

# Thunder and Cyclone

- Hebrew prophets to the destruction of Israel

## ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

With the division of Solomon's empire into two kingdoms at his death in 922 BC, Israel found herself helpless in a hostile political environment with fifty years of bloodshed and intrigue. The challenges from the surrounding nations were enormous:

- Syria, under Ben Hadad of Damascus, was a constant thorn in Israel's side.
- Assyria, one of history's cruelest nations, was pacing restlessly in her Mesopotamian lair with ambitions to rule the world. Under Ashur-nasir-pal II (883–859 BC) she began to flex her muscle. During Omri's day she attacked Syria and Lebanon and 'washed her weapons in the Mediterranean'. A sign of what was to come.

After Solomon's death in 922 BC the kingdom was divided into two. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat ruled in the North and Rehoboam, son of Solomon, ruled in the South. Israel was in the midst of a hostile political environment, not just from within but also from the surrounding nations:

- Syria
- Assyria

The Northern kingdom of Israel immediately succumbed to the other gods of the surrounding nations, despite Elijah and Elisha's warnings.

The Assyrian empire to the north was a people renowned for ruthlessness and cruelty. The Assyrian king extracted tributes from states in Palestine and Syria and rebellions in the northern kingdom of Israel were swiftly dealt with, e.g. Samaria was sacked in 722 BC and its population deported.

In the south Judah paid the required tribute, although Hezekiah withheld it in the late 8th Century BC.

Eventually Assyria fell to Babylon who captured Asshur in 614 BC, followed by Ninevah a few years later. Although Assyria allied itself with Egypt, Babylon was too strong.

## GOD'S SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

### Omri and the nations

Omri's seizure of the throne of the northern kingdom (in a military coup) in 876 BC came not a moment too soon,

Omri built friendly relations with all the nations he could:

- Omri married his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of king of Tyre, bringing both economic advantage and spiritual corruption;
- Omri's daughter Athaliah married Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, bringing some peace between both nations;
- Omri made alliance with Syria against the Assyrians.

Omri is mentioned on the 'Moabite Stone' / 'Mesha Stele', which refers to conflict with Ahab Omri's son and the 'Black Obelisk of Shalmaeser', which refers to Jehu as 'son of



Omri' (ironic as he was the one who destroyed the 'house of Omri'!) but it shows the impact that Omri had on the Assyrian understanding of the leadership of Israel.

## Omri and Israel

Omri, though dismissed in a few verses in the biblical text, was a very capable ruler. The Assyrians referred to the kings of Israel as 'sons of Omri' long after his dynasty had disappeared. Things that took place in his reign set the scene for much that was to happen in the remaining years of Israel's history:

- He built the new capital, Samaria, which like Jerusalem was the property of the king himself;
- He built beautiful buildings with ivory inlays;
- The conditions of the poor in Israel deteriorated with debt, slavery, etc.;
- Corrupting Canaanite religion from Phoenicia took a firm hold; Jezebel worshipped Baal Melkart – 'king of the underworld', priests of Baal were given official status, much of the population gave only lip service to Yahweh;
- True worshippers of Yahweh were persecuted, killed or went into hiding. But a new era of the prophetic voice was dawning with individuals such as Micaiah to Elisha keeping the covenant faith alive.

## Prophetic mind

Prophets are not new to our story, but from now on they play an increasingly dominant role. We get our English word 'prophet' from the Greek, which means 'one who speaks for another'. The Hebrew word *nabi* is 'one who communicates the divine will' (it literally means 'to bubble up'); it has both the sense of 'an announcer' or 'caller' and 'one who is called', both of which are important aspects of being a messenger of God.

The prophet is essentially a 'forth teller' rather than a 'foreteller'. They are God's spokesperson, God promises to put divine words into their mouth. The prophet may foretell the future but this is always a secondary feature.

Prophecy is first and foremost a revelation of the character of God. It is rooted in the covenant, the standard against which all prophecy is to be judged. Prophecy may build upon the covenant but it will never contradict it. Even revelation about the future is essentially a revelation about God's character; knowing how God will act in any particular circumstance tells us more about his nature, and how we also should act now.

The prophet speaks essentially to the people of their own time and out of their common circumstances. Yet the prophet's message is not the result of mere observation or thought, but from having stood in the counsels of God (Amos 3:7). Because their message is a revelation of the character of God, its significance reaches beyond the prophet's own time and later application may be different.

