

# Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?

## Session 4: Salvation History Comes Unravelling (Amos 3-6) (B)

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs – NotebookLM AI

### 1) Abstract:

Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture, "Salvation History Comes Unravelling," examines Amos chapters 3-6, focusing on Israel's impending judgment. He highlights God's **sarcasm** and **patience** in calling Israel to repentance through various **calamities** before declaring judgment. Chisholm explains that Israel's **religious rituals** at places like Bethel and Gilgal are deemed **hypocritical** by God due to their pervasive **injustice**. He emphasizes the **chiasm** (a literary device using a mirror structure) in Amos 5, showing how God's attributes, such as **sovereignty** and **justice**, underpin the call to "seek the Lord and live." Ultimately, the text reveals God's repeated attempts to prompt His people to **return to Him** before final, unavoidable judgment, serving as a **microcosm** for humanity's rejection of God's grace.

### 2) Briefing Document:

Briefing Document: "Salvation History Comes Unravelling" (Amos 3-6)

**Source:** Excerpts from "Chisholm\_Amos\_Ses04\_B.pdf" – Dr. Robert Chisholm, "Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?" Session 4 (B): Salvation History Comes Unravelling (Amos 3-6).

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#### I. Overview and Core Message (Amos 4:4-13)

Dr. Robert Chisholm's session focuses on Amos chapters 3-6, specifically detailing Amos 4:4-13 and introducing Amos 5:1-17. The central theme of this section is **Israel's impending judgment due to their persistent sin and hypocrisy, despite**

**God's repeated warnings.** The overarching message is encapsulated in the phrase, "Prepare to Meet Your God," signifying that "Sinful Israel is going to meet their God in judgment."

## II. Key Themes and Concepts

### A. Sarcastic Imperatives and Religious Hypocrisy (Amos 4:4-5)

- **Ironic Commands:** God issues seemingly absurd commands: "Go to Bethel and sin," and "Go to Gilgal and sin yet more." This is identified as "an ironic or even sarcastic imperative," akin to an exasperated parent telling a disobedient child to "Go ahead, climb the tree, fall and break your arm or your neck, I don't care."
- **Substitution of Ritual for Reality:** The Israelites believe that "by offering sacrifices, tithes, and freewill offerings, they're going to gain God's favor, and he will not judge them." However, God views their religious rituals as sin because they are offered by "hypocrites" whose "hands have blood on them and they're guilty of injustice."
- **Significance of Worship Sites:** Bethel and Gilgal, historically sacred sites (Bethel for Jacob's encounter with God; Gilgal as the first campsite after crossing the Jordan and the place of circumcision), are now condemned. God states, "your association with these sites isn't going to insulate you from my judgment."

### B. God's Persistent Warnings and Israel's Unresponsiveness (Amos 4:6-11)

- **Covenant Curses as Signals:** Chisholm highlights that God had already been sending "signals of his displeasure" through various natural disasters and plagues, which are "covenant curses" mentioned in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. These were designed "to get them to come to their senses and realize something is wrong in our relationship with God."
- **Repeated Refrain: "Yet you have not returned to me":** This phrase emphasizes Israel's stubborn refusal to repent despite experiencing:
- "Empty stomachs" and "lack of bread" (famine).
- Withholding of rain (drought), leading to people "staggered from town to town for water."

- "Blight and mildew" and locusts devouring crops, leading to missed harvests.
- "Plagues," "killed your young men with the sword," and "stench of your camps."
- Destruction akin to "Sodom and Gomorrah," with Israel barely escaping "like a burning stick, snatched from the fire."
- **Purpose of Warnings:** These calamities were "very tangible object lessons" intended to draw Israel to repentance (Hebrew: *shuv*, "to return").

### C. The Inevitability and Nature of Judgment (Amos 4:12-13)

- **"Prepare to Meet Your God":** This is a direct declaration of impending judgment. Chisholm interprets this not as a new, undescribed action, but an intensification of what God "has already been doing." It means meeting God "up close and personal as I come in judgment."
- **Description of God's Sovereignty:** Verse 13 provides a hymnic description of God, emphasizing His absolute power and control:
  - "He who forms the mountains, who creates the world" (Creator of stability and instability, "all of the world and all of nature").
  - "who reveals his thoughts to mankind" (through prophets, underscoring His communication of intentions).
  - "who turns dawn to darkness and treads on the heights of the earth" (ability to invert natural order, bring death/destruction, and appear in judgment "in the storm clouds").
- **Call to Repentance (Implicit):** The best way to "prepare to meet your God" is to "return to me."

