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AMOS 8: 1 Thus the Lord GOD showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit.

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This chapter begins with a fourth vision denoting the certainty and nearness of the destruction of Israel, Amo 8:1-3. The prophet then proceeds to reprove their oppression and injustice, Amo 8:4-7. Strong and beautiful figures, by which is represented the complete dissolution of the Israelitish polity, Amo 8:8-10. The people threatened with a most awful judgment; a Famine of the word of God, Amo 8:11-14.

Verse 1

A basket of summer fruit - As summer fruit was not proper for preserving, but must be eaten as soon as gathered, so the Lord intimates by this symbol that the kingdom of Israel was now ripe for destruction, and that punishment must descend upon it without delay. Some think the prophet means the fruits at the end of autumn. And as after the autumn no fruit could be expected, so Israel's summer is gone by, her autumn is ended, and she shall yield no more fruit. Or, the autumn of her iniquity is come, the measure is filled up, and now she shall gather the fruit of her sin in the abundance of her punishment.

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AMOS 8: 2 He said, "Amos, what do you see?" I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come on my people Israel. I will not again pass by them any more.

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Verse 2

A basket of summer fruit - כלוב קיץ kelub kayits, the end is come - בא הקץ ba hakkets: here is a paronomasia or play upon the words kayits, summer fruit, and kets, the end, both coming from similar roots. See the note on Eze 7:2 (note), where there is a similar play on the same word.

I will not again pass by them any more - I will be no longer their Guardian.

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AMOS 8: 3 The songs of the temple will be wailings in that day," says the Lord GOD. "The dead bodies will be many. In every place they will throw them out with silence.

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Verse 3

The songs of the temple - Instead of שירות shiroth, songs, Houbigant reads שורות shoroth, the singing women; and Newcome follows him: "And the singing women of the palace shall howl in that day." Instead of joyous songs, they shall have nothing but lamentation.

They shall cast them forth with silence - Every place shall be filled with the dead, and a dreadful silence shall reign universally; the few that remain being afraid either to speak or complain, or even to chant a funeral dirge for the most respectable of the dead.

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AMOS 8: 4 Hear this, you who desire to swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail,

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Verse 4

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy - Ye that bruise the poor; exact from them, and tread them under foot.

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AMOS 8: 5 Saying, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may market wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel large, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit;

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Verse 5

When will the new moon be gone - This was kept as a kind of holy day, not by Divine command, but by custom. The Sabbath was strictly holy; and yet so covetous were they that they grudged to give to God and their own souls this seventh portion of time! But bad and execrable as they were, they neither set forth their corn, nor their wheat, nor any other kind of merchandise, on the Sabbath. They were saints then, when compared to multitudes called Christians, who keep their shops either partially or entirely open on the Lord's day, and buy and sell without any scruples of conscience. Conscience! alas! they have none; it is seared as with a hot iron. The strong man armed, in them, is quiet, for all his goods are in peace.

Making the ephah small, and the shekel great - Giving short measure, and taking full price; or, buying with a heavy weight, and selling with one that was light.

Falsifying the balances - Having one scale light, and the other weighty; one end of the beam long, and the other short. A few months ago I detected a knave with such balances; with a slip of his finger along the beam he altered the center, which made three ounces short weight in every pound. He did it so dexterously, that though I knew he was cheating, or, as the prophet expresses it, was falsifying the balances by deceit, it was some time before I could detect the fraud, and not till I had been several times cheated by this accomplished knave. So we find that though the knaves of ancient Israel are dead, they have left their successors behind them.

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AMOS 8: 6 that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the sweepings with the wheat?"

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Verse 6

That we may buy the poor for silver - Buying their services for such a time, with just money enough to clear them from other creditors.

And the needy for a pair of shoes - See Amo 2:6.

And sell the refuse of the wheat! - Selling bad wheat and damaged flour to poor people as good, knowing that such cannot afford to prosecute them.

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AMOS 8: 7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Surely I will never forget any of their works."

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Verse 7

By the excellency of Jacob - By the state of eminence to which he had raised the descendants of Jacob; or, by the excellent One of Jacob, that is, Himself. The meaning is: "As surely as I have raised you to such a state of eminence, so surely will I punish you in proportion to your advantages and your crimes."

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AMOS 8: 8 Won't the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? Yes, it will rise up wholly like the River; and it will be stirred up and sink again, like the River of Egypt.

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Verse 8

Shall not the land tremble for this - It is supposed that an earthquake is here intended, and that the rising up and subsiding as a flood refers to that heaving motion that takes place in an earthquake, and which the prophet here compares to the overflowing and subsiding of the waters of the Nile. But it may refer to commotions among the people.

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AMOS 8: 9 It will happen in that day," says the Lord GOD, "that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.

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Verse 9

I will cause the sun to go down at noon - This may either refer to that darkness which often precedes and accompanies earthquakes, or to an eclipse. Abp. Usher has shown that about eleven years after Amos prophesied there were two great eclipses of the sun; one at the feast of tabernacles, and the other some time before the passover. The prophet may refer to the darkness occasioned by those eclipses; yet I rather think the whole may refer to the earthquake.

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AMOS 8: 10 I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will make you wear sackcloth on all your bodies, and baldness on every head. I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.

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Verse 10

I will turn your feasts into mourning - See on Amo 8:3 (note).

A bitter day - A time of grievous calamity.

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AMOS 8: 11 Behold, the days come," says the Lord GOD, "that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the LORD's words.

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Verse 11

A famine in the land - The most grievous of all famines, a famine of the words of Jehovah; a time in which no prophet should appear, no spiritual counsellor, no faithful reprove, none any longer who would point out the way of salvation, or would assure them of the mercy of God on their repentance and return to him. This is the severest of God's judgments on this side the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched.

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AMOS 8: 12 They will wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will run back and forth to seek the LORD's word, and will not find it.

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Verse 12

They shall wander front sea to sea - From the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea or from west to east, and from north to south, to seek the word of the Lord; to find a prophet, or any person authorized by God to show them the end of their calamities. In this state they shall continue, because they have rejected Him who is the bread of life.

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AMOS 8: 13 In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint for thirst.

AMOS 8: 14 Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, 'As your god, Dan, lives;' and, 'As the way of Beersheba lives;' they will fall, and never rise up again."

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Verse 14

By the sin of Samaria - Baal, who was worshipped here.

Thy god, O Dan - The golden calf, or ox, the representative of the Egyptian god Apis, or Osiris.

The manner of Beer-sheba - The worship, or object of worship. Another of the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up there. The word דרך derech, way, is here taken for the object and mode of worship; see Act 19:9, where way is taken for the creed and form of Divine worship as practiced by the followers of Christ, and by which they were distinguished from the Jews. See also Act 9:2.