

**Madness!  
Don't Worry, Be Happy!  
Amos 6:1 – 14**

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There are promised blessings for obedience to God's people the Jews, and there are also promised curses for disobedience. One of the referenced end stages is the direct result of a seared conscience that has fully abandoned God and is looking solely to self. We are talking about a topic that has recently come up as a result of behavior being seen in circles of business and government here in the west.

This end stage is not the only reason why we pray for those in leadership, but it is a good reason to pray for them.

When they listen to the enemy, ideas and decisions made sound like madness.

Deuteronomy 28:28

"The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind," (ESV)

This was a promise made by YAHWEH to His people if they failed to remain faithful. The northern kingdom rushed headlong into idolatry and were so determined to "do their thing" that they kicked out all the Levites. Those individuals specifically charged by YAHWEH to keep the flock faithful, were gone. In their place were those who relied on the good graces of the King for their employment. The King was not that interested in being faithful, so they weren't either. They were not faithful.

I find it interesting that the attitude of leadership then, which impacted the spiritual life of the nation, also continues to be a characteristic we see today. The King set the tone for the nation. In western democracies, we see the

opposite, the people elect someone who is like them. As we continue to see leadership around the world that appears to be morally bankrupt, we only need to look at those who are voting them in.

That is us by the way. Madness rules in the west these days.

Meanwhile, back in the time of Amos, recently seen in Nineveh.

Jonah 3:5–9

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?” (NKJV)

Just a few years prior to Amos going to Bethel and confronting the people of Israel with their sin, Jonah had gone to a nation that did not know the Lord at all, and they did repent.

The blessings they are experiencing in Israel are because of the King in Nineveh, the head of the Assyrian Empire, repented.

It had nothing to do with their effectiveness on the battlefield. It was YAHWEH moving in the nations around them.

In Assyria, when that King who repented dies, everything changes, and Assyria shifts back to terrorizing the Middle East and they continue to do so until they reach the end prophesied by Nahum. More to come when we get to that book.

The pagan nation repented, but not Israel. Instead of seeking YAHWEH so they may live, instead of repenting in sackcloth and ashes, like the Assyrian leader did after hearing Jonah, they became optimistic about their future, and continued in their sin, idolatry and oppression.

What we have been reading about leading up to this point leads you to believe that this is a people who have gone mad. Stark raving bonkers.

Amos has reminded them of their history and all that YAHWEH has done for them to be where they are today, even in their sin. But they no longer had a Biblical worldview and they had systematically rejected any teaching that would point them to one. They were nothing more than a poor copy of the world. They were apostate, at least most in the nation were. Yes, there is a remnant, but for the majority, there is a false sense of security.

How is a false sense of security reflected today? Most commonly with natural disasters such as wild fires, floods or hurricanes. Less commonly, volcanos or earthquakes.

I have worked in and around natural disasters for years and there is a common factor I have found, not everyone evacuates or prepares.

Just look at how many folks live in California and then check how many of them have earthquake insurance.

As I looked at social media prior to Hurricane Ian, I saw it again. Disbelief. The satellite imagery must be wrong. The computer models must be in error. Surely this isn't coming here. And once again, first responders wind up looking for survivors or victims immediately after the storm, simply because of unbelief that ended when reality struck.

If you believe what is being told you, neighbors look at you like your weird because you have a plan and prepare for the storm to arrive, ahead of time too. But the signs were unmistakable. It was not if, but when.

There is a storm coming that makes our recent experience with Hurricane Ian look like nothing. Jesus warned of this storm 2000 years ago in Matthew 24 & 25. Joel talked about this storm and gave us a name for it, the Day of the Lord. Jesus affirmed that description as well and it shows up in other books of the Bible as well.

This storm is coming. The warning signs are all there and unlike in the past where there has been only a few, they have all now converged and **ALL** the signs are now visible. They are now all visible and increasing in strength and intensity, just like Jesus said they would.

