

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

Session 7: Amos 7:1-8:3 Judgment is Inescapable (B)

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

1) Abstract:

In a **teaching session on the Book of Amos**, Dr. Robert Chisholm explains that **judgment is inescapable**. He discusses Amos's visions, including the symbolic **basket of ripe fruit (qayetz) representing the "end" (qayetz)** for Israel, a clever wordplay. Chisholm emphasizes that to comprehend God's seemingly harsh judgment, one must **view reality from God's perspective**, acknowledging His holiness and justice, as illustrated by the **plumb line vision**. The text further details the Israelites' **economic injustices** and their **disregard for religious observance**, leading to divine retribution. Finally, Chisholm highlights the **inescapability of God's judgment**, asserting that there is no hiding place from His wrath.

2) Briefing Document:

Detailed Briefing: The Inescapable Judgment in Amos (Sessions 7A & 7B)

This briefing reviews Dr. Robert Chisholm's teachings on the Book of Amos, specifically focusing on chapters 7:1-8:3 (Session 7A) and 8:4-9:10 (Session 7B), which emphasize the theme of "Judgment is Inescapable."

Main Themes and Key Ideas:

1. Understanding God's Judgment from His Perspective:

- **The Problem:** Many struggle with the "seemingly harsh judgment" of God, questioning His goodness when reading texts like Amos or Revelation.

- **The Solution:** Chisholm emphasizes that "to understand God's seemingly harsh judgment, we must look at reality from his perspective." God is sovereign, just, and good, and these attributes must be held in balance.
- **God's Holiness and Justice:** Just as a plumb line reveals a crooked wall, God's holiness and justice cannot tolerate the "crooked walls" of humanity, necessitating judgment.
- **God's Emotional Nature and Balance:** Through examples from Hosea, Chisholm illustrates God's complex emotional nature, showing Him struggling between anger (due to holiness and desire for justice) and mercy/compassion. This internal "struggle" within God demonstrates His perfect balance of emotions, unlike humans.
- **God's Shared Suffering:** God does not insulate Himself from the consequences of sin; Jesus, the God-man, suffered the penalty for sins, showing God's profound care and willingness to suffer for redemption.

1. **Symbolic Visions as Declarations of Inescapable Judgment:**

- **Review of Previous Visions (Amos 7): Locusts and Fire:** Initial "motion pictures" of judgment (locusts destroying crops, fire consuming the land) where Amos interceded, and the Lord relented.
- **Plumb Line:** A "snapshot" vision where God held a plumb line to a wall (representing Israel), implying the nation was "not built to plumb" and had become "crooked," requiring Amos to adjust his perspective to God's.
- **The Basket of Ripe Fruit (Amos 8:1-3): The Vision:** Amos sees a "basket of ripe fruit" (*qayetz* in Hebrew).
- **The Wordplay:** God reveals the meaning: "The time is ripe for my people Israel. I will spare them no longer." This connects the word *qayetz* (ripe fruit) with *qayetz* (end). The harvesting of summer fruit also signifies the end of the agricultural season, reinforcing the idea of an imminent end for Israel.
- **The Inevitability:** This vision signifies God's firm decision that judgment *must* come, illustrating its inescapable nature.

1. **Israel's Corrupt Society and Its Manifestations:**

- **Exploitation of the Poor:** The rich "trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land." They are eager for religious festivals (New Moon and Sabbath) to end so they can resume their illicit economic activities.
- **Economic Deceit:"Skimping on the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales."**
 - They used a "less-than-standard ephah" (dry measure unit) so customers received less grain than paid for.
 - They used a "heavier-than-standard shekel weight" for payment, making customers pay more.
 - Scales were "rigged," and they sold "the sweepings, the chaff with the wheat," demonstrating a complete lack of integrity.
- **Slave Trade:** "Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, peddling people."
- **Violation of the Sabbath (in spirit):** Though not technically violating the Sabbath by working, their impatience for the Sabbath to end reveals a spiritual disregard for its intended purpose of rest and relief. This implies a violation of "nine of the Ten Commandments" in Amos, with the Sabbath being the only technical exception, but still violated in spirit.
- **Pride and Arrogance:** God "swore by the pride of Jacob," sarcastically highlighting their unchanging arrogance as the basis for His unwavering judgment.

