

Through the Bible

AMOS

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

**69 PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA**

AMOS

AMOS IS THE FIRST OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS CONTAINING A PROPHECY TO ISRAEL, THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

AMOS HAD NO DESIRE TO BE A PROPHET. HE WAS A SIMPLE SHEPHERD -- JUST LIKE MANY OF THE FIRST APOSTLES WERE SIMPLE FISHERMEN. ELISHA HAD BEEN A FARMER. AMOS WAS A MAN WHO LOOKED AFTER CATTLE, SHEEP AND FIGS.

WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT HIS CREDENTIALS HE SAID, "I AM NOT A PROFESSIONAL PROPHET. I CERTAINLY NEVER GOT ANY TRAINING TO BE A PROPHET. I AM JUST A SHEPHERD. I TAKE CARE OF FIG TREES. BUT THE LORD CALLED ME AWAY FROM MY FLOCK AND TOLD ME, 'GO AND PROPHECY TO MY PEOPLE IN ISRAEL'" (AMOS 7:14--15).

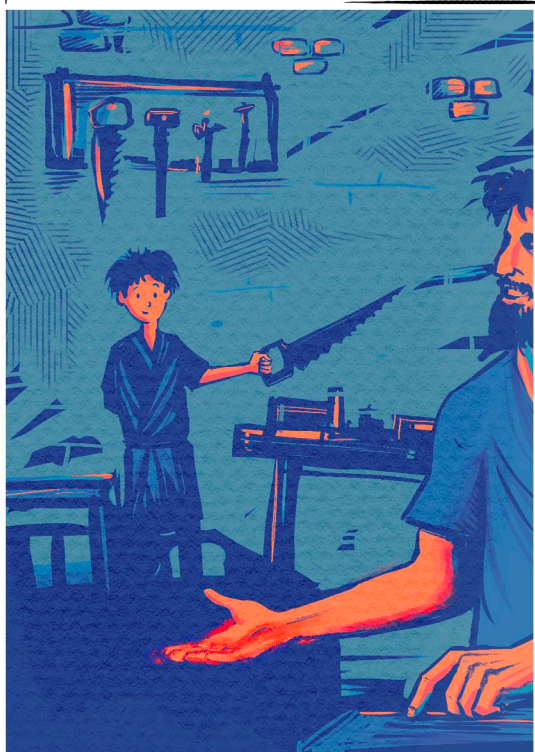
WHY DID GOD PICK AMOS TO BE THE FIRST PERSON TO WRITE DOWN A PROPHETIC MESSAGE? GOD MUST HAVE WATCHED HIM (LIKE HE WATCHES ALL OF US) TO SEE IF AMOS FEARED GOD AND WAS FAITHFUL IN HIS WORK.



AMOS STARTED PROPHECYING ABOUT 40 YEARS AFTER ELISHA. IF GEHAZI (ELISHA'S SERVANT) HAD **NOT** CHASED AFTER NAAMAN'S **MONEY** AND THUS **RUINED** HIMSELF, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE MAY HAVE GOT A **DOUBLE** PORTION OF ELISHA'S **ANOINTING** AND BECOME THE NEXT **PROPHET** IN ISRAEL. IN THAT CASE, **GEHAZI** MAY HAVE WRITTEN THIS PROPHECY **INSTEAD OF AMOS**. BUT GEHAZI **MISSED** THAT PRIVILEGE. THE LORD WARNS US TO BE **WATCHFUL** SO THAT NO ONE TAKES **OUR CROWN** (REVELATION 3:11).



THERE IS A CROWN THAT GOD HAS KEPT FOR YOU IF YOU WILL BE FAITHFUL IN THE MINISTRY GOD PLANNED FOR YOU. BUT YOU CAN LOSE THAT CROWN IF YOU ARE UNFAITHFUL. AND THEN THE MINISTRY YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO FULFIL WILL BE DONE BY SOMEBODY ELSE AND HE WILL GET YOUR CROWN. SO PERHAPS AMOS GOT GEHAZI'S CROWN! GOD WATCHES US EVERY DAY TO SEE IF WE ARE FAITHFUL IN OUR DAILY LIFE, WHETHER WE CHOOSE THE WAY OF HUMILITY ALWAYS, WHETHER WE TAKE TIME TO WAIT ON HIM AND LISTEN TO HIM, TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES, ETC.



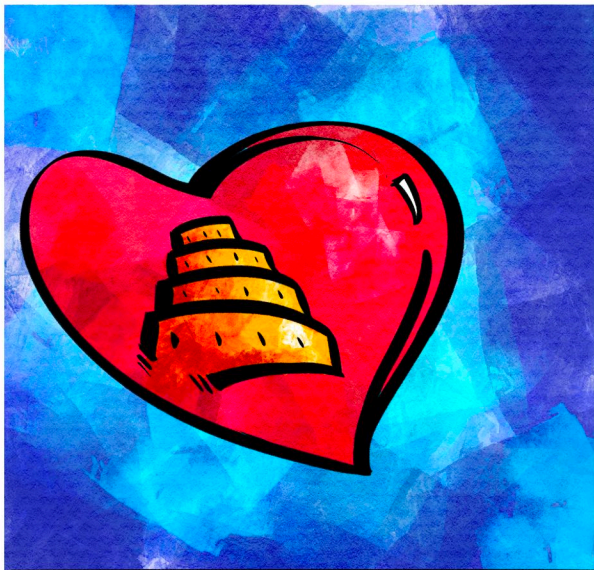
JESUS WAS FAITHFUL FOR 30 YEARS IN NAZARETH BEFORE HE WAS CALLED TO PREACH. WHEN YOU CONTINUE BEING FAITHFUL IN **LITTLE THINGS** FOR MANY LONG YEARS, YOU CAN BEGIN TO WONDER WHETHER GOD HAS FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT YOU. HE HAS NOT. ALL OF A SUDDEN, ONE DAY, GOD WILL SAY TO YOU, "YOU ARE MY **SERVANT** FROM TODAY." GOD CALLS THOSE WHO ARE **FAITHFUL** IN THEIR **SECULAR** WORK. HE DID THAT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. JESUS ALSO CALLED AS **APOSTLES** MEN WHO HAD BEEN **FAITHFUL** IN THEIR **SECULAR** WORK.



