

## ***IX. Seek the LORD and Live***

30-Jan-05            Amos 5:1-17            Keddie Chapter 7

*Theme:*            The Transforming God calls us to forsake our sins, seek Him, and live; the alternative is the wailing and lamentation that comes with judgment.

*Key Verses:*    Amos 5:4, 6a, 14a <sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek Me and live.” ... <sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD and live. ... <sup>14</sup>Seek good and not evil, That you may live.

### Review

Last week we looked at Amos chapter 4. **Amos starts out by mocking the so-called “cows of Bashan” – the rich, socialite ladies of Samaria.** These society gals seem well-mannered on the exterior, even religious. They go to church and observe the rituals and forms of their religion. However, their religion is as hollow as their profession. They prefer the applause of men for their religious deeds than the approval of God. **Because of their motives, and because of their lack of appreciation for obeying God and worshiping Him appropriately, their religion is in vain.** Every time they practice it, they sin.

**Even worse, their so-called religion has no impact on their lives at all. They are manipulative, self-absorbed, and callous about the plight of the less fortunate. In fact, they obtain their own comfortable lifestyle at the expense of others, oppressing the poor and crushing the needy.** For their sins, Amos warns that their lives will soon be turned upside-down, and they will one day feel the oppression of a foreign invader who will lead them out of the city, captive like fish on fishhooks.

**The warning signs were all there. God had sent a series of “natural disasters” to warn Israel about their apostasy.** But neither famine, nor drought, nor crop disease, nor locusts, nor plague, nor war, nor destroying earthquake could wake Israel from their sin. **“Yet you have not returned to Me” is the refrain over and over again. “Therefore” says the Lord, “Prepare to meet your God!” Meeting God is a frightening thing. We will all have to do it one day. Will you meet God on your terms, or His? Will you meet him in your own righteousness, or cloaked in the righteousness of Christ? Amos reminds us through his closing hymn, that God is a sovereign God and that we cannot stand before Him – “The LORD God of hosts is His name.”**

### Introduction

Today we reach the center of the structure of Amos. **Section four is the pivot point, the heart of the prophecy. And as we might expect, the focus of this pivotal section of the prophet is on repentance.** Amos calls Israel to repent, to “seek the LORD and live.” And as we might expect, **the heart of this seven-part chiasm is also arranged as a seven-part chiasm. Even within this section there are seven-part chiasms.** The structure of this section is so clear that I find it amusing when I read comments like this one: “Amos 5:4-17 is a fast-moving, *rather unstructured* but impassioned plea for the doomed people to ‘seek the Lord and live’” (Keddie).

**The section begins and ends with lamentation and wailing. The next units (B-B’) are the calls to repentance:** “Seek Me and live;” “Seek the LORD and live;” “Seek good and not evil that you may live;” and “Hate evil, love good.” The sections are further united by references to “the house of Joseph” in unit B and “the remnant of Joseph” in unit B’. **Moving inward in the**

## Minor Prophets: Joel & Amos

chiastic structure, units C and C' look at the sins of the people of Israel, particularly focusing in on injustice and unrighteousness. Finally, the center of the section is the second fragment of the hymn that we saw last week. This hymn of God's sovereignty lies at the center of the center of the book and the refrain of the hymn serves as a fitting capstone to Amos: "The LORD is His name."

- A. Lamentation over fallen Israel (5:1-3)
- B. Call to repentance: 'seek me and live' (5:4-6)
- C. Condemnation of Israel's injustice: 'you who turn justice into wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth' (5:7)
- X. CENTER: hymn of Yahweh's power; seven verbs (5:8-9)
- C'. Condemnation of Israel's injustice: "you who afflict the righteous and deprive the poor of justice" (5:10-13)
- B'. Call to repentance: "seek good, not evil, that you may live (5:14-15)
- A'. Coming lamentation (5:16-17)

We will look at each of these seven units of this central section of the chiasm of Amos.

