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# THE BOOK OF AMOS

Part Two: Translation  
and Notes

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BY

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## I

*i. 1. The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds from Tekoa—(words) which came to him in visions concerning Israel, during the days of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam-ben-Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.*

This verse, which is in prose, is a general title to the whole of the book, comparable to those found at the beginning of other books, e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc. They are all the work of editors, and some of them contain more than one stratum. Because of the awkwardness of the two relative clauses, some scholars have thought the phrase 'who was among the shepherds from Tekoa' to be secondary, but it is the other relative clause which is the more difficult syntactically. It is probable that the reference to the reigns of the kings is secondary, and that the reference to the earthquake belongs to the earliest editorial stratum.

*shepherds* (EVV, 'herdmen').<sup>1</sup> Amos is described, not as an ordinary shepherd (*ro'eh*), but as a *noqed*. The word is found elsewhere in the Old Testament only in 2 Kings iii. 4, though it was probably the original reading for *boqer* (cattleman) in Amos vii. 14 (*q.v.*). Outside the Old Testament it is found with the meaning 'shepherd' in Assyrian, Arabic, and Syriac. The Arabic *naqqad* is a dwarfed sheep with short legs, despised for its smallness ('viler than a *naqqad*'), but

<sup>1</sup>The round brackets enclose insertions made to render the meaning more clear, and the square brackets enclose passages which are held to belong to times later than those of Amos of Tekoa.

valued for its abundant fine wool. The word *noqed* (shepherd, sheep-master, *naggad*-keeper) is used of Mesha, King of Moab, not only in 2 Kings iii. 4, but also in line 30 of the Moabite Stone (Mesha's own account of his successful revolt against Israel, found in the desert in 1868). On account of the reference in 2 Kings, Jewish interpreters have maintained that Amos was a man of some considerable substance, a wealthy sheep-owner, who had property interests in the Shephelah (the lowlands west of the Judean hills) also, and voluntarily endured contumely, afflicting himself for the sins of Israel (so the Targum of vii. 14; but see the note there).

*came to him in visions* (EVV, 'saw'). This is T. H. Robinson's translation, and expresses well the fact that the Hebrew word *chazah* has here a special meaning not expressed by the plain word 'saw'. When the word is used of seeing with the eyes, it tends to involve the idea of intensity, or that of appreciation, but the root is used mostly of a seer in his ecstasy or of perception with the intelligence. The noun *chozeh* (seer, vii. 12) tends to be used, to a greater extent than its companion *ro'eh* (1 Samuel ix. 9) of 'auditory rather than strictly visual phenomena' (A. R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel*, 1944, p. 14. See also S. R. Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 126). This use is in line with the Arabic use of the verb *chazay* of perception with the inner vision, and of the Arabic noun *chaz* (astronomer, astrologer); cf. Isaiah xlvii. 13.

*Uzziah* ('my strength is Jah') is called Azariah ('Jah hath helped') in the Book of Kings. The difference in the Hebrew consists of the insertion of one consonant (with consequent adjustment of the vowelling), and

the existence of the two names may be due to no more than an accidental error of a very early copyist who remembered the opening phrase of 2 Chronicles xxvi. 7. King Uzziah was the most successful of all the Judahite kings. Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*, IX, x, 3) characterizes him as 'a good man, and by nature righteous and magnanimous, and high-minded in taking care of the affairs of his kingdom'. The chronology of the kings of both Israel and Judah presents grave difficulties. See Oesterley and Robinson, *History of Israel*, vol. I, pp. 360, 461 f., where the suggested dates of Uzziah's reign are 786-57 B.C., with Jotham as coregent till Uzziah's death in 744 B.C. This reduces the length of his reign by ten years from the fifty-two of 2 Kings xv. 2 and 2 Chronicles xxvi. 2, which seems to be rather a lot, but it is certain that some such reduction must be made.

*Jeroboam-ben-Joash*, so called to distinguish him from his predecessor of the same name, Jeroboam-ben-Nebat. The English spelling of the name is due to the spelling of the Septuagint, the Hebrew being *Yorob'am*. This is one of very many elements due to the fact that the first influence of the Hebrew Old Testament on the Christian Church was through the Greek. The Old Testament first became known to Christians in its Greek (Septuagint) form, and even though Jerome's third translation into Latin was from the Hebrew, yet Septuagint still maintains its strong influence in that translation. The Hebrew name is difficult, but probably means, 'Let the people multiply'. He was the most successful of all the Israelite kings, but his death led to a period of successive usurpations and unrest which never ceased until the kingdom itself came to an end with the deposition of Hoshea by the Assyrians in 724 B.C.

*The earthquake.* This particular earthquake is mentioned again, after many centuries, in Zechariah xiv. 5, and was evidently of catastrophic proportions, comparable to that of the year of the battle of Actium (31 B.C.), when, according to Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*, XV, v, 2), ten thousand people were buried in the ruins. Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*, IX, x, 4) gives a lurid and detailed description of an earthquake which he says took place on the occasion of King Uzziah's sudden seizure with leprosy. Assuming the dates of Oesterley and Robinson, this would make Amos's first assay in prophecy to be 757 B.C. On the other hand, Josephus says that 'a rent was made in the temple' on the occasion of Uzziah's sudden sickness, and this reference has been associated with the movement of the foundations mentioned in Isaiah vi. 4. This occurred (probably) in the year 744 B.C., the year of King Uzziah's death, so that 'a couple of years before the earthquake' would be 746 B.C. There is a very great deal to be said for the suggestion that there was an earthquake of some severity in the year of King Uzziah's death, and that this had to do with Isaiah's call to be a prophet. The first chapters of the Book of Isaiah have many references to an earthquake, ii. 19, 21, v. 9 (?), 14, 25; whilst iii. 8 may actually refer to a city at least in part ruined in an earthquake. It is evident that a disaster of catastrophic proportions has made a deep impression of the prophet's mind. The general tendency is to give the date of Amos's preaching as 'towards the middle of the eighth century' (G. A. Smith), say, from 765-50 B.C. (Wellhausen, Cheyne, Driver, Marti). Sellin and Gressmann suggest about 750 B.C., but Cripps advocates a date as late as 742 or 741 B.C. This seems to us to involve difficulties in the general chronology of the kings, since it is difficult to allow as late a



date as 741 B.C. for the death of Jeroboam II. We find (with Edgehill) that there is no need to assume that either Hosea or Isaiah are definitely borrowing from Amos, since all three may be presumed to belong to a general movement of revival and of protest against the luxurious living of the well-to-do of the period. Both Amos and Hosea began their ministries before the death of Jeroboam, but there is no need to insist upon any long interval. On the other hand, the Assyrian threat evidently loomed largely in the mind of Amos. This did not arise till the accession by usurpation of Tiglath-pileser III in 745 B.C. He speedily showed his strength and determination by his defeat of the eastern Aramaeans, but not yet (when Amos began to preach) had he turned west. This he did in 743 B.C., so that we would agree with Zejdner and Valeton in fixing the date of the preaching of Amos at 745-44 B.C. It seems to us that Cripps is sound in so far as he seeks to place the date as late as possible and certainly after the rise of the new Assyrian usurper, but to go below 744 B.C. involves us in serious difficulties in the dates of the later kings.

## II

*i. 2. He said: The Lord roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; The pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the Ridge of Carmel withers.*

This is a couplet in 3 : 3 measure, placed at the head of the collection by the compiler as being generally suitable by way of introduction, and typical of the prophet's message as a whole. Weiser refers to it aptly as 'the motto', which indeed it is. The very preciseness of the metre, with its strict parallelism and its four exact three-stress lines, suggests that it may well have

been a sort of monologue (Köhler, *Selbstgesprach*) or pet-phrase (Baumann, *Schlagwort*), of which the prophet was particularly fond.

The verse has been objected to by Cheyne, Marti, Volz, Harper, Cooke, and others, as not being from Amos himself. It has been argued that Amos would never think of Jehovah as dwelling in Zion, this being a Deuteronomic idea. But, as Bertholet pointed out, if Isaiah could speak as in Isaiah vi, viii. 18, xxxi. 9, there is no reason why Amos should not use such phrases as are found in this verse. Marti pointed out that Jehovah appeared to Amos at Bethel also (ix. 1). To say that Jehovah roars from Zion is not a Deuteronomic sentiment, unless it is assumed by the author that Jehovah never roared from anywhere else. To Amos, Jerusalem was the most important of all the places at which Jehovah could be worshipped (so Nowack), and this is all the verse need imply. If Amos went to preach at Bethel, the royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom, it is only natural that he should think chiefly of Jerusalem, the royal sanctuary of the Southern Kingdom, as the best shrine of all.

We do not see much force in the objection that the verse could not be based upon personal experience. Such an objection seems to us to be singularly pedestrian. The experience of the desert life and Amos's knowledge of the nerve-shattering roar of the leaping lion, would naturally lead him to think of the terror of the Lord in this way, this terror of the Lord which first stung him into utterance.

It has been alleged that the phraseology is late, but the evidence for this is by no means convincing, neither do we admit that the first two lines agree with their context any more exactly in Joel iv. 16 (EVV, iii. 16). Cheyne, Volz, Marti, Harper, and Cripps regard the

couplet as being an insertion here from Joel, but the whole section of Joel from verse 14<sup>b</sup> to verse 21 is a mass of quotations, and verse 16<sup>b</sup> follows naturally enough from verse 15. These scholars would therefore see in Amos i. 2 a reference to the thunder, this undoubtedly being the meaning in Joel. With this both Wellhausen and Sellin agree, but other scholars—rightly, as we hold—think of the roar of the lion as he springs on his prey. The importance of this interpretation is in its stress on the immediacy of the crisis. The lion is silent until the actual moment of his spring, so that when the shepherd hears the roar, he knows that the doom of some creature is immediately at hand. This is the burden of Amos's whole message. The judgement of the Lord is coming swiftly, and there is a bare minimum of time left for repentance.

*roars* (AV, 'will roar'; RV, 'shall roar'). It is best to regard all the verbs in this verse as in the present tense. If the prophet had used the participle, it would have meant 'about to roar', but he intended to say that Jehovah was even now roaring like a lion, so that the doom was immediate. The verb used (*sha'ag*) is the roar of the lion as he leaps, as against *naham* or *hamah*, which is his growl as he eats. It has been argued that the phrase 'utter his voice' necessarily means thunder. It is true that this is its most frequent meaning, but it is also true that when the reference is to thunder, it is commonly stated that the Lord utters His voice from the heavens. Here the voice is from Jerusalem, and since 'the Deep' also 'utters his voice' (Habakkuk iii. 10), and Wisdom 'uttereth her voice in the streets' (Proverbs viii. 1), we judge that the reference to thunder is by no means certain.

*the pastures of the shepherds.* The 'habitations' of AV and RVm is from the Targum, which also influenced

the Douai Version when it turned the *speciosa* (beautiful things) of the Vulgate into 'beautiful places'. The variations are due to the close similarity of three Hebrew words, and this confusion between 'pasture', 'habitation', and 'beauty' is found elsewhere. The Syriac has the interesting rendering, 'the oasis inhabited by shepherds', but the parallelism of Carmel makes it clear that the prophet is thinking of the pastures of Palestine itself.

*the Ridge of Carmel* (Moffatt). This ridge runs twelve miles south-east from the promontory by the sea, the scene of Elijah's great exploit. It is reckoned to be the most fertile strip in the country, comparable in its fertility to the luxurious growth of the Lebanon. The word itself testifies to the fertility, since the word means 'garden-land', and the article is always used. It is always 'The Carmel', just as it is 'The Lebanon', and, incidentally, 'The Jordan'. The withering of the Ridge of Carmel is therefore the climax of calamities. If Carmel becomes desiccated, then all the land must be drought-ridden indeed. Cf. Isaiah xxxiii. 9.

### III

*i. 3-5. Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Damascus, yea for four I will not intervene; because they crushed with sharp iron threshing-sleds Gilead. . . . So I will fling fire into the palace of Hazael, and it shall eat up the mansions of Ben-hadad. I will wipe out the enthroned one from the Vale of Wealth, and he that holds the sceptre from the House of Delight. I will break down the gate-bar of Damascus, and the people of Aram shall go in exile to Qir, saith the Lord.*

These three verses composed of five 3:3 lines, contain Amos's oracle of doom upon the Aramaean (Syrian)

kingdom of Damascus, king and city and people. Damascus was the capital of the most famous and powerful of all the Aramaean kingdoms. For a short summary of its relations with Assyria and Israel, see *Part One*, pp. 9f. Damascus has been famous since the world was young; indeed, it is reputed to be the oldest city in the world. Its famous oasis, the sudden surprise view of luxurious vegetation with which the traveller is greeted when he comes over the surrounding hills in from the desert—these combine to exalt Damascus in the estimation of the Arab-speaking peoples far beyond the understanding of other peoples. To the Arab it is *jinnat ed-dinnea* ('the world's garden'), and many have thought, with some justification, that the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis ii owes something to the almost legendary reverence with which the Semitic world, ancient and modern alike, has always thought of this city. Whoso wantonly destroys this city earns forthwith the bitter hatred of the Muslim world. It is doubtful whether there can ever be any expiation for such a crime. The city marks the beginning of the pilgrimage (*chajj*) road to Mecca, and it is one of the four sacred cities of Islam. It is said that the Prophet never would enter *es-Sham* (as the Arabs call it), that he once went thither in a caravan in his younger days, but when he saw the famous view of the fertile oasis, he wrapped his face in his mantle, turned away, and refused to enter the city, on the ground that man may enter but one paradise (*jannat*), and his was above.

*For three . . . yea for four.* Commentators from the Rabbis onwards have sought to find symbolical meanings in these numbers, but all such efforts are largely works of supererogation. See, in Jewish writings, Jeremiah xxxvi. 23; Proverbs xxx. 15, 18, 21, 29; Ecclesiasticus xxvi. 5; and, in classical literature, in

Homer, *Odd.*, v, 306; Vergil, *Aen.*, i, 94; Horace, *Odes*, xxxi, 13. Other numbers are found in 2 Kings xiii. 19; Isaiah xvii. 6; Hosea vi. 2; Amos iv. 2; Micah v. 5; Psalms lxii. 11; Proverbs vi. 16; Moffatt has 'for crime upon crime', and T. H. Robinson 'of so many crimes'. The sense intended is an indefinite multiplicity of evil deeds.

*rebellious acts* (EVV, 'transgressions'). The Hebrew word is *pesha'*, and without doubt it should be translated 'rebellion, revolt'. We regard this as of prime importance, since the very serious view which the prophets took of sin depends upon the fact that they regarded it as an act of rebellion against God rather than a transgression of a moral code. The Greek translators realized this, since their translation of the word here, as generally in the Prophets, is *asebeia*, a word which denotes an act against the gods, as distinct from *adikia*, an act against men. For this distinction in Greek, see Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VIII, viii, 7. For a full discussion of the prophet's view of sin, see my *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, 1944, pp. 64 ff. The Vulgate has *scelera* ('crimes', see Moffatt and T. H. Robinson, mentioned in the previous note), which is better than 'transgressions', but still does not represent the Hebrew. The Hebrew word for 'transgression' in the sense of EVV is '*aberah*, a word which is not earlier than the Mishnah, whilst the Aramaic equivalent '*aberta* is found in the Targums.

*I will not intervene* (EVV, 'I will not turn away the punishment thereof'). The Hebrew means 'I will not turn it back', the words 'the punishment' being an insertion in the EVV, as the italics of AV show. The difficulties which the translators found in the Hebrew are shown by the variants given in the AVm. Their

insertion of 'the punishment' is sound exegesis, though we would prefer 'retribution'. The reason for the apparent ellipsis, which has created the difficulty, is to be found in the Hebrew tendency to think of sin and its consequences as one unit, the one being the natural result of the other. Cf. the Hebrew '*awon*, which means both an iniquitous act (Jeremiah xi. 10 and frequently) and its punishment (Genesis iv. 13). It is most difficult on many occasions to decide which of the two meanings a Hebrew writer intended, all the more so because he himself probably was thinking of both elements. The 'it' of the Hebrew in this verse therefore refers back syntactically to *pesha'* (rebellious act), the word being taken quite correctly to refer, not only to the initial act, but also to its natural consequence. Cf. Isaiah xliii. 13, where the EVV have 'who shall let (RV, the more modern "prevent") it?', whilst AVm ('Heb. *turn it back*') makes it clear that the Hebrew text there has the same word as in Amos i. 3. In the present passage, the Douai Version follows the Vulgate with 'convert', implying with Jerome, who here is following the traditional Jewish exegesis, that Damascus has sinned past all forgiveness. There is no sin past forgiveness if there is repentance, except only that against the Holy Spirit (Mark iii. 29), by which we understand the stubborn and persistent refusal to allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish His saving work of witnessing to the things of God and convicting of sin. We have translated 'intervene', because we judge the idea of the prophet to be that the retribution which is going to come upon Damascus is the natural result of her rebellious acts against the will of God, and that these results are bound to come to pass in the nature of things unless God intervenes according to His sovereign will.

*crushed* (EVV, 'threshed'). The threshing is not by beating out (*chabaṭ*) as Gideon in Judges vi. 11, but by crushing as in Isaiah xxviii. 28.

*sharp iron threshing-sleds* (EVV, 'threshing instruments of iron'). These are the threshing sleds, curved slabs of wood studded with flints or with iron, which not only threshed out the corn, but also chopped the straw (G. A. Smith, vol. I, p. 124), but Jerome says that they were used after the threshing in order to crush the straw. The full phrase of 'threshing-sleds' is *morag charits* (Isaiah xli. 5). The historical reference is to Hazael's ruthless campaigns against Israelite territory (Gilead) east of Jordan in the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz (2 Kings viii. 12, x. 32 f., xii. 7, 22). Septuagint translates 'sawed with iron saws', evidently guessing, but knowing that the word *charutsoth* had something to do with sharp instruments. Vulgate thinks of heavy iron wains being dragged over the corn; cf. Isaiah xxviii. 28.

*Gilead*. It is probable that two words have dropped out, since the word is an odd one outside the regular 3:3 scheme, and the second half of the second line is missing. The Septuagint supplies an addition, 'the women with child of the Gileadites', which would indeed restore the full measure, though it is probably a repetition from verse 13.

*Hazael*. This is the court official who murdered his master Ben-hadad II, Ahab's ally at the battle of Karkar. According to 2 Kings viii. 7-15, he was encouraged in this by Elisha, who was prepared for almost any action which would destroy the House of Omri in Israel, and break the Syrian alliance. Hazael gave his son the name (perhaps a throne-name) Ben-hadad, after the fashion of the previous dynasty. Hadad (or



Adad; cf. the name of the Assyrian King Adad-nirari III) was one of the two dominant deities of the Near East from early times. He was the storm and rain god, as distinguished from Shamash, the sun-god, though a number of Assyrian kings between 1800 and 1000 B.C. have the name Shamshi-Adad, a combination of the two. The god Adad was often identified with Rimmon or Ramman, hence Adad-nirari III is often called Ramman-nirari. The El and Baal of the Ras Shamra tablets are equivalent to Shamash and Hadad. In Zechariah xi. 12 both Hadad and Rimmon are worshipped with the rites of Tammuz-Adonis.

*The palace of Hazael* (EVV, 'house'). It is customary to take this to mean the dynasty founded by Hazael, but the parallelism demands a reference to an actual building. The parallel word *'armon* is properly 'citadel', but comes to be used generally for 'palaces, mansions' (cf. verses 7, 10, etc.). Translate therefore 'palace', cf. 1 Kings ix. 1, etc., with 'mansions' in the other half of the line.

*I will break down.* . . . Most modern scholars would transfer this line to follow the reference to Beth-eden (5c). There is a very great deal to be said for this. It makes two excellent couplets, the first referring to the sweeping away of the king, and the second to the capture of the city and the exiling of its inhabitants.

*the enthroned one* (EVV, 'the inhabitant', but see RVm, which is correct). The participle *yosheb* is used some 215 times to mean 'inhabitant, dweller', but the verb is also used absolutely of a judge or a king sitting on his throne, Exodus xviii. 14; Psalms ii. 4, xxix. 10; etc. We have thus an excellent parallel to the 'he that holds the sceptre' of the next clause. See especially 1 Kings xv. 18 (end).

*the Vale of Wealth* (AV, 'the plain of Aven' with *Bikath-aven*, a transliteration of the Hebrew, in the margin as a proper name; RV, 'the valley of Aven', explaining the name as 'vanity' in the margin). The Hebrew word *big'ah* describes a valley so broad and open that it may be understood to mean 'plain' rather than 'valley'. E.g. the 'valley of dry bones' of Ezekiel xxxvii is properly a shallow plain, and in Isaiah xl. 4 the word *big'ah* is translated 'plain' in both AV and RV, this meaning being essential to the context. Both Septuagint (*pedion*) and Vulgate (*campus*) have realized the meaning in this present verse, i.e. a broad, open valley. The Hebrew word '*awen* actually means 'trouble, wickedness' (not 'vanity'), and can be used for 'idolatry', though this use is rare. It is, however, the rendering of Vulgate and Douai. Septuagint, with different vowelling, has 'the plain of On', this latter being the Egyptian name of Heliopolis, a city famous for its sun-worship, as the name itself shows. Since the name Heliopolis was given to Baalbek, famous to this day for its ruined temples, it is customary to see in this verse a reference to the valley of Baalbek, all the more so since the plain of Coele-Syria, by which Baalbek is situated, is still called by the Arabs *el-Baq'a*. The weakness of this solution is a double one. There is no evidence that Baalbek was called Heliopolis as early as Amos's time, and the probabilities are all against it, since Greek influence was not paramount in that area until another four centuries had passed. And, secondly, it is strange that Baalbek should be mentioned in connexion with Damascus in Amos's time, since it is the opposite side of the Anti-Lebanon watershed, and at this period Damascus was greatly reduced in power. For our part, we would follow the vowelling of the Septuagint, but take the name to be the Hebrew word

meaning 'wealth' (Hosea xii. 9; Job xx. 10), the reference being to the broad and fertile oasis of Damascus itself. We would suppose that the Greek translators were correct in their pronunciation of the word, but were led astray because of their local Egyptian knowledge. Ephraem Syrus realized that the reference must be to a place in the Damascus area, when he said it was a place near Damascus distinguished for its idol-chapel. But the reference to idolatry is wholly superfluous here, since Damascus is being condemned for its ruthlessness, and not for its idols.

*the house of delight* (EVV, 'the house of Eden', both with Beth-eden, a transliteration, as a place name in the margin). There was a place called Bit-adini (the Assyrian equivalent of the Hebrew phrase here) on the middle Euphrates, to which Nowack and others have considered this to be a reference. But once more, this city-state is a long way from Damascus, and, from Amos's point of view, on the wrong side of it in any case. It is more likely that here also we have a reference to Damascus itself, still the Eden (paradise) of the Muslim world. G. A. Smith realized that the context demands a place in the Damascus oasis itself, when he suggested that it was some palace there which was the pleasant abode of her kings.

*shall go in exile.* The verb *galah* with its subsidiaries means 'become clear, uncover, reveal, display', and so 'go forth, depart'. These are its meanings in Arabic equally as in Hebrew. With the rise of Assyria and her policy of deportation the word comes to mean that involuntary exile to which the subject peoples were condemned, and that is the meaning here. This use is an indication that Amos was aware of the Assyrian threat, since he could scarcely have used this word in this sense otherwise.

*Qir*. If this is a Hebrew word it means 'wall', but it is used both on the Moabite Stone and in Old Testament references to Moab of (apparently) a fortress, i.e. a walled city; cf. Greek *teichos*, which is Septuagint's rendering when it does not ignore the word altogether. There is a *Qir* mentioned in conjunction with Elam as supplying a contingent for the Assyrian army (Isaiah xx. 6), and some have therefore seen here a reference to the Assyrian *Kurru*, a district between Armenia and the Caspian Sea, but this is spelt with a *kaph* (*k*) and not with a *qoph* (*q*), and further, it is denied that Assyria ever had control of this area. According to Amos it was the original home of the Aramaeans of Damascus (ix. 7) and to it (Amos i. 5; 2 Kings xvi. 9) they were exiled when they ceased to be a nation. Its locality is uncertain. The Vulgate has Cyrene.

#### IV

*i. 6-8. Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Gaza, yea for four I will not intervene, because they exiled a whole population, to hand over as prisoners to Edom. . . . So I will fling fire into the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her mansions. I will wipe out the enthroned one from Ashdod, and he that holds the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will keep on striking at Ekron, and the last survivors of the Philistines will perish.*

An oracle of (probably) five lines in 3:3 rhythm, though the second half of the second line seems to be one word short, and the third line is of uncertain rhythm. The oracle is against the Philistines generally, and against Gaza in particular. Gaza was the most southerly of the cities of the Philistines, situated at a junction of the caravan routes, and so most deeply involved in the slave trade. Duhm and Meinhold object

to the paragraph on the ground that it is little more than a mechanical catalogue inserted so as to complete the whole round of neighbouring nations. Marti's objection is on stronger grounds. He notes the omission of Gath from the list of the five towns of the Philistines, and holds that the paragraph must therefore be later than 711 B.C., when the city was destroyed by Sargon of Assyria. Weiser follows Sellin, who would retain the verses on the ground that either the town was reckoned to Judah at that time (2 Chronicles xxvi. 6; Micah i. 14), or that it had not recovered from its overthrow by Hazael (2 Kings xii. 18). We would therefore retain the paragraph as a genuine oracle of Amos in company with all but the most radical of critics.

*Gaza.* The spelling varies, but properly it should have double-z as in Assyrian and modern Arabic. It was the most southerly of the cities of the Philistines, on the edge of the desert, at a junction of the caravan routes, and commanding the route between Egypt and Syria. It was conquered by the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser in 734 B.C., and destroyed in the revolt against Sargon.

*they exiled a whole population*, lit. 'exiled a complete exile'. It is not stated who was thus exiled. They were handed over to Edom. The word used to describe their fate strictly involves imprisonment, 'to shut them up', so Septuagint and Vulgate. It is generally supposed that the reference is to traffic in slaves, the connexion being that the same charge is made against Tyre in i. 9, and Tyre is definitely charged with this traffic in Ezekiel xxvii. 13. The incident to which the prophet refers may well be that recorded in 2 Chronicles xxi. 16. This is indeed a hundred years before Amos's time, but it is approximately of the same period as Hazael's incursions into Gilead. Perhaps the intention of Amos

would be more clear if the verb 'shut up, deliver over' had an object, which needs to be added if the 3:3 metre is original.

