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## ARTICLE VIII.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF AMOS.

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IN the study of the Old Testament prophets, as of any other composition that on the surface makes pretensions to unity, the problem is to get the most reasonable logically connected message that accounts for all the material of the book. The question should be, What is the message of this particular book as it lies before us? And only when we have exhausted every effort and have failed to get a rational and likely message should we relegate the book to the limbo of scrap-iron. It seems that the author of the book of Amos had a message for his day and generation, and that he saw or felt some sort of logical connection between all its parts. The following article is an attempt to understand the book as a connected whole and to point out its one aim.

The main argument of the prophecy will appear from the outline of the book, but a brief survey of the man and his times will help to understand his aim better.

The *man Amos* was a native of Tekoa, a small town twelve miles south of Jerusalem, on the very edge of the desert. In so small a place all were familiarly known to each other, and to their own acquaintances none seemed great. Of these, mostly if not exclusively shepherds and farmers, was Amos, just an ordinary man (i. 1; vii. 14). He was familiar with the desert — its beasts, its poverty, and its sternness. In nature around him all was meager and austere, but rich and

vigorous were the thoughts and feelings within him. Great men in barren places grow, "as a root out of dry ground." The few events whose reports reach their ears find a keen mental appetite, are well digested, make a deep impression on the feelings, and mightily move and mold the lonely dweller. Thus Amos was deeply stirred by the news of the Syrian threshing-sledge in Gilead (i. 3), the Philistine slave-trade (i. 6), the ribald songs and drunken filth of Israel's feasts (v. 21-24), the greed and lust of Israel's great ones (ii. 7, 8), the oppression of his fellow-poor (ii. 6), and the reports of luxuriant silk and ivory couches in homes where wine was drunk by the bucketful with stolid indifference regarding the national calamities (vi. 4-7). These reports, reaching him in his comparative solitude, were ruminated until his soul within him burned with rage and pity for Israel.

Like his great compatriot David, Amos spent much time with his sheep under the clear sky, looking into its sublime abyss, dwelling on the awe-inspiring scenes and sounds of the silent desert, while night filled him with an indescribable sense of the greatness and awfulness of the God of this nature and of Israelitish history; for Amos, though a mere farmer and herdsman, and poor at that, was not ignorant of the history of his people. He knew the story of Jacob and Esau (i. 11), of Balaam's prophecy concerning Moab, "the sons of tumult" (ii. 2; cp. Num. xxiv. 17), the law of the pledge (ii. 8; cp. Ex. xxii. 26), the "forty years' wandering in the wilderness" (ii. 10; cp. Deut. ii. 7), the fall of the Amorites (ii. 9; cp. Num. xiii. 32, 33), David as poet and musician (vi. 5; cp. 1 Chron. xv. 16), and the movement of the nations (vi. 2; ix. 7). He knew history, however, not as a series of facts, not even as a chain of events, but as the moral government of a moral God (ix. 8). To Amos, God

ruled in history; history was the ruling of God, and God dwelt in and ruled from Zion. Like the roar of the lion about to spring upon its prey, Amos heard coming to him from Zion Israel's doom in Jehovah's judgment. Loud and clear and irresistible was the divine summons calling him to the north, if perchance he might save Israel from its impending doom (i. 2; iii. 8).

Amos being, like every other of the Old Testament prophets, a genuine man of God (that is, thoroughly unselfed, full of love for his fellow-men and a thoroughgoing patriot), could not go up to Israel simply to rebuke them out of personal or national dislike, but to announce their doom which they had brought on themselves, in order that they might turn and live. This fact determines the message he brought them. It is not a personal matter with him. His *message* is as divine, as objective, as if he had seen it with his eyes; but the words are "the words of Amos." He had visions, but he was no visionary. He sees the facts of man's sins, of God's awful holiness, and the doom sure to follow if sin is persisted in. He tells his message, but so objectively, so utterly separate from himself, that there are only twenty-five verses in his book (of nine chapters) which are not quotations of divine thought; and those few verses are apostrophes of God's greatness (v. 8, 9; ix. 5), or of man's sinfulness (iv. 1; vi. 1-7; viii. 4-7), or an appeal to man to repent (v. 6-15). And yet we are told (i. 1) that the words are "the words of Amos"; and so they are. His style breathes the freedom and vigor of the desert. It is imaginative and poetic (iii. 9; v. 3), graphic (v. 9, 10), bold (iv. 4, 5; vi. 1), powerful in sudden turns (iii. 2; iv. 6-12), pathetic, for in describing the luxury of the nobles in vi. 1-5, he laments that they cannot see the affliction of his people (vi. 6). He is emphatic, having many inversions

of the usual Hebrew order, e. g., "Jehovah from Zion shall roar," and many others. He is full of striking figures and analogies (iii. 6, 8, 12; iv. 1, 2; v. 7, 19; vi. 12) and grand descriptions (iii. 15; v. 8, 9; viii. 8-10); while in ii. 6-16 he has a finely rounded period.

As to the *times* of Amos, he lived in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and of Jeroboam II., king of Israel. Uzziah was king 780-739 B.C., a period of forty-one years, or, according to the common reckoning, fifty-two years. He was one of the most prosperous of Judah's kings. He subdued the Philistines, subjected the Arabians and Ammonites, fortified Jerusalem, had 2600 horses and 307,500 foot-soldiers, and powerful engines of war. With these he maintained the peace, while his attention to husbandry made the land productive, and by the opening of Elath as a seaport and the vast increase of commerce by land and sea he greatly added to the nation's wealth and consequent luxury and ease. In his success and prosperity his heart was lifted up so that he even presumed to play the rôle of (high?) priest. In this he seems to have been but an example of the general pride and godlessness fostered by the blessings of his reign.

Jeroboam II. reigned in Israel from B. C. 783 to 743, also a long and prosperous period like that of Uzziah. The other Jeroboam, the founder of the Northern Kingdom, had instituted calf-worship at Bethel and Dan so as to wean the people from Jerusalem, and thus prevent their return to the kings who ruled there. This was pure "will-worship" and directly against the divine purpose of finally uniting the North and the South (1 Kings xi. 39). Instead of trusting God to keep him on the throne as he had promised him, Jeroboam I. laid his own hand interferingly on the arm of God. Instead of ruling submissively as long as it pleased God, he tried to

lengthen the tenure of his royalty and that of his family beyond the divinely allotted time.