AMOS SAW GOD AS THE GOD OF **ALL** NATIONS, AND **NOT JUST** THE GOD OF ISRAEL. HE QUOTES THE LORD'S WORDS, "DO YOU ISRAELITES THINK THAT YOU ARE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN THE ETHIOPIANS? I BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT. THAT'S RIGHT. BUT HAVEN'T I DONE AS MUCH FOR **OTHER** NATIONS? WHAT IS THE **DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN YOU AND THEM?" (9:7). AMOS WAS A PROPHET WITH A "NEW COVENANT" VISION THAT **EMBRACED** ALL PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS.



AMOS ROSE ABOVE THE PETTY **NARROW-MINDEDNESS** OF THE ISRAELITES. HE HAD A **LARGE** HEART FOR PEOPLE **ALL OVER THE WORLD**. THERE ARE MANY CHRISTIAN GROUPS TODAY THAT IMAGINE THAT GOD HAS **CHOSEN ONLY** THEM TO BE HIS PEOPLE ON EARTH!! IN FACT, THAT ATTITUDE IS ONE OF THE **IDENTIFYING MARKS** OF A **CULT**. THERE WERE PEOPLE LIKE THAT IN ISRAEL IN THOSE DAYS TOO. BUT NOT AMOS - HE HAD A **LARGE** HEART.



TRUE SERVANT OF GOD WILL HAVE A **LARGE HEART** THAT **ACCEPTS** GOD'S PEOPLE IN EVERY GROUP AND DENOMINATION. **BABYLON** IS **NOT** A SYSTEM THAT IS FOUND IN ANY **ONE DENOMINATION**. IT IS THE **WORLD SYSTEM** THAT CAN BE FOUND RIGHT INSIDE YOUR **HEART**. PEOPLE CAN SIT IN THE **BEST CHURCH** IN THE WORLD AND BE A PART OF **BABYLON**.



FOR EXAMPLE, IF WE LOVE **MONEY**, WHICHEVER CHURCH IN THE WORLD WE MAY BELONG TO, WE ARE A PART OF **BABYLON**. CERTAIN CHURCHES MAY HAVE A **HEAD-PROBLEM** (DOCTRINAL), WHEREAS THE MORE **SERIOUS** IS A **HEART-PROBLEM** (RELATED TO LIFE).

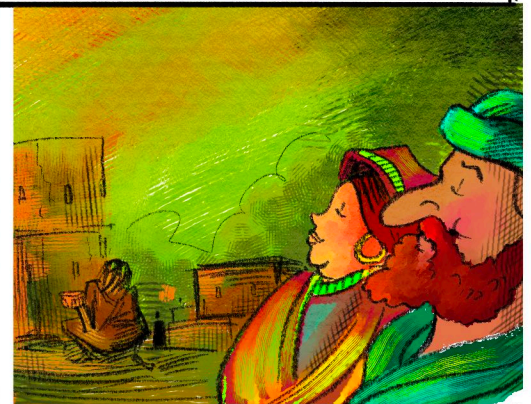


THERE IS A LOT OF **EXCLUSIVISM** IN CHRISTENDOM TODAY THAT IMAGINES THAT GOD CARES ONLY FOR ONE'S OWN LITTLE GROUP!! THE BODY OF CHRIST IS **LARGER** THAN **ANY ONE DENOMINATION**. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE NOT FOUND IN ANY ONE DENOMINATION TODAY. GOD HAS HIS PEOPLE IN EVERY DENOMINATION. THERE ARE BORN AGAIN PEOPLE IN MANY CHURCHES WITH **DIFFERENT DOCTRINES**. IN THE SAME WAY, THERE ARE UNCONVERTED PEOPLE WHO SIT AS REGISTERED MEMBERS IN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES AND WHO ARE BREAKING BREAD IN "**SEPARATED**" ASSEMBLIES

ALMOST ALL OF AMOS' ILLUSTRATIONS COME FROM HIS SHEPHERD LIFE.



EVEN THOUGH GOD GAVE HIM THE MESSAGE TO SPEAK, YET GOD USED AMOS' HUMAN **PERSONALITY** AND **INTELLIGENCE** TO CONVEY THAT MESSAGE. AMOS TALKS ABOUT A BULLOCK CART FULL OF **SHEAVES** OF CORN, ABOUT A **SHEPHERD** TRYING TO RESCUE BITS OF A LAMB FROM A LION'S MOUTH, ABOUT **PLOUGHING** THE FIELDS, AND ABOUT CATERPILLARS AND LOCUSTS. HE ALSO TALKS ABOUT THE **STARS**, SHOWING THAT AS A SHEPHERD IN THE FIELDS AT **NIGHT**, HE WAS A **KEEN OBSERVER** OF GOD'S VAST **CREATION**.