*Philistines.* These were the survivors of the ancient Aegean civilization, and were thus connected with the great Minoan culture of Crete and Cyprus. They were driven south by the Achaeans and the Dorians, those barbarous tribes who later became the Greeks of the classical period; they attempted to gain a foothold in Egypt, but were driven back by Ramses III (early twelfth century), and finally settled along the coast between Carmel and Egypt, reaching their full strength in the time of Saul, and later were driven back to the coast by David. They remained independent of the Israelite states until all these smaller kingdoms were overwhelmed by the great warring empires from the eighth century onwards. It is a strange anomaly that the name 'philistines' should have become a synonym for rude vulgarity, when this people was easily the most cultured people of that rough country, to which, by a strange recompense of Fortune, they have given their name in the form Palestine. The country was called this by the Greeks, presumably because, being themselves a seafaring people, their first contact was with the race who controlled the rare and none-too-satisfactory harbours along the forbidding south Syrian coast.

## V

*i. 9, 10. [Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Tyre, yea for four I will not intervene, because they delivered up a whole people to Edom, and do not remember the covenant of brethren. So I will fling fire within the wall of Tyre, and it will devour her palaces.]*

An oracle concerning Tyre, containing two lines, the first a normal 3:3, but the second a 4:4 line. It may be that the original rhythm has been disturbed, but if so the restoration must be entirely a matter of conjecture. This section is generally regarded as being an insertion by the compiler; so Duhm, Wellhausen, Marti, Lohr, Sellin, Harper, H. Schmidt, and others. The reasons given include the similarity to the previous oracle, of which it is little more than an ill-copied doublet. The chief difficulty is that of interpreting the phrase 'the covenant of brethren (brotherly covenant)', which cannot easily be explained except on the basis of an offence against fellow Phoenicians. This brings us to the years 678-6 B.C., when Tyre twice assisted the Assyrians to suppress a revolt in Phoenicia. Although G. A. Smith refers to this pair of incidents, he is on the whole inclined to regard the paragraph as from Amos of Tekoa, and so also Edgehill, Cripps, and Oesterley and Robinson (*Introduction*). It is best to regard the paragraph as later than Amos. Problematic alliances between Tyre and Judah can scarcely explain the phrase 'brotherly covenant', and it is unlikely that any prophet would ever think kindly of the alliance between Tyre and Israel in Ahab's time. We find the phrase 'saith the Lord' to be a good criterion. It is found after the oracles against Damascus, Gaza, Ammon, Moab, and Israel, but not at the end of the oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah. We regard the whole oracle as an unskilful plagiarism on the preceding oracle, except for the new element 'and did not remember the covenant of brethren', which we would transfer to verse 11 (see below).

*Tyre.* The original city ('Old Tyre') was built on the mainland, but the later city was on an island, half a mile from the shore. It became famous as a port, not

least because of its two harbours, one on the north and the other on the south, so that it was possible for a ship to make port whatever the wind. The city was very strong and difficult to capture. It withstood a three years' siege by Shalmaneser IV from 726 B.C., and again a thirteen years' siege by Nebuchadrezzar after the Battle of Carchemish (604 B.C.), but Asshur-bani-pal captured it by storm in 664 B.C., and Alexander the Great took it in seven months. Tyre was always a great commercial city (cf. Isaiah xxiii. 3), trading in all manner of merchandise, including slaves. Ezekiel's elegy on the expected fall of Tyre to Nebuchadrezzar is one of the finest pieces of writing in the Old Testament (xxviii).

## VI

*i. 11, 12. [Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Edom, yea for four I will not intervene, because he hunted down his brother with the sword, [and he destroyed his friend] (and did not remember the covenant of brothers). He retained his anger for ever, and his wrath he kept for aye. I will fling fire in Teman, and it will devour the mansions of Botsrah.]*

This oracle concerning Edom consists of four 3:3 lines. There is a considerable body of opinion against the genuineness of this paragraph as an oracle of Amos of Tekoa. Neither Judah nor Israel had anything to complain of against Edom up to a far later period than that of Amos. Indeed, it was rather Edom which had serious cause of complaint against the two Hebrew kingdoms. Objectors include Wellhausen, Nowack, Cheyne, Harper, G. A. Smith, Marti, Sellin, and Weiser, who regards this and the previous oracle as being by the same hand. This we take to be a libel on



the author of the Edom-oracle. Even Driver is doubtful concerning the authenticity of this oracle. Cripps would keep it, mostly on the ground that we do not know enough about the history of Edom dogmatically to deny the oracle to Amos. Edom was the age-old enemy and rival of Israel, who traced the rivalry back to Jacob and Esau. Teman is a northern district of Edom, frequently used instead of Edom or as synonymous with it, Jeremiah xlix. 7, 20, etc. Botsrah also is mentioned in parallelism with Edom, Isaiah xxxiv. 6, lxiii. 1; Jeremiah xlix. 22. It is generally agreed, with justification, that this oracle belongs to the same period as these other passages which speak of the vengeance upon Edom for the way in which Edom took advantage of the misfortunes of Judah in the sixth century. Note especially Isaiah lxiii. 1, where the prophet uses the meaning of the Edom-root (red) and the assonance of Botsrah and the word *batsir* (first-ripe grape) in his vision of the Lord treading the winepress alone, his garments spattered with the red blood of Edom. The ancient stories of Jacob and Esau contain the same kind of word-play. The old capital of Edom was Mount Se'ir, and the word *se'ar* means 'hair' (cf. Genesis xxv. 25, xxvii. 11, 23). The word *'adom* means 'red' (cf. Genesis xxv. 25, and the 'red red' pottage of Genesis xxv. 30).

*hunted down* (EVV, 'did pursue'). The root means 'pursue' but often with the sense of harass, persecute, a sense which seems to be required here.

*and he destroyed his friend* (EVV, 'and did cast off all pity', the Hebrew being 'and corrupted his compassions', as in AVm and RVm). The phrase is suspect because the tense is wrong, and is characteristic of late rather than of classical Hebrew. It is therefore best

regarded as an early gloss, early because it appears in all the ancient Versions. Whilst we would not follow the modern tendency and necessarily emend according to a strict system of rhythmical versification to the exclusion of every other consideration, yet in this case there is the syntactical difficulty also. It is bad Hebrew. We would therefore treat the phrase as very late Hebrew, and translate accordingly, 'and he destroyed his friend(s)'. The rendering 'friend' for the late-Hebrew *racham* is justified by its frequent use in the Targums, and it is found also in Nabatean and in Palmyrene. According to Nöldeke, Wellhausen, and Gerber, the Hebrew word *rachamim* (compassions) has its origin not directly from the root *r-ch-m* (soft, gentle, have compassion), but through the noun *racham*, which means 'womb'. Thus the rendering 'friend' is an extension of the idea of those who are born of the same womb, and has therefore particular aptness in the case of twins, such as Jacob-Israel and Esau-Edom. The translation 'friend' was suggested by Baur (1847), but cannot be admitted unless the phrase is reckoned to be a gloss.

If the phrase 'and did cast off all pity' (and destroyed his brother) be treated as a gloss, then we need a parallel to 'because he hunted down his brother with the sword', which did not have a very good parallel member in any case, and now has none at all. We suggest, therefore, that this was the original place of the line 'and he did not remember the covenant of brethren', which is so difficult in verse 9, but monstrously easy here.

*he retained his anger for ever* (EVV 'and his anger did tear perpetually'). The Hebrew text, followed faithfully by the English Versions, is sound enough as it stands, the figure being of a tearing, raging anger as of

some mad beast. But Olshausen, following Syriac and Vulgate, suggested the omission of one letter (*pe*), to give the rendering we have adopted, and so moderns generally. This makes an excellent parallelism with the other half of the couplet, and is generally agreed as being the original text. Cf. Jeremiah iii. 5, where the same two verbs are used. Harper would treat one phrase or the other as a gloss, holding that one of them is redundant, but Harper is a follower of the regular strophe theories of Briggs and Mueller, so that all such suggestions of his must be treated with extreme reserve.

*and his wrath he kept for aye.* So the English Versions, though in order to get this translation, the Hebrew must be altered slightly (*shamar lanetsach* for *shemarah netsach*).

## VII

*i. 13-15. Thus saith the Lord; For three rebellious acts of the sons of Ammon, yea for four I will not intervene; because they have ripped up the pregnant women of Gilead, to enlarge their territory. I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour her mansions, amid shouting in the day of battle, amid raging tempest in the day of sweeping storm. Their king shall go into exile, he and his princes together. Saith the Lord.*

This oracle concerning the fate of Ammon is composed of five lines, all in 3:3 rhythm, except that the metre of verse 14*a* is comparable to that of verse 7, probably intended by the prophet to provide some sort of relief from the extreme regularity of the rest. The oracle is genuinely from Amos of Tekoa.

The dispute concerning the territory between the Arnon and the Jabbok is as old as the time of Jephthah

(Judges x. 12-33). Saul defeated the Ammonites (1 Samuel xi. 1-13) and rescued Jabesh-gilead. David later most brutally avenged an insult to his ambassadors (2 Samuel xii. 26-31), but Ammon seems to have regained its independence after the time of Solomon. G. A. Smith has suggested that the atrocities of which Amos speaks belong to the time when Hazael attacked Gilead from the north and probably the Ammonites attacked at the same time from the south (2 Kings viii. 12, x. 33). Such brutalities were far from unknown in ancient Semitic warfare, and are not unknown in modern times.

*Rabbah* or 'Rabbah of the sons of Ammon' (2 Samuel xii. 26) was the royal city of the Ammonites, and the only city of theirs which is mentioned in the Old Testament. They were apparently a people more markedly nomadic than their neighbours the Moabites.

*amid shouting*. Baur was right in saying that the reference is to the shouting of the attackers and victors and not to the cry of the vanquished. There is no clear instance of the use of either verb or noun of a call in distress. It is usually a call to action, either of alarm to defence or of rally to the attack, though the idea of triumph or joy predominates. Hence the frequent use of the word in public worship (eight times in the Psalms and thrice elsewhere, but regularly in the synagogue literature). It is used particularly in connexion with the blowing of trumpets in the services, and is a rapid succession of short notes.

*amid raging tempest*. The EVV have 'with a tempest', but the strict etymological meaning of the word is better preserved by the insertion of 'raging'.

*sweeping storm* (EVV, 'the whirlwind'). The translation of EVV is due to the interpretation of the Targum,

which is followed by the Vulgate. Gesenius, on the other hand, is probably right in deriving the word, not from *sūph* ('make an end'; cf. Septuagint here), but from a by-form of *saphah* (sweep, snatch away); cf. Job xxi. 18, of driving chaff away down the wind, and Isaiah v. 28 and elsewhere, of the driving of chariots.

*their king.* It is tempting, on the basis of Syriac, Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus, and Greek MSS. which depend upon Lucian, to see here the name Milcom, which involves only a difference of vowelism. The Septuagint has 'her (Ammon's) kings, their priests and their princes together', whilst Syriac has 'Malcom and his priests and his princes'. We take the original to be as in the Hebrew text, and would account for the variations in the Versions as confections due to assimilation to Jeremiah xlix. 3. Earlier scholars tended to read 'Milcom', but the later tendency is to retain the Hebrew Text.

## VIII

*ii. 1-3. Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Moab, yea for four I will not intervene: because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. . . . So I will fling fire on Moab, and it shall devour the mansions of the Cities, and Moab shall die amid uproar, amid shouting, (and) amid trumpet-calls. I will wipe out (every) judge from her midst, and her princes I will slay with the rest. Saith the Lord.*

This oracle concerning the fate of Moab is composed of five 3 : 3 lines, though the second line is halting, difficult, and may have suffered mutilation. The oracle is a genuine oracle of Amos of Tekoa. The occasion of the desecration of the body of the Edomite king is a matter of conjecture. The best suggestion is that it

occurred in connexion with the events related in 2 Kings iii, when Mesha of Moab evidently was successful in his revolt, though the patriotic historian does his best to hide the details of the disaster to Israel and her two subservient allies, Judah and Edom. It is evident, not only from the Moabite stone, but also from 2 Kings iii. 27, that Israel suffered a crushing defeat, and it may well have involved the Edomite king in a particularly disastrous way, since the critical point of the battle seems to have been a determined attempt of the Moabite king to cut his way through to the Edomite king. This, at any rate, was the opinion of Jerome, and it is the most likely solution in our present lack of knowledge of the relations between these peoples.

*burnt the bones of.* . . . Some scholars (e.g. Procksch) have thought that the name of the king has been lost here. Certainly another word would restore the regular 3 : 3 rhythm, and whilst it may be that the prophet intended to make some variation, this line can scarcely have been original. It is not poetry at all. Perhaps one or two words are missing at the end of the line, though this addition would not make such a good line as the insertion of a word after 'bones of'. The desecration of the dead was a great crime, since whilst in ancient times they had no thought of any real life after death, yet they believed in some sort of shadowy existence, in which those who were buried together consorted together. The destruction of the body involved a dreaded homelessness, and the loss of whatever life there was beyond the grave. Even the bodies of criminals were decently buried, Deuteronomy xxi. 23; Joshua x. 27; etc.

*to lime.* It is best to take this to mean that the bones were burned to powder after death; cf. Vulgate, 'to

ashes', and Septuagint, 'to *konia*', which was the fine dust sprinkled over the wrestler's body after he had been oiled, in order to give his opponent some chance of holding him. The Targum says that he (? the king of Moab) used the residue for plastering his house as with lime. Whether this is an addition of the Targum, or whether it represents the extra word or two which would make the original Hebrew into a good line, it is impossible to say. Possibly we should read *lashod* (to destroy) for *lasid* (to lime).

*the Cities.* The Versions generally omit the article and transliterate as if a place-name, but Septuagint has 'her cities'. This is the meaning of the word *Qeriyyoth*. Elsewhere we find references to a place called 'Ar of Moab (Numbers xxi. 28, etc.) or even 'Ar (Numbers xxi. 15, etc.), and also to *Qir* in connexion with more than one Moabite city, eg. *Qir Moab* (Isaiah xv. 1), *Qir Chares* (or *Chareseth*) in Isaiah xvi. 7, 11 and 2 Kings iii. 25. There is also a place called *Qiryathaim* (the two *Qiryahs*) in the Moabite country, Jeremiah xlvi. 1 and frequently; and the shrine of Chemosh, the Moabite god, is at *Qiryath*, according to the Moabite stone. Since all these words 'Ar, *Qir*, *Qiryah* mean 'city', we judge that Amos is referring to the cities of Moab generally, under the usual description 'the *Keriyyoth*', which is probably an intensive plural of the noun *Qiryah*.

*and Moab shall die amid tumult.* Some scholars (e.g. Harper, and cf. Moffatt) would transfer this one to end of verse 1, and would make slight alterations (*lashod meth bish'on* for *lasid umeth besha'on*) to read, 'to desecrate the dead for the violence done to Moab'. This may be correct, but it restores the second line at the expense of the fourth, and is wholly conjectural.

*tumult*. The reference is to the din and crash of battle, just as the 'fire' of all these oracles is the 'fires of war' (Moffatt). The corresponding verb is used in Isaiah vi. 11 of cities crashing into ruins; of the din of battle in Jeremiah xxv. 31; and of the pounding of heavy seas in Isaiah xvii. 12.

*trumpet*, properly the *shofar*, the ram's horn trumpet. It was the earliest kind of trumpet, natural to a pastoral people. It was used as an alarm (iii. 6) and for all general purposes, but came later to be distinguished from the straight clarion, the *chatsotserah*, a long, straight, slender metal tube with a flaring end. The *shofar* came to be used specially in connexion with the Feast of Trumpets (New Year's Day), when Israel specially remembered the Kingdom of God, and prayed for true repentance on that and the succeeding nine days.

## IX

*ii. 4, 5. [Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Judah, yea for four I will not intervene; because they have spurned the Law of the Lord, and His statutes they have not kept, and their false gods have led them astray (the false gods) which their fathers followed. So I will fling fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the mansions of Jerusalem.]*

This oracle concerning Judah contains four lines, all in 3 : 3 rhythm, though the third is a 2 : 3 line. Duhm and Wellhausen led the way in objecting to this section as being considered as genuinely eighth century, and they have been followed by almost all the critics. S. R. Driver and van Hoonacker followed Robertson Smith and Kuenen in defending the paragraph, and they are supported amongst modern scholars by Horton and Cripps. Their chief ground for admitting the oracle



as genuinely from Amos of Tekoa is that the total omission of Judah from the catalogue is inconceivable. This evidently is what the later compiler thought, and so also Edgehill, who regards the section as late, but holds that Judah is included in the oracle against Israel which follows. We do not find the objection that Judah must be included to have much weight, since the prophets tended to be partners with us all in being more sure of judgement when they were thinking of other nations, and more sure of mercy when they were thinking of their own. Isaiah, for instance, is sure of the destruction of Israel, but confident of the survival of a remnant of Judah. Hosea hopes for a revival of the North after a renewed sojourn in the desert. Jeremiah has affinities with both kingdoms, and looks forward to a happy reunion. We would be disposed, therefore, on general grounds to expect no particular reference to Judah. For further discussion on this, see *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 118-22. An additional consideration is put forward by Hölscher, that Amos was inspired by a general movement in the South against the Canaanite cults which were especially rampant in the North.

It is often pointed out (e.g. Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 137) that 'Amos does not restrict his censure to wrongs perpetrated against Israel; it is the rights common to humanity at large, which he vindicates and defends'. It needs to be remembered that this judgement of Amos depends at root upon the supposition that all the oracles are genuinely from him. When the oracles concerning Tyre, Edom, and Judah are excised from his list, it will be seen that Driver's comment is not so applicable. He refers particularly to the crime against the king of Edom (ii. 1), but if the association with 2 Kings iii is sound, then Edom is to be reckoned as a

pro-Israelite ally, and all the charges which are made by Amos are such as the patriotic Israelite would endorse. Our view is that Amos made such charges against foreign nations as would rise to the mind of every Israelite, especially those who were thoroughly convinced that the Day of the Lord would be a bright and prosperous day for Israel (v. 18). Then, having made his charges against other peoples, the prophet turns to Israel (ii. 6 ff.) and makes his charges against them. They have the greater responsibility (iii. 2) and risk the greater condemnation. Before God, they must stand for judgement equally with the Ethiopians and the Philistines and the Syrians (ix. 7). We do not think it sound, therefore, to say that Amos is basing his charges against the heathen on general ethical grounds. He is pointing out the obvious crimes of surrounding nations against Israel and her friends, and then turning to Israel to say that she too must come into the same judgement, but to a greater condemnation because of her much greater privileges.

*spurned* (RV, 'rejected', which is not as good as AV, 'despised'). T. H. Robinson translated 'deliberately rejected', a meaning which is sound and admissible for the majority of cases where the word occurs. There are, however, a number of cases where an element of 'despising, spurning' is understood, e.g. Amos v. 21; Job ix. 21, xix. 18; etc., and especially the noun which is found once only in Lamentations iii. 45: 'offscouring and refuse thou makest us'.

*the Law of the Lord*. Moffatt translates 'ruling'. The word *torah* (the root means 'point, direct, teach') is a word with a long development (see *Distinctive Ideas*, pp. 74-6). Originally it stood for the answer given by God when the oracle was consulted on a particular

point raised for the first time. This first 'ruling' was a *torah*, and this early meaning is the one which Moffatt has adopted here. With the advent of Deuteronomy it came to mean the written Law, and still later the Law as found in the Pentateuch, till finally it came to mean the Pentateuch itself and also the whole body of Jewish law and custom as the rule of daily life. If, therefore, this oracle concerning Judah is regarded as belonging to the time of Amos, then Moffatt is right with his translation, 'ruling', but if the section is post-Deuteronomic, then the translation should be, 'the Law of the Lord'. This latter is the sounder rendering, since there are many traces of Deuteronomic influence in verse 4. The word *ma'as* (spurn, despise, reject) is in general use throughout the Old Testament period, but out of 73 occurrences, 12 are in Jeremiah, 5 in Ezekiel, 3 in Leviticus xxvi (Code of Holiness), and 11 in Job. Further, the word *shamar* (keep) is very frequent from Deuteronomic times of keeping the commandments or the statutes (as here), etc., and especially the phrase 'to walk after (other gods)', which we have translated 'follow', and which is so common in Deuteronomy as to be a marked feature of the style and one of its criteria. Add to this the reference to 'their fathers' and the general indefinite style, and we find ourselves in no doubt that this is an insertion under Deuteronomic influence by an editor who was sure that the Judah of his time ought also to come under condemnation.

*his statutes* (Hebrew *chuggim*), a characteristically Deuteronomic word, with an original root-meaning of 'cut in, inscribe' and hence 'enact, decree, prescribe', but an admirable word for those laws which were engraved on tables of stone.

*have led them astray* (EVV, 'have caused them to err'). The Hebrew verb *ta'ah* is a parallel form of the verb

*ṭa'ah* (with a *tau* instead of the true *teth*). The form is found twice only in Hebrew (Song i. 7, of a vagrant woman, and Ezekiel xiii. 10), but the tendency to use the verb of being led astray to the worship of false gods is clear from the Arabic *ṭa'iyat* (one who deviates from the right way), and especially the Ethiopic *ṭa'at* (apostasy, idolatry).

*their false gods* (lit. their lies). The usual extension of the meaning of the word from 'lies, deceptions' is to be found in its use for 'false prophecies, divinations' (especially in Ezekiel). The meaning 'idols' is unique here, unless Psalm xl. 4 (Heb., 5) be taken in the same sense. Compare the use of *hebel* (vanity, vain thing) in 2 Kings xvii. 15, a verse which as a whole increases the likelihood that the whole of this oracle is Deuteronomic and therefore later than Amos.

## X

*ii. 6, 7a. Thus saith the Lord: For three rebellious acts of Israel, yea for four I will not intervene; Because they have sold up the honest man for sixpence, and the needy man for a pair of sandals, they who trample down the poor man's very head, and thrust aside humble folk.*

These three lines in 3:3 rhythm form the first of a collection of three oracles against Israel, the Northern Kingdom. The three oracles are distinguishable both in content and in rhythm. In this first oracle Amos attacks the rich for their ruthless oppression of the poor. They make use of their control of the courts in order to exercise every legal right, foreclosing on the honest man who has got into debt because of circumstances beyond his control, and giving him not even the opportunity for recovery which the commonest decency demands. They sell him up for the smallest

debt, as though they trample down his very head and brush him from the path in the arrogance of their prosperity.

*have sold up.* The general tendency has been to think in terms of bribery, the rich man bribing the judges in order to secure the verdict. Whilst this probably was a general feature of the 'justice' of the times, it is not likely that this is the prophet's meaning. He is dealing with the oppression of the poor by the rich and not with the maladministration of justice. We therefore interpret the passage to refer to the foreclosing of mortgages in a legal, but oppressive manner. This might or might not involve selling the debtor as a slave; cf. 2 Kings iv. 1.

*the honest man* (EVV, 'the righteous'). Moffatt has 'honest folk', which is good. The word *tsaddiq* has a long development (see *Distinctive Ideas*, pp. 68-78), and here means the poor man who has conformed to the norm of proper conduct, and has lived honestly and humbly, fearing God and molesting no man.

*for sixpence* (EVV, 'for silver', a straight translation of the Hebrew). Moffatt has 'for money', which is sound, whilst T. H. Robinson has combined the two halves of the couplet into one statement, a procedure which is sound if the passage is to be rendered into a wholly un-Hebrew medium, and as 'the price of a pair of shoes'. We have thought it better to preserve something of the parallelism of the Hebrew, and so retain a wider wealth of language. The price for which the honest poor man is sold up is a very small one, and so we have interpreted the 'silver' of the Hebrew to be the smallest regular silver coin in circulation.

*the needy* (so RV, to make the distinction between the two Hebrew words used in the two verses. AV trans-

lates both by 'the poor' and so gives the impression that the same word occurs in the Hebrew in both cases). The root means 'to be willing, consent', from whence we get the development 'be desirous', so that the 'abiyonah is the caper-berry, so called because it was thought to stimulate desire. The word here used is 'ebyon, occurring in J, E and D, but not in P, and some 23 times in the Psalms. He is the needy man who is always longing for what his poverty denies him, as the Rabbis said, 'He is called 'ebyon, because he longs for everything' (*Lev. Rabba*, p. 34). It is curious that in Arabic and thence in Urdu the root has the contrary meaning 'refuse' (though in the Nejd dialect the true meaning survives). The change-over seems to have arisen through the idea of a grudging consent, i.e. fastidious, and so refusing. There are other examples of this kind of contrariness in a word, e.g. the Hebrew root *n-k-r*, which provides both the meaning 'be acquainted with' (Job vii. 10) and also the word *nokri* (foreigner). Cf. also the English word 'restive', and other Hebrew examples in *Distinctive Ideas*, pp. 95-8. The word 'ebyon was adopted by the Ebionites, a name given to the Judaizing Christians of the first centuries. They were strict observers of the Law, but had a defective Christology. The name probably arose because of their strict observance of the Law and their faithfulness to it under all circumstances, just as the phrase 'the meek' came to have an at-least semi-technical use of the same type (see below). The *tsaddiq* (honest, righteous man) comes more and more to be the 'just' man, i.e. the man who is innocent of offence and adheres to the Law with humble devotion. Since the tendency in this rough world is for evil-doers to flourish like the green bay-tree, the tendency is for the righteous to be also the poor and either humble or humiliated.

*pair of sandals* (EVV, 'shoes'). Some scholars (Box, Horton) have interpreted this phrase with reference to the custom indicated in Ruth iv. 7 and Psalm lx. 8, whereby walking across a plot of land, or casting a shoe across it, is taken to be the formal sign of legal possession, but the meaning is rather that the rich sell up the honest poor for 'an old song' (G. A. Smith). Compare the similar phrases 'handfuls of barley' and 'dry crumbs' of Ezekiel xiii. 19; also the Septuagint of 1 Samuel xii. 3, 'from whom have I taken a bribe or a sandal', of which the original may well have been '. . . or a pair of sandals'; cf. the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus xlvi. 19, where the Greek even has the plural and not the singular, as the English translation suggests. The two halves of the line are now seen to refer to the same morally illegal, even if formally legal procedure. Scholars like Driver, who thought of corrupt justice for the first half of the line, were compelled to suppose that two different matters were mentioned in the same line, a custom which is not at all characteristic of these oracles.

