

Amos

Chapter 9

The Destruction of Israel

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said: “Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape. 2 “If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. 3 If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. 4 And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.” 5 The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt; 6 who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds his vault upon the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth—the LORD is his name. 7 “Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?” declares the LORD. “Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? 8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the LORD. 9 “For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. 10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’

9:1 *I saw the Lord.* God is now poised on earth. (CSB)

A fifth vision. (Kretzmann)

beside the altar. God is about to initiate the destruction from the very place from which the people expect to hear a word of peace and blessing. (CSB)

Not only evokes a portion of a previous oracle (in 7:7) but, more important, sets the stage for Amos’s climactic fifth vision. (TLSB)

Most likely that of the idolatrous sanctuary at Bethel, to which reference has just been made. (Kretzmann)

Strike the capitals ... thresholds. The Lord will shake Israel’s illicit shrines to their very foundations. Their pillars would fall, and then the entire structures would collapse, killing the priests and worshipers. (TLSB)

capitals. Knobs at the tops of pillars holding up the roof of the shrine. (TLSB)

thresholds shake. God will shatter the temple completely, from the decorated capitals down to the heavy stone thresholds. The next lines depict the destruction. Whether the vision shows the Lord at Jerusalem or at Bethel is unclear, but we know of no temple structure at Bethel. (CSB)

Foundation stones beneath the pillars. (TLSB)

not one of them shall escape – Those fleeing the temple’s collapse will be killed with the sword. (TLSB)

9:2–4 These verses emphasize the impossibility of escape from God’s impending judgment. The imaginary extremes to which a person might go may be compared with those in Ps 139:7–12. God’s domain includes every place, even the realm of the grave (v. 2). (CSB)

9:2 *Sheol ... heaven*. Neither the deepest depth nor the highest height will provide a place of refuge. When God pours out His wrath, there is no place to hide (cf 2:14–16; Dt 32:22). (TLSB)

9:3 *serpent*. In pagan mythology, the fierce monster of the sea. If someone should seek to escape by hiding in the depths, he could still not evade God, for even there all are subject to him. (CSB)

Sea monster with a deadly bite stands ready to serve as God’s servant of destruction (Ps 74:13–14; Is 27:1). (TLSB)

9:4 *go into captivity before their enemies... by their enemies ... I will command*. Even those dispersed among the nations will not escape God’s judgment. (CSB)

Even exile in a foreign land will not provide an escape, for the Lord is ruler over all. (TLSB)

I will fix my eyes ... for evil. Usually, God “fixes” His eyes on His people in order to show favor (Ps 33:18; Jer 24:6; cf Gn 44:21). Here, however, this expression serves to convey the certainty of Israel’s punishment. (TLSB)

Keeping them under observation without ceasing, so that escape would be an utter impossibility. The omnipresence and the almighty power of the Lord is further brought out. (Kretzmann)

9:5-6 Last of Amos’s three hymnic doxologies of judgment. It begins and ends with God’s personal name, Yahweh. (TLSB)

9:5 *The Lord ... who*. Introduces a hymnic reminder that Israel’s God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, thus underlining the pronouncements of the previous verses (cf. 4:13; 5:8–9). (CSB)

As Creator and Ruler of all, the Lord has more than sufficient power to carry out His threats, for He controls nature and guides human events. Accordingly, the Assyrians will soon accomplish God’s purpose, albeit unwittingly, when they come and destroy the northern tribes. (TLSB)

earth ... melts. As though struck by lightning. (CSB)

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)

9:6 *his upper chambers*. Contrasts the scale of God with the scale of man, whose structures fall at the movement of the earth (v. 5). (CSB)

Cosmic imagery emphasizes that God is Creator and Sustainer of all things. As Lord of the universe, nothing can escape His judgment (vv 1–4). Tertullian: “Christ has prepared for us this ascension into heaven” (ANF 3:462). (TLSB)

pours them out. May refer to the great flood (Gn 6:9–9:17). Just as there was no escaping God’s judgment in Noah’s day, so also it shall be when a flood of Assyrian soldiers overwhelms the land. (TLSB)

9:7 Rhetorical questions. The Lord denies that apostate Israel enjoys a position of privilege before Him. By abandoning the covenant, the people have become no better than the Cushites, i.e., descendants of wicked Ham and brothers of the accursed Canaanites (Gn 9:18–25; 10:6). Tragically, most from the northern tribes would lose their privileged covenantal status. (TLSB)

Cushites. A dark-skinned people who lived south of Egypt. (CSB)

Did I not bring up Israel? Israel could not rely on God’s past blessings as an assurance of his future benevolence. Her stubborn rebelliousness robbed the exodus of all special meaning for her; her journey from Egypt is reduced to no more significance than the movements of other peoples. (CSB)

Philistines from Caphtor. Likely modern Crete. (TLSB)

Kir. Very likely a province of Assyria. (Kretzmann)

9:8 *sinful kingdom.* Israel, the chosen, whose disobedience was far worse than the sins of other nations (cf. 1:3–2:16; 3:1–2). (CSB)

All that the Lord now sees in Israel is a wicked nation; they will be punished. (TLSB)

I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob. Yet there is still a word of hope. Since God is just, a faithful remnant will be spared. The messianic line will continue, and people will be saved through Christ. Cf Lv 26:44; Dt 4:31. On the remnant theme in the prophetic writings, cf Is 10:22; 11:1–2, 11; 37:30–32. (TLSB)

9:9 *as one shakes with a sieve.* Continues remnant motif of v 8. God will separate the good from the bad. The evil will be punished with death, while the faithful remnant will be preserved for life. (TLSB)

sieve. Separates the wheat from small stones and other refuse gathered with it when scooped up from the ground. (CSB)