## Prophetic message

The prophet uses the 'messenger style', carrying the stamp of authority with its 'thus says the Lord'. The prophetic message is usually a simple, tightly packed, pregnant, authoritative proclamation, which may be explained and expanded as desired. The 'messenger style' was important for practical reasons:



- Most prophets faced real hostility, the style gave maximum impact in the minimum amount of time;
- The essentially poetic form made it easily remembered and passed from mouth to mouth;
- Hostility often led to the prophets using 'acted prophecies' to gain public attention.

## Prophetic movement

Moses is the prophet par excellence. Not only leading the Israelite people through the 'Exodus experience' but the one who proclaimed the true meaning of the event as God's self-revelation. By Samuel's time the title *nabi* refers to a special class of people within Israelite society, who by their ecstatic experiences brought the 'spirit' back into the covenant and revived the heart of the nation. They formed 'guilds' under a 'father' figure (e.g. Samuel, Elijah and Elisha), moving from place to place, delivering oracles but closely associated with the sanctuaries such as Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Jericho and Ramah.

Increasingly the prophets became 'professional', working closely with the priesthood; and sadly in time lost much of their 'edge', to the extent that we see Amos openly disassociating himself from them (Am 7:14).

In the 8th century BC we see a new prophetic phenomenon developing, individuals from every walk of life proclaiming God's word to his people with independent zeal:

- They have no prophetic background;
- They delivered oracles in polished literary style;
- They spoke simply in response to 'the burden of the Lord';
- They often returned to obscurity having delivered their messages;
- They spoke to the nation at times of crisis;
- They took issue with rulers and politics but never engaged in revolutionary activity;
- They were a reform movement within the broad prophetic tradition, reawakening the nation's memory to the Sinai Covenant and applying it to their contemporary situation;
- They appeared at times of emergency, like the judges of the past, but unlike them they did not carry out acts of judgment.

## REMNANT AND JUDGEMENT

### Elijah: distinctive prophet

#### □ Rough man from Tishbe

The sudden appearance of Elijah before Ahab (1Kgs 17:1) marks a new beginning in God's dealings with Israel, and prophecy would never be the same again. It is his uniqueness that leads him to be viewed as the 'forerunner to the Messiah' (Mal 4:5); he is the one who represents the prophets at the transfiguration. There are also parallels between Elijah and Moses, which are also significant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The parallels between Elijah and Moses are too many to be accidental:

- Both had been shepherds.
- Both were spoken to by God on Sinai.
- Both were fed miraculously; Moses by 'manna' and Elijah by ravens.
- Both challenged the 'gods' of their day, Moses the 'gods' of Egypt and Elijah the 'gods' of Canaan.
- Both controlled the powers of nature; Moses the Red Sea, Elijah the Jordan.



The stark difference between Elijah and the 'sanctuary prophets' is seen in the fact that Ahaziah recognises him from the description 'a hairy man with a leather belt around his waist' (2Kgs 1:8). This identifies him in the dress of the poorest peasants of the day, which emphasises the contrast between him and the 'professional' prophets who were respected establishment figures. Ironically, in later times, the hair garment seems to have become the indispensable badge of the prophet (Zech 13:4)!

Elijah came from Tishbe in Gilead, among the hills of trans-Jordan near the desert. He was probably either a poor tiller of the soil, or more likely a shepherd. His unique knowledge of hiding places and water sources gave him the ability to appear and disappear suddenly. The fact that his father's name is not mentioned suggests he came from a family with no social standing whatever.

His social and economic background would have been simple and harsh. We can only assume that at some point he must have had a dramatic encounter with Yahweh and his covenant, which he saw in austere terms. Elijah is probably the least political of the prophets, his sole concern being to demonstrate the absolute power of Yahweh to his people.

#### □ **Contest on Carmel**

On the summit of Mount Carmel the contest between Baal and Yahweh, which began at the Conquest, became clearly focused and brought to crisis (1Kgs 18:17-46). Baal claimed power over the rain and the earth; events showed beyond question that it is Yahweh, not Baal, who is God.

The seaward end of Carmel where the contest took place is believed to have been especially dedicated to the worship of Baal; so he was defeated on his own ground. The cry of the people is, 'Yahweh is the Mighty One.'