Unbelief has resulted in a sense of false security. For many today, and for Israel at the time of Amos.

Amos comes to people who think they are safe enough but, in fact, are living in a dream. They have everything they need in the way of security in this life and a most suitable religion to look after the next! They are a complacent people. (Keddie 1986, 95)

Amos is addressing a people gone mad. You hear it in his language.

Amos 6:1–3

“Woe to those who are carefree in Zion, And to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, The dignitaries of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes. Go over to Calneh and look, And go from there to Hamath the great, Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, Or is their territory greater than yours? Are you postponing the day of disaster, And would you bring near the seat of violence?” (NASB 2020)

Those who are in power are fat, dumb, and happy. They aren’t worried about a thing.

The condemned attitudes echo earlier passages. These individuals or groups, who are in control at the expense of others dependent on them (2:6–8; 3:9–10; 4:1; 5:10–11; cf. 8:4–6), feel confident in the nation’s position among the surrounding peoples (cf. 5:18–20), but their ability to stave off judgment is coming to an end. (Carroll R. 2020, 361)

Warning after warning has been issued to the nation of Israel. Prophet after prophet has come and told them of the need to repent and what the consequences would be if they do not.

But we have money, power, territory, vassals, slaves, estate homes, two chariots in every garage, outdoor kitchens by the pool in the back yard, and even though there are a few social ills in our nation, we’re good because we are God’s chosen people.

Really?

This woe applies to the great men in Zion and Samaria, that is to say, to the chiefs of the whole of the covenant nation, because they were all sunk in the same godless security; though special allusion is made to the corrupt leaders of the kingdom of the ten tribes, whose debauchery is still further depicted in what follows. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 199)

Moses warned that unfaithfulness would lead to all that Amos listed earlier, oh, and madness would be near the end point just before judgement falls.

This is a message to Judah and to Israel. Israel simply opted for the express lane with no waiting to judgement, but Judah is heading there too. In Judah, they thought because Jerusalem was a well fortified city, virtually impregnable, they were safe. The Temple was there. We are God’s people after all.

They had forgotten a bit of their own history involving the prior occupants of Jerusalem, the Jebusites.

### 1 Chronicles 11:4–6

“And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, that is, Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. The inhabitants of Jebus said to David, “You will not come in here.” Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. David said, “Whoever strikes the Jebusites first shall be chief and commander.” And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief.” (ESV)

Jeremiah would later talk about this same arrogance of the people of Jerusalem regarding their attitude of impregnability due to the Temple being there.

### Jeremiah 7:3–4

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’” (ESV)

The Prophet Zephaniah would go further about how arrogance and place have nothing to do with the judgement of God. It really is all about faithfulness.

### Zephaniah 3:11

“In that day you will not be ashamed of all your rebelliousness against me, for then I will remove from your midst those who proudly boast, and you will never again be arrogant on my holy hill.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Again, why the pride? Well, we are God’s people after all.

This idea has not ended either, it is alive and well in this nation, the United States. There is even a term for it, Christian Nationalism. When we move towards this, we are moving towards the same nationalistic idolatry that impacted Israel and Judah. Dr. Paul Miller has written this about the problem.

*Christian nationalism in American history has been devastating to both church and state, in the nation’s race relations, its foreign policy, and in the church’s witness. The marriage represents an American and evangelical version of Caesaropapism, the appropriation of the church’s moral authority and evangelical zeal to the cause of secular greatness. It can be hard for Christians to recognize this because, truthfully, America is unique and, compared to other great powers today and in ages past, relatively just and humane—and of course it is true that Christianity has been extraordinarily influential in the nation’s history, politics, and culture.*

