

Amos 5

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A Lament for Israel A Call to Repentance

¹ Hear this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel:

² The virgin of Israel has fallen;
She will rise no more.
She lies forsaken on her land;
There is no one to raise her up.

Virgin: בְּתוּלָה *b'tulah* a virgin or newly married woman. God used the picture of marriage to describe His relationship with Israel.

³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

³ For thus says the Lord GOD:

"The city that goes out by a thousand
Shall have a hundred left,
And that which goes out by a hundred
Shall have ten left to the house of Israel."

Similar to vaYikra (Leviticus) 26.36-37

- ³⁶ 'And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues.
- ³⁷ They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no *power* to stand before your enemies.

A Call to Repentance

⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:

“Seek Me and live;
⁵ But do not seek Bethel,
Nor enter Gilgal,
Nor pass over to Beersheba;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
And Bethel shall come to nothing.
⁶ Seek the LORD and live,
Lest He break out like fire *in* the house of Joseph,
And devour *it*,
With no one to quench *it* in Bethel—
⁷ You who turn justice to wormwood,
And lay righteousness to rest in the earth!”

Seek me and live: D'varim (Deuteronomy) 30.11–20

¹¹ “For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off. ¹² It *is* not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³ Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴ But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

⁸ He made the Pleiades and Orion;
He turns the shadow of death into morning
And makes the day dark as night;
He calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth;
The LORD *is* His name.

⁹ He rains ruin upon the strong,
So that fury comes upon the fortress.

God pleads that, as the Creator and Sustainer of the world, is there anything too difficult or outside His reach? To Whom should we be seeking allegiance?

¹⁰ They hate the one who rebukes in the gate,
And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.

¹¹ Therefore, because you tread down the poor
And take grain taxes from him,
Though you have built houses of hewn stone,
Yet you shall not dwell in them;
You have planted pleasant vineyards,
But you shall not drink wine from them.

¹² For I know your manifold transgressions
And your mighty sins:
Afflicting the just *and* taking bribes;
Diverting the poor *from justice* at the gate.

¹³ Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time,
For it *is* an evil time.

The concern for the poor and powerless, and hatred for oppression is again stated, along with a promise of justice upon those who abuse their position or authority over the weak. Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 5.20-25

²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

²¹ Woe to *those who are* wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight!

²² Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,
Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,

²³ Who justify the wicked for a bribe,
And take away justice from the righteous man!

²⁴ Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble,
And the flame consumes the chaff,
So their root will be as rottenness,
And their blossom will ascend like dust;
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵ Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people;
He has stretched out His hand against them
And stricken them,
And the hills trembled.

Their carcasses *were* as refuse in the midst of the streets.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

¹⁴ Seek good and not evil,
That you may live;
So the LORD God of hosts will be with you,
As you have spoken.

¹⁵ Hate evil, love good;
Establish justice in the gate.
It may be that the LORD God of hosts
Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Again to D'varim (Deuteronomy) 30.19

19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

The Day of the LORD

16 Therefore the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, says this:

"*There shall be* wailing in all streets,
And they shall say in all the highways,
'Alas! Alas!'

They shall call the farmer to mourning,
And skillful lamenters to wailing.

17 In all vineyards *there shall be* wailing,
For I will pass through you,"
Says the LORD.

Why the mourning? For the failed crops, see D'varim (Deuteronomy) 28.58–67

58 "If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, 59 then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses. 60 Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 Also every sickness and every plague, which *is* not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62 You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. 63 And it shall be, *that* just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess.

64 "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. 65 And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. 66 Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. 67 In the morning you shall say, 'Oh, that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Oh, that it were morning!' because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.

18 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!

For what good *is* the day of the LORD to you?

It *will be* darkness, and not light.

19 It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion,

And a bear met him!

Or *as though* he went into the house,

Leaned his hand on the wall,

And a serpent bit him!

20 *Is* not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light?

Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?

21 "I hate, I despise your feast days,

And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.

22 Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,
I will not accept *them*,
Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.
23 Take away from Me the noise of your songs,
For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.
24 But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.

These are not the sacrifices of Israel, which the Lord commanded, but the abominations practiced by the ten northern tribes in place of God's commanded sacrifices. M'lakhim alef (1 Kings) 12.25-33

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Peniel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. 31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that *was* in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.

Justice...Righteousness: Obedience to God's commands are the just and right things to do.

25 "Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings
In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
26 You also carried Sikkuth [fn1] your king [fn2]
And Chiun, [fn3] your idols,
The star of your gods,
Which you made for yourselves.
27 Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus,"
Says the LORD, whose name *is* the God of hosts.

וּנְשָׂאתֶם, אֵת סִבּוֹת מַלְכֵיכֶם, וְאֵת, כִּיּוֹן צִלְמֵיכֶם--בּוֹכָב, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם, לָכֶם. *un'sa'tem et sikut mal'k'khem v'et kiy'un*

Footnotes:

5:26 A pagan deity

5:26 Septuagint and Vulgate read *tabernacle of Moloch*.

5:26 A pagan deity