#### □ **Encounter on Horeb**

Immediately after the remarkable events at Carmel we find Elijah running in fear towards the Sinai. This shows us that the startling events had in no way won the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. Jezebel's vow to kill Elijah (1Kgs 19:2), as he had killed her prophets, shows that she did not consider herself defeated at all, quite the reverse; the prophet realises she is quite capable of fulfilling her words.

Elijah's journey to Horeb is a return to his covenant roots. The earthquake, wind and fire recall both the original covenant making at Sinai and the recent events on Carmel; but on this occasion they are not the medium of revelation. They may be a gentle rebuke not to always trust in the dramatic to communicate God. Instead God speaks with 'a voice of gentle stillness', an awesome vocal silence.

God chides him for being a fugitive from the places where history is being made. He agrees with Elijah's complaint against Israel. He tells Elijah that he has been, and is to be,

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- Both left no site on earth where anyone knew they were buried.
  - Both stood at beginnings; with Moses 'the children of Israel' began, with Elijah 'the remnant of Israel' began.
  - Both stood with Jesus at the Transfiguration.



an instrument of God's judgment. But there will be a 'remnant'.<sup>2</sup> The '7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal' (1Kgs 19:18) are symbolic. The number represents the inner quorum of faithful covenant people with whom God's purposes will be fulfilled; ordinary people whose exact number is known only by God. They are an underground community of faith in a hostile and corrupt environment. Elijah's (and Elisha's) work is not to save the nation from judgment – things have gone too far for that; rather it is to increase the size of the 'remnant'.

## **Elisha: serving and succeeding**

### **□ Youth and passion**

Elisha is a unique and significant prophet. His uniqueness begins with his call. Other prophets have their disciples; only Elijah has a successor. He was not merely a servant but was prepared to follow the one whom he served. Unlike other prophets Elisha did not receive a call direct from God, just the touch of the rough prophetic cloak (1Kgs 19:19-21). At the beginning it was merely an invitation to walk God's unknown path, 'washing the hands' of Elijah as his servant.

In contrast to Elijah, Elisha came from a family of considerable social standing; any field needing twelve yoke of oxen to plough it shows this. He was on the verge of maturity but not yet married. He served the great prophet for many years and yet even at the end there was uncertainty about all that God had for him. In asking for a 'double portion' of Elijah's spirit (2Kgs 2:9) he was asking for the portion of the 'first born' (Deut 21:17), not that he might be greater than his master, simply that he might fulfill his calling. His desire was more than granted.

### **□ Sealing and enlarging**

Like Elijah, Elisha was an instrument of God's judgment through whom the 'remnant' would be created. God had said on Sinai, '... the person who escapes the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay' (1Kgs 19:17). These words were fulfilled in 722 BC when final judgment fell on Israel; it was not simply the end of a state but of a whole society, which even a few years before had appeared to have considerable economic strength. The heart of the nation was corrupt; rebellion against the covenant had borne its rotten fruit. Elisha did not wield a sword, but many years after his death the violence of Tiglathpilezer III of Assyria fulfilled the prophecy. The nation's failure to respond to Elisha was the final seal upon her fate.

Elisha turned from the nation as a whole and devoted his ministry to those who had wholeheartedly embraced Elijah's message. God's judgment on Israel was pronounced at Sinai; from then on the ministry was to the 'remnant'. The 'remnant' were the human embodiment of the truth; they were also a sign that God had turned from the nation as a whole. There were those in Israel who would imagine they had been spared the other forces of destruction, but they would find in Elisha the ultimate destruction – God's rejection of them.

The many stories that were remembered about Elisha illustrate one or other of the two sides of his ministry: the sealing of judgment or the enlarging and serving of the remnant.

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<sup>2</sup> Literally meaning 'the physical embodiment of the truth'.

In the 50 years between Elisha and Amos we find little of the promised remnant surviving; but this is because it was a 'remnant'. Israel's population in Ahab's reign is estimated at about one million, the remnant would have been less than one in 200. Further, few of the remnant were among the rich and mighty and so rarely made the headlines. However, 2 Chronicles 30:1, 18-21 makes it clear that they were there. Few would have been of sufficient social importance to be deported, but they kept the flame alight through the darkest days. Elisha had been successful.