*they who trample down the poor man's very head.* The Hebrew has 'that pant after the dust of the earth in the head of the poor', which is barely intelligible, so the EVV have substituted 'on' for 'in', which makes it a little better. We have thus a picture of the wealthy so rapacious that not only, as Micah iii. 2 f. expresses it, do they 'skin' the poor man, but they are eager to grasp even the dust which the poor man casts on his head in token of his misery (so Pusey, Duhm). But there are objections to this reading. The line is too long for the rhythm, for whilst we would agree that a 3:3 rhythm may vary to a 3:2 or a 2:3 rhythm, yet it is not competent for it to vary the other way to a 4:3. Further, the ideas in the two halves of the line are not

complementary in the way in which Amos characteristically adopts. It seems best to assume that the phrase 'upon the dust of the earth' is a gloss (Löhr, Meinhold, Sellin, Weiser, T. H. Robinson, and others), introduced by a prosaic scribe who, seeing 'trample' follow 'sandals', explained, with a careful devotion which was worthy of a better cause, that sandals do actually trample upon the dust of the earth (so Torrey). The key to the puzzle is found in Septuagint, which has a doublet, showing both the original reading and the effect of the scribe's gloss. It has 'sandals that walk on the dust of the earth' and follows it with 'and they (i.e. the wealthy oppressors) strike with the fist (so Syriac) the heads of the poor'. The Vulgate is clearer still with 'they bruise the heads of the poor' and then it adds the gloss, 'upon the dust of the earth'. This involves reading *shaphim* for the present *sho'aphim* (the consonantal difference is the omission of the soundless consonant *aleph*) and omitting the preposition *beth* ('in' or, as the EVV have, 'on'), which latter we take to be an attempt to make sense of the passage after the gloss had been inserted. We thus have the same word 'bruise' as in Genesis iii. 15 of 'bruising (crushing)' the head and the heel, a passage where the RVm, with its 'lie in wait for', harps back to the verb now found in Amos ii. 7. The 'very head' is T. H. Robinson's excellent rendering of the sense of the Hebrew.

*the poor.* The word here is *dallim*, from a root which means 'to be low, languish, droop', and so here of the poor as being 'weak, drooping, thin'.

*humble folk.* The word is *anawim*, an 'active' adjective meaning 'meek, humble'. There is a certain amount of confusion in the Hebrew Old Testament between this word and the very similar *aniyyim* (the consonantal difference in the Hebrew is only a *yodh* for a *vav*), which



is a 'passive' adjective meaning 'humbled'. Both words came to be used ultimately in a technical sense for the faithful Jew, especially the former word. It stands for the humble soul who fulfilled the Law and trusted in God. He sounded no trumpet, and made no show, but was quietly loyal to the God of his fathers. He was not able to defend himself against oppression, either of enemies from without the country, or of a greedy aristocracy and merchant class within it. He therefore was in special need of God's care, for it was to Him that the 'meek' looked, in as much as apart from God he had no helper (Psalm lxii. 12). The word occurs very often in the Psalms, and becomes the proper term for those who waited patiently and humbly for the consolation of Israel. When that day at last dawned, then they would be set on high and 'the meek' would 'inherit the earth' (Psalm xxxvii. 11; Matthew v. 5). In this verse of Amos we see the beginning of the development which bore such fruit of patience at last.

*thrust aside.* We have here followed Sellin and Weiser, who insert the preposition *mem* (from), to read, 'and they turn aside the meek from the path'. T. H. Robinson follows this with 'they make the lower classes step aside for them', but apparently without any alteration of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew will probably just stand this translation, but it is better to suppose that the letter *mem* has been lost by haplography; cf. Isaiah xxx. 11; Job xxiv. 4. Many prefer to retain the text on the basis of such passages as Isaiah x. 2; Amos v. 11; etc., and to interpret the line as referring to bribery and corruption in the courts. So Moffatt with 'and humble souls they harry'. Our objection to this is that we do not think Amos is talking about unjust juridical procedure, but of the general arrogance of the rich who take advantage of their legal rights.

## XI

*ii. 7b, 8. And a man and his father go to 'the girl', to profane my holy Name. Clothes that are pledged they spread out beside every altar, and forfeited wine they drink at their God's shrine.*

A short paragraph of four lines, two in 2:2 rhythm and two in 3:2 rhythm. We take this paragraph, like the following paragraph, to be in the famous Qinah-measure, i.e. mainly 3:2, but with variations into 2:2. The essence of the Qinah measure is the uneven division of the line, so that the first half is longer than the second. It gives a peculiar halting rhythm, much used in laments or dirges; hence the name Qinah, the identification of which we owe primarily to Lowth and secondarily to Budde. It is found generally in laments, and especially in Lamentations i-iv (but not in v).

T. H. Robinson considers verses 7b-12 to form one section, and, so far as the rhythm is concerned, this judgement is sound. On the other hand, Weiser omits 10, 11a, 12, and 15, and makes 6-16 one section, in spite of the changes of rhythm. We regard the changes of rhythm and topic to be sufficient justification for our procedure of making three distinct sections.

*go to 'the girl'.* This is an exact rendering of the Hebrew, and we consider it to be the soundest exegesis. It is said (cf. S. R. Driver) that this is a case of the 'generic article', best represented in English by the indefinite article, 'a girl'. Even assuming that the reference is to prostitution of the type with which our modern world is unfortunately familiar, we would

hold that the definite article might well stand, as if a man should say, 'I am going to the pub, the club, the . . .'. We see no need to introduce the word 'the same', as the English Versions and even the Douai Version (here departing from the Vulgate) have done, following the lead of Septuagint. Still less do we accept T. H. Robinson's explanation that father and son both treat the servant-girl as a harlot. It is best to interpret the passage as a criticism of the religion of the time, where young and old alike go to the shrine, allegedly of Jehovah, to the *qedeshah*, the temple prostitute, the same girl or another, it mattered not which; the custom was 'to go to the *qedeshah*'. This is a custom which is a feature of fertility cults generally, and was found regularly in certain Babylonian Temples, Greek temples of Aphrodite, and in Canaanite cults. Cf. Hosea iv. 14, and the Deuteronomic law against such things (xxiii. 17), including male prostitutes also. This practice was one of the products of the syncretism against which the prophets had continually to fight. The prophet is not thus protesting against an exaggerated immorality, mixed with a sort of illegal incest, but against temple prostitution. These two lines are thus linked with the next two lines (verse 8), which deal with other temple practices which the prophet deploras.

*to profane.* Strictly the Hebrew means 'in order that they may profane', with the sense of purpose and intention being clear and intended. Nevertheless, some authorities hold that the word is used ironically, since it was clearly not their real purpose (e.g. Hosea viii. 4). Two other explanations are possible. In the first place, it is likely that the prophet used the form *lema'an* instead of the ordinary inseparable preposition *lamedh* in order to make two words of it, and so retain his 2 : 2

rhythm. In the second place, we hold that the Hebrews were never as precise as we are between 'purpose' and 'result'. For instance, following the famous vision of Isaiah vi, there is a passage (verses 9-13a) where the prophet retells the message that came to him indicating the result of his preaching. A modern and Western writer would say: 'In spite of all you say, they may hear, but they will never understand. As a matter of fact, they will shut their eyes. . . .' That is, the prophet is told from the start that the result of his preaching will be such and such. But the Hebrew did not talk that way. He was so sure of the over-ruling power of God, so sure that there was no uncaused effect, that he traced back every result to its cause, and went so far as to say that Isaiah's preaching caused the result. He identified *post hoc* with *propter hoc*, and tended always to speak in terms of the second.

*profane.* The verb *chillel* properly means 'untie, undo', whence it comes to mean 'free from a bond, taboo', and so to bring into common use. This can happen in a good way. By the offering of the 'holy' (i.e. that which belongs to God) firstfruits, the rest of the vineyard is made 'common', and so is permissible for human use, Deuteronomy xx. 6. It can also happen in a bad way, when men profane and desecrate 'holy things'. Amos is saying that the conduct he condemns is 'profaning God's holy Name', it is bringing God into touch with customs and habits and thoughts which are wholly alien to Him, and ought never to be countenanced in connexion with His worship. For a full discussion of the primitive meanings and developments of these words ('holy, profane, common', etc.) see *Distinctive Ideas*, pp. 24-36.

*clothes that are pledged . . . mortgaged wine.* The reference in each case is to articles which have been pawned

with them. Moffatt has this clearly in respect of the first item, 'on garments seized in pledge', but he follows the usual explanation in respect of the second item with his 'they drink the money taken in fines'. The word translated 'fined' in RV and 'condemned' in AV is by no means certain in its precise significance, and T. H. Robinson is much nearer the intention of the prophet with his explanation that the wine they drink belongs to those who have pawned it with them. We would go farther than this on the strength of the Aramaic of Ezra vii. 26, where the root is used of 'confiscation of goods'. The word then refers to forfeited pledges, and we are thus back on the old charges of legal rapacity, the wealthy being quick to foreclose on the honest debtor, but this time their ruthlessness is associated with the very shrine of Jehovah Himself.

*they spread out.* It is generally agreed that the verb as Amos uses it does not mean 'stretch themselves out', but must be translated transitively 'stretch out'. This involves agreeing with the Septuagint in the omission of the preposition 'upon'. The meaning is that they use these pawned clothes for their feasts, though the EVV are quite correct in assuming that the purpose is to make rugs of them. Septuagint translates *chabulim* (pledged) as if from another, though similar, root, and so makes the cloths to be 'bound' together so as to make curtains round the altar. Douai modernizes the fashion and makes the feasters sit down instead of recline at meat. The word used for 'clothes' (*beged*) is a general word to include every kind of garment. Some scholars have seen here a reference to the *salmah*, or *simplah*, the large square outer garment which was wrapped round the body by day and used as a blanket at night. There was an ancient law (Exodus xxii. 25 f.: E) which prohibited such a pledge being retained

overnight by the creditor. We judge, however, that Amos is talking not so much about unredeemed pledges, but about pledges which have been forfeited, the creditors having ruthlessly foreclosed immediately the agreed period of loan has elapsed.

*altar.* The Hebrew *mizbeach* etymologically means 'place of slaughter'; cf. 1 Samuel xiv. 32-5. The blood was poured out on the (now) sacred stone, and was thus offered to the god (cf. the old idea of the god who dwelt in the sacred, and therefore unhewn stone), whilst the flesh of this *zebach* (lit. 'slaughter' and later 'animal sacrifice') was eaten by the people. The 'altar', therefore, as the place on which the offering to the god was burned is therefore a development from an earlier idea of the altar as the place where the animal was slain. See G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (1925), pp. 96-129.

*their God's shrine* (lit. 'the house of their god(s)'). The Targum, as we would expect, translates the plural form 'elohim in this case as 'idols', i.e. not as the name of the God of Israel. Scholars of Driver's time were uncertain whether these shrines were dedicated to Jehovah and accompanied with the syncretistic practices borrowed from the Canaanite cults, or whether they were definitely Baal-Astarte shrines. Modern archæological evidence makes it certain that the former was the case, and that even where Jehovah may not have been identified with the local Baal, He was worshipped with every kind of fertility rite. We have in these verses the picture of feasting in the shrine itself close by the altar. That such feasts were a feature of Canaanite-Hebrew religion in the early period can be seen from Judges ix. 27; 1 Samuel i. 9-15; both incidents connected with the annual vintage feast

which marked the end of one agricultural year and the beginning of the next. They brought their gifts, shared them with the god and his priests, and ate and drank and gave the god thanks. Amos's criticism is not of the custom of feasting in the shrine, since this was the normal custom (nor was there any need to curtain off the altar, as Septuagint suggests) and the later ideas of more restrained behaviour had not yet developed. We do not find it necessary to suppose that the prophet is here condemning the drunkenness of such allegedly sacred feasts, though this may well be so. His condemnation mainly is concerned with the combination of religious exercises with the merciless ruthlessness of the wealthy, who only just do not steal the material for their feasts from the humble and needy honest man.

## XII

*ii. 9-12. Now it was I who exterminated from before them the Amorite, whose height was like the height of cedars, and mighty was he as the oaks, but I destroyed his fruit above and his roots below. And it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you in the wilderness for forty years to occupy the land of the Amorite. And (after that) I raised up some of your sons to be prophets, and some of your youths to be Nazirites, but you made the Nazirites drink wine, and you laid commands on the prophets saying Ye shall not prophesy. Is not this indeed so, O sons of Israel? Oracle of the Lord.*

An oracle of eight lines, mainly in the Qinah (3:2) measure, with the first line in 2 : 2 and on two occasions a third stichos of three beats added (10c, 12a). The prophet recounts the 'mighty saving acts of the Lord' in rescuing Israel out of Egypt, leading them through

the wilderness, and settling them in Canaan, and concludes with charges of disloyal behaviour and ungrateful requital. The general attitude is that of Deuteronomy xxxii, the Deuteronomic Song of Moses, which belongs roughly to the period of Amos, and later (though before the time of Christ) became one of the Sabbath canticles, the other being the Exodus Song of Moses (Exodus xv. 1-18) and the Song of Israel (Numbers xxi. 17 f.). Most modern scholars transfer 11b to the end of verse 12; cf. T. H. Robinson; whilst some would interchange verses 9 and 10, thus making the prophet refer to the rescue from Egypt before he speaks of the journeying through the Wilderness. There is no need for this interchange. It is true that looking forwards from the beginning of the world, the Exodus came before the Settlement, but it is also true that for the prophet looking backwards, the Settlement came before the Exodus. The latter is at least as likely as the former; indeed, we judge it to be the more natural order for a prophet of a non-historico-scientific age.

*Now it was I.* The 'I' in the Hebrew is most emphatic, but we find no need to translate 'yet it was I' unless verse 9 is regarded as originally following verse 8. We do not think that it does, since the counterpart of God's action is Israel's action as retailed in verse 12, i.e. it follows the recital of God's saving work, and does not precede it.

*the Amorite.* This name is given (a) to the people east of Jordan, subjects of Sihon and Og the two kings of the Amorites, and (b) in E and D to the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan generally. In this latter the two traditions follow the general Mesopotamian tradition, in which Syria and Palestine are known as the land of the Amorite (Amurra), and this as far back as



the time of Sargon I of Akkad (c. 2600 B.C.). The Egyptians represented the inhabitants of Canaan as being tall, and in the Old Testament their height (as here, like the cedars) is legendary; cf. Deuteronomy i. 28; etc. For similes of the same type, see Ezekiel xxxi. 3; etc. It was the acme of straightness and strength (cf. Job xl. 17), and the Lebanon has been famous for its cedars, so useful for building, from time immemorial, especially in countries like Mesopotamia, where there is no wood.

*mighty* (T. H. Robinson, 'sturdy'; EVV, 'strong'). The word is emphatic because of its position. The root means 'to be strong, powerful', though the Arabic equivalent (*chasan* with a light guttural) means 'to be good, handsome, kindly', so that Hasan son of Ali was well-named, he being noted for his kindly and generous disposition. The Oxford Lexicon connects the word with an Arabic root meaning 'coarse, rough', but makes an error, for the word is not *chasuna*, but *chashuna*, both with a heavy guttural. In Syriac, *Chassin* is used for 'Almighty', the equivalent of the Hebrew El-Shaddai, though the word also has the meaning 'violent, difficult' and intensive forms of the verb mean 'tyrannize'.

*his fruit above and his roots below*. In English idiom this is 'root and branch' (T. H. Robinson). Driver quotes the curse on the tomb of Eshmunazar of Sidon (c. 400 B.C.) against whoever violates the tomb, 'may he have no root beneath, or fruit above, or any beauty among the living under the sun'.

*Egypt*. The Hebrew form *Mitsraim* is a dual, i.e. the two Egypts, Upper and Lower, as always, the Pharaoh having a double crown. Some scholars hold that this agreement is accidental, and that the dual form in Hebrew is only apparent and not real, but that it is

actually an ending noting locality, e.g. Jerusalem (so the Hebrew), Ephraim, and the Aramaic name for Samaria which is *Shamerain* (Heb., *Shomeron*).

*the wilderness.* The Hebrew *midhbar* properly means 'place of pasture', e.g. Joel ii. 22, 'the pastures of the *midhbar* put forth fresh-green-spring grass'. It is a country which is not fertile enough for cultivation, but provides enough pasturage for the cattle of a nomadic tribe. In times immediately following the rains, it is covered with grass, as is the case with even the drought-ridden lands of Central Australia. The word can also be used of the dry barren lands (Hosea ii. 5) where there is never any grass at all, but it is wrong to think of the *midhbar* as a wholly barren waste. The Hebrews, according to the traditions, lived for forty years in the *midhbar*.

*prophets.* The origin of the term *nabi*' (prophet) has been the object of more than one careful and scholarly examination. We agree with A. R. Johnson (*ibid.*, p. 24) that the obvious etymology is the right one. It is from the root *n-b-'*, 'to utter a sound' (e.g. bark softly, of a dog), and thence 'to inform, announce'; cf. both Arabic and Akkadian. The prophet is then one who speaks forth the message of God.

*Nazirite.* The *nazir* is the separated one, i.e. consecrated. The law of the Nazirite is to be found in Numbers vi. 1-21. They allowed their hair to grow long, it being not permissible for any razor to touch their heads. The hair is regarded as being sacred amongst many primitive peoples, and as such being the source of supernatural strength (e.g. Samson, whose miraculous strength went with his hair, and returned when his hair grew once more). Some peoples preserved the sanctity of the hair of their sacred persons

by their being always clean-shaved, but the Hebrews allowed the hair to grow. Amongst the sacred persons was the king, whence kings had to wear a *nezzer* (consecration, fillet), and so kings wear crowns. The Nazirites also took vows of abstinence, and were not allowed to drink wine. They thus represented the ancient desert and pre-Canaan tradition, and in respect of total abstinence from wine and strong drink they were at one with the Rechabites.

*Oracle of the Lord.* The older explanation of the word translated 'oracle' is that it is a passive participle from a root which in Arabic means 'utter a low sound, murmur, whisper'. The more modern explanation is that it is a noun meaning 'whisper'. The word is common in the prophets, always in the same form except once (Jeremiah xxiii. 21, where a verbal form is used of 'ne'uming a ne'um'), and about 400 times in all. It is used six times of Balaam's oracles, four times elsewhere, and all the rest in the Prophets. It is the secret whispered message which the Lord speaks in the prophet's heart and ear, the message which it is the prophet's business to speak forth boldly in the Name of the Lord.

### XIII

*ii. 13-16. Behold, I am about to press down where you are, as the wagon presses down the (floor) filled with sheaves. Then shall flight fail the swift, and the strong man not retain his strength, nor the warrior save his life. The archer shall not stand his ground, nor the swift-footed save himself, and the horseman shall not save his life. And the stout-hearted amongst the warriors shall flee unarmed in that day. Oracle of the Lord.*

This oracle contains five lines of 3 : 3 measure with a third stichos added to the first (verse 13), closing with

a 2:2 line, of which the first part, 'in that day', may well be an interpolation. The prophet is foretelling the punishment which is coming from God, who will grind the nation down just as the threshing-wagon pressed down hard upon the sheaves which filled the threshing floor, so hardly that no sheaf could escape. The oracle passes on to tell of the way in which this crushing will take place, namely in the rout of defeat in battle, so complete that neither swiftness of foot nor doughtiness of deed can avail. The picture concludes with the failure of even the charioteers to escape, and of veteran warriors casting their arms away to seek refuge in headlong flight.

*I am about to press down.* . . . Substantially as in AVm, except for the idea that the wagon is full of sheaves. The verse is most difficult, and has given rise to more discussion than perhaps any verse in the book except one or two verses in chapter v. Most of the difficulty has been caused by the picture common to Western eyes of the great harvest wains laden with sheaves of corn. Hence we get the picture of the wagon groaning (Aquila, Jerome, and the Douai 'scream') under the weight of its load. But the picture in the prophet's mind is of the threshing wagon with its roller passing over the whole of the threshing-floor, crushing down every sheaf that is there, and letting none escape. Cf. Isaiah xxviii. 27 and especially Proverbs xx. 26, where the RV reads, 'a wise king winnoweth the wicked, and bringeth the threshing wheel (but 'roller' is better) over them', the same figure as that which Amos uses. The rest of the difficulty has been due largely to the otherwise unknown (in Hebrew) root 'ug, which we have translated 'press down'. Many scholars have adopted Wellhausen's modification of Hitzig's suggestion and have changed the *ayin* to *pe*, reading the

root *puq* (totter), and so Nowack, Duhm, Löhr, Edgell, T. H. Robinson, and others. Most of these scholars think of the ground shaking underneath the wagon, but T. H. Robinson thinks of the wagon rocking, a rendering which certainly fits the text better, and does not assume any such word as 'the ground', as Hitzig, Wellhausen, and Procksch. Other scholars retain the root 'uq of the present Hebrew text, and seek to explain it by various Arabic verbs, particularly the verb 'aqa (groan, creak). This is, as we have seen, the rendering of Aquila and the Vulgate, and is followed by Hoffmann, Marti, Sellin, and Weiser. Moffatt follows Hitzig's later view, explaining the word by the Arabic 'uj (withdraw, flee away), and so 'collapse' as the full wagon breaks down. For our part, we would regard the verb as the Aramaic equivalent of the true Hebrew *tsuq*, and read 'press down', as the Targum has done, and so Jewish tradition generally, and Ewald, G. A. Smith, and Driver.

*where you are.* This phrase has occasioned difficulty, since its most usual meaning is 'under you', but AVm has taken this to mean 'the place under you', and we would follow this, unless it is held to be necessary to insert 'the ground', as Hitzig, Wellhausen, and Procksch. This, however, disturbs the metre, unless we take the initial word 'behold' into the scheme and regard verse 13 as making two lines, instead of one line with a third stichos.

*the (floor) that is full of sheaves.* It seems most natural to regard the adjective 'full' as qualifying 'wagon', but 'the full one' can also be taken to mean the threshing floor that is full, on the analogy of 2 Kings iv. 4. The verb needs an object, and presumably the third stichos contains a reference to whatever it is that is full of sheaves.

*warrior*. The *gibbor* is the mighty man, the hero of a hundred fights, the steady, experienced infantryman. Modern scholars regard considerable portions of verses 14 and 15 as inflations. Procksch, for instance, would omit 14c and 15a, whilst Weiser would omit 14a and the whole of 15. There certainly does seem to be a considerable amount of needless repetition, with the same phrases repeated in a way which is alien to the rest of the oracles. Procksch's omissions seem to be the most satisfactory, in that they get rid of the duplications and preserve all else.

*unarmed*. The word need not necessarily mean 'naked', and we much prefer T. H. Robinson's 'he shall fling away his weapons and take to flight' to Moffatt's 'shall strip and run'. Compare the Greek *gumnos*, which means 'stripped', either of all clothes or of weapons (Herodotus 2, 141).

#### XIV

iii. 1. *Hear the word of the Lord which the Lord hath spoken concerning you, O sons of Israel, [against all the family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:]*

This verse is a prose introduction to the following oracles. Some scholars regard the phrase 'against you, O sons of Israel' as an inflation, whereas others retain this, and omit the rest of the verse. This latter is the course adopted by most modern scholars, e.g. Marti, Sellin, Meinhold, Hölscher, and T. H. Robinson, but Procksch retains it and omits the earlier phrase. One or other should certainly go, because of the change of person.

*family*. The word is a development from the word *shifchah* ('maid', but originally 'concubine', from the

root *shafach* 'pour out' with vulgar meaning). So we get the meaning 'clan' and, in the Priestly Code, a subdivision of a tribe. But if the word is connected with the word 'concubine', it probably meant originally some minor and secondary offshoot of the tribe. In this case, Joshua vi. 23 is not as unintelligible as the Oxford Lexicon suggests, since 'all her family' (so the Versions, reading the singular and not the plural) means all the harlot's children.

## XV

*iii. 2-8. With you alone have I been intimate out of all the families of earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Do two men travel together unless they have planned it together? Does a lion roar in the bad-lands, unless he has prey? Does a lion growl [out of his den] unless he has made a capture? Does a bird swoop down to the ground, unless there is a lure for her? Does a trap spring up from the ground, and not capture anything at all? Can the alarm be blown in the city, and the people not be terrified? Can there be trouble in a city, and the Lord have not been at work? [For the Lord Jehovah God does not do anything, except he has (first) revealed his secret plan to his slaves the prophets.] The lion hath roared, who can but shudder? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*

The oracle consists of eleven lines in the Qinah measure, with two lines (verse 7) interpolated. The first two lines state the special privileges which Israel has enjoyed in intimate relationships with Jehovah, and the corresponding obligations she has incurred. More has been given to Israel than to any other nation; more therefore is required of her. The following seven lines contain illustrations drawn mostly, though

not entirely, from desert and agricultural life, all of them showing that there is no effect without its cause. The last of the series contains the statement that, when trouble comes, then it will be because Jehovah has been at work, as verse 2 suggests, punishing Israel for her iniquities. As in the other six cases, the one is the inevitable result of the other. The next two lines declare the function of the prophet, and are probably an interpolation. He it is to whom Jehovah reveals what He is about to do. Well, then, continues Amos, the lion has roared and the disaster is therefore imminent; God has spoken, and I must speak forth this message of doom.

*with you alone have I been intimate* (lit., as in EVV, 'you only have I known'). The Hebrew word *yada'* has reference to personal knowledge rather than to intellectual knowledge, though its use is wide enough to include any and every type of knowing. But here the word is used in its narrower sense of intimacy. It involves a closer knowledge than, for instance, in Genesis xxix. 5 (J), 'do you know Laban?', and is to be interpreted of the most intimate personal knowledge possible, e.g. the frequent use of the word in the sense of the man-and-wife relationship. When the Psalmist in Psalm i. 6 says that God 'knows the way of the righteous', he means that God is thoroughly intimate with every twist and turn of the road, and that there is not an inch of the whole track where God's intimate and close protection is not available. This verse, therefore, is of the utmost importance because it is the first statement of the existence of that special relationship arising out of Jehovah's election-love, and developing ultimately into the doctrine of election. The modern tendency is to read back almost all of the special prophetic doctrines into the teaching of Moses, and once more to



establish Moses as the origin of all those ideas and movements which raised Hebrew religion to its unique position in the ancient world. For our part, we hold that the relationship between Jehovah and Israel was not regarded in any markedly different light from the way in which the relationship between Chemosh (say) and Moab was regarded. Jehovah was Israel's god, just as Chemosh was Moab's god. It is, in our view, only here in Amos iii. 2 that we get the breakaway from the general Semitic henotheistic idea of one nation, one god. This is the beginning of that idea of special choice and special mission which has been Israel's glory.