GOD GAVE AMOS A MESSAGE PRONOUNCING **JUDGEMENT** ON THE **RICH** PEOPLE IN ISRAEL AND THEIR **WIVES** WHO LIVED IN GREAT **LUXURY** AND **IGNORED** THE **POOR**. SO AMOS WAS OBVIOUSLY **NOT** A **POPULAR** PREACHER!!



AMOS WAS LIVING AT A TIME WHEN JEROBOAM WAS KING. THIS WAS A RELATIVELY **PEACEFUL** TIME IN ISRAEL. SINCE THERE WAS NO EXPENSE ON WAR, THE ISRAELITES EXPANDED THEIR **BUSINESSES** AND BECAME VERY, VERY **RICH**. AMOS MENTIONS THE **PALATIAL SUMMER HOUSES** AND **WINTER MANSIONS** OF THE **WEALTHY** (3:15). THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL LIVED IN **LUXURY**, LYING ON BEDS OF **IVORY**, LAZILY LISTENING TO **MUSIC**, GETTING **DRUNK**, GORGING THEMSELVES ON TENDER **MEATS** AND LIVING IN GROSS **IMMORALITY** (6:4; 4:1; 2:7)



ON TOP OF ALL THIS, THEY ALSO **EXPLOITED** THE **POOR** THROUGH EXORBITANT RENTS AND THROUGH **BRIBING** JUDGES IN THE COURTS (5:10, 12). THE **POOR** WERE ALSO BEING SOLD AS **SLAVES** (2:6). THE **RICH** BUSINESSMEN EAGERLY WAITED FOR THE SABBATH DAY TO BE OVER EACH WEEK, SO THAT THEY COULD GO OUT AND DO **BUSINESS** ONCE AGAIN (8:5). ALL THEY THOUGHT ABOUT WAS **MONEY**. AND THEIR WIVES WERE PAMPERED **DRUNKARDS** (4:1).



NOBODY **CARED** THAT THE COUNTRY WAS BEING **DESTROYED** (6:6). AND THOSE WHO WERE NOT RICH OR INFLUENTIAL **LOST** OUT IN THIS SYSTEM. THIS IS THE TYPE OF ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH **COMMUNISM** BREEDS TODAY. COMMUNISM FLOURISHES WHEREVER FANTASTICALLY RICH PEOPLE **EXPLOIT** THE **POOR**.



THE AMAZING THING IS THAT ALONG WITH ALL THIS **SELF-INDULGENCE**, THEY ALSO HAD A LOT OF **RELIGION**. THEY OFFERED **SACRIFICES** AND THANKSGIVING **OFFERINGS** REGULARLY AND BROUGHT THEIR **TITHES** EVERY THREE DAYS. THEY HAD THEIR SOLEMN **ASSEMBLIES**, THEIR SPECIAL MEETINGS AND THEIR **RELIGIOUS** FESTIVALS WITH **HYMNS** OF PRAISE. THEY HAD WONDERFUL TIMES OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP. BUT THE LORD **REJECTED** ALL OF THIS AS A LOT OF EMPTY **NOISE** (5:21--23). THE ISRAELITES HAD **PROFESSIONAL** PREACHERS THOSE DAYS TOO. ONE OF THEM WAS AMAZIAH WHO **CONFRONTED** AMOS (7:10--16).



ALL THIS IS VERY SIMILAR TO WHAT WE SEE IN **CHRISTENDOM** TODAY. MANY RICH PREACHERS LIVE IN **GRAND** HOUSES TODAY THAT HAVE BEEN BUILT WITH **OFFERINGS** TAKEN FROM **POOR** BELIEVERS. RICH PEOPLE ARE GIVEN POSITIONS OF **HONOUR** IN **CHURCHES** MERELY BECAUSE OF THEIR **WEALTH**. SUCH RICH PREACHERS AND RICH PEOPLE DO **NOT** LIKE TO HEAR THE TRUTH. SO **AMOS** HAD A VERY **DIFFICULT** MINISTRY.



AMAZIAH WAS A PRIEST WHO WAS PAID A GOOD **SALARY** BY THE RICH **BOARD-MEMBERS** OF THE **TEMPLE** BECAUSE HE PREACHED SERMONS THAT KEPT THEM **HAPPY**. AND HERE CAME THIS **SHEPHERD-PROPHET**, AMOS, AN **UNTRAINED** MAN, WHO BEGAN TO **THUNDER** AWAY AT ALL THOSE RICH PEOPLE. THOSE RICH PEOPLE BECAME **FURIOUS** AND SAID, "GET THIS AMOS OUT OF HERE. HE IS PREACHING **FALSE** DOCTRINE AND **HERESIES**! THROW HIM OUT." AMAZIAH PROMPTLY ORDERED AMOS TO GET **OUT** OF ISRAEL TO **PLEASE** THOSE RICH PEOPLE. AND AMAZIAH SUFFERED THE **JUDGEMENT** OF GOD IN HIS OWN **FAMILY** AS A RESULT (7:12, 17).



FIRST, AMOS PRONOUNCED **JUDGEMENT** ON DAMASCUS, GAZA, TYRE, EDM, AMMON AND MOAB. I CAN IMAGINE HOW THE ISRAELITES MUST HAVE BEEN **DELIGHTED** LISTENING TO AMOS THUNDERING AWAY AGAINST THOSE NATIONS. THEY WOULD HAVE SAID, "AMEN. PRAISE THE LORD."