After the interval of the house of Omri, when the Sidonian Baal (that is, open and avowed idolatry) was espoused by the royal house and nation, this policy of Jeroboam I. was followed by Jehu and his successors, and most likely from the same motive. As the house of Omri had been severely punished for its apostasy, so also the house of Jehu was punished for its half-way return to Jehovah. In the reign of Jehoahaz God had, through the kings of Syria, taken away almost all means of defense, leaving only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and 10,000 footmen (2 Kings xiii. 1-9). To feel the force of this reduction, we must compare this state of affairs with that of Asa, the king of the rival kingdom, for he had 300,000 heavy armed soldiers and 280,000 Benjamite archers (2 Chron. xiv. 8); or with that of the first Jeroboam, who one time led 800,000 chosen men against Abijam (2 Chron. xiii. 3), or with the army of Shishak, who attacked Judah with 1200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen (2 Chron. xii. 3).

In contrast to this low ebb in the time of Jehoahaz, there was, under Jeroboam II., and by help divine, an extent of territory and splendor of wealth truly Solomonic. This latter king, following the example of Joash, recaptured the land from Hamath, two hundred miles to the north of Samaria, even unto the Dead Sea beyond Jordan (Amos vi. 14; 2 Kings xiv. 25). He chastised Moab and Ammon in this southern war of extension. From the prophet Amos we learn of the outward prosperity of Jeroboam II. Commerce and tributary kings filled the national treasury. Business was so brisk that merchants were impatient of the check which the holy Sabbath put upon their money-making (viii. 5, 6). Splendid winter and summer residences rose on every side (iii. 15).

There were beds, and even houses, so profusely inlaid with ivory as to be spoken of as "ivory beds" and "ivory houses" (iii. 12, 15; vi. 4). Parks and vineyards adorned the landscape and pandered to the tastes for leisure and for drink (v. 11). Meanwhile the farmer, on whom rested the burden of taxes and outlay for war and luxury, and at times the burden of a drought, was ground to abject poverty. Great and cruel were the wrongs inflicted by the great and powerful upon the less fortunate (ii. 7, 8; iii. 10; iv. 5-7). Immorality ran riot. Even the women of the nobility were not absent from the repulsive drunken revels of Israel (ii. 8, 12; iv. 1).

With all their beastliness, however, they were very religious; but their religion was calf-worship after the manner of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin." Feast-days and sacrifices were regularly observed (v. 21-24), but Jehovah they did not know (cp. Rom. i. 21-25). Not Jerusalem, where God caused his name to be known, but Bethel and Dan and Beersheba, where *human* inventions were substituted for divine instruction, were the centers of their great religious gatherings. This worship the authors of the historical books abhorred; and if we would understand Amos we must think of him as sharing the same feeling. He does not look upon calf-worship as if it made but little difference what Israel worshiped so long as they were sincere and obeyed the law of love toward their fellow-men. In iii. 14 Amos says, "In the day that I shall visit the transgression of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel." In iv. 5 he tells them, with righteous sarcasm, to multiply worship at these their self-chosen places of worship. With burning love he represents God as pleading with them, "Seek *me*, and ye shall live, but seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal" (v. 4, 5); "The high

places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries shall be laid waste" (vii. 9). In viii. 14 he calls this worship "the sin of Samaria." The prophet has no hope for Northern Israel. No halo of future glory surrounds the royalty of Northern Israel. No morning dawn lights up the night of her lapse into sin, as is the case with Judah and the house of David. Israel's hope, based on their being God's people, shall be frustrated (v. 18-20; ix. 7, 8). Nor can we say, that, being a Southerner, Amos saw the Northern people with contorted vision; for if ever man had unselfed himself and thus spoke, it was a Hebrew prophet. He saw. His was a vision of what was external to himself. What he saw or spoke of man or God had objective reality.

This, then, was what Amos saw as he looked northward. These were the times in which he lived. This was the people to whom he was sent. This must we keep in mind as we read his book.

The *title* of his book is found in the first verse in these words, "The words of Amos which he saw." The rest of the verse simply locates the man and his message. The words we are told are of Amos, but the subject-matter is not of him, for he saw (חזן). Sight is the most objective of our senses. It is the least likely to deceive us. What we see, exists outside of the mind, and the Hebrew word used here denotes sharp distinction made by gazing or looking closely. Not only did he see what had an existence outside of his own mind (that is, something objective), but he also saw what had reality as distinguished from mere appearance. Under all the glitter of Israel's "glory" he saw the real rottenness of their inward spiritual life. Seeing this and seeing thus, he spoke. A true messenger of God, he declares not himself but God, speaks not his own will or feelings but God's, denounces not what



seems to him to be but what really is the sin of the people. This is what we here have in Amos and in all the Old Testament prophets.

The *text* of the book of Amos is found in the second verse, and that in the Hebrew order, which reads, "Jehovah from Zion shall roar." The rest of the verse describes the terribleness of the punishment indicated by the word "roar." If Joel is earlier than Amos, it will be natural to understand the latter as quoting the words of the former (Joel iii. 16) as text, and connecting his own sermon with that of his predecessor. Joel predicted divine judgment in these same words, and promised that "Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people." In the time of Amos these words were abused by Israel, who seemed to claim divine protection on the mere ground of being God's chosen people (iii. 1, 2), in the same manner as the Jews in Christ's time based their claim of divine favor on being Abraham's children (Matt. iii. 7-10). As John the Baptist corrected the error of the Jews in his day, so Amos seems to correct the same error in the minds of his contemporaries. Like John, Amos would say, "God can of these stones raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. iii. 9; Amos ix. 7), and, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." In fact there is a striking similarity between John the Baptist and Amos, both as to character and message.

In this text, or motto, of the discourses (i. 2) there are three distinct elements: the first element is the name of Israel's God, Jehovah; the second element is the phrase "from Zion"; and the third is the verb "shall roar."

1. "Jehovah" is the keynote of the whole prophecy. Eighty-seven times Amos sounds forth this awful divine name. Most frequently he uses simply "Jehovah"; many times *Adonai*, "Lord" or "Master," precedes it, and once it

follows; several times the expression is "Jehovah of hosts." Amos speaks the name with awe and reverence, a reverence and an awe which at times breaks forth in sublime description, or apostrophe, of God, out of all grammatical connection with the context (v. 8, 9; ix. 5). The former passage seems to be a recoil from, or offset to, a description of Israel's sin given in v. 7. Amos is very careful that every word of his shall be ascribed to Jehovah. Much of the book consists of the quotation of divine utterances. He tells us both at the beginning and at the end of the quotation, "Thus saith Jehovah." To understand Amos we must gain his conception of this oft-quoted God, for it is the ground-swell of his prophecy.