*But that is part of the problem: When America is most just, it is most tempting for Americans to treat it as a precursor to the kingdom of God, reducing the church to the chaplaincy of American nationalism. The opposite case is an even greater problem: When America is at its worst, when it does not live up to its creed—as happens sadly all too often—American Christians nonetheless continue to act as cheerleaders and defenders of the nation, Christians have blessed sin and called evil good. We have taken the name of Christ as a moral fig leaf while shilling for the whore of Babylon. (Miller 2022, 7-8)*

Israel and Judah need revival. Our nation needs revival. Judgement is coming. “Those that were at ease were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom, having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great and not to be proud. Great nations and great men are apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them.” (Henry 1994, 1512)

They had accommodated the surrounding nations, and, over time, integrated that accommodation into their culture resulting in a culture that no longer is Biblically based. Francis Schaeffer outlined this showing “how accommodation works. First one starts questioning, based upon what the world about us is saying, then one looks at Scripture, then theology, then scientific study—until finally what the Scriptures teach is completely subjected to whatever view is currently accepted by the world.” (Schaeffer 1982, 398)

The humanistically based view of final reality began to be influential in the United States about eighty years ago. Its control of the consensus has become overwhelmingly dominant in about the last forty years. The shift has affected

all parts of society and culture, but most importantly it has come largely to control government and law....The world view which produced the founding of the United States in the first place is increasingly now not allowed to exert its influence in government, in the schools, or in the public means of information. (Schaeffer, A Christian Manifesto 1982, 495-496)

A Biblical worldview is no longer in fashion today, like in Israel and soon, Judah.

Getting back to Israel and Judah, things are good in both the north and the south. There is even a reference to the number of nations wanting to come and see what they are doing there. Success is attractive and "...The dignitaries of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes." (Amos 6:1b, NASB 2020).

They had serious international influence at this point. By the way, this will be the last reference that Amos makes of Judah.

He gives sardonic and sarcastic expression to the manner in which these prominent celebrities actually think and speak about themselves. They are securely ensconced in their arrogance as the acknowledged, distinguished leaders of Samaria. They are the chosen of the choicest nations. All's right in their world; no harm can come to them! (Paul and Cross 1991, 200)

YAHWEH invites them to look around.

Amos 6:2

"Go over to Calneh and look, And go from there to Hamath the great, Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, Or is their territory greater than yours?" (NASB 2020)

This is a command phrased as an invitation to make a comparison with three city states that are nearby. Four times YAHWEH uses the imperative form commanding the leadership to look. They would not travel to them, but they were very familiar with them.

Calneh and Hamath were Syrian city-states under Israel's influence. Gath was a Philistine city-state under Judah's control. No was the expected answer to the rhetorical questions. The point of the rhetorical questions was the equality between those city-states and Israel/Judah. Leaders of Israel and Judah were wrong if they thought they were better or bigger than the three city-states. (Smith and Page 1995, 117)

Here in the west, we hold ourselves up to other nations routinely in order to show how much better and freer we are here than there. The Lord would ask us the same question. Are we better than those around us we tend to look down at?

Some of the nations around us are wondering what has happened to us and now they are looking down at us.

We have become complacent here in the west. We think we deserve what it is the Lord has given to us.

Complacency is an insidious sin, because it's based on lies, motivated by pride, and leads to trusting something other than God (Zeph. 1:12). Like the people in the church of Laodicea, complacent people consider themselves "rich, and increased with goods" and in need of nothing (Rev. 3:17). In reality, however, they have lost everything that's important in the spiritual life. When the Lord sees His people becoming complacent and self-satisfied, He sometimes sends trials to wake them up. (Wiersbe 1996, 57)

He did that to Israel and to Judah. Israel did nothing, Judah repented.

Israel remained set on the direction started for them by Jeroboam I and simply increased the speed and reduced the drag further on their high-speed journey to destruction.

Judah would eventually go there as well, but Israel was determined.

Because of the attitude of the leadership in Israel, they truly believe that if, and it is a big if, if judgment is coming, it is a long long way off.

Remember, they are looking forward to the Day of the Lord for God to zap the bad guys (Amos 5:18).

