

# Ancient Message for a Modern World

Rosmini Centre – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019



In the Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament, **Amos** was one of the Twelve Minor Prophets.

There are FOUR MAJOR PROPHETS



### Structure of the Twelve Minor Prophets

1	<i>Assyrian Period</i>	}	Hosea
2			Joel
3			Amos
4			Obadiah
5			Jonah
6			Micah
7			Nahum
8	<i>Babylonian Period</i>	}	Habakkuk
9			Zephaniah
10	<i>Post-Babylonian Period</i>	}	Haggai
11			Zechariah
12			Malachi



The Kingdom of Israel (10 Tribes) with Capital City SAMARIA and BETHEL the place of worship.

The Kingdom of JUDAH (2 Tribes) with Capital City JERUSALEM and the TEMPLE of SOLOMON as the place of worship.

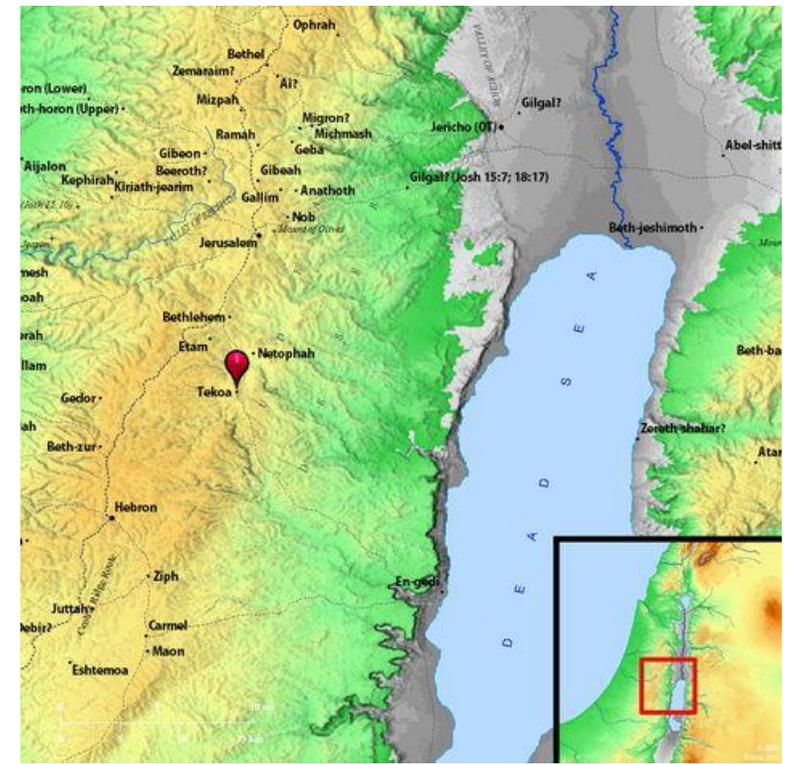
The Kingdom of Israel at the time of SAUL – DAVID - SOLOMON



The Prophet AMOS was from TEKOA, a small village 13 miles south of Jerusalem. By profession he was a **shepherd** and had a **sycamore-figs orchard**. Scholars find his language vivid, elegant, expressive which indicates he was a learned man. Certainly he knew what was going on not only in Israel and Judah but also in the surrounding nations.

He did not belong to any group of prophets. He is proud to say it clearly: **“I am not a prophet”**. He meant he did not belong to a school/guild of prophets who usually were associated with the Temple in Jerusalem or in Bethel or in other Jewish shrines. The reputation of such prophets was often tarnished by their greed for money and by their giving prophecies to appease the king or the mood of the nation.

**AMOS** claims he was called by **GOD** to announce doom to Israel. His prophetic activity probably lasted a year, in 762 BC. It came to an abrupt end, being banished from the kingdom of Israel by the High Priest **AMAZIAH**.



*'I am not a prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood. I am merely a herdsman and dresser of sycamore-figs.'*

*<sup>15</sup> But Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel."*

## The Prophetic Call

Two characteristics: 1- It is a clear call;  
2- It takes over the life of the prophet.

The vocation to the prophecy or to the religious or priestly life or to witnessing the Christian message can never be riddled with doubts and confusion.

It is as clear as the roar of a lion, says Amos.

“Yahweh roars from Zion, and makes himself heard from Jerusalem” (Amos 1, 2)

“The lion roars: who is not afraid? The Lord has spoken: who will not prophesy?” (Amo 3:8)

God's call takes over your life. You become a prophet first of all by letting your life speak the prophecy.