### Exposition

#### A. Lamentation (5:1-3)

There is an abrupt switch from 4:13 to 5:1. After offering us the first verse of the majestic hymn *The LORD God Is His Name*, Amos strikes up a different tune – a dirge of lamentation. **Amos makes three points in his lamentation: 1) Israel is fallen; 2) Israel is forsaken; and 3) Israel is ready for a funeral.**

**First, Israel is fallen:** "The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more" (5:2a). Israel was to be a pure bride, betrothed to her Husband, the Lord. As Amos' successor Hosea ably points out, Israel is no longer a pure virgin; she is an adulterous wife who has abandoned God for other loves. **Israel has fallen from her status as the bride and will be destroyed.** This verse is reminiscent of Revelation 18:2:

**Revelation 18:2** <sup>2</sup>And he [the angel] cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!*"

**Second, Israel is forsaken:** "She lies forsaken on her land; there is no one to raise her up" (5:2b). Israel is forsaken. **She has abandoned God; now God has abandoned her.** "Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!"

**Third, Israel is funereal:** "For thus says the Lord GOD: 'The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel'" (5:3). **The picture is one of invasion and death through war. The emphasis here is not on the surviving remnant, but on the near total devastation that is coming.** Israel is headed for a funeral, and Amos is singing the funeral lamentation.

Keddie make a good application of these opening verses of chapter 5: "What about churches that are still apparently alive? The message is for the living, not for the dead and gone! Israel was outwardly quite prosperous. Many churches today are similarly thriving. There is a great deal of activity, a well-developed program, a wide range of organizations catering for every age group in church and community and perhaps even thronged services on the Lord's Day. Israel may have

## Minor Prophets: Joel & Amos

been dead, from God's point of view, but you would not have said so had you seen the statistics on church attendance and giving. We must therefore, look at the deeper things. Israel's prosperity, military prowess and ersatz spirituality could not save her. Apostasy, however magnificent its panoply and power, will perish for the lack of a real soul."

### B. Seek the LORD and Live (5:4-6)

Having presided over the funeral dirge, Amos now says something quite remarkable: "For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: 'Seek Me and live.'" Perhaps the reports of Israel's demise are a bit premature! It's a bit like the movie *The Princess Bride*. The hero Wesley is apparently tortured to death. Inigo Montoya and the giant Fezzik take Wesley to Miracle Max for a miracle. There they learn that Wesley is not completely dead, he is just "mostly dead." In fact, he's been "mostly dead all day." Miracle Max is able to revive Wesley, and he goes on to defeat Prince Humperdink, rescue the Princess Buttercup, and live happily ever after.

"Seek Me and live." **Even though Israel is fallen, forsaken, and headed for their own funeral, God still calls them to repent and live.** God is much greater than Miracle Max. Wesley was "mostly dead all day," and Miracle Max was able to revive him. But Israel was completely dead. **What God offers here is no less than a spiritual resurrection. What a great and gracious God we have! This is the gospel.** As Ephesians 2 so succinctly describes, we were all dead in our trespasses and sins until God reached down and resurrected us:

**Ephesians 2:1, 4-5** <sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, *who were dead in trespasses and sins...* <sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>*even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved).

Notice that **this little unit is arranged in a seven-part chiasm:**

- A. *Seek Me and live;*
- B. But do not seek *Bethel*,
- C. Nor enter *Gilgal*,
- X. Nor pass over to *Beersheba*;
- C'. For *Gilgal* shall surely go into captivity,
- B'. And *Bethel* shall come to nothing.
- A'. *Seek the LORD and live*, lest He break out ...

Looking at the chiasm, we can see that **the call to repentance, the exhortation to seek God and live, brackets the unit. In between the call to seek God and live, Amos exhorts Israel to stop their destructive religious practices that are at the root of the funeral dirge** Amos has already expressed in verses 1-3. **The exhortation centers on three religious shrines: Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba.** All three of these locations are associated with the history of Israel.

**First is Bethel.** We've already encountered the shrine of Bethel a few times in our study of Amos (4:4; 7:10-13). In the book of Genesis, **Bethel is particularly associated with the patriarch Jacob, the ancestor of Israel.** He visited Bethel twice, once on his flight from the land (Gen. 28:10-22), and once upon his return to the land to fulfill his vow made there (Gen. 35:1-15). At both occasions, God made His presence and promises known to Jacob. Jacob responded in worship at Bethel – the "house of God." Later on, the first king of Israel, Jeroboam I, established Bethel as an alternate worship site to Jerusalem.

