

kingdom were carried away into a captivity from which they never returned. *City . . a thousand . . an hundred . . an hundred . . ten.* Israel is pictured as going out to battle by towns and villages and losing nine-tenths of her army in the fight.

II. The People's Peril, 4-9.

Vs. 4-6. *Seek ye me, and . . live.* To seek God is to live, for He is life and the life-giver. *Seek not Beth-el*; where one of Jeroboam's calves had been set up (see 1 Kgs. 12 : 28, 29). *Nor enter into Gilgal*; Israel's first camping place east of the Jordan (Josh. 4 : 19, 20) and afterwards a centre of idolatrous worship. *Beer-sheba*; 50 miles southwest of Jerusalem, in the extreme south of Judah, and hence to be reached from Israel only by a long journey. This was also a favorite place of worship,—so much pains would the people take in their false religion and so little in the service of the true God. It was as if Amos had said: Church-going, sacraments, formal prayers are worthless unless we seek God with the heart. *Gilgal . . into captivity.* The Hebrew is: "Ha-Gilgal galoh yiglah," a play upon words. *Bethel . . to nought*; to trouble on account of her iniquity. The meaning is, that worship at these shrines, so far from bringing help, would involve Israel in ruin. *Break out like fire*; in burning and consuming wrath against sin. *House of Joseph*; the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, here put for the whole Northern kingdom.

Vs. 7-9. *Turn judgment to wormwood.* From the Greek word for "wormwood" comes our word "absinthe." The decisions of judges, instead of being wholesome and grateful, are bitter and cruel to those who receive them. *Cast down righteousness* (Rev. Ver.); trampling it under foot. *The seven stars*; Rev. Ver., "the Pleiades," literally, "the group." *Orion*; literally, "the giant" or "the fool." The Hebrews, in later times, called this constellation "Nimrod." *The shadow of death*; a description of deep darkness. *Make the day dark*; brings the day to an end in night. *Calleth*; like a sovereign ruler. *For the waters*; which instantly obey, like a well-trained servant. *Poureth them out*; in great floods, as in the days of Noah. *The Lord is his name*; and He alone should receive worship and service. Read v. 9 in Rev. Ver.

III. The Leaders' Wickedness, 10-13.

Vs. 10-13. *They*; Israel's leaders, including the judges (see on v. 7). *Hate him that rebuketh*; as Amos himself was doing. (Compare Isa. 29 : 21; Jer. 17 : 19; 18 : 20.) The wicked leaders "hate" the one who denounces their sins. *In the gate*; the wide city gateway, common in the East, "the centre of concourse, of business, and of administration of justice." No doubt Amos had chosen that place for his prophesying. *Speaketh uprightly*; stands up boldly for the innocent. *Your treading is upon the poor.* The rich had ways then of taking the very bread out of the mouth of the poor, perhaps by high rents, perhaps by taxation, hardly by direct robbery. But v. 11 teaches that wealth gotten by injustice is not only insecure, but is certain to fail. "Houses of hewn stone" were the newest luxury in Samaria, Israel's capital. *For I know*, etc. The Lord sees and will reckon with evil-doers. *The prudent*; the wise and good. *Shall keep silence*; through fear. Not all in Israel were as bold as Amos.

IV. The Prophets' Counsel, 14, 15.

Vs. 14, 15. *Seek good, and not evil.* Israel has been diligent in wrong-doing; let her now be as earnest in doing well. *Establish judgment in the gate.* See to it, that the law courts give the people justice. *It may be*; in spite of the dark guilt of the nation. *The Lord . . will be gracious*; forgiving sin and restoring the people to His favor. *The remnant of Joseph*; the few (see ch. 3 : 12) who will be left in the Northern kingdom named here, as in v. 7, from the ancestor of its two chief tribes.

Light from the East

BETHEL, GILGAL, BEERSHEBA (v. 5).—Every Canaanite town had its god who, like a member of the community, dwelt at his own place in or beside the town. It might be an open space marked by a stone, a tree or a spring, and in any case by an altar, or it might be enclosed within the walls of a building. It was the dwelling-place of the god, and if you had anything to do with him you went to his place; that is, you made a little pilgrimage when you wished to present an offering or to implore a favor. You would go to Bethel or to Beersheba or to some other