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## Scripture

Amos 1:1-5, 1:13-2:8

<sup>1</sup>1The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

<sup>2</sup>And he said:

The LORD roars from Zion,  
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;  
the pastures of the shepherds wither,  
and the top of Carmel dries up.

<sup>3</sup>Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Damascus,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because they have threshed Gilead  
with threshing sledges of iron.

<sup>4</sup>So I will send a fire on the house of Hazael,  
and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.

<sup>5</sup>I will break the gate bars of Damascus,  
and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven,  
and the one who holds the scepter from Beth-eden;  
and the people of Aram shall go into exile to Kir,  
says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of the Ammonites,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead  
in order to enlarge their territory.

<sup>14</sup>So I will kindle a fire against the wall of Rabbah,  
fire that shall devour its strongholds,  
with shouting on the day of battle,  
with a storm on the day of the whirlwind;

<sup>15</sup>then their king shall go into exile,  
he and his officials together,  
says the LORD.

2:1 Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Moab,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because he burned to lime  
the bones of the king of Edom.

<sup>2</sup>So I will send a fire on Moab,  
and it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth,  
and Moab shall die amid uproar,  
amid shouting and the sound of the trumpet;

<sup>3</sup>I will cut off the ruler from its midst,  
and will kill all its officials with him,  
says the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Judah,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because they have rejected the law of the LORD,  
and have not kept his statutes,  
but they have been led astray by the same lies  
after which their ancestors walked.

<sup>5</sup>So I will send a fire on Judah,  
and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Israel,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because they sell the righteous for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals —

<sup>7</sup>they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,  
and push the afflicted out of the way;  
father and son go in to the same girl,  
so that my holy name is profaned;

<sup>8</sup>they lay themselves down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge;  
and in the house of their God they drink  
wine bought with fines they imposed.

## **Devotional**

A masterful piece of street theater opens the book of Amos: imagine the crowds, cheering the prophet on as he condemns Israel's enemies and competitors! But then, Amos turns his attention to *Israel*,

unexpectedly identified as just like its neighbors, and condemned as are they for injustice, cruelty, and false worship. It is Israel that turns out to be the true target of Amos' prophecy, and of the Lord's wrath.

If what we expect in this season of expectancy is the deliverance of those like us, and the expulsion of the outsiders, then this will be an empty season of smug self-congratulation. May the unexpected twist of Amos' prophecy call us instead to a holy Advent of self-examination, and renew our commitment to justice for and the inclusion of those on the margins.

**Prayer**

O Lord, forgive our easy embrace of those like us, and our suspicion of the stranger. Empower us to participate in your ministry. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.