AMOS: “Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel." (Amos 7:15)

ISAIAH: “Whom shall I send?” “Here I am, send me”

JEREMIAH: “The word of Yahweh came to me, saying:  
<sup>5</sup> 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you came to birth, I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.' (Jer. 1:4-5)

EZEKIEL: “You are to deliver my words to them whether they listen or not, for they are a tribe of rebels. Open your mouth and eat what I am about to give you.' He un-rolled a scroll in front of me; it was written on, front and back; on it was written 'Lamentations, dirges and cries of grief'. (Ez. 2:7-10)

HOSEA: His whole life was a prophecy for Israel....

There is a **lesson for all of us**: when the LORD calls, the **calling is always precise and clear**. For **St. Anthony**, the call came from the mouth of the priest preaching on JESUS' words: *“If you want to be perfect, sell all you have, give the money to the poor, come and follow Me”*. He did precisely what JESUS said through the priest. The same for **St. Augustine**, as he was waiting to be seen by St. Ambrose in Milan: *“Take and read, take and read”* he could hear from the voice of a child. He looked around, saw the Bible open, went and read the words that drove him to full conversion.

**Every Christian has a call to the religious life**, since to everyone JESUS said, “If you want to be perfect...”; it is a question of asking ourselves if we truly feel we are up to following **JESUS poor, chaste, and obedient** for life. Obviously, there is a clear call to married life too and this is not inferior in any way to any other call since what matters is to do **what God wants us to do**.

Our life should be taken over by our special call.  
*“My food, said JESUS, is to do the will of my Father in Heaven”*.

The Old Testament Prophets give us a wonderful example of people whose life and words were identical in many ways. **Think of Hosea** – he had to marry a prostitute – **Ezekiel** – his wife died as a sign that the Temple was going to be destroyed – **Isaiah** – he had to walk naked through the streets of Jerusalem as a sign that the people would walk naked to exile – **Amos** – he was snatched from his fields to go up North to tell God's message of doom, being rejected by the High Priest.

St. Paul VI: *“The people of today need witnesses more than preachers”*. Blessed Rosmini insisted on learning made alive in righteous living.  
*“JESUS began to do and to teach”*.

AMOS was active c. 762BC during the rule of kings JEROBOAM II – King of Israel - and UZZIAH – King of Judah.

He was from the southern KINGDOM OF JUDAH but preached in the northern KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

Amos wrote at a time of relative peace and great prosperity for the Kingdom of Israel but also of neglect of the Lord's Commandments.

He spoke against an increased disparity between the very wealthy and the very poor.

His major themes of social justice, God's omnipotence, and divine judgment became the major themes of later prophecy.,

✦ Amos — message to wealthy and religious leaders about their greed, selfishness, immorality, extortion, bribery and injustice



*Let justice roll down  
like waters, and  
righteousness like  
an ever-flowing stream  
-Amos 5:24*

HERE?

1. Israel lacked justice and righteousness, they have done the opposites: oppression and evil
2. All their religion, wealth, and power were in vain
3. They failed to heed God's chastisement
4. The Day of Judgment is a day of darkness

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BUT LET JUSTICE ROLL  
ON LIKE A RIVER,  
RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE  
A NEVER-FAILING  
STREAM!

AMOS 5:24

Book River- ISRAEL

Amos 4: Prepare to  
meet your God!

The Lion's roaring for  
repentance toward justice in  
politics and economics

**"BEHOLD,  
THE DAYS ARE COMING,"**  
SAYS THE LORD GOD.

**"THAT I WILL SEND A  
FAMINE  
ON THE LAND,  
NOT A FAMINE OF BREAD, NOR A THIRST FOR WATER,  
BUT OF HEARING THE  
WORDS OF THE LORD."**

AMOS 8:11

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## AMOS, THE PROPHET OF DOOM

**Amos 1:1** Words of Amos one of the shepherds of Tekoa. The visions he had about Israel, in the time of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. (Amos 1:1)

The Lord Yahweh says this- **an enemy will soon besiege the land**, he will bring down your strength and **your palaces will be looted**. (Amos 3:11)

Listen to this **you cows of Bashan** living on the hill of Samaria, exploiting the weak and ill-treating the poor, saying to your husbands, 'Bring us something to drink!'