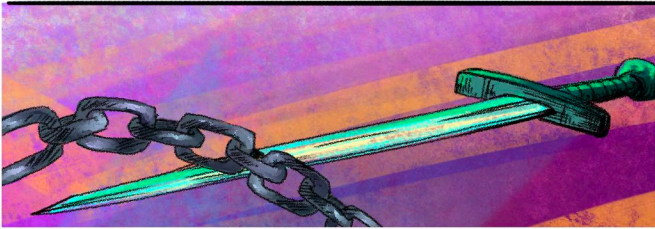


AMOS OFTEN USED THE EXPRESSION (EIGHT TIMES IN CHAPTERS 1 AND 2). WHAT THE LORD MEANT BY THAT WAS, "I HAVE LET YOU OFF A NUMBER OF TIMES. BUT I AM **NOT** GOING TO LET YOU OFF ANY MORE. I YOU HAVE BEEN TAKING **ADVANTAGE** OF MY **GOODNESS**. NOW I HAVE TO **PUNISH** YOU." THIS IS A WORD THAT WE **ALL** NEED TO HEAR.

BUT AFTER THAT HE SAID, "WOE UNTO JUDAH. WOE UNTO **ISRAEL**." AND THEN THE "AMENS" BECAME **SILENT** -- BECAUSE NOW HE WAS PREACHING TO **THEM**. WE ALL LIKE TO HEAR PREACHERS WHO TELL US WHAT IS **WRONG** WITH THE **WORLD** AND WITH **OTHER CHURCHES!** THAT WAS HOW AMOS **STARTED**. HE GOT THEM ALL TO SAY "AMEN" AND THEN HOMED IN ON THEM. HE WAS A **WISE** PREACHER. HE TOLD THEM THAT THEY (JUDAH AND ISRAEL) WERE **NO DIFFERENT** (2:4, 6).



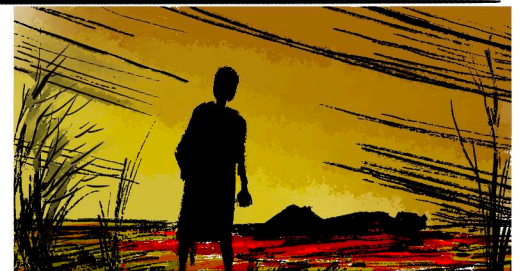
AMOS' PREACHING **CONDEMNED** THE PEOPLE OF VARIOUS NATIONS MAINLY FOR THE **CRUEL** WAY THEY HAD TREATED OTHERS. DAMASCUS HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF **POOR** PEOPLE AND "THRESHED THEM LIKE GRAIN" (1:3). PEOPLE HAD BEEN TREATED LIKE THINGS (GRAIN). IT IS A COMMON SIN AMONG MANY **CHRISTIANS** THAT THEY **LOVE** THEIR **MATERIAL POSSESSIONS** MUCH MORE THAN THEY LOVE **PEOPLE**.



TYRE HAD BROKEN THEIR COVENANT OF **BROTHERHOOD** WITH ISRAEL AND SOLD WHOLE ISRAELI VILLAGES AS **SLAVES** TO EDMOM (1:9). EDMOM HAD CHASED DOWN THEIR **ISRAELI COUSINS** WITH **SWORDS** (1:11). THIS IS ANOTHER COMMON **SIN** AMONG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY FORGET THAT **OTHERS** IN **CHRIST'S BODY** ARE THEIR **OWN BROTHERS** AND **SISTERS**, AND BETRAY THEM TO OTHERS.



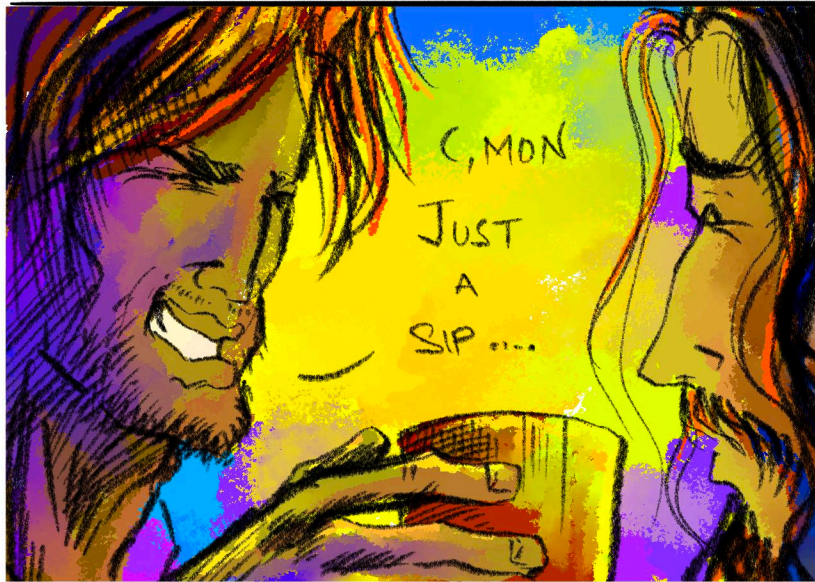
MOAB WAS SO **ANGRY** WITH THE DEAD KING OF EDMOM FOR SOMETHING THAT HAD HAPPENED WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, THAT THEY **DUG** UP HIS **BONES** AND **BURNED** THEM TO **ASHES** (2:1). **CHRISTIANS** TOO OFTEN RETAIN **ANGER** AGAINST OTHERS FOR THINGS THAT HAPPENED MANY YEARS EARLIER.. MANY OF MAN'S ACTIONS ARE **MOTIVATED** BY **ANGER**. **ANGRY** PEOPLE TEND TO BE **HARD** ON OTHERS.



