

by a foreign army as it was done by Babylon. Spiritually it denotes that no stranger (one of the outside world) would enter this kingdom until he renounced his past relationship and became a fellow citizen (Ephesians 2: 19).

Verse 18. All of these figures of speech refer to the spiritual blessings to be given through the kingdom of Christ. They were to be as water in a thirsty land, and their fountain will reach even to the valley of *Shittim*. Funk and Wagnalls Standard Bible Dictionary says the following of this place: "Some dry, thirsty valley where acacias (a desert plant) were known to flourish is meant." The point is that the fountain of the water of life will be so full that it will flow and reach even to the regions formerly very dry.

Verse 19. The passage resumes briefly the subject of ancient Israel and the countries that mistreated them. These persecuting groups were destined to feel the weight of God's wrath for their mistreatment of His people.

Verse 20. *Judah* has the meaning of spiritual Israel, and it is a repetition of the prediction that the new kingdom was to "stand for ever" (Daniel 2: 44).

Verse 21. *Cleanse their blood* means the cure of idolatry if applied to fleshly Israel, and to the remission of sins when applied to spiritual Israel.

## AMOS 1

Verse 1. Amos was not a prophet "professionally" (chapter 7: 14); that is, he was not devoting his life among the group of men classed as prophets, but was a shepherd by occupation. But the Lord can call upon a man from any walk of life to receive instruction and directions to whatever work is needed. For instance, the Lord called Moses from this very same occupation to take upon him the great work that was to engage him all the rest of his life (Exodus 3: 1, 2). Likewise, Amos was called upon to receive a prophetic message and write it down to become a part of the Bible. *Israel* and *Judah* mean the 10-tribe and 2-tribe kingdoms which were in power when Amos was called. The time of his call is specifically indicated by naming the kings who were reigning over the Jews, and the date is made still more definite by its relation to an earthquake that is recorded in history. I shall give the reader the information of this very unusual circumstance: "While Uzziah was in this state [condition of pros-

perity and power], and making preparations for futurity, he was corrupted in his mind by pride, and became insolent, and this on account of that abundance which he had of things that will soon perish, and despised that power which is of eternal duration (which consisted in piety toward God, and in the observation of his laws); accordingly, when a remarkable day was come, and a general festival was to be celebrated, he put on the holy garment, and went into the temple to offer incense to God upon the golden altar, which he was prohibited to do by Azariah the high priest. In the meantime, a great earthquake shook the ground, and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately; and before the city, at a place called Erpge, half the mountain broke off from the rest of the west, and rolled itself four furloughs, and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king's gardens, were spoiled by the obstruction." — Josephus, Antiquities, Book 9, Chapter 10, Section 4. This was not the first and only time where God expressed his attitude toward a situation by some interference with the established order of things in creation. He caused the sun to stand still for Joshua (Joshua 10: 13), and the shadow to go backward for Isaiah (2 Kings 20: 11). The difference in the cases being that the two mentioned last were to show His approval of what was being done, while the one of our verse was to demonstrate His disapproval. It is all in keeping with the thought in Hebrews 1: 1.

Verse 2. See the comments on Joel 3: 16 for the various meanings of "roar." In the present case it signifies the intensity of the Lord's feelings against the wrongs of the heathen nations, as well as those of some of His own people. Jerusalem is named as the place from which the voice of the Lord will sound, because that was the capital of his kingdom on earth. *Carmel shall wither* implies that it would be a remarkable event for such a place to fail. I shall quote what Funk and Wagnalls Standard Bible Dictionary says: "It [Carmel] was also famed in literary composition for natural beauty. Together with Sharon, Lebanon, and Bashan it is one of the points of Palestine which especially show God's favor to Israel in bestowing such a country upon it. Its devastation is, therefore,

a sign of the decided displeasure of Jehovah."

Verse 3. The prophet now takes up the Lord's denunciations against certain cities and nations. *Damascus* was the capital of Syria that lay just north of Palestine. *Threshed Gilead* is a figurative description of the cruel treatment that Damascus accorded that district. *For three transgressions, and for four*. This form of speech is used a number of times, and means that the ones accused had not been guilty just once or even twice, but they had done so three or four times; had been guilty repeatedly.

Verse 4. Hazael and Ben-hadad were father and son who reigned successively over Syria (2 Kings 13: 24). God threatens to destroy the buildings of these men because of the "three or four" transgressions.

Verse 5. A *bar* is used to defend a house or other place against an unfriendly intruder. To break the bar of Damascus would therefore mean to overcome the defence of the city and expose it to an enemy. *Him that holdeth the scepter* means the king, and he was to be cut off from the *house of Eden*. Smith's Bible Dictionary renders this phrase "Beth-Eden," and says it means "house of pleasure," and that it was probably a country residence of the kings of Damascus. The *captivity unto Kir* was fulfilled and the account of it is in 2 Kings 16: 9.

Verse 6. *Gaza* was an important town of the Philistines, and 2 Chronicles 28: 18 records an instance of the greediness of those people for conquest. *Carried captive the whole captivity* means that the Philistines were not satisfied with taking some of the people, but wished to remove the entire population and sell them as slaves to the Edomites.

Verse 7. The Philistines were punished for their cruelty, and 2 Kings 18: 8 gives an account of one instance of it.

Verse 8. All of the towns named were in the land of the Philistines, and were to share in the chastisement that God threatened to bring against that land.

Verse 9. *Tyrus* (or Tyre) was the principal city of the Phoenicians, a country lying along the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The complaint against this city was that it had taken some of God's people and turned them over to the Edomites who had long been bitter foes of Israel. *Brotherly*

*covenant* means that fraternal understanding that should exist between nations located near each other. This friendship had been indicated previously in the dealing with David and Solomon (2 Samuel 5: 11).

Verse 10. *Devour the palaces* means to destroy the houses of the kings of Tyre.

Verse 11. The Edomites were always bitter enemies of Israel. They were descended from Esau and seemed to have harbored a resentment for the people of Israel who were descendants of Esau's twin brother Jacob. *Did pursue his brother with the sword* had been predicted in Genesis 27: 40, yet God was always jealous of his own people and would not tolerate any improper motive that any nation showed against them.

Verse 12. *Teman* and *Bozrah* were cities of the Edomites, and they were destined to feel the wrath of God for their injustices against Israel.

Verse 13. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot (Genesis 19: 38), and sometimes were given favorable regard by the Lord because of their relation to Israel, but He always condemned even his own children when they did wrong. These Ammonites were so greedy for territory that they committed the brutal acts in order to destroy the population of the territory they wished to seize.

Verse 14. Smith's Bible Dictionary says that Rabbah was the chief city of the Ammonites, hence the most valuable of their buildings would be there. But the city was threatened with invasion from an enemy army that would *devour* (destroy) those houses.