To Amos, Jehovah is a self-conscious personality. He swears by himself (vi. 8) or by his holiness (iv. 2). He is lord or sovereign (iii. 6) and Lord of hosts, majestic Ruler of the hosts of stars or soldiers, perhaps of all earthly and heavenly forces (iii. 13; v. 14, 15, 16, 27; vi. 8, 14; ix. 5), that is he is omnipotent (*pantokrator* in LXX). He is the almighty Maker of the mountains and the winds and the starry heavens (iv. 13; v. 8; ix. 5). His angry breath withers the verdure of hill and dale (i. 2). He withholds rain, sends locusts, mildew, pestilence, and ruin (chap. iv.), earthquakes and floods (ix. 5). Nations are moved about at his will—Israel from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, the Syrians from Kir and back again (ix. 7; i. 5). He removes Israel to Damascus (v. 27). He leads the Assyrians against Israel and sends on all nations fire and sword (chaps. i., ii.). He is the God of Israel (iv. 12). He reads the most secret thoughts of every individual being (iv. 13). According to Amos, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of this living, mighty, and holy God.

Above all, Jehovah, according to Amos, is an *ethical* Being. But Amos is not a philosopher; he does not deal in abstractions. What God is, he lets us infer from what he does. For their transgressions, the nations are overthrown. It is because they sell the righteous for money, and turn aside the meek from justice, that God crushes them as under a heavily laden cart (iii. 10, 11; ii. 6, 13). Because they turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness (v. 7), he destroys them (iii. 12; v. 9; vi. 12). Doing thus, shows of what character he is. So also God speaks, "I hate, I despise your feasts" (v. 21); "I will not hear the melody of your viols"; "Seek ye me, and ye shall live" (v. 23; v. 5, 14). We thus learn that what Jehovah demands is righteousness, nothing more, nothing less: what he hates is injustice. Sin, or offense to the Deity, is a thing of purely *moral* character. "Morality is that for the sake of which all other things exist; it is the alone essential thing in the world. It is no postulate, no idea; but at once a necessity and a fact; the most intensely living of personal powers—Jehovah, the God of Israel."<sup>1</sup> With Amos, God, Jehovah, is first. People must be what their God is, "mind to mind, nature to nature."<sup>2</sup> Hence calf-worship was not Jehovah-worship. "Seek *me*, seek not Bethel" (v. 4, 5). Not their belonging to God, but their likeness to him, saves his people and makes them really his (iii. 2; ix. 7, 8). He wants pure lives, humane acts, kind hearts, not ritual (vi. 3-6, 13). No doubt, sacrifices with right mind and heart were understood and taken for granted to be acceptable to him (Heb. xiii. 16).

2. "From Zion" (and its parallel "from Jerusalem") is the second element in the text of the book. Amos preached

<sup>1</sup>Wellhausen's *History*, as quoted by A. B. Davidson, *Expositor*, March, 1887, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup>Davidson.

Jehovah the Righteous One, and that as he revealed himself in Zion. From here as the base of operations God works, according to Amos and other books of the Bible, upon the world, planting or plucking up, as the case might demand (Ps. xiv. 7; Isa. ii. 3; Joel iii. 16). It is not *any* worship of God, sincere, though mistaken, that is the power of God unto salvation of the world. It is only the true knowledge of God as he himself revealed himself, first in Zion and later in Christ, that is life (John xvii. 3). In the passage before us it is the roar, the ruin, that comes from Zion. In ix. 11 it is salvation that comes from Zion, and that through the house of David; for never does any hope attach to Northern Israel or to any of its dynasties. "From Zion," "from Jerusalem," is next to Jehovah in emphatic position; and in thus emphasizing this idea Amos condemns all religious activities of Northern Israel.

3. "Shall roar," "shall utter his voice," is the third element in the text of Amos. According to his own statement (iii. 4), the lion roars only when he sees and is about to spring on his prey, and he growls and utters his voice when he has the prey actually in his clutches. God is the lion: Israel, sinful Israel, is the prey. The word "roar" indicates that God had determined to spring upon them, was in the very act of striking, or had already his mighty hand upon them (cp. Matt. iii. 10). He had not yet torn up his prey; but, unless they repent (v. 14, 15), he will tear them up in such a manner as to leave only a small remnant, in itself useless (iii. 12; iv. 11; ix. 9, 10). Punishment, threatened and imminent, and caused by sin, impenitence, and hardness of heart on the part of Israel; and on God's part the process by which he came to this irrevocable decision to punish Israel, are the thoughts here indicated and developed in the book of Amos.

In calm, unimpassioned style, as contrasted with the strongly emphasized first half of the verse, Amos states, in the second half, the fearful consequences of the divine wrath, which, like a scorching, fiery wind, like a long-continued drought, burns up every green herb and clothes garden and field in mournful black or ashy gray. If nature, the physical substratum of man's life, will thus be destroyed, what will become of man himself? The prophet seems to stand, like Abraham, alone, looking upon Israel's ruin caused by God's wrath at man's sin (iv. 11). The certainty, the imminence, and the terribleness of Jehovah's punishment on Israel for its sins are here concisely and graphically set forth.

The *body of the book of Amos* is divided into three sections: the first section (i. 3-ii. 16) enforces the truth of the impartiality of God's justice; the second section (iii. 1-vi. 14) contains the prophet's charge against Israel, setting forth the fact and development of its sins as the cause of divine punishment; in the third section (vii. 1-ix. 15) Amos reveals the mind of God—how he came to his irrevocable decision to punish Israel for its sins and to save a remnant for future glory.

#### GOD'S IMPARTIAL JUSTICE (I. 3-II. 16).

Amos being filled, as we have seen, with reverential awe at the thought of Jehovah's justice—a justice intensely moral, ethical, and grounded in the very character of God, with nothing in the least arbitrary—he tries to impress upon Israel this same deep conviction of the impartial, intrinsic character of that divine justice which is about to mete out severe retribution on the nation for its sins. It is necessary for Israel to know and feel that their God is impartial in his justice, if they are to change their conduct and character

into the likeness of Jehovah's own character. There is no hope for them in any *outward* relation to their God. They are his, in order that they may be like him. Being moral and ethical in his very nature, God cannot protect them in their unethical, immoral character and conduct. In order the better to impress this great lesson, Amos lifts the veil and shows them God's dealings with the nations in general. In almost wearisome monotony, as if God meted out justice by mathematical formula, we see nation after nation arraigned, condemned, and punished for their sins of cruelty and inhumanity — transgressions, these, of God's laws as far as known to the transgressor, whether written in the human heart or revealed in the Sacred Scriptures.