Amos 6:3

“Are you postponing the day of disaster, And would you bring near the seat of violence?” (NASB 2020)

The sense of security in Israel is not real. They are not secure. They are doing nothing to postpone the coming disaster. Instead of looking at the reality around them, such as Assyria beginning to resurge, they are enjoying living the good life. Geopolitics are not important to the leadership. Living the good life is. The reality is because they are doing nothing, they are hastening the day of destruction.

Jesus provided us an example of this line of thinking with His parable of the rich foolish farmer.

Luke 12:16–21

“Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I’ll sit back and say to myself, “My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!” ’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ “Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”” (NLT)

This farmer has sought to secure himself and his future without reference to God. This is the force of the label given him by God, “fool,” used in the LXX to signify a person who rebels against God or whose practices deny God—a usage that coheres with the representation of “greed” (v 15) as a form of idolatry. (Green 1997, 491)

In the west, we ignore geopolitics, unless it meets our agenda. But we are more concerned about social justice than the very real future.

Just like the rich man, we see leaders in the west looking to pander to the basest instincts of man. Laws are no longer important and are not being upheld. Life is no longer sacred in some places, in fact infanticide, suicide on demand and euthanasia are all growing trends in the west.

In 2020, suicide was among the top 9 leading causes of death for people ages 10-64. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 25-34. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2022)

Belgium legalized euthanasia (physician assisted suicide) in 2002. But recent studies have revealed that “the percentage of involuntary euthanasia in patients who were 80-years-old or over rose to 52.7%, while in those with diseases other than cancer, this figure reached 67.5%.” (Kennedy Institute of Ethics Bioethics Research Library 2016)

Matthew 24:11–12 “Then many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Such will be the spread of evil that many people’s love will grow cold.” (GNB)

Just like our culture today, “the man was a fool because he thought ‘things’ afforded security, when in fact, the only security is in being ‘rich towards God’, that is having a personal saving faith in God through the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Keddie 1986, 96)

Israel’s leadership are fools, and the nation is running behind them. They and the entire nation is in a state of madness, they believe that things, the good life, will never end. Amos is providing the reality check.

Amos 6:4–7

“Those who lie on beds of ivory, And lounge around on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock, And calves from the midst of the fattened cattle, Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs

for themselves, Who drink wine from sacred bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils— Yet they have not grieved over the collapse of Joseph. Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the revelry of those who lounge around will come to an end.” (NASB 2020)

We are given the picture of a feast. Not just any feast.

In verse 7 we are told what kind of feast is being described. The revelry is a מִרְזָח (mirzah) or “cultic feast...funeral meal.” (Holladay and Köhler 2000, 215)

This is not any kind of a feast condoned by YAHWEH. It was “a ritual drinking feast known throughout the ancient Semitic world.” (McLaughlin 2000, 866)

There was more to this than just a lot of drinking, it appears to have been related to veneration of the dead. Something the Torah says not to do. These feasts were “dedicated to a god (mrzh .lm), often related to memorial rites to insure the beatification of members after death and was characterized by sacred banquets of eating and drinking that lasted several days.” (Paul and Cross 1991, 211-212)

There are hints about the activities taking place in these feasts provided to us by Amos.

Amos 6:4

“Those who lie on beds of ivory, And lounge around on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock, And calves from the midst of the fattened cattle,” (NASB 2020)

Remember how Hosea let us know that fertility cults had become part of the worship practices of Israel, including prostitution along with it. Here we see that as a central focal point of the feasts they are indulging in. Several commentators made reference to orgies being central to this.

In other words, “illicit sex and gluttony are the two sins that are mentioned here, and they are sins of the flesh.” (McGee 1997, 710)

In fact, there appears to have been a preoccupation with sex in Israel. Their culture had made that a focal point of their worship and the leadership of the nation partied like there was no tomorrow. On the backs of those they oppressed, they ate, drank and partied. The hookup culture we see today is nothing new.

