

## AMOS denounces BETHEL – “house of (which) god”?

The word of our God stands for ever Isaiah 40:8

If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah ... So the king consulted {God?} and MADE two golden calves ... and HE SET one in Bethel ... AND HE MADE houses on high places, AND MADE priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. And JEROBOAM INSTITUTED a feast ... thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which HE HAD MADE. And HE STATIONED in Bethel the priests of the high places WHICH HE HAD MADE. Then he went up to the altar WHICH HE HAD MADE in Bethel ... in the month WHICH HE HAD DEVISED IN HIS OWN HEART; and HE INSTITUTED a feast for the sons of Israel .... 1 Kings 12:27-33

1. BETHEL -- home of a counterfeit religious system, the 'religious symbol rallied political commitment to the kingdom'. By this means a politico-religious elite dominated and pillaged a dependent underclass

In order to unite the 10 tribes around his rule, Jeroboam I created a new shrine and a duplicate religious system. The purpose of the calf, altar, priesthood, and festivals of Bethel was to give credence and stability to Jeroboam's Northern Kingdom. Donald R. Sunukjian, Bible Knowledge Commentary Vol. I p.1446

Training in wisdom achieves self-knowledge by means of comparison. Knowledge of foreign lands belongs from of old to its specialties. Wisdom raises its voice "where the paths cross" (Prov. 8:2). Hans Walter Wolff Amos the Prophet p.10

[On Amos 4:1] ... he here accuses the chiefs of the kingdom of oppressing the innocent and distressing the poor ... He does not think them worthy of the name of men; and yet they wished to be viewed as a class separate from the common people, as though they were some heroes or half-gods. The Prophet, by way of contempt, calls them here cows ... John Calvin Twelve Minor Prophets: Amos (tr.Owen p.224)

2. Bethel's formal worship gave new meaning to 'meat in due season' (3:14-15; 4:1-5; but NO



F.B. MEYER  
(1847-1929)  
The Baptist minister  
likened the 'God-in-a-box'  
mentality of idolaters to  
attempting to arrest a  
flood with a sandbank

### REPENTANCE, RELATIONSHIP, vv. 6-12

... we know that the sacrifices offered at Bethel were mere profanations; for the whole worship was spurious. God had indeed chosen to himself a place where he designed sacrifices to be offered. The Israelites built a temple without any command, nay, against the manifest prohibition of God. John Calvin Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Amos (tr. Owen, p.219)

This, to Amos, is the sin of sins, that the lives of the poor should be bartered for money, that for economic gain they should be sold into slavery or trampled to the dust by those who have them in their power, and that the very courts which should have given redress and made such atrocities impossible, were themselves corrupt and venal, so that the love of money poisoned justice at its source. The class whose privilege and duty it was to protect the poor exploited them. Nothing stirs the blood of Amos like that ... John Edgar McFadyen A Cry for Justice: A Study in Amos p.12

### 3. OCCULT and CULT centre (5:4-15; 18-27 - contrast vv.8, 26)

... Pleiades is a symbol of God and the center of the universe. C.T.Russell, Thy Kingdom Come (1891, p.321)

... Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God. J.F.Rutherford, Reconciliation (1928, p.14)

The prophet therefore affirms that, during the 40 years journey through the wilderness, Israel did not offer sacrifices to its true King Jehovah, but carried about with it a star made into a god as the king of heaven . C.F.Keil, The Minor Prophets Vol. I p.296

The revelation of His name has the same significance as when, in a developing friendship, we

## The diminution of God: shame and abomination

The martyr Stephen quoted vv.25-27, which accuse the people of carrying about little shrines and pocket-idols, to serve as amulets averting disaster, Acts 7:43. But they might as well have built a bank of sand to arrest an overflowing flood! The one thing which is going to help us is repentance toward God and faith in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. F.B. Meyer, ... Bible Commentary p.351

[re Acts 7:43] Sikkuth seems to be Akkadian Sakkut (a name of Ninib, god of the planet Saturn) with the vowels of shiqqus, 'abomination' (so Moloch, better Molech, a title of various Canaanite deities, is simply melekh, 'king', with the vowels of bosheth, 'shame') ... 'Kiyyun your images, the star of your gods that you made for yourselves'. Kiyyun is Assyrian Kaiwanu, another name of Ninib, spelt (like Sikkuth) with the vowels of shiqqus. [Rompha] ... resembles Repa, a name of Seb, the Egyptian god of the planet Saturn ... F.F.Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text p.174

