty and the rebirth of David's kingdom. This idea was also proposed by the Prophet Hosea.

**CJB Hosea 3:4-5** ***<sup>4</sup> For the people of Isra'el are going to be in seclusion for a long time without a king, prince, sacrifice, standing-stone, ritual vest or household gods. <sup>5</sup> Afterwards, the people of Isra'el will repent and seek ADONAI their God and David their king; they will come trembling to ADONAI and his goodness in the acharit-hayamim.***

These are End-Times prophetic revelations. In a nutshell it predicts the return of Israel (David was king over a united Israel, long before it split into 2 separate kingdoms) as a political entity...a nation. Then, those who have been exiled will seek God and long to return to their ancient land. Folks: this has happened. Israel was re-born as a nation in 1948, and many of the exiles immediately began to return. But even more astounding, those who openly identify themselves as members of the 10 tribes that formed Ephraim/Israel are also returning in increasing numbers. Remember: this prophecy happens in relation to the End Times. Therefore, we can draw a reasonable conclusion that we have indeed entered into that indeterminate time-period that the Bible calls the End Times.

God says that the walls of the Israelite cities will be repaired, and they'll live there again. And that they'll even possess a remnant (a portion) of |Edom. That has also come true. The Red Sea port city of Eilat first belonged to the territory of Judah. It was taken from them by Edom. And now Eilat is back in Judah's (modern Israel's) possession. The term Edom and the phrase "all the nations over whom My name has been called" are meant as a parallel; that is, while Edom is meant literally, it is also meant to represent other nations as well. This grammar technique is not unusual in the Bible and scholars give it the name synecdoche.

Verse 13 expands on the nature of the restoration of Israel using another agricultural metaphor. The words, "when the plowman shall draw near the reaper" it is intended to give the picture of the field crops thriving and maturing so fast that the person who is reading a field to plant seeds overtakes the person who is harvesting what he is planting! Obviously this is an exaggeration meant to make the point of an abundance that is even greater for Israel upon their return, than before they were exiled from the land. One might call this an unconditional blessing. In fact, it was a promised blessing made to Israel long ago, during their exodus from Egypt.

**CJB Leviticus 26:41-42** ***<sup>41</sup> At that time I will be going against them, bringing them into the lands of their enemies. But if their uncircumcised hearts will grow humble, and they are paid the punishment for their misdeeds; <sup>42</sup> then I will remember my covenant with Ya'akov, also my covenant with Yitz'chak and my covenant with Avraham; and I will remember the land.***

The topic is again addressed in Deuteronomy:

**CJB Deuteronomy 30:5-9** ***<sup>5</sup> ADONAI your God will bring you back into the land your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you prosper there, and you will become even more numerous than your ancestors. <sup>6</sup> Then ADONAI your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your children, so that you will love ADONAI your God with all your heart and all your being, and thus you will live. <sup>7</sup> ADONAI your God will put all these curses on your enemies, on those who hated and persecuted you; <sup>8</sup> but you will return and pay attention to what ADONAI says and obey all his mitzvot which I am giving you today. <sup>9</sup> Then ADONAI your God will give you more than enough in everything you set out to do- the fruit of your body, the fruit of your livestock, and the fruit of your land will all do well; for ADONAI will once again rejoice to see you do well, just as he rejoiced in your ancestors.***

The next metaphor used is of the person who is treading grapes overtaking the one who is planting the seed. Grapes were usually harvested and pressed (by foot) during the months of August and September. The farmers who sow seeds usually start that process during the November-December timeframe. So, the picture is of the grape harvest being so plentiful that they can't even finish

stomping all the grapes to extract the juice until it is time for the planting of new crops. The mention of wine flowing down the sides of hills and mountains is obviously an exaggeration meant to show the enormous quantity of wine that will be made in those years after Israel returns from their exile.

Verses 14 and 15 end the oracles presented in the Book of Amos by summing up the extreme nature of the restoration that more than matches the extreme nature of the destruction of Israel. At this point I want to read to you from another biblical Prophet that essentially says all the same things, but in more detail. Turn you Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 37.

### **READ EZEKIEL CHAPTER 37 all**

I'm not sure there is a more thrilling chapter in the Old Testament than this one; every time I read it chills run up my spine. It begins with the announced intent to restore Israel when they are still as dry bones. These dry bones represent the exiles of Israel who are certain that after waiting for so long for God to relent and fulfill His promise of restoration and return that He has forgotten them as they languish in exile; they feel all hope is lost.

Next God says He is going to make Israel one...united...again. We must know Israel's history to understand that they were a united nation...all 12 tribes under one king and one central government...for but 80 years. Under kings David and Solomon all the tribes gave up their sovereignty and bowed down a king. That unification ended after Solomon died. Rivals for the vacant throne led to a civil war that tore the united Israel apart into 2 separate kingdoms: Judah and Ephraim/Israel. This is when the 2 houses of Israel (the house of Judah and the house of Ephraim/Israel) concept became reality. It has remained that way for millennia. But with His two sticks prophecy, the Lord explains that Israel will once again be united under a single king. No more division. Even now, today, as the 10 tribes steadily flow back to Israel, welcomed by their brother tribe Judah, they together operate under a single government...that of the modern Israeli government.

While some of this prophecy has been fulfilled, some has not. For instance, it speaks of the returning exiles again living on the mountains of Israel. The

mountains of Israel is part of the land of the former Ephraim/Israel. And, legally, for the time being, the bulk of that region is in the hands of the Palestinians... it is more known to the world as the West Bank. So that portion of Israel's restoration is still future.

Another part of the prophecy says that once Israel returns, they will never again be removed from their land. That means that not only will God not punish them ever again with exile, but also that despite the overwhelming number of enemies Israel faces that want to push them into the Mediterranean Sea, it won't happen. I'm sure this defense of their land will come at great cost to the treasury and to the citizens of Israel; but they will not be leaving the land ever again.

The most Messianic part of the prophecy, however, is the mention that the king that Israel will ultimately pay homage to will be David. While some Orthodox Jews think that this means that King David will be resurrected in the flesh and rule over Israel, most Jews don't believe that way. Many more believe that it will be a Messiah that is related to King David. Of course, as those of us who trust in Yeshua already know, Yeshua comes from the royal lineage of King David and that He is the messiah prophesied in Ezekiel as sitting on David's throne.

What a great hope Israel and all those who worship the God of Israel have. The time is coming when these prophecies will be completely fulfilled; and all signs are that it is so very near. But what is also coming is the continual advancement of evil on this planet, a deterioration of the institutions who claim to worship God and also a diminishing of the numbers of individuals who claim allegiance to Him, a series of never-ending wars and diseases, and then the war to end all wars that we are told will be so unimaginably terrible that nothing even close to it has ever before been experienced on this planet. Next: God's wrath. After that, the reign of Messiah Yeshua over the Kingdom of Heaven for a thousand years, and finally a new heavens and earth that completely overturns the old order that has been in existence since Adam and Eve; an order where sin and death have dominated. Upon the re-creation that brings a new heavens and earth:

**CJB Revelation 21:1-5** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer there. <sup>2</sup> Also I saw the holy city, New Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from*

***God, prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "See! God's Sh'khinah is with mankind, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and he himself, God-with-them, will be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will no longer be any death; and there will no longer be any mourning, crying or pain; because the old order has passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then the One sitting on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new!" Also he said, "Write, 'These words are true and trustworthy!'"***

This concludes our study of the Book of Amos.