1. The Severity and Appropriateness of Judgment:

- **Cosmic Impact:** The land will "tremble" and "mourn," rising and falling like the Nile, indicating a devastating earthquake motif associated with the "day of the Lord." The land itself is personified as suffering "collateral damage."
- **Celestial Signs:** God will "make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight," an eclipse, viewed as a major "sign from a God," intensifying the sense of divine intervention.
- **Widespread Mourning and Despair:** Religious festivals will turn to "mourning," singing to "weeping." People will wear sackcloth and shave their

heads, a cultural practice for mourning the death of an "only son," signifying unparalleled loss and widespread death/destruction.

- **Famine of God's Word:** A unique judgment is a "famine... not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the lord." This is a direct consequence for those who told prophets to "shut up," like the priest at Bethel. People will "stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the lord, but they will not find it."
- **Idolatry and Its Consequences:** Those who swear by the "sin of Samaria" (idolatry, possibly Baal worship or Jeroboam's golden calf in Dan) and "the way of Beersheba" (another false worship system) "will never fall to rise again." This implies Judah's inclusion in the coming judgment.

1. **God's Omnipresence and Inescapable Judgment ("God Always Wins at Hide and Seek"):**

- **Destruction of Worship Centers:** God is seen standing by the altar, commanding the sanctuary to collapse, bringing down the roof on the worshipers. Those who survive will be killed by the sword.
- **No Place to Hide:** The Lord declares that there is no escape from His judgment:
 - "Though they dig down to the depths below, from there, my hand will take them." (Even Sheol, the underworld).
 - "Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there, I will bring them down."
 - "Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them."
 - "Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them." (Possibly Leviathan, the chaos monster, or a generic poisonous snake).
 - "Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good."

- **God's Sovereignty:** This absolute control is reinforced by a hymnic interlude (Amos 9:5-6), describing God as "the Lord Almighty" who "touches the earth, and it melts," builds "his lofty palace in the heavens," and "calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land." This affirms His authority and ability to execute what He has threatened.

1. **Glimmer of Hope: The Sieve and the Remnant:**

- While judgment is severe, the imagery of God shaking His people "in a sieve" (Amos 9:7-10) is presented as "good news."
- The sieve is used "to separate things," suggesting that amidst the judgment, there will be a separation, and this process will be "good news for the righteous remnant." This foreshadows a "happy ending" in Amos, transitioning from pure judgment to a future restoration.

3) Study Guide:

Amos: Judgment is Inescapable

Detailed Study Guide

This study guide focuses on Dr. Robert Chisholm's teaching on Amos 7:1-8:3 and 8:4-9:10, emphasizing the inescapable nature of God's judgment.

I. Review of Previous Visions (Amos 7:1-8:3)

- **A. First Two Visions (Motion Pictures):** Locusts destroying crops.
- Fire overtaking and destroying the land.
- Amos's intercession and God's relenting.
- **B. Third Vision (Snapshot):** Lord holding a plumb line beside a wall.
- Symbolism: The wall (Israel) is crooked, not built to plumb.
- Purpose: To adjust Amos's perspective to God's view, understanding why judgment is necessary.

- **C. Amos's Encounter with the Priest at Bethel:**Context: Occurs between the third and fourth visions.
- Significance: Amos learns from personal experience that the elite (represented by the priest) are "beyond the line" and prioritize the king over God. This reinforces the necessity of judgment.