I went to a Bedouin style wedding in Kuwait years ago. It was a party, sorta. The men were in one tent and several miles away were the women. We all gathered together on carpets lounging on the ground and eating, when it was time to do so, and then back to the main tent for sword dances and general talking until it was time to get in several suburbans so the bride could be fetched. No wine, but fruit drinks and coffee designed to keep you up for several days. Nowhere near what this is talking about. The tent was a rental wedding venue and there were no couches, just sand, chairs, and a carpet laid out on it under a tent.

What is being outlined here is more opulent and decadent than we would consider. This is a feast that went on for days. At the feast, we find out they had music, drink, and essential or nonessential oils.

They did not sing Psalms like at the Temple, not at all.

Amos 6:5–6

“Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves, Who drink wine from sacred bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils— Yet they have not grieved over the collapse of Joseph.” (NASB 2020)

They are inventing new ways to play music. Maybe this is where jazz came from, but they were playing on instruments invented by David for the purpose of the worship of YAHWEH, but that is not what they were using them for.

The wine they were drinking were from bowls, but not just any type of bowl. They were drinking from sacred bowls.

They drink thereby out of sacrificial bowls of wine, i.e., drink wine out of sacrificial bowls. Mizrâq, in the plural mizrâqîm and mizrâqōth, from zâraq, to sprinkle, was the name given both to the vessels used for the sprinkling of the blood, and also to the bowls made use of for pouring the libation of wine upon the table of shew-bread (2 Chron. 4:8). This word is applied by Amos to the bowls out of which the gluttons drank their wine... (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 200-201)

Remember, we found out that the nation suffered from drought as discipline from the Lord to encourage His people to repent. The image being brought to mind is while the general population did not have enough to drink, the ruling elites, the rich and powerful of Israel were reclining at days long festivals indulging in as much wine as they could hold. I am reminded of a recent photo of a major political figure standing in front of their twin \$20,000 refrigerators, one of which was loaded with high dollar specialty ice creams, at a time where no one else could go out and shop for luxury items due to the pandemic. Not much has changed in 2700 years.

While they were busy getting and staying drunk, the same issue Hosea spoke to, they made sure that they smelled good by anointing themselves with various high dollar oils. Amos tells them that they should be grieving because of the various things that had happened to their nation and due to impending judgement. No mourning over sin with this group though. The party never ends. So here is their future.

Amos 6:7

“Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the revelry of those who lounge around will come to an end.” (NASB 2020)

The sarcasm continues. They were using the finest of oils, top rank, the very first and the very best. They felt secure in their role as being among the first rank of Israel, well, they will get to be the first in the future, the first to go into exile.

As they go out, surrounded by death all around, they will not have the opportunity to party for the dead this time. They are used to having feasts for the dead, but when they go to exile, they will be at the head of the line implying those who survive will see them bundled off first with hooks in their nose unable to wail and party over their dead colleagues. Humbled is the word.

Amos 6:8

“The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of armies has declared: “I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And detest his citadels; Therefore I will give up the city and all it contains.”” (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH makes a point of telling Israel He is sworn by Himself the judgement to come. “Abraham demonstrated his allegiance to God and his faithfulness to his word by being prepared to offer up his only, well-loved son as a sacrifice to God. Because he did this, the angel of the Lord told him that God had sworn by himself that he would surely bless Abraham and grant him many descendants.

God swore by himself because there is no greater one than he (see Heb. 6:13). Twice the name of the ‘LORD’ is mentioned in verse 8, to show that he is declaring his final verdict upon disobedient Israel.” (Bentley 2006, 81)

Why the emphasis at the beginning of verse 8 on the names of God? That is intentional and is part of reflecting to Israel just who they have been ignoring and who it is that is judging them.