### D. Universal Microcosm: Israel's Experience as a Model for Humanity

- **God's Patience and Human Rebellion:** Chisholm asserts that God's dealings with ancient Israel are "a microcosm of his dealings with the human race." Just as Israel rebelled, "the whole human race has rebelled against God."

- **Consequences of Rejection:** God "has been trying to get rebellious humankind's attention by letting them experience the consequences of their rejection of God." Yet, "humankind, for the most part, refuses to acknowledge its sin, rejects God's offer of forgiveness, and continues in its sinful ways."
- **Religious Formalism in Modernity:** Like Israel, many in modern times "turn to religious formalism... somehow deriving a sense of spiritual security from such activities."
- **Final Judgment:** Eventually, God's patience will end, and "History will come to an end as the sovereign Creator executes final judgment," as described in Revelation.

#### E. Literary Structure: The Chiasm in Amos 5:1-17

- **Oral Literature:** Chisholm highlights that biblical prophecy was "oral literature" designed for preaching and hearing, making repetition and specific structures highly effective.
- **Chiasm (Concentric/Mirror Structure):** The passage Amos 5:1-17 is structured as an A-B-C-D-C-B-A chiasm (or mirror structure), where the second half mirrors the first, and a central point (D) acts as a pivot.
- **A: Lament (Amos 5:1-3):** "Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you. Fallen is virgin Israel, never to rise again..." This signifies "Death is imminent." Military devastation is predicted, with 90% casualties.
- **B: Call to Repentance/Seek Life (Amos 5:4-6):** "Seek me, and live." This contrasts with the judgment in A. However, they are warned, "Do not seek Bethel," "Do not go to Gilgal," "Do not journey to Beersheba" because these sites will face judgment ("Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing"). This section includes powerful Hebrew wordplay: "Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle" (Gilgal, exile will exile).
- **C: Accusation of Injustice (Amos 5:7):** "There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground." This explains *why* judgment is coming, as their behavior "demands justice."
- **D: The Divine Judge (Amos 5:8-9 – The Pivot):** This is the central, non-repeated point. It describes God's absolute sovereignty ("He who made the

Pleiades and Orion... turns midnight into dawn... calls for the waters of the sea... The Lord is his name") and His power to destroy ("destroys the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin"). This is where "they're guilty of injustice, and they're going to encounter the divine judge."

- **C' (Amos 5:10-13):** Further detailed accusation of injustice. They "hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth." They "levy a straw tax on the poor," "oppress the innocent and take bribes," and "deprive the poor of justice." This leads to the warning: "Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them. Though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine."
- **B' (Amos 5:14-15):** The practical application of "seeking the Lord." It means "Seek good, not evil, that you may live." It's about actions: "Hate evil. Love good. Maintain justice in the courts." There is a slight glimmer of hope: "Perhaps there's a little... the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph."
- **A' (Amos 5:16-17):** Return to lamentation. "There will be wailing and cries of anguish in every public square... The farmers will be summoned to weep, and the mourners to wail... There will be wailing in all the vineyards." The concluding phrase, "for I will pass through your midst, says the Lord," is a direct "tenth plague revisited" allusion, comparing the coming judgment to the Passover judgment in Egypt, but this time against Israel.

### III. Important Facts and Insights

- **Bethel and Gilgal:** Were not just random places, but deeply significant historical and religious sites for Israel, making their condemnation particularly poignant.
- **Hebrew Wordplay:** The example of "Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle" demonstrates the artistry and impact of the original Hebrew text, especially in an oral context.
- **Theophany:** God's appearance for judgment is often described as coming "in the storm clouds," consistent with Old Testament imagery of divine appearances (theophanies).

