

"Go Back To Where You Came From"

Amos, The Unwanted Prophet: Part Three

Complacent Theology: more than ever the elite were confident that Yahweh was with them and that, Yahweh being who he is, the greatest of gods, they were the first of nations. Indeed, there appears to have arisen at this time an expectation that Yahweh might soon act on a certain day to bring them as a people to a position of unprecedented preeminence over all others. It is this complacent theology which comes under attack in several of Amos' most memorable words.

Soporific Worship: Amos' abhorrence of these practices in his famous diatribe against solemn assemblies, is transparent. And this is what is wrong with it. In and of itself it may be all right, but it distracts from doing what is really important, what Yahweh really wants. "But let justice flow like water and uprightness like a never-failing stream."

"I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them...But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

"Father," his son Joshua looks at him. "You look startled."

"I am son," Amos replies. "I had another vision." Amos was speechless but tried to describe what he experienced. "At first I wasn't sure whether I was daydreaming or having a vision or seeing the real thing."

"Mother said you had these visions often," Joshua said.

"This is only the third one." he said. "I had thought they had ended after the last two."

"Why is that, father?" Josua said. "Mom said that the Lord God had relented and it would not happen."

"This is more shocking than even the catastrophe of Locust and drought!" Amos said still shaken.

"I am afraid to ask what the vision showed you this time."

Amos begins to explain the vision. "I saw a man standing by a tottering wall. It was a military invasion that would soon sweep through the land!"

"What does that mean," Joshua asked, "a tottering wall?"

"It came to me that it represents the House of Jacob's moral condition," he said. "The high places of Isaac will be ruined, and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste, and the sword in hand, says the Lord God, I will attack the House of Jeroboam!" Amos felt exhausted.

"Father," Joshua looks worried, "Why is the Lord God doing this?"

"From what I have heard from our merchant friends from Edom, is that basically good people are being sold by the rich into debt-slavery for piddling sums," Amos said angrily. "They are the ones who are bringing on this catastrophe that will punish the guilty rich and the innocent poor as well."

"Our Edomite brothers that pass through our way north know a lot from their travels," Joshua said with awe.

"Yes they do. From their travels they glean a lot of information that would otherwise be hard to come by," Amos said. "Unfortunately, unless you live in Jerusalem or are the rich in Samaria, the rest are considered outside the covenant, especially the Edomites and the Moabites."

Amos continued, "Another reason is that certain oppressed ones who prior to this time had been living on small ancestral estates were now being forced to sell under pressure from an upper class elite who were taxing and cheating them to death."

"How unjust!" now even Joshua was indignant. "The very ones sold into debt-slavery could have been landed owners like ourselves!"

"Exactly!" Amos replied. "And to make matters worse, the rich keep the cloaks taken in pledge from the desperately poor as collateral for small loans and holding them beyond nightfall!"

"That is expressly forbidden in the Torah!" Joshua added.

Amos was proud of his son for remembering well the teachings of the Law. "And that is why my son we have the Law from God through Moses. Unless we keep the Law of the Lord God, then they are useless, but more important, it will make our people vulnerable to the pagans from other lands around us."

"Father," his son asks. "When will this happen?"

"Son," and now Amos looks him in the face and answers. "I do not know for certain, but it may be soon. All I know is that when the vision is delivered to the North, the Lord God will put into action what he has warned he will do, unless the people repent. By then, all my pleading will have no effect."

"But, Father, why you?"

"I do not know," Amos honestly said. "Who knows the mind of God."

Joshua asks one more time, "Will we be safe?"

"If we put our trust in the Lord and keep his commandments," Amos said, "we will be safe. The Lord God has promised this."