*of earth.* This word 'adamah is not often used for 'the whole earth', but properly of the tilled land, e.g. Genesis iv. 12, 14, especially the latter verse, where the 'adamah is contrasted with the desert into which Cain has been driven. The word, therefore, should mean 'the settled lands', and perhaps Amos did actually intend this. There is the ever-present tendency of the nomad to regard the desert as the place which God has not blessed with fertility, and in Hosea, as in Genesis iv. 14, being driven out into the wilderness is a penalty exacted by God for Israel's waywardness. G. A. Smith, followed by Edgehill, thinks the word has been used purposely 'to stamp the meanness and mortality of them all'. Perhaps all this is trying to read too much into the passage, for the phrase is used twice elsewhere (Genesis xii. 3, xxviii. 14, both J) of all peoples, though the regular phrase with *goy* (nation, heathen) and 'erets (earth, land) also is found in J and JE, e.g. Genesis xviii. 18, xxii. 8, xxvi. 4.

*Do two men travel . . .* (RV, 'shall two walk together . . .'; AV, 'can . . .'). If you see two men travelling together, then you may safely infer that they have made

an appointment so to do. Amos knew the desert, and he knew that two men so rarely take the same road, that when they do it is certain that they have fixed time and place (cf. Job ii. 11). In the hostile desert every man must be considered an enemy until the contrary is proved; cf. Genesis iv. 14; the tribal mark is the only protection. Septuagint reads, 'if they do not know each other', transferring the order of two letters, and so Gressmann, Marti, Hölscher, Edgehill, and others. Another suggestion is to keep the Hebrew text and interpret 'if they be not agreed' (so Duhm, Harper, H. Schmidt, Köhler), but we prefer the more specific rendering which involves the idea of having fixed an appointment; cf. Wellhausen, Nowack, Sellin, G. A. Smith, Driver, Moffatt, T. H. Robinson, and RVm.

*the bad lands* (EVV, 'the forest'). The root means 'to be rugged', so that the word *ya'ar* is properly rough, rugged country, perhaps mountainous, but with pits and all sorts of places in which men can be lost (cf. 2 Samuel xviii. 8, 17). It was good hunting country for the lion, who is not truly a forest animal.

[*out of his den*, EVV.] Most moderns omit this, for two reasons. First, it overweights the line; secondly, it is wrong zoologically. The lion does not roar out of his den. Either he roars as he springs on the prey (verse 4a), or else he growls as he devours it (verse 4b).

*swoop down* (EVV, 'fall in a snare'). It is certainly best to omit the reference to the snare in the first half of verse 5a, thus following Septuagint. The passage presents no difficulty if, instead of 'fall', we translate 'swoop down' of the sudden descent of the bird which sees the lure of the fowler in the bird-trap. For a

similar use of the verb, see Genesis xxiv. 64 (J) of Rebekah's sudden descent from her camel when she first espies Isaac, or, again, Naaman's sudden descent from his chariot when he sees Gehazi running after him, 2 Kings v. 21. There is thus no need to regard the verses as being in the wrong order. Amos speaks first of the swooping bird, and then of the springing trap.

*lure* (EVV, 'gin'). The word *moqesh* is properly the bait, or lure, particularly that in the net of the fowler. From this its meaning is extended to mean any sort of lure, bait, snare.

*For the Lord Jehovah . . .* (verse 7). Almost all scholars agree that this verse disturbs the connexion, since verse 8 follows naturally from verse 6. Harper (translating 'but'), G. A. Smith, Driver, T. H. Robinson, and Edgehill disagree with this, and retain. Against this, it is difficult to recognize the first line as poetry, even if the rhythm be put right, since the division of the line is wrong, and is different from the other verses, both those before and the following. It is practicable to read verse 7 after verse 8, and Driver realizes that this is the proper sequence. Cripps regards the two verses as another section, the rhythm being different, but we do not find this to be true of verse 8, the first two words being of such emphasis and solemnity as to carry the equivalent of three beats. It is practicable to treat verse 7 as misplaced from after verse 8, having been there either from the beginning (Oettli) or as a gloss, later misplaced. Most scholars regard it as a gloss, since there are elements in it which seem to belong to the time of Jeremiah. So Duhm, Nowack, Hölscher, Löhr, Cheyne, Marti, Weiser.

*his secret plan* (EVV, 'secret'). The original meaning

of the root is uncertain, but the idea of familiar intercourse amongst a circle of friends is firmly established, with developments into 'assembly' on the one hand, and into 'intimacy, secret plan' on the other. The idea of the secret council of the Lord appears in 1 Kings xxii. 19-23 and Job i. ii, so that this in itself is no criterion of a later date. But when this idea is combined with the claim that 'his slaves the prophets' know all His intimate plans, we find a development beyond the time of Amos, especially in view of the phrase 'his slaves (EVV, 'servants') the prophets', which certainly has a post-Deuteronomic flavour. In any case, the sequence of verse 8 is so exact and pungent from verse 6, that verse 7 must be an intrusion, somewhat prosaic and largely irrelevant.

*The lion hath roared.* . . . This verse (8) expresses the sense of imperative call of which Amos was very conscious indeed. As the prophet himself said, the Lord Himself took him from after the sheep, and bade him prophesy (vii. 15). The same is true of Jeremiah, called from the womb to be a prophet (Jeremiah i. 5), commanded by God, even against his own desires, to speak forth the message which was given him (i. 7, xx. 9-11). A man does not choose to be a prophet; he is chosen. There is a confusion throughout the Bible over this matter of the call of God. On the one hand, God calls and the individual responds; on the other hand, the whole experience is one of Divine compulsion. Scholars have sometimes attempted to draw a distinction between the 'called' and the 'chosen', chiefly on the basis of Matthew xxii. 14, 'For many are called, but few are chosen', but whilst this distinction is made in the Gospels, it is not found elsewhere. In the Gospels, 'the called' (*kletoi*) are those who are invited to enter the kingdom, and 'the chosen' (*eklekttoi*) are those who

do actually enter. In Paul 'the called' and 'the chosen' are one and the same group. He insists that the determining Agent is God, and this is true to the Old Testament. It is a mystery of religious experience, and cannot otherwise be resolved. The Christian is fully conscious that at the beginning he himself made the choice as a free agent, but, on the other hand, as he looks back through the years, he realizes that even those very first promptings in his own heart and the first movements of his own will were the work of God the Holy Spirit. How else does God work, except through the heart and the mind and the will? The difficulty in the reconciliation of the two apparently contradictory elements in experience is paralleled by the difficulty of allowing freedom to both God and man. If we start with the assumption of freedom for God, then it is difficult to allow any real freedom to man, and the logical outcome is predestination. On the other hand, if we start with the assumption of freedom for man, then it is difficult to allow any freedom for God, and the logical outcome is a God fettered by the decisions of wayward man. The dilemma depends upon the tacit assumption that there is for man a freedom that is absolute. All human freedom is relative. No commands are grievous, if we desire to do them. All that freedom actually means is that we are free to do that which we desire to do. Luther's great paradox is resolved by the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts (Romans v. 5): 'The Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none: the Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to all.' The discussion of the meanings of 'called' and 'chosen' in the New Testament is to be found in Lightfoot's commentary on Colossians iii. 12; see also Sanday and Headlam, *Romans* (ICC), p. 4.

## XVI

*iii. 9, 10. Proclaim in the mansions of Ashdod and in the mansions in the land of Egypt, and say: Gather upon the hills of Samaria, and see great disorders within her, and oppression in her midst. They are utter strangers to honest dealing, who hoard up violence and robbery in their palaces. Oracle of the Lord.*

This is a short oracle metrical in form, but it is difficult to say exactly what the rhythm is. If the oracle is to be reduced to any recognizable regularity, then various words must be omitted. Which words are to be omitted depends upon a previous decision as to what the metre is. Verse 10 is 3:3 measure, if, as seems essential, the phrase 'oracle of the Lord' is transferred to the end of the sentence, but this leaves 'in her palaces' as overloading the line.

*Ahdod.* Most scholars agree to follow the Septuagint and read 'Assyria'. We would retain the Hebrew text in company with the other Versions. It is much more easy to explain a change to 'Assyria', especially with a reference to Egypt in the parallel clause, than it is to explain a change to 'Ashdod' (cf. Cripps, similarly). Amos does not mention Assyria by name anywhere, and if he mentions Egypt here it is not by way of calling that country to exercise Jehovah's punishment. Egypt was never any threat to Israel, nor indeed to Judah until long after Israel had ceased to be. Further, the prophet is not calling either Ashdod or Egypt to cause the tumults in the city. The tumults are already there to be seen. He is calling the heathen neighbours in from the south and west to see the civil strife within the city, caused by the ruthless rapacity of the rich (cf.

ii. 6-8). Retain, therefore, 'Ashdod' in company with Edgehill, Harper, Driver, G. A. Smith.

*hills of* (EVV, 'mountains'). Once again most modern commentators follow Septuagint and read the singular, i.e. Mount Samaria, but this emendation stands or falls with the previous alteration. The reference is not to attack the city or to come against it, but to gather on the surrounding hills to look into the city and see what is there.

*Samaria*. The capital of the Northern Kingdom, and by this time a prosperous city, reaping a rich harvest from the through traffic. It was built by Omri (886-74 B.C.), further fortified by his son Ahab (874-52), until it could stand a three-years' siege by the Assyrians from 724 to 721. Tirzah had been the capital for a few years since the time of Baasha (912-888), thus replacing the ancient Shechem, which had been the centre of northern life and activity from time immemorial.

*oppression* (lit. 'oppressed ones'; cf. AV), but the word is probably an abstract plural meaning 'oppression, extortion'; cf. the Arabic equivalent, which means 'roughness, injustice'.

*They are utter strangers to . . .* (lit. 'they do not know' with great emphasis on the 'not'). We have translated the word in a personal way, on the assumption that the word 'know' is used of personal dealings rather than of knowledge ordinarily, and we have inserted the 'utter' in order to preserve the emphasis of the Hebrew negative.

*honest-dealing* (lit. 'to do straightness'; EVV, 'right'). The Hebrew root probably meant originally 'straight in front', e.g. the modern English 'straight-dealing'.

## XVII

*iii. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary shall surround the land, and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy mansions shall be looted.*

A fragment of uncertain metre, possibly originally 3:3 rhythm. One phrase is certainly corrupt, and the damage may easily be more extensive, though Weiser and others regard this verse as the conclusion of the oracle of verses 9 and 10.

*An adversary shall surround.* . . . The EVV have smoothed out a very difficult Hebrew text, lit. 'an adversary and round about the land', though the word *tsar* might mean 'adversity' (Nowack, Marti, and so Baur Hitzig, Driver, following Jerome). It is better to follow the Syriac Version and read a verb, 'shall surround'.

*shall bring down*, following the Hebrew text. Most moderns would turn this into a passive, translating 'shall be brought down', but this is an unnecessary change, though the object is to make Jehovah the agent.

*thy might*. Moffatt has 'your forts', following German scholars generally (Wellhausen, Marti, Duhm, Budde, Cripps), but not Nowack, Sellin, Weiser, T. H. Robinson, who all retain the Hebrew text.

## XVIII

*iii. 12, 13. Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth (no more than) a pair of knuckle bones or a tip of an ear, so shall the sons of Israel be rescued, sitting in Samaria in the corner of a divan and on the damask of a bed. Hear ye and bear witness in the House of Jacob. Oracle of the Lord [the God of Hosts].*



This is an oracle telling of the almost complete annihilation of Samaria. Just as sometimes the shepherd is not able to rescue from the lion's mouth anything more than the barest remnants of the sheep he has devoured, so none except an odd cowering survivor will escape the general doom. The metre is mainly a 2 : 2 rhythm.

*knuckle bones* (EVV, 'legs'). The Hebrew word has to do with the bend of the legs, so that T. H. Robinson's 'knuckle-bones' is an accurate rendering. The parallel is 'a tip of an ear', which we owe to the Vulgate (Douai).

*sitting*. (RV, 'sit', but AV, 'dwell'). This line has occasioned great difficulty. Procksch would make it follow verse 13, transferring the rest of the verse to follow verse 8. We do not find that such drastic action is necessary. The difficulties of the line begin with this word, since there is always the element of uncertainty as to whether it is to be translated by 'sitting' or 'dwelling'. Emendations almost without number have been proposed, and it may be that the line is incurably corrupt. But if we think of the rich man cowering in the corner of the divan which is built up against the wall of the room on three sides, or on the silken cushion of his couch, we have a picture of the sole, cowering survivor of a household, which it is evidently something of the intention of the prophet to portray.

*the damask*. All the ancient Versions read 'Damascus' here, presumably thinking of Assyria destroying both Syria and Israel, each with barely a survivor, unless, with Weiser and others, we regard this line as belonging to the next section. But the Hebrew text does not read this, and the parallelism seems to demand a reference to the edge or corner of a couch. This is the judgement of Ibn Ezra, and it can be maintained either by

translating the Hebrew by 'damask (cushion)' on the analogy of the Arabic *dimaqs*, or by adopting Duhm's emendation of *dabbesheth* ('camel's hump', Isaiah xxx. 6) and taking it to mean 'cushion', as something that is humpy. For various other suggested emendations in the line, see the commentaries, but their marked variations testify to the difficulty of the problem.

## XIX

*iii. 14, 15. For in the day when I punish Israel for his rebellious acts, then I will punish (in particular) the altars of Bethel. . . . And the altar-horns shall be cut off and they shall fall to the ground. And I will strike down winter-house as well as summer-house, and the ivory houses shall perish, and the ebony houses come to an end. Oracle of the Lord.*

The oracle contains three qinah lines with a trimeter stichos added to the first, unless this be the first half of another qinah line, of which the second half has been lost. Some scholars (e.g. Procksch) would omit this trimeter ('and I will visit the altars of Bethel') as being the interpolation of a later editor under Deuteronomic influence. Nowack, T. H. Robinson, and Köhler would read the singular instead of the plural. Our view is that if the singular is read, the passage is definitely an interpolation, since the reference is then to the altar which Jeroboam I set up at the time of Israel's successful revolt against the domination of the south under the Davidic dynasty. But all the Versions read the plural, and therefore we would allow the stichos to stand. Harper would transfer verse 15 to follow verse 11, partly in the interests of a common theme, and in this he is supported by Edgehill, and partly because of his theories of strophic structure.

Moffatt places verse 15 after verse 12, but this would seem to demand the excision of the first part of 14*b*, and the transference of the rest of 14*b* immediately to follow verse 12. Weiser follows the radical tendency which would omit the last half of verse 13 (certainly the last three words are an addition in any case), the whole of the references to altars in 14*b*, and would extend verse 15 by making use of what otherwise are doublets in the Septuagint. For our part, we would retain the Hebrew text as it stands, and take the oracle to be a declaration that when God does punish Israel, he will pay particular attention to the shrine at Bethel which has been the scene of such feasting as is described in ii. 8, and to the luxurious houses of the rich, their winter residences and their summer residences as well.

*the altars.* The occurrence of the singular 'altar' in the phrase immediately succeeding is not decisive, since the phrase there may well be translated 'the altar-horns', this referring to whatever altar-horns there were at Bethel, whether of Jeroboam's altar or of other altars which had been set up there. It is a very tempting suggestion to read here 'pillars' instead of 'altars'; cf. Marti, Gressmann, Balla, and others.

*the altar-horns.* If the line is to be placed after verse 12, then the reference will be to the altar-horns as the last place of refuge for the fugitive; cf. 1 Kings i. 50 f., ii. 28. If, however, the line is in its proper place, then the reference is to those knobs at the corners of the altar which seem, from the excavations, to be a regular feature of altars, as being the most sacred part of the altar. They are common at all periods from Mesopotamia to Egypt and Greece (cf. S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archæology*, pp. 30 f.). The passage therefore refers to the complete and utter desecration of the very altars themselves.

*winter-house.* The word translated 'winter' strictly means 'autumn', but these houses were evidently built for the cold weather. The one mentioned in Jeremiah xxxvi. 22 was provided with a brazier, and the incidents took place during the ninth month, which would be toward the end of November. Driver and others quote the contemporary inscription from Zinjiri, near Aleppo, where a vassal of Tiglath-pileser tells how he has made his father's house so splendid that it is both a summer-house and a winter-house together.

*ivory houses.* The first house of this type of which we hear is the famous ivory house built by Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 39; Psalm xlv. 9). It was probably panelled with ivory, and evidently it had successors amongst luxurious aristocracy of Samaria.

*ebony houses* (EVV, 'the great houses'). RVm has 'many houses', but if the Hebrew text is to be retained, then it is better to keep to the texts of AV and RV. In defence of the Hebrew text, it can be said that the Assyrian equivalent *bitu rabbu* is the ideographic equivalent of the word *ekallu*, which is the Hebrew *heykal* (palace, temple). But it is impossible to resist Marti's emendation, 'houses of ebony'; cf. Ezekiel xxvii. 15. This is followed by Nowack, Gressmann, Balla, T. H. Robinson, and others, though Sellin prefers 'pillared houses' (cf. Jeremiah x. 5), whilst H. Schmidt would strike out the whole phrase.

## XX

*iv. 1-3. Hear this word. Ye Bashan cows, ye women in mount Samaria, oppressing the weak, bullying the needy, saying to your husbands, bring (money?) that we may drink. The Lord [Jehovah] hath sworn by His very Self, For behold: The days are coming upon you, when you*

*shall be carried in large shields, and your posterity in fish-pots, and by the breaches shall ye go each one straight ahead, and ye shall be cast on the dung heaps. Oracle of the Lord.*

This oracle is of mixed rhythm; first, three 2 : 2 lines, in which Amos scornfully likens the rich wives of Samaria to the fat, sleek cows of the fertile Bashan pasture-lands; next a three-beat stichos introducing the doom of the Lord, a doom which is contained in one 3 : 3 : 3 line and one 2 : 2 : 2 line.

*Bashan cows* (cf. Deuteronomy xxxii. 14; Ezekiel xxxix. 18; Psalm xxii. 12). These women care for nothing except their lazy luxury, and keep nagging (T. H. Robinson) their husbands to provide yet more money that they may spend it in feasting, all the time wholly careless that this money is wrung from the poor and needy by extortion and violence.

*by His very Self* (lit. 'by His holiness', as in EVV). Amongst the Hebrews this word *qodesh* (holiness) was reserved for Jehovah alone, and not used for gods in general. When, therefore, Amos says that Jehovah has sworn 'by His holiness', it is equivalent to him saying that Jehovah has sworn 'by Himself' (vi. 8), just as 'the excellency of Jacob' (viii. 7) is a circumlocution for the Divine Name similar to 'the Fear of Isaac' (Genesis xxxi. 42: E). The meaning is 'by His sacred awe-inspiring personality' (Mitchell). For the development of the meaning of the word *qodesh* among the Hebrews, see *Distinctive Ideas*, pp. 42-50, 52 ff.

*large shields*. This is the natural meaning of the Hebrew word here used (*tsinnoth*), and it is so interpreted by Septuagint, the Targum, Aquila. On the other hand the Vulgate and Thedotion have 'pikes' and 'spears' respectively. Syriac has a word which

may mean either 'arms' or 'armour'. We judge that this latter meaning has arisen partly because of the Septuagint *hopla*, which can mean 'arms' as well as the large shields of the hoplites, the Syriac being non-committal, whilst the other two versions have been more precise; and partly also because there is another Hebrew word with plural *tsinnim*, which possibly means 'hooks, barbs'. The situation is complicated by the fact that the parallel word *siroth* means 'pots' (e.g. the Arabic *siyr*, which is a large water-pot), but there is similarly a similar word (also with a plural in *-im* instead of *-oth*) which means 'thorns'. And, since this latter word is followed by an otherwise unknown word which seems to have something to do with fish, we have the rendering 'fish-hooks'. The commentators seem all, with what to us seems to be a curious unanimity, to favour the unusual meanings 'hooks, barbs' in each part of the line. Harper, here typical of most scholars, flatly denies that the translation 'shields' makes any sense, but finds no difficulty in the sudden change of metaphor from cows to fish. But, in our view, the reading 'shields' does make sense. We picture the carcasses of these overfed women of Samaria being carried out straight ahead through the breaches of the walls on hollow shields, and their 'posterity' (Targum 'daughters') in large fish-pots, all to be cast out as useless on the heaps. We see no reason why 'fish-pots' should be any more strange than 'flesh-pots', Exodus xvi. 3. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the whole body of opinion is in favour of the picture of the women being dragged out of the city with hooks through their noses, and fish-hooks through, either the last of them because the supply of captive-hooks has given out, or through the flesh-parts of their posteriors (in which case Procksch's suggestion of *appekem* (your noses) for

*ethekem* (you) as object to the passive verb of the Hebrew, is thoroughly apt). Septuagint has had great difficulty with the passage, but both the Vulgate and the Targum found the verse plain sailing, e.g. Vulgate, 'they shall lift you up on pikes (Targum, 'shields', more correctly), and what shall remain of you (Targum 'your daughters') in boiling pots (Targum, 'shallow fishing boats').'

*on the dung heaps* (cf. T. H. Robinson, which seems to be the best guess possible) RV transliterates 'to Hermon'; AV, changing *he* to *aleph*, 'into the palace'. Versions and commentators have all alike had to guess, e.g. Armenia, Mount Rimmon, royal power (Rashi), or, changing one vowel, Hermon. Some ghastly and thoroughly unpleasant fate seems to be indicated. The previous word is, by common consent, turned into a passive following the Versions.

## XXI

*iv. 4, 5. Go to Bethel, and rebel; to Gilgal, to rebel more and more. And bring your sacrifices in the morning, on three days your tithes; And sacrifice a thank-offering without leaven, and declare vows, let folks hear. For thus you really like to do, ye sons of Israel. Oracle of the Lord [God].*

A four-line oracle in 3:3 measure, in which the prophet, with biting sarcasm, attacks the empty show of correct and fulsome ritual, backed by the legal extortions of the wealthy. Amos is not saying here that ritual is wrong, though elsewhere we believe he declares that it is a departure from the old pure faith of the desert (v. 25). Further, he is not accusing them of doing anything contrary to the best, approved practice.

They are as correct in their worship, as they are correct in their legal procedure, but all the time they are rebelling against God because of the inhumanity of their justice. Cf. Isaiah i. 10-17, where the same charge is made of worship and oppression. It was perfectly correct for them to bring their morning sacrifice, and perfectly correct also for them on three days to bring their tithes. In this latter case we hold that Oort's suggestion is sound, and that the prophet is referring to the tithes brought at the three great feasts, tithes of barley at Unleavened Bread, of wheat at Harvest (Weeks), and of wine and the rest of the produce at Ingathering. Other suggestions are that the worshippers are exaggerating their piety, by bringing their tithes three times as often as is necessary, or (T. H. Robinson) making them last three days. Or, again, it has been suggested that they are following normal custom in making their offering in the morning after they arrive and bringing forward their tithes on the third day. It seems to us that the Hebrew demands the translation 'three days', and the assumption is that they spend three days on their tithes, i.e. as we suggest, one day at each of the three great pilgrimage festivals of the Israelite-Canaanite year.

*sacrifice* (EVV, 'offer', with 'offer by burning' in the margins). The word means 'burn with thick smoke', and is used in Arabic of an ordinary fire smoking. In Assyrian, however, the word *qutrinnu* means 'incense offering', and this is the use of the verb *qitter* in Hebrew in post-exilic times.

*without leaven*. We agree with T. H. Robinson that the Hebrew here is best taken to mean 'without leaven'; cf. Weiser. There is therefore no need to presuppose mistaken zeal, or a special local custom. Most



commentators suggest mistaken zeal on the part of the worshippers, following the previous suggestion of exaggeration.

*let folks hear* (lit. 'publish', as RV). The Syriac, with slight difference in the reading, has 'pay them', i.e. fulfil the vows which ye have declared, called out aloud, for the verb translated 'declare' (EVV, 'proclaim') actually means call out aloud; cf. the *Qor'an* is that which is recited aloud.

## XXII

*iv. 6. And I even gave you clean teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places. But ye did not turn back to me. Oracle of the Lord.*

This is the first of a series of five separate oracles, each telling of some disaster of the natural world which God had sent by way of retribution, and each ending with the refrain, 'But ye did not turn back to me', with the usual concluding formula, 'Oracle of the Lord'. This first oracle of the series is composed of three stichoi of three stresses each. Whilst stichoi of this type predominate throughout the series, yet often there seem to be stichoi of two stresses. In some cases the metre is obscure, probably because of heavy glossing, and this is especially the case in the second oracle (Section XXIII, verses 7 and 8). The oracles speak in turn of famine, drought, blight, plague and lastly earthquake.

*cleanness of teeth* (so EVV). The ancient Versions vary between 'dullness' and 'cleanness', both being regarded as being due to hunger, the one because the teeth are blunt from disuse, the other because they have not been dirtied with remnants of food. Septuagint thinks of toothache.

### XXIII

*iv. 7, 8. And I even withheld from you the downpour, whilst yet there were three months to harvest. [And I will bring rain upon one city, and on another city I will not bring rain. One strip shall be rained on, and a strip on which it shall not rain shall wither. And two or three cities shall stagger to another city to drink water, but shall not be satisfied.] But ye did not turn to me. Oracle of the Lord.*

The metre of this oracle is wholly uncertain, indeed it is impossible to treat the larger part of it as rhythmical at all. Further, with an accurate translation of the Hebrew, a great deal is lacking in sense and continuity of thought.

*the downpour.* The root means 'be bulky, massive', though some authorities regard the connexion as doubtful. The word *geshem* is used of the heaven monsoon rains of October-November, the 'former rains' of the Old Testament; cf. Ezra x. 13; 1 Kings xviii. 41; Zechariah xiv. 17; and frequently throughout the Old Testament. Most scholars would excise the next phrase on the ground that three months before the harvest is exactly the right time for the *geshem*, but we do not agree that this is a gloss of a scribe who wished to air his meteorological knowledge. Such a comment involves confusion between the 'former' and the 'latter' rains. The *geshem* is the 'former rain', much more in the nature of a heavy downpour than the frequent showers of the 'latter rain'. The prophet says that the heavy autumn rains had not arrived by the time the lighter spring rains were due. This spelt disaster for the whole country, since without the autumn rains the hard-baked ground of the long summer drought could never be softened and ploughed.

*and I will bring rain.* So Sellin. As the commentators have seen, this cannot be translated as a future if it is to stand as part of the true text, and they therefore translate it by 'I began to send rain' or 'would cause it to rain' (cf. T. H. Robinson, 'sometimes I sent rain'). It is certain that if the line is to stand, then some such rendering must be offered, and of these T. H. Robinson's is undoubtedly the best. But, in our view, even that is a *tour de force*, though it can be justified on syntactical grounds, but only just. It is best to recognize that another element has been introduced into the picture, that of scattered showers with patchy fertility and thirst-ridden folk wandering from city to city to find drinking-water. The passage reads like the threats the later prophets frequently uttered.