- **Justice as a Core Attribute:** God's judgment is portrayed as the necessary "implementation of God's just nature and demands" in response to their injustice.
- **Amos's Role:** He is a prophet proclaiming coming judgment, a "truth-teller" in a society that "hate[s] truth-tellers."
- **Context of Prosperity:** Despite the coming judgment, the source notes that the period leading up to it "had been a time of prosperity," making Israel's moral decay and rejection of God's warnings all the more striking.

#### IV. Conclusion

The session underscores God's deep patience and repeated efforts to call Israel to repentance through various means, from prophetic warnings to tangible "covenant curses." However, Israel's persistent religious hypocrisy, substitution of ritual for genuine righteousness, and widespread injustice lead inevitably to severe divine judgment. The intricate chiasmic structure of Amos 5 further highlights the prophet's deliberate and impactful communication, emphasizing the stark choice between seeking God through righteousness and facing the terrifying reality of meeting Him as a sovereign and just judge. This historical account serves as a timeless "microcosm" for understanding God's dealings with all humanity.

### 3) Study Guide:

#### Understanding Amos 3-6: Salvation History Comes Unravelling

##### Study Guide

This study guide focuses on Dr. Robert Chisholm's Session 4 (B) of his teaching on the Book of Amos, specifically covering chapters 3-6. The session is titled "Salvation History Comes Unravelling" and highlights God's judgment on Israel due to their unrepentant sin and hypocrisy.

##### Key Themes:

- **Ironic Imperatives/Sarcasm:** God's seemingly contradictory commands to "Go to Bethel and sin" are a sarcastic indictment of Israel's ritualistic and hypocritical worship. They believe their religious acts gain favor, but these acts are viewed as sin due to accompanying injustice.

- **Failed Attempts at Repentance:** Chapters 4:6-11 detail a series of covenant curses (famine, drought, blight, locusts, plagues, military defeat, devastation akin to Sodom and Gomorrah) that God sent to prompt Israel's return (shuv) to Him. Despite these severe warnings, Israel "has not returned."
- **"Prepare to Meet Your God":** This phrase (Amos 4:12) signifies an impending encounter with God as a judge. It's a call to confront their Creator who is all-powerful, controls nature, reveals His will through prophets, and can bring drastic judgment. The best "preparation" is repentance.
- **God's Patience and Drastic Measures:** God is patient, using various warnings and judgments to bring His people to repentance. When these fail, more severe measures are implemented, ultimately leading to final judgment. This serves as a microcosm for God's dealings with all humankind.
- **The Problem of Religious Formalism vs. True Piety:** Israel engaged in extensive religious rituals (sacrifices, tithes, freewill offerings at Bethel and Gilgal) but neglected moral justice and righteousness. God rejects hypocritical worship; ritual without righteousness is sin.
- **Significance of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba:** These sites, historically important worship centers for Israel, are ironically condemned. Bethel (House of God) and Gilgal (associated with entering the Promised Land) are explicitly mentioned as places where their worship is sinful, and they will be destroyed. Beersheba, another patriarchal site, is also included in the condemnation.
- **Injustice as the Core Sin:** A primary reason for God's judgment is Israel's pervasive injustice. They "turn justice into bitterness," "cast righteousness to the ground," "oppress the innocent," "take bribes," and "deprive the poor of justice in the courts."
- **Chiasm/Concentric Structure (Oral Literature):** Amos 5:1-17 employs a sophisticated literary structure (A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A') to emphasize its message, common in oral literature for memorability and impact.
- **A:** Israel's demise deserves lament (death is imminent).
- **B:** The people must repent (seek me and live).

- **C:** They are guilty of injustice.
- **D (Pivot):** They will encounter the divine judge (God's sovereignty).
- **C':** The people are guilty of injustice (expanded accusations).
- **B':** The people must repent (seek good, not evil).
- **A':** Divine judgment will bring lamentation (God will pass through).
- **"I Will Pass Through Your Midst" (The 10th Plague Revisited):** The conclusion of Amos 5:17 explicitly alludes to the Passover narrative (Exodus), where God "passed through" Egypt in judgment. This emphasizes that Israel, despite their covenant relationship, will experience a similar, devastating judgment, akin to the death of the firstborn in Egypt.

