

Amos 7:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plummet. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plummet in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

Analysis

And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plummet (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲלֵי מְהֻאֵתָה רָאָה עַמּוֹס וַיֹּאמֶר אֲنָה) —God engages Amos in dialogue, asking what he sees. This pedagogical method appears in other visions (Jeremiah 1:11, 13; Amos 8:2; Zechariah 4:2, 5:2). God doesn't just show visions; He ensures the prophet understands by prompting articulation and then providing interpretation. Amos's simple response, "A plummet" (anak, אֲנָה), sets up God's explanation in the second half of the verse.

Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plummet in the midst of my people Israel (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּנִי שֶׁם אֲנָה בְּקָרְבָּן עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל) —God announces His action: "I will set a plummet" (hineni sam anak, הִנֵּנִי שֶׁם אֲנָה). The phrase "in the midst of my people Israel" (beqerev ammi Yisra'el, בְּקָרְבָּן עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל) indicates thorough, comprehensive inspection—not superficial examination but penetrating assessment of the nation's core. The possessive "my people" (ammi, עַמִּי) is poignant; despite their rebellion, God still calls them His own, making their failure more tragic.

I will not again pass by them any more (לֹא-אָסַף עַד עֲבֹר לֵוּ) —this is the turning point. The verb avar (עַבְרָר, "pass by/pass over") can mean to overlook, spare, or forgive (Proverbs 19:11, Micah 7:18). God has been "passing by" Israel's sins, giving opportunity for repentance, interceding through prophets, relenting from judgment (as in verses 3, 6). But now He declares: "I will not again pass by them"

(lo-*osif* od *avor* lo). The double negative (lo... od, "not... again/any more") emphasizes finality. This is the last warning; the next step is execution of judgment.

This marks a crucial shift in Amos's visions. The first two prompted intercession and divine relenting; the third offers no such opportunity. Why? Israel's persistent impenitence has exhausted God's patience. Amos 4:6-11 catalogs judgments God sent to provoke repentance—famine, drought, crop failure, plague, military defeat—each ending with the devastating refrain: "yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD." After repeated warnings ignored, God declares judgment irrevocable. This same pattern appears with Pharaoh (Exodus 7-14), Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:25, 3:14), and Judah under Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 15:1-4).

Historical Context

This verse (c. 760 BC) marks the point of no return for northern Israel. Though judgment wouldn't fall immediately, it became inevitable. Within 40 years, Assyria began conquering Israelite territory; by 722 BC, Samaria fell after a three-year siege, and Israel ceased to exist as a nation. The ten northern tribes were deported to Assyria and replaced with foreign peoples (2 Kings 17:5-6, 24), fulfilling Amos's prophecies.

The tragedy is heightened by knowing how close Israel came to salvation. Twice God relented from judgment (verses 3, 6) in response to prophetic intercession. But when the plumbline inspection revealed structural unsoundness—deep-seated covenant violation, systematic injustice, religious syncretism—God declared "enough." The principle applies universally: God's patience, though vast, is not infinite. Proverbs 29:1 warns: "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Israel had been "often reproved" through Moses (Deuteronomy), Joshua (Joshua 24), Samuel (1 Samuel 12), prophets, judges, and calamities. They hardened their necks; now destruction would come "without remedy."

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God "will not again pass by" His people, and how should this affect our response to conviction of sin?
2. How do we discern whether current difficulties are warnings providing opportunity for repentance or irrevocable judgments?

Interlinear Text

Then said	And the LORD	H413	H4100	H859	what seest	unto me Amos	H5986
H559	H3068				H7200		
Then said	A plumbline	H594	H559	H136	Behold I will set	A plumbline	H594
H559					H7760		
in the midst	of my people	H5971	Israel	H3808	I will not again	pass by	H0
H7130		H3478		H3254		H5674	

Additional Cross-References

Amos 8:2 (References Lord): And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

Lamentations 2:8 (References Lord): The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

Jeremiah 15:6 (References Lord): Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

Isaiah 28:17 (Parallel theme): Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

2 Kings 21:13 (Parallel theme): And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

Micah 7:18 (Parallel theme): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.