<sup>2</sup> The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: Look, **the days will soon be on you when he will use hooks to drag you away and fish-hooks for the very last of you;**

<sup>3</sup> **through the breaches in the wall you will leave**, each one straight ahead, and be herded away towards Hermon - (Amos 4:1-3)

Listen to this word which I utter against you, it is a dirge, House of Israel: **She has fallen down, never to rise again**, the virgin Israel. There she lies on her own soil, with no one to lift her up. (Amo 5:1-2)

So now listen to what Yahweh says: "You say: Do not prophesy against Israel, do not foretell doom on the House of Isaac!" <sup>17</sup> Very well, this is what Yahweh says, "**Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets, your sons and daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parcelled out by measuring line, and you yourself will die on polluted soil and Israel will go into captivity far from its own land!**" '

(Amo 7:16-17)

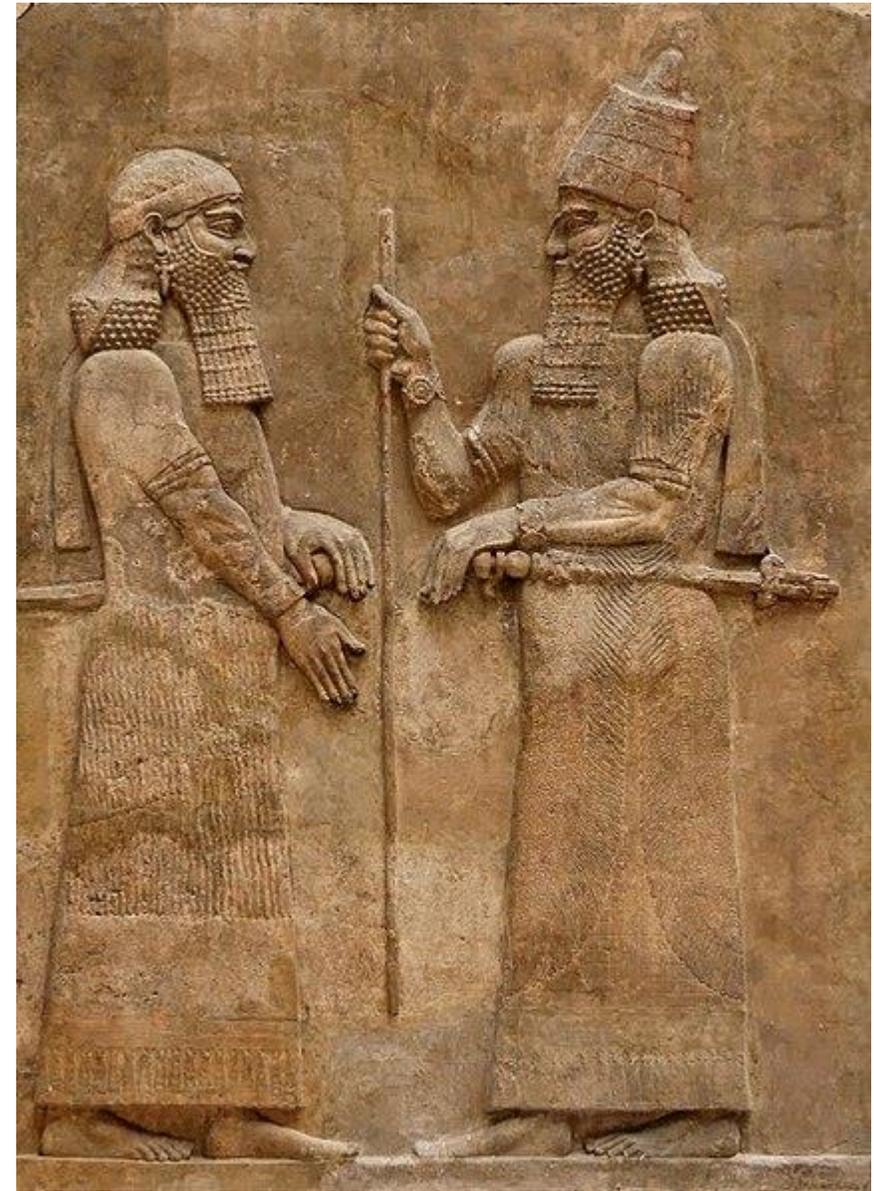
“Disaster for those so comfortable in Zion and for those so confident on the hill of Samaria, the notables of **this first of nations**, those to whom the House of Israel has recourse! (Amo 6:1)

<sup>4</sup> Lying on **ivory beds** and sprawling on their divans, they **dine on lambs from the flock**, and stall-fattened veal;

<sup>5</sup> they bawl to the **sound of the lyre** and, like David, they **invent musical instruments**;

<sup>6</sup> they **drink wine by the bowlful**, and lard themselves with the finest oils, but **for the ruin of Joseph they care nothing**.

