

## Amos Chapter 4

Verses 1-5: The husbands of "Samaria" met their wives' demands for luxury by denying "the poor" justice, and then by taking their land through excessive taxation and usury. These wealthy women ("cows of Bashan"), were in turn using their wealth to enrich themselves rather than to help the needy, unaware that they were "fattening" themselves for the slaughter of God's devastating judgment.

**Amos 4:1 "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that [are] in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink."**

"Ye kine of Bashan" is an indictment against the women of Samaria. The "cows" of Bashan were noted for being well fed and strong because of the lush pastures of the area. The women of Samaria lived in luxurious wantonness, enjoying their luxury because they oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. When the women of the land sink to such a low moral and degraded state, God's judgment must fall, for the entire land is degraded.

Bashan was a fertile region below Mt. Hermon east of the Jordan River known for its lush pastures. Under Jeroboam II, Israel was enjoying great prosperity.

"Kine", in the verse above, means a heifer. This is not a female cow, but speaking of women. It is terrible when a woman has no compassion on the poor. In the 31st chapter of Proverbs, there is a description of a virtuous woman. Read it all. I will give one verse here.

Proverbs 31:20 "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

The woman (in verse 1 of this lesson), is the opposite of a virtuous woman, and is a disgrace to womanhood. She is not only greedy and hurtful to the poor, but it appears she is a drinker as well. It is bad enough to see an evil man, but an evil woman no one can bear.

**Amos 4:2 "The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks."**

As sure as God is holy and true, so certainly will he bring the threatened judgment upon you.

Days shall come (literally, are among), upon you. God's Day and eternity are ever coming. He reminds them of their continual approach. He says not only that they will certainly come, but they are ever coming. They are holding on their steady course. Each day which passes, they advance a day closer upon the sinner. Most people put out of their minds what "will come;" they "put far the evil day."

That he will take you away with hooks, and your future descendants with fish hooks. The enemy, the king of Assyria, or God by him, would take them out of their own land, as fish out of water.

Out of their own element, and carry them captive into a strange land, both them and their posterity. And which should be as easily done as fish are taken with the hook, even though they were as the kine of Bashan.

God swears by Himself, because there is no one above Him, He is Holiness. God is absolute Truth and Holiness. The mention of the "hooks" means that the people will be helpless to save themselves. God will take them away as if they had a hook in their mouth. A fish is helpless when he has a fishhook in his mouth.

**Amos 4:3 "And ye shall go out at the breaches, every [cow at that which is] before her; and ye shall cast [them] into the palace, saith the LORD."**

At the breaches ... into the palace": Captives will be led out of the city through breaches in the walls, depicting massive overthrow. The location of the palace is unknown.

Cattle find a hole in the fence and go through it. These women will find a break in the wall and go out at it. They will be carried away by the enemy to their stronghold.

Verses 4-5: With poignant sarcasm, Amos indicted Israel for idolatrous sacrifices and ritualistic religion.

The people of Israel upheld the elements of religion they preferred. The feasting and festivals, while ignoring God's real priorities such as justice (5:14-15, 21-24; Hosea 6:6). They even set up a shrine in "Beth-el" so they would not have to travel to the temple in Jerusalem for worship. So God sarcastically told Israel to continue their hypocritical worship.

**Amos 4:4 "Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, [and] your tithes after three years:"**

"Beth-el ... Gilgal": Beth-el, the place of Jacob's dream (Gen. Chapter 28), and Gilgal, where Israel was circumcised before surrounding Jericho (Joshua 5:1-9), were sacred to Israel.

"Gilgal" represents Israel's early faithfulness (Joshua 5:10; 9:6).

Beth-el and Gilgal had been places of true worship in the past. These of Israel had turned both places into a place for false worship as they both were places where idols were worshipped. It is so strange that all the time the Israelites were worshipping false gods; they were still going through the motion of worshipping God. They were still sacrificing every day as they had before they started worshipping false gods.

There was a tithe that took place every third year, but most believe this is speaking of a tithe every three weeks which is not the law. This tithe had to be associated with their worship of false gods. (In 2nd Timothy chapter 3), we read that even in our day, people will have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

**Amos 4:5 "And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim [and] publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."**

“Offer ... leaven”: Though prohibited from most offerings, leaven was required as a part of the thank offering (Lev. 7:11-15).

Leaven symbolizes sin. The law forbids any leaven in any meat offering consumed by fire. Leavened bread was never to touch the altar. We see they had strayed very far from the law of their fathers.

Verses 6-11: Past warnings were futile, a fact repeatedly emphasized by “Yet you have not returned to Me” (verses 6, 8-11).

Before confronting sinners in final judgment, God has often used drastic measures, in this case, famine (4:6), drought (4:7-8), the devastation of crops (4:9), plague (4:10), and warfare (4:10); in an effort to get people’s attention and bring them to repentance. Still, Israel would not return to Him. Every person must “prepare to meet ... God”, either as loving father or as divine Judge (Heb. 10:31; Rev. 20:15).

**Amos 4:6 "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."**

“Cleanness of teeth”: Amos employed this euphemism to depict the absence of food during the famine and drought sent by God to warn Israel, which he described (in verses 6-9; Deuteronomy 28:22-24; 47-48; Lev. 26:18).

The fact that their teeth were clean indicates a famine in the land. God brought the famine to cause them to repent and return to Him. Even the famine did not cause them to repent of their sins.

**Amos 4:7 "And also I have withholden the rain from you, when [there were] yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered."**

The withdrawal of rain at this period (February and March), is at the present day most calamitous to the crops in Palestine.

