

Amos 7:7-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-7/amos-77-9/>

Amos also envisions a plumb line that the LORD sets amid Israel to determine their level of devotion to Him. Israel fails the test, so God will destroy their religious structures.

In Amos's third vision, he saw *the Lord standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand*. A *plumb line* is a string or a cord with a lead weight used by builders to ascertain that walls are vertically straight. The weight pulls the string straight so that it provides a standard for a straight vertical line. In ancient times, a *plumb line* could also test settled mud-brick walls to see how far they had tilted. Any wall that tilted too far was to be destroyed and rebuilt. Amos here sees a vision of God *standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand*, which is a picture of God making an assessment of straightness, and soundness.

The prophet then reported a dialogue he had with God. The LORD initiated the conversation and said to Amos, *What do you see, Amos?* And Amos replied to God to let Him know what he saw. He simply *said, A plumb line*. Then the LORD spoke again to disclose His intentions to Amos. He declared, *Behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel*. God makes clear here that the picture Amos sees is of God making an assessment. It will turn out that the vertical wall, representing Israel, needs to be destroyed and rebuilt.

The Suzerain or Ruler God would set a *plumb line* amid His covenant people to determine how straight their devotion was to Him. God found the Israelites to be a crooked generation (Deuteronomy 32:5–6). The people of God deviated completely from the ways of righteousness. They gave themselves up to idol worship and social injustice. They had once been built correctly but now were out of line. Therefore, God announced that He would no longer have compassion on His covenant people, as He had before (vv. 1–6). This time God precluded Amos from any further appeal and said: *I will spare them no longer*. God's judgment on the disobedient Israelites was inevitable.

Since the Israelites failed the test of the *plumb line*, God would judge them severely. He would cause *the high places of Isaac to be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste*. Like the names 'Jacob' (Amos 3:13) and 'Joseph' (Amos 5:6; 6:6), the name *Isaac* is here used for the northern kingdom of Israel. The author specifically mentioned two types of religious structures: *high places and sanctuaries*.

In ancient Israel and Judah, many *sanctuaries*, located in both cities and countryside, were identified as *high places*. They were often equipped with altars, stone pillars, and groves of trees. They were regarded as elevated platforms, built in the open air, where religious rituals could legitimately be performed. For example, Samuel offered a sacrifice on a high place the day before he anointed Saul as king: "Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind" (1 Samuel 9:19).

David also “*left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which He commanded Israel*” (1 Chronicles 16:39–40). That means, these *high places* were legitimate places of worship.

However, these *high places* were later associated with idolatry. According to the Kings material, Jeroboam I of Israel (931–910 BC) made two golden calves: one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and “made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi” (1 Kings 12:31). Jeroboam II of Israel followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam I. As king, he was supposed to lead the people of Israel in all righteousness and truth. He was given the authority to encourage the Israelites to obey the covenantal precepts of God. But he (like all his predecessors) failed to do so.

Therefore, when Amos spoke negatively of the *high places*, it is not because they were regarded as unauthorized places of worship (see for instance, 1 Samuel 9:12). Rather, it is because the Israelite worship was not pleasing to the LORD since it was full of idolatry and hypocrisy. Amos said God would destroy such religious structures (high places and sanctuaries) in Israel to preclude the nation from being able to worship.

Moreover, God would *rise against the house of Jeroboam II with the sword*. The term *house* is used for lineage or dynasty. God said that He would rise against the dynasty of Jeroboam II *with the sword*, meaning that He would likely use violence to destroy the dynasty of King Jeroboam II of Israel and remove his lineage from sitting upon the throne of Israel. This time, the prophet did not intercede on behalf of the people because He knew God was going to accomplish His will.

Amos’s prophecy against the dynasty of Jeroboam II was fulfilled in 752 BC, when shortly after the death of Jeroboam II, his son Zechariah “became king over Israel in Samaria” but was soon assassinated, and the throne passed out of the line of Jeroboam (2 Kings 15:8–12).

Biblical Text

**⁷ Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. ⁸ The Lord said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,
“Behold I am about to put a plumb line
In the midst of My people Israel.
I will spare them no longer.
⁹ “The high places of Isaac will be desolated
And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste.
Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”**