<sup>7</sup> That is why **they will now go into captivity**, heading the column of captives. The sprawlers' revelry is over”. (Amo 6:2-7)



**The Fall of Israel in 725BC**

**“What do you see, Amos?”** he asked. **'A basket of ripe fruit,'** I said. Then Yahweh said, **'The time is ripe for my people Israel;** I will not continue to overlook their offences.

<sup>3</sup> That day, the palace songs will turn to howls, -declares the Lord Yahweh- the corpses will be many that are thrown down everywhere. Keep silent!

<sup>4</sup> Listen to this, you who crush the needy and reduce the oppressed to nothing,

<sup>5</sup> you who say, **'When will New Moon be over so that we can sell our corn, and Sabbath, so that we can market our wheat? Then, we can make the bushel-measure smaller and the shekel-weight bigger, by fraudulently tampering with the scales.**

<sup>6</sup> We can buy up the weak for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals, and even get a price for the sweepings of the wheat.'

<sup>9</sup> **'On that Day- declares the Lord Yahweh- I shall make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.**

<sup>10</sup> I shall turn your festivals into mourning and all your singing into lamentation; I shall make you all wear sacking round your waists and have all your heads shaved. **I shall make it like the mourning for an only child,** and it will end like the bitterest of days.

(Amo 8:2-10)



## The ALMIGHTY IS THE RULER OF THE NATIONS

For the three crimes, the four crimes of Damascus, I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have threshed Gilead with iron threshing-sledges, <sup>4</sup> I shall send fire down on the House of Hazael to devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad; <sup>5</sup> I shall break the gate-bar of Damascus, I shall destroy the inhabitant of Bikath-Aven, the holder of the sceptre in Beth-Eden, and the people of Aram will be deported to Kir, Yahweh says.

<sup>6</sup> Yahweh says this: For the three crimes, the four crimes of Gaza, I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have deported entire nations as slaves to Edom, <sup>7</sup> I shall send fire down on the walls of Gaza to devour its palaces;

<sup>8</sup> I shall destroy the inhabitant of Ashdod, the holder of the sceptre in Ashkelon; I shall turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord Yahweh.

<sup>9</sup> Yahweh says this: For the three crimes, the four crimes of Tyre, I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have handed hosts of captives over to Edom, heedless of a covenant of brotherhood, <sup>10</sup> I shall send fire down on the walls of Tyre to devour its palaces.

**PS: See chapters 1 – 2 for more examples of Amos' belief that GOD is the GOD of all the nations of the earth, caring for all, watching their behaviour, judging them, punishing them.**

## ISRAEL'S CRIMES

The LORD says this: **For the three crimes, the four crimes of Israel**, I have made my decree and will not relent: *because they have sold the upright for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals,*

*<sup>7</sup> because they have crushed the heads of the weak into the dust and thrust the rights of the oppressed to one side, father and son sleeping with the same girl and thus profaning my holy name,*

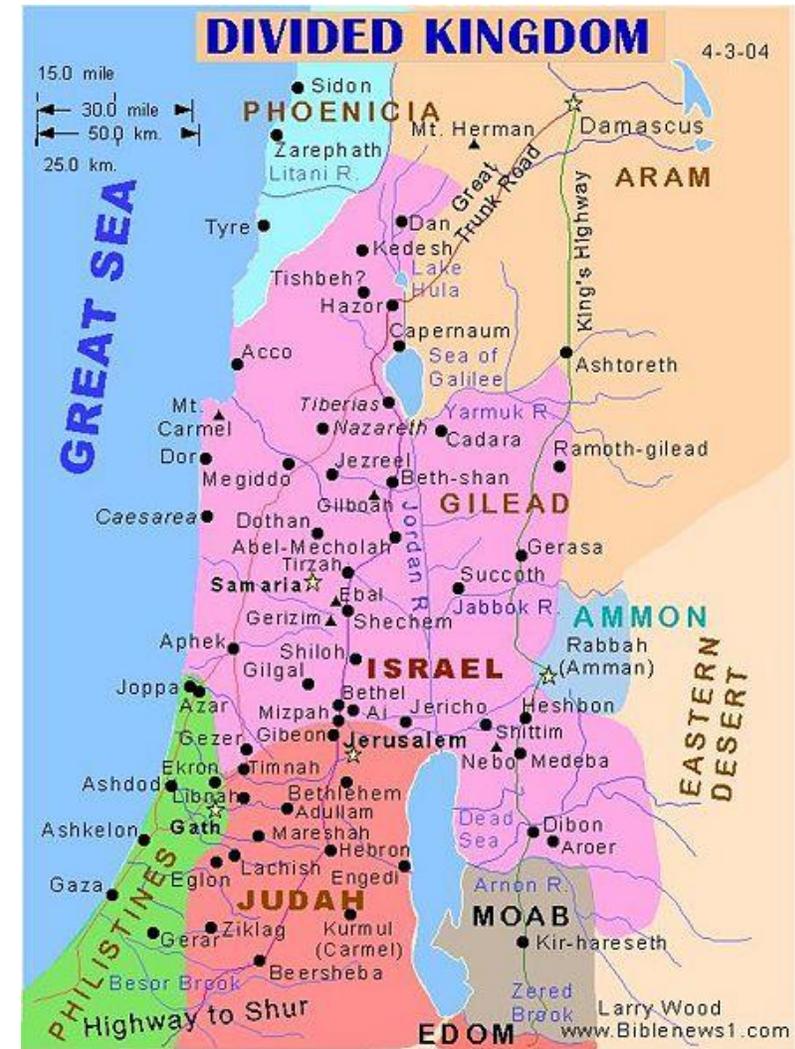
*<sup>8</sup> lying down beside every altar on clothes acquired as pledges, and drinking the wine of the people they have fined in the house of their god.*