#### □ **Jehu's purge**

The moment for judgment upon the house of Omri had arrived. In 842 BC Elisha sends one of his prophetic band to anoint Jehu, the commander of the army. This simple act was enough to ignite the explosive situation into revolution. The army rose to support him. Driving his chariot at proverbial speed to Jezreel he purges the royal family and court with unspeakable brutality. The horrific details burnt themselves into the memory of generations (2 Kgs 9:1-37).

While Jehu was motivated by political ambition, his actions are also a prophetic sign. By triggering the events, Elisha reveals the nature of the judgment that Israel is bringing upon herself:

- It left the nation weak, destroying the cream of its leadership;
- At a stroke all the prosperous political alliances carefully established with other nations were cut; bitterness sowed among many;
- The worship of Baal was destroyed in the name of Yahweh, but no real faith was established in the hearts of the people;
- It did nothing to check the social abuses that Amos had to challenge later;
- The fact that Judah's King Ahaziah also died in the purge left the way for evil Athaliah to come to power in the South;
- Vulnerable to attack from Syria, Jehu was forced to pay tribute to Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III, but gained very little advantage from the act.

#### **Borrowed time**

By the time Jehu's great-grandson, Jeroboam II, had come to the throne (786 BC) the situation had changed completely. Syria had been so damaged by the Assyrians she was no threat to Israel, and having spent so much of her energy on Syria the Assyrians were little threat either; but this would soon change! For a time there was 'peace' of a sort, in fact Israel was to enjoy the greatest period of political and economic prosperity since her split with Judah; the lull before the storm.

Before we move into the final chapter of Israel's story we must comment on the ministry of Jonah.

#### **JONAH: GOD'S UNIVERSAL LOVE**

The story of Jonah is one of the best known in the Bible.<sup>3</sup> All we need to note is that either just prior to or early in the reign of Jeroboam II (786 BC), when Assyria was a fast-growing threat on the horizon, God tells his prophet to go to her capital, Nineveh, with the message that unless she repents she will be judged. We can quite understand Jonah's refusal to

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<sup>3</sup> This story presents a number of historical and literary problems for biblical scholars, which has led many to believe it should be read as a parable, with its main theme of mission and God being a God of love as the essential truth it communicates. However, Jesus' reference to it as an apparent historical document and its setting in the reign of Jeroboam II leads some to disagree with this view.



obey. To remain silent and see judgment fall on such a fearful enemy could only be good! But God's heart is completely the opposite. No matter how evil the nation may be she was to have an opportunity to repent.

The whole message of the prophecy is that 'God is love'. Jonah himself had to learn that lesson though he did everything he could to resist it. Nineveh repented and judgment was averted. However, her continual evil ways meant that judgment was only postponed. In 612 BC this great nation crumbled within weeks and Nineveh fell, never to be rebuilt.

Jonah reminds us, "God loves those you hate the most!"

## **AMOS: THE CRY FOR JUSTICE**

### **Shepherd from Tekoa**

The ministry of Amos, like that of Elijah, is another milestone in the unfolding faith and prophetic voice among the Hebrew people. Amos was a simple herdsman from Tekoa in the hill country of Judea, who supplemented his income by tending sycamore trees. Spending much time with his sheep in the harsh wilderness of Judea he developed a way of thinking about the covenant similar to the stark extremes of the monochrome contrasts of the desert. Luxury and subtle tones played no part in his life. He viewed every situation with the simple question, 'What does Yahweh think of this?'

The profitable markets of Israel made Amos a frequent visitor north, which gave him first-hand experience of life in the northern kingdom. The trade fairs, at which he sold his wool, would have coincided with the main religious festivals, and what he saw of the social and religious corruption would have sown the seeds from which his message was born.

We do not know the precise circumstances of Amos' call but it is clear that within the isolation of the desert he had a dramatic encounter with Yahweh. In his own words, 'the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, "Go prophesy to my people Israel"' (Am 7:15). Again, 'The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?' (3:8). The five visions of doom that make up the final portion of the book must have played an important part in his call, so that about 764 BC Amos could do nothing other than wrap his cloak around himself and travel north with his message.

The best setting in which to understand Amos' public ministry seems to be the seven-day New Year Festival centered on the sanctuary of Bethel. Here he would have gained the attention of the majority until, maybe in fact only after about three days, his work was cut short after being expelled by the irate High Priest Amaziah (7:10-13).