II. The Fourth Vision: Basket of Ripe Fruit (Amos 8:1-3)

- **A. Description of the Vision:**Amos sees a "basket of ripe fruit" (Hebrew: *qayetz*).
- The Lord asks Amos what he sees, and Amos accurately describes it.
- **B. Wordplay and Symbolism:**The Hebrew word for "ripe fruit" (*qayetz*) sounds like the Hebrew word for "end" (*qayetz*).
- This soundplay emphasizes that "the end has come for my people Israel."
- The harvesting of summer fruit occurs at the end of the agricultural season (August/September, as per the Gezer calendar), reinforcing the idea of "the end."
- **C. Core Principle of Judgment (Amos 7:1-8:3):**"To understand God's seemingly harsh judgment, we must look at reality from his perspective."
- God is sovereign, just, and good; these attributes must be held in balance.
- His justice and holiness cannot tolerate crookedness (sin), making judgment necessary.

III. God's Character and the Nature of Judgment

- **A. Balancing God's Sovereignty/Greatness and Goodness:**Challenge: Some scholars emphasize God's sovereignty to the point of a "demonic side" (author of good and evil), others emphasize goodness to the point of denying sovereignty (God engaged in a struggle with evil).
- Correct view: God is both sovereign/great and good, holding these attributes in perfect balance.
- Application: Difficult to grasp emotionally, especially concerning concepts like hell, but must be viewed from God's all-wise and just perspective.

- **B. Correlating with Other Texts (Hosea as an example): Harsh Imagery:** God depriving people of children (military invasion, slaughter), acting as predators (lions, bears) ripping people to shreds for Baal worship (rejecting Him as the source of blessing).
- **Tender Imagery:** God taking Israel into exile to separate them from "lovers" (idols), bringing them into the wilderness to "whisper sweet nothings" and win them back (husband-wife metaphor from Hosea's marriage to Gomer).
- **God's Internal Struggle (Hosea 11):** God expresses agony ("How can I give you up?") demonstrating a balance of anger (from holiness and justice) and mercy/compassion. God is emotional, but His emotions are in perfect balance, unlike humans.
- **C. God's Suffering in Redemption:** God does not insulate Himself from the consequences of sin; the God-man (Jesus) suffered the penalty for sins.
- This highlights God's justice and care, even when judgment seems harsh or mysterious to human understanding.

IV. Judgment is Inescapable (Amos 8:4-9:10)

- **A. A Corrupt Society Gets Totally Eclipsed (Amos 8:4-14):**
- **Accusation: Injustice and Exploitation:** Trampling the needy and poor.
- Impatience for religious festivals (new moon, Sabbath) to end to resume dishonest practices.
- Violation of the Sabbath in spirit (not enjoying it, wishing it over).
- **Cheating in the Marketplace:** Skimping on measure (smaller *ephah*).
- Boosting price (heavier *shekel* weight).
- Rigged scales.
- Selling "sweepings" (chaff) with wheat.
- Buying the poor with silver, needy for sandals (peddling people).
- Application to modern Christian business practices: The Lord hates cheating; fairness honors Him.

- **God's Oath of Judgment:** "I will never forget anything they have done."
- Swearing by "the pride of Jacob" (their arrogance), indicating its unchanging nature without judgment.
- **Announcements of Judgment:** Land trembling and mourning (earthquake motif, land personified).
- Sun going down at noon, earth darkening (eclipse as a major sign).
- Religious festivals turning to mourning, singing to weeping.
- Wearing sackcloth and shaved heads (cultural signs of deep mourning, like for an only son).
- **Famine of Hearing the Word of the Lord:** Not a literal famine of food/water, but a spiritual famine.
- People who rejected God's word will desperately search for it but not find it.
- Example: Saul's inability to contact the Lord.
- Young women and men fainting from spiritual thirst.
- Those who swear by idols (sin of Samaria - Baal, Asherah; god of Dan - golden calf; way of Beersheba - false worship) will fall and never rise again (Judah also included).
- **B. God Always Wins at Hide and Seek (Amos 9:1-6):**
- **The Vision:** Lord standing by the altar, commanding the sanctuary to collapse, killing many.
- **Inescapability of Judgment:** No escape: "Not one will get away. None will escape."
- Even if they dig to Sheol (depths below) or climb to the heavens above, God's hand will find them.
- This is a *merism*: using opposite extremes to encompass everything in between.
- Hiding on top of Carmel (elevated) or at the bottom of the sea will not work (God commands serpent/Leviathan to bite them).