Verse 15. To go into captivity merely means to be taken captive by the attacking army and be taken from his seat of authority.

## AMOS 2

Verse 1. The Moabites had the same origin as the Ammonites (Genesis 19: 37). The historians and commentaries offer various suggestions about this strange act of the king of Moab. It is questioned whether he actually burned the bones of the reigning king of Edom, or that he dug up the bones of the son who (had he lived) would have reigned over Edom. But the main point in the passage is not affected either way it may be understood. God would not endorse such an inhuman performance that could have been

prompted only by the spirit of wicked vengeance.

Verse 2. *Kiriath* was an important city of the Moabites and it was destined to be destroyed by fire from an attacking army. The success of the invader was to be accompanied with shouts and the instruments commonly used in warfare.

Verse 3. *Judge and princes* means any of the leading men of the nation. In all military operations it is regarded as of special importance to remove the most outstanding men of the city or nation attacked.

Verse 4. While the Lord was giving these threatening messages through the prophet, He did not overlook his own people in their misconduct. To *despise the law* means to belittle it and hence treat it as if it had very little or no important purpose with them. *Their lies* refers to the false predictions of peace that the unfaithful prophets were issuing to the nation. The effect of these false messages was to cause them to err in following in the steps of their unfaithful ancestors.

Verse 5. This verse was literally fulfilled as recorded in 2 Kings 25: 9.

Verse 6. Judah was named in verse 4, therefore we should understand *Israel* to be the 10-tribe kingdom. This agrees with chapter 1: 1 that states that Amos "saw" some things concerning Israel. Both the kingdoms of the Jews were yet in power when he began his writing. *Sold the righteous for silver, poor for a pair of shoes*. No proper money value can be placed upon a human being, but to sell one for such a paltry price denotes a most contemptible estimate of him.

Verse 7. All the terms of any passage should be interpreted in view of the general thought of the whole writing in the connection. We know the prophet is writing about the mistreatment the leaders of Israel were imposing upon the poor and otherwise dependent common people. They had very little regard for even the humble customs and religious practices of their brethren. It was a custom in ancient times to put dust upon the head in times of grief and anxiety, or at such occasions when devout servants of the Lord wished to emphasize their feeling of reverence for God. These wicked leaders were so bitter against the common poor people that they panted or selfishly sought to cast this dust of devotion from the heads and dash it to the ground. They were also very loose in their conduct of the inti-

mate affairs of life. All the laws of decency forbade a man and his son being intimate with the same woman, but these corrupt men did not stop short of that kind of iniquity.

Verse 8. The law of Moses permitted a man to take a garment as security for a financial obligation, but he was not allowed to keep it overnight (Exodus 22: 26; Deuteronomy 24: 12). But these evil men made personal use of garments that had been taken temporarily, and intensified their guilt by lounging around in them in the temples of idolatrous worship. *Condensed* is from *ANASH*, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; properly to urge; by implication to inflict a penalty, specifically to fine." The law authorized fines to be levied on certain conditions (Deuteronomy 22: 19), but it must not be done unjustly. These men abused their authority by fining the poor without cause, then spending that money for wine which they drank in the idolaters' house.

Verse 9. There was a distinct tribe of early inhabitants in Palestine that went by the name of Amorite. They were so outstanding in iniquity that the name came to be used sometimes as a designation for all the heathen. (See Genesis 15: 16.)

Verse 10. Ingratitude is a very bad principle and is condemned in both sacred and profane literature. The Lord had done so much for Israel that it made their evil conduct all the more to be condemned, and they are being reminded of the subject in a number of verses. The one event of rescuing them from the Egyptians after four centuries of bondage should have bound them to God in a firm spirit of un-mixed devotion. And their release from that country put them in a situation that would have been distressing from the unsettled state of the wilderness, yet the Lord took care of them miraculously for the entire journey of 40 years, so that they could come into possession of the land being held by these Amorites.

Verse 11. After settling the people of Israel in the land promised to the fathers, the Lord honored them with national distinction and gave their children an honorable part in the conduct of public affairs. Prophets were given the important work of standing between God and the people in delivering inspired messages of instruction and consolation, and the Nazarites were permitted to form a special class of servants for God, with the provision

that they would have distinctive favors from Him.

Verse 12. One of the conditions of a Nazarite's vow was that he abstain from the use of wine or any other part of the grape during the term of his vow (Numbers 6: 2-4). *Gave the Nazarites wine to drink.* Two wrongs never make one right, and no one is justified in doing evil just because some one places the temptation before him. But it is also true that if one furnishes the occasion that causes another to go wrong, he will be held accountable for that wrong (Romans 14: 15, 16; 1 Corinthians 8: 11, 12). There were devout persons in the congregation who took upon themselves the obligations of the Nazarite vow in order to obtain some special favor, and to satisfy their desire for a distinctive service to the Lord. And there are people in the world who are so selfish that they do not want anyone else to have some blessing that they do not have. They seem to be acting under the idea that says, "if I cannot have certain favors, I do not want others to have them either." These persons did not want to make the sacrifice required to obtain the blessings coming upon a Nazarite, hence they induced them to drink wine so they would not receive them either, having violated their vow. They also obstructed the work of the prophets because they did not like the warnings and exhortations to duty that were spoken by them.

Verse 13. We cannot think of God as being pressed in the sense of being burdened by a load that would feel heavy to Him. The marginal reading is, "I will press your place as a cart full of sheaves presseth," and also the American Standard Version words the passage in the same way. Such a rendering also is in keeping with the general thought, for the Lord is threatening to bear down upon these leaders of Israel so heavily that they will not be able to travel.

Verse 14. The reasoning in this verse justifies the conclusion expressed as to the proper rendering of the preceding one. Because of the pressure the Lord was to put on the shoulders of the unfaithful men of Israel, they would not be able to make any progress in traveling. Being unable to travel as satisfactorily as desired, they would not be able to *deliver themselves* from the condition that He had in mind to bring upon Israel, namely, the Assyrian captivity.

Verse 15. The *bow* and the *horse*

were used in warfare, either offensive or defensive. Hence when the Assyrians make their invasion into the realm of Israel they will overcome them because of their insufficient ability either for fighting or fleeing.

Verse 16. *Naked* is defined by Strong as "Naked, either partially or totally." The idea is that they would strip themselves of part of their wearing articles so that they might be the more able to flee.

### AMOS 3

Verse 1. The chief part of the nation to which this book is directed is the 10-tribe kingdom, but a part of it is so composed that it may be properly addressed to the *whole family of Israel*.