**Israel is called to seek God; not to seek Bethel, "the house of God."** Israel was looking at the externals of religion. **They were more interested in the house of God rather than the God of**

**the house.** When the people of God are more interested in the external trappings of religion than in God Himself, they are in trouble. **What is the fate of Bethel? It will “come to nothing.” In Hebrew, Beth-El becomes Beth-Aven, the house of wickedness.** This is exactly what Hosea writes just a few years later:

**Hosea 4:15** <sup>15</sup>Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Let not Judah offend. Do not come up to Gilgal, Nor go up to Beth Aven, Nor swear an oath, saying, “As the LORD lives.”

Their future lies in seeking God, not seeking Bethel.

**Second is Gilgal.** Gilgal is the place where Israel first crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land under Joshua (Jos. 5:1-12). Gilgal was the headquarters of Joshua’s campaign of conquest. It was also the site where Israel’s first king, Saul, was confirmed in his office (1 Sam. 11:14-15). As such, **it symbolized possession and dominion of the land.** However, Amos says that “Gilgal shall surely go into captivity.” Motyer comments: **“Gilgal spoke of an inheritance but could not make that inheritance a sure possession—rather the reverse, for, in spite of much veneration at the shrine, banishment is to be their experience.”**

**Third is Beersheba.** Beersheba was located in the southern part of Judah, so it wasn’t even in the northern kingdom of Israel. Apparently some Israelites took pilgrimages to Beersheba, in much the same way as Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca, for example. **Why would they go to Beersheba? Perhaps the reason lies in its association with all three of the Genesis patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** Abraham lived at Beersheba “many days” (Gen. 21:32-33). It was there that Abimelech made the statement that became the theme of Beersheba: “God is with you in all that you do” (Gen. 21:22). Isaac also lived in Beersheba. It was there that God came to Isaac in a night vision and pronounced the same promise as He had made to his father Abraham: “Do not fear, for I am with you.” (Gen. 26:23-24). Jacob journeyed through Beersheba on his way down to Egypt to be reunited with his son Joseph. While at Beersheba, God spoke to Jacob in a night vision similar to that of his father Isaac: “Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again” (Gen. 46:1-4). Motyer summarizes: **“Thus at Beersheba each of the three patriarchs in turn received the assurance of the companionship of God with them, ‘I am with you.’ Like Bethel, Beersheba was the repository of promises, but somehow it could not bestow what it expressed, the living companionship of the Lord.”**

You might ask yourself, why is Beersheba at the center of the chiasm? That is a focal point of the literary structure. I’ve asked myself the same question. Here is the answer that I’ve come up with. Amos is pointing out the folly of their manmade religion. **The Israelites have demonstrated their willingness to go through the motions, to embellish the external trappings of their religion.** We saw that with the cows of Bashan in 4:4-5. But here, they are even willing to commit themselves to a pilgrimage into the southern kingdom, to go to Beersheba to worship. The folly of this action lies in the partial truth of it. **The Israelites should be making pilgrimages to the southern kingdom to worship. Except that instead of going to Beersheba, they should be going to – Jerusalem, the home of the one true Temple and altar for sacrifice.** They’ve demonstrated their willingness to be religious, but their religion is in vain, because they are looking in the wrong place. **A modern-day equivalent would be looking for religious satisfaction in Buddha or Allah or Vishnu rather than in the only place it can be found – Jesus Christ.**

Bethel. Gilgal. Beersheba. Israel was “looking for love in all the wrong places.” **Israel is exhorted not to seek external religions trappings, enter into false shrines, or go on vain religious pilgrimages. Instead, they are instructed to “seek the LORD and live.” True religion does not involve empty rites or practices; it involves a relationship with a person. If we want to live, we must seek Jesus Christ.**

**Amos ends the section with what will happen if they do not seek and live: the house of Joseph will be burned down to the ground.** Remember that Joseph was given a double portion of inheritance in Israel – two tribes – his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim was the main tribe of the northern kingdom and the location of the capital of Samaria, so the “house of Joseph” is another way of describing the northern kingdom of Israel. The “house of Joseph” is contrasted with Bethel – “the house of God.” Two different meanings could be in play here – the false priests of Bethel are part of the problem and thus will burn with the rest of the house of Joseph. Alternately, the true house of God stands in opposition to the false religion practiced by the house of Joseph and will preside over their destruction. Either way, **the only hope for Israel to avoid Amos’ funeral dirge is to abandon Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, repent of their sin, return to God, and seek the Lord in order that they may live.**