In the LXX of Am[os] v 26 the form used is [Raiphani] or [Rephan], which is similar to Repa or Repha, one of the names of the Egyptian Saturn (Seb). B.F.Westcott/ F.J.A.Hort Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek Appendix p.92

begin to use each other's first names. It stands, therefore, for the intimacy with Himself into which the Lord brought His people by redemption. Sadly our English Bibles (except for the Jerusalem Bible) continue to observe the ancient scruple which supposed the name of God to be too holy to be used. J.A. Motyer The Day of the Lion: The Message of Amos p.14

4. Amos preached justice, charity, but pride of life ruled at Bethel (yet religious to a T; vv. 5:21-24)

In the prophet Amos the prevailing conception is that of righteousness. Jehovah is the righteous ruler of men, who vindicates on all, Israel and the heathen alike, the law of morality. And what the prophet demands of the people is righteousness -- that is, just dealing with one another. "Let righteousness run down your streets like water" (Amos v.24) A.B.Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament pp.260-61

Just as the member of the clan is educated to show regard for the poor, so on the other hand he is warned against an extravagant life ... surely there were, even beyond the time of Amos, clan units who in a most critical way opposed the gluttonous life of the settled land, as the example of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35:6 most directly shows. Hans Walter Wolff Amos the Prophet p.74

5. Did Bethel accept any reproof? (7:8-17) Note v.13 -- Bethel both RELIGIOUS sanctuary AND centre of KINGDOM

... they looked forward (5:18-20) to the day when He would in a unique way exert Himself to bring the whole world to His heel, for they were confident that on that day they would receive all the honours ... Amos insisted that privilege brings peril (3:2). The claim of the day clearly was that privilege brings security. J.A. Motyer The Day of the Lion: The Message of Amos p.17

6. It's inevitable end? (9:1-4) Yet NOT the end -- why? COVENANT with David (9:8-15)

[on 3:9] And when they look, what do they see? Just what you might expect they would see among a people whom peace and prosperity, succeeding the ravages of war, had left free for the unscrupulous prosecution of trade and commerce ... They would see gorgeous palaces, with inlaid work of ivory and ebony, filled with the ill-gotten gains of violence and robbery. They would see indolent nobles sitting on their fine silk couches – nobles who, not content with a single palace all the year round, must needs have a house for winter and a house for summer. ... In the mad haste after riches, in the dissolute luxury of city life, they had lost touch with the eternal facts, they had forgotten God's everlasting and inexorable laws; they had no time for reflection, no interest in it, no eyes for facts that would have been plain and probable enough to thinking men, no ears for the rumbling thunder that foretold the storm ... The God whom it has insulted will smite it, the whole of it ... its churches and its palaces alike will be laid, by the terrible hand of the enemy whom He will send, in one welter of ruin. When we remember that the sanctuary of Bethel was the royal chapel (7:13) hallowed by ancient and precious traditions associated with the name of father Jacob, we can imagine the horrified looks upon the faces of Amos's hearers when he announced that the very horns of its altar would be hewn off and dashed to the ground. What blasphemy! and this fierce message was delivered , too, in the name of the very God to whose sanctuaries the people were so zealously flocking.

Impossible, incredible, away with him! John Edgar McFadyen A Cry for Justice: A Study in Amos pp.31-33

How remarkably v.9 has been fulfilled! Notwithstanding their scatterings, the Hebrew people have been preserved as a race... The promises made to Abraham and David are yet to be fulfilled. The derision of their foes, of whom Edom was the ringleader, will be silenced. Through the parted curtain, we glimpse the golden age of the future. There is a divine plan working to its conclusion, and Israel shall yet come again to the land given to their fathers.

F.B. Meyer, op.cit. p.352

7. Note 4 'I will's (vv.11-15) and PARADISE motif (vv.13,14); LAND (v.15)

## How we can get God to love us!

But how did they transgress at Bethel? Even by worshipping God. We here see how little the pretence of good intention avails with God, which hypocrites ever bring forward. They imagine that, provided their purpose is to worship God, what they do cannot be disapproved: thus they wanton in their own inventions, and think that God obtains his due, so that he cannot complain. But the Prophet declares all their worship to be nothing else than abomination and execrable wickedness, though the Israelites, trusting in it, thought themselves safe. John Calvin Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Amos p.231

Eternity will stretch out before those who love Jehovah God ... Everything that mankind achieves will further delight the heart of our loving heavenly Father, Jehovah ... Is not a delightful future on a paradise earth worth any effort or sacrifice YOU MAKE ... Demonstrate your love for Jehovah ... IN TURN, Jehovah God will rejoice over you in his great and loving heart ... and HE WILL LOVE YOU FOREVER! Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life (WTBTS, 1995; pp.190-91, emphasis added!)