- Even if driven into exile, God's sword will slay them; He will watch them for harm, not good.
- **Hymnic Section (Description of God):** Lord Almighty (Yahweh, who leads armies).
- Touches earth, and it melts; causes land to rise and fall (earthquake).
- Builds lofty palace in heavens (King of the world, authority).
- Controls waters of the sea (absolute control of nature).
- Reinforces His ability to execute promised judgment.
- **C. Shaken in a Sieve (Amos 9:7-10):**
- (This section is introduced but not fully detailed in the provided text, noted as the transition to the "happy ending" and good news for the righteous remnant).

Quiz: Ten Short-Answer Questions

1. Describe the first two visions Amos experienced in Chapter 7 and what action Amos took in response to them.
2. What was the key visual element in the third vision of Amos 7, and what did it symbolize about the nation of Israel?
3. Explain the wordplay Dr. Chisholm highlights between *qayetz* (ripe fruit) and *qayetz* (end) in Amos 8:1-3. How does this wordplay reinforce the message?
4. According to Dr. Chisholm, what is the core principle for understanding God's seemingly harsh judgment in Amos 7-8?
5. How does Amos's encounter with the priest at Bethel contribute to his understanding that judgment is necessary?
6. List three specific dishonest business practices of the Israelites mentioned in Amos 8:4-6 that angered the Lord.
7. Beyond literal famine, what specific "famine" does God threaten to send upon the land in Amos 8:11-12, and why is this an appropriate judgment?

8. In Amos 9:1-4, what imagery does God use to illustrate the inescapability of His judgment, regardless of where people try to hide?
9. Why does Dr. Chisholm believe the "hymnic" sections (like Amos 9:5-6) are appropriately placed within judgment speeches?
10. Dr. Chisholm uses Hosea as an example to illustrate a critical balance in understanding God's character. Briefly explain how Hosea demonstrates both God's harshness and tenderness.

Answer Key

1. The first two visions in Amos 7 were like "motion pictures": locusts sweeping through and destroying crops, and fire overtaking the land. In response to both, Amos cried out to the Lord to forgive and stop, and the Lord relented.
2. The key visual element in the third vision was the Lord holding a plumb line beside a wall. This symbolized that the wall, representing the nation of Israel, was "not built to plumb" or had become crooked, signifying their moral and spiritual deviation from God's standard.
3. The wordplay highlights that the Hebrew word for "ripe fruit" (*qayetz*) sounds identical to the Hebrew word for "end" (*qayetz*). This connection between the summer fruit harvest (end of the agricultural season) and the word for "end" powerfully conveys that the time for Israel's judgment, or their "end," has arrived.
4. The core principle for understanding God's seemingly harsh judgment is that "we must look at reality from his perspective." This means recognizing that God is sovereign, just, and good, and His justice and holiness necessitate judgment when His people become "crooked walls."
5. Amos's encounter with the priest at Bethel, a high-ranking elite figure, showed him firsthand that these leaders were "way beyond the line" and prioritized the king over God. This personal experience solidified Amos's realization that judgment was not only necessary but also deserved by those at the top.
6. Three dishonest business practices mentioned are: skimping on the measure (using a smaller ephah), boosting the price (using a heavier shekel weight),

and cheating with dishonest scales. They also sold "sweepings" (chaff) with wheat and bought the poor for silver or a pair of sandals.