“Amos describes Yahweh three different ways. He begins by calling him “my Lord,” which affirms that he is Amos’ God. Twice, once in the first line and once in the second, Amos refers to him as “Yahweh.” This name invokes memories of the covenant. Then he refers to Yahweh as “God of armies,” traditionally translated as “God of hosts.” This name serves at least two purposes. One is a reminder of their sin in 5:26, where the people served the “hosts of heaven” (celestial objects), and reminds them that Yahweh is God over all things they might be tempted to worship.



But, even more so, in light of the following context this name signifies God’s control over all armies. Yahweh has the power and ability to send enemy nations against them in order to send them into exile (v. 7) and to level destruction on them (vv. 9–10, 14) for their sin. Even Amos’ chosen names for Yahweh are ominous indications about their coming judgment.” (Hoyt 2018, 241)

Here, being given all these names of God and reflecting that He is swearing by Himself, is not a good thing. It is God speaking to His disobedient people just how sure judgement coming was. Their madness of ignoring the warning signs is simply ignoring the inevitable. The key problem in the northern kingdom...pride. God hates pride. We forget that.

“...I loathe the arrogance of Jacob...” The Hebrew word used here means pride “is irreconcilable with Yahweh, contrary to his character and his will as an expression of that character, an ethical and cultic taboo.

To call something *tô‘ēbâ* is to characterize it as chaotic and alien, and therefore dangerous, within the cosmic and social order.” (Preuss 2006, 602)

Here in this country, pride is held up as a virtue. Political figures are prone to this as are many professional athletes. This is well in view in the upcoming election usually couched as nationalism. “The words that politicians use to peddle nationalism are not words designed to persuade; they are words designed to anger, enflame, embitter, and frighten. Worse, they are words designed to deceive and distract, to pull attention away from one set of problems—such as racial justice, school reform, or the tax code—and focus on another (often exaggerated) set...” (Miller 2022, 221)

In the world of rhetoric, the elites in Israel and the elites in the west today engaged in is the same, they want to redirect the line of questions away from reality and onto themselves. Look at what we have done for you, or what we can do for you, and on and on.

Again, listen to the Lord. “The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of armies has declared: “I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And detest his citadels; Therefore I will give up the city and all it contains.”” (Amos 6:8, NASB 2020)

Proverbs 16:18–19

“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall. Better to live humbly with the poor than to share plunder with the proud.” (NLT)

He hasn’t changed His mind about pride. He still hates it. For Israel, YAHWEH lets them know that He is the one giving up the city, the military store houses, the stockpiled weapons and food, all of it, to an unnamed enemy. That would be Assyria. Judgement is coming and what will that look like for Israel?

Amos 6:9–11

“And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die. Then one’s uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out his bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, “Is anyone else with you?” And that one will say, “No one.” Then he will answer, “Keep quiet! For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned.” For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces, and the small house to rubble.” (NASB 2020)

Once the judgement of God falls upon the nation, those who before in their pride were confident God would not judge Him, are now fearful to say His name.

They refused to give honor to the name of YAHWEH or worship Him and His holy name. Now, as they begin the clean-up of the land, they cower at His name. Now the fear is real and genuine. The remnant is still alive, but the few who remain are fearful to even say His name lest they too be taken in judgement.

Note this as well. The home has been completely devastated. No one in it has survived, and based on what we read, this is not a one off. The devastation is widespread. Everyone in that location is gone.

The remaining relatives performing the clean up have so many bodies to remove, they are burning them. There are so few remaining, it is impossible to bury everyone before wild animals get to them. This is a scene from the worst possible nightmare anyone could ever have.

The stench is overpowering, conversations are short and terse, and the fear is overwhelming.

The action of God that we see in verse 11 is a fulfillment of His oath in verse 8.

The totality of the effect might suggest a strong earthquake (8:8; 9:1), but the method God will use is not stated. The result of God's oath and command will destroy the pride of Samaria (6:8) and reveal the power of the wrath of God. (G. V. Smith 1998, 282)

Before He is done though, YAHWEH talks about the madness and absurdity of their military pride. We need to listen carefully to this as this is a type of pride still prevalent in the world today. This is done with rhetorical questions.