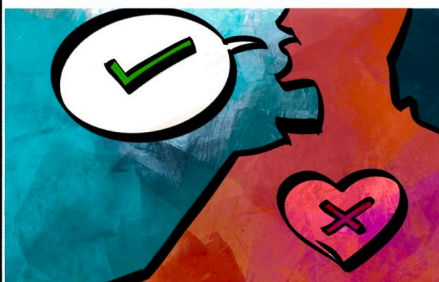
WHEN WE STUDIED GENESIS, WE SAW THAT GOD **NEVER** CURSED ADAM -- BECAUSE WHEN ADAM SINNED, HE HURT ONLY HIMSELF. BUT GOD **CURSED** CAIN, BECAUSE CAIN **HURT** ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. ANY SIN THAT HURTS **ANOTHER** PERSON IN ANY WAY IS VERY SERIOUS IN GOD'S EYES. SO **GOSSIPING** (THAT HURTS OTHERS) IS **WORSE** THAN TAKING HARMFUL **DRUGS** (THAT HURTS ONLY **YOURSELF**).



THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAD SINNED **AGAIN AND AGAIN** (2:6). AMONG MANY OTHER SINS, THEY **OFFERED WINE** IN THE HOUSE OF **GOD** THAT HAD BEEN PURCHASED WITH **STOLEN MONEY** (2:7, 8). THAT WAS LIKE **CHEATING OTHERS** AND GIVING THAT MONEY FOR **GOD'S WORK**. JESUS TOLD US TO FIRST GIVE TO **CAESAR** WHAT WAS **CAESAR'S** AND THEN TO GIVE TO **GOD** WHAT BELONGED TO **GOD**. THAT IS THE ORDER.



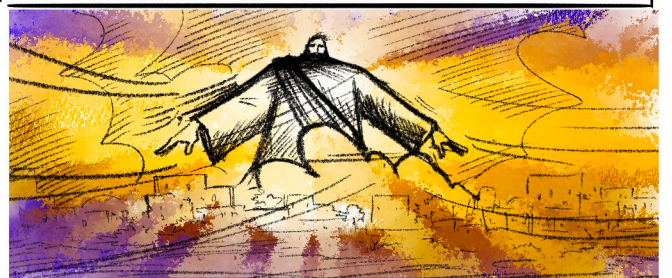
"I CHOSE SOME OF YOUR SONS TO BE PROPHETS AND NAZARITES" (2:11). **NAZARITES** WERE THOSE WHO WERE SET APART TO BE EXCLUSIVELY GOD'S -- LIKE **SAMSON**. "BUT YOU CAUSED THE NAZARITES TO **SIN** BY MAKING THEM DRINK **WINE**." "THERE WERE A FEW **WHOLEHEARTED** YOUNG BELIEVERS IN YOUR CHURCH, BUT YOU **CORRUPTED** THEM BY YOUR **SELF-SEEKING**, YOUR **WORLDLINESS** AND YOUR **IMMORAL** BEHAVIOUR. THUS THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE BACKSLID." I BELIEVE THIS HAS HAPPENED IN INDIA. GOD CALLS SOME YOUNG MAN HERE OR THERE TO BE A PROPHET OR A NAZARITE, **SEPARATED TO GOD**, BUT HE GETS **CORRUPTED** BY LOOKING AT THE **EXAMPLE** OF **OLDER PREACHERS** WHO ARE GOING IN THE **WRONG DIRECTION**.



FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES OF CHRISTLIKE LEADERS AND **IGNORE** THE REST, EVEN IF THEIR **DOCTRINES** ARE CORRECT.



IN CHAPTERS 3 TO 6 AMOS TOLD ISRAEL **WHY** THEY WERE BEING **JUDGED**. HE ASKED THEM, "CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY BE **AGREED?**" (3:3). HOW COULD THE LORD WALK WITH THEM, IF THEY WERE NOT IN TOTAL **FELLOWSHIP** WITH HIM? AS LONG AS THERE WERE **SINS** IN ISRAEL THAT THEY HAD NOT **REPENTED** OF AND **SET RIGHT**, THE LORD WOULD **NOT** WALK WITH THEM. WE MUST AGREE WITH THE LORD'S **VIEW OF SIN** IN ORDER TO **FELLOWSHIP** WITH HIM.



AMOS WENT ON TO SAY, "WHEN A **LION** ROARS IT IS BECAUSE HE HAS FOUND A VICTIM. AND IF THE **LORD** IS **ROARING** NOW IN **JUDGMENT**, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS **SIN** IN ISRAEL. WHEN **DISASTER** COMES TO A CITY, IT IS BECAUSE THE **LORD** SENT IT -- AS A **JUDGMENT**" (3:4--6).



A FEW YEARS AFTER AMOS PREACHED, **ASSYRIA** CAME AND BROUGHT THAT PREDICTED **DISASTER** ON ISRAEL. THE LORD TOLD THEM IN **ADVANCE** THAT THAT WAS HIS **PUNISHMENT** TO TEACH THEM A LESSON. BUT BEFORE PUNISHING THEM, HE WOULD WARN THEM THROUGH HIS **PROPHETS**, GIVING THEM AN **OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT** (3:7).