Verse 2. *You only have I known* means that God had not recognized or accepted any other family. It is forcefully expressed in Deuteronomy 7: 6 as follows: "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people upon the face of the earth." This favor placed them under greater obligation to conduct themselves in a manner pleasing to Him. They did not do so, therefore it was divinely decreed to *punish you for all your iniquities*.

Verse 3. Two men might unexpectedly come together while each is out walking and that would not require any previous understanding, but they would not continue their walk together without it. *Together* is from YACHAD, which Strong defines, "Properly a unit, i. e. (adverbially) unitedly." This means not only that the two might happen to walk in the same general direction, but that they were doing so as a unit of action. The statement (in question form) is that the men will not do so except they be *agreed*. That word is the key to the whole passage. It is from YAAD and Strong's definition is, "A primitive root; to fix upon (by agreement or appointment); by implication to meet (at a stated time), to summon (to trial), to direct (in a certain quarter or position), to engage (for marriage)." Moffatt renders the word "have planned it." I have gone into much detail here because of the fundamental importance of the subject being considered. The principle is clearly set forth that in matters of right and wrong it is not enough that the parties be "all striving for the same place," but that they be a UNIT in their activities. Not only so, but that unity must have been agreed upon by the parties proposing to walk together. Since the actual case at hand



is that of "walking with God," it is a foregone conclusion that He is the one to do all the planning, and that man is expected and should be glad to agree to the plan.

Verses 4-6. I have grouped these verses into one paragraph because they are all written for one purpose, and that may well be expressed by the phrase, "no effect without a cause." For instance, a lion does not roar if there is no prey; a bird cannot be entrapped unless there is a trap; a snare cannot be taken up if there is no snare to take; a trumpet would not be blown unless there was some danger to be announced. *Evil* is used in the sense of some chastisement, and its presence is proof that there is some cause for it in the mind of the Lord.

Verse 7. God will not cause any false alarm, and when He instructs the prophets to sound a warning, there is a cause for it.

Verse 8. In view of the foregoing logical conclusions, how foolish it would be were the people not to fear since the lion (God) has roared; and what neglect of duty it would be for the prophets not to utter the predictions of warning since the Lord has spoken of them through the channel of inspiration.

Verse 9. This and the next two verses are a prediction of the Assyrian siege. Ashdod was a city of the Philistines and Egypt was another of the heathen countries. In a figurative manner these foreign people were invited to come and witness what was going to happen to Samaria, the capital of the 10-tribe kingdom of the Jews. The *tumults and oppression* would be the natural result of a siege.

Verse 10. *They* refers to the people of the kingdom of Samaria. *Know not to do right* is said in the same sense as Isaiah 1:3; they knew not because they did not consider what the Lord had told them in his word. Instead of dealing justly with their brethren, they increased their own store of wealth by means of violence and robbery.

Verse 11. *An adversary even round about the land* is a direct prediction of the Assyrian siege, and the fulfillment is recorded in 2 Kings 17:5. *Spotted* is from BAZAZ, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to plunder." While the Assyrians were conducting the siege of Samaria, they entered the houses of the city and took possession of their valuables.

Verse 12. From this verse through

the close of the chapter the passage is a prediction of the Assyrian captivity of Israel. If the shepherd could rescue only the legs and piece of an ear of his sheep from the mouth of the lion, it would be because the sheep was almost wholly devoured. The figure is used to indicate the "close call" that Israel was to make to being entirely destroyed. But the great Shepherd would not let his flock (the 10-tribe kingdom) be entirely ruined, and so He will take out a part of it even though at the time the members of the flock will be lounging on beds and couches. *Damascus* is from DEMESHEQ, which Strong defines, "Damask (as a fabric of Damascus)." The idea is that the people of Israel (especially the leaders in the capital city of Samaria) will be taking it easy, lolling their time away on beds and couches adorned with the luxurious fabrics of Damascus.

Verse 13. The Lord bids the prophet call upon the house of Jacob (from whom came the name Israel) to hear what the God of hosts has to say.

Verse 14. *Visit the transgressions* means to bring judgment upon them for their transgressions. Those sins consisted in their sacrifices to idol gods, and Bethel is named because one of the idol calves was erected there (1 Kings 12:29). *Horns of the altar shall be cut off* is a prediction of the destruction of idolatrous worship, which was to be accomplished by the captivity.

Verse 15. *Winter house and summer house*. The luxury-loving leaders had the two separate houses erected in such a manner and in such places as to give them comfort at the various seasons. *Houses of ivory* were a part of the extravagancies indulged in by the pleasure-mad princes of Israel. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following about this subject: "The ivory house of Abab, 1 Kings 22:39, was probably a palace, the walls of which were panelled with ivory, like the palace of Menelaus, described by Homer's *Odyssey* 4, 73. Beds inlaid or veneered with ivory were in use by the Hebrews."

#### AMOS 4

Verse 1. According to Moffatt's translation these *kine* were the wives of the nation's men who practiced oppression and injustice against the poor for their own selfishness. Their *masters* were their husbands who were bidden to join with them in providing luxuries of wine at the expense of the poor.

Verse 2. There is virtually no difference in the meaning of *hook* and *fishhook*. Each of them may mean a hook in the ordinary sense of the word, or it may refer to a thorn from a tree; again they may have specific reference to a metal ring that was originally made for the control of a vicious animal by running it through his nose. This is the origin of the expression "leading one around by the nose" when speaking of someone who humbly does what a domineering person demands. In view of the indefinite uses and meanings of the word, we should take our verse to denote that the evil characters of Israel were to be treated with the cruelty and humiliation they deserved.

Verse 3. *Go out at the breaches* refers to the protecting wall around the capital city that was to be pierced, and the inhabitants forced to leave the city by way of these *breaches* or gaps. *Cast them into the palace* is explained in the margin to mean that the inhabitants of the palace will be forced to discard the things belonging to it.

Verse 4. *Bethel* was one of the cities where an idol god was erected. (1 Kings 12: 29) by the first king of Israel, and *Gilgal* was the place where the first king of Judah committed his serious offence (1 Samuel 10: 8; 13: 8-10). Both parts of the people of the Jewish nation had been guilty of much transgression. *Come to Bethel*, etc., sounds as if the Lord was bidding the people to continue in their sin. We know that is not the case, but it has the force of saying, "You have gone so far in your corrupt practices that you will not change them now until you are given the deserved chastisement."

Verse 5. The last part of the preceding verse and beginning of this describes some of the rites authorized by the law of Moses. The prophet is condemning these people indirectly, which raises the question of why it is so if the law provided for such services. The explanation is in the first part of the preceding verse, where the practice of idolatry is included with the things set out by the law. Such a mixture was always displeasing to God and he rejected their entire religious life because of such an impure combination. The reader should see the long note offered with the comments on Isaiah 1: 10 in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY. *For this liketh you* is an accusation that the people not only practiced the things named, but they did it because they liked to do so; their heart was in it.

