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AMOS 5: 1 Listen to this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.

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This chapter opens with a tender and pathetic lamentation, in the style of a funeral song, over the house of Israel, Amo 5:1, Amo 5:2. The prophet then glances at the awful threatening denounced against them, Amo 5:3; earnestly exhorting them to renounce their idols, and seek Jehovah, of whom he gives a very magnificent description, Amo 5:4-9. He then reproves their injustice and oppression with great warmth and indignation; exhorts them again to repentance; and enforces his exhortation with the most awful threatenings, delivered with great majesty and authority, and in images full of beauty and grandeur, Amo 5:10-24. The chapter concludes with observing that their idolatry was of long standing, that they increased the national guilt, by adding to the sins of their fathers; and that their punishment, therefore, should be great in proportion, Amo 5:25-27. Formerly numbers of them were brought captive to Damascus, 2Kgs 10:32, 2Kgs 10:33; but now they must go beyond it to Assyria, 2Kgs 15:29; 2Kgs 17:6.

Verse 1

Hear ye this word - Attend to this doleful song which I make for the house of Israel.

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AMOS 5: 2 "The virgin of Israel has fallen; She shall rise no more. She is cast down on her land; there is no one to raise her up."

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Verse 2

The virgin of Israel - The kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes, which were carried into captivity; and are now totally lost in the nations of the earth.

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AMOS 5: 3 For thus says the Lord GOD: "The city that went out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went out one hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel."

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Verse 3

The city that went out by a thousand - The city that could easily have furnished, on any emergency, a thousand fighting men, can now produce scarcely one hundred - one in ten of the former number; and now of the hundred scarcely ten remain: so reduced was Israel when Shalmaneser besieged and took Samaria, and carried the residue into captivity.

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AMOS 5: 4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek me, and you will live;

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Verse 4

Seek ye me, and ye shall live - Cease your rebellion against me; return to me with all your heart; and though consigned to death, ye shall be rescued and live. Deplorable as your case is, it is not utterly desperate.

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AMOS 5: 5 but don't seek Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and don't pass to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.

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Verse 5

But seek not Beth-el - There was one of Jeroboam's golden calves, and at Gilgal were carved images; both were places in which idolatry was triumphant. The prophet shows them that all hope from those quarters is utterly vain; for Gilgal shall go into captivity, and Beth-el be brought to naught. There is a play or paronomasia on the letters and words in this clause: הגלגל גלה יגלה ובית אל יהיה לאון haggilgal galoh yigleh, ubeith el yiheyeh leaven. "This Gilgal shall go captive into captivity; and Beth-el (the house of God) shall be for Beth-aven," (the house of iniquity.)

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AMOS 5: 6 Seek the LORD, and you will live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be no one to quench it in Bethel.

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Verse 6

Seek the Lord, and ye shall live - Repeated from Amo 5:4.

In the house of Joseph - The Israelites of the ten tribes, of whom Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, were the chief.

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AMOS 5: 7 You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth:

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Verse 7

Ye who turn judgment to wormwood - Who pervert judgment; causing him who obtains his suit to mourn sorely over the expenses he has incurred in gaining his right.

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AMOS 5: 8 seek him who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name,

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Verse 8

That maketh the seven stars and Orion - Or, Hyades and Arcturus, Kimah and Kesil. See my notes on Job 9:9; Job 38:32, where the subject of this verse is largely considered.

Turneth the shadow of death into the morning - Who makes day and night, light and darkness.

Calleth for the waters of the sea - Raising them up by evaporation, and collecting them into clouds.

And poureth them out - Causing them to drop down in showers upon the face of the earth. Who has done this? Jehovah is his name.

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AMOS 5: 9 who brings sudden destruction on the strong, so that destruction comes on the fortress.

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Verse 9

That strengtheneth the spoiled - Who takes the part of the poor and oppressed against the oppressor; and, in the course of his providence, sets up the former, and depresses the latter.

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AMOS 5: 10 They hate him who reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks blamelessly.

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Verse 10

They hate him that rebuketh in the gate - They cannot bear an upright magistrate, and will not have righteous laws executed.

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AMOS 5: 11 Therefore, because you trample on the poor, and take taxes from him of wheat: You have built houses of cut stone, but you will not dwell in them. You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

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Verse 11

Your treading is upon the poor - You tread them under your feet; they form the road on which ye walk; and yet it was by oppressing and impoverishing them that ye gained your riches.

Ye take from him burdens of wheat - Ye will have his bread for doing him justice.

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AMOS 5: 12 For I know how many your offences, and how great are your sins— you who afflict the just, who take a bribe, and who turn aside the needy in the courts.

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Verse 12

I know your manifold transgressions - I have marked the multitude of your smaller crimes, as well as your mighty offenses. Among their greater offenses were,

1. Their afflicting the righteous.
2. Taking bribes to blind their eyes in judgment. And,

3. Refusing to hear the poor, who had no money to give them.

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AMOS 5: 13 Therefore a prudent person keeps silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.

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Verse 13

The prudent shall keep silence - A wise man will consider that it is useless to complain. He can have no justice without bribes; and he has no money to give: consequently, in such an evil time, it is best to keep silence.

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AMOS 5: 14 Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of Armies, will be with you, as you say.

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Verse 14

Seek good, and not evil - Is there a greater mystery in the world, than that a man, instead of seeking good, will seek evil, knowing that it is evil?

And so the Lord - As God is the Fountain of good, so they who seek the supreme good seek him: and they who seek shall find him; For the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with him.

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AMOS 5: 15 Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that the LORD, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."