THE **JUDGEMENT** ON ISRAEL CAME ABOUT **100 YEARS** AFTER AMOS PROPHESIED; BUT IT DID COME. WHEN **NOAH** PROCLAIMED JUDGEMENT ON THE WORLD, IT CAME ONLY **120 YEARS** LATER. EVERYONE **WILL REAP** WHAT THEY **SOW**. THERE WILL BE **NO ESCAPING** THAT. BUT GOD WILL **WARN** PEOPLE THROUGH HIS **PROPHETS** BEFORE HE JUDGES.



WHEN THE **LION** ROARS, PEOPLE SHOULD **FEAR**. WHEN THE SOVEREIGN LORD SPEAKS, HIS SERVANTS MUST **PROPHESY** (3:8). WHAT THE LORD WAS SAYING WAS, "IF A LION STOOD IN FRONT OF YOU AND **ROARED**, YOU WOULD TREMBLE. BUT HERE I AM SPEAKING TO YOU, AND YOU **DON'T TREMBLE**. I AM SPEAKING TO YOU ABOUT THE **IMPURITY** IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR EYES, YOUR **UNRIGHTEOUSNESS** IN **MONEY MATTERS**, YOUR **WORSHIP** OF **THINGS** OTHER THAN ME. YET YOU DO NOT TREMBLE. YOU ARE MORE AFRAID OF A LION THAT I CREATED THAN OF ME ITS **CREATOR**."



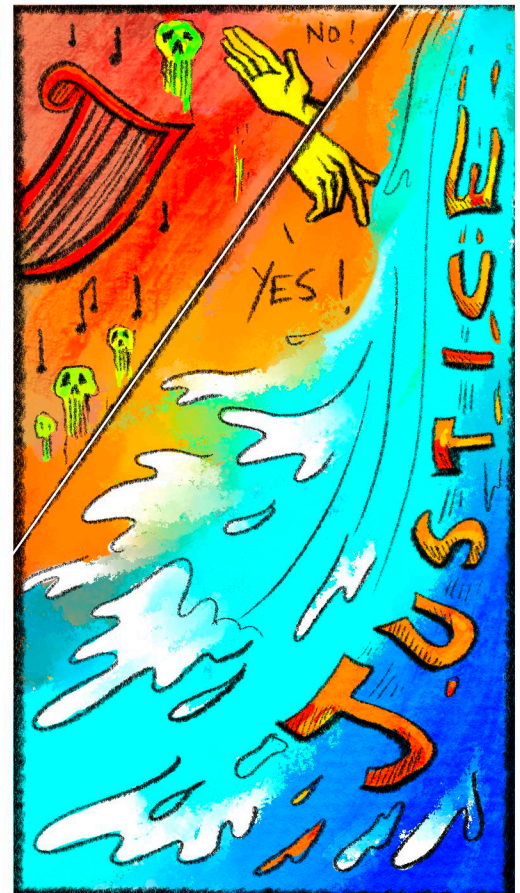
GOD'S PEOPLE HAD **SINNED** SO MUCH THAT THEY HAD ACTUALLY "**FORGOTTEN** WHAT WAS **RIGHT**" AND WHAT WAS **WRONG** (3:10).



IN CHAPTER 4, AMOS CALLED THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL, "**FAT COWS**." THEY WERE FAT THROUGH LOTS OF **EATING** AND **DRINKING**. YET THEY WERE **CONSTANTLY** ASKING THEIR HUSBANDS FOR "YET **ANOTHER DRINK**" (4:1). AMOS WARNED THEM THAT SOMEONE WOULD "**PUT A HOOK** IN THEIR NOSES (THESE COWS), AND **DRAW** THEM AWAY" (4:2). THE LORD WAS **SHARP** IN HIS **REBUKES**

THE LORD WENT ON TO TELL THEM, "I **TRIED** TO WARN YOU THROUGH ONE **CALAMITY** AFTER ANOTHER THAT I WAS **NOT** HAPPY WITH YOU. **BLIGHT, SICKNESS, PLAGUE, DESTRUCTION, DROUGHT**.. BUT YOU WOULD **NOT** RETURN TO ME. THERE WAS NOW ONLY ONE SOLUTION LEFT: "**PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD**" (4:12).





"DON'T GO TO WORSHIP IN **BETHEL**, GILGAL OR BEERSHEBA" (5:5). THESE WERE PLACES WHERE GOD HAD WORKED IN THE PAST. THERE WAS A **HISTORY** ATTACHED TO THESE PLACES. IN BETHEL AND IN BEERSHEBA, GOD HAD MET WITH **JACOB**, THE **FATHER** OF THE **ISRAELI** NATION. GOD WAS SAYING, "DON'T LIVE IN THE **PAST**." DON'T SAY, "THE MAN WHO FOUNDED OUR **CHURCH**, MANY YEARS AGO WAS A **GODLY** MAN." SOME OF THESE **GODLY** MEN WHO FOUNDED CHURCHES 200--300 YEARS AGO, WOULD **NOT** JOIN THE CHURCHES THEY **FOUNDED**, IF THEY WERE TO RETURN TO EARTH TODAY -- BECAUSE THEIR CHURCHES HAVE **BACKSLIPPEN** SO BADLY. SEE WHERE **GOD** IS **WORKING** TODAY.