Verse 6. *Have given you* is present and past tense in form, but it is one of the styles of prophetic speech. However, there was also such a condition referred to as a matter of the past, for God had before punished his people with some of these temporal shortages. *Cleanness of teeth* is a figurative designation for the results of famine. The phrase is followed immediately with the words *want of bread*, which would be a cause for the cleanness of teeth; no food to cause them to be unclean.

Verse 7. This verse gives some more of the punishment that God imposed on the land because of the iniquity of the people. He is the creator of the rain and the seasons, and therefore would have the ability to control them as He sees fit.

Verse 8. The scarcity of drinking water is indicated by the fact that the citizens of several cities would consume all the supply in one of the more favored ones, and even then their thirst was not satisfied. What made the condition more deplorable was the fact that none of these chastisements brought the rebellious people to repentance.

Verse 9. The reader may still be wondering why the Lord brought all these misfortunes upon the land of Israel. It was just what he had warned them of in more than one place. It may help some to quote a statement written by Moses as follows: "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deuteronomy 28: 15-17). With all these threatenings recorded in the Sacred Text, the people of Israel should have been induced to observe the divine laws. They were not, for the passage complains, *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*.

Verse 10. *Pestilence of Egypt* means a pestilence like that sent upon the land of Egypt. (See Exodus 9: 3, 8; 12; 29.) The losses cited in this verse would be suffered when a foreign force came against the land, which God would cause to happen for a punishment upon them. The *stink of your camps* would be a natural result of the death of so many living creatures, both human and brute.

Verse 11. They were not destroyed literally in the same manner as was Sodom, but their destruction was just as sure. *Firebrand plucked out of the burning* denotes the near complete ruin that the Lord suffered to come upon His unfaithful people. But God still loved the nation and saw to it that the enemy could not put the nation entirely out of existence as a distinct people.

Verse 12. *Prepare to meet thy God.* Many impassioned speeches have been made on this statement by public speakers, exhorting men to get ready for "the great judgment day." The exhortations are important in themselves, but they are a farfetched application of this passage. The last words, *O Israel*, are generally omitted in the exhortations, and hence the correct meaning of the statement is lost. The admonition is addressed to the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel, and it is said in view of the things soon to happen to the nation. A key word to the verse is *thus*, referring the reader back to verses 2, 3, where the Lord is predicting the siege and captivity of the kingdom. Verses 4-11 recounts the various instances of their misbehaviour in the past, and of the temporal misfortunes that God brought upon the people for their sins. But those chastisements had failed to bring them to repentance, therefore God determined to *do unto them* according to the prediction in verses 2 and 3. In view of that great event to come upon the nation, it is exhorted to *prepare* (get ready) for the time. The word *meet* is from QIRAB, which Strong defines, "An encountering." It is called an encountering with God because He is the one bringing the Assyrians against them.

Verse 13. As proof that God is able to bring this great encounter upon the nation, mention is made of the other vast works that He has already done in creation.

### AMOS 5

Verse 1. The severe denunciations which the Lord expresses against the people from time to time should not be interpreted as an indication of bitterness. He is grieved at the wrongs of the nation that has always been favored with divine assistance, and these strong declarations are prompted by the spirit of sorrow, hence are said to be in the form of a lamentation.

Verse 2. The word *virgin* is often applied to God's people because the first definition of the original is, "to

separate." Israel had been separated from the other nations of the world to be the Lord's own special people (Deuteronomy 7: 6; 14: 2), hence the term *virgin* is an appropriate one. *Shall no more rise* denotes that Israel had sunk so low as a nation that it would not be able to rise above the fate of the siege and captivity threatened.

Verse 3. The nation was destined to be greatly reduced by the exile as indicated by the contrasting terms *thousand* and *hundred*. It is a prediction of the remnant that was salvaged from the captivity, and the fulfillment is in Ezra 2: 1, 64.

Verse 4. *Seek ye me and ye shall live* presents the same apparent contradiction that has been mentioned several times. The explanation lies in the distinction between the nation as a whole, and certain individuals in it. See the long note on the subject, offered with comments on 2 Kings 22: 17, volume 2 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 5. The significance of *Bethel* is in the fact that it was one of the places where the first king of the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel erected an idol calf, and the nation had practiced idolatry ever since. *Gilgal* is the place where the first king of Judah committed his first great sin after entering upon the throne (1 Samuel 10: 8; 13: 8-14). Beer-sheba was once a stronghold of idolatry and hence not a proper place to receive a favorable impression on the subject of service to God.

Verse 6. *Seek the Lord and ye shall live* is commented on in verse 4.

Verse 7. *Wormwood* was a very bitter substance and is used much as a figurative likeness of any unpleasant experience. The leaders in Israel were selfish and regulated the lives of others in view of their own personal interests. Instead of dealing justly with those who looked to them for advice and decisions in times of difficulty, they deprived them of their rights and thus turned their case into bitterness.

Verse 8. *Seven stars* is the same as Pleiades in Job 9: 9, the cluster of stars that is popularly called "the seven sisters," and *Orion* is defined by Strong, "Any notable constellation." Instead of being interested in the gods of the heathen, Israel is exhorted to seek the Maker of these heavenly bodies. He is the one who can rule day and night and turn one into the other at will; who can control the

mighty waters of the sea and use them in whatsoever manner He pleases.

Verse 9. *Strengtheneth the spoiled* means to support the man who has been overcome by a stronger force, and enable him to turn against his oppressor successfully.

Verse 10. This verse describes a kind of character that has existed ever since there has been man on the earth. It is not always manifested in the same way, but the principle is the same. The reason a man is hated who rebukes sin is that the person rebuked realizes he is guilty and does not want to be reminded of it. The rebuke does not always have to be done directly or in words. It may be done by the righteous life of one in contrast with the wicked life of the other, the good life being a silent rebuke to the other. It is thus we read about the first family where Cain and Abel had their experience. There is nothing said about Abel's rebuking Cain verbally, but his righteous life was a stinging rebuke of Cain's evil one. So John says that Cain slew Abel "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous (1 John 3: 12)." The people of Israel did not like to be told of their sins, so they insisted that the teachers give them messages that suited them (Jeremiah 5: 31; Isaiah 30: 10). Since the people wanted the teachers to give this false instruction, they catered to them and hence brought upon them the wrath of God. Another bad thing that resulted from the practice of false teaching was the chance it gave them of making improper rules of conduct, and that also opened the way for them to impose upon the poor.

Verse 11. We should remember that the rebuking running through most of these verses is addressed chiefly to the leaders of the nation who took advantage of their standing to oppress the poor. They forced them to furnish unjust portions of their crops so that they could live in luxury. They had also indulged themselves with costly houses and had planted vineyards to suit their own extravagant desires. But God now warns them that it will all be taken from them and their luxurious provisions will be in vain.