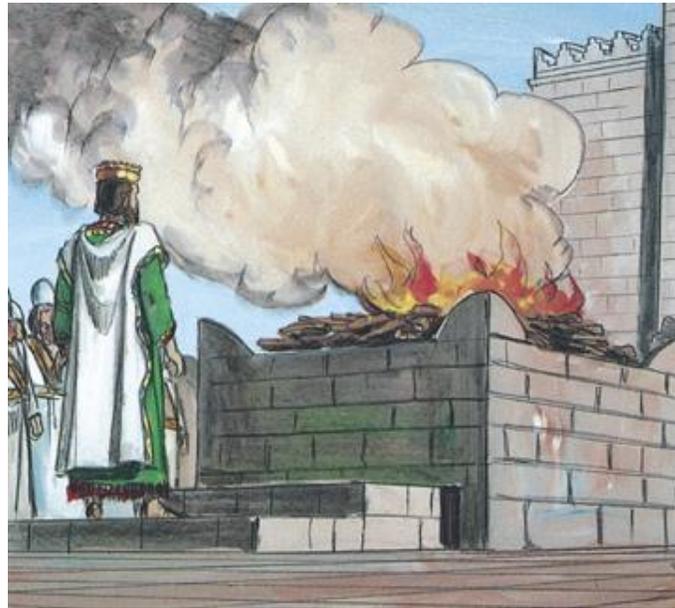
<sup>9</sup> **Yet it was I who** destroyed the Amorite before them, he who was as tall as the cedars, as strong as the oaks; I who destroyed his fruit above ground and his roots below.

<sup>10</sup> **It was I who brought you up from Egypt** and for forty years led you through the desert to take possession of the Amorite's country;

<sup>11</sup> **I who raised up prophets from your sons** and Nazirites from your young men. Israelites, is this not true? -declares Yahweh!

<sup>12</sup> But you have made the Nazirite drink wine and given orders to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy.' (Amo 2:6-12)





**The rebellious audience had a ready answer for AMOS: how can God be displeased with us? We have great celebrations in His honour, we constantly offer Him sacrifices, bulls and sheep by the thousands, and He is blessing us with the abundance of everything!**

### **This is God's reply:**

**“Go to Bethel, and sin, to Gilgal, and sin even harder! Bring your sacrifices each morning, your tithes every third day,**

**<sup>5</sup> burn your thank-offering of leaven and widely publicise your free-will offerings, for this, children of Israel, is what makes you happy -declares the Lord Yahweh (Amos 4:4)**

**“I hate, I scorn your festivals, I take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies.**

**<sup>22</sup> When you bring me burnt offerings . . . your oblations, I do not accept them and I do not look at your communion sacrifices of fat cattle.**

**<sup>23</sup> Spare me the din of your chanting, let me hear none of your strumming on lyres,**

**<sup>24</sup> but let justice flow like water, and uprightness like a never-failing stream!**

**<sup>25</sup> Did you bring me sacrifices and oblations those forty years in the desert,**

**House of Israel?**

**(Amos 5:21-25)**

## GOD'S SPECIAL LOVE FOR ISRAEL

**Amos 3:1** Listen, Israelites, to this prophecy which Yahweh pronounces against you, against the whole family which **I brought up from Egypt:**

<sup>2</sup> **You alone have I intimately known of all the families of earth, that is why I shall punish you for all your wrong-doings. (Amos 3:1-2)**

**Amos 7:1** This is what Lord Yahweh showed me: there was **a swarm of locusts** when the second crop was sprouting, full-grown locusts, after the king's hay had been cut.