### C. The Alchemy of Sin (5:7)

I’ve entitled this third unit of the central section of Amos as “the alchemy of sin.” Alchemy is that ancient “science” of transformation. **Alchemists of old tried to find ways to transform lead into gold. Alchemists were interested in physical transformation.** Here in Amos 5:7, we have a spiritual transformation: “You who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth!” **Israel has committed spiritual alchemy – they have transformed justice into wormwood.** That is quite a feat!

Hubbard comments: “*Justice* puts some slight emphasis on establishing and preserving order in society by righting wrongs and punishing the wrong-doers, while *righteousness* emphasizes the relationships that covenantal society entails and insists that each partner in the covenant do all that is necessary to keep the covenant working right. The verbs catch the heart of the crime: the people express their rebellion (1) by *turning* the sweet words and deeds of justice (cf. Ps. 119:103) into the bitterest substance nameable — *wormwood*, a familiar plant in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds, proverbial for a bitterness (Pr. 5:4), comparable only to the taste of poison (Am. 6:12; Deut. 29:18; Jer. 23:15; Lam. 3:19); and (2) by *casting* to the ground, as though it were trash, the righteousness that God counts precious.”

**Proverbs 5:3-4** <sup>3</sup>For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; <sup>4</sup>But in the end she is *bitter as wormwood*, Sharp as a two-edged sword.

**Lamentations 3:15** <sup>15</sup>He has filled me with *bitterness*, He has made me drink *wormwood*.

**The previous unit (5:4-6) described within its call to repentance the religious sins of Israel – their folly in pursuing the religious shrines of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. These are sins against God. Here in verse 7, Amos is speaking of their social sins – the practice of injustice and unrighteousness against their fellow men.** Amos has made this charge before, in 2:6-7 (the initial charge against Israel), 3:9-10 (storing up robbery and violence in palaces), and 4:1 (the sins of the cows of Bashan). So we shouldn’t be surprised to see it again. It is one of Amos’ big themes. In the parallel unit to this one (5:10-13), Amos will enumerate more fully Israel’s

## Minor Prophets: Joel & Amos

sins, describing in more detail the spiritual alchemy of Israel – how they transformed justice into bitter poison, leading to death.

### D. Sovereignty Hymn – Second Stanza (5:8-9)

That brings us to **the heart of this section of Amos – in fact, the heart of the entire book of Amos – the second stanza of the hymn of God’s sovereignty.** Amos has first sung the funeral dirge, but then given them hope that God may “resurrect” them and cause them to live if they seek the Lord. In order to do that, they first must forsake their spiritual sins against God as practiced at the false shrines of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. Next, they must also forsake their social sins – the alchemy of sin that transforms justice into wormwood and righteousness into something to be discarded. **Having identified the two main categories of sins to forsake, now Amos sings to us about the God we are to turn to and seek.** What a God He is!

Amos 5:8-9 <sup>8</sup>He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning  
And makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on  
the face of the earth; The LORD is His name. <sup>9</sup>He rains ruin upon the strong, So that fury  
comes upon the fortress.

**This hymn contains seven action verbs:** *He made, He turns and makes, He calls and pours, He rains* so that *fury comes.* Indeed, **it is a display of God’s sovereignty over His creation.** Hubbard reminds us that the hymn crescendos in the “awesome announcement: *the Lord is his name*, a clause which, appropriately, is central to the chiasmic structure of this passage and, indeed, to the whole book.”

Motyer calls this the “**Hymn to the Transforming God,**” an appropriate title especially considering Amos’ presentation of the alchemy of Israel’s sin. **God is the True Alchemist, the only one who is truly able to transform the world.** Motyer says: “He makes the seasonal changes. This (8a) appears to be the force of the reference to *the Pleiades and Orion*, constellations which were used in the ancient world to mark the turn of the seasons. He also makes the daily changes, when deep darkness becomes morning and subsequently *day* yields to *night*. He makes the occasional changes (8b), as when the sea wall is breached and the land is inundated, and the historical changes, when *the strong* and *the fortress* fall before the destroyer (9). But this fine hymn is bracketed about with references to a people who resist change. They come to Bethel (7) and they go from Bethel (10-12) totally unaltered. The failure, therefore, lay not in the Bethel promises nor in the God of Bethel, but in the willfulness which would not be transformed from lawlessness and transgression.”

