

Book of Amos

Chapter 5:1-17

¹ **Hear** this word which I take up for you as a **dirge**, O house of Israel: ² She has fallen, she will not rise again - The virgin Israel. She lies neglected on her land; there is none to raise her up.

Sunukjian > Amos' third (vv. 1-17) and fourth (vv. 18-27) messages are structured and juxtaposed to highlight one overall truth: the nation would be judged by its mighty sovereign God, but individuals could yet repent and live.

Each message follows a chiasmic structure in which the themes of the early paragraphs are repeated in reverse order in the later paragraphs. In chiasmic structures the second or middle theme, whether repeated or not, emerges as the central focus of the whole message.

In Amos' third message this central focus is the might and sovereignty of God:

- a. Description of certain judgment (vv. 1-3)
- b. Call for individual repentance (vv. 4-6)
- c. Accusation of legal injustice (v. 7)
- d. Portrayal of a sovereign God (vv. 8-9)
- e. Accusation of legal injustice (vv. 10-13)
- f. Call for individual repentance (vv. 14-15)
- g. Description of certain judgment (vv. 16-17)

Hear > Strong's > to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively, to tell, etc.)

Swindoll > This is the third time Amos has called the people to give attention to God's Word (3: 1; 4: 1).

Hear this word ... > Benson > It is justly observed by Grotius, that this verse would be translated more according to the Hebrew thus; *Hear ye this word, even a lamentation, which I take up over you*

Dirge > Sunukjian > 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.

³For thus says the Lord GOD, "The city which goes forth a thousand strong will have a hundred left, and the one which goes forth a hundred strong will have ten left to the house of Israel."

Wiersbe > The New Testament indicates that God knows where all twelve tribes are (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Rev. 7:4; 21:12), and the prophets speak of a time of reunion and glory (Ezek. 37:19–28; Jer. 3:18; 23:5–6; Hos. 1:11).

Matthew 19:28 > ²⁸ And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 22:30 > ⁸ "You are the ones who have stood by Me in My trials; ²⁹ and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jer. 3:18 > ¹⁸ In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance

⁴For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "**Seek Me that you may live.** ⁵ "But do not resort to Bethel and do not come to Gilgal, nor cross over to **Beersheba**; for Gilgal will certainly go into captivity and Bethel will come to trouble.

Wiersbe > The prophet gave three reasons,

1. The first of which is that we might have life (Amos 5:4). The way of disobedience is the way of darkness and death. "Seek me and live" is God's invitation and admonition (v. 4 NIV).
2. The second reason we should seek God is because there is no other way to experience spiritual blessing (Amos 5:5). The people were going to the shrines in droves and coming home further from God than when they left. (Emerson said that a change in geography never overcomes a flaw in character, and he was right.)
3. The third reason for seeking God is because judgment is coming (v. 6).

Seek > Strong's > to tread or frequent; usually to follow (for pursuit or search); by implication, to seek or ask; specifically to worship

Seek me ... > Barnes > Literally, "*seek Me; and live.*" He does not speak of them, as cause and effect, but as one. Where the one is, there is the other. To seek God is to live.

Bethel > Sunukjian > 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” (cf. NIV marg.; 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.

Beersheba > Barnes > Israel thought it not too much to go to the extremist point of Judah toward Idumaea , perhaps, four times as far south of Jerusalem, as Jerusalem lay from Bethel ... So much pains will people take in self-willed service, and yet not see that it takes away the excuse for neglecting the true. (There is a map on the next page)

Septuagint > *But seek not Bethel, and go not into Galgala, and cross not over to the Well of the Oath: for Galgala shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall be as that which is not.*

Genesis 21:30, 31 > ³⁰ He said, “You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.” ³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath.

II Kings 23:8 ⁸ Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba;



⁶ *“**Seek the LORD that you may live**, or He will break forth like a fire, **O house of Joseph**, and it will consume with none to quench it for Bethel,*

Seek the Lord ... > Barnes > Literally, "seek the Lord; and live." He re-impresses on them the one simple need of the creature, "seek God," the one true God as He revealed Himself.

O house of Joseph > Benson > That is, the kingdom of the ten tribes, the chief whereof was Ephraim the son of Joseph.