### **Justice and righteousness**

The theme of the New Year Festival would have been the expectancy of the Day of the Lord; that moment in history when God would come in judgment and destroy his enemies and establish this people as his all-powerful nation. Amos begins by calling judgment upon all Israel's neighbours (1:2-2:3); this would have brought excited interest and enthusiasm from the crowd. He even condemns his own nation Judah (2:4-5). Once he has the people's undivided attention he suddenly turns on his Israelite listeners, proclaiming that the greatest judgment of all was to fall upon them, Israel. No one, not even those who



thought they were God's chosen people, would escape judgment unless they lived an upright covenant life.

Amos then begins to lay before the people a catalogue of the nation's crimes (2:6ff.). It shows the depths to which she has fallen, though she covered everything with a veneer of piety and prosperity:

- The rich lived in extravagance on 'beds of ivory' (6:4), only a few enjoyed the wealth of the nation;
- The rich were only able to live the way they did because they ground down the face of the poor with injustice (2:6-7); many had to sell themselves into slavery (8:6);
- The judges who should have administered the covenant turned a deaf ear to their pleas and deliberately perverted justice in favour of the rich (2:6);
- The rich women encouraged their husbands in their evil so that they could enjoy an extravagant lifestyle (4:1-3);
- Shopkeepers were using false weights and measures with the express purpose of cheating the poor; and would groan when it was the Sabbath as it interrupted their money-making;
- There was gross immorality in the nation due to cult prostitution; a father and son have sex with the same girl, on ground dedicated to female fertility gods, believing Yahweh is indifferent to it (2:7-8), worshipping Yahweh as though he were Baal;
- The Nazirites and prophets are suppressed, silencing religious zeal and God's truth (2:11-12).

Amos pours scorn upon all the extravagant religious ritual that is going on in the sanctuary; Yahweh refuses to have anything to do with it (4:4-5). Amos has much to say about what Yahweh expected of the nation, but the essence of his message is summed up in the key verse 5:24:

'Let justice (*mishpat*) roll down like waters  
and righteousness (*zedekah*) like an ever-flowing stream.'

God is not concerned with worship and sacrifice; rather it is 'justice' that is the essence of obedience to the covenant. Fleming James said of Amos, 'No man felt more strongly about the exploitation of the poor.' To Amos, judgment was inevitable: there was no heart in the nation for repentance. He sees some hope in the future (9:1-15), but it only lies beyond a devastating act of justice by God.

## **HOSEA: COVENANT LOVE**

### **Personal tragedy**

There remained yet one final prophetic voice to cry out within Israel as she hurtled blindly to her doom; Hosea's. Whether or not as a young man he had heard Amos at Bethel we can only guess. Although we know a great deal about one aspect of his life, his marriage, Hosea is essentially an anonymous prophet. He came from a family with some social standing, as his father's name is mentioned. He probably lived in the provincial heartland of Israel, Ephraim or Western Manasseh. It would seem very likely that he came from a family that were among the 'remnant' who were continuing in the teachings of Elijah and Elisha.





God's first command to Hosea was to marry Gomer (1:2); this event was to be the force that shaped his ministry. The story has proved a moral problem for many; it has even been suggested the story was given as a dream. The best reconstruction of events appears to be that Hosea married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, in good faith, her future unfaithfulness being unknown to him. She bore him three children (two sons and a daughter) to whom he gave prophetic names (sign-children of his message). After the birth of the children, of whom the paternity of only the first is certain, Gomer left Hosea. Why she left we don't know; frustrated prophet's wife wooed by a neighbour with a roving eye?

Hosea is heartbroken and is left with three children. Everyone must have expected Hosea to divorce Gomer – he had every right under covenant law – but he did not. Then one day, probably some time later, he found her for sale as a slave in the local market place. No longer attractive to her lovers, maybe even after a time as a cult prostitute, most likely in debt; and he bought her (3:1-5). The price he paid is uncertain;<sup>4</sup> if it was 30 shekels it was a high price for a slave and emphasises his love for her, if it was only 15 shekels it suggests that she was 'going cheap', 'soiled goods', emphasising his love in another way. So Gomer was now both his wife and his slave. Hosea was promising to be faithful to her, but did she ever respond to his love? We are not told.