<sup>2</sup> When they had eaten all the grass in the land, I said, 'Lord Yahweh, forgive, I beg you. **How can Jacob survive, being so small?**'

<sup>3</sup> Then **Yahweh relented**; 'It will not happen,' said Yahweh.

<sup>4</sup> This is what Lord Yahweh showed me: Lord Yahweh **summoning fire in punishment**; it had devoured the great Abyss and was encroaching on the land,

<sup>5</sup> when I said, 'Lord Yahweh, stop, I beg you. **How can Jacob survive, being so small?**'

<sup>6</sup> Then **Yahweh relented**; 'This will not happen either,' said the Lord Yahweh.

<sup>7</sup> This is what he showed me: **the Lord standing by a wall, with a plumb-line** in his hand.

<sup>8</sup> 'What do you see, Amos?' Yahweh asked me. 'A plumb-line,' I said. Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am going to put a plumb-line in among my people Israel; never again will I overlook their offences.

(Amos 7:1-8)

## The God of ISRAEL IS THE ONLY GOD

He it is who forges the mountains, creates the wind, who reveals his mind to humankind, changes the dawn into darkness and strides on the heights of the world: **Yahweh, God Sabaoth, is his name.** (Amos 4:13)

He it is who makes the **Pleiades and Orion**, who turns shadow dark as death into morning and day to darkest night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the surface of the land. **Yahweh is his name.** (Amos 5:8)

**Lord Yahweh Sabaoth**- he touches the earth and it melts, and all living things on it lament. <sup>6</sup> He who builds his mansions in the heavens, supporting his vault on the earth; who summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the surface of the land: **Yahweh is his name.**

<sup>7</sup> **Are not you and the Cushites all the same to me, children of Israel? - declares Yahweh. Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt and the Philistines from Capthor, and the Aramaeans from Kir?**  
(Amo 9:5-7)



## IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR ISRAEL?

<sup>11</sup> **On that Day, I shall rebuild the tottering hut of David**, make good the gaps in it, restore its ruins and rebuild it as it was in the days of old,

<sup>12</sup> for them to be master of what is left of Edom and of all the nations once called mine -Yahweh declares, and he will perform it.

<sup>13</sup> The days are **coming-** declares Yahweh- **when the ploughman will tread on the heels of the reaper, and the treader of grapes on the heels of the sower of seed, and the mountains will run with new wine and the hills all flow with it.**

<sup>14</sup> I shall **restore the fortunes of my people Israel**; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will plant vineyards and drink their wine, they will lay out gardens and eat their produce.

<sup>15</sup> And **I shall plant them in their own soil** and they will never be uprooted again from the country which I have given them, declares Yahweh, your God. (Amos 9:11-15)



## THE DAY OF THE LORD

In traditional Jewish teaching, the **DAY of the LORD** will be a radiant, glorious, splendid **DAY**, when the **MESSIAH** shall come to put things right all over the earth, establishing **JERUSALEM** as the centre of God's people. The **DAY of the LORD** shall be everlasting in glory and radiant celebrations.

**For AMOS it is not so! The DAY of the LORD is dark and full of woe and gloom, the DAY of judgment and punishment. He was referring primarily to the FALL of the KINGDOM OF ISRAEL merely 40 YEARS AWAY**

This expression, found in Amos, will be used by all other prophets, and in the **New Testament**. The **DAY of the LORD** indicates the **Second Coming of CHRIST** in glory. It will be a **DAY of Judgment and punishment** but also the glorious **ETERNAL DAY of CHRIST's triumph**, of the **NEW JERUSALEM**, of the final establishment of the **KINGDOM OF GOD**.

Last Sunday (XXIX of the Year) we heard the last line of the Gospel: **“When the Son of Man comes, will HE find any faith on earth?”** There is only one answer to this question as the **LORD** presented it, and the answer is **NO**. The theme of the **“remnant”** is present in the Bible, and it indicates also the final stages of the history of Humanity. **FREEDOM** is **GOD's** greatest gift to us, but it comes at a price for those who abuse it!