

AMOS 4: 1 Listen to this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who tell their husbands, "Bring us drinks!"

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Israel reprov'd for their oppression, Amo 4:1-3; idolatry, Amo 4:4, Amo 4:5; and for their impenitence under the chastising hand of God, Amo 4:6-11. The omniscience and uncontrollable power of God, Amo 4:12, Amo 4:13.

Verse 1

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan - Such an address was quite natural from the herdsman of Tekoa. Bashan was famous for the fertility of its soil, and its flocks and herds; and the prophet here represents the iniquitous, opulent, idle, lazy drones, whether men or women, under the idea of fatted bullocks, which were shortly to be led out to the slaughter.

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AMOS 4: 2 The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that behold, "The days shall come on you that they will take you away with hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks."

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Verse 2

He will take you away with hooks - Two modes of fishing are here alluded to:

1. Angling with rod, line, and baited hook.
2. That with the gaff, eel-spear, harpoon, or such like; the first used in catching small fish, by which the common people may be here represented; the second, for catching large fish, such as leave the sea, and come up the rivers to deposit their spawn; or such as are caught in the sea, as sharks, whales, dolphins, and even the hippopotamus, to which the more powerful and opulent inhabitants may be likened.

But as the words in the text are generally feminine, it has been supposed that the prophecy is against the proud, powerful, voluptuous women. I rather think that the prophet speaks catachrestically; and means men of effeminate manners and idle lives. They are not the bulls of Bashan, but the cows; having little of the manly character remaining. Some understand the latter word as meaning a sort of basket or wicker fish-nets.

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AMOS 4: 3 You will go out at the breaches in the wall, everyone straight before her; and you will cast yourselves into Harmon," says the LORD.

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Verse 3

And ye shall go out at the breaches - Probably the metaphor is here kept up. They shall be caught by the hooks, or by the nets; and though they may make breaches in the latter by their flouncing when caught, they shall be taken out at these very breaches; and cast, not in the palace, but into a reservoir, to be kept awhile, and afterwards be taken out to be destroyed. Samaria itself is the net;

your adversaries shall besiege it, and make breaches in its walls. At those breaches ye shall endeavor to make your escape, but ye shall be caught and led into captivity, where most of you shall be destroyed. See Houbigant on this passage.

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AMOS 4: 4 "Go to Bethel, and sin; to Gilgal, and sin more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days,

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Verse 4

Come to Beth-el and transgress - Spoken ironically. Go on to worship your calves at Beth-el; and multiply your transgressions at Gilgal; the very place where I rolled away the reproach of your fathers, by admitting them there into my covenant by circumcision. A place that should have ever been sacred to me; but you have now desecrated it by enormous idolatries. Let your morning and evening sacrifices be offered still to your senseless gods; and continue to support your present vicious priesthood by the regular triennial tithes which should have been employed in my service; and: -

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AMOS 4: 5 offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim free will offerings and brag about them: for this pleases you, you children of Israel," says the Lord GOD.

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Verse 5

Over a sacrifice of thanksgiving - To the senseless metal, and the unfeeling stock and stone images, from which ye never did, and never could receive any help. Proceed yet farther, and bring free-will offerings; testify superabundant gratitude to your wooden and metallic gods, to whom ye are under such immense imaginary obligations! Proclaim and publish these offerings, and set forth the perfections of the objects of your worship; and see what they can do for you, when I, Jehovah, shall send drought, and blasting, and famine, and pestilence, and the sword among you.

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AMOS 4: 6 "I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in every town; yet you haven't returned to me," says the LORD.

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Verse 6

Cleanness of teeth - Scarcity of bread, as immediately explained. Ye shall have no trouble in cleaning your teeth, for ye shall have nothing to eat.

Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord - This reprehension is repeated live times in this chapter; and in it are strongly implied God's longsuffering, his various modes of fatherly chastisement, the ingratitude of the people, and their obstinate wickedness. The famine mentioned here is supposed to be that which is spoken of 2Kgs 8:1; but it is most likely to have been that mentioned by Joel, chaps. 1 and 2.