7. God threatens to send a "famine of hearing the words of the Lord." This is appropriate because the people had actively rejected and told prophets like Amos to "shut up," showing their aggressive disregard for God's communication. Now, when they desperately seek a divine message, they will not find it.
8. To illustrate the inescapability of judgment, God states that people may try to dig down to Sheol (depths below) or climb to the heavens above, but His hand will still find them. He also mentions hiding on Mt. Carmel or at the bottom of the sea, from which He will command a serpent or sword to strike them down.
9. Dr. Chisholm believes the hymnic sections are appropriate because the people might have a lesser view of God. These descriptions of God's greatness, power, and sovereignty (e.g., touching the earth and it melts, building His palace in the heavens, controlling the waters) remind everyone who He truly is and solidify His authority and ability to carry out the announced judgments.
10. Hosea demonstrates God's harshness by depicting Him as a predator bringing military invasion and taking children away from Baal worshipers. Simultaneously, it shows His tenderness through the metaphor of a loving husband winning back his unfaithful wife in exile, whispering "sweet nothings" and expressing an agonizing internal struggle ("How can I give you up?") between anger and mercy.

Essay Format Questions (No Answers)

1. Dr. Chisholm argues that understanding God's judgment requires viewing reality from His perspective, balancing His sovereignty, justice, and goodness. Discuss how the various visions and encounters in Amos 7-8 contribute to this adjusted perspective, providing specific examples of both God's actions and Amos's learning.
2. Analyze the role of wordplay and cultural context in conveying God's message in Amos 8:1-3, focusing on the connection between "ripe fruit" and "the end."

How does this specific example illustrate the depth and intentionality of divine communication in the prophetic books?

3. The passage in Amos 8:4-10 details severe economic injustices. Discuss the specific ways the Israelites cheated and exploited the poor, and explain Dr. Chisholm's argument for the universal applicability of God's disapproval of such business practices for Christians today.
4. Examine the concept of "inescapable judgment" as presented in Amos 8:11-9:6. Discuss the various scenarios people might attempt to escape judgment (e.g., hiding, seeking words from God) and explain why, according to the text, none of these attempts will succeed.
5. Compare and contrast the portrayal of God's character in Amos 7-9 with the examples drawn from the book of Hosea. How do these two prophetic books collectively illustrate the complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory aspects of God's nature, particularly concerning His justice and compassion?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amos:** An Old Testament prophet, the focus of Dr. Chisholm's teaching. His name means "burden-bearer" or "one who carries a burden."
- **Bethel:** A significant religious site in the northern kingdom of Israel, where a priest confronted Amos. It was the location of a royal sanctuary and idolatrous worship (golden calf).
- **Chaff:** The dry, scaly protective casings of the seeds of cereal grain. In Amos, it refers to worthless material mixed in with grain by dishonest merchants.
- **Day of the Lord:** A recurring prophetic theme in the Old Testament, often referring to a future time of God's intervention in history, bringing judgment upon His enemies and deliverance for His people.
- **Eclipse:** A celestial event where one celestial body obscures another. In the ancient world, it was often interpreted as a significant sign or act of God, symbolizing impending doom or judgment.
- **Ephah:** An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure, roughly equivalent to 3/5 of a bushel or about 22 liters. In Amos, it refers to a dishonest "small ephah" used to cheat customers.

- **Gezer Calendar:** An ancient Hebrew inscription discovered at Gezer, outlining agricultural activities throughout the year. It supports the understanding that summer fruit was harvested at the end of the agricultural season.
- **Gomer:** The unfaithful wife of the prophet Hosea, whose marriage served as a living parable for Israel's unfaithfulness to God.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods. A major sin addressed by Amos and other prophets, often involving syncretistic practices where Yahweh was worshipped alongside Canaanite deities like Baal and Asherah.
- **Inescapable Judgment:** The core theme of Amos 8:4-9:10, emphasizing that God's judgment will come to pass and there is no place for those targeted to hide or escape His wrath.
- **Justice (God's):** An attribute of God often highlighted in Amos, referring to His righteousness and fairness in holding people accountable for their actions, especially regarding the oppression of the poor and vulnerable.
- **Leviathan:** A mythical sea creature or chaos monster mentioned in some poetic Old Testament texts (e.g., Psalm 74). Dr. Chisholm suggests it might be the "serpent" God commands to bite those hiding at the bottom of the sea.
- **Merism:** A literary device using two contrasting parts (e.g., "heavens above" and "depths below") to represent an entire concept (e.g., everywhere or everything in between).
- **New Moon Festival:** A monthly religious observance in ancient Israel, which the unrighteous impatiently waited to end so they could resume their dishonest commercial activities.
- **Plumb Line:** A tool used in construction to determine a true vertical. In Amos's vision, it symbolizes God's standard of righteousness against which Israel is found "crooked."
- **Prophetic Soundplay:** A literary technique used by Hebrew prophets, where words with similar sounds but different meanings are used to create a deeper, often ironic or impactful, message. *Qayetz/qayetz* is an example.
- **Qayetz:** The Hebrew word for "ripe fruit" (Amos 8:1).