*strip.* The word is used of 'portion, field, territory'. The root means 'divide, share', in Arabic it means 'measure off', with *Chaliq* as a Name of the Creator, both in Arabic and in Urdu; cf. the picture of Isaiah xl. 12 (though the verb is different). In Assyrian the word means 'field, possession', and its specialized use in Hebrew is of the land surrounding a town, all divided off into strips. The system is similar to that which obtained in England in the Middle Ages, and the results of it can be seen in the way in which our country roads so often have right-angle turns immediately before entering villages. These are the tracks round the rectangular strips of cultivated land, now grown up into roads.

*it shall not rain* (EVV, 'it rained'). Many scholars would follow the Septuagint and read the first person, but this is the third-person feminine and equals 'it'. There is no need to alter the text.

*and . . . shall stagger.* The 'wander' of the EVV is not

accurate enough here, though the word can be translated in this way. Its specific use is of unsteady gait, e.g. of the drunkard (Isaiah xxix. 9; Psalm cvii. 27), of the faint (Lamentations iv. 14 f.) as here.

## XXIV

*iv. 9. I smote you with blight and mildew. I parched your gardens and your vineyards. And your figs and olives the locusts devoured. But ye did not turn back to me. Oracle of the Lord.*

*blight* (EVV, 'blasting'). In late Hebrew the word means 'blight', scorched and blasted by the hot wind from the desert, Genesis xli. 6.

*mildew*. The Hebrew word refers to the colour, a pale, unhealthy green. A word from the same root (*yereq*) is used in Hebrew of green herbage in all its freshness and healthiness, but in the word (*yeraqon*) which Amos uses here, we get more of the Arabic tinge of colour, e.g. 'ash-colour', the dusky-white of a camel, and even of a silver coin.

*I parched* (EVV, 'the multitude of'). There is general agreement that a verb must be read here, and this rendering (*hecherabti*) involves the minimum of alteration.

*your gardens*. The root means 'cover, enclose, defend', so that the Hebrew garden is primarily a walled garden. Cf. the famous 'Garden of Death', when soon after the death of the Prophet, the Beni-Chanifa were defeated at the battle of Al-Yemana and fled into a walled garden, to be followed by the faithful Muslim, with Al-Bara ibn Malik at their head. The Beni-Chanifa were wiped out to a man, whilst the Faithful lost so many 'Readers' (those who knew the Qor'an by heart) that

Omar, later Caliph, at that time realized the necessity of writing down the Qor'an 'lest any part of it should be lost'. This was the origin of the Islamic 'Canon'.

*locusts* (EVV, 'the palmer worm'). *Gazam* is one of a number of names by which the Hebrews spoke of the locusts, though it is by no means certain that they identified the insect in all the stages of its growth. This word means 'the shearer', the root used in Talmud of lopping off branches. There is a long excursus on locusts in Driver, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 82-91.

## XXV

*iv. 10, 11. I sent the Death among you [like the Egyptian Death]: I slew your youths in battle, [with the captivity of your horses,] till I made your camp reek [in your nostrils]. But ye did not turn back to me. Oracle of the Lord.*

*the Death* (EVV, 'the pestilence'). In Arabic the word means 'departure' and so 'death'. This root *d-b-r* is one of the most curious roots in the whole of the Semitic languages, in as much as words derived from it mean 'speak', 'word', 'pestilence', 'pasture', 'death', 'innermost shrine', 'mouth', 'wilderness', and even 'a swarm of bees'. The root meaning seems to have been 'go away', and from this all these varied meanings have apparently been derived, the original idea being extended through such meanings as 'depart', 'that which is behind' as having receded, 'that which is led away', and so 'pasturage' and 'bees'.

*like the Egyptian Death.* The Hebrew reads 'after the manner of Egypt', a phrase which has occasioned considerable discussion as to its exact meaning. It is best to follow Duhm, Sellin, T. H. Robinson, and omit the phrase as a gloss. As Cripps says, such an omission

'would vastly improve the rhythm'. Probably the gloss itself is a corruption of 'like the Egyptian Death', so Procksch, a phrase which is found frequently of the plague of Egypt (cf. Psalm lxxviii. 50 f.) in Rabbinic writings.

*with the captivity of your horses.* Most scholars would omit the phrase, and the use of the preposition 'with' is scarcely Hebraic. Moffatt with his 'the flower of your steeds' is following the proposed emendation of Graetz, Sellin, and others ('beauty'), unless he is following Ehrlich, as he often does, with 'the best of'. It is a marginal note of a scribe, perhaps influenced by a reminiscence of ii. 14 f.

*till I made your camp reek* (lit. 'and I made the stench of your camp rise up', i.e. because of the corpses of war and pestilence). The Hebrew text adds 'and in your nostrils', which can be made into good Hebrew by the omission of the copula, as in the Versions, but it is best to omit the whole word as a gloss with Marti, Sellin, Weiser, T. H. Robinson.

## XXVI

*iv. 11. I devastated you as when God devastated Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand snatched from the burning. But ye did not turn back to me. Oracle of the Lord.*

*I devastated* (EVV, 'I have overthrown'). The word means 'overturn', and is followed immediately by the word *mahpekah*, which is used, as here, always of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

*a brand snatched out of the burning.* The emphasis is not so much that only a remnant was saved, but rather on the miracle of there being any survivor at all. The word translated 'brand' apparently comes from a root

which means 'curved, bent', and perhaps therefore meant originally a bent stick with which to stir the fire.

## XXVII

*iv. 12, 13. Therefore thus will I do to thee, O Israel—because I will assuredly do this, Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. [For behold, he that models mountains and shapes the wind, and declares to man what is his intention, makes the dawn and the dark, and treads upon the heights of the earth, Jehovah the God of Hosts is His Name.]*

This oracle is composed of two lines of 3 : 3 measure plus the conclusion in three stresses, unless there is inflation. There is general agreement that verse 13 is a later addition. The tendency to insert doxologies of this type is shown very clearly by Edgehill, who quotes the doxology which has actually been inserted into the Septuagint text of Hosea xiii. 4, 'Who made firm the heavens and founded the earth, whose hands founded all the hosts of heaven; and I did not display them that thou shouldest walk after them'. Such passages become common with the exile. The need for the emphasis on Jehovah as Creator did not arise until the Jews came into contact with the claims made by the Babylonians for Marduk; cf. Isaiah xl–lv. Verse 13 is unnecessary to the argument, and is an intrusion in just the same way as is v. 8 f. below, which Moffatt would transfer to follow iv. 13, thus following Graetz and Cheyne. Both passages contain phrases which are generally recognized to be exilic or even post-exilic. It is, of course, possible that Amos should rhapsodize, but unlikely that he would do so in this fashion, since the piling up of phrases of this type is contrary to his usual style. It is best, therefore, to follow Duhm,

Wellhausen, Cheyne, G. A. Smith (with regrets), Cooke, Nowack, Marti, Sellin, Weiser, and others in regarding verse 13 as a later addition. It is possible also that some editorial changes have taken place at the end of verse 12, where the threat of 12*a* seems to demand some definite statement as to what that threat is. So Marti, Wellhausen, Nowack, Hölscher, Sellin, and others. On the other hand, the phrase 'Prepare to meet thy God' can well be regarded as satisfactory, perhaps because of its indefiniteness.

*he that models* (EVV, 'he that formeth'). The word means to fashion, model, as the potter the clay. Indeed this actual word *yotser* is used regularly of the potter, and frequently of God forming the various things He created. See also Isaiah xlv. 9, 10, 12; Habakkuk ii. 18; where the word is used of a modeller in wood. Septuagint has 'the thunder' for 'mountains', probably influenced by 'the wind' of the next phrase.

*he that shapes* (EVV, 'he that createth'). This word is the general word of the Priestly Code in its Creation-account, and is infrequent in pre-exilic writings. Strictly, the word involves shaping by cutting.

*what is his thought*. The word translated 'his thought' is otherwise unknown, though an alteration of the vowel turns it into a word used occasionally, though not commonly, for 'complaint, anxiety'. The root in Arabic means 'to be eager', but in Rabbinic Hebrew it means 'talk, conversation'. If the text is correct, then it seems best to retain the word as it is, and take it to mean 'intention', i.e. that which God is specially concerned about, as being a word which has kept closer to the original meaning of the root than the more common word, 'anxiety'. The Versions found great difficulty with 'his glory' (Syriac), 'his works' (Targum), 'his



declaration' (Vulgate), whilst Septuagint, by omitting the letter *he*, obtains 'his Messiah'. Various attempts have been made to emend the text, but without producing any marked improvement.

*to man.* Here the word 'adam' is used in its true sense of 'man' as distinct from 'god'. This word corresponds to the *anthropos* of the Greeks, and the Latin *homo*, and means lit. the earth-one; cf. Genesis ii. 7, 'and the Lord God formed (modelled) man ('adam) dust from the earth ('adamah)'. The other word, 'ish, strictly means man as against woman, and thus corresponds to the Greek *aner* and the Latin *vir*.

*makes the dawn and the dark* (EVV, 'that maketh the morning darkness'). The EVV are accurate translations of the Hebrew, except that strictly it should be 'maker of'. It is best to follow the Septuagint in introducing 'and', otherwise the phrase 'maker of dawn' has an object in the accusative, and the syntax is far from easy to explain. Most scholars prefer to emend after the Septuagint.

*the God of Hosts.* If it were held that Amos spoke this verse, then it would be very likely indeed that this phrase is an interpolation. Since, however, it is generally agreed that the whole verse is an addition, the interpolation is not so certain.

## XXVIII

*v. 1, 2. Listen to this word, a lament which I am about to raise over you, O house of Israel. Fallen no more to rise, (is) Virgin Israel; Forsaken on the ground, none to raise her.*

The first verse is a prose introduction to a two-line lament in the qinah measure. The Septuagint and the

Vulgate place the full stop after 'over you', and continue 'The house of Israel is fallen no more to rise; Virgin Israel is forsaken . . .', but the other ancient Versions follow the divisions of the Hebrew text. This retains the true *qinah* measure and has much more effect in its pathos.

*Virgin Israel*, i.e. unconquered Israel, hitherto inviolate. This type of phrase is found frequently, e.g. 'daughter of Zion', Isaiah i. 8; Zechariah ix. 9, followed immediately with 'daughter of Jerusalem', etc. Similarly 'virgin daughter of Zion', 2 Kings xix. 21, with its equivalent, Isaiah xxxvii. 22. It was thought at one time that the form of the Hebrew demanded the preposition 'of', but it is now generally agreed that the two words are in apposition. We read, therefore, not 'virgin of Israel' but 'virgin Israel', just as in a similar construction, we read 'the river Euphrates' and not 'the river of Euphrates'. The word *bethulah* strictly means 'virgin'. According to the *Tosefta Shebiith*, the word can be used of a human being as inviolate, of soil that is unbroken, and of sycamores that are untrimmed. Other similar words are *na'arah* which means a young girl, under the age of puberty, and '*almah*, which means a young woman capable of bearing children, whether virgin or not (cf. Isaiah vii. 14).

*the ground* (EVV, 'her land', following the Hebrew text, but since Septuagint has 'his land' and Targum and Syriac have no suffix at all, we judge that the latter two represent the original).

## XXIX

v. 3. *For thus saith the Lord God to the house of Israel: The city which went out to war a thousand shall have a hundred left; and she that went out a hundred shall have ten left.*

Once more a prose introduction to a short lament, a two-line qinah. At the end of the verse there is the phrase 'to the house of Israel'. It is out of place where it is. Either, therefore, omit it as an intrusion from the following verse (Löhr, Oettli, Sellin, Moffatt, Weiser) or transfer it to the end of the introductory phrase (T. H. Robinson), as we have done. This makes the introduction of this oracle similar to that of the text, a common feature of these prophecies, whether due to the prophet himself or to the editor.

*which went out to war.* (EVV, 'went out, forth'). The phrase means 'go forth to war', and is in regular use as such. Cf. Isaiah xlii. 13, which seems to be even more specific, and to mean 'go forth before the battle line as a champion', just as Goliath did.

### XXX

*v. 4-6. For thus saith the Lord God to the house of Israel: Consult me and live; and do not consult Bethel, nor come to Gilgal, nor cross the country to Beer-Sheba; [for Gilgal shall go completely into exile, and Bethel shall become misery]. Consult ye the Lord and live, lest he leap out like fire, and it devour the House of Joseph with none to quench in Bethel.*

An oracle of four lines in the qinah measure with one line inserted at the end of verse 5. Amos has now passed on from his strictures of iv. 4-5, and now definitely contrasts the worship at Bethel and Gilgal with Jehovah-worship. He bids Israel cease to consult the oracles at their shrines, and consult Jehovah instead. This oracle is of the same spirit as ix. 1 ff., where he pictures Jehovah as smiting down and destroying utterly the shrine at Bethel, and ruthlessly rooting out every survivor. The whole worship is false,

and can end only in destruction and death, both for itself and all who frequent the shrine.

*consult* (EVV, 'seek ye'). The word has always an intensive meaning, of (originally) rubbing out effectively, treading or beating out a path, and so frequenting persistently. It comes in this way to be used of regular and earnest inquiring at a shrine, and demanding rather than casual asking.

*Gilgal shall go completely into exile.* The Hebrew is a string of assonances, *hag-gilgal galoh yigleh*. The whole line is probably a later insertion. It destroys the qinah rhythm and interrupts the sense; so scholars generally,

*the house of Joseph.* In the Hebrew this phrase follows 'a fire', but if it be transferred to follow 'devour', we provide a necessary object for the verb, restore the qinah rhythm to two lines, and provide a sound parallel to 'Bethel' at the end of the line. All sorts of suggestions have been made in respect of these verses, changes in the text, omissions, sometimes on grounds of metre, and sometimes because it is thought that the sense can thereby be improved. Some scholars, for instance, are quite sure that the reference to Beer-sheba is an intrusion, whereas it can be argued with equal force that it is needful to make up the rhythm. Further, is not Amos anticipating the Deuteronomic reforms in his realization that nothing can eliminate the festering wickedness of these provincial shrines except complete annihilation? In that case, why should he not include Beer-sheba also? And why ever should anyone go out of his way to include Beer-sheba?

*the house of Israel.* The EVV follow the Hebrew with 'Bethel', but Septuagint has 'the house of Israel', and this seems to be the more likely reading, since the Hebrew text may well have been influenced by the

names of the Israelite shrines in the previous verse. So Marti, Procksch, Cripps. On the other hand, T. H. Robinson would regard the last phrase as an addition in each Version.

### XXXI

*v. 7, 10-13. Woe to those who turn justice into bitterness, and have thrust rightness down to the ground. They hate the honest witness in the court, and the man who speaks the truth they loathe. Therefore, since ye trample on the weak, and take from him load after load of corn; though ye have built stone houses, ye shall not live in them; though ye have planted vineyards for your pleasure, ye shall not drink their wine. For I well know that your rebellious acts are many, and your misdeeds are huge—bullies of the honest man, takers of blood-money, and the needy they have twisted in the court. Therefore the prudent man [in that time] will be silent, for it is an evil time.*

These verses contain a series of charges against the courts of the day, where the rich have it all their own way, and the poor man can expect no sort of justice. It may be that actually we have here a series of fragments, since there are frequent changes of person, but the metre is for the most part the same throughout, and it may be that it is a complete whole. If the various changes of person are to be regarded as a sure criterion, then the fragments are verse 7, verse 10, verses 11 and 12*a*, verses 12*b* and 13; cf. T. H. Robinson. Weiser and others regard the whole chapter as being in confusion, and make v. 7, 10, vi. 12, v. 11*b*, vi. 11 into one oracle, but such treatment seems unnecessary, and it certainly gives no better connexion than that which we have offered.

*Woe to those who turn.* Most scholars insert 'Woe' after the pattern of v. 18, vi. 1. So Nowack, Marti, Procksch,

Sellin, Weiser, G. A. Smith, and others. T. H. Robinson regards the line as a broken fragment of which the first part, as well as the last part, has been lost. The EVV have covered the change of person, which here is the third, and not the second.

*bitterness* (EVV, 'wormwood'). The reference is to a Palestinian plant which is regularly mentioned as the synonym for bitterness. The corresponding Arabic verb means 'curse, revile', and the same meaning is found in Urdu.

*have thrust down* (AV, 'leave off'; RV, 'cast down'). The rendering of AV is following the ordinary normal meaning of the Hebrew form, 'let lie', but the meaning here is analogous to that in Isaiah xxviii. 2, i.e. laying down forcibly, thrusting down. The renderings of Moffatt ('trample') and T. H. Robinson ('put an end to') are vigorous, but are somewhat wide of the original metaphor.

*the honest witness* (AV, 'him that rebuketh'; RV, 'him that reproveth'). Moffatt has 'a man who exposes you', but we have taken the word to mean the witness before the court. The justification of this is the use of the *chokeach* in the Talmud to mean 'evidence', supported in part by the usage of the root in Job xiii. 3, 15, xv. 3, and the parallel clause which refers to the man who is speaking the truth in the court. If we could be sure that there was a counsel for the defence, then it would be still more apt, and a little closer to the normal meaning of the root.

*in the court* (EVV, 'in the gate'). The Targum has in part interpreted the Hebrew phrase correctly with its 'in the gates of the houses of justice'. The 'gate' is the place where the elders used to sit and administer justice, Deuteronomy xxi. 19, xxii. 15, xxv. 7; Ruth

iv. 1, 2, iv. 11; Job xxxi. 21; Psalm cxxvii. 5. It is best to translate into English custom.

*load after load* (T. H. Robinson; AV, 'burdens'; RV, 'exactions'). The Hebrew actually has the singular, but the EVV have followed the lead of the Septuagint in treating it as a plural. The Vulgate has 'choice plunder', following the Septuagint which has elsewhere translated the following word (*bar*, 'corn', Arabic 'wheat', though there is Sanskrit support for the rendering 'choice', and in Urdu the word can mean 'chosen man', 'bridegroom') to mean 'choice' (normally *bachar*), and this some ten or twelve times.

*vineyards for your pleasure* (lit. 'vineyards of desire', as the AVm shows). It is open to translate this 'pleasant vineyards' (as RV), i.e. vineyards which now are delightful, or as we have rendered it, i.e. vineyards which will produce the wine that gives delight. In view of the following clause, this latter seems to be the better rendering.

*misdeeds* (EVV 'sins'). The word translated 'transgressions' means 'rebellious acts', as we have seen in the notes on i. 3. This other word, *chattath*, comes from a root which means 'miss the goal, way' and so 'go wrong, sin'. The Arabic has often the sense 'miss the mark', whilst in Ethiopic the word comes to mean 'sin' through the idea of 'fail to find', and the Urdu equivalent is 'mistake, slip, oversight, fault'.

*huge* (EVV, 'mighty'). The word *atsum* means 'mighty, numerous', but rather in the sense of 'vast, huge'. It conveys the idea of giant beings, especially large-boned, and the Arabic verb actually means in the first instance 'to be huge in bone', whence we have in Semitic languages generally the twin developments of meaning, both 'mighty' and 'bone', e.g. in

Urdu '*atsim ush-sha'n* means 'lofty (massive) in dignity'. AV has wrongly taken this adjective and the preceding one as qualifying the noun, but this is wrong, as RV shows.

*bullies of.* The EVV have 'afflict', taking the *tsade* of the root to be equivalent to the light *tsade* of other Semitic languages, but it is better to take it as the heavy *tsade* and so translate another word which involves definite active hostility. This is what Moffatt has done with 'browbeating'; in this, following G. A. Smith. Scholars generally are agreed on this harsher word.

*blood-money.* EVV have 'a bribe', but AVm shows that something more serious is intended with its 'ransom'. The word means 'the price of a life, ransom', and we have therefore rendered it by the strong words, 'blood-money'. It is more than a bribe, which is *shochad*. The word *kopher*, translated 'blood-money', belongs to the atonement-root of Old Testament sacrificial theology. The original meaning of the root has given rise to considerable discussion (see G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, pp. 67-73, etc.), and scholarship varies between 'cover' (Schmoller, Wellhausen and, more recently, König) and 'wash away with a liquid' (so W. Robertson Smith and Gray himself) with both ideas of 'cover' and 'remove' as developing from it. It seems to be best to retain the idea of 'cover, hide' as the original meaning, regarding lustration rites as being the most common ritual means of hiding, removing sin. From this the development occurs of restoring the divine favour by removing that which is preventing it, and thence placating by giving an equivalent. In the use of the word *kopher* for 'blood-money, ransom', the emphasis is on the payment of the equivalent in redemption for death. For the way in



which the various aspects of a word can develop at the expense of, and sometimes to the exclusion of other aspects, see my article, 'The Width and Length of Words' (*Expository Times*, July 1944, pp. 265-8), and examples there given. The whole development of the word has been confused by the use of the English word 'atonement', which properly refers to the object of the action. This English word emphasizes the aim, i.e. reconciliation, and is actually a portmanteau word for 'reconciliation'. Cf. Romans v. 11, the only instance where the word 'atonement' occurs in the New Testament (Authorized Version), where it is replaced in the Revised Version by 'reconciliation'. The word 'atone' is not found in the Authorized Version at all. The use of the phrase 'at one' for 'reconciled' is as old as Robert Mannyng, the fourteenth-century Lincolnshire rhyming chronicler who translated Wace's *Brut d' Angleterre* into octosyllabic rhyming couplets. Such phrases as 'make an atonement with God' come into common use in the sixteenth century.

*Therefore let the prudent man. . .* The EVV have 'shall keep silence', but probably 'let' is better. The general consensus of opinion is that this verse is an apocalyptic gloss, so Nowack, Hölscher, Sellin, Weiser, T. H. Robinson, Edgehill, Cripps, and others. The objections to its inclusion as a saying of Amos are partly that it is apocalyptic in character, and partly that it is in prose. We would retain the verse as belonging to Amos except for the phrase 'in that time'. If this phrase alone is excised, then the remainder is by no means apocalyptic in character; cf. Micah ii. 3. Further, the verse becomes rhythmical. The reference to Micah ii. 3, in our view, does not support the claim of an apocalyptic tendency, but rather confirms the genuineness and non-apocalyptic character of the verse.

## XXXII

*v. 9, 8. He that causeth Taurus to gleam after Capella, and makes Taurus set after the Grape-gatherer, the maker of Pleiades and Orion, and turned pitch-darkness into the morning, and has made day darken into night; He that calls aloud to the waters of the sea, and has poured them over the surface of the earth, the Lord is His Name.*

This doxology is of the same general pattern as that in iv. 13, and is equally to be regarded as an interpolation of exilic or post-exilic times. Not only is the emphasis on Jehovah as being the great Creator of all a reflexion and rebuttal of the claims made by the Babylonians for Marduk, but the interest in the stars and the constellations is a result of the interest in such things in Mesopotamian circles where each god had his own star, and the stars were watched by the astrologers with most scrupulous zeal. The doxology is in 3:3 measure, and probably lacks a half-line at the beginning of verse 8, since the remainder forms four half-lines of two excellent parallel couplets.

We have inserted verse 9 before verse 8, following Hoffmann, Procksch, and others. Even if this is not accepted, the verse ought to come before the 'the Lord is his Name' at the end of verse 8. As verse 9 stands it is untranslatable. It reads, 'he who makes ruin smile on a strong one, and ruin comes upon a fortress'. The Vulgate has something of this in its 'he that with a smile bringeth destruction . . .', but the first word ought to mean a cheerful smile, not the kind of smile which Vulgate presupposes. The Hebrew verb *balag* certainly means 'smile, gleam', and this has full support from Arabic. RV extends the idea of gleaming into 'causeth to flash forth' in the margin, and 'bringeth

sudden destruction' in the text, but this is not a legitimate rendering of the Hebrew. The easiest emendation, if the rest of the verse is to be retained as the Hebrew has it, is to follow the Septuagint with the root *palag* ('divide out', and so 'dispense'), and this is what some scholars do, only in this case they tend to regard the line as a broken fragment independent of verse 8. Is the line indeed a fragment, or has it any connexion with verse 8? We ourselves find the most attractive, and indeed the most likely solution to be that of Hoffmann, followed by Procksch, Duhm, Gressmann, and Mowinckel. He leaves the first word as it is, i.e. 'he that causeth to gleam', and regards the rest of the verse as a corruption of the names of three stars or constellations, putting the whole line in front of verse 8. The changes involved are reading *resh* for *daleth* in *shod* (destruction), and for the rest changes only in vowel-ing with *yod* for *vav* in the last word, after the Septuagint. Astronomically speaking, Capella the goat rises at the end of April and Taurus the bull in May, whilst the Grape-gatherer (Vindemiator, in the constellation Virgo) sets in September. An alternative is to understand the Grape-gatherer to mean Arcturus, the vintage star of Hesiod. The last word of the line becomes lit. 'cause to come'. Hebrew idiom regularly uses the word 'come' of the setting of the sun and the stars, just as it uses the corresponding *yatsa*' (lit. 'go out') of the rising of the sun and the stars; cf. Isaiah xl. 25. The metaphor is from the ancient myth of the sun-god going out from his chamber in the morning (Psalm xix. 5), and coming in again to it at night.

*the Pleiades* (so RV, but AV has 'the seven stars'). There is often an element of uncertainty in the identification of stars and constellations in Hebrew. The identification of *Kimah* with Pleiades rests on the

supposition that it is connected with the root *kum* (cf. Arabic *kuwm*, a herd of camels), Pleiades being the most obvious herd or cluster of stars in the heavens. The Vulgate and Aquila have Arcturus, whilst Sirius has also been suggested. See especially G. B. Gray, *Job* (ICC), notes on Job ix. 8 and xxxviii. 31. It is best to make Kimah to be the Pleiades and Kesil to be Orion, though Jewish commentators (e.g. Saadia and Abulwalid) suggest Canopus for the latter. The advantage of understanding the references to be to the Pleiades and Orion is that the rising of Pleiades is connected from ancient time with the coming of spring and the setting of Orion with the coming of winter.

*to morning.* The Hebrew word *boqer* does not mean 'morning' in the sense of a period of time, however long or short. It refers to the actual change of the dark to the light, just as 'erebh means the change from light to dark. Cf. Genesis i. 5, which is properly, 'and dawn and dusk were the first day'. The word *baqar* (beast, cattle) comes from the same root which means 'cleave', the ox being the cleaving animal, because it is the ploughing beast and so cleaves the soil. Similarly *boqer* is the dawn because then the light cleaves the darkness.

