

# Amos

## Chapter 8

### *The Coming Day of Bitter Mourning*

**This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them. 3 The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,” declares the Lord GOD. “So many dead bodies!” “They are thrown everywhere!” “Silence!” 4 Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, 5 saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, 6 that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?” 7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. 8 Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?” 9 “And on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10 I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. 11 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. 12 They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it. 13 “In that day the lovely virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst. 14 Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria, and say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,’ and, ‘As the Way of Beersheba lives,’ they shall fall, and never rise again.”**

**8:1** Amos continues to report his visions despite Amaziah’s attempt to silence him. (TLSB)

*showed me.* This is another vision revealing the fate of Israel. (Kretzmann)

*summer fruit.* Likely figs, one of Israel’s most important fruits, harvested in Aug/Sept. (TLSB)

**8:2** *The end.* Wordplay; Hbr for “figs” sounds like the word for “end.” The harvest serves as a metaphor for death and/or judgment (cf Jl 3:12–13; Mt 13:30, 39; Rv 14:14–16). Simply put, Israel is threatened with being plucked, thrown into a basket, and devoured by Assyria. (TLSB)

*pass by.* The curses threatened in the covenant for abandoning the Lord (Dt 28:15–18) will soon begin to materialize. (TLSB)

**8:3** *that day.* Amos is talking about their destruction and it could also allude to Judgment Day.

*wailing ... Silence!* There would be no thanksgiving songs for this harvest (contrast Lev 23:39–41)—only the silence of despair. (CSB)

Songs of idolatrous worship will become wailing lamentation when the carnage begins. Corpses will be strewn everywhere. (TLSB)

Cries of the deepest grief and mourning over the large number of the slain. (Kretzmann)

*silence* – With an admonition to hush, to bow in silence under the terrible severity of the divine judgment. If a sinner acknowledges his sin, he will also be ready to bow in silence and humility under the hand of God when some punishment comes upon him. (Kretzmann)

A typical reaction when God confronts people with their sinfulness. (TLSB)

**8:4-6** Another list of specific ways that the people—esp the wealthy—pervert justice and oppress the poor. Amos levels similar charges in 2:6–7; 5:11–12. (TLSB)

**8:4** *hear this* – This is an attention-getting alert letting people know that important news is coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

*trample* – Means to totally crush. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Cf 2:7. A refrain in Amos’s prophecy. The covenant stipulated a very different treatment of the poor (Dt 15:7–11). (TLSB)

*the poor* – Those who are disadvantaged, poor, afflicted, weak, low in status, and thin like the emaciated cows in Gen 41:19. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Panting after the poor in their anxiety to destroy them and to grasp their property. (Kretzmann)

**8:5** People obviously did not have their hearts in worship. (TLSB)

*New Moon ... Sabbath*. The official religious festivals, when commerce ceased (cf. Nu 28:9–15; 2Ki 4:23). (CSB)

First day of the lunar month was a regular festival. (TLSB)

This was a holy day (Num 28:11-15). Although work, including selling was forbidden on the Sabbath and major festivals, it was not expressly prohibited for the New Moon, but the pious may well have followed the spirit of the Torah by resting on it. Some of them obviously have been doing so in a hypocritical manner. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Sabbath means to finish, cease, do away with work. These people hypocritically cease work on the Sabbath, then during the rest of the week they make the poor cease to exist. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

*wheat for sale* – Means to open the wheat, that is, open the containers and display it for sale. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Opening their storehouses in order to make unjust gains. (Kretzmann)

*false balances*. See Lev 19:35–36; Dt 25:13–16; Pr 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23. (CSB)

To make matters worse, these people habitually defrauded unsuspecting customers with dishonest weights, measures, and scales (Lv 19:35–36; Dt 25:13–15). (TLSB)

This means to make the bushel of wheat sold to the customer smaller and the shekel paid the customer be greater. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Scales of deceit. When the wheat was on one side of the balance, the dishonest merchant would put the lighter stone on the other side, but when the customer put his payment on the scale, the merchant would balance it with a heavier weight. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

**8:6** *buy the poor...pair of sandals* – Apparently the merchants would force a person to be sold into slavery if they could not pay a debt as small as the price of sandals. Another interpretation is that “sandals” is an idiom for the legal transfer of land (Ruth 4:7-10); if so, the poor were sold either in order to be acquired as slaves or in order to acquire their land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Some in Israel stooped to trafficking in slave trade. (TLSB)

*chaff of the wheat* – It was the custom as a directive of the Lord to round the corners, leaving some wheat standing for those who were poor and needed to have it for survival (Ruth 2:2-3). In this verse “the sweepings” were literally the refuse or husks, which were likely mixed in with the kernels when selling wheat to the poor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Some merchants were taking sweepings off the threshing floor and mixing them in with the grain in order to “bulk up” their bags of wheat. Beyond the dishonesty and price inflation involved, this was also an unhealthy practice. (TLSB)

**8:7** *sworn by the Pride of Jacob*. Israel took pride in the fact that the Lord was her God. (CSB)

Land of Israel. Amos elsewhere depicts the Lord swearing by His holiness (4:2) and Himself (6:8). Swearing by a corrupt and idolatrous land is highly ironic. (TLSB)

This is a name the Lord gives himself and therefore swears by himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