- **Qayetz:** The Hebrew word for "end" (Amos 8:2), used in a soundplay with *qayetz* (ripe fruit).
- **Righteous Remnant:** A small group of faithful believers who remain loyal to God amidst widespread apostasy or judgment. The shaking in a sieve imagery implies good news for this group.
- **Sabbath:** The seventh day of the week, observed as a day of rest and worship by the Israelites, commanded by God. The unrighteous in Amos were impatient for it to end.
- **Samaria:** The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, often associated with its idolatry.
- **Shekel:** An ancient unit of weight, also used as a currency. In Amos, it refers to a dishonest "large shekel" weight used to charge customers more.
- **Sheol:** In Hebrew tradition, the underworld or realm of the dead. God's ability to reach people even if they "dig down to the depths below" includes Sheol, symbolizing that no place is beyond His reach.
- **Sieve:** A device with a mesh bottom used to separate finer particles from coarser ones. In Amos, it is an image of God shaking His people to separate the righteous from the wicked.
- **Still Life (Symbolic Still Life):** An artistic composition of inanimate objects. In Amos 8:1-3, the "basket of ripe fruit" is described as a "still life," a snapshot vision given to the prophet.
- **Syncretism:** The blending of different religious beliefs or practices, such as the worship of Yahweh alongside Baal or the golden calf.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind. Often accompanied by cosmic disturbances like earthquakes or land trembling.

4) FAQs: What do the "Symbolic Still Life" visions in Amos 7-8 represent?

The "Symbolic Still Life" refers to a series of visions given to the prophet Amos, particularly in Amos 7:1-8:3. The first two visions were like "motion pictures,"

showing locusts and fire destroying the land, prompting Amos to intercede and God to relent. The third vision was a "snapshot" of God holding a plumb line next to a crooked wall, signifying that Israel was out of alignment with God's standards and judgment was necessary. The final vision, a basket of ripe summer fruit (*qayetz*), is a wordplay on the Hebrew word for "end" (*qayetz*). This signifies that the "end has come" for Israel, and God will no longer spare them, underscoring the inevitability of judgment. These visions force Amos, and by extension the reader, to view reality from God's perspective, understanding that His judgment, though seemingly harsh, is just and necessary given Israel's transgressions.

How does the concept of "God's perspective" explain His judgment?

To understand God's seemingly harsh judgment, one must look at reality from His perspective. God is sovereign, just, and good, and these attributes must be held in balance. The plumb line vision illustrates that humanity, like a crooked wall, is out of alignment with God's holiness and justice, making judgment necessary. While difficult to comprehend emotionally, God's infinite wisdom and justice mean His perspective is the ultimate standard. The text emphasizes that God's judgment is not arbitrary but a consequence of unrepentant sin, similar to how He would not "insulate Himself from the consequences of sin" by sending Jesus to suffer.

What is the significance of the wordplay between "summer fruit" and "end" in Amos 8:1-3?

In Amos 8:1-3, Amos sees a "basket of ripe fruit," which in Hebrew is *kaluv qayetz*. The Lord then reveals the meaning, stating, "The time is ripe for my people Israel. I will spare them no longer." The Hebrew word for "ripe" (*qayetz*) is a direct sound play on the Hebrew word for "end" (*qayetz*). This clever wordplay, easily missed in English translations, signifies that just as summer fruit marks the end of the agricultural season (harvested in August and September, listed last in the Gezer calendar), Israel's spiritual season has also come to an end, and their judgment is at hand. It powerfully conveys the finality and inevitability of God's decision.