*pitch-darkness* (EVV, 'the shadow of death'). The translation of the English Versions is due to the interpretation of the Rabbis, who, not recognizing the word as a good Hebrew word, regarded it as two words *tsal-marweth* (shadow of death). It is now generally recognized as being a true word *tsalmuth* (deep, darkness); cf. Psalm xxiii. 4, where the picture is of the flock passing through a gloomy, dark ravine (cf. RVm).

*poured them* (the waters). . . . This is generally interpreted as referring to long-continued rains or to an inundation by the sea. The context is of the round of

the seasons, first the two constellations of the spring and the autumn, then to the succession of day and night. We take the reference to be to the heavy autumnal rains which come in from the west; cf. ix. 6.

### XXXIII

*v. 14, 15. [Seek after good and not after evil that you may keep alive, and so that the Lord [the God of Hosts] may be with you, as you say He is. Hate evil and love good, and set up justice in the courts. Peradventure the Lord [the God of Hosts] will be kind to what is left of Joseph.]*

An oracle of four qinah lines, with the phrase 'the God of Hosts' interpolated twice. Most modern scholars regard these verses as a later intrusion into the text. The phrase 'the remnant of Joseph' can scarcely belong to the time of Amos and his preaching at Bethel in the time of Jeroboam II, and must belong to at least a date after 733 B.C., when much of the land had been overrun and the northern provinces snatched away. Perhaps it is later than the disaster of 722 B.C., when Israel ceased altogether to be a nation. For the rest, the four lines are largely dependent on earlier verses in the chapter—namely 4, 6, 14*a*, and 7*b*. The verses are regarded as an intrusion by G. A. Smith, Hölscher, Edgell, Nowack, Weiser, and moderns generally, though Marti would place the verses after verse 6. Moffatt puts them at the end of the chapter as an insertion there to follow the threat of exile beyond Damascus. The oracle adds nothing new to the teaching which has preceded it.

### XXXIV

*v. 16, 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Hosts [the Lord]: In every square there shall be mourning, and in every street they shall say Woe, Woe; And they shall*

*summon the husbandman to mourning, and the professional wailers to lamentation. And in every vineyard there shall be mourning, for I will pass through your midst. Saith the Lord.*

This oracle of three qinah lines with the usual introduction describes universal sorrow and tears, both in city and in country, both by amateurs and professionals. The prophet continues his message wherein he is certain that the standards of conduct which he deplures can end in nothing but disaster.

*professional wailers* (EVV, 'skilful of lamentation'), lit. 'knowers of weeping'. Cf. Ecclesiastes xii. 5; Mark v. 38.

### XXXV

*v. 18-20. Woe to you that long for the Day of the Lord. What on earth has the Day of the Lord for you? It is darkness and not light. As if a man should flee from a lion, and run into a bear, and should turn into the house, and lean his hand upon the wall, and a snake bite him. Will not the Day of the Lord be darkness and not light, even pitch darkness without a ray of light in it.*

This oracle contains six qinah lines. In this section and the next we have two of the most important elements of the preaching of Amos. Here he is running absolutely counter to all the popular thought of the day. Not only so, but this section marks the beginning of a long development of thought in Hebrew religion, ending with a full apocalyptic outlook. It is the seed-bed of apocalypse. The Day of the Lord is the day when the Millennium begins. Amos is telling the people that the Millennium has nothing to do with them. When that great day comes, and the Lord comes to His own, He will set righteousness and justice

on high. This means that Israel will have no part in it, since Israel is sinful. Righteousness and justice is exactly what God has not found in Israel. The outlook therefore cannot be bright for Israel. It must be anything but light, not the faintest ray of light, but absolute darkness. Her favoured position as the one nation with whom God has been thoroughly intimate (iii. 2) will not avail her in that day of crisis.

*the Day of the Lord.* This phrase later became central in all Jewish eschatological thought. It came to mean the end of the present order, and the beginning of the new age, and when the belief in Messiah had developed, it meant the day of Messiah, the day when Messiah established the kingdom. But here in Amos the meaning is far from its full and later development. Originally the Day of the Lord was the day of the great autumnal feast, that day on which the fate of the coming year was to be decided. This is the suggestion of Mowinckel, who conceived this feast to be the festival of Jehovah the King, the occasion when He ascended His throne and was greeted in the cultus with coronation glee. Whilst there is no evidence of such a festival in Old Israel, yet it is certain that in popular thought this feast was regarded as critical in respect of the fortunes of the coming year. It was natural that Israel should look forward to one great Day of the Lord, when God should be established over all His enemies. Already by the time of Amos the Israelites were looking beyond the annual Day of the Lord to the one Great Day when all their hopes and ambitions would be realized in plenty and prosperity and joy. Where, according to Amos, Israel made her mistake was in not realizing that the enemy of Jehovah who was to be cast down, never more to rise, was unrighteousness in all its forms, and that Israel with all

her unrighteousness must perish with the rest. At the same time, even amongst the prophets, the identification of Israel with the purposes of God never wholly died. This shows itself in the Doctrine of the remnant, which, if not visible in Amos, at any rate shows itself in Hosea and especially in Isaiah of Jerusalem. This means that the idea of the heathen as the enemy of God never wholly died, and during the decay of prophecy, especially after the exile, it flourished again. The years following the return from the exile and the re-establishment of Hebrew life around Jerusalem, were years of increasing nationalism, with the result that long before the time of our Lord, the Day of the Lord had become, for the majority of Jews, a Day of Vengeance on the heathen.

But parallel with the development of the idea of the Day of the Lord as the great Day of Days, we have a development of apocalyptic ideas interwoven with it. The Jews of post-exilic times longed for a change in their fortunes. They watched the political horizon with increasing earnestness, all the stirring of the nations, and the rise of new conquerors. They hoped against hope, from the time of Cyrus onwards, that this new conqueror or that would be the means by which the Jews should be lifted on high. But generation after generation passed, and nothing of this took place except in fitful gleams which soon faded into darkness. Then there came more and more the infiltration of Persian ideas into Jewish thought, especially the idea of successive ages in the world's history. Zoroastrian thought was familiar with the idea that this earth and this heaven would pass away, and in its place there would be a new heaven and a new earth. This idea was a godsend to the Jews in their dilemma. They took it up with enthusiasm, because, amongst



other things, it solved their problem of the restoration and exaltation of the fortunes of Israel. That was when the Day of the Lord would come, at the end of the Age. The result of this development was that the Day of the Lord became the centre and core of all this wealth of apocalyptic thought. It marked the end of the world they knew. They watched for its coming more than they that watch for the morning. They sought to work out the signs of that coming day, and to describe the blessings of righteous Israel in the New Age. The Day of the Lord was the day when Messiah appeared to set up the Kingdom.

Another feature of the development of the ideas of the Day of the Lord is the way in which the imagery grew like a snowball. Amos said that the Day of the Lord would be darkness, with not a gleam of light in it. In consequence of this, every writer in the years that followed used the simile of darkness. For instance, the next writer to refer to the Day of the Lord was Zephaniah. He multiplies the vigour of the picture which Amos painted, and talks of wars, trouble and distress, wasteness and desolation, darkness and gloom, clouds and thick darkness (i. 14-16). By the time we come to Isaiah xiii. 10, 13, we have 'the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their lights', followed by the eclipse of both sun and moon, and an earthquake which shall shake both heaven and earth. In Joel ii. 30 f. the picture grows still more lurid, and we get, in Joel iii. 2, 4, 12, the vision of judgement of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat ('Jehovah will judge'), a picture which combines with the old idea of the change of fate at the new year, to develop into the idea of the Grand Assize at the End of Days. For a modern study of apocalyptic development and significance, see H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (1944).

*flee from a lion*. . . . The whole of verse 19 belongs to the same picture, and is an expression, though with a different simile, of the same inevitability of doom which we find in ix. 1-4. A man is fleeing headlong from a lion, suddenly finds himself confronted with a bear, rushes away and dashes headfirst into his house, and as he rests in fancied security against the wall to recover his breath, he is bitten by a snake. There is no escape for him; 'his doom is writ'.

*pitch darkness* (EVV, 'very dark'). The word 'aphel is derived from a root of which the verb in Arabic means 'disappear' and so 'set' of the sun. The more usual word for 'darkness', used in verse 18 and earlier in verse 20, is *choshkek*, which in Arabic means 'to bear rancour' (i.e. 'look black'), so that the Arabic *chasak* means 'hatred'.

*ray of light* (EVV, 'brightness'). The word *nagah* means 'shine', a word which in Assyrian has developed also into meaning 'be joyful', a meaning which never seems to have developed in Hebrew, where the idea of a bright gleam developed, a brightness more than ordinary, so that in the Targum *Nogeha* is a name for the planet Venus.

### XXXVI

*v. 21-27. I hate, I spurn your feasts, and I will have nothing to do with your final festivities. For though ye offer me whole-offerings, I will not accept your gifts, nor will I look at your fatling-sacrifices. Take away from me your noisy songs, and I will not listen to the strumming of your harps. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a never-failing torrent. Was it sacrifices and gifts ye brought me those forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? So now ye shall shoulder Sakkut*

*your king, and Kewan the star of your god . . . your images which ye have made for yourselves; and I will exile you beyond Damascus. Saith the Lord, the God of Hosts is His Name.*

The oracle is in 3:3 measure, with an extra three-beat line at the beginning of verse 22 and another extra three-beat line in verse 26. Verse 27, as the concluding verse, is in two-beat measure, probably because, since it foretells the doom of Israel, it was intended to be spoken slowly, as if heavy with threats. The oracle concludes with a lengthened formula.

Amos roundly condemns the worship of Israel, the whole sacrificial system in vogue at the shrines. He makes the astonishing statement, just as astonishing to many students today as it was to the prophet's contemporaries, that Jehovah will have nothing at all to do with any sort of sacrifice whatever, nor will he take any notice of the big festivals which were the high-days of the whole religious system. In verse 23, Amos gives the reason for God's abhorrence of all their sacred gifts and occasions. It is because justice and righteousness are going to sweep right through the country and sweep away everything that reeks with injustice and wrongdoing. In the previous section Israel is promised nothing but darkness when the Day of the Lord comes. This is because Israel is unrighteous, and must therefore suffer the penalty of unrighteousness. The prophet is following up such charges as he made in ii. 8, where he painted the picture of the wealthy and the prosperous combining ruthlessness and selfish business efficiency with joyous feasts at the shrines, close by the very altars themselves. He returns to the same condemnation in ix. 1-5, where he speaks of God's steadfast determination to destroy the whole shrine, and of

His determined rooting out of every last vestige of those who frequent them. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Amos regarded the shrines and everything that took place there as being a thorough and complete abomination, or that he regarded their destruction as the best thing that could happen for Israelitish religion.

In verse 25 we have one of the most difficult verses in the Old Testament. Recent commentaries agree that Amos believed that there were no sacrifices to Jehovah during the forty years in the desert, and in this he was certainly supported by Jeremiah a century or so later. Jeremiah definitely denied that there were any sacrifices in the desert (vii. 22), and it is difficult to make the passage in Amos mean anything else than this. The explanation that they offered sacrifices in the wilderness, but not to Jehovah, is precluded by the order of the words in the sentence. The whole emphasis of the Hebrew is on 'sacrifices and gifts' and not on 'to me'. There is no statement here that all religious ritual is an abomination, though the words of such prophets as Amos and Jeremiah, and indeed such a passage as Isaiah i. 10-17, must be taken into consideration in our assessment of the value of such practices. It is certain that these prophets held that sacrifices and the ritual accompanying them have no virtue in themselves, but that everything depends upon the character and conduct of the worshipper. This is important, not only because there are those today who hold such views, but also because it marks a definite turning away of the prophets from the belief in the virtue of 'magic', i.e. the age-old belief that certain ritual acts have in themselves virtue and compelling power. The efficacy of such magical rites is one of the features of primitive religious belief, so that the attack on such ideas is one

of the important features of the prophetic teaching. Such ideas were nevertheless preserved in priestly circles, and the Priestly Code is full of them.

There is another difficulty presented by Amos's denial of sacrifice in the wilderness, and it is associated with the origin and development of religion generally. It concerns the whole mass of primitive practice in connexion with the slaughter of animals generally. That some such ideas were deep-rooted in Israel is shown by 1 Samuel xiv. 33, where the eating of the blood of a slaughtered beast is regarded as a sin (*chata'*, misdeed, error). This is in accordance with primitive belief and practice the whole world over, and the books of the anthropologists and all who have travelled amongst primitive peoples are full of such instances from every part of the world. There can be little doubt that the Israelites followed such practices before ever they entered the land of Canaan. There are too many indications of such beliefs in the Priestly Code for us ever to come to any other conclusion. This means that Amos's statement against sacrifice does not include such primitive practices. His statement concerns the gifts and the shared meals which were a feature of Canaanite-Israelite religion. The whole matter needs considerably more discussion than is possible here, and we hope to return to the matter on another occasion.

*feasts* (so RV, but AV 'feast-days'). RV is better. The reference is to the pilgrimage festivals of Palestinian religion. The Hebrew word is *chagg*, a word which has its Arabic counterpart in the *chajj* of Islam, i.e. the great annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In Palestine there were three such annual pilgrimages, all harvest festivals, Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Ingathering. These are the pre-Deuteronomic names, for in post-exilic times the Feast of Ingathering was

split up into the three sacred occasions of the month Tishri, New Year's Day, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles), whilst Passover came to be brought into closer relation with Unleavened Bread. At each of these three great pilgrimage feasts, the Israelite went to his local or his favourite shrine, and offered his first-fruits. That this latter was a Canaanite custom, and not a desert custom, appears from Exodus xiii. 11-16 (J). It may be that in Amos v. 21, the reference is not to the three pilgrimages, but to the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the agricultural year, always the most important of them of all, right down to the destruction of Herod's Temple. There are other passages where the reference is not to the three agricultural feasts of one year, but to successive Feasts of Ingathering; cf. Isaiah xxix. 1. It is extremely probable that this is what Amos means, especially in view of ii. 8, since this last feast of the agricultural year was the vintage feast, and the most joyful and hilarious of them all; cf. Judges ix. 27; 1 Samuel i. 13, where it appears that drunkenness was far from unknown.

*I will have nothing to do with* (lit. 'I will not smell in', as in AV, which RV expresses in the margin, with the more elegant 'I will take no delight in' in the text). The phrase is not so much a metaphor as a survival of ideas of a cruder time. Cf. Genesis viii. 21, with its oft-quoted parallel in the Babylonian Epic of Creation, where the Babylonian Noah offers sacrifices on the summit of the mountain when the flood had so far subsided, and 'The gods smelt the savour, the gods smelt the goodly savour; the gods gathered like flies over the sacrifice'.

*final festivities* (EVV, 'solemn assemblies'). The word is generally used of the last day of a pilgrimage feast,

e.g. Deuteronomy xvi. 8, of the closing day of Unleavened Bread; Leviticus xxiii. 26; Numbers xxix. 35 (both P); Nehemiah viii. 18, of the last day of the post-exilic Feast of Booths. In the Mishnah and in Rabbinic writings generally the word '*atsereth*' means the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), because it was regarded as the conclusion of the Passover-Unleavened Bread festival, the two being connected by the Counting of the Omer (Wave-sheaf), which began with the one and finished with the other. It is probable therefore that Amos is referring in particular to the closing ceremonies of the great annual autumnal feast, ceremonies which may reasonably be expected to have been something in the way of a climax in devotion and perhaps hilarity. It may very well be that what Jehu meant when he had his little joke in 2 Kings x. 20 was that he would summon as '*atsarah*' (the two forms are used interchangeably) for Baal, i.e. it was going to be a last great feast, as indeed it was the last for all who entered the Baal shrine.

*whole-offerings* (EVV, 'burnt-offerings'). The '*olah*' was an offering wholly burned on the altar.

*your gifts* (RV, 'meal-offerings'). AV has 'meat-offerings', using the word 'meat' in its wider sixteenth-seventeenth-century meaning to include any sort of food. The AV rendering here has a curiosity of its own, because in post-exilic Jewry the *minchah* was precisely not a meat-offering. It was essentially a meal-offering, and it accompanied every flesh-offering. In pre-exilic ritual the word was used of any gift-offering of whatever type. The word is used of the tribute paid to a king (cf. 1 Samuel x. 27; 1 Kings v. 1; etc.). The etymology of the word is disputed, whether connected with the Arabic *manacha* (lend, give, though usually under certain conditions) or with the Arabic *nachah*

(lead), but there is no doubt of the Hebrew usage, which involves the idea of 'gift, tribute'. See the discussion in G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, pp. 13-17.

*I will not accept.* The root *ratsah* means 'to be well pleased with', and so in Arabic, where *ritswan* means 'favour, grace', and is the name of the door-keeper of Paradise in Muslim lore. The verb is used of being pleased, satisfied whether by the paying off of a debt, or in any other way. Cf. Isaiah xl. 2, where the verb is translated 'pardoned'. The noun *ratson* stands at its worst for 'self-will' (Genesis xlix. 6), but at its best for 'being right with God', the 'good will' of Luke ii. 14 (AV). The Greek word used in the Angels' Song is *eudokia*, the regular Septuagint equivalent of the Hebrew *ratson*. It stands therefore, not for general amiability, nor even for the hail-fellow-well-met of the kindly, well-intentioned man, but for nothing less than true, humble fellowship with God, and a devoted love to Him.

*fatling-sacrifices.* lit. 'the *shelem* of your fatlings'. There is a division of opinion as to the precise significance of the word *shelem*, though it is plain enough that it refers to a shared meal, part of the offering being consumed on the altar, and the rest eaten by the worshippers in a common meal. The difference of opinion is as to whether the word etymologically means 'peace-offerings (EVV text)' or 'thank-offerings (EVV margins)' in the sense of 'payment-offerings'. The latter is probably the correct interpretation; see, further, Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, pp. 5, 7, 41.

*your noisy songs* (lit. 'the noise of your songs' (EVV) ). The word translated 'noise' is used of the growling of dogs, and bears, or the meaning of doves, but it has a



tendency to mean 'noisy' sound, such as the roar of the waves and the tumult of gathering crowds.

*the strumming of . . .* (EVV, 'the melody of'). The reference is clearly to the playing of musical instruments, in this instance of the viols (EVV), but better rendered 'harp, lyre, guitar', a stringed instrument with a bulging resonance body at the lower end; hence the name *nebel*, which is also used of the skin in which wine was stored, or even of pitchers (Isaiah xxii. 24). We have translated 'strumming' on the assumption that the root *zamar* means fundamentally 'pluck', the reference thus being to the plucking of the strings. There is a difference of opinion concerning this root, some holding that there are two roots, the first meaning 'make music with a pipe, reed'; cf. Arabic *zamar* (pipe), and *zamma'r* (piper), and the other meaning 'pluck, prune', whence *mazmerah* means a pruning knife. We hold that the Arabic *zamar* (pipe) is a loan word from the Hebrew Bible without its precise significance, but that the Arabic *zabar* is the true equivalent, a word which signifies 'strong, violent', of which the form *zabuwr* is used of the Psalms of David. The Greek equivalent of *mizmor* (a psalm) is *psalmos*, from a root which in Greek originally meant 'pluck', e.g. the twanging of the bow-string, but mostly of playing a stringed instrument with the fingers, as against with the plectron. The use of the word in Greek to mean 'singing' is confined to Biblical use, and is one of the instances in which New Testament Greek is not true Hellenistic (*Koine*) Greek, but has definite Septuagint tendencies. Note that in Urdu the word *zambur* means 'nippers, forceps'. This word is of Sanskrit origin, but it is very similar to the Hebrew word for snuffers (*mezammereth*), and establishes a far-off connexion between the Hebrew *zamar* and the Arabic *zabar*.

a never-failing torrent (EVL, 'a mighty stream', but see RVm, 'ever-flowing'). The phrase is found only here and in Deuteronomy xxi. 4. For a full discussion, see S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (ICC), pp. 241 f. The word *nachal* (torrent, wady) signifies a narrow defile through which a flooded stream flows in the rainy season. During the dry season many of them are dry river beds covered with stones, but in the wet season a torrent so strong that it carries everything before it. Cf. Micah vi. 7, 'torrents of oil'. The *nahar* (cf. 'River Euphrates') is a steady river, but the *nachal* is a torrent which may run dry. The phrase used in this verse contains the word 'eythan, the meaning of which was lost until the modern systematic study of Arabic. The ancient Versions guessed at the meaning from the context, and so the medieval Jewish commentators; hence the meaning 'strong, mighty, rough'. But the word beyond question means 'ever-flowing'; cf. Arabic *watana* (to be constant).

*sacrifices* (verse 25). As G. B. Gray pointed out (*Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, p. 6), the rendering 'sacrifice' for this word is 'very inconvenient', since it means really 'that which is slain'. The word is a general term for animal-offerings, and in practice it has an equivalent *shelem* (verse 23), this latter being a general word signifying 'payment-offering'.

*So now ye shall shoulder* (cf. RVm, which is correct). The AV and RV translate this as a past tense, and similarly the Versions, making the verse refer back to the desert journeys. But this is an impossible rendering of the Hebrew. The tense is to be translated as a future, and the reference is to the forthcoming exile, and the connexion is with the following verse. It is better to translate 'lift up, shoulder' and not 'carry'; though the latter is a sound enough rendering in general. Strictly,

the word does actually mean 'lift up', and the meaning 'carry' is an extension of it.

*Sakkut your king.* The spelling of the Hebrew is *Sikkuth*, but these vowels are not original, and the same applies to the following *Kiyyun*, which is properly Kewan. Both words have been given the vowels of the Hebrew word *shiqquts* (detested thing), a word used of idols and everything connected with them. The Masoretes followed the practice of inserting the vowels of either this word or the word *bosheth* (shameful thing) whenever the name of a heathen god appeared in the text, and sometimes went so far as to substitute *bosheth* for *baal*, e.g. Ish-bosheth for Ish-baal. Other examples are Tophet (for an original Tepheth or Taphat), Molech (for Melek), and *gillulim*, which has the vowels of detested things, but probably refers to the circles of sacred stones, the *tumuli* of early pagan rites. Sakkut is the Assyrian god Ninib, whose star was Saturn. Sakkut-Nidib is called 'king' in Assyrian texts. Kewan is the name of the planet Saturn with whom Ninib was identified in the Assyrian system, where every deity was associated with a heavenly body. We have thus a reference to one god, and not to two, since Kewan actually is 'the star of your god'. It may well be, as Procksch suggests, that the phrase 'the star of your god' is a gloss to explain the name Kewan, which was certainly recognized and correctly spelt by the Syriac translators. We have therefore translated this phrase as immediately following the word 'Kewan', thus interchanging with 'your images'. Many scholars regard the verse as a later addition (so Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, Löhr, and others), whilst other scholars prefer to follow the lead of the Versions and translate *sikkuth* as if it were *sukkath* (tabernacle of), not allowing the names of the gods to be possible in the time of Amos.

We see no reason to deny the knowledge of Mesopotamian gods in eighth-century Israel, since the Ras Shamra Tablets give a picture of a great confusion of cults followed in the fourteenth-thirteenth century in Syria. G. A. Smith follows Ewald with 'the shrine of your king, and the stand of your images', with 'the star of your god' as a gloss. As we have said, we regard the mention of the Assyrian god and his star as being most satisfactory, but see the commentaries, almost all of which have long discussions of the verse.

### XXXVII

*vi. 1-7. Woe to [those that are at ease in Zion and] those that fancy themselves safe in Mount Samaria, the men of mark of the first of the nations, [and the house of Israel shall come to them]. Cross over to Kalneh and see; and go from there to Great Hamath; and go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are ye better than these kingdoms, or is their territory greater than yours? Ye refuse to think of the evil day, but have brought close the enthronement of violence. They lie on ivory beds, and are sprawled on their couches, eating fresh lamb and fatted veal; they bawl to the sound of the harp; they think their orchestras are like David. They drink bowlfuls of wine, and anoint themselves with the best of oils, but they are indifferent to the break-up of Joseph. Therefore shall they go into exile at the head of the exiles, and the shouting of the sprawlers shall depart.*

An oracle in 3:3 measure with an occasional extra tristich. It is an oracle against the luxurious chief men of Samaria, who think themselves leaders of the most prosperous of all countries. Amos tells them that there are other countries at least as favoured as they are, and all of them near to a terrible doom. But they

live in luxury and spend their days in revelry with wine and songs. They take not the slightest thought for the imminent break-up of the Northern Kingdom. The doom is that they will be the leaders of the column of exiles, and away they will go with their drunken songs.

*that are at ease.* The root is used in both good and bad senses; e.g. in a good sense in Isaiah xxxiii. 20; Job xii. 5; but here in a bad sense, with the idea of arrogant carelessness; cf. Isaiah xxxii. 9, 11. Similarly, the parallel word 'they that fancy themselves safe' is used in a bad sense. Literally, it means 'trust' (cf. EVV), but we have translated it so as to make clear the idea of folly and false confidence which is intended.

*in Zion.* The great majority of scholars are agreed that the mention of Zion in this verse is not original with Amos, but is a later interpolation to make the oracle apply also to the times when the doom of Judah was near. They would therefore replace 'Zion' by some such word as 'Israel'. For our part, we would regard the whole phrase 'they that are at ease in Zion' as an interpolation, and would follow Procksch in regarding 'and the house of Israel shall come to them' as being an addition. We would take this to be a gloss on 'the nations', i.e. the house of Israel will come to them (i.e. the heathen) as exiles, since the verb naturally demands translation as a future tense.

*the men of mark of . . .* (RV, 'notable men of'). The verb means 'pierce', and so 'marked off, designated'; cf. the Arabic *naqiybat* (wisdom), and *naqiyb* (leader), and the Hebrew of Numbers i. 17, 'those who are pricked off by name'.

*and the house of Israel shall come to them* (AV, 'to whom the house of Israel came', and so RV, but reading

'come'). None of the commentators likes this phrase, and the Versions vary considerably in their rendering of it. Vulgate has 'that go in with state into the house of Israel', whilst Syriac makes the leaders 'spoil' the house of Israel. Septuagint divides the verse differently. Many commentators emend, e.g. Orelli, Procksch, and others, 'and are like gods to the house of Israel' (cf. Moffatt). In our view it is best to take the phrase to be a later gloss (T. H. Robinson), since it is not possible to translate the verb as a past tense (cf. AV). The natural translation is a future, as we have indicated in the note on 'in Zion'.

*Kalneh.* The commentators have found great difficulty with this verse, the majority of moderns are agreed that it is a later interpolation. Even Kuenen feels that he cannot retain the verse, and in this he is joined by Horton (Century Bible) who generally is anxious to retain everything possible. Ewald, Robertson Smith, and Driver retain the verse, and there has latterly been a renewed tendency to regard it as from Amos himself.