FURTHER HE SAYS "YOU ARE THE **ENEMIES** OF EVERYTHING **GOOD**; YOU TAKE BRIBES; YOU REFUSE **JUSTICE** TO THE POOR. I HATE YOUR SHOW AND PRETENSE -- YOUR HYPOCRISY OF '**HONORING**' ME WITH YOUR **RELIGIOUS** FEASTS AND SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES. I WILL NOT ACCEPT YOUR BURNT OFFERINGS AND THANK OFFERINGS. I WILL NOT LOOK AT YOUR OFFERINGS OF PEACE. AWAY WITH YOUR **HYMNS** OF **PRAISE** -- THEY ARE MERE **NOISE** TO MY EARS. I WILL **NOT** LISTEN TO YOUR MUSIC, NO MATTER HOW LOVELY IT IS. I WANT TO SEE A MIGHTY **FLOOD** OF **JUSTICE** -- A **TORRENT** OF DOING **GOOD**" (5:7--12, 21--24 - TLB). WHEN A BELIEVER RENTS OUT HIS HOUSE TO A **POOR** MAN, DID YOU KNOW THAT **GOD** IS **INTERESTED** IN THE AMOUNT OF **RENT** HE CHARGES? **GOD** **HATES** THOSE WHO **EXPLOIT** THE **POOR**.



IN 6:4--6, THE LORD IS QUITE **SARCASTIC** AND TELLS THEM THAT THEY **IMAGINE** THEY ARE AS **GOOD** MUSICIANS AS **DAVID** WAS. BUT **DAVID** HAD A **GOOD** HEART, WHEREAS THESE **ISRAELITES** ONLY HAD **GOOD** MUSIC.



THEY WERE HAPPY THAT EVERYTHING WAS GOING **WELL** IN THEIR HOMES THEY HAD **COMFORTABLE** HOUSES, **GOOD** **MUSIC** AND **GOOD** **FOOD**. BUT HOW MANY OF THEM WERE CONCERNED ABOUT "**JOSEPH'S AFFLICTION**" -- THE **SAD** **STATE** OF THE NATION? HARDLY ANYONE. IN OUR TIME, THE LORD'S QUESTION IS "HOW MANY OF YOU ARE **CONCERNED** ABOUT THE **SAD** **STATE** OF THE **CHURCH**?"



THE LORD SAID, "I DESPISE THE **PRIDE** AND THE **FALSE** GLORY OF ISRAEL. I **HATE** THEIR BEAUTIFUL HOMES" (6:8). DOES GOD HATE BEAUTIFUL HOMES? NO. BUT HE DOES **RESIST** PEOPLE WHO ARE **PROUD** OF THEIR **BEAUTIFUL** HOMES, AND ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY ARE **NOT CONCERNED** THAT THE BODY OF **CHRIST** SHOULD BE **PURE** AND **HOLY**.



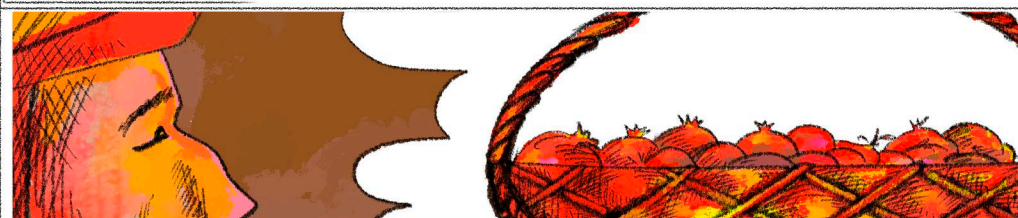
IN 7:1--6, AMOS SAW VISIONS OF A **LOCUST-SWARM** AND A GREAT **FIRE** COMING TO JUDGE ISRAEL. HE IMMEDIATELY **INTERCEDED** FOR ISRAEL. GOD LISTENED TO AMOS AND GAVE UP HIS PLANS TO JUDGE ISRAEL -- **TWICE**. IN EZEKIEL'S TIME LATER, GOD DID NOT FIND ANY **INTERCESSOR** (EZEKIEL 22:30). BUT AT THIS TIME, HE DID FIND ONE -- **AMOS** WHO **PLEADED** WITH GOD, JUST AS **MOSES** HAD **PLEADED** MANY CENTURIES EARLIER WHEN GOD HAD WANTED TO DESTROY ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS. THESE PROPHETS WERE **COMPASSIONATE** MEN AND **THEREFORE** THEY WERE GREAT **INTERCESSORS**.