Amos 6:12–14

“Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison, And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, You who rejoice in Lodebar, And say, “Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?” “For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, House of Israel,” declares the LORD God of armies, “And they will torment you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah.”” (NASB 2020)

So how crazy are you, enough to race horses on rocks? No one does that, you would have to be crazy to do so. That is the point.

Would you take good oxen who are used to ploughing and have them plough rocks? Normally you would clear the land of the rocks first, but if your crazy enough, give it a go.

Horses are smart enough not to race on rocks and oxen are smarter than we are in refusing to pull the plow on rocky ground. But Israel, they are not even as smart as these animals. They both know better, it is a good place to walk much less run or work.

But Israel is mad. They have turned justice into poison, into wormwood.

The image of the “fruit of righteousness” (Prov 11:30), meant to be wholesome and nourishing but turned into poison, implies that the product will be eaten. While in the first place it is bitter for their victims, in the end they will be forced to eat the fruit of their own doings; hence the Woe. Compare the fruit of wisdom (Prov 8:18–19) and contrast the fruit of lies (Hos 10:13). (Andersen and Freedman 2008, 579)

Under Jeroboam II, the military of Israel had recaptured the town of Lo-debar. Amos purposely mispronounces it. “The former place name is variously written, with the vocalization לֹא דָבָר (lō· dābār) appearing only here. This writing suggests an ironic twist of the name, hearing it as “No-thing,” a pun which if not attributable to Amos himself indicates that the old school of Amos continued his tradition of prophetic criticism.” (Wolff 1977, 288)

After sarcastically saying they rejoice in nothing, Amos then attacks their boast of solely capturing Karnaim. The town name means two horns, such as the two horns on a bull, normally a symbol of strength.

It was not they but Yahweh, however, who had strengthened them to achieve this victory over a symbolically strong town. Actually, Karnaim was quite insignificant. (Constable 2003, Amos 6:13)

“Amos scoffed that they were rejoicing over what was really “nothing,” and were falsely imagining that they had seized “strength” by means of their own strength.” Their pride is grossly misplaced in their military power. (Sunukjian 1985, 1444)

The promises of God and the protection of God were no longer necessary, because the people saw that they were bigger and better than any other nation around them. As long as they had the money to maintain their life style, they could be happy. As long as they could live peacefully and at ease in their secure palace-fortresses, they were sufficiently insulated from the world of reality around them. They believed they were the leaders of the most powerful nation in the world and had a strong army to protect them. (G. V. Smith 1998, 285-286)

Amos 6:14

““For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, House of Israel,” declares the LORD God of armies, “And they will torment you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah.”” (NASB 2020)

Israel believes it has an all-powerful military, but YAHWEH tells them, He is going to raise up a nation against them. This nation will not only defeat them, but they will also cover the entire nation, from the entrance of Hamath in the north to the brook of the Arabah in the south. No place in the nation of Israel will be exempt.

Amos deliberately used the traditional boundaries that recall both the grandeur of Solomon’s realm (1 Kgs 8:65; ‘from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt’, the southern boundary appropriate to the larger, united kingdom) and the conquests of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:25). (Hubbard 1989, 212)

We are living in a time much like that of Israel prior to the beginning of judgement. When we look closely, we too see that our leadership is mad, and so is much of the nation. We need to repent and return to the Lord. For us as believers, it is a simple step.

1 John 1:9–10

“If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (NRSV)

If you do not know the Lord, and you want an out for what is coming, that too can be obtained.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

How do we do that?

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

### **ABC’s of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

Repentance is what God required of Israel, they didn’t repent, and they were judged and sent into exile. Only a remnant remained. He stands ready to save and ready to make all things new today. It is our choice.

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