### E. The Anatomy of Sin (5:10-13)

From this *Hymn to the Transforming God*, the rest of our section parallels in reverse order the first three sections of Amos chapter 5. **The unit contained in 5:10-13 parallels that of 5:7, the alchemy of sin.** I’ve entitled this section “**the anatomy of sin**” because here we have more detail about the perversions of justice and righteousness that Amos simply alludes to in 5:7. To see the correlation with 5:7, note the emphasis in verse 12 on affliction of the just or righteous, and on keeping the poor from access to justice at the gate. The NIV translation is helpful here:

Amos 5:12 <sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the *righteous* and take bribes and you deprive the poor of *justice* in the courts.

In fact, **the setting for verses 10-13 is at the city gate, the place where the city elders met to hear court cases and administer justice. The problem that Amos outlines, however, is that the courts of the city gate are corrupt – justice is not available to the righteous one who needs it.**

**This unit contains seven couplets.** Let's run through them briefly. **The first couplet is verse 10:** "They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly." **Here we have our twin ideas of *justice in the gate* and *righteousness*** through the one who speaks uprightly. However, we can see the alchemy of sin in action – they hate justice and righteousness and will end up perverting them into the bitter wormwood of verse 7.

The **second couplet speaks of official oppression:** "Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him" (5:11a). Again, we are confronted with the rich and powerful oppressing the poor unfairly. **The third and fourth couplets speak of these oppressors attempting to rest in the fruits of their ill-gotten gains:** "Though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them;" and "You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them" (5:11b-c). This is a common theme in the Old Testament – the wicked ultimately not enjoying the fruits of their sin.

**The fifth couplet is an accusation from God:** "For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins" (5:12a). Despite their attempts to hide their corruption and social injustice from prying eyes, **they cannot cover up their sin from the omniscient, omnipotent God. The sixth couplet is a further description of their social injustice and corruption:** "Afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate" (5:12b).

**The seventh couplet seems to be a proverb:** "Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time" (5:13). In a sense, it mirrors the first couplet. **The corrupt Israelites are trying to silence those who speak uprightly; Amos reminds them that it is they themselves who should keep quiet.** "Anything you say can and will be used against you." If they are wise, they will see that God has built up a solid case against them. Their hidden sins are out in plain view. **The anatomy of their sin has been exposed.** Their corruption of justice against their fellow man into bitter wormwood will be used against them as they face the Righteous Judge.

#### **F. Seek Good and Not Evil That You May Live (5:14-15)**

As we work our way back out of the chiasm, **we come again to the call to repentance and life, although expressed slightly differently.** In verses 4 and 6, the instruction was to "seek Me" or "seek the Lord" and "live." Here they are commanded to "seek good and not evil, that you may live" (5:14). In addition to being a parallel statement to verses 4-6, I believe that this command is also a commentary on the religious sin that Amos has already outlined.

**The Israelites may have thought they were seeking God when they went to worship at Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba.** After all, look at the second half of verse 14: "So that the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken." **When they've gone to worship, they have spoken of the LORD God of hosts being with them.** Lord God Almighty was on their side, or so they thought. We've already seen this same thought from the book of Hosea:

**Hosea 4:15** <sup>15</sup>Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Let not Judah offend. Do not come up to Gilgal, Nor go up to Beth Aven, Nor swear an oath, saying, "As the LORD lives."