#### Key Concepts:

- **Shuv (Repentance):** The Hebrew verb meaning "to return," highlighting God's desire for Israel to turn back to Him.
- **Covenant Curses:** The negative consequences outlined in Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26) for disobedience, which God began to implement as warnings.
- **Theophany:** An appearance of God, often described with natural phenomena like storm clouds, thunder, and lightning, reinforcing His power and impending judgment.
- **Kinah (Lament):** A Hebrew mourning song, indicating imminent death and devastation for Israel.
- **Sound Play/Word Play:** A rhetorical device used by prophets, such as "Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle" (Gilgal will surely go into exile), to enhance memorability and impact in oral delivery.

#### Practical Applications/Lessons:

- God's consistent character as a God of justice.
- The futility of religious ritual without genuine righteousness and justice.



- The importance of repentance and "seeking good" as the true way to "seek God."
- The severity of God's judgment on unrepentant sin, even among His chosen people.
- The cosmic scope of God's sovereignty over creation and history.

#### Quiz: Amos 3-6 - Salvation History Unravelled

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Explain the sarcasm in Amos 4:4-5, where God tells Israel to "Go to Bethel and sin." What message is He trying to convey?
2. List three types of "signals of displeasure" or "covenant curses" God sent to Israel before declaring, "Prepare to meet your God." What was God's intention behind these warnings?
3. What is the significance of the phrase "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12), according to Dr. Chisholm? How does this relate to the description of God in Amos 4:13?
4. How does Dr. Chisholm explain the tension between Israel's religious rituals and God's view of them as sin? What classic text is referenced to support this point?
5. Why are sites like Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, historically important for Israel's worship, ironically condemned in Amos 5:5?
6. Briefly describe the chiasmic (A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A') structure used in Amos 5:1-17. Why is this literary device particularly effective in oral communication?
7. What is the central accusation against Israel in Amos 5:7 and 5:10-12? How does this relate to God's nature?
8. How does Amos 5:6 and 5:14-15 define "seeking the Lord" or "seeking good"? What is it contrasted with?
9. Explain the allusion to the "10th plague revisited" at the end of Amos 5:17. What terrifying implication does this have for Israel?

10. Dr. Chisholm states that God's dealings with ancient Israel are a "microcosm of his dealings with the human race." What universal lesson does he draw from this comparison?

Answer Key

1. The sarcasm in Amos 4:4-5 highlights God's rejection of Israel's hypocritical worship. They believed their elaborate sacrifices and offerings at places like Bethel and Gilgal gained God's favor, but because these rituals were performed alongside pervasive injustice and moral corruption, God viewed them as sinful and an affront rather than true worship.
2. God sent signals like famine ("empty stomachs," "lack of bread"), drought ("withheld rain"), and agricultural devastation ("blight and mildew," "locusts devoured fig and olive trees"). His intention was to prompt them to "return" (shuv) to Him, to come to their senses and realize their disobedience was preventing His blessings.
3. "Prepare to meet your God" signifies that God is coming as their judge, and they will encounter Him "up close and personal" in this role. Amos 4:13 describes God as the all-powerful Creator who forms mountains, creates wind, reveals thoughts, turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the earth's heights, emphasizing that this judge is sovereign and omnipotent.
4. God viewed Israel's religious rituals as sin because they were performed by hypocrites whose hands were "full of blood" (Isaiah 1). The Lord desires righteousness and justice, not ritualistic offerings from those who practice injustice. Ritual without moral uprightness is unacceptable.
5. Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba were significant worship sites where Israelites historically met God and experienced His blessings. However, Israel's corruption and syncretism had polluted these places, turning them into centers of hypocritical worship. Therefore, God declares they will be destroyed, signifying that their historical significance and religious activity will not protect them from judgment.
6. The chiasmic structure (A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A') presents themes in a mirrored fashion around a central point. For instance, Amos 5:1-3 (lament) is mirrored by 5:16-17, and the call to repent (5:4) is mirrored by 5:14-15. This structure

aids memorability in oral delivery, allowing listeners to follow the progression and emphasis of the message.