Verse 12. Everything that is done is open before the eyes of the Lord. The leaders took advantage of their position to oppress the poor so that they could enlarge their own possessions. Not only so, but if some one of the poor had the misfortune of being treated with fraud in a deal, it would

not avail him anything to appeal to these leaders who were the rulers, for they could be bribed by the fraudulent dealers to render a verdict against the victim.

Verse 13. A prudent man is one who does not "speak out of turn," and in the present case it means not to speak any word of protest against what the Lord is threatening to do. The times are so evil that all wise men should endorse the Lord's judgments.

Verse 14. This verse takes the same comments and note as verse 4.

Verse 15. There is no uncertainty in the promises of God. *It may be* has the force of saying "it will be," on condition that the people will hate evil and love the good. *Remnant of Joseph*. The 10-tribe kingdom, to which most of these messages are addressed, was also called "Ephraim," and since he was a son of Joseph, the name is used as a designation of the whole group, the *remnant* meaning those who survive the captivity.

Verse 16. When the people see the presence of the Assyrian forces, they will make the wailing here stated. They will even call for a public demonstration of regret over the sad condition of their country.

Verse 17. There were two outstanding occupations in Palestine, the production of sheep and the growing of vineyards. It would therefore be a special cause of regret to be deprived of their vineyards.

Verse 18. *Woe . . . desire the day of the Lord*. In times of distress men will often call upon the Lord, even though they have been disrespecting Him in the past. These inconsistent leaders will pretend that they would like for the Lord to "show his hand" when the clouds of trouble seem to be gathering. But that is just what He will be doing when those clouds begin to hover, and they will bring national darkness and not light.

Verse 19. The comparisons in this verse are similar to a familiar one, "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire," and the prophet is using them in connection with his statements in verse 18. When a man rebels against the Lord as these wicked leaders had done, it is inconsistent to expect Him to furnish relief; instead, He is the very one whose wrath will be felt if the guilty person turns in that direction.

Verse 20. This verse repeats the thought of the preceding ones.



Verse 21. Before taking up the comments of each verse, I request the reader to indicate, either in his Bible if he is marking it, or in whatever place he is making notes, that all of the verses from the present one through the end of the chapter, and through the first 6 verses of the next chapter, are to be regarded as one paragraph with one general subject. That has to do with one of the outstanding apparent contradictions in God's threatenings and predictions against His people. In more than one place they have seemed to be condemned for doing some of the very things that the Mosaic system required. We cannot believe that God would tell a man to do something, and then condemn him for doing it. When it seems to be so, there is an explanation in the premises and we should examine them for it. I have composed at length a note, based on the truths and facts of history, both sacred and profane, that fully clarifies this seeming difficulty, and the reader is urged to consult that note again with extreme care, before proceeding with the study of these comments. That note is offered in the comments on Isaiah 1: 10, volume 3 of this COMMENTARY. I shall now take up the comments on the verse of this paragraph, followed with the others in their order, explaining them in the light of the general subject of the suggested general paragraph. The note referred to will explain why God hated their feast days. In their solemn assemblies they used sweet incense under the law, and the only use that could be made of it would be to smell it. God refused to smell the odor of their incense for the same reason that he hated their feast days.

Verse 22. The sacrifices and offerings mentioned were required by the law of Moses, but God was rejecting them for the same reason mentioned above.

Verse 23. Instrumental music was not introduced by the law of Moses, but it was later instituted by David and the Lord sanctioned it by giving it His glory (2 Chronicles 29: 25; 5: 14). But although the Lord had blessed the use of the musical instruments with his glory, after the leaders became so corrupt, that service was rejected on the same ground as were the others mentioned above.

Verse 24. *Judgment* is from MISHPAT, which Strong defines, "Properly a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially." Since the term is

connected with *righteousness as a mighty stream*, we know the word means a favorable verdict. The leaders had imposed upon the poor and decided matters unjustly against them. This verse is an exhortation for them to reverse that practice and render decisions that are just.

Verse 25. God never asks a question for the sake of his own information, so this one is a reminder for the people of Israel, calling their attention to the practices that they followed all through the wilderness.

Verse 26. The Lord admits that Israel had performed the services stated in the preceding verse, but they were offset by their practices of idolatry. Moloch was one of the invisible gods of the heathen, and the Israelites took up the worship of that false deity. Chiun was an image that they made, a *star* or chief article they made in honor of the heathen god that they worshiped.

Verse 27. *Therefore* means that God concluded to punish his people because of these idolatrous practices which they thought they could add to the ordinances of the divine law. *Captivity beyond Damascus*. That city was the capital of ancient Syria and it was located just north of Palestine. But the Jewish nation was destined to go into captivity under both the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, which were located far away in the territory of the Euphrates, and that was literally *beyond Damascus*. The two empires were in control in succession from one another, but they were virtually in the same part of the world, hence the Jewish people all came finally to be held in captivity in the same general location according to the various prophecies.

## AMOS 6

Verse 1. *Woe* is pronounced just once in the present connection and it applies to all the leading men in Israel who are described in the first 6 verses of the chapter. It is from *howr* and Strong defines it with the single word "oh!" It has been rendered by ah, alas, ho, O, and woe in the A. V. It signifies that something very distressing is going to come upon those of whom it is spoken. *At ease* means to be feeling secure and contented, and unconcerned about the comfort of others. And that, too, even when the feeling of security might be at the expense of the poor and be causing them much distress. *Zion* is used fig-

uratively to denote the people of Israel as a nation. Samaria was the capital of the 10-tribe kingdom, and that portion of the Jews trusted in the power of their headquarters to stand between them and all trouble. *Named chief of the nations.* These leaders of the Israelites had obtained a high standing even among the heathen nations because of their partaking with them in idolatrous practices. *House of Israel came.* These princes had so much power that the common people looked to them for leadership, notwithstanding the unjust treatment they had received concerning their own rights.

Verse 2. *Calneh, Hamath and Gath* were communities of the heathen which were once powerful. But what was their condition now as Amos was writing? It was one of humiliation brought about by the same people who were predicted to come against Israel. Since the people of the Lord were no stronger than the mentioned ones who were subdued, they should not loll around with a feeling of "security" as if nothing evil could come upon them.

Verse 3. The false teachers denied that the nation was in any danger, or at least for the time being. Such assurances of security misled the people because they believed their prophets. The result of it was to encourage further acts of injustice. This is along the same line as a statement of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 8: 11: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Verse 4. The simple meaning of this verse is that the princes and other leaders of the nation were living in the height of luxury. That fact alone would have been bad enough, but by picking out the choicest food only, they deprived the common people of their share of the good things that were intended for all of the citizens.