**When the Israelite worshippers went up to their false shrines, they invoked the name of the Lord. They were outwardly pious, but inwardly corrupt.** What God is saying here through

## Minor Prophets: Joel & Amos

Amos is that instead of seeking the good, the right, the holy in their worship, they have instead been sinning through seeking evil. **They may think their religious expression guarantees God's presence and favor, but that is not so. God is not with them.** God's favor does not shine upon them. They have rejected the good and exchanged it for evil – more spiritual alchemy. And so **Amos exhorts his Israelite listeners to recognize their folly and seek the Lord correctly, so that they may live.**

But Israel is guilty not only of religious sin; they are also responsible for corruption of justice against their neighbors. Therefore, **the second exhortation Amos gives focuses on correcting this second major category of Israelite sin:** “Hate evil, love good: establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph” (5:15). “Establish justice in the gate” ties us squarely back to the previous unit, where the social injustice of their court system was highlighted. **Loving God is just the first half of our duty – the second half is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Israel was guilty of both, and Amos calls them to “love God, hate sin.”**

Notice the encouragement that Amos gives Israelite to forsake their sin and return to God: “It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.” **The “remnant of Joseph” ties us back to the parallel section in verse 6 where God threatens to “break out like fire in the house of Joseph.” This time, instead of the stick, Amos offers the carrot. Grace is extended to the remnant.**

### G. Wailing (5:16-17)

**Unfortunately (for Israel), Amos has one more unit left to complete his chiasm. He began with a lament; he ends with a lament.** He began with a funeral; he ends with a funeral. The emphasis is on *wailing*: “Therefore the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, says this: ‘There shall be *wailing* in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, “Alas! Alas!” They shall call the farmer to mourning and skillful lamenters to *wailing*. In all vineyards there shall be *wailing*’” (5:16-17a). Wailing. Mourning. Lamenting. This is the grief that they will experience when the LORD comes: “‘For I will pass through you,’ says the LORD” (5:17b).

**The picture that Amos paints here takes us once again back to Egypt, to the Exodus, and to the awful tenth plague of the death of the firstborn. At that time, the Lord *passed through* Egypt but He *passed over* Israel:**

**Exodus 12:12-13, 30** <sup>12</sup>For *I will pass through* the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, *I will pass over you*; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt....<sup>30</sup>So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and *there was a great cry in Egypt*, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

**When God passed through Egypt, there was a great cry of mourning, for every household was visited with death. But there was safety in the land of Goshen, because the Israelites had smeared the blood of the Passover lamb on their door frames so that God passed over them. For the Israelites of Amos' day, no such Passover was planned. The blood of their unauthorized sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal and Beersheba did not protect them from the wrath of a Just God. The next time that God comes in judgment, He was going to *pass through* Israel, and the result would be death, wailing, mourning, lamentation.**

## Minor Prophets: Joel & Amos

Hubbard summarizes: “They have left Yahweh no choice but to pass through in devastating judgment and never again to pass by in grace and forgiveness. The collapse of justice and righteousness leads to more than social upheaval. It leads inevitably to divine retribution.”

Israel was commanded to *seek God and live*. The alternative was that God would seek them out with death as the result. Two clear choices are presented to Israel. Unfortunately, we know which choice Israel ultimately made.

### Conclusion

What can we say in conclusion? **At the heart of the message of Amos is a call to repentance, to “seek the LORD and live.” At the heart of the heart of the message is the awesome God we are called to seek: “the LORD is His name.”**

**Amos presents his case in a well-organized, well-argued way through a seven-part chiasm. The first units (A-A’) describe the lamentation for a people who are separated from God, for a people who have forgotten their calling as the Virgin Bride of Israel and are now no different than the Egyptians of the Tenth Plague. The next units (B-B’) are the calls to repentance, to seek God and to forsake their sins.** Between the two repentance units, Israel is called to forsake both their religious sins and their societal sins. Moving inward to **the next two units (C-C’), those sins – particularly their societal sins – are enumerated.** They are guilty of spiritual alchemy; of transforming justice into the bitterness of wormwood, and discarding righteousness as they trample on the rights of the less fortunate. **Finally, the central focus (X) of this central section of Amos is on the Lord. He is the True Transforming God.** He is the God that can resurrect dead sinners back to life. He is the God who can rain fury and ruin upon the sinner who does not repent. Our God is an awesome God: The LORD is His name.

**This is the same God we serve today. And this is the same call to repentance we must hear: “Seek the LORD and live.” There is no other way to have life.**

**John 14:6** <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

**If we are to live, we must seek and serve the Lord – Jesus Christ.**

Next week: Lesson 10 – At Ease in Zion – Amos 5:18-6:14 – Keddie Chapters 8-9

Close in Prayer.