There are two main lines of interpretation. The first is that followed by the majority of moderns, e.g. Wellhausen, Marti, G. A. Smith, Sellin, Edgehill, Bickell, Harper, and others. They assume that the cities have already been destroyed, and that the chief men of the Northern kingdom are bidden to go and see the ruined sites of these more splendid places, and take warning. If this assumption is correct, then the verse must be later than the rest of the prophecies, since Hamath was destroyed in 720 by Sargon, and Gath was destroyed in 711 B.C. The Kalneh to which reference is made may be the Kulunu (Isaiah x. 9; Calno) destroyed by Sargon in 711 B.C., or perhaps the Kullani (near Arpad and north of Aleppo) destroyed by

Tiglath-pileser in 738 B.C. In any case, if Amos did write this particular verse, then he must have lived until 710 B.C., but that is scarcely a practicable solution, since by that time Israel herself had been destroyed and there could be no possibility of the leaders of Israel, already by that time themselves exiled, journeying here and there to be warned of a disaster which had already taken place. If, therefore, the reference is to the destruction of these cities, then the verse must be an interpolation intended to warn the Southern kingdom of Judah rather than the Northern kingdom of Israel. The second main line of interpretation is that Amos is not referring to the destruction of these cities, but is combatting the idea that Israel is the most splendid of all nations with the largest territory, and therefore can afford to rest securely without any real threat of coming disaster. We do not find any serious breakdown of the rhythm in this verse, as Cripps suggests, though the phrase 'go down to Gath of the Philistines' makes a better distich than tristich. This phrase may possibly be an addition by a scribe who interpreted the verse to refer to the destruction of the cities mentioned, already destroyed in his day, perhaps the same scribe who made the insertions of the previous verse and thus pointed the moral against Judah. Our view is that the verse is not a warning on the basis of cities already destroyed, but rather that Israel is in no way different from other great states, all on the brink of disaster, and therefore living in careless arrogance which soon will ensure its own doom; cf. Orelli, Gressmann, H. Schmidt, Weiser, T. H. Robinson.

*refuse to think of* (EVV, 'put far away'). The verb means 'thrust off', and thus 'put out of their minds', 'refuse to think of it'.

*but have brought close* (EVV, 'and cause . . . to come

near'). Most scholars take this to refer to the encouragement of oppression within Israel, a theme on which Amos elsewhere dwells with considerable frequency. Our judgement is that Pusey is right here in thinking of a reference to Assyria and the violent doom which is coming all the nearer because of the careless arrogance of the revellers of Samaria. In putting out of their minds all thought of the coming crisis, they have made it all the more certain and imminent. This is the meaning the context demands. The meaning 'throne' for the Hebrew *shebeth* is recognized by the Vulgate, and we find no need to emend to 'sabbath' (following Septuagint) or 'slaughter-sacrifice' (Cheyne), 'destruction and . . .' (Marti), or even 'year of . . .' (Procksch, to balance the other half of the line).

*are sprawled* (EVV, 'stretch themselves'). The word means 'go free, unrestrained', and is used in Arabic of camels being left loose to pasture where they choose, and of hair hanging loose. It is used in Ezekiel xvii. 6 of a spreading vine, and in Ezekiel xxiii. 15 of the overhanging end of turbans.

*fresh lamb and fatted veal* (so Moffatt excellently). The Hebrew literally is 'the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall', as in EVV.

*bawl* (AV, 'chant' and in the margin 'quaver', but RV is better, 'sing idle songs'). The root *paraṭ* is used in Rabbinic Hebrew to mean 'break off, divide', and in Arabic 'precede, act hastily' and even 'talk immoderately'. Driver's suggestion is of extemporizing without premeditation, over-rapidly, and so in meaningless words. But in the Great Midrash on Leviticus (*Wayyiqra Rabba*) there is (p. 5) a reference to this very verse where it is explained as opening their mouths wide with cynical speech. We take the meaning,



therefore, to be the loud, open-mouthed bawling of the drunkards as they attempt to sing to their orchestras.

*think* . . . (AV, 'invent'; RV, 'devise'). The translations of the EVV have considerable support from the use of the verb in the Priestly Code and in the writings of the Chronicler, but, as Harper, for instance, says, it is curious to refer to the invention of instruments of music. And so many commentators take the phrase to refer to the invention of new songs, reading *kol* ('all', Nowack, Gressmann, Edgehill) for *keley* ('instruments of'), or *milley* ('words of', Sellin, etc.). Weiser, omitting various consonants and, with others, the reference to David, has 'they bawl to the twang of the harp, and reckon their bawling as singing', a rendering which has a great deal to be said for it. For our part we would retain the Hebrew text, thus following the Vulgate. This is the rendering which T. H. Robinson adopts, and perhaps he is right also in omitting the 'for themselves' as overloading the line.

*bowlfuls of wine*. The Hebrew word signifies a vessel used for tossing out water, i.e. they drink wine by the bowlful, swilling it down their throats. Septuagint has a slightly different text, and refers to the excellence of the wine (cf. T. H. Robinson), but we prefer the picture of the Hebrew text, though the Septuagint certainly provides a good parallel to the other half of the line.

*they are indifferent to* (EVV, 'they are not grieved for'). The meaning of the Hebrew strictly is 'are not sick', but the extension to indifference and apathy is legitimate. The line is of four stresses, and is an addition to the general 3 : 3 rhythm of the oracle. We judge that the prophet intended this, since it forms a fitting contrast to what precedes, and is said with solemn and laboured emphasis.

*shouting* (AV, 'banquet'; RV, 'revelry'). The rendering of AV follows the meaning of the word in Rabbinic writings, where the special reference is to funeral feasts; cf. Jeremiah xvi. 5. In Phoenician inscriptions the word means a religious festival, and the corresponding Arabic root means 'shout'. It is best to retain the meaning of RV, with 'revelry' or 'shouting', though it is possible that Amos really meant that they were actually celebrating, though unwittingly, their own funeral feast.

### XXXVIII

*vi. 8. The Lord Jehovah has sworn by Himself. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Hosts. I loathe the pride of Jacob, and his mansions I hate, and I will deliver up the city and everything in it.*

A short oracle concerning the coming doom of Israel, and God's abandonment of the capital. It is composed of the customary introductory phrases with, in this case, considerable conflation, and two lines of 2:2 measure. It is possible that part of the introduction is misplaced from the previous verse, where some such addition is required after 'therefore now'.

*loathe* (EVV, 'abhor'). Scholars generally are agreed that the Hebrew word has an *aleph* mis-written for an *ayin*, and translate accordingly, as EVV have done. Otherwise the word should mean 'long for, desire', which is scarcely applicable in the context.

*pride* (EVV, 'excellency', but RVm, 'pride'). The word can be used in both a good sense and a bad sense. The Versions understand the latter, and the Septuagint is especially good with its rendering *hubris*, which is properly that insolence of man by which he regards himself as being equal to, or independent of God.

*deliver up* (so EVV). This rendering is better than 'shut up', a use which is chiefly late so far as the causative form of the verb is concerned.

### XXXIX

*vi. 9-10. And it shall come to pass that if there be ten men left in one house, they shall die. And when a man's uncle and his undertaker shall lift him up to take out his bones from the house, and he shall say to whoever is in the recesses of the house, Is there any more there with you? and he shall reply, Not a single one, then he shall say, Hush, for it is not permitted to mention the name of the Lord.*

This is a description of an epidemic so severe that there is scarcely a survivor. The disaster is so complete that the searchers must themselves enter the houses of the dead and penetrate to the farthest recesses. When the corpses are taken out to be burned, the customary benediction must be omitted, so great is the disaster and the desolation. It is barely possible to make poetry of the two verses. Perhaps verse 9 is composed of one 3:3 line, and verse 10 of one 3:3 line, followed by a series of two-stress phrases, but it is best to abandon the effort to force the verses into any one rhythmical scheme. Many scholars have given up verse 10 as being hopelessly corrupt. Septuagint had great difficulty with it, though the Vulgate substantially reproduces the Hebrew text, and similarly the Targum.

*his undertaker* (EVV, 'he that burneth him'). Our rendering is that of T. H. Robinson. Moffatt's translation is dependent upon a text which has been emended considerably. The various suggestions can be seen in the commentaries, but we do not regard any of them as being more satisfactory than the Hebrew text.

## XL

*vi. 11. For behold the Lord is issuing his commands:  
And (the destroyer) will smite the great house into frag-  
ments, and the small house into fissures.*

This oracle is a fragment of uncertain rhythm, probably 3:3, and may well be a continuation of vi. 8 (No. XXXVIII), i.e. verses 9, 10 are a prose interpolation.

*fragments* (EVV, 'breaches'). The word is not found elsewhere, though there is an apparently similar word in Canticles v. 2 which means 'drops of dew'. On the other hand, there is an Arabic word *rass*, which means a fountain stopped up with stones. The EVV 'breaches' is presumably due to the influence of the parallel word 'fissures', whilst AVm is due to Canticles v. 2.

## XLI

*vi. 12. Can horses gallop up a crag, or does one plough the  
sea with oxen? For ye have turned justice to poison, and  
the product of uprightness to bitterness.*

This oracle consists of two 3:3 lines, and is an attack on the corruption of the courts of law. It is contrary to all sense to expect war-horses to rush headlong over crags and precipices, and just as senseless to expect a man to plough the sea with his oxen. But, says the prophet, an equally senseless state of affairs exists in Israel. The law-court is the place where a man may reasonably and properly expect to find justice, but he finds the exact opposite, and the only result of upright dealing is wormwood and bitterness.

*crag.* The EVV have 'rock', but this is inadequate, for the word strictly means a sharp isolated crag,

though it can be used more generally of a precipice (so T. H. Robinson).

*plough the sea with oxen.* The Hebrew has 'will one plough with oxen', into which the EVV insert 'there' (i.e. on the crag) and thus make reasonably good sense. But the plural form for 'oxen' is unusual, and practically every commentator adopts the brilliant suggestion of Michaelis, who, simply by dividing the one word into two, proposed the reading which we have adopted. Septuagint has 'will they (i.e. the stallions of the previous phrase) be silent amongst the mares?'. There are two roots *ch-r-sh* in common use (there are actually four altogether, quite distinct) one of which means 'cut, engrave, plough', and the other 'be silent'. For the rest, Septuagint is making the best of a bad job.  
*poison, bitterness.* See note on v. 17.

## XLII

*vi. 13, 14. You who rejoice at Lo-debar, who say, Is it not by our own strength that we have taken Karnaim? For behold I am raising up against you, O house of Israel, [oracle of the Lord, the God of Hosts] a nation, which will oppress you from the Hamath frontier to the wady of the Arabah.*

T. H. Robinson thinks that the beginning of the oracle is lost, whilst others would regard verse 13*a* as continuing from verse 6*b* (e.g. Duhm, Procksch) in Section XXXVII. This involves the idea that they are indifferent to the break-up of Joseph, and rejoice at temporary successes in arms as a proof that they are able to withstand any onslaught whatever. An alternative reconstruction is that of Weiser—namely, vi. 1, vi. 13, vi. 2, 3, vi. 14. This makes a good sequence. It is best to leave the section as it stands, agreeing that

perhaps the first part of the oracle is lost, though this is by no means a necessary assumption. The section consists of a single tristich, two complete 3 : 3 lines (with an interpolation), and one 2 : 2 : 2 line.

*Lo-debar.* The Hebrew has 'not a thing (word)' i.e. 'a thing of nought' (EVV), and this is the rendering of the Versions, followed by the translation of *karnaim* as a noun meaning 'a pair of horns' as a metaphor for strength (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 17 and frequently). Many scholars have adopted the suggestion of Graetz, that we should read two place-names, Lo-debar and Karnaim in Gilead. These two places had been captured from Syria-Damascus by Jeroboam II. English scholars have, until recently, been slow to adopt this suggestion, although G. A. Smith was in favour of it. Harper was against it, but Cripps and Edgehill are attracted to it. T. H. Robinson adopts it, rightly, we believe, and there is a very great deal to be said for Weiser's reconstruction which fits this verse into the context of careless confidence of vi. 1-3.

*the Hamath frontier* (so T. H. Robinson), lit. 'the entering in of Hamath', as in EVV. This is the 'farthest north' frontier of Israel in the days of its greatest prosperity. It is, as G. A. Smith points out, 'the Pass between the Lebanons, at whose mouth stands Dan, northern limit of Israel'.

*the wady of the Arabah.* AV translates the Hebrew in the normal way as 'the river (margin, 'valley') of the wilderness', but RV retains the latter word as a proper name. The most natural identification is the Wady of Egypt, the traditional southern limit of the Holy Land, now known as Wady el-'Arish. If Amos is limiting his threat to Israel precisely, then his reference is to some torrent bed which runs down into the Dead Sea, the Sea of the Arabah.

### XLIII

*vii. 1-3. Thus did the Lord [Jehovah] make me see, And lo he was forming a locust swarm at the beginning of the growth of the spring crop, [and behold the spring crop is after the royal shearings]. And as it was making an end of devouring everything green in the country, I said 'O Lord [Jehovah], forgive I pray, how can Jacob recover? For he is small'. The Lord changed his mind concerning this. 'It shall not happen', said the Lord.*

This is the first of a series of visions, each of which begins with the same set phrase, with the story of Amos's conflict with Amaziah interpolated between the third and the fourth visions. The first two visions conclude with a plea by the prophet for mercy, and a granting of forgiveness by God, but in the third and the fourth visions the prophet makes no such plea and there is no relenting. The first vision was probably originally composed of nine tristichs, but the interpolation of odd words and explanatory phrases has obscured the original structure.

*Thus did . . . make me see*, which is better than the EVV 'shewed me'. It is best to regard the whole experience as a vision which God caused the prophet to see; so H. Schmidt. According to verse 3, the destruction never took place. Other scholars say Amos actually experienced this locust-plague, and presumably the conflagration of the next vision, but this is contrary to the statements made. Others suggest that the visions were suggested by the sight of locusts and by experience of a huge fire.

*And lo he was forming . . .* The EVV have 'he formed', which is not accurate, since the Hebrew means either he was in process of forming or he was about to form.

The Hebrew, however, is difficult, and we must either introduce a subject ('he') before the participle, as EVV have done, or read the noun *yetser* (i.e. 'behold a formation of . . .'). This latter is what the Versions have done, but in our view the former suggestion is much more satisfactory.

*a swarm of locusts* (AV, 'grasshoppers'; RV, 'locusts'). The Hebrew word *gobay* (elsewhere only Nahum iii. 17) etymologically means 'swarm' rather than 'locusts' and is definitely a collective noun. See note on p. 77, *supra*. The fact that *gobay* is itself a collective noun meaning 'swarm' militates against the reading 'formation of . . .' immediately preceding.

*the beginning of the growth of the spring crop*. The EVV use the phrase 'the latter growth'. The Hebrew word *leqesh* certainly means 'late', and, as G. A. Smith suggested, it means the spring-crop which grows as a result of the 'latter (spring) rain', the name for which is *malqosh*, from the same root. An alternative explanation involves the idea of a second mowing of hay (so Syriac), the first mowings being supposed to be due as tribute to the king. Hence the succeeding phrase is translated 'the king's mowings'. But, as has often been pointed out, it seems to be a very considerable burden on the community that the king should take the whole of the first crop of this best and sweetest grass of all. In any case, it is an assumption that there was such a custom, though, as Robertson Smith pointed out, the Romans did levy such a tax on all pasture-land in Syria in the month Nisan, which roughly is the month when the spring grass has grown. But the more natural translation of the phrase *gizzey-hammelek* is 'the king's shearings', and we prefer this. We take the phrase 'and behold the spring-crop is after the royal shearings' to be an explanatory gloss explaining the time of



the year which was intended by the word *leqesh* (spring-growth). Some scholars would read *yeleq* for the second *leqesh*, following the Septuagint, and translate it to mean 'full-grown locust', but we prefer to follow the Hebrew text. The Septuagint actually reads 'and one caterpillar, king Gog'. This gives the vision an eschatological colouring, and is reminiscent of Ezekiel xxxviii and xxxix with Joel i.

*and as it was making an end. . .* The EVV are not translations of the Hebrew text, which is 'and it shall be if he made an end of . . .'. It is best to follow Torrey's emendation, which involves only the insertion of a *yodh* and a redivision of the consonants.

*changed his mind* (EVV, 'repented'). The Hebrew root *nacham* really means to heave a sigh of relief; cf. the Arabic use of the root of the panting of a horse after galloping. If the word 'comfort' is used, in translation, e.g. Isaiah xl. 1, then it means comfort out of sorrow and not in the midst of sorrow. The idea of 'comfort, console', is an extension of the idea of changing one's mind through repentance.

#### XLIV

*vii. 4-6. Thus did the Lord [Jehovah] make me see. And lo he was calling a flaming fire, and it devoured the mighty deep and was about to devour the Portion (of the Lord). And I said, O Lord [Jehovah] 'Desist, I pray. How can Jacob recover? For he is small'. The Lord changed his mind concerning this. 'This too shall not happen', said the Lord [Jehovah].*

This second oracle seems also to have consisted originally of nine tristiches, though the scheme is marred by insertions. It is a vision of a fire which would destroy the whole creation, the primeval Deep

and the very solid earth itself. There is no possibility of this vision being a description of an actual experience.

*he was calling.* . . . EVV transfer the phrase 'the Lord Jehovah' from the end of the line in order to provide the necessary noun to precede the participle. It is best to insert 'he' as in verse 1, and to regard the phrase 'the Lord God' as a misplaced addition; cf. Weiser, Procksch, etc.

*a flaming fire.* The Hebrew text is reproduced by EVV 'to contend with fire'. The Hebrew text is not satisfactory, as the variations in the Versions show, and various emendations have been suggested, of which we have adopted that by Elhorst, and followed by Halévy, Procksch, Stärk, T. H. Robinson, Weiser, and others.

*the mighty deep.* The *Tehom* is the primeval deep of the ancient Creation myth. There are passages in the Old Testament where the word seems at first sight to be used of any sea (Jonah ii. 5) or even of the Nile (Ezekiel xxxi. 4), but this is not the case. Such instances are due to the way in which the Hebrews made this Mesopotamian myth speak of the great fight of God against Evil, so that Rahab-Tiamat the Sea-monster or Tehom (a semi-depersonalized Tiamat) came to represent every enemy of God and Israel through the ages. See *Studies in the Psalter*, pp. 94-107.

*the Portion of the Lord.* The Hebrew word means 'portion', as RVm indicates. And so AV has 'part', though it is not easy to see what the translators intended this to convey. RV has translated with 'the land', and the generally accepted interpretation is that the reference is to the solid framework of land which was founded over the mighty primeval Deep. This is not wholly satisfactory, and so Budde suggested *chedel*

(world) for *cheleq*. It seems more satisfactory to follow Septuagint and to assume that the original reading was 'the Portion of the Lord', i.e. Israel, or the Promised Land generally. This is a very common phrase, and it is much better than leaving the word 'portion' by itself, or assuming that it means 'the solid earth' or something else equally removed from its normal meaning.

#### XLV

*vii. 7-9. Thus did he make me see. And lo the Lord standing by a plumbline-wall, with a plumbline in his hand. And the Lord said to me, 'What seest thou, Amos?' So I said, 'A plumbline'. And the Lord said, 'Lo I am setting a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel. I will not again pass them by. And the shrines of Isaac shall be desolated, and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste, and I will attack the House of Jeroboam with the sword.'*

This is the third oracle of the series. It is the vision of God testing Israel's uprightness as with a plumbline, and finding that Israel is anything but upright, He has determined to destroy temples and king. This time there will be no relenting, and the doom is fixed and sure. The oracle concludes with three 3:3 lines, but it is difficult to see any rhythm in the first half of verse 8.

*the Lord standing.* . . . Septuagint (Codex Alexandrinus) seems to have read 'man', a reading which Procksch favours, and with all the more justification since we would expect 'the Lord' to belong to the previous phrase, as indeed in Septuagint here, and in the Hebrew text also in the previous two visions. We have translated 'standing' and not 'stood' because the verb is a participle and the perfect tense. Strictly it should be 'having taken up his stand'.

by a *plumblinewall*. The Hebrew is literally 'a wall of a plumbline', and all the Versions read two words, though they found the second word difficult. Most scholars reject the second word as an accidental repetition from the following phrase. They say that the whole point about the wall is that it is not a plumbline-wall, i.e. not a truly vertical wall, and they find it difficult to interpret the Hebrew as meaning 'a wall built to a plumbline'. We see no difficulty in translating 'a plumblinewall', since however far from the true the wall has become, presumably a plumbline was used in the building of it. The wall has departed from its original uprightness, and that was true of the dynasty of Jeroboam, originally so zealous for Jehovah. The fact that it is a wall originally built with a plumbline is a material factor in the vision, since it was particularly a wall which was expected to be true; cf. iii. 1 f. It was not a wall roughly built without any particular care.

*plumbline*. The Versions found this word difficult. Septuagint has 'adamant', which apparently meant originally 'unconquerable' and came early in Greek literature to be used for the toughest known metal. This is in line to some extent with the use of the word '*anak*' in other Semitic languages, where it means 'lead'. Hence we get the rendering 'plumbline' from the use of a leaden plummet. Targum interprets with 'judgement', whilst the Vulgate ('plaster' and in the next phrase 'trowel') is guessing, as also Aquila with his 'lacquer'.

*shrines* (EVV, 'high-places', following the Hebrew strictly). The reference is to the hills which had been sacred places in Palestine from time immemorial, being largely taken over by the invading Israelites, usually with a large admixture of the original pagan rites.

## XLVI

*vii. 10-17. Then Amaziah, priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, 'Amos has been plotting against thee in the very midst of the House of Israel, and the country cannot stand all his words. For thus hath Amos said, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be completely exiled from his own land"'. Then Amaziah said to Amos, 'Thou seer, go, haste thee to the land of Judah, and eat thy bread there, and do your prophesying there; thou shalt not prophesy any more at Bethel, for it is a royal sanctuary and a royal place'. Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, 'No professional prophet am I, and no member of a prophetic guild am I. For a shepherd am I and a tender of sycomores, but the Lord took me from after the sheep, and the Lord said to me, "Go, prophesy concerning my people Israel". So now hear the word of the Lord. Thou sayest, "Thou shalt not prophesy concerning Israel, nor preach concerning the House of Isaac". Therefore, thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy estate shall be shared out by the plot, and thou thyself shalt die upon unholy soil, and Israel shall be wholly exiled from his own country.'*

These verses are a narrative account of the clash between Amaziah the high priest of Bethel and Amos the shepherd of Tekoa. Amaziah believes that Amos is heading a conspiracy against the ruling dynasty. It would not have been the first time that this had taken place, for Jeroboam's own dynasty itself, in the time of Jehu its founder a hundred years before, had been put on the throne by the prophetic guilds under Elisha. These guilds had also been instrumental in causing a revolution and change of dynasty in Damascus, when

Elisha encouraged Hazael to murder his royal master. Amaziah is therefore most anxious to put an end to what might easily prove to be the beginning of a revolution, which this time would oust instead of install a king of Jehu's line. But Amos denies that he belongs to the prophetic guilds. He denies that he is a professional prophet. On the contrary, he was following his own twin professions of shepherd and tender of sycamore trees, when he received a direct and unmistakable call from God Himself. This call was specific and clear. It concerned the fate of the shrines of Israel, the sister-kingdom of the North, of the royal house, and of the very kingdom itself. All alike were doomed, and this is the message which Amos was commissioned and commanded to deliver.

*eat bread*, i.e. go home back to your own country and earn your living there as a prophet. We cannot allow you to play the prophet here in this royal sanctuary and palace.

*professional prophet*. Amos is just as clear that he was called by God to prophesy concerning the sister- and rival-kingdom of Israel, as he is clear that he is not a *nabi*' in the usually understood sense of the term. This word here therefore must mean 'a professional prophet', i.e. 'a *ben-nabi*'', lit. 'a son of a prophet', but idiomatically a member of the class of prophets.

*shepherd*. The Hebrew word means 'cattleman', but it is generally agreed that it is an error for the not very dissimilar *noqed*, the word which is used of Amos in i. 1, 'of the *naqqad*-keepers of Tekoa' (see note on p. 5, *supra*).

*tender of sycomores*. The sycamore belongs to the fig family, and is distinct from the sycamine, which belongs

to the mulberry group. This tree, the sycamore, produces a small fig-like fruit, insipid, and eaten only by the poor. The word translated 'tender' is *boleş*, which means one who has to do with these figs, for the corresponding words in Arabic and in Ethiopic denote a species of fig. Just exactly what Amos did with these sycamore-figs is uncertain. According to Septuagint, he scraped them, whilst Theodotion and Vulgate say that he nipped them, though the Douai Version, like AV, makes him gather them. The Targum says that he owned them in the Shephelah, the hilly country to the west of the hills of Judah proper. Certain it is that these sycomores did not grow at such a high altitude as Tekoa, and whatever Amos did with them, he would have to go either west to the Shephelah or north to the warmer area near Jericho. There is evidence that this particular type of fig is infested with insects which have to be released by the nipping of the fruit, but there is no need to be more specific than the RV is with its 'dresser'.

*preach* (lit. 'drop not', as in EVV). The root is used of the clouds dripping water, of hands dripping myrrh, and generally of the flow of words. There is one example of the use of the verb in connexion with ordinary speech (Job xxix. 22), but usually it is used of prophetic speech, though not with any great frequency. The idea is that of Luke iv. 22, 'the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth'. The word is used here in Amos vii. 16 without any invidious meaning.

*unholy soil* (AV, 'a polluted land'; RV, 'a land that is unclean'). The only holy-clean soil is that of Israel, since Israel is Jehovah's land. 'Unholy soil' or, more accurately 'unclean soil', is therefore any foreign land; cf. Ezekiel iv. 13; Hosea ix. 3.

## XLVII

*viii. 1-3. Thus did the Lord Jehovah make me see, And lo a basket of autumn fruit. And he said to me, 'What seest thou, Amos?' So I said, 'A basket of autumn fruit'. Then the Lord said to me, 'The end has come for my people Israel. I will no more pass them by. And the singing-women of the palace shall howl in that day. Oracle of the Lord Jehovah. The corpses shall be many. In every place they shall have been cast. . . .'*

This is the last of the four visions which Jehovah caused Amos to see. The similarity of the questioning of the prophet in these visions (vii. 8 and viii. 2) with the questioning of the prophet Jeremiah in the two visions of Jeremiah i. 11, 12, and 13 f. is enhanced by the play on words of similar sound which is made both here and in Jeremiah i. 11 f. Amos says that he sees a basket of autumn-fruit (*qayits*), to which the reply of the Lord is 'The end (*qayts*) has come. . . .' Similarly, Jeremiah says that he sees a branch of an almond-tree (*shaged*), to which the reply is 'I am awake (*shoged*)'. Israel is a late summer-fruit ripe for disaster, over-ripe and ready to fall. The oracle opens in what seems to be prose, but concludes with four lines in 2:2 rhythm, though perhaps the qinah (3:2) rhythm is intended.