Verse 5. With all of the facts and truths before him that have been so clearly set forth, surely the reader is prepared to avoid a fundamental error that has been made in commenting on this verse. It is a common thing for certain teachers to use this verse in showing that God condemned instrumental music even in Old Testament times. In such teaching they miss entirely the point the prophet is making. The verse is but another item of the practice I have already explained, that of mixing some things that would have been endorsed previously, with

their idolatrous and other evil things, thinking that God would accept the whole program.

Verse 6. In the preceding chapter we saw how these selfish leaders had sandwiched their evil doings with some of the original ordinances of the law, and the same thing is done in this. Verse 5 is the "filling" composed of instrumental music, something introduced and endorsed by David with the Lord's blessing. Then around that are the things that were prompted by their own evil desires. *Drink wine in bowls.* The last word is from *MIZBAQ*, which Strong defines, "A bowl (as if for sprinkling)," and the word has also been rendered by "basin." It indicates the extravagance and selfishness of these men. They were not satisfied with what a regular drinking cup would supply, but drank so much wine that it required these large vessels to serve them. The ointments were all precious and costly, but these men appropriated to their personal use the chief or choice ones. After his description of the general program of these leaders, the prophet states his concluding charge against them in the words, *but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.* For some reason the name of Joseph is occasionally used to designate the nation as a whole, especially when the writer is dealing with the sorrows and injustices of its common people. This is doubtless because he was such an unusual example of patience and virtue even under the most trying circumstances. But the hardships of the poor did not mean anything to these leaders among the Israelites, for they persisted in gratifying their own selfish desires at the expense of their poor brethren.

Verse 7. When an army invades a city or territory, it is considered good strategy to capture its leading men first if possible (for example see 1 Kings 22: 31). That idea seems to have been followed in this case, for the men who were "out in front" in their selfish domination over the common people, were destined to be first to go when the enemy came against the land. That will put an end to their *banquets* and other indulgences. The reader should again consult the long note in connection with the comments on Isaiah 1: 10, volume 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 8. *Excellency* is from a Hebrew word that means arrogance or pride. *Jacob* is used as a designation for the nation as a whole, but espe-

cially the leading men who dominated the common people. These men exalted themselves in their pride of power, and did many evil things under the pretense of their position. It was all this that God said he abhorred, and caused Him to decree the complete destruction of their city.

Verse 9. The destruction threatened was to be so complete that if a house contained 10 men, they would all die and would need to be disposed of by someone outside the building who was supposed to be interested in their cases.

Verse 10. It was customary in ancient times for the nearest relative living to bury the dead (see Genesis 25: 9; 35: 29; Judges 16: 31), which is the reason that the uncle is mentioned here. *Burneth* is rendered "burial" in Moffatt's translation. I shall quote from Funk and Wagnalls Standard Bible Dictionary on the subject of "Mode of Burial." "Cremation was not practiced in Israel; the usage was rather to bury the dead, while cremation, of criminals for example (Leviticus 20: 14; 21: 9; Joshua 7: 25), appears as a disgrace added to the penalty of death." The burning of incense in connection with burial ceremonies sometimes might be mistaken for the burning of the bones of the dead (1 Samuel 31: 12; 2 Chronicles 16: 14; Jeremiah 34: 5). *By the sides of the house* means someone near the house where those 10 men were just found dead. *Is there yet any with thee*; is there one that I have overlooked? *Hold thy tongue*, etc. The destruction decreed for the place was to be so complete that it would be of no use at that late hour to make any appeal to the Lord.

Verse 11. This verse explains why the remark was made in the close of the preceding one. The Lord had commanded that just such a complete destruction was to come upon the people and houses of Israel as is described.

Verse 12. The two questions in the beginning of this verse should be answered in the negative. The wickedness of the nation had turned good judgment into gall (bitterness), and righteousness had been supplanted by hemlock (poison). Therefore the Lord determined to strip the land of its fertility, and render it useless to work their beasts.

Verse 13. Strong says the figurative meaning of the original for *horn* is "power." These exacting leaders of Israel were boasting that they had

power by reason of their own merit. The truth of the matter was that they beat down all who asked for their own rights, and usurped a position of almost absolute power.

Verse 14. *Hemath* was a place at the northern extremity of Palestine, and *the wilderness* refers to the valley at the south near the Dead Sea. The prediction is that a nation was to come against Israel and subdue the whole territory between the points.

## AMOS 7

Verse 1. We see Amos in the role of an intercessor for Israel, and by his plea to God causes the divine wrath to be turned back. The subject is presented figuratively and begins with the idea of insects being created to destroy the young vegetation. After the main crop is harvested, called the *king's mowings*, a tender growth of grass comes up in the same field, here called the *latter growth*. This is what the insects destroyed according to the figurative prediction.

Verse 2. After this destruction by the insects, Amos made his plea on behalf of Jacob (Israel), suggesting that the nation was too small to withstand such a loss.

Verse 3. *Lord repented* means the Lord changed his mind and removed the insects.

Verse 4. But the people were not truly penitent and did not make the proper reformation even though the Lord had relieved their distress. Then He brought a more severe chastisement upon the land. This time it was in the form of fire that dried up the *great deep* which means the water supply in the veins of the earth.

Verse 5. Again the prophet pleads on behalf of the people.

Verse 6. The Lord was again entreated to relent and withdraw His wrath, to give the nation a chance to reform or change the way of life from bad to good.

Verse 7. The repeated acts of mercy that God showed toward Israel were not appreciated, but they always slipped back into their former way of sin, if they even ceased it at all. The patience of the Lord finally was exhausted and He determined to use more severe measures against the unfaithful nation. It is indicated by the use of the plumbline which will be explained with the comments on the next verse.

Verse 8. *Plumbline* is from *ANAK*, which Strong defines, "To be narrow,"

In symbolic language it indicates something strict and exacting, and was an appropriate article for the decree that God was about to make. He had been lenient with the unfaithful people until they no longer deserved mercy as a nation. *Not pass by* means that the Lord would not overlook their iniquity again but would bring severe punishment on them.

Verse 9. We have seen the names of Joseph and Jacob used to signify the nation of Israel, now it is Isaac that is used in the same way. In all of the cases it is because of the important relation the men sustained to the race. The predictions and rebuke of the book frequently apply with equal force to all of the Jewish nation, but the writings of Amos generally are made with reference to the 10-tribe kingdom. That is why this verse mentions *Jeroboam*, he being the man who led the revolt resulting in the establishment of that kingdom (1 Kings 12).