7. The central accusation against Israel is their pervasive injustice. They "turn justice into bitterness," "cast righteousness to the ground," "oppress the innocent," "take bribes," and "deprive the poor of justice." This relates to God's nature as a God of justice, whose righteous demands require accountability for such actions.
8. Amos 5:6 and 5:14-15 define "seeking the Lord" or "seeking good" as actively "seeking good, not evil," "hating evil," "loving good," and "maintaining justice in the courts." It is contrasted with mere religious ritual and hypocrisy at worship sites like Bethel and Gilgal.
9. Amos 5:17, "I will pass through your midst, says the Lord," directly alludes to the Passover narrative in Exodus, where God "passed through" Egypt in judgment, resulting in the death of the firstborn. For Israel, this implies a devastating, indiscriminate judgment from God, akin to the plague that struck Egypt, demonstrating that their covenant status will not spare them from the consequences of their sin.
10. Dr. Chisholm suggests that God's patient yet ultimately drastic dealings with ancient Israel serve as a microcosm for His dealings with the entire human race. Despite His blessings and warnings (like the covenant curses), humankind often rejects God's offer of forgiveness and persists in sin, eventually facing ultimate judgment, similar to Israel's fate in Amos.

#### Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the progression of God's warnings and judgments in Amos 4:6-11. Discuss how Israel's repeated failure to "return to me" despite these escalating measures underscores the gravity of their sin and God's patience, drawing parallels to a broader theological principle.
2. Discuss the significance of the phrase "Prepare to meet your God" in Amos 4:12, considering its immediate context within the sermon and the subsequent description of God in Amos 4:13. How does this passage challenge a superficial understanding of God's character?

3. Examine the tension between Israel's extensive religious rituals (sacrifices, tithes, freewill offerings at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba) and God's condemnation of these practices in Amos 4:4-5 and 5:5. What fundamental theological principle regarding worship and righteousness is Amos emphasizing?
4. Deconstruct the chiastic structure of Amos 5:1-17 (A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A'). Identify each thematic section and explain how the structure enhances the prophet's message, particularly the central pivot and the repeated emphasis on lamentation and repentance.
5. Compare and contrast the concept of "seeking the Lord" as practiced by Israel through their rituals with the true meaning of "seeking the Lord" as articulated in Amos 5:4-6 and 5:14-15. How does the "10th plague revisited" imagery in 5:17 serve as a powerful conclusion to this section on Israel's failure to truly seek God?

#### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Abba:** Hebrew word meaning "nothing" or "destruction," used in a wordplay to describe the fate of Bethel in Amos 5:5.
- **Amos:** One of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament, whose book proclaims God's judgment against Israel and surrounding nations due to their injustice and spiritual apostasy.
- **Bethel:** ("House of God") An ancient and historically significant worship site for Israel, associated with Jacob's vision and covenant promises. Ironically condemned in Amos for its corrupt and hypocritical worship.
- **Beersheba:** A significant patriarchal site in the southern kingdom of Judah, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob encountered God. Included in Amos's condemnation of corrupted worship sites.
- **Chiasm/Concentric Structure:** A literary device where a series of ideas are presented and then repeated in reverse order (A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A'), creating a mirror-like or concentric pattern. Often used in oral literature to emphasize a central theme.

- **Covenant Curses:** Specific negative consequences outlined in the Mosaic Law (e.g., Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26) that God promised to bring upon Israel if they disobeyed His commands. Amos describes these being implemented (famine, drought, blight, etc.).
- **Gilgal:** A historically important site where the Israelites first camped after crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land, and where the new generation was circumcised. Condemned in Amos for its corrupted worship.
- **Ironic Imperative:** A command given with a sarcastic or ironic intent, meaning the opposite of what is literally stated. Used by God in Amos 4:4-5 to mock Israel's sinful worship.
- **Kinah:** A Hebrew word for a lament or mourning song, indicating imminent death and devastation. Amos's prophecy often takes on this form.
- **Microcosm:** A small, representative system that reflects a larger one. Dr. Chisholm uses this to describe how God's dealings with ancient Israel (their rebellion, warnings, and judgment) parallel His dealings with all humankind throughout history.
- **Northern Kingdom (Israel/Ephraim):** The ten northern tribes of Israel that seceded after the death of Solomon, forming their own kingdom. Amos's prophecies are primarily directed at this kingdom.
- **Oral Literature:** Literature designed to be spoken and heard, rather than read. It often employs devices like repetition, sound play, and structured patterns (like chiasms) to aid memorability and impact.
- **Passover:** An annual Jewish festival commemorating God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, specifically the night when the angel of death "passed over" the homes marked with lamb's blood while striking the firstborn of Egypt.
- **Pleiades and Orion:** Constellations mentioned in Amos 5:8, used to highlight God's sovereignty as the Creator of the heavens.
- **Religious Formalism:** The practice of adhering strictly to religious rituals and outward expressions of faith without genuine internal piety, moral integrity, or a true relationship with God.