Into this whirl of divine wrath and punishment were drawn also God's chosen people, Judah and Israel, who were chosen not for privileges only but for duties commensurate with their privileges. Amos, as we have seen, does not philosophize. He shows us these concrete examples of God's dealings, how exceedingly accurate is his dealing out of punishment wherever and whenever sin is found, so that we may learn therefrom his absolutely righteous character. How intensely in earnest, how intrinsically moral, must Jehovah have appeared to the thoughtful hearer as he followed God in this round of punishments inflicted on heathen and Israelite alike! If God deals thus, the hearer must have thought, if God is so fair and just, then the cause of Israel's calamity must be found in ourselves. How far removed from that arbitrary and unethical conduct so untrue and yet so often ascribed to God, do we here see the Jehovah of Israel portrayed as we follow Amos on this round of divine judgments! As Amos looks into the sublime heights of the divine nature of Jehovah, he quivers with intense feelings of reverence and fear; and before he tells

of their sins and the divine sentence thereon, he would have Israel also see God as he saw him and feel his sublime greatness as he felt it. To this end he shows them God's moral and ethical conduct toward, and dealing with, sin everywhere, in heathen and in chosen people alike. In every case the sentence of condemnation is explicitly ascribed to God, and we are to feel that God cannot look with allowance upon sin in any one whatsoever.

This is the motive of these two chapters. As an introduction they have the rhetorical effect of arousing the interest and holding the attention of his audience until their own doom is announced. But this can scarcely have been the chief purpose in the mind of Amos. There was a deeper motive than that of rhetorical effect. Amos would bring his hearers to a realizing sense of the true character of the God whom he represents and with whom they have to deal.

The formula "for three transgressions, and for four," found in the sentences against all the nations condemned, means that the measure of their iniquity was full (Gen. xv. 16), and more than full; that God had not been hasty or even abstractly just with them, but that, having shown mercy and forbearance, and finding these of no avail, the time had come for more stringent measures, and these irrevocable.

1. *Damascus and the Syrians* (i. 3-5) were the first on whose sins fell the divine wrath. Their sin is wanton, studied cruelty, the suppression of humane natural feelings. The punishment is the horrors of war — the storming of citadels, fire, depopulation, devastation, and deportation even unto Kir, their original home (ix. 7). Thus all their historic development goes for naught, and they are to be sent back to the point from which they started.

2. *Gaza and the Philistines* (i. 6-8) have the same sin of

inhumanity, expressing itself in the capturing of entire populations, regardless of age or sex or position, and selling them as slaves on the markets of Edom, a slave-dealing nation (i. 6). In addition to the punishment of Damascus, Gaza will have God against it to keep it down.

3. *Tyre and the Phœnicians* (i. 9, 10) receive the same sentence for the same sin, intensified by the addition of unfaithfulness to a covenant, and the violation of sacred feelings of kinship.

4. In the case of *Edom* (i. 11, 12), beside the sin of inhumanity, there is emphasized the suppression of the emotion that accompanies the ties of kinship and the sustained brutal ferocity of anger.

5. *Ammon* also (i. 13-15) is ferociously inhuman, manifesting his greed for land, with the accompaniment of cruelty against woman in her most sacred condition. Wars, devastation, and death most horrible, while its foe exults over its agony, is Ammon's reward.

6. *Moab's* unfeeling violation of the sacredness of the human body and irreverence for royalty (ii. 1-3) is punished with death amid the exulting music of its foes. As they sinned in burning the bones of kings, so God cuts off judge and prince among them in just retribution. All these died without law as they had sinned without law; but

7. *Judah* (ii. 4, 5) sinned against the revealed law of Jehovah in its worship of idols. Its punishment is the same as that of the other nations.

8. In speaking of *Israel* (ii. 6-16), Amos enlarges upon the sin and guilt of the culprit nation, for it is to Israel that he was especially sent. God does not treat them different from all the other nations. Here also God is acting along the lines of his inherently righteous character. That their



punishment will be severe is the result of their unusually heinous sins. Their sin (ii. 6-8) is threefold — greed, lust, and self-indulgent ease. Their greed led to the perversion of justice and the cruel oppression of the poor. Money and gain were to them more than the life of the oppressed. In this they anticipated modern commerce, which holds human life and female virtue cheap as compared with financial gain and business success. Their lust was unrestrained even by the sense of shame (ii. 7). Neither the sight of their robberies nor the conscious presence of God restrained them from their self-indulgence (ii. 8). Their transgression was not forgetfulness: it was defiance.

These sins, which they had in common with the heathen, were all the more heinous because of what God had done for them (ii. 9-12). The mighty Amorites, whom they could not have driven out (Ps. xlv. 3), God had driven out for them (Num. xiii. 32; Josh. xxiv. 12). God had delivered them out of the mighty hand of Pharaoh. He led them and fed them forty years in the wilderness to bring them into the good land of those expelled Amorites (Deut. i. 31; xxxii. 10, 12). He had given them prophets to lead them on by warning voice and promise. He had given them Nazirites as examples of self-denial and devotion. All this they could not deny. Yet in the face of it all, they forgot his kindness, made the Nazirites break their solemn vows, and did not let the prophets speak.

Their punishment could not fail to come, for God was a just — impartially just — God. God would crush them under himself like a heavily laden cart. The figure of the sheaf-laden cart seems to mean that God's judgment on them, or even God himself, was, as it were, made heavier by the load of their sins; and so the severity of their doom is in direct

proportion to the greatness of their iniquity. Here again the punishment is war, with the fearful accessory of flight; and that not unto life but unto death, fugitives fleeing in all directions and in all conditions.

## II. ISRAEL'S SIN THE CAUSE OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

(III.-VI. 14).

In the "roar" of Jehovah (i. 2) there is indicated the certain and imminent calamity overhanging Israel. This calamity comes from Jehovah, but its cause lies in Israel's sins. After showing them that all of God's acts are reasonable and necessary, Amos develops the fact and nature of their sinfulness as the cause of the calamity to be sent upon them by a just God. Sure as the laws of cause and effect is punishment or calamity preceded by sin, and hence the prophet proves to them that they are sinners, that they are incorrigible sinners, that they are sinners who are deaf to the voice of divine love, that they are self-sufficient and hypocritical sinners, that they are self-centered and hardened in their sin. Thus, like the Amorite before them, they fill the cup of their iniquity (Gen. xv. 16); and as those were cast out, so shall these be cast out of the same land and for the same reason. Hence in this section Amos speaks to Israel, appeals to their conscience, where they can find the verification of the truth of his words, but must justify God in his judgment (Ps. li. 4).

