

# ***Contemporary Mystic Christianity*** **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

## **Books Of The Prophets**

### **From the Kingdom's Division to the Fall of Sumaria**

After the unification of Israel under David and the establishing of a national dynasty of Hebrew rulers at Jerusalem, the Israelites achieved a period of peace and prosperity during which they took to themselves the civilization and culture — including the language — of the land wherein they dwelt. This amalgamation of both blood and culture bore fruit as a new culture that combined Canaan's mellow beauty with the austere power and rugged inspiration of Israel's Yahweh-worship. Foremost representatives of the new Hebrew civilization were the prophets, who appear in Israelite history as contemporaneous with various sacred and historical documents. Although the connection cannot always be proved, it is evident they represent a parallel development in the great spiritual upsurge of this people. Thus, the elder prophets appear during a period that produced the documents of the Hexateuch; Jeremiah seems to speak from the pages of Deuteronomy, discovered during his lifetime when Josiah caused the Temple of Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

It has been shown that a definite, if unwritten, Mystery tradition, the Kabbala, came down with Moses and Joshua from Egypt and the desert, and that this tradition culminated in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. It was guarded by Schools of Initiates which continued in existence to the time of Christ, sometimes working in harmony with the Temple hierarchy; sometimes not.

More than half of the Old Testament is composed of prophetic literature. The influence of this literature on Western civilization is incalculably great.

The Hebrew Word for prophet means one who proclaims, or one who carries out a mandate as of some higher power. The first mention of communities or Schools of Prophets occurs in the history of Samuel. One such School was located at Ramah (the Most High) on Mt. Ephraim; another was at Beth-el and still another at Gilgal. Beth-el means house of God and Gilgal a circle — that is, an inner or secret group. Knights of the Round Table formed such a circle. The spiritual ecstasy, the exaltation of neophytes in these Schools found beautiful expression in singing and dancing.

Initiatory rituals of such Schools must of necessity be harmonized with the course of Nature; hence, the symbolism is basically astronomical. Circles of sacred stones anciently used in these rituals are as common to

biblical as to English history. Beth-el was the place where Jacob set up a sacred stone to commemorate the "ladder" of the Mysteries revealed to him there; Gilgal was the circle of stones where the followers of Joshua were circumcised after their entrance into Canaan. The highest aspects of Canaanite religion were astronomical; the star-gods were worshipped, but emphasis in popular worship was placed on earth-deities or spirits of agriculture and fertility. Above all was the God of Heaven and Eternity, Jah or Jahweh. "Our Father which art in Heaven" was the God of the conquering Hebrews to whom Ramah was particularly sacred.

Samuel labored intimately with the reigning kings of Israel, Saul and David. So did "Gad, David's seer" (II Samuel 24:11) and "Nathan the prophet" (I Kings 1:32), who were teacher and spiritual adviser to the young Solomon. To them is attributed the original authorship of history covering the reigns of David and Solomon as it is incorporated in the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

Under Elijah and Elisha, however, a separation took place between statecraft and religion — corresponding chronologically to the division of the original Israel into North and South Kingdoms, wherein political conditions had become such that the prophets could no longer lend their authority to, activities that were purely selfish and materialistic. Meantime the organized priestcraft

constituting the state church became ever more rigidly ecclesiastical and more entangled in rituals without understanding their meaning. The priests, therefore, were consistent supporters of prevailing modes while the prophets were protestants. In a spiritual sense, the prophets, although representing the oldest tradition, heralded the newest; in them glowed the ever-living fount of Divine Wisdom whereas the priestcraft possessed nothing but a stagnant pool of remembered knowledge. From the beginning of history the prophets have been voices crying in the wilderness to make straight the way for ushering in a new day and a new way of life.