- **Salvation History:** The theological concept that views human history as a narrative of God's redemptive plan and interactions with humanity, particularly Israel. Amos shows this history "unravelling" due to Israel's sin.
- **Shuv:** A Hebrew verb meaning "to return," "to turn back," or "to repent." A key concept in Amos, representing God's call for Israel to turn away from their sin and back to Him.
- **Sound Play/Word Play:** A literary device that uses the sounds of words, often similar-sounding words with different meanings, to create emphasis or a clever effect (e.g., "Ha Gilgal, Galo Yigle").
- **Syncretism:** The blending of different religious beliefs or practices, often leading to the corruption of pure worship.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind, often accompanied by natural phenomena like storm clouds, thunder, and fire, emphasizing His power and presence.
- **10th Plague Revisited:** An allusion in Amos 5:17 to the final plague in Egypt, where God "passed through" and brought death to the firstborn. Its application to Israel signifies a similarly devastating and inescapable judgment.

#### 4) FAQs:

How does Amos use "ironic or sarcastic imperatives" to convey God's message to Israel?

Amos uses ironic or sarcastic commands, such as "Go to Bethel and sin," to highlight Israel's profound spiritual misalignment. The Israelites were engaging in extensive religious rituals at significant worship sites like Bethel and Gilgal, believing these acts would earn God's favor and protect them from judgment. However, their rituals were devoid of genuine righteousness and justice, making them acts of hypocrisy in God's eyes. By sarcastically commanding them to continue their sinful rituals, God underscores that their religious activities are not only futile but are actually offensive, counting as sin because they are offered by hypocrites whose hands are stained with injustice. This rhetorical device serves to expose the

hollowness of their worship and emphasize that ritual cannot substitute for true obedience and moral living.

What is the significance of Bethel and Gilgal in Amos's message?

Bethel and Gilgal were historically significant worship sites for Israel, deeply embedded in their cultural memory. Bethel was where Jacob encountered God, signifying a foundational connection to their forefather. Gilgal was their first campsite after crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, a place associated with the miraculous entry and the circumcision of a new generation, symbolizing the fulfillment of God's promises. However, by Amos's time, these sites had become centers of idolatry and hypocritical worship. God warns that going to these places, despite their historical sanctity, amounts to sin because the people are substituting empty ritual for true righteousness. The prophet emphasizes that these cherished sites will not insulate Israel from judgment; in fact, they will become objects of judgment themselves due to the pervasive corruption and syncretism.

How has God been communicating His displeasure to Israel before the pronouncement of final judgment?

Before declaring final judgment, God had already sent a series of "signals of his displeasure" to Israel. These included widespread famine (empty stomachs and lack of bread), drought (withholding rain), agricultural blights (mildew, blight, locusts destroying crops), and plagues, including a sword that killed young men. The recurring phrase "yet you have not returned to me" indicates that these adversities were designed to get Israel's attention, prompting them to recognize their disobedience and repent. Despite experiencing tangible consequences of their rebellion—which align with the covenant curses described in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26—Israel largely failed to connect these dots and return to God.

What is the profound meaning behind the statement "Prepare to meet your God" in Amos 4:12?