*basket.* The word means 'net' rather than 'basket'; cf. Jeremiah v. 27 'like a net full of birds' and the *kilubi* of the Tell-el-Amarna letters, which means a bird-net.

*autumn-fruit.* EVV have 'summer-fruit', but the Arabic equivalent has reference to the very great heat of the summer, and means late summer rather than early summer.



*singing-women.* The Hebrew word is the otherwise unknown feminine plural of *shir* (song), though feminine singular forms are found twelve times in the Old Testament. The difficulty is that songs can scarcely be said to 'howl', wherefore most scholars follow the Septuagint and see here a reference to singing women. The Vulgate, with a change of the sibilant, makes the hinges of the Temple 'scream' (so Douai).

*palace.* The word *heykhal* is used occasionally of a royal palace, the clearest instances being Psalm xlv. 15 and 8, but most often it is used of 'a palace of God', i.e. a shrine (1 Samuel i. 9), but especially of the post-exilic Temple at Jerusalem. The word appears both in Arabic and in Ethiopic with the meaning 'temple', whilst the Assyrian *ekallu* means 'palace, temple'. It is probably the old Sumerian *e-gal* (great house), which has come into Assyrian as a loan-word, and thence into other Semitic languages.

*shall have been cast.* . . . The verb is in the perfect tense, but can be translated as a future perfect. Either keep the Hebrew and understand the construction to be an impersonal one, or change the verb into a passive form. The last three or four words are difficult, especially the last, which apparently means 'hush'. Probably the end of the oracle is mutilated, and it might be better to read, 'many shall be the corpses in every place, they shall have been cast. . . .'

## XLVIII

*viii. 4-8.* *Hear this, ye that trample down the needy and lord it over the common people, and say, 'When will the new-month-day be past so that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath that we may display wheat for sale? and give short*

*measure and make the money-weight heavier and cheat with crooked scales; [buy up honest men for sixpence and the needy for a pair of sandals,] and the sweepings of wheat we will sell. The Lord hath sworn by the pride of Jacob: 'I will never forget any of their deeds! Shall not the very earth quake because of this, and every dweller mourn? For it shall all rise up like the Nile and [heave and] sink like the Egyptian Nile.'*

The oracle is in the main in 3:3 rhythm with an additional tristich in verse 6, and a 2:2:2 line in the second half of verse 5. Amos has returned to his charges of the ill-treatment of the common man by the wealthy classes. In this instance he is speaking out against their zeal in making money at any cost. They can scarcely wait until the rest-days of the new-month and the Sabbath are past till they get busy with their business of selling wheat with false measures and scales and generally illegal practices. The only result must be a general disaster in which the whole earth heaves and sinks like the Nile of Egypt, bringing desolation and sorrow upon all.

*trample down the needy.* The EVV have 'swallow up', as if the Hebrew means 'pant after', but see the note on ii. 7 (p. 39). It is possible that the two opening phrases of verse 6 are a marginal gloss inserted from ii. 7. In which case the latter half of verse 5 and the last phrase of verse 6 made originally a 2:2 line and a 3:3 line. This was most probably the case, since the reference to selling up the needy and so forth is an intrusion, and the charge of selling wheat-sweepings as good corn follows naturally upon the charges of cheating with measures and scales.

*lord it over* (so T. H. Robinson). The AV introduces the word 'even' and so makes tolerable sense, but most

scholars follow the Septuagint, which read 'oppress'. T. H. Robinson is influenced by the actual Septuagint rendering, and this does indeed make an excellent translation.

*new-month-day* and *sabbath* were the two sacred days of pre-exilic times. The general opinion is that both were originally monthly festivals, the one at the new-moon and the other at the full-moon, but that in course of time the Sabbath became a weekly festival. Both were taboo-days in the sense that all ordinary occupations were prohibited.

*give short measure* (EVV 'making the ephah small', thus keeping closely to the Hebrew text). The ephah was roughly equivalent to the modern bushel.

*make the money-weight heavier*. The EVV again follow the Hebrew literally with '(making) the shekel great', but this rendering does not make the practice plain. The Israelites were accustomed to weigh out the price that was paid in any transaction. Amos's charge is that not only did the corn-merchants use small measures and so give under-weight, but they cheated also by using heavier weights, so that actually a heavier weight of money was needed in order to pay for the corn that was bought.

*cheat with crooked scales*, lit. 'to bend scales (balances) of deceit'.

*by the pride of Jacob*. Some scholars (Wellhausen, Driver, and most moderns) consider this to be a reference to the proud arrogance of Israel; cf. vi. 1 ff., and especially vi. 8 (end); but it is better to regard it as a synonym for the Sacred Name itself; cf. Hosea v. 5, vii. 10; so Marti and others. Perhaps, as many think, the prophet's use of the same phrase in vi. 8 is decisive against this latter interpretation.

*like the Nile.* The Hebrew text actually reads, 'and it shall rise like the light', but the Versions and modern commentators are agreed that a *yodh* has been omitted in the course of transmission, and that we should read 'like the Nile'. This is the assumption of EVV. Cf. ix. 5, which is a later insertion, based in part on this very line.

*heave and sink.* Most moderns follow the Septuagint in omitting the word translated 'heave'. This is probably correct, and the interpolated verb probably was realized to be necessary after the error which made the first part of the verse refer to the rise of the dawn (cf. Genesis xix. 15 and often). The word 'sink' is an ancient correction of the Masoretes, who found another word (an *ayin* has been omitted) which means 'water, irrigate'. So that what the Masoretes apparently found was 'and it shall rise like the light (i.e. the dawn) and shall heave and irrigate like the Nile of Egypt'.

## XLIX

*viii. 9, 10. And it shall come to pass in that day—Oracle of the Lord Jehovah—that I will cause the sun to set at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, and I will make sackcloth appear on everyone's loins, and baldness on every head, and I will make it like mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a day of bitter sorrow.*

The oracle consists of two 3:3 lines, followed by three qinah 3:2 lines. The prophet begins with a description of the eclipse of the noon-day sun, and passes on to a scene of bitter and desolating sorrow. Some hold that the actual occasion of the oracle was an

eclipse which took place in the summer of 763 B.C. Some would transfer viii. 3 to follow either verse 9 or the first line of verse 10; certainly verse 3 fits this context better than the place where it is now found.

*I will cause the sun to set.* The Hebrew idiom is 'enter', from the idea that the sun comes out of his bed-chamber in the morning and returns to it at night; cf. Jeremiah xv. 9 and frequently. See p. 91, *supra*.

*in broad daylight*, lit. 'in the light of day', but we have followed T. H. Robinson's excellent rendering.

*your feasts.* The reference is to the pilgrimage-feasts, particularly to the joyous Feast of Ingathering, the vintage feast which marked the end of the agricultural year. See p. 101, *supra*.

*lamentation.* The Hebrew word is *Qinah*. The Hebrew metre changes here actually into the famous 3:2 qinah rhythm.

*sackcloth upon everyone's loins.* This and the following phrase, 'baldness on every head', are the two traditional mourning customs of Palestine. The custom was prohibited in the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy xiv. 1), but evidently it was common and legitimate in the time of Amos. The custom has been said to be connected with ancestor-worship, the idea being to establish an undying relationship between the living and the dead. It is more probable that the object was to provide the dead with that life-stuff which would enable them still to live in the realms of the dead. The hair, like the blood, was supposed amongst the Hebrews equally as amongst other primitive peoples to have particular life-giving properties, e.g. Samson's hair. The life-giving hair was shaved off and given to the dead, that they might have the benefit of its *mana*-power.

*mourning for an only son.* There is no need to assume here any reference to the weeping for Tammuz-Adonis, though the Lebanon area is the ancient home of Adonis.

## L

*viii. 11, 12. Behold the days are about to come—oracle of the Lord Jehovah—when I will send a famine in the earth, not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall stagger from sea to sea, and shall rush to and fro from north to east, to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.*

The rhythm of this oracle is uncertain, but it probably consists of three tristichs (unless the phrase 'Oracle of the Lord' is an interpolation, in which case we have one 3:3 line), then two 2:2 lines, followed by a 3:3 line and a 2:2 line. Wellhausen, Cheyne, Löhr, and others have objected to these two verses as being original on the ground that physical and figurative thirst cannot be so combined, and on general grounds of lack of strict consistency. But we see no reason why the prophet should not use the experience of a famine of bread and water as a basis for an oracle which would say that there will be a yet more serious famine, when the Lord abandons Israel completely to her own devices and ceases to send His prophets with His word. The time will come when the people, in their extremity, will long to hear those words which for so long they have left unheeded. It will then be too late. English scholars generally retain the whole oracle, and we see no reason why this should not be done. Marti, Sellin, and others would omit the latter half of verse 11 and the concluding phrases of verse 12 as being later glosses. These omissions have the effect of allowing Amos to speak of a great famine and

drought, in which the people will stagger and rush about from one side of the country to the other, but will find neither food nor drink. In this case the interpolations are those passages which refer to the famine for the word of the Lord, thus making the whole passage figurative.

*are about to come.* We have translated the phrase in this way because it became later one of the regular opening phrases of apocalyptic writings. The whole point of all apocalypses is that the things of which the writer speaks are coming to pass immediately. There is no thought in their minds of some far-distant consummation. The time is a time of crisis, and no time is to be lost if there is to be any repentance before it is too late. We would therefore never translate the phrase 'behold the days come' (or 'are coming'), since the meaning is that they are in the immediate future.

*famine.* The Arabic shows that the word meant originally 'to be roomy', hence 'to be voracious', and so we get the meaning 'famine'.

*rush to and fro.* This is an intensive form of a verb which means 'rove about'; cf. the Septuagint, 'shall run hither and thither'.

## LI

*viii. 13, 14. In that day fair maidens and youths in full vigour shall faint for thirst, and they shall fall and rise no more, they who swear by the Ashimah of Samaria and say, 'As thy god liveth, O Dan', and 'As thy Darling liveth, O Beersheba'.*

This oracle consists of three 3:3 lines. It is best to transfer the last phrase 'and they shall fall . . .' from the end of verse 14 to the beginning of that verse, as many

commentators suggest, e.g. Nowack, Marti, Sellin, T. H. Robinson, Moffatt, and others. This makes good sense from a sequence in the Hebrew which is none too satisfactory, and it also makes excellent parallelism throughout.

*shall faint.* The verb strictly means 'cover, enwrap', and comes to mean faint through the idea of the senses being enwrapped.

*youths in full vigour.* The word means 'chosen ones' and thence youths in their full vigour and strength.

*the Ashimah of Samaria.* The Hebrew reads 'the guilt of Samaria', i.e. the false deity who is worshipped there, or the idolatrous worship generally. There are three ways of dealing with the passage. The first is to assume that the name stands for the local god of Bethel; so Wellhausen, Cheyne, Nowack, Marti, Sellin, etc. The second is to change the *daleth* to a *resh* and read the *asherah* (or Astarte) of Samaria; so Graetz, Robertson Smith, Duhm, Procksch, and others. The third suggestion is to alter the vowels only and read 'Ashimah'. This is the name of a goddess who was worshipped as a consort of Jehovah by the Jews of Elephantine in the temple there in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C. It may be the same as the goddess Anath-Bethel, who is also mentioned in the Elephantine papyri, though it is more likely that a trilogy of deities was worshipped there, according to the strong local custom which seems to have prevailed whatever deities were introduced there. This last interpretation is that of Gressmann, Köhler, Edgell, and Cripps, and we judge it to be the most satisfactory.

*thy darling.* The Hebrew has 'the way of', but it seems better to read here a reference to some deity.



Wellhausen and others read, 'thy well', but the best suggestion is to change the *resh* into a *daleth*, and read 'thy darling' or 'thy patron'. This is the solution of Hoffmann, Winckler, T. H. Robinson, Moffatt, Weiser, and others. It has support from the personal name *Dodawياهو* (Yahu is my darling) of 2 Chronicles xx. 37 and in the occurrence of the name *Dodh* of (apparently) Jehovah's altar on the Moabite Stone.

## LII

*ix. 1-4. I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: Smite the capitals of the pillars, so that the thresholds shake as with an earthquake, and smash them with the sum total of them all (i.e. the people), and the rest of them I will slay with the sword. He among them that turns to flee shall not flee, and he that escapes among them shall not save himself. Though they dig down to Sheol, from there my hand shall take them, and though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them, and though they hide themselves [from my sight] on the sea-floor, from there I will command the Serpent and he will bite them. For though they go into captivity in front of their enemies, from there I will command the sword and it will slay them, for I will set my eye upon them for evil and not for good.*

After a prose introduction we have probably eight 3:3 lines, though this scheme, like any other, depends upon the assumption that odd words are actually later interpolations. The prophet speaks of the final doom and utter extinction of all those who have rejected Him, and the destruction begins in the very shrine which has been the centre of all their false worship. God commands that the capitals of the pillars be smitten,

and with such determined vigour that the Temple is shaken to its very foundations. Many will be killed in the first disaster, but there will be no safety for any survivor. Wherever they go in order to hide themselves, whether deep down in the earth or high up in the skies, amongst the caves on the top of Carmel or down in the depths of the sea, everywhere God will hunt them out and destroy them. Not even exile will save them, so fixed and determined is God's rejection of Israel, a rejection so richly deserved and so long delayed in God's great forbearance.

*the capitals of the pillars* (AV, 'lintel of the door'; RV, 'chapters'). The Hebrew word is *kaphtor*, used here and in Zephaniah ii. 14 of the capitals of pillars, the round and perhaps carved collar under the roof. The word is used in the Priestly Code frequently of the knobs or bulbs with which the sacred seven-branched candlestick of the post-exilic Temple was decorated. Septuagint, reading different vowels and encouraged by the earlier mention of the altar, has 'mercy-seat' (Coverdale's word, which we owe ultimately to Martin Luther), whilst Codex Alexandrinus has gone still farther and has 'altar'.

*and smash them. . . .* This second 3:3 line is difficult, and it is difficult to see why the heads of the people should be mentioned after the thresholds (not 'posts', as AV). This has led some (Van Hoonacker, Moffatt) to read 'ceiling' for 'thresholds', and picture the whole roof collapsing on the worshippers. Otherwise, if we would retain the Hebrew text, we might take *ro'sh*, not in its normal sense of an actual human head, but as meaning 'sum-total' (Exodus xxx. 12, and often in the Priestly Code). Yet again, we might follow Volz, Procksch, Sellin, Weiser, in reading an *ayin* for the

*aleph* in *ro'sh*, and translating, 'and smash them with an earthquake, the whole of them'. The difficulties can be removed by reading, 'and he smote the capital, and made the thresholds quake, and said, "I will smash them . . ." ' (so T. H. Robinson).

*save himself* (AV, 'be delivered'). The Hebrew word originally meant 'slip through', whence it can mean 'escape', 'give birth', and in Phoenician the noun can mean 'harbour, refuge', hence the name of the island of Malta, which was originally an old Phoenician harbour. See *Expository Times* (July 1944), 'The Width and Length of Words', vol. LV, 10, pp. 265-8.

*Sheol* (EVV, 'hell'). The shadowy abode of the dead, but here the meaning is geographical, i.e. dig deep down into the earth, just as in the next phrase we have 'climb up into the very skies'.

*search them out*. T. H. Robinson has 'hunt them out', which is better.

*the Serpent*. This is the Monster of the old Creation Myth, the Tiamat of the Mesopotamians, and the Rahab of the Hebrews. One variation of the ancient myth is that when the Hero-God (Jehovah for the Hebrews, Marduk in the sixth century B.C. Babylonian version) overcame the monster, He fastened her down in the depths of the sea and fixed a limit over which she should not pass (cf. Job xxxviii. 11). The idea survived in popular lore in the thought that when the sea roared (cf. Psalms xciii. 3 f.), this was the ancient Dragon of evil struggling to be free. As we have pointed out (see p. 122, *supra*, and the reference there), the Hebrew identified every Enemy of God with the dragon, until in early Christian literature the Beast that comes up out of the Sea (Revelation xii. 9, xiii. 1) is identified with Anti-Christ.

### LIII

*ix. 5, 6. [(It is) the Lord Jehovah of Hosts, He that toucheth the earth and it heaves, and every dweller mourns, and it rises all of it like the Nile, and sinks down like the Nile of Egypt. He that builds his terraces in the heavens and his arched-dome he fixes firm on the earth. He that calls to the water of the sea, and pours it over the land. Jehovah is His Name.]*

A doxology of three 3:3 lines. Scholars generally recognize this as an interpolation similar to the earlier doxologies, e.g. iv. 13, v. 8.

*it heaves* (EJV, 'melteth', 'shall melt'). The meaning 'melt' is clearly established for some forms of the verb, but we would translate the simple form of the verb after the meaning found in Arabic, i.e. the surge of the sea, e.g. *mawg* is a wave. This meaning is much more suitable when the context is an earthquake.

*his terraces.* The first half of verse 6 is a magnificent picture of the storied palace of God, reaching terrace after terrace high into the sky, and all built up on the gigantic arch of the sky, whose foundations are firmly fixed on the solid earth. The AV has 'troop' where RV has 'vault'. The reason is that the word found in the Hebrew primarily means 'that which is bound', and hence can be used of a 'bunch' of hyssop (cf. the Vulgate here, Douai has 'bundle'), and also of a group of men (2 Samuel ii. 25).

*calls to the water of the sea.* . . . The reference is to the heavy rains (the former rain, i.e. the monsoon), which comes up from the south-west; cf. 1 Kings xviii. 43 f.

## LIV

*ix. 7-8a. Are not ye as the Ethiopians to me, O ye sons of Israel? Was it not Israel that I brought up from the land of Egypt? (Yes), but (I also brought) the Philistines from Caphtor and Aram (Syria) from Qir. Behold the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will wipe it out from the face of the land.*

An oracle in the famous 3 : 2 (qinah measure). It marks the end of the genuine prophecies of Amos the herdsman of Tekoa, and is a lament on the utter rejection of Israel. The oracle is important because it lays down definitely that Jehovah's election (special choice) of Israel depends for its continuance upon right-action and true loyalty in Israel. Whilst Jehovah was intimate alone with Israel (iii. 1 f.), yet that does not mean He is indissolubly bound to them alone whatever they may do. Israel, the sinful kingdom, is rejected, and becomes to God no more than the Ethiopians. If it be said that God brought Israel out of Egypt, the answer is, Yes, but He also brought the Philistines from Crete, these uncircumcized Philistines whom you hate; and He also brought Syria from Qir beyond Damascus, this Syria which had been Israel's arch-enemy ever since Hazael murdered his master a hundred years before, and with whom Israel had been mostly at war ever since David's time.

*Caphtor.* The Versions generally identified this with Cappadocia, but it is generally agreed that it is Crete, the Philistines being the last remnants of the ancient Minoan civilization; see p. 22, *supra*.

*ix. 8b-9. [Except that I will not utterly sweep away the House of Jacob, Oracle of the Lord. For behold I am issuing commands, and I will make the House of Israel wander amongst all the heathen, just as (corn) is shaken to and fro in the sieve, and not a grain falls to the earth.]*

The last line of verse 8 is an addition by a later hand who excepts Judah from the condemnation of the prophet. We may suppose that the scribe lived after both Israel and Judah had ceased to be independent kingdoms, when the Dispersion was an actual fact. He wishes to maintain the doctrine of the Remnant, that in spite of all disasters, the true Israel will yet be gathered from the four corners of the world.

*grain.* The word elsewhere means 'pebble', and this is the rendering of the Targum, the Vulgate, and Aquila, but, assuming that this is the intended meaning, it still remains doubtful whether the passage is a promise of hope or a threat. If the sieve is a fine-meshed sieve, then the dust and the chaff falls through, and what remains is the good grain. But if the sieve is a large-meshed one, then the grain falls through, and what remains is the general rubbish of the threshing floor. This idea receives support from Ecclesiasticus xxvii. 4, where it is stated that in the shaking of a large-meshed sieve, only the refuse remains. But if this is the case, then it seems strange that the phrase in Amos ix. 9 should be an absolute denial that any 'pebble' falls to the ground. It should be the opposite statement that everything is scattered except the pebble. And so although many scholars (Gressmann, Volz, Sellin, and others) accept this interpretation, we find that the one adopted by EVV ('the least grain') is better. This is

the interpretation of the Septuagint, and of Jerome in his commentary. The meaning, then, is that, however wide and great the Dispersion, yet the faithful will be preserved. An alternative interpretation is to take the last phrase as a factual statement that none of the rubbish gets out of the sieve, but continues to be tossed to and fro. This would involve the ceaseless wandering of the Northern Kingdom, whilst Judah (House of Jacob) will be saved, even though but a remnant. On the whole we prefer this interpretation, since to say that 'not the least grain falls to the ground' in the sense that is generally intended, does not agree with the closing phrase of the previous verse, where it is admitted that a large part of Judah will be destroyed.

#### LVI

*ix. 10.* [All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, Evil shall not come near and befall us.]

This verse is difficult. It seems to have no discernible rhythm, and in this respect is similar to the previous section, though it is possible to see a 3:3 line in the latter half of verse 9. The verse can scarcely be from Amos himself, since he admits no survivor of the Northern kingdom, whether the sinful rich or the honest poor. It is best to regard the verse as an addition by a scribe who took the end of the previous section to mean that all the dispersed of Judah would be saved.

*befall.* EVV have 'prevent' in the old Elizabethan sense of 'hinder' with the idea of being there before; cf. 'prevenient grace'.

#### LVII

*ix. 11-12.* [In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and I will wall up its breaches and

*its ruins I will raise, and I will build it as in the days of old, so that they shall occupy what is left of Edom and all the heathen whom I have conquered. Oracle of the Lord who doeth this.]*

This is another oracle added by a later hand. It contains a promise of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, a rebuilding of ruined walls and dwellings, and an extension of the kingdom to the farthest limits of the great days of old. The oracle can be dissected into one 3 : 3 line plus a series of distiches (ten in all), of which some are in parallel.

*the tabernacle of David.* The *sukkah* is the booth or hut of the vineyards with its intertwined branches, now as ever a feature of the Jewish autumnal Feast of Tabernacles. It is difficult to think of this phrase being used at any time during the existence of the kingdoms, and it bears all the marks of a time long after the eighth century.

*wall up.* EVV 'close up', but 'wall up' conveys more accurately the sense of the Hebrew word.

*its breaches.* The Hebrew text varies its pronoun-suffixes from third feminine plural to third masculine singular, ending with third feminine singular. This is smoothed out in Septuagint, so that all are third feminine singular and refer back to 'tabernacle', which is a feminine word.

*what is left of Edom.* The singling out of Edom reflects the period after the exile, when the bitterness between the two peoples was most virulent; cf. Psalm lx; Obadiah 18-21; Isaiah lxiii. 1-6.

*whom I have conquered* (lit. 'over whom my name has been called'). This is the regular phrase which denotes conquest. The clearest example is 2 Samuel xii. 28,



'lest I (Joab) take the city, and my name be called over it'. We take the reference to be to all those countries which David had conquered, i.e. including Damascus, as far north as Hamath, and all the countries round about.

### LVIII

*ix. 13. [Behold the days are coming—oracle of the Lord—when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and he that treads the grapes (shall overtake) him that makes a trail of seed, and the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hillocks shall melt.]*

The oracle consists of an introductory phrase and two 3 : 3 lines. It is a promise of millennial fertility, when there is such speedy growth that the reaper will still be busy before the ploughman has finished his ploughing, and the vintage will begin before the sowing is done. And the best of wine will be so abundant that the very mountains and hillocks will flow with it. Such pictures of unbounded fertility are regularly found in promises of the Messianic Age where there is no mention of Messiah Himself, i.e. where God Himself is King, but are not usual in Messianic passages where there is a Messiah. The passage is very much later than Amos, and belongs to the post-exilic period.

*ploughman.* The Hebrew verb originally means 'cut in, engrave' and so 'plough', whilst the word translated 'reaper' primarily means 'bind', i.e. bind into sheaves.

*makes a trail of seed* (E.V.V. 'soweth seed'). Strictly, the Hebrew is 'trails (drags) the seed'; cf. Psalm cxxvi. 6, which is strictly, 'He that goes forth, weeping as he goes, carrying a trail of seed, shall surely come in with glad shouting bearing his sheaves'.

*sweet wine.* The word properly means 'that which is pressed out', e.g. a similar word is used in Rabbinic writings of 'pressed wheat', but the actual word is used in the Midrash to the Psalms of the heavens dripping sweet wine (on Psalm lxxiii).

*hillock.* The word is usually translated 'hills', but the word has more accurately to do with a swelling, hump-backed hill; so that 'hillock' more closely conveys the actual meaning.

## LIX

*ix. 14, 15. [And I will change the fortune of my people Israel, and they shall build the desolated cities, and dwell (in them), and shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and shall make gardens and eat their fruit. For I will plant them in their own land, and they shall not be uprooted any more away from their land which I have given them; saith the Lord your God.]*

The oracle provides the traditional happy ending which is usually found at the end of a book of the prophets. So essential is this happy ending that it is customary for the last verse but one of Malachi to be repeated after the dreadful threat with which the actual last verse concludes, and this verse is actually repeated in Hebrew Bibles generally. The oracle consists of four four-beat lines (tetrameters), and a rough parallelism is to be found in the middle three. The passage bears every indication of lateness.

*I will change the fortune* (EVV, 'I will bring again the captivity'). There is great confusion concerning this phrase almost throughout the Hebrew Old Testament. As Ewald realized many years ago, the passage originally consisted of a verb and noun from the root

*shub* (return), and meant 'I will turn a turning' (i.e. change a bad fortune into a good fortune), and was primarily associated with ideas of better times beginning with the New Year (cf. Jeremiah viii. 20). After the exile the turning and change of fortune which was most to be desired was the release from exile, with the result that the noun of the phrase (originally *shebuth*) became confused with a somewhat similar noun (*shebith*) from the root *shabah*, meaning 'captivity'. The result of this confusion was that the phrase came always to be translated in this way. In most cases no harm was done, for the two things coincided, but there is one outstanding instance where the original meaning of 'change the fortune' is certain, e.g. Job xlii. 10, 'and the Lord changed the fortune of Job'.

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