

# Amos 6:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-6/amos-61-3/>

*Amos warns the preeminent leaders of Israel and Judah against their false confidence of security and urges them to learn from what happened to three nearby city-states—Calneh, Hamath the great, and Gath.*

The prophet Amos warned the proud leaders of Israel and Judah against their false confidence of security. In so doing, he cried out, *Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria*. As noted before, the term *woe*, which can also be translated as “Alas” (Amos 5:18), was used in ancient Israel as a mourning shout at funerals (Jeremiah 34:5; 1 Kings 13:30). Here in Amos, it is used to describe the impending destruction of the Israelites who were *at ease* and felt *secure* in their homeland. Israel’s destruction was final, and the prophet lamented for the living people in anticipation of their death.

To be *at ease* is to feel confident and safe. To *feel secure* is akin to being *at ease*. The meanings of the phrases overlap greatly, and Amos used them here to warn the proud Israelites who had an easy life *in Zion* and *in Samaria*. The place called *Zion* is a mountain located on the eastern side of *Jerusalem*, the capital city of Judah (Amos 1:2). The place called *Samaria* was the capital city of Israel. Since *Zion* (or Jerusalem) and *Samaria* were the two capital cities of the southern kingdom of Judah and northern kingdom of Israel respectively, the wealthy citizens of both countries enjoyed residing in them. During the days of Amos, the leaders of *Zion* and *Samaria* were untroubled. They had peace of mind and had an easy life.

According to Amos, these high-society people were *the distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel* looked for advice and for handling the affairs of the nation. But since those preeminent leaders were practicing injustice, Amos directed his message of *woe* to them, asking them to learn from the destruction of some other great city-states. More specifically Amos commanded them to *go over to Calneh and look, and go from there to Hamath the great, then go down to Gath of the Philistines*.

The places named *Calneh* and *Hamath the great* were two cities situated in northern Aram (Syria). They were conquered during the Assyrian campaigns under Shalmaneser III in 854–846 BC. The city called *Gath* was one of the five major cities of the Philistines and was the closest to Judah. It was captured by Hazael of Aram in 815 BC (2 Kings 12:17), and later by Uzziah of Judah in 760 BC (2 Chronicles 26:6). Amos’s audience would likely have known about what happened to *Calneh, Hamath the great, and Gath*. The prophet asked them to look at the humiliating condition of these cities so that they might think about their own vulnerability.

Having commanded the notable leaders of Israel and Judah to learn from the destruction of these great cities, Amos asked them two questions, saying, *Are they better than these kingdoms, Or is their territory greater than yours?* These questions served to cause the complacent leaders of Israel and Judah to think about their own impending destruction as they reflected upon that of these three *kingdoms*. Amos wanted to let them know that they had false assumptions if they

thought they were *better or greater than* these three *kingdoms*. No, they were not *better or greater*. They, too, could be conquered just as these *kingdoms* were conquered.

In a similar vein, Amos asked them another question: *Do you put off the day of calamity?* To *put off* something means to push it away, to delay, or to reject it. Here it meant that the leading citizens of Israel and Judah rejected *the day of calamity*, that is, *the day* when the Suzerain (Ruler) God would intervene to judge them (Amos 5:18). For them, *the day of calamity* was reserved only for the pagan peoples, those who did not have a covenant relationship with the LORD.

So, the prophet asked a follow-up question: *And would you bring near the seat of violence?* This meant that the notable citizens of both kingdoms, by their sinful acts of greed and injustice to those not having political power, would cause violent people to come and overtake them quicker. Since they were so preoccupied with their luxurious lifestyle along with their sinful actions, they behaved as though *the day of calamity* would never overtake them. But the Israelites were wrong in thinking that they would not be judged. In fact, their sinful actions accelerated the judgment day because God expected them to know better since they had His covenantal laws. Thus, the notable men of Israel and Judah were in for an unpleasant surprise.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>1</sup>Woe to those who are at ease in Zion  
And to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria,  
The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,  
To whom the house of Israel comes.  
<sup>2</sup>Go over to Calneh and look,  
And go from there to Hamath the great,  
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.  
Are they better than these kingdoms,  
Or is their territory greater than yours?  
<sup>3</sup>Do you put off the day of calamity,  
And would you bring near the seat of violence?**