The statement "Prepare to meet your God" signifies that God is coming to Israel, not as a benevolent protector, but as their divine judge. This impending encounter is portrayed as an intense, personal reckoning. The preceding verses highlight God's identity as the omnipotent Creator who forms mountains, creates wind, reveals His thoughts through prophets, and can turn dawn into darkness. This description

emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty and power over creation and human affairs. Therefore, "prepare to meet your God" is a stark warning that the same God who established the world and patiently tried to call them back is now coming to execute judgment. The implied "best way to prepare" is repentance and a sincere return to Him.

How does Amos's message about Israel serve as a "microcosm" for God's dealings with all humanity?

Dr. Chisholm posits that God's interactions with ancient Israel are a "microcosm" of His dealings with the entire human race. Just as Israel rebelled and failed to heed God's warnings, humanity continually rejects God's blessings and offers of forgiveness, often turning to "religious formalism" or empty rituals instead of genuine repentance. Despite God's patient attempts to draw people back through various means (experiencing consequences of rebellion, the message of Jesus Christ), humankind often refuses to acknowledge sin and believes things will "end up okay in the end." This parallel suggests that the patterns of divine patience, warnings, human rebellion, and eventual judgment seen in Amos's prophecy for Israel are universally applicable to humanity's spiritual journey.

What is a "chiasm" or "mirror structure" in oral literature, and how does it function in Amos 5?

A chiasm (also known as a mirror or concentric structure) is a literary device prevalent in oral literature, where themes or ideas are presented in a specific order (e.g., A, B, C, D) and then repeated in reverse order (D, C, B, A), with the central point (D) often being the most significant. This structure aids memory and emphasizes key ideas in an oral context where direct repetition is valued for learning.

In Amos 5, the structure unfolds as follows:

- **A (verses 1-3):** Israel's demise leading to lamentation and death.
- **B (verses 4-6):** The call to "seek me and live," emphasizing life over lament, but not through hypocritical ritual at sites like Bethel and Gilgal.
- **C (verse 7):** Accusation of their injustice—turning justice into bitterness, casting righteousness to the ground.



- **D (verse 8-9):** The central pivot: a hymnic description of God's sovereignty as Creator and Judge, linking their injustice to His imminent judgment.
- **C' (verses 10-13):** Further detailing of their injustice, including hatred for truth, oppression of the poor, and bribery.
- **B' (verses 14-15):** The call to "seek good, not evil, that you may live," clarifying what seeking God truly means (repentance, seeking justice) and offering a glimmer of hope for a remnant.
- **A' (verses 16-17):** Divine judgment bringing lamentation, echoing the initial theme of death and wailing, specifically mentioning God "passing through their midst" like the Tenth Plague in Egypt.

This chiastic structure effectively frames the entire section, emphasizing Israel's guilt (C and C') and God's role as the sovereign Judge (D), while bookending the message with themes of lamentation and judgment (A and A') and the conditional offer of life through seeking God (B and B').

Why does Amos refer to the "Tenth Plague revisited" in chapter 5?

Amos's reference to the "Tenth Plague revisited" at the end of chapter 5 (verse 17, "I will pass through your midst") is a powerful allusion to the Passover event in Exodus. In the original Tenth Plague, God "passed through" Egypt, causing the death of the firstborn in every Egyptian home while sparing the Israelites who had applied blood to their doorposts. By using the same language, Amos signals that God's impending judgment on Israel will be as devastating and inescapable as that original plague on Egypt. This comparison underscores the severity and finality of the judgment, implying that Israel, despite being God's chosen people, will face the same kind of divine wrath as their former oppressors due to their unrepentant sin and hypocrisy. The implication is that they will suffer a fate akin to that of Egypt, with widespread death and lamentation.

What is the core message of "seeking the Lord" according to Amos 5?

According to Amos 5, "seeking the Lord" is not found in performing religious rituals at traditional worship sites like Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba, especially when those actions are accompanied by hypocrisy and injustice. Instead, "seeking the Lord" means actively "seeking good, not evil," and "maintaining justice in the courts." It

requires hating evil, loving good, repenting from wrongdoing, and doing what is right. God clarifies that if they truly seek Him by pursuing righteousness and justice, then "the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is." This redefinition emphasizes that genuine worship and a right relationship with God are demonstrated through ethical conduct and social justice, rather than mere religious formalism.