1. *The events in God's moral government follow certain, immutable laws* (iii. 1-8). God being impartial in his doings as Judge, the punishments he metes out are necessary, reasonable, and kind in that he always gives sufficient warning. God being in very nature and essence very just and kind, he cannot deal arbitrarily. The Israelites are indeed his chosen people; but just because they are his, and he being as holy

as he is, they also must be holy. "I am Jehovah your God: sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44, 45). They are indeed his sons; but just for that reason will they be punished for all their sins (Heb. xii. 6). In the nature of the case God cannot but demand of them that they walk in his ways as he cannot walk in theirs and yet agree. They must, since they are his, walk also in his ways. "Can two walk together and not agree?" (iii. 3). And are they perhaps not sinners, walking in their own way? God is not unreasonable. Even a lion does not roar when there is no prey; why should God roar, that is threaten to strike, unless there is sin in those thus threatened? His very roar, his impending stroke, proves them sinful, guilty, as surely as the lion's roar is proof of the presence of prey (iii. 4). God's actions are, therefore, not without good reason, but they are also unavoidable. Being what he is, essentially just and holy as well as kind, he must as inevitably punish when and where sin is present (iii. 5); and as naturally should the Israelites tremble and take refuge in him as citizens do at the war-announcing trumpet (iii. 8); for no calamity comes by accident, or merely in the course of nature, but from Jehovah, the personal, requiting God of Israel (iii. 6b), and that not unannounced, for he tells his spokesmen, the prophets, who in turn warn the threatened people (iii. 7). The lion, God, has roared; "even now the ax lieth at the root of the tree" (Matt. iii. 10). The ax is swung; to tremble is unavoidable. "God has declared his decision to me," saith Amos, "and I must speak to you" (iii. 8).

2. *The certainty* of the fact *that they are sinners* (iii. 9-iv. 5). In this paragraph the fact of their sins is set forth, and that (1) by showing that the Israelite men are sinners (iii. 9-15) both as to their works, or the fruit of

life (iii. 9–12), and as to their worship, or the root of life (iii. 13–15). And then (2) he shows that the Israelite women are sinners in their works, the fruit of life (iv. 1–5), and in their worship, or the root of life (iv. 4, 5).

(1a) The prophet had said that their sins brought on the divine punishment. He now (iii. 9–12) proceeds to prove that *the men are sinners in their works*. To do this he does not appeal to Israel themselves, for they are too sinful to know, but he appeals to the heathen nations round about. These know better than Israel how to distinguish between right and wrong (Matt. xii. 41, 42). Assembled on the hills round about Samaria, they are to gaze in horror down upon Israel's confusion of sin (iii. 9). You heathen, he seems to say, look and judge, for my people Israel is too sinful to know even how to do or value a righteous deed. They lay up robbery and violence like a bank account (iii. 10). This is the reason for the lion's roar. This is the prey on which he is in the act of springing; and when he has done so, two shinbones only and a piece of an ear shall be rescued by the shepherd from the mouth of the lion (iii. 12), when the foe shall have encircled them, humbled them, and plundered their goods — these delicate, effeminate well-livers.

(1b) Still addressing the assembled heathen (iii. 13–15), Amos, in the name of God, calls them to witness that when he visits Israel, as just now threatened, he will also visit judgment on the root of Israel's *evil conduct*, namely, their religion, their *false worship*: "I will also visit the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off" (iii. 14). As the calf-worship of the North was at bottom rooted in and springing from selfishness (1 Kings xii. 26–28); so the voluptuous, self-indulgent luxury, which expressed itself

in the building of expensive and extensive summer and winter residences, was essentially one with the erection of magnificent temples of worship. Will-worship and self-indulgent lust go hand in hand. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. ii. 23). Hence their residences and their houses of worship must go down together. This calf-worship, this will-worship, was the root of their evil conduct. God, therefore, strikes here (iii. 13-15) at the root. False worship, error in a point of teaching, brings forth, or rather fails to withstand, evil conduct in life.

(2a) *The sinfulness of the women* (iv. 1-5). Often the sinfulness of the men is offset by the purity and moral strength of the women of a country or a community, i. e. by the wives and mothers. Not so here (iv. 1-3). The women of Israel are addressed as fat cows of Bashan, that is, well fed and wanton in their sinful indulgences. Of Israel, God foretold through Moses, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" (Deut. xxxii. 15). This is here applied to the women. Naturally tender and reserved, they have become boldly impudent and cruel in the satisfying of their desires. Little did they think or care that their drunken excesses caused want and misery to the poor, but called boisterously to their husbands for wine, and egged them on to even greater lengths than they would have gone of their own accord. No wonder the Lord Jehovah swore by his holiness that these women should be led by ropes, like cattle, to the slave-markets of distant lands.

(2b) The *root* of this sensuous life was also found in *false worship*. Without restricting himself to the women of Israel, Amos calls sarcastically on all to multiply their sin-

ful worship (iv. 4, 5) at Bethel and at Gilgal, to carry out punctually in their calf-Jehovah-worship the laws and regulations given by Moses for the sacrifices of true Jehovah-worship; for, by such worship, says he, "will they please themselves."

In this entire section (iii. 9-iv. 5), Amos emphasizes the fact of their sinfulness. God chose them for holiness, and will punish them for their unholiness. This fact he has established. They cannot deny their sins. The nation's sinfulness is universal, including men and women. It is deep, reaching not only their conduct and character but their religion. Hence, broad and deep as is their sin, their punishment shall be likewise.

3. They are *sinners incorrigible* (iv. 6-13). Having shown that they are really sinners in their conduct and worship, he proceeds to show them that they did not allow themselves to be corrected by any of God's various remedial providences, many of which had been predicted by Moses as special punishment for such apostasy. The divine rod was of no avail. Famine (iv. 6), drought (iv. 7, 8; Deut. xi. 16, 17) locusts, and war with its accompanying pestilence and death and depopulation (iv. 10; Deut. xxviii. 27), and even the ruin of their cities like the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, leaving them but a small percentage of the population — all these divine visitations made no impression on them. They endured all and sinned on. For this reason God would do as he had already threatened to do (iv. 2, 3; cp. ii. 6-12; iii. 1-15). Hence Israel must prepare to meet his God. This is the reason why the lion roared. This is the cause of the trumpet alarm. They would not flee to him for refuge, so they must face him in his anger — him the Awful One, the Creator of all, far away and yet near (iv. 13)! All the

calamities in iv. 6-11 were remedial; now (iv. 13) there shall be punitive and retributive calamities.