The priests, occupying places of prominence and power in connection with Temple worship, adhered strictly to form and ceremonial. That the social position of the prophets was much lower was indicated by their dress. Priests were robed in the finest of white robes; prophets in dark, coarse garments made of camel's hair. The priests also bore a distinguishing mark between the eyes — the scar of an incision which, by its location, pointed to the seat of spirit and symbolized certain work done by an awakened ego,

The most important prophetic utterances were usually given at gatherings of the multitudes on great feast days. Early prophecies were lyrical, often accompanied by music. Prophetic messages contained both an inner and an outer

meaning, the inner or deeper being reserved for pupils of prophetic Schools or sanctuaries. The outer messages, given in public to the multitudes, were in the nature of prophetic warnings concerning coming doom if their ways were not abandoned for the ways of the Lord (Law).

The reign of Jeroboam II of Israel was a time of the greatest prosperity since the days of Solomon. The wealthy erected magnificent palaces enhanced by ivory panels and gorgeous interior decorations. The populace was given to mad and drunken debaucheries. Under their glamor and ritual, religious sanctuaries fostered moral depravity. Obscenities were indulged in by young and old without delicacy and without shame. Leaders of both church and state, who should have been the inspiring guardians of the people, had become leaders in debauchery and every kind of vicious amusement.

Such were the conditions which called out the prophets of the eighth century before Christ: first of all Amos, "a man standing in the confines of light and darkness like day on the misty mountain tops." (781-740 B.C.) The Book of Amos has been called one of the world's smallest classics.

## **Amos**

### **Prophet of Social Righteousness**

Amos represents no established tradition. He received his summons through no formal process of consecration. In the midst of his simple and homely duties, through the "clear desert air the word of God breaks upon him without medium or sacrament." Without pride or ostentation, Amos states simply and tersely: "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Amos tells us that he was "among the herdsmen of Tekoa." He was also, he declares, "a gatherer of sycamore fruit." The sycamore is an oriental desert tree entirely unlike our own tree of a similar name. It grows to a great height and is easily cultivated in sandy soil, requiring little water. The fruit is like a small fig, sweet and watery, and was in common use by the poor as food. The ripening of the fruit is hastened by pinching or piercing, which is evidently the meaning of the prophet's words when he styles himself "a dresser of sycamores."

Amos, (the name means burden) sets the pattern for many prophets who came after him, especially for one who was to follow in his steps across the wastes of this same Judean desert more than seven hundred years later; of this latter the Supreme Prophet said: "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Simplicity, austerity and humility are forevermore the triple crown of the Hebrew prophets, and the voice of a

prophet crying out in the name of justice and mercy has never been absent in the land.

Tekoa was a small village twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Here Amos tended sheep in the holy region sacred from the days of Melchizedek to the Shepherd Initiates. The tree whose fruit he gathered was the ancient Egyptian Tree of Life, sacred to the Mother Goddess, Nut.

The prophet lived and prophesied during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. Since material prosperity was considered a mark of favor with the Gods, people went to great lengths to appease them and win their protection. Hundreds of maidens were dedicated to Temple service and took part in the elaborate ceremonials. Vast numbers of priests and craftsmen were listed in the retinue of the gods. Yet with all this, the poor multiplied in the land as oppression and cruel injustices fell upon them.

Many were the ways in which injustices were heaped upon the poor in Amos' day. They could be imprisoned for trifling debts and sold into slavery for minor crimes. Extortionate taxes and levies could be exacted upon the slightest pretext. Unjust charges and bribed witnesses filled the prisons and kept them filled. The pleasures of life belonged altogether to the privileged classes while the masses found life one long, intolerable burden of bitterness

and cruelty. Against such evil the first prophet of the divided Kingdom lifted up his voice.

Amos has been called the first socialist. "They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" and "your treading upon the poor" were the scathing accusations Amos hurled at astounded and indignant inhabitants of wealthy Samaria. The signs of the times were plain to his discerning eyes. The downfall of the luxury-loving city was not far off and Amos was endeavoring to stay its corruption.

*Amos 5:15*

*Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.*

As with everyone who has courage to stand alone and give out advanced teachings, Amos was derided, persecuted, without friends or favor in the public eye. But his prophecy concerning Jeroboam and Israel was fulfilled when, in 722 B.C., Samaria fell captive to Assyria.

