

*The structure and thought flow of chapters 7 to 9*

• *Preceding 8:4-10*

• *8:4-10 Crime and Punishment*

• *Following 8:4-10*

• *The A-B-C-B-A structure of the three chapters 7-9 summarised*

• *8:4-10 – Crime and punishment - the centre-piece*

**1. The Crimes of Israel**

• *Israel's crimes listed*

We have been looking at the structure of Amos 7:1–9:15. The entire section may be entitled: God's Sovereign Graciousness<sup>□1</sup>. The questions that are being put to us are: will Israel survive at all? Is there any hope of Israel's receiving God's Word? We have had sections which might be entitled:

1. Judgement without hope of present renewal (7:1–9)
2. The word of God rejected (7:10–8:3)

Now in a small central unit (8:4–10), Amos again gives the reason for Israel's imminent end. It is a matter of just retribution. Crime is being followed by punishment. The next section may again be entitled:

3. Crime and punishment (8:4–10).

Amos 8:4–6 lists the crimes. Amos 8:7–10 speaks of the oath of God in which He determines to bring the situation to an end.

We may now take a look ahead at Amos 8:11–9:15. The hope for Israel is in the fact that Amos is preaching to the nation. While God is speaking to us there is hope of recovery. But Amaziah, and the nation generally, have rejected Amos's word. So the word that has been opposed will for the moment be lost in Israel. Amos 8:11–9:6 describes a situation in which a famine of hearing the word of God settles upon the nation. The section may be entitled: the word of God lost<sup>□1</sup>. This brings us more acutely than ever to the question: is there any hope for Israel at all?

Amos 9:7–15 answers the question. God will 'destroy it from the face of the earth' but 'nevertheless [He] will not totally destroy the house of Jacob'. With all other nations, Israel will be thoroughly shaken and many sinners will be removed altogether<sup>□1</sup>. But there is one note of hope: the house of David! The only hope for northern Israel is not in northern Israel at all but in Amos's own Judah! Israel may at some undated future time recover – but only through the house of David<sup>□2</sup>.

So it now appears that the structure of Amos 7:1–9:15 once again follows the A-B-C-B-A pattern much loved by Amos.

- A. Judgement – without hope of present renewal (7:1–9)  
B. The word of God rejected (7:10–8:3)  
C. Crime and punishment (8:4–10)  
B. The word of God lost (8:11–9:6)  
A. Judgement – with hope of future renewal (9:7–15).

Amos 7:1–9 balances 9:7–15 and deals with a similar topic. Amos 7:10–8:3 balances 8:11–9:6 and deals with a similar topic. Amos 8:4–10 is a centre-piece of the section. Let us consider it in fuller detail.

1. **Amos again lists the crimes of Israel.** The upper classes of Israel put their own greed above every claim of mercy towards people, every claim of reverence towards God.

<sup>4</sup>Hear this, you who trample upon the needy,  
 and bring the poor of the land to an end,  
<sup>5</sup>you who say, "When will the new moon be finished,  
 so that we may sell grain,  
 and when will the Sabbath come to an end,  
 so that we may offer wheat for sale?"  
 You who reduce the quantity, the ephah'  
 but raise the price, the shekel,  
 who cheat with false scales,

□1 7:1-9:15

□1 8:11-9:6

□1 9:7-10

□2 9:11-15

<sup>6</sup>who buy the needy for silver,  
and the poor for a pair of sandals.  
You want to sell even the husks of grain.'

The crimes that aroused God to anger were:

- (i) domineering over the poor ('you who trample upon the needy') <sup>1</sup>
- (ii) eliminating them from any position in society ('you who . . . bring the poor ... to an end') <sup>2</sup>
- (iii) showing such greed for money-making that they could hardly wait for their idolatrous religion to be finished so that they could get on with more money-making <sup>3</sup>
- (iv) showing dishonesty in their business-methods <sup>4</sup>
- (v) unrelentingly oppressing the poor <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 8:4a

<sup>1</sup> 8:4a

<sup>3</sup> 8:4a

<sup>4</sup> 8:4b

<sup>5</sup> 8:5

## 2. Pride brings down God's judgement

• The Pride of Jacob – a title for God

• God's oath – judgement is unalterably certain

• Pride is a fatal sin

• Judgement described in picture language – earthquake, flood and eclipse

• A time of bitter bereavement

2. **Pride brings down God's judgement.** A time of irreversible judgement is at hand, says Amos.

<sup>7</sup>'Yahweh has sworn by the "Pride" of Jacob,  
"I will never forget any of their misdeeds.'"

The 'pride of Jacob' could be taken in four ways.

- (i) One scholar thinks it refers to the land of Israel; I personally doubt it.
- (ii) Some think the Hebrew means 'against the pride of Jacob'; this would be an unprecedented meaning for a common Hebrew phrase meaning 'swear by'.
- (iii) It could be sarcasm. The 'pride' of Jacob is so steadfast you can take an oath by it!
- (iv) 'Pride of Jacob' could be taken as a title for God (like 'Mighty One of Jacob' in Genesis 49:24). If the fourth option is right (as I believe) it deliberately picks up from what was said in 6:8. God swears against Israel's pride; He swears by His own pride! Once God has taken an oath, the judgement is unalterably certain. God now swears not to forget their sin but to punish it in a way that will never be reversed. When northern Israel was devastated by the Assyrians it would be a judgement that would never be precisely undone. Northern Israel never recovered. What brought down the extermination of the nation was pride. Some sins are more fatal than others; pride is one of them.

<sup>8</sup>"For this reason should not the land tremble,  
and should not everyone who lives in it mourn?  
The whole land will rise like the Nile;  
it will be tossed about and sink again,  
like the river of Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>And it shall happen on that day"  
- oracle of the sovereign Yahweh  
"I will make the sun go down at noon;  
I will darken the earth in the clear daylight.'"

The judgement will be like an earthquake, a flood and an eclipse combined! The land will shake. God's judgement will come in like a flood, like the overflowing Nile. The land will be shaken up and down. The sun will disappear. It is no doubt picture-language, but it pictures destructive, overwhelming, frightening judgement. The literal earthquake two years after Amos's preaching <sup>1</sup> must have given the people a reminder of what Amos said!

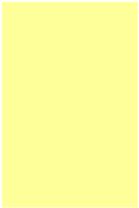
<sup>1</sup> see 1:1

<sup>10</sup>"I will turn your festivals into mourning,  
and all your songs in a lamentation.  
I will bring sackcloth upon every pair of thighs;  
I will shave your heads.  
I will make it to be like a time of mourning for an only son,  
and its outcome like a bitter day.'"

Festivities will be turned to mourning. People will put on sackcloth, and go around with shaved heads – both signs of grief. It will be like a bitter bereavement.

• *There is no hope for Israel if it will not repent of its pride*

Amos's words are almost without hope. If God has – or is about to – swear an oath, what hope can there be? It is a measure of the powerful devastation and destruction that pride brings. There is almost no hope for Israel if the nation will not repent of its pride. If there is ever to be any hope for Israel, it will have to be like a resurrection from death. Pride is so destructive, its end is ruin with almost no hope of recovery



	<p><b>Dr Michael Eaton</b> is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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