That you might see my hand in it and be instructed, I gave rain to one city, and withheld rain from the next neighbor city. Nay, one part of a field, the same field, was watered and flourished, another part dry and withered. All this was done to convince and turn you.

I stopped the rain until the fruits of the earth were destroyed with drought, and yet you would not consider and to return to me by repentance.

This is speaking of a drought coming. Again, God did this to get them to repent and turn back to Him, but they did not. He caused such selective places to rain so that it should have been obvious that this was a judgment of God upon them.

**Amos 4:8 "So two [or] three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."**

Two or three cities, that is, the inhabitants of them, being without water, went up and down in quest of any city or place where they could find water for themselves and cattle to drink.

“But they were not satisfied”: Could not get enough for their present use and much less to carry back with them to supply them for any length of time. Such a scarcity there was of it in other parts (see 1 Kings 18:5).

“Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord”: This had no more effect upon them than the other to relinquish their former courses, and return unto the Lord by humiliation and repentance.

Sometimes the drought was so bad that they had to go to another city to get water. They still did not recognize God's hand in this and did not repent.

**Amos 4:9 "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured [them]: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."**

Literally, "an exceeding scorching," such as the hot east wind produced and "an exceeding mildew," a blight, in which the ears turn untimely a pale yellow, and had no grain. Both words are doubly intensive. They stand together in the prophecy of Moses (Deut. 28:22), among the other scourges of disobedience.

The palmer worm devoured them; just when they were budding and blossoming, and bringing forth fruit; and so what the blasting and mildew did not consume, the palmer worm, a kind of locust, did. Which has its name from its biting and cutting off the leaves and branches of trees, as of those mentioned vines, olives and fig trees, with which the land of Canaan abounded, the cutting off which was a great calamity.

“Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord”: This dispensation of Providence was also without its desired fruit and effect (see Amos 4:6).

Even when they did make a crop, God sent mildew and ruined the fruit and vegetables. They still did not realize they were being punished for sin in their lives, and they did not repent and turn to God. Even the palmerworm (a type of locust) did not cause them to repent.

God's promise had been to bless them if they obeyed Him, and to curse them if they did not. If they had known His Word, they should have understood what was happening. It was within their own power to stop all of this. They just needed to repent and return to God.

**Amos 4:10 "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."**

“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt”: That is, after the way in which God had dealt with Egypt. God had twice promised, when the memory of the plagues which He sent on Egypt was still fresh in their minds: "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, I will put none of the diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians" (Exodus 15:26; Deut. 7:15).

“Your young men have I slain with the sword”: Of the enemy in battle; or as they were in the way to Egypt, being sent there to fetch food, but were intercepted by the enemy.

“And have taken away your horses”: On which they rode to Egypt on the above errand. Or rather which they brought up from thence, contrary to the command of God.

“And have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils”: Such numbers of their armies being slain, and these lying unburied, the smell of them was very noisome.

“Yet have ye not returned unto me saith the Lord”: Still they continued to be obstinate and impenitent (see Amos 4:6).

Each punishment that God sent on them became a little worse, but it did no good at all. They did not repent. Even the loss of their sons to the sword, did not cause them to repent. The loss of their horses did not affect them either. The stink comes from the unburied dead bodies, possibly from some battle.

**Amos 4:11 "I have overthrown [some] of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."**

“Firebrand plucked out of the burning”: Only because of God’s mercy was Israel saved from extinction (Zech. 3:2; Jude 23).

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone falling from God in heaven. A very similar thing had happened to some of them, but they were not moved enough to repent and return to God.

The general concept was first used of Israel’s preparation to receive the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19:11, 15); here she was implored to prepare for His judgment.

**Amos 4:12 "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: [and] because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."**

“Prepare to meet thy God” warns that God is not going to visit Israel with salvation, but rather with inevitable and complete judgment.

This last punishment will be so great, that they will die. All of the plagues God had sent before to warn them had not caused them to repent. God does not tell them exactly what this next punishment is, but frightens them by telling them to prepare to meet their God.

**Amos 4:13 "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what [is] his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, [is] his name."**

This is the God whom they were to be prepared to face. He is the Lord God Almighty.

This is a declaration that Creator God will bring this punishment on them. This is no idle threat, but is made by the Ruler of the universe. The mountains are from generation to generation, and are one of the most permanent of His creations. No one knows where the wind comes from, but God created it too. God is God of all His creation. The Lord, Jehovah, the Eternal One, Alpha and Omega, the One who exists, the All Powerful, is still in control of all. He can do with any of it whatever He chooses. It all belongs to God.

### Amos Chapter 4 Questions

1. What does "kine" mean?
2. Who are the kine in verse 1?
3. Where, in Proverbs, do we read about the virtuous woman?
4. This woman, in verse 1, is a disgrace to \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What had God sworn by?
6. Why did He swear by that?
7. What does the mention of the "hooks" mean?
8. Where do the women go to find a way of escape?
9. What did Beth-el and Gilgal have in common?
10. What terrible thing had happened to them?
11. What do we read about in 2 Timothy 3, that is similar to their problem?
12. Leaven symbolizes \_\_\_\_\_.

13. The law forbids leaven in what offering?
14. Why were their teeth clean?
15. Why had God allowed this to happen to them?
16. What is verse 7 speaking of?
17. How bad was the drought?
18. When they did make a crop, what did God do to destroy it?
19. Each punishment that God sent on them became a little \_\_\_\_\_.
20. What did the stink come from?
21. How were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed?
22. What did God tell them to prepare to do?
23. What is verse 13 a declaration of?
24. Why can God do this?