4. The people are *sinner*s that despise God's pleading love (v. 1-17). Thus far we have seen that Israel gave God ample reason for punishing them, and being himself absolutely moral in his essence, it is impossible for him not to punish them. Amos had shown them that they were sinners, both men and women, both in conduct and in worship; that they had set themselves against all corrective providences, sinning in the face of all remedial punishment. Now (v. 1-17) Jehovah pleads with them lovingly. Though they have been incorrigible, yet, in the name of Jehovah, the prophet pleads with them, albeit in vain. He sings them a dirge in which he laments the sad fate in store for them and their land, "a prostrate virgin without a friend in her helplessness. Of her thousands that go out to war only hundreds shall return, and of her hundreds only tens. Mourning and lamentation of the defenseless people shall fill the desolate land. Only a tenth, but yet a tenth, shall remain." Herein is practical ruin, and yet the hope of ultimate recovery (see Isa. vi. 12, 13). In view of this sad fate awaiting them, God pleads with them to seek *him*, and not their idol shrines. "Seek Jehovah," lest this evil come upon you, ye turners of sweet justice into wormwood — him, the Maker of all things (v. 7) — seek him, "and ye shall live" (v. 6). Verse 7 is not an assertion, giving information, but a name or title, descriptive of the condition they have attained. So are verses 8 and 9 descriptive titles of God.

Notwithstanding God's determination to punish them, and notwithstanding their opposition to all correction and persistence in crushing the poor, all of which is known to God

and corroborated by the ominous silence of the preachers of righteousness, who think, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone" (Hos. iv. 17), yet still, pending their coming doom, Amos preaches repentance, and pleads with them to seek God, seek good, that they may live, and it may be a remnant shall be saved (v. 14, 15). But as they cannot be driven with the rod, so they cannot be drawn by love. Even now they show no signs of repentance, even now they are unyielding and resist the pleading love of God. Awful, therefore, will be their wailing and woe in that terrible day (v. 16, 17).

The thought in this paragraph (v. 1-17) is broken, and much of it is by many modern scholars excluded from the book of Amos. But the disjointed sentences and the irregular flow of thought are due to the strong emotion with which the prophet here uttered his pleadings. Strong emotions do not flow smoothly or in the orderly channels that cold reason has dug out. They are turbulent waters that overflow all banks and defy all orderly arrangement. If this fact were less often forgotten in the interpretation of the Bible, and if interpreters would more fully share the intense feelings of the biblical writers, there would be less trouble with the logic of its impassioned and poetic expressions. Who would think of looking for strict and orderly logic in the ravings of a pleading lover or in the expressions of a bereaved and grief-stricken mother?

5. They are *sinners, hypocritical and ceremonial* (v. 18-27). Not only are they sinners, as we have seen, in conduct and in worship, yielding neither to the rod of divine correction nor to the pleadings of divine love, but they are even hypocritically righteous and ceremonially religious. In their hypocritical self-righteousness they desire the great day



of Jehovah, a day of judgment to come, as if it could bring such as them anything but evil. "Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or [fleeing from the bear] he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him" (v. 18, 19). To their ceremonial religiousness, God can only say, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.... Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (v. 21-23); "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?... What does Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah vi. 7, 8); "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (v. 24).

Such a mixing of truth and error, of obedience and self-will, as they have been charged with (v. 18-26), was nothing new in the history of Israel. Sacrifices and offerings Israel did indeed bring in the wilderness for forty years, but also the tabernacle of their own king, and the shrine of their images, the star of their god which they had made for themselves, did they bear with them on their journey. Therefore, because of this incessant mixing up of pretended devotion to Jehovah with a religion of their own devising and gods of their own making, they shall be carried into captivity. The "therefore" of verse 27 Amos evidently applies to the syncretism of both ancient and contemporary Israel. In their religious conduct the people of his day were "witnesses and consented unto the works of their fathers"

(Luke xi. 48). Their and their fathers' work was in fact all of a piece, and the captivity, threatened both here and in Deut. xxix. 24-28, was the punishment for this sin of actual idolatry under the cloak of pretended Jehovah-worship.

6. They are *sinner*s self-centered and hardened (vi. 1-14). Darker and darker were the colors which Amos took to draw the picture of Israel's sins; but in this chapter we see them in the lurid and deceptive light which portends the storm. Outwardly they are more gloriously prosperous than ever. "At ease in Zion and secure in the mountain of Samaria are the notable men of this chief of nations, to whom all Israel comes with loyal allegiance." Calneh and Hamath the great and Gath of the Philistines are not better in worldly prosperity or in wideness of border than the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (vi. 1, 2). Completely self-complacent and at ease, even in the face of the misery and affliction of others of their countrymen, they have reached the ultimate limit of human sinfulness. It is not the coarser, more repulsive sins of the flesh that mark the last stage of a sinner's downward course. In Christ's time the Pharisees had really fallen deeper in sin than the publicans and harlots. When we speak of the sins for which Sodom was destroyed we are apt to think of their repulsive practices, but the word of God does not characterize her sin: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy" (Ezek. xvi. 49). Parallel with this passage is the list of sins with which Amos charges his contemporaries and fellow-citizens. Their ease and prosperity we have seen in vi. 1 and 2. In verse 3 he continues thus: "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come

near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (vi. 3-6).

All this unparalleled prosperity, this glorious civilization, appeared indeed excellent to the pride of Israel, but to God's righteous and impartial judgment it was hateful: "I abhor the excellency of Jacob and his palaces" (vi. 8). Into captivity they must go, and that at the head of the procession of captives, and all their revelry and their indulgent lazy life shall pass away. The wine of their banquets shall be turned into tears, and their ribald songs into the wail of the captive train. Their proud city shall be emptied of its inhabitants, and should as few as ten remain somewhere in a house, they too shall die. Verse 10 gives a specimen scene in the city after the war and exportation. In the deathlike silence of the devastated city a man creeps forth from his hiding-place to burn the bones of his dead and distant relatives: near ones there are none. He bears the gruesome burdens to the courtyard and burns them, for burying is out of the question. On returning to the house and finding there in the hidden recesses of the apparently deserted dwelling the lone and trembling form of some escaped inmate, he says to him, "Is there yet any one with thee?" and receives the answer, No, hist, for we dare not mention the name of Jehovah; so terrible has the dear name of their loving God become to this people who had made light of the Holy One of Israel.