Verse 10. This is not the Jeroboam mentioned in the preceding verse, but the one named in chapter 1: 1, and who is often referred to as Jeroboam II. Bethel was one of the places where the first Jeroboam erected altars for idolatrous worship (1 Kings 12: 29), and of course such a place would call for the services of a priest; hence the statement that Amaziah was the *priest of Bethel*. That will also explain why he objected to the work of Amos. In all ages, men have opposed those who offered them unpleasant truth, especially if it condemned their conduct. The predictions by Amos that the nation was to be overthrown were made in view of the corruptions of which the services of Amaziah were an important part. He realized that truth and hence was aroused against the prophet and sent the message to the king of Israel. He doubtless thought he was acting the part of a loyal citizen in giving this information to his master. *Not able to bear* means they could not endure or be reconciled to the predictions of the prophet.

Verse 11. There is no evidence that Amos predicted the death of Jeroboam in the manner accused by Amaziah. 2 Kings 14: 26-29 shows the death of that king not to have been caused by the sword. But the other statement of Amaziah was true, for Amos was authorized to predict the exile of the kingdom of Israel. It is a common trick of evil men to mix some truth with their error so as to deceive their

hearers and cause them to accept the entire story.

Verse 12. A seer is the same as a prophet; it means literally one who sees into the future. Amaziah thought he could get rid of the unpleasant predictions of Amos by having him move into some other locality. He suggested that he go and deliver his messages in the land of Judah, which was the 2-tribe kingdom. Such a suggestion had the appearance of being fair and that he recognized him as a prophet of God who was qualified to contact His people wherever they might be.

Verse 13. Amaziah spoke on behalf of Jeroboam who was the king and whose *chapel* (religious headquarters) was at Bethel, one of the seats of idolatry. He seems to think that by the removal of the one who was giving the unpleasant predictions, he could be rid of the fulfillment of them. It was as foolish as it would be to discharge a doctor who discovered a dreadful disease in one's body.

Verse 14. The speech of Amaziah implied that he considered Amos as one of the regular prophets who had no other occupation. In that case it would not matter very much where he worked, just so he did the work of a prophet. He would then not be idle from his life's work were he to go into the land of Judah and continue his regular occupation. But Amos enlightened him on the subject and told him that he was not that kind of prophet, but was a shepherd by occupation. He had been called as a special servant of the Lord for the mission of delivering the predictions intended for the 10-tribe kingdom, and only incidentally to include some things pertaining to Judah. *Prophet's son* means one of the young men who were being trained by the regular prophets, not a son in the usual sense of that word.

Verse 15. While Amos was engaged about his work with the flock, the Lord appeared to him by inspiration and told him to go and prophesy unto *Israel*, which here means the 10-tribe kingdom, not Judah as Amaziah wanted him to do.

Verse 16. Amos wants Amaziah to know that he is not speaking his own ideas, but that it is the *word of the Lord*. *House of Isaac* has the same meaning as house of Israel since he was one of the important men in the blood line from Abraham.

Verse 17. Amos was not intimidated by the criticism of Amaziah but gave



him the final paragraph of his predictions. Not only was the nation to suffer the captivity but his own family was to be disgraced. *Divided by line* means the land would be measured off into lots and taken possession of by the enemy.

### AMOS 8

Verse 1. *Summer fruit* is used figuratively to indicate the end of the season. The original is a word that means the product of any kind that has come to full growth, and in its application to the predictions of the nation it means that the season is over.

Verse 2. In answer to the Lord's question Amos acknowledged the vision of the basket of fruit. The meaning of it was then stated, that *the end is come upon my people of Israel*. The "season" that was ended was the period of God's leniency toward the unfaithful nation. *Not pass by* means the Lord would not overlook their iniquity any more, but would bring an enemy force against them.

Verse 3. *Songs of the temple* refers to the religious performances that the people of Israel had so inconsistently carried out, even while their minds were polluted with the belief in false gods. But instead of those songs, the people were to be made to howl by the attack of the foes. *Cast forth with silence* denotes that these hypocritical songsters would be silenced by their death, caused by the might of a hostile army that the Lord would suffer to come against His people.

Verse 4. The main complaint all along has been against the head men of the nation, who imposed upon the poor and common people to advance their own interests. This is the meaning of the expression *swallow up the needy*.

Verse 5. The days of new moons were holy days with the Jews (1 Samuel 20: 24-27; 1 Chronicles 23: 31), and on such days they were not to work or transact any secular business. These covetous men could not dismiss from their minds the worldly subject in order to give "undivided attention" to their religious duties, but even while the holy day was being (outwardly) observed, they were thinking of the deals they intended to perform. Their worldly-minded interests were made worse by the unjust means they intended to take for profit. *Ephah small, shekel great*. They tampered with the scales by causing the balancing weights to show more than they actually con-

tained, then cheated their customers in another way which was to increase the price unjustly.

Verse 6. *Poor for silver, needy for shoes*. See the comments on chapter 2: 6 for this subject. *Sell the refuse of wheat* means they sold the worthless part of their grain as if it had full value.

Verse 7. *Excellency* is also rendered by "pride" and "arrogance," so we may rightly conclude that it is used in an unfavorable sense. The Lord would not have something favorable as a basis for an oath, hence the sense of the verse is that God made an oath in view of the pride of Jacob, or the people of Israel. *Their works* refers to the unrighteous practices of the leaders in Israel, and the Lord was *never to forget* or never to overlook it. Because of such an oath it meant that something very serious was going to come upon the unfaithful nation.

Verse 8. The antecedent of *this* is the chastisement threatened in the preceding verse. Well might the land (its people) tremble at thought of the wrath of God that was prophesied to come upon it. *Floods* and waters are used figuratively in the Bible to signify some overwhelming condition, and the particular application in this case is to the national calamity to come by the agency of the Assyrians or Babylonians. The specific reason for connecting Egypt with the figure is that the original word for *flood* means any large body of water, and the Nile River in Egypt is such a body.

Verse 9. *Sun to go down at noon* is a figure of speech and indicates that the national sun (power) was to cease to shine prematurely. Had Israel been faithful to God the nation would have remained in power through the entire Jewish dispensation. Instead, that power was cut off many centuries before that age ceased. *Darken the earth in the clear day* has the same meaning as the preceding figure.

Verse 10. The thought running through this verse is that all conditions were to be reversed, changing from favorable to unfavorable. On occasions of feasts there was usually great enjoyment, but it was to be turned into mourning. Songs were expressions of cheer, but they were to be changed into those of lamentation. In their prosperity they wore gay clothing, but it was to be replaced with the coarse material called sackcloth. Smith's Bible Dictionary says that artificial baldness was a sign of

mourning, and so it is predicted that the distress to come upon them would cause them to shave off the hair in their mourning. The comparison as to that for an only son is to indicate how profound will be the grief when the nation has been humiliated by invaders.