What specific injustices are highlighted in Amos 8:4-6, and what is God's response to them?

Amos 8:4-6 condemns those who "trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land." These individuals were eager for religious festivals to end so they could

resume their deceitful business practices. They "skimp[ed] on the measure, boost[ed] the price, and cheat[ed] with dishonest scales." This involved using a smaller ephah (dry measure) to give customers less grain and a heavier shekel weight to make them pay more. They also sold "the sweepings, the chaff with the wheat," essentially mixing garbage with their product. Furthermore, they engaged in human trafficking, "buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals." God's response is an oath sworn "by the pride of Jacob" (sarcastic, referring to their arrogance) that He will "never forget anything they have done" and will bring severe judgment upon them.

How does God demonstrate His inescapability in judgment in Amos 9:1-6?

Amos 9:1-6 strongly emphasizes the inescapability of God's judgment, summarized as "God Always Wins at Hide and Seek." No matter where the people try to flee, God's hand will reach them. This is illustrated through merism, using opposite extremes to show His omnipresence and power:

- Though they "dig down to the depths below" (even to Sheol), God's hand will take them.
- Though they "climb up to the heavens above," God will bring them down.
- Though they "hide themselves on the top of Carmel" (a high mountain), God will hunt them down.
- Though they "hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea," God will command a serpent (or Leviathan) to bite them.
- Even if they are "driven into exile by their enemies," God will "command the sword to slay them."

This section also includes a hymnic description of God's sovereignty (Amos 9:5-6), reminding the audience of His absolute control over creation and history, solidifying His ability to execute all His threatened judgments.

What is the "famine of hearing the words of the Lord" described in Amos 8:11-12?

In Amos 8:11-12, God declares that a severe famine will come upon the land, but "not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord." This is a spiritual judgment, a direct consequence of the people's rejection of God's prophets and their messages. Having previously told prophets to "shut up"

and not speak (as the priest at Bethel told Amos), a time will come when they desperately seek a message from God but will find none. People will "stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it." This judgment is particularly appropriate as it directly punishes their dismissal of divine communication by removing it entirely.

How does the Book of Amos, along with Hosea, illustrate the balance of God's justice and mercy?

The Book of Amos, like Hosea (Amos's contemporary), presents both "harsh imagery" of God's judgment and "tender imagery" of His compassion, revealing a God who perfectly balances His emotions. In Hosea, God declares severe judgment, including depriving people of their children for their idolatry, demonstrating His holiness and justice. Yet, in the same book, He expresses tender longing to win back His unfaithful people, taking them "back into the wilderness" to "whisper sweet nothings into her ear." Hosea 11 strikingly portrays God's internal struggle, "How can I give you up... my mercy, it turns within me, and it overcomes my anger." This illustrates that God, unlike humans, can hold His anger (arising from holiness and justice) and His mercy/compassion in perfect balance. He is an emotional being, but His emotions are perfectly ordered and just.

What is the ultimate purpose of God's judgment, and does it offer any hope?

While the immediate focus of Amos 7-9 is on the inevitability and severity of judgment, the broader context of the book, particularly the later verses of chapter 9 (beyond the provided text), reveals an ultimate purpose beyond mere destruction. The imagery of God shaking His people "in a sieve" (Amos 9:9) is described as "good news for the righteous remnant." This implies that judgment serves to purify and separate the righteous from the wicked, preserving a remnant. Although not detailed in this specific excerpt, the overall trajectory of Amos, typical of prophetic books, transitions to a "happy ending" where restoration and blessings are promised to those who remain faithful. Thus, judgment, though severe, is part of God's plan for purification and ultimate redemption, ensuring that His covenant purposes will ultimately prevail.