⁷ *for those who turn **justice** into **wormwood** and **cast righteousness down to the earth.**”*

Justice > Strong’s > a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree (human or (participant's) divine law, individual or collective), including the act, the place, the suit, the crime, and the penalty; abstractly, justice, including a participant's right or privilege (statutory or customary).

Wormwood > Strong’s > from an unused root supposed to mean to curse; wormwood (regarded as poisonous, and therefore accursed)

Swindoll > Fear of judgment may not be the highest motive for obeying God, but the Lord will accept it. Animals and little children understand rewards and punishments, but we hope that the children will eventually mature and develop higher motives for obedience than receiving some candy or escaping a spanking. God’s people, Israel, never achieved that higher level of obedience, the kind of obedience that comes from a heart that loves God.

Cast righteousness down to the earth > Weirsbe > Righteousness and justice should be the pillars that hold up society, but these selfish rulers had thrown the pillars to the ground. One of the evidences that the pillars of national justice are shaking and ready to fall is the increase in lawsuits. “They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field” (Hos. 10:4 NIV). Israel was afflicted with poisonous weeds and poisonous water (Amos 5:7), and the Lord was displeased.

⁸ *He who made the **Pleiades** and **Orion** and changes deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is His name. ⁹It is He who flashes forth with destruction upon the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.*

Pleiades > (Strong’s) a cluster of stars, i.e. the Pleiades

Orion > (Strong's) The Hebrew word is found 4 times in the scriptures ... three times it is translated as *Orion* and the fourth as *constellations*

Sunukjian > He who made the constellations Pleiades and Orion (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.

¹⁰ *They hate him who **reproves** in the **gate**, and they abhor him who **speaks with integrity**.*

Reproves > (Strong's) to be right (i.e. correct); reciprocal, to argue; causatively, to decide, justify or convict

Gate (an illustration) > **Ruth 4:1, 2** (through verse 12) > ¹*Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.* ²*He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.*

Speaks with integrity > (Barnes) Literally, "perfectly."

¹¹ *Therefore because you **impose heavy rent** on the poor and exact a **tribute** of grain from them, though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, yet you will not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.* ¹² *For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, you who **distress** the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate.* ¹³ *Therefore at such a time the **prudent** person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.*

Impose heavy rent > I'm not sure as to the source of this translation. The Hebrew word used is a "primitive root" and is translated by Strong's as *to trample down*.

Tribute > (Strong's) a raising (as of the hands in prayer), or rising (of flame); figuratively, an utterance; concretely, a beacon (as raised); a present (as taken), mess, or tribute; figuratively, a reproach (as a burden)

Barnes > The word always signifies presents, voluntary , or involuntary , what was carried, offered to anyone ... It may be that, in order to evade the law, the interest was called "a present."

Distress > (Strong's) to cramp, literally or figuratively

You will see a pattern in how this same Hebrew word is translated in the scriptures – *afflict, vex, trouble, enemy, besiege.*

Prudent > (Strong's) to be (causatively, make or act) circumspect and hence, intelligent

Weirsbe > "Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you" (Prov. 9:8 NKJV; and see 1 Kings 22:5ff. for an illustration of this principle).

Sunukjian:

- V 7 The judicial system, instead of being a medicinal herb to heal wrongs and restore the oppressed, had itself become a fatal poison within the nation
- V 10 Intimidation of the righteous
- VV 11b-12a Judgment of covenant sin
- V 12b Abuse of the poor
- V 13 Intimidation of the righteous

¹⁴ *Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said!* ¹⁵ *Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

Look at the trilogy of opportunities He has given them to survive:

Verse 4 > *Seek Me that you may live*

Verse 6 > *Seek the LORD that you may live*

Verse 14 > *Seek good and not evil, that you may live*

¹⁶ *Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, "There is wailing in all the plazas, and in all the streets they say, 'Alas! Alas!' They also call the farmer to mourning and professional mourners to lamentation. ¹⁷ "And in all the vineyards there is wailing, because I will pass through the midst of you," says the LORD.*

This is written in the present tense ... as if what will happen was happening as he spoke. Their own history should have warned them of the validity of this prophecy ...Moses gave this message to Pharaoh the night they were freed from Egypt.

Exodus 11:4-8 > ⁴ Moses said, 'Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go out through Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ⁶ Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been nor will ever be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites — not at people, not at animals — so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. ⁸ Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, "Leave us, you and all the people who follow you." After that I will leave.' And in hot anger he left Pharaoh