Constructed from a punctured copper bowl or from a screen made with plant fibers. (TLSB)

no a pebble shall fall. Only the grain drops through, the refuse being screened out to be discarded. (CSB)

The nations of the world are the sieve by which Israel is cleaned of the chaff found in its midst of the godless people that claimed membership in the congregation of the Lord. (Kretzmann)

9:10 *All the sinners ... will die.* For their persistent rebellion. (CSB)

All those doing evil will perish. The final sentence of the vision states Israel’s denial. (TLSB)

9:1–10 In his fifth and final vision report, Amos makes two main points: (1) Because Israel has abandoned the covenant, it has forfeited its claim to a privileged status before God. Thus the nation will be destroyed, leaving only a tiny remnant. If you insist on living life on your own terms, arrogantly

spurning God's will for your life, you will face judgment. (2) Yet the Lord provides a means of escape: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn 1:9). • "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (Ps 51:1–2). We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. (TLSB)

The Restoration of Israel

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, 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. 13 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. 14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.

9:11 The verse is also regarded as Messianic in the Jewish Talmud. (CSB)

I will raise up. Raises a hope underlying Amos's words—one that runs through the whole OT from Ge 3:15 on: God will bring blessing after judgment and will not ultimately reject Israel. (CSB)

Amos characterizes the royal house of David as having fallen into a weak and decrepit state. Yet the Lord promises to restore its fortunes for the sake of the covenant made with David (2Sm 7:8–16). This restoration of David's line finds its fulfillment in the advent of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of David. Luther: "This is the kingdom of David, from which the Messiah was to rule.... It had fallen, it had been broken. But when Christ came, it was revived" (AE 18:189). (TLSB)

booth. Lit. "hut" (or rough booth)—either the dynasty ("house") of David or the united kingdom of the 12 tribes (David's kingdom). The word "hut" may have been chosen to recall David's humble beginnings. (CSB)

Hbr *sukkah*, a temporary dwelling, a lowly hut. (TLSB)

as in days of old. In the days of David and Solomon. (CSB)

9:12 remnant of Edom. Whatever is left of Israel's bitter enemy after her punishment. (CSB)

Edomites were some of Israel's most ancient and hated enemies. Nevertheless, the Lord promises that a remnant of Edom, along with peoples of all nations, will be made part of the restored Davidic kingdom. Then the greatest promise made to Abraham would be fulfilled: through his offspring (Jesus), "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3). (TLSB)

all the nations who are called by my name. Refers to the extent of the rule of the Lord's anointed future King, recalling that David had reigned over many nations surrounding Israel. It represents the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. The Messiah will reign even over former enemies, of whom Edom is symbolic. (CSB)

In Christ, believers from every nation are freely granted the honor of being called by the Lord's name. In this connection, note how James uses this passage to prove that all people shall be welcomed into the

Church through Baptism and faith in Jesus, without any need for circumcision and the observance of similar rite (Ac 15:1–35, esp 16–17). (TLSB)

9:13–15 After all the forecasts of destruction, dearth and death (cf. 5:9, 11, 27), Amos’s final words picture a glorious Edenic prosperity, when the seasons will run together so that sowing and reaping are without interval, and there will be a continuous supply of fresh produce (a reversal of the conditions portrayed in 4:6–11). (CSB)

9:13 *overtake*. Promised restoration will be so abundant that there will be no breaks in the plowing-seeding-reaping work cycle. (TLSB)

drip sweet wine. Hyperbole. The blessings of the messianic kingdom will be overflowing (cf Mi 4:4). (TLSB)

9:14–15 *I will restore... they will rebuild ... They shall plant ... I will plant*. In the promised land, God will make his people productive, fruitful and secure. (CSB)

9:14 *my ... people*. All those who accept the deliverance from the powers of evil being assembled in the congregation of the Lord's people. (Kretzmann)

rebuild the ruined cities. God will reverse to well-being all that was destroyed. Thus, people will rebuild and dwell (cf 3:15; 4:11; 6:11), plant and drink (cf 4:9; 5:11), cultivate and eat (4:9). After the Messiah’s advent, nations wasting away in unbelief, superstitions, and wickedness will be “rebuilt” by the preaching of good news (Is. 55:1-5; Zec 9:9-10), thus fulfilling the restoration promised here (cf Dt 30:3-5) (TLSB)

9:15 *never again*. When Israel is finally restored, she will never again be destroyed. (CSB)

God’s restored people are given another promise—they will dwell securely. This pledge constitutes a reversal of the threats appearing in 5:2, 27; 7:17. Those called into relationship with the Messiah will be “the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified” (Is 61:3). Cf Jn 10:27–30; Rm 8:31–39; Php 1:6. (TLSB)

your God. Thus the prophet, in the conclusion of his book, under the type of Israel restored to its land, pictures the peace and prosperity of the true spiritual Israel, of the Church of the New Testament, in which every congregation is a garden of His mercy, and the streams of His love come down in the preaching of the Gospel, in order to bring peace to the hearts of poor sinners throughout the world. (Kretzmann)

9:11–15 Following many oracles and visions threatening judgment, Amos’s prophecy unexpectedly ends with a word of hope. A day of rich blessing is coming, for the Lord will fulfill His covenant promises, bring about restoration, and establish the eternal kingdom of His Messiah. If it is perilous to despise God’s threats of judgment and punishment, as did the people of Amos’s day, it is even more foolhardy to refuse such gracious promises as Jn 3:16. • “Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Amen. (LSB, p 308). (TLSB)