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AMOS 4: 7 "I also have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain on one city, and caused it not to rain on another city. One place was rained on, and the piece where it didn't rain withered.

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Verse 7

When there were yet three months to the harvest - St. Jerome says, from the end of April, when the latter rain falls, until harvest, there are three months, May, June, and July, in which no rain falls in Judea. The rain, therefore, that God had withheld from them, was that which was usual in the spring months, particularly in April.

I caused it to rain upon one city - To prove to them that this rain did not come fortuitously or of necessity, God was pleased to make these most evident distinctions. One city had rain and could fill all its tanks or cisterns, while a neighboring city had none. One farm or field was well watered, and abundant in its crops, while one contiguous to it had not a shower. In these instances a particular providence was most evident. "And yet, they did not return to the Lord."

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AMOS 4: 8 So two or three cities staggered to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet you haven't returned to me," says the LORD.

AMOS 4: 9 "I struck you with blight and mildew many times in your gardens and your vineyards; and your fig trees and your olive trees have the swarming locust devoured: yet you haven't returned to me," says the LORD.

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Verse 9

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew - He sent blasting and mildew on the crops, and the locust on the gardens, vineyards, and fields; and this in such a way as to show it was a Divine judgment. They saw this; "yet they did not return to the Lord!"

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AMOS 4: 10 "I sent plagues among you like I did Egypt. I have slain your young men with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camp, yet you haven't returned to me," says the LORD.

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Verse 10

I have sent - the pestilence - After the blasting and the mildew, the pestilence came; and it acted among them as one of the plagues of Egypt. Besides this, he had suffered their enemies to attack and prevail against them; alluding to the time in which the Syrians besieged Samaria, and reduced it to the most extreme necessity, when the head of an ass was sold for eighty pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five; and mothers ate the flesh of their children that had died through hunger, 2Kgs 6:25. And the people were miraculously relieved by the total slaughter of the

Syrians by the unseen hand of God, 2Kgs 7:1, etc. And yet, after all those signal judgments, and singular mercies, "they did not return unto the Lord!"

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AMOS 4: 11 "I have overthrown some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a burning stick plucked out of the fire; yet you haven't returned to me," says the LORD.

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Verse 11

I have overthrown some of you - In the destruction of your cities I have shown my judgments as signally as I did in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and those of you that did escape were as "brands plucked out of the fire;" if not consumed, yet much scorched. And as the judgment was evidently from my hand, so was the deliverance; "and yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

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AMOS 4: 12 "Therefore thus will I do to you, Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, Israel.

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Verse 12

Therefore thus will I do unto thee - I will continue my judgments, I will fight against you; and, because I am thus determined: -

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel - This is a military phrase, and is to be understood as a challenge to come out to battle. As if the Lord had said, I will attack you immediately. Throw yourselves into a posture of defense, summon your idols to your help: and try how far your strength, and that of your gods, will avail you against the unconquerable arm of the Lord of hosts! This verse has been often painfully misapplied by public teachers; it has no particular relation to the day of judgment, nor to the hour of death. These constructions are impositions on the text.

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AMOS 4: 13 For, behold, he who forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought; who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the high places of the earth: The LORD, the God of Armies, is his name."

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Verse 13

He that formeth the mountains - Here is a powerful description of the majesty of God. He formed the earth; he created the wind; he knows the inmost thoughts of the heart; he is the Creator of darkness and light; he steps from mountain to mountain, and has all things under his feet! Who is he who hath done and can do all these things? Jehovah Elohim Tsebaoth, that is his name.

1. The self-existing, eternal, and independent Being.

2. The God who is in covenant with mankind.

3. The universal Commander of all the hosts of earth and heaven. This name is farther illustrated in the following chapter. These words are full of instruction, and may be a subject of profitable meditation to every serious mind.