**8:8** *rise like the Nile*. Because of the heavy seasonal rains in Ethiopia, the Nile in Egypt annually rose by as much as 25 feet, flooding the whole valley except for the towns and villages standing above it. Its waters carried a large amount of rich soil, which was deposited on the land—perhaps referred to by the words “stirred up.” (CSB)

Famous for overflowing its banks in the spring and then steadily receding, the Nile is a simile for how the invading Assyrians would flood Israel and then eventually depart, leaving nothing but debris and stench in their wake. (TLSB)

**8:9** *that day*. The day of the Lord. (TLSB)

*darken the earth*. As elsewhere, the “day of the LORD” is described as one in which the cosmic (world) order is disrupted and light is turned to darkness (see Isa 13:10; 24:23; 34:4; 50:3; Eze 32:7–8; Joel 2:10, 31; Mic 3:6), as if creation is being undone (see Jer 4:23). (CSB)

Eclipses and darkness are often mentioned in connection with the Lord’s judgment and the Last Day (Is 13:10; Jl 2:10; Zep 1:15; cf Lk 23:44–45), when the entire created order will manifest the Creator’s outpoured wrath. (TLSB)

By a terrible catastrophe, the picture being well applicable to the fate of a nation or of the earth when it is destroyed while in the very midst of its earthly fortune and power. (Kretzmann)

**8:10 mourning.** Illustrated by King David (2Sa 18:33). (CSB)

Singing and rejoicing of religious celebration would give way to outpourings of grief and sorrow. (TLSB)

*bring sackcloth ... baldness.* Signs of mourning (see Ge 37:34; Jer 47:5). (CSB)

In ancient Israel, putting on sackcloth and shaving one's head showed that one was undergoing a period of mourning (see note, Jb 16:15; cf Is 15:2–3; 22:12; Jer 48:37). (TLSB)

*only son.* On whose life the future of the family depended (cf. 2Sa 18:18). (CSB)

Children, especially males, not only embodied a family's aspirations but also helped provide for their parents in old age. Accordingly, the death of an only son constituted one of the greatest and most grievous of all misfortunes, truly "a bitter day." (TLSB)

*bitter day.* The opposite of the "day of celebration" (Est 9:22). (CSB)

**8:11 days.** When God's judgment begins to take effect. (CSB)

*famine on the land...WORDS OF THE LORD.* In times of great distress Israel turned to the Lord for a prophetic word of hope or guidance (see, e.g., 2Ki 19:1–4, 14; 22:13–14; Jer 21:2; Eze 14:3, 7), but in the coming judgment the Lord will answer all such appeals with silence—the awful silence of God (see 1Sa 28:6; Eze 7:26; 20:1–3; Mic 3:4, 7). (CSB)

Because the people have rejected and despised God's Word, and even forbidden His prophets from prophesying (2:12; 7:12–13), they will soon receive their just deserts—the Lord will no longer provide "the bread of life," His life-sustaining Gospel (cf Dt 8:3; Jn 4:10, 14; 6:35). Gregory of Nazianzus: "[Basil] provided the nourishment of the Word ... in rich abundance to the relief not of a famine of bread, nor of a thirst for water, but a longing for that Word which is really lifegiving and nourishing, and causes to grow to spiritual manhood him who is duly fed thereon" (NPNF 2 7:407–8). Luther: "For when the Word has been taken away, what else remains but the most terrible darkness of human reason which wants to be our mistress and which can teach nothing else than the doctrines of the demons?... There is no light except through faith in the Word" (AE 18:183). (TLSB)

**8:12 wander ... run ... seek.** Desperate but futile search for divine guidance. They will find no word of comfort or consolation. (TLSB)

*sea to sea ... north to east.* Throughout the land of Israel, even to the Transjordan. (CSB)

**8:13 lovely virgins and the young men.** Coming judgment will be so severe that even those in the prime of life will perish. (TLSB)

*thirst.* Both physical and spiritual. Their strength sapped, even the lovely girls and strong boys of the nation would faint and fall useless. (CSB)

Apparently recalls the drought threatened in 7:4. (TLSB)

This in spite of their natural strength and stamina, which was lacking in those who had been overcome before them. (Kretzmann)

**8:14** *Those who swear.* By the gods of their various religious centers—the false gods in which they trusted rather than in the Lord. (CSB)

*Guilt of Samaria.* Idolatrous worship of the golden calves at Bethel (TLSB)

*Dan.* Territory of Dan was also home to some of Israel’s apostasy. Cf Jgs 18. (TLSB)

*As the Way of Beersheba lives.* Oath for false gods and evil practices of Beersheba. A horned, cut-stone altar was discovered there at a “high place” or shrine. See note, Ex 27:2. (TLSB)

**Ch 8** Amos’s vision of the basket of summer fruit points to the Lord’s judgment, which will soon cut down the people of Israel for their idolatrous worship, their greed, and their callous mistreatment of their brethren. If we persist in doing evil and despising God’s graciousness, we will receive the same reward—punishment from God and eternal separation from His life-giving Word. Treasure the Word! Our God is gracious and continually stands ready to receive the repentant heart and lift it up with His Word of forgiveness and peace in Jesus. • Lord, Your Word assures me that You will not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17). Therefore, graciously receive my confession, and cover me with the forgiveness of Him who died and rose again. Amen. (TLSB)