Verse 11. *Famine of . . . words of the Lord.* The people will have resisted the teaching of those who would have given them the truth (such as Amaziah against Amos, verses 12, 13) until God will cease to offer them such teachers.

Verse 12. They will realize when it is too late what they have done, and will seek frantically to find some of the true teachers. However, it will be in vain because of the famine just predicted in which no spiritual food will be available.

Verse 13. Virgins and young men are usually possessed of more reserve vitality than others, but the famine was to be so severe that even they would faint.

Verse 14. The reference to Samaria and Beer-sheba is because of the idolatry that was set up and practiced in those places. Dan was one of the 10 tribes that formed this kingdom, and it had trusted in this false religion started in Samaria.

### AMOS 9

Verse 1. As a general comment on this and several verses following, it should be stated that *them* and kindred pronouns stand for the people of Israel who have been so unfaithful to God, and who were destined to be punished with exile into a foreign land. Idolatry was the predominating corruption of the nation, hence the *altar* spoken of pertained to that used in the idolatrous worship. The *lintel* and *door* were parts of the idols' temple and they were to be smitten by the prophet at the commandment of the Lord. *Posts may shake* signifies that the temple of idolatry was to be overthrown and its worshippers to be scattered. *That fleeth . . . not flee away* means that although the unfaithful idolaters attempt to get away from the wrath of God they will not succeed. *That escapeth . . . not be delivered* denotes virtually the same as the preceding statement. Some may escape the immediate capture by the enemy but they will not succeed in the end, for they will be taken into the territory of the foreign foes.

Verse 2. The impossibility of escap-

ing the wrath of God is the thought of this verse. *Hell* and *heaven* are used figuratively because they are opposite terms, and denote the complete presence of God no matter where a man might flee. David used the same figure in Psalms 139: 8 where he was considering the subject being discussed by Amos.

Verse 3. In seeking to escape the wrath of God it would be natural to hunt out places that were considered as a good place of seclusion. Carmel was thought of as such a spot because it was a high point and was situated at the top of a long range that was separated from the country in general. Nothing is actually hidden from the vision of the Lord, hence the phrase *hid from my sight* means to become invisible to the general view. Even though the victim of God's wrath might seek refuge in such an apparently secret place, the Lord would find some kind of means to take him. Ordinary serpents do not live in the bottom of the sea, hence the statement means that some agency would be called upon to carry out the vengeance of God upon the evil servant of Him who was so displeased at the corruption of the divine law.

Verse 4. Even after the Lord's people have been moved into the territory of a foreign land, the wrath of an offended God will not be satisfied, for the severity of their captors will reduce their numbers. *Evil* is not something wrong morally for God does not use such means to punish his people. The term refers to something in the nature of a chastisement that would cause great humiliation.

Verse 5. God of *hosts* means he is the God of armies and all other forces that could be used in proper causes. The *touch* of His hand when administered in wrath will result in the overthrow of that land or other object that might be touched; will cause it to *melt*. *Flood of Egypt* is explained at chapter 8: 8.

Verse 6. The leading term in the lexicon definition of *stories* is, "superiority of station," and the statement of the verse means that God is the high and exalted One. *Troop* is a strained rendering of the original which simply means to bind together as a man would a group of articles that he wanted to handle. The entire first sentence of this verse means that God is as exalted as the highest heaven, and also is strong enough to take possession of all things on the

earth. As a specific example of this power, mention is made of the *waters of the sea* which have been made subject to Him more than once (Exodus 14: 16-31; Jonah 1: 4, 15; Matthew 8: 26, 27).

Verse 7. The children of Israel are named in a group with a number of heathen nations. That is for the purpose of showing the vast power of the Almighty, and to indicate the dependence of the whole world upon the independent God.

Verse 8. The comparisons and figures of speech are dropped and the literal prediction of the fate of the nation of Israel is stated. *Saving*, etc., refers to the remnant that was to be left after the captivity was ended (Ezra 2: 64).

Verse 9. This verse has the same subject matter as the preceding one, only it is expressed in figurative language. The heathen nations are the sieve and God was going to use that means of separating many of the people of Israel. In literal actions a sieve retains the good grain, while the dwarfed and otherwise objectionable particles will drop through and fall to the ground. The prediction of the verse is that none of the *grain* among the people of Israel would fall.

Verse 10. The context will justify the insertion of a word between this and the preceding verse, making the present one read: But, *all the sinners of my people*, etc. The particular *sinners* referred to were the false prophets who belittled the idea that any danger was threatening the nation, and who were all the time preaching "peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6: 14).

Verse 11. *That day* denotes the time when the nation of Israel will have received its chastisement at the hands of the heathen. God promised to restore the service that had been interrupted by the exile. *Tabernacles of David* is a phrase used in the sense of the regime that started with that great patriarch, the first ruler of Judah.

Verse 12. Israel had previously been troubled by these peoples, but the promise is that it will be favored by the Lord and the downtrodden people will rejoice.

Verse 13. The prosperity that was to return to Israel was to be prompt and great. The strong expressions of this verse are rather figurative, yet they are a true picture of the speed

with which the blessings of God would come to the land.

Verse 14. *Bring again the captivity* means that the captivity will be reversed, and the Lord's people were to be brought out of it. They also were to be restored to their own land to produce and enjoy the crops of the soil.

Verse 15. *No more be pulled up* applies to them as a nation, for Israel was never moved bodily out of Palestine after the return from captivity. The nation was finally subjugated by another government and the power of the same was taken from it, but it took place while living in its original territory.

## OBADIAH

Verse 1. The book of Obadiah is the shortest one in the Old Testament and is one of the minor prophets. There are two main subjects treated in the book; the denunciations against Edom and the return of Israel from the captivity. According to verse 11 the book is to be dated about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. *Vision of Obadiah* means that he was shown a picture of the doom of Edom. *Rumour* means an authentic message from the Lord, not merely some floating speculation as the word usually denotes. An *ambassador* is a herald or messenger who is sent out from an authoritative source to deliver a decree. Such a messenger had been sent out among the nations concerning the land of Edom and Obadiah had heard about it. The gist of the *rumour* or message was that the nations were to rise up and be arrayed against the doomed people.

Verse 2. *Among the heathen* might imply that Edom was not one of the heathen as he is said to be *among* them. However, the word is also rendered "nation" in many places and it is so used in this one. The original word means any group or nation of people regardless of what religion they profess. This verse means that the Edomites were doomed by the Lord to become one of the smaller nations and to be looked down upon.

Verse 3. I shall make a quotation from an authentic work of reference concerning Edom: "Edom is emphatically a land of mountains. On the west, along the side of Arabia, is a line of low limestone hills. Back of these rise higher, igneous rocks [emphasis mine, E. M. Z.], surmounted by variegated sandstone, of peculiar color,