As horses cannot run up the smooth surface of a rock,

there being not enough ground for them to dig their toe-calks into, so the word of God cannot so much as get a grasp on the hardened hearts of Israel, much less grow fruit there, neither could the plow of divine discipline make an impression there. To the claims of justice they were as impervious as a rock. Their pride, their self-esteem, had hardened them,—“Ye that rejoice in a thing of naught, that say, Have not we taken unto us horns by our own strength?” But God will humble their pride by sending on them another nation, one greater than they in their boasted strength, which shall lay them bare from one end of the land to the other, namely, the Assyrians. These will crush this spiritually rocklike people if God cannot fertilize them. In these verses (vi. 12, 13) we have the psychological climax in the human soul ripe for judgment, a condition of complacent self-sufficiency which amounts to a self-deification and the rejection of God.

### III. ISRAEL'S DOOM AS DEVELOPED IN GOD'S MIND (VII. 1-IX. 15).

We have seen the development of man's sin as the occasion and human cause of national ruin, a darkening picture of the heinousness of sin. The fact of their sin, undisturbed by wrath, unmoved by love, blindly confident in their piety, and impervious in self-complacency, all made up the one side of the coming judgment. There is another side—the divine. Here also there is progress. God's intention to let fly the arrows of his wrath gradually became an irrevocable decision. This progress is pictured in this section of the book. Up to this time the prophet preached to the mind and conscience of the people. From now on he relates the visions in which he saw what God was doing. Hence in this section the ordinary sermon addressed to the conscience of the peo-

ple would have been inappropriate as visions would have been in the preceding sections.

1. *The vision of locusts: the doom averted* (vii. 1-3). In the first vision God is seen forming, or about to form, locusts, in order to eat up the people's growth of vegetation after the king had had his share; but at the prayer of Amos God desists and pardons Jacob. Here the divine decision to punish is still subject to change at the intercession of the prophet.

2. *The vision of fire: the doom again averted* (vii. 4, 5). In this vision God announces his intention to contend, or that he is contending, with Israel by fire which is about to devour all things. As before, God allows the prophet's prayer to turn him from his purpose. Here, too, God's purpose is not yet irrevocable, but there is an advance on the first in the severity of the affliction and the state of the divine mind, for God is here *contending*, that is entering litigation, with Israel.

3. *The vision of the plumb-line: the doom irrevocable* (vii. 7-9). Here God is seen standing by Israel under the figure of a wall built with a plumb-line, that is a carefully constructed piece of mechanic's work, and hence must bear the inspection with the plumb-line, the mason's standard. Israel was God's handiwork, made according to a standard, made after an ideal, with a divine purpose in view. To this standard they must conform, this purpose they must meet. God applies the standard: they fall short. They are weighed in the balances and are found wanting (Dan. v. 27). God, like the potter, had his ideal for what he was making; and when they were not coming up to it, he determined to destroy them (Jer. xviii. 3-10). In the first vision there is only a swarm of locusts: in the second, God enters into for-

mal legal contest with them. Here he proves their default in the dramatic way of applying the plumb-line. Here first their failure comes to be clearly demonstrated in formal trial, and the sentence is passed and declared irrevocable. Thus there is an advance on the two former visions. In this, as in the following visions, account is taken, and that emphatically, of Israel's religious defection (vii. 9), as it is with the state of the heart that God is most, if not only, concerned, for out of the heart are the issues of life. In speaking to Israel in the preceding chapters (i.-vi.), Amos made a great deal of the conduct, as it is this of which alone account can be taken as between man and man. The motive of the heart must be an inference. Not so with God. "He looketh on the heart."

4. Amos is interrupted by Amaziah (vii. 10-14). When Amos, in the second part of verse 9, said that God would "rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword," he gave Amaziah a hold on his words. Amaziah sends to the king a report that is grossly exaggerated as to the words of Amos, and utterly false and malicious in the ascription of motive. On hearing these words, Amaziah felt it his duty, as religious head of the nation, to speak to this outsider and send him home. Imputing to him no higher than a bread-and-butter motive, he bluntly tells Amos to go to his native Judah and eat his bread there, as one would return a pauper to the land that gave him birth. Jeroboam the king does not seem to have concerned himself much with the reported conspiracy, and the priest's appeal to the royal authority was likely assumed for effect. Amos first repudiates the charge of a mercenary motive, and then predicts for Amaziah and his family fearful evils, and restates with added emphasis what he had said before about Israel's captivity (vii. 14-17).

5. *The vision of the summer fruit: decision confirmed by an oath* (viii. 1-14). In the fourth vision Amos sees a basket of summer fruit. Unlike the baskets of figs in Jer. xxiv., this has nothing to do with the condition of Israel, but is introduced for the play on the word, just as in Jer. i. the "rod of the almond tree" is used. The Hebrew word *kaitz* ("summer fruit") and the word *ketz* ("end") sound nearly alike, and the use of this word in the vision deeply impressed the fact that the end of the nation was at hand. Here too the sentence is irrevocable, but somewhat further advanced, as it is not merely pronounced but on the very point of execution.

In viii. 4-10 Amos addresses to Israel words of God that go with the vision, Jehovah confirming with an oath the threat he had announced in the vision. Verses 4-6 are the lengthy descriptive title with which he addresses this sinful people. Verse 7 is the oath sworn by "the Excellency," the God of Jacob, that he will never forget any of their works, at the heinousness of which the very land with its inhabitants shall mourn and tremble, and be moved as violently as the unstable waters of the Nile. The calamities predicted in verses 9 and 10 are not the pains of the body, but the anguish and horrors of the soul—mysterious darkness on a clear day, feasts turned to mourning, and songs to lamentations, the sackcloth and the baldness of the mourner, the mourning as for an only-begotten son. This will be deepest grief, bitter weeping, with no joy, but only a bitter end in view. The common consolation that it will soon be over and a better day will come has here no place. And what is promised is still deeper mental anguish, viz. spiritual hunger for God, unsatisfied (viii. 11-14). All these who now swear by the sin of Samaria, despising God's word to them, shall

then seek him everywhere, and shall faint because they will fail to find him.

6. *The vision of the Lord by the altar: destruction ordered* (ix. 1-6). In this vision Amos sees Jehovah, the God of Israel, standing by the altar of the false religion, giving command to smite it with ruinous effect. He has here actually entered upon the work of destruction. There is no longer any parleying, the work is represented as begun, and he will slay with the sword the very last one of them. None shall escape. Though they dig down into Sheol, or climb up into heaven, he will take them thence and slay them; though they hide in the labyrinth of Carmel's caves, there will he search them out; at the bottom of the sea, the serpent, at his command, shall bite them; even when they have left the land and are driven before their foes, the divine wrath will not cease to pursue them, for he will have a sword there in that foreign land to do his bidding on them; he will keep his eye on them, not for good but for evil.