### Steadfast love

Out of this personal tragedy Yahweh was able to share his own heart with Hosea about his own covenant relationship with Israel.<sup>5</sup> The heart of Hosea's message is that Yahweh and Israel are in a covenant relationship like marriage, which Israel had broken by committing adultery with Canaanite gods. But like Hosea with Gomer, Yahweh had not divorced Israel, the judgment that is coming upon her is not vindictive, but its purpose is that through it her heart might once again be turned towards her 'husband' God. Yahweh would take the nation through the 'wilderness' again that he might win her heart afresh, another 'honeymoon period'. Beyond judgment would be a covenant renewed (2:14-23). The touchstone of Hosea's message can be seen in 6:6:

'For I desire steadfast love [*chesed*] and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.'

For Amos the hallmarks of the covenant were 'justice' and 'righteousness', for Hosea they are 'steadfast love' and 'knowledge of God'.

The Hebrew *chesed* is difficult to translate; e.g. steadfast love, loyal love, loving faithfulness, trustworthiness, mercy, covenant love, etc. It is a 'covenant' word describing what is required of two people bound in solemn covenant; it is the heart of marriage. *Chesed* can never be motivated by legal obligation but rather rises from that inner spring of loyalty which is in the heart of the relationship itself; it has the necessary quality of being constant, firm and steadfast.

The phrase 'knowledge of God' overlaps with *chesed*. Hosea says that the root of Israel's problem is that she does not 'know' God. This is not 'intellectual' knowledge as such, but 'covenant knowledge'; that knowledge of intimate understanding which includes the 'will' as well as the 'mind', knowledge of the 'heart', the response of the whole person to God, like

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<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew text is corrupt at this point.

<sup>5</sup> The book of Hosea has been insightfully described as 'God singing the blues'.

the husband and wife in the sexual experience of marriage. Because Israel did not 'know' Yahweh she was estranged from her husband; but the day would come when she would 'know' him (2:20).

How long Hosea ministered we do not know, nor do we know how he met his end. Whether or not he lived to see the beginning of the siege of Samaria is unknown.

## **ISRAEL'S COLLAPSE**

### **Spiral into oblivion**

With the death of Jeroboam II in 746 BC the story of Israel becomes a total disaster. In 745 BC Tiglathpilezer III came to power in Assyria, and under his vigorous rule this fearsome nation embarked upon a determined campaign permanently to conquer the lands beyond the Euphrates, which promised rich timber and mineral resources. Assyria had made numerous campaigns during the previous hundred years but had never been strong enough to hold her gains; now she was coming to conquer, occupy and rule. Wherever they ruled the pattern was the same:

- They deported the upper classes of the population to minimise resistance.
- They levied heavy taxation and tribute upon the population.
- They put down any opposition with terrible brutality, ruling by fear.

Probably even a strong nation with wise leadership would have found it nearly impossible to weather the storm ahead; but Israel, her inner sickness breaking out into the open, ceased to function as a nation and simply writhed in the death throes of unrestrained anarchy. Within ten years following Jeroboam's death Israel had five kings, three of whom seized the throne by violence; none of them had any right to rule (see 2 Kgs 15:8-18).

It was into this maelstrom that Hosea proclaimed his words. Israel was like a ship in a hurricane in the final stages before breaking apart. Power was being snatched by one hand after another, law and order collapsed, neither life nor property were safe. The crimes Amos had attacked had come to full fruit with the whole social fabric ripped from top to bottom. Without the covenant there was no base upon which to build the future.

In 724 BC, already crushed by Assyria, Israel attempted to rebel against her new masters; it was suicide. Shalmanezar, son of Tiglathpilezer, completely occupied the land and laid siege to Samaria, which fell two years later to Sargon II. Some 27,290 of her citizens were deported to upper Mesopotamia losing their identity forever. Israel's political history was ended. Many of the 'remnant' fled to Judah. Those Israelites who were left became mixed with the people the Assyrians brought in from other areas, to create descendants, who we later meet as the Samaritans.

### **Questions**

1. Why did the empire; built by David, collapse so completely at the death of Solomon?
2. What is the significance of the concept of the 'remnant' in prophetic ministry; both in Hebrew history and 'salvation history' as a whole?



3. If Amos was ministering as a prophet today, what aspects of our society do you imagine he would attack as 'injustice' and 'unrighteousness'?

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