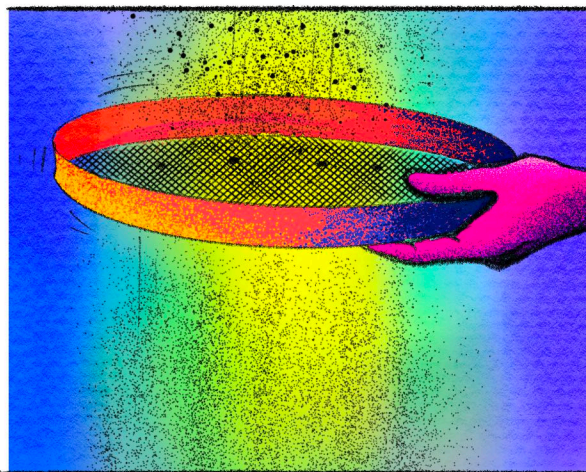
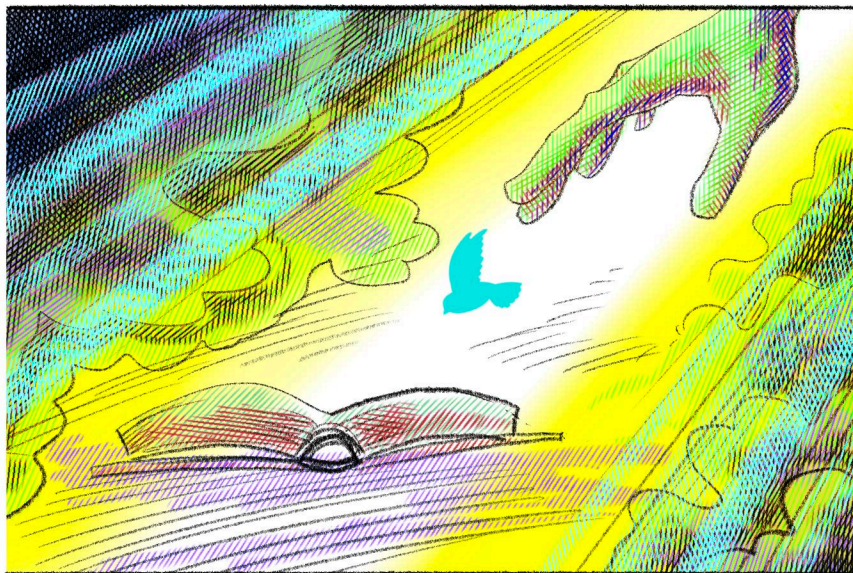
THE LORD THEN GAVE AMOS A VISION OF A **PLUMB-LINE** AND TOLD HIM, "I AM ABOUT TO PUT A PLUMB LINE IN THE MIDST OF MY PEOPLE **ISRAEL** -- TO SEE IF THEY ARE **STRAIGHTFORWARD**, **HONEST** AND **UPRIGHT** -- I WILL SPARE THEM NO LONGER" (7:8). GOD ALWAYS TESTS US BY HIS PLUMB-LINE TO SEE IF WE ARE **HONEST** ABOUT OUR **SINS**.



WE THEN SEE A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN **AMAZIAH**, THE PRIEST OF **BETHEL**, (SYMBOLISING A **BABYLONIAN** "CHRISTIAN" LEADER) AND **AMOS** (SYMBOLISING ONE WHO BUILDS **JERUSALEM**, THE TRUE CHURCH). **FALSE** PROPHETS ARE **QUICK** TO SPREAD **LIES** ABOUT THE **TRUE** PROPHETS OF GOD. THAT HAPPENED IN AMOS' TIME, AND IT HAS HAPPENED TIME AND AGAIN DURING THE LAST **2000** YEARS IN **CHRISTENDOM**.



THEN THE LORD GAVE AMOS A VISION OF **RIPE** FRUIT SYMBOLISING THAT **ISRAEL** WAS **RIPE** FOR **PUNISHMENT** (8:2).



IN 8:11, 12, WE READ THESE **PROPHETIC** WORDS ABOUT THE LAST DAYS: "THERE WILL BE A FAMINE IN THE **LAST DAYS** -- NOT A FAMINE OF **BREAD** BUT A FAMINE OF THE **WORD** OF THE LORD -- AND PEOPLE WILL WANDER HERE AND THERE LOOKING FOR A WORD FROM THE LORD." WE ARE SEEING THAT FAMINE TODAY. 'THE WORD OF GOD' REFERS TO THE BIBLE -- AND THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF THAT. BUT HERE IT IS SPEAKING ABOUT 'THE WORD OF THE **LORD**' -- AND THAT REFERS TO THE **PROPHETIC** WORD THAT COMES FROM GOD ACCORDING TO THE **NEED** OF THE HOUR THROUGH THE MOUTH OF A **PROPHET**.

WHEN GOD JUDGES ISRAEL, THOSE WHO GENUINELY FEAR HIM WILL BE SAVED: "I HAVE COMMANDED THAT ISRAEL BE **SIFTED** BY THE OTHER NATIONS AS GRAIN IS SIFTED IN A SIEVE, YET **NOT ONE TRUE KERNEL** WILL BE LOST. BUT ALL THESE SINNERS WHO SAY, 'GOD WILL NOT TOUCH US,' WILL **DIE** BY THE SWORD." **SATAN** HAS A SIEVE WITH WHICH HE SEEKS TO **SIFT GOD'S** CHILDREN (SEE LUKE 22:31). BUT OUR LORD **PRAYS** FOR US AND OUR **FAITH** WILL **NOT FAIL**.



THE LORD THEN SAYS, "AT THAT TIME I WILL **REBUILD** THE CITY OF DAVID, WHICH IS NOW LYING IN **RUINS**, AND RETURN IT TO ITS **FORMER GLORY**" (9:11). THIS VERSE IS QUOTED BY JAMES (IN ACTS 15:16, 17), AS REFERRING TO THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH. THE **CHURCH** IS IN A **RUINED** STATE IN MANY PLACES. BUT THE LORD SAYS, "I WILL REBUILD IT."

AND THEN THE TIME WILL COME WHEN "THE **PLOWMAN** WILL **OVERTAKE** THE **REAPER**" (9:13). WHAT THAT MEANS IS: WE HAVE **SOWN** MUCH **EVIL** IN THE PAST, AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN **FORGIVEN**, YET TO SOME EXTENT WE STILL **REAP** WHAT WE HAVE **SOWN**. BUT THE TIME WILL SOON COME WHEN THE NEW THINGS THAT YOU ARE **SOWING** IN YOUR **LIFE** (AFTER BECOMING A **WHOLEHEARTED** DISCIPLE) WILL **WIPE OUT** THE THINGS YOU HAVE BEEN **REAPING** (BECAUSE OF YOUR **PAST**).



"The plowman will overtake the reaper" (9:13)
what a glorious promise!