Woe to the people that has Jehovah against it. He is not a common enemy. He is not one of the many gods that divide the heavens and the earth among themselves, thus leaving room for their victims to flee to some other realm. This is Jehovah of Hosts. His is such a power that he needs but "touch the land, and it melts, and all that dwell therein mourn." The solid earth shall rise and fall and be in commotion, like the river Nile, noted for its swelling floods. The heavens are his dominion also. He builds his chambers there, and the vaults of the sky rest on the foundation of the earth. The sea comes at his call, and he sends it out over the earth. In short, Jehovah is his name.

The calamities threatened in the section from vii. 1 to ix. 6 are almost exclusively mental and spiritual, as over against



the physical evils of the first six chapters of this book. Even where the sword is mentioned, as in vii. 9, the desolation of the temple, it is spiritual loss that is the more emphatic, being mentioned first. Amaziah's is a mental and soul agony (vii. 17). In viii. 3 the songs of their worship turned into wailings in the temple, the multitude of the dead strewn everywhere, the silent grief, the inexpressible horror of casting out of their doors the sacred remains of their beloved dead because they must get rid of them and cannot bury them — all this is soul agony. The midday darkness (viii. 9) is more mental horror than physical inconvenience. It is grief come to the uttermost (viii. 10), "as the mourning of an only son," and "the end thereof as a bitter day." In chapter ix. there is again physical suffering by the sword, though here the temple is first ruined, and the worst of the threatened evil is the thought that God has utterly rejected them, and has come to be their implacable enemy, which is mental and spiritual agony, and not physical pain.

The picture of the end as painted by Amos seems to be this. The invading army draws near. Anxiety takes hold of the people, but they trust in their gods and temples. These the enemy strikes down. All hope of help from their gods having perished, the people seek Jehovah with thirst-like desire, but find him not, or find that he has now turned against them. This is the intensest mental agony. Then comes captivity and the sword (ix. 1-8), which, though later in time, is not so distressing as the soul anguish that preceded it.

7. *The vision of a glorious day to come* (ix. 7-15). We have now come to the turning-point in the prophecy of Amos. For the nation of Northern Israel all is dark and hopeless. Before leaving this dark picture, he turns to it hastily once

more, to give us briefly the reason of Israel's ruin and to define clearly the aim of God in thus dealing with them. As to the first, their apostasy from Jehovah to self-instituted calf-worship and their transgressions of his laws have reduced Israel to the level of other and heathen nations. 'Not by bringing you up from Egypt makes you my people. I have dealt thus with the Philistines and the Syrians.' On the basis of my mercy and grace expressed in delivering you from bondage and leading you through the wilderness into this goodly land, you were to fulfil your part by remaining faithful and obedient to me (Ex. xx.). This you have failed to do, and hence you are not my people and I am not your God. You are no more to me than the other nations of the earth. Hence I will destroy you as a kingdom from the face of the earth.' Here the prophecy turns from the darkness of the doom to the brightness of a better day. According to the divine purpose, as indicated in 1 Kings xi. 39, the Northern Kingdom was never intended to continue as such. The people were to return to their ancient capital, and the dynasty that ruled there. This return the son of Nebat and his imitators made impossible, and brought on God the necessity of destroying them as a kingdom. But Northern Israel was not all of Israel. To Amos the people is one, — "The whole family which I brought up out of Egypt" (iii. 2). "Jehovah shall roar from Zion" is the text of his sermon to Israel; and when Northern Israel shall be wiped from the face of the earth, the very justice of God demands that the few remaining God-fearing persons shall be saved. And these, where shall they go? The house of the common ancestor Jacob (not called Israel here in order to leave room for the wider application) shall not thus utterly be destroyed (cp. Isaiah's remnant, Isa. x. 22-26), and

to this the sifted and saved of Northern Israel will belong. Of the people, as distinct from the kingdom, only the sinners shall die.

This turn from threatened ruin to promised glory, so characteristic of the prophets (Isa. viii. 8, 9; Jer. v. 10; xxx. 11; Joel ii. 11, 12), so true to the nature of God, who is love and mercy (Ex. xxxiv. 6; Jonah iv. 2, 11), is not strange of Amos. This turn is not even abrupt. That God will save the faithful few lies all along in his subconsciousness, in his heart of love. Thus the "shinbones and a piece of an ear" saved by the shepherd from the lion's jaw (iii. 12), the "brand plucked from the fire" (iv. 11), the "ten out of a hundred returning" (v. 3), the hoped-for "remnant of Joseph" (v. 15), are all stars glimmering in the night of predicted ruin.

Inasmuch as the people, to Amos, are one and undivided, their hope springs from Judah and the house of David, or rather from the tumble-down hut of David; for in that day the glorious house of the son of Jesse shall have been reduced to a mere tent or booth as the tree of Jesse shall have been reduced to a mere stump (Isa. xi. 1), ere God shall raise up the house of David or cause a sprout to spring from the stock of Jesse. God pledged the holy city of Jerusalem and the house of David a throne forever (2 Sam. vii. 13; 1 Kings xi. 36), but never in all prophecy does a ray of hope fall upon any of the capitals of Northern Israel or the kings of its dynasties. There is always, even in the darkest nights, a halo like the morning dawn around the heads of the kings of the house of David. God's promises cannot be broken. His faithfulness is not shattered by the faithlessness of his beneficiaries. Hence the house of David, and with it the kingdom of Israel, must continue in Judah. Individual

persons of the Northern Kingdom find here the realization of the promise of their God. In the center of the glorious picture is the more glorious Descendant of David. Around him are the nations of the earth, owned in love by the returned captives of Israel. All nature shall be abundantly fruitful and propitious to God's redeemed people. They shall be planted, no more to be plucked up, "saith Jehovah their God."

Thus Amos pleads in love with his countrymen to turn from their sins and avert the doom that hangs over them. All he says leads or should lead to that. For men will not turn from their sins to a God who himself is not most holy, nor to a God who is partial in his judgments. In developing the picture of their sin, he took away every excuse of theirs, and showed them up as sinners in the extreme. He showed God's reluctance to punish, so as to encourage them to return; held up to them the attractive picture of the redeemed in the Kingdom of God, so they would come to their God. The book has a message which moves toward an end and attains it. This message was first delivered to Northern Israel. The same God lives to-day. The same sins prevail to-day. The same message, therefore, comes to us to-day, viz. sin brings ruin, and return to God gives us a share in the Kingdom of God's redeemed.