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Verse 15

Hate the evil, and love the good - What ruins you, avoid; what helps you, cleave to. And as a proof that you take this advice, purify the seats of justice, and then expect God to be gracious to the remnant of Joseph - to the posterity of the ten tribes.

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AMOS 5: 16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Armies, the Lord: "Wailing will be in all the broad ways; and they will say in all the streets, 'Alas! Alas!' and they will call the farmer to mourning, and those who are skillful in lamentation to wailing.

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Verse 16

They shall call the husbandman to mourning - Because the crops have failed, and the ground has been tilled in vain.

Such as are skillful of lamentation - See the note on Jer 9:17.

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AMOS 5: 17 In all vineyards there will be wailing; for I will pass through your midst," says the LORD.

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Verse 17

And in all vineyards shall be wailing - The places where festivity especially used to prevail.

I will pass through thee - As I passed, by the ministry of the destroying angel, through Egypt, not to spare, but to destroy.

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AMOS 5: 18 "Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light.

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Verse 18

Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord - The prophet had often denounced the coming of God's day, that is, of a time of judgment; and the unbelievers had said, "Let his day come, that we may see it." Now the prophet tells them that that day would be to them darkness - calamity, and not light - not prosperity.

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AMOS 5: 19 As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; Or he went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a snake bit him.

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Verse 19

As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him - They shall go from one evil to another. He who escapes from the lion's mouth shall fall into the bear's paws: -

Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charybdim.

The Israelites, under their king Menahem, wishing to avoid a civil war, called in Pul, king of Assyria, to help them. This led to a series of evils inflicted by the Syrian and Assyrian kings, till at last Israel was ravaged by Shalmaneser, and carried into captivity. Thus, in avoiding one evil they fell into another still more grievous.

Leaned his hands on a wall, and a serpent bit him - Snakes and venomous animals are fond of taking up their lodging in walls of houses, where they can either find or make holes; and it is dangerous to sit near them or lean against them. In the East Indies they keep the faithful mongose, a species of ichneumon, in their houses, for the purpose of destroying the snakes that infest them.

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AMOS 5: 20 Won't the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

AMOS 5: 21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I can't stand your solemn assemblies.

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## Verse 21

I hate, I despise your feast days - I abominate those sacrificial festivals where there is no piety, and I despise them because they pretend to be what they are not. This may refer to the three annual festivals which were still observed in a certain way among the Israelites.

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AMOS 5: 22 Yes, though you offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat animals.

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## Verse 22

The peace-offerings of your fat beasts - מריאכם merieychem probably means buffaloes; and so Bochart.

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AMOS 5: 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

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## Verse 23

The noise of thy songs - the melody of thy viols - They had both vocal and instrumental music in those sacrificial festivals; and God hated the noise of the one and shut his ears against the melody of the other. In the first there was nothing but noise, because their hearts were not right with God; and in the latter there could be nothing but (זמרת zimrath) cutting and scraping, because there was no heart - no religious sense in the thing, and nearly as little in them that used it. See on Amo 6:5 (note).

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AMOS 5: 24 But let justice roll on like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

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## Verse 24

Let judgment run down - Let the execution of justice be everywhere like the showers that fall upon the land to render it fertile; and let righteousness in heart and life be like a mighty river, or the Jordan, that shall wind its course through the whole nation, and carry every abomination into the Dead Sea. Let justice and righteousness prevail everywhere, and sweep their contraries out of the land.

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AMOS 5: 25 "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, house of Israel?"

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## Verse 25

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices - Some have been led to think that "during the forty years which the Israelites spent in the wilderness, between Egypt and the promised land, they did not offer any sacrifices, as in their circumstances it was impossible; they offered none because they had none." But such people must have forgotten that when the covenant was made at Sinai, there were burnt-offerings and peace-offerings of oxen sacrificed to the Lord, Exo 24:5; and at the setting up of the tabernacle the twelve princes of the twelve tribes offered each a young bullock, a ram, and a lamb, for a burnt-offering; a kid for a sin-offering; two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs, for a peace-offering, Num 7:12, etc.; which amounted to an immense number of victims offered in the course of the twelve days during which this feast of the dedication lasted. At the consecration of priests, bullocks and rams to a considerable number were offered, see Lev 8:1, etc.; but they were not offered so regularly, nor in such abundance, as they were after the settlement in the promised land. Learned men, therefore, have considered this verse as speaking thus: Did ye offer to me, during forty years in the wilderness, sacrifices in such a way as was pleasing to me? Ye did not; for your hearts were divided, and ye were generally in a spirit of insurrection or murmuring.

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AMOS 5: 26 You also carried the tent of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves.

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Verse 26

But ye have borne - The preceding verse spoke of their fathers; the present verse speaks of the Israelites then existing, who were so grievously addicted to idolatry, that they not only worshipped at stated public places the idols set up by public authority, but they carried their gods about with them everywhere.

The tabernacle of your Moloch - Probably a small portable shrine, with an image of their god in it, such as Moloch; and the star or representative of their god Chiun. For an ample exposition of this verse, see the note on Act 7:42; to which let me add, that from Picart's Religious Ceremonies, vol. 3 p. 199, we find that there was an idol named Choun worshipped among the Peruvians from the remotest antiquity.

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AMOS 5: 27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of Armies.

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Verse 27

Will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus - That is, into Assyria, the way to which, from Judea, was by Damascus.

But St. Stephen says, Act 7:43, beyond Babylon; because the Holy Spirit that was in him chose to extend the meaning of the original text to that great and final captivity of the Jews in general, when Zedekiah, their last king, and the people of Judea, were carried into Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Media; see 2Kgs 17:7, 2Kgs 17:24. This captivity happened after the time of Amos.