*Amos 7:11*

*For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.*



He gained the bitter enmity of the priests against whose mode of living and false teaching he spoke with harsh forthrightness. One of these was Amaziah, high priest during the reign of Jeroboam, a man of worldly ambition and little thought for spiritual truth.

*Amos 7:12-13*

*Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:*

*But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.*

The first chapter of Amos contains an admonition and a warning to the seven states adjacent to Palestine. Because of its harmonious structural proportions, this part of the Book has been likened to Marc Anthony's famous address in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Amos was of a deep, fervent and mystic temperament. His song is strong, vigorous and, at the same time, poetically beautiful.

Astrologically, Amos represents Aries, the sign of the Shepherd Teacher and the fearless, daring pioneer. Esoterically, his song deals with transformation of the body.

*Amos 5:2,4*

*The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.*

*For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live.*

*Straight and narrow is the way and few there be who are ready to make the sacrifice to find it. Amos variously calls upon man to emancipate himself from the thralldom of his old life and come forth into a new one.*

*Amos 7:4,7,8*

*Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and then it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.*

*Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou, And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more.*

The plumbline is the ascending life force and the wall is the aura of protection builded through the conservation of this force. The auras of persons who have passed through this overcoming present a very different appearance from those who have not. Such have indeed a wall of protection; the colors of the aura are more scintillating, they possess a greater depth and clarity; the "background," too, is more clearly defined.

The outer Temple is a reflex of the inner (bodily) structure. Does the wall lean from the perpendicular? The Lord (Law) hears the accurate measurement (the plummet). If the measure does not tally, the bodily temple wastes away in disease, old age and death.

The fire that devoured the deep refers to the occult Law of Consequence which governs throughout the universe. Only by practicing the Golden Rule can the Golden Age be restored to the earth. Man's inhumanities to man must always take their toll in famine, flood and fire. The earth evolves with man and reflects his nature. All occult teachers have brought this message, but none have stressed it more than those whose teachings are incorporated in the Christian Bible.

*Amos 8:11-13*

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*

*In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst.*

When the people's spiritual status fell so low that the complete destruction of the Temple was threatened,

spiritual truth was withheld for a time. This same condition occurred at the time of the Flood, and again on the threshold of the Arian Age, when the breaking up of the Taurean civilization of Chaldea caused Abraham and his people to be led forth into Canaan. The Lords of Destiny always withdraw esoteric Teachings for a time when mankind lapses into a particularly dark period of materiality, but this does not mean that the Teachings are lost forever. A chosen messenger of the Brotherhood of Light appears precisely at the point where darkness prevails and lights the Path leading to the Promised Land.

*Amos 1:3,4*

*Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:  
But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which will devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.*

The prophet is speaking for others besides the house of Israel. Like all great prophets, his voice is heard beyond the borders of his own land. It is plain that he speaks for the ears of those dwelling in Damascus as well as for inhabitants of Samaria. Shall Israel fall and her enemies triumph? Israel is punished for her transgressions but so also are other sinning nations, for God is not God of Israel

alone but of all mankind. And He is a God of justice who hears the cries of the poor. Damascus also must suffer for her sins.

Similar pronouncements are made concerning three other states, namely, Gaza, Edom and Ammon. The Lord declares He will punish each of them "for three transgressions or four." The Law's declaration in every instance is that these punishments will be executed by fire. The numbers three and four refer, respectively, to man's triune spiritual nature and to the quaternary equipment of his personality, the combined principles constituting the sevenfold man. The spirit working in and through form develops the soul body; it is the building of this body that constitutes the chief work of the race during our present Earth Period. This is possible only through pure and righteous living. Those who fail to build lose their rank as pioneers and become stragglers. This holds true for both nations and individuals. The failure to build the soul body causes great suffering here; also after death, when the fires of conscience burn because of neglected opportunities for building a vehicle necessary to sustain the ego in higher worlds.

Amos closes his song with a picture. of the redeemed, the Chosen, those who make themselves worthy of a place among pioneers of the New Race and New Age.

*Amos 9:11,14,15*

*In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:*

*And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.*

*And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.*

— **Corinne Heline**