

### Amos Lesson 3 Articles

Throughout history, there have been rich people who have enjoyed a sumptuous standard of living without giving a thought to the sufferings of others. It seems incredible that in the awful Auschwitz concentration camp of the Second World War, Nazi officers could enjoy wonderful banquets, even calling on some of the Jews to play music to them before they were taken to the gas chambers. The ‘notable men’ of Israel lolled on beds of ivory in drunken stupors, eating choice lambs and fattened calves, and singing drunken songs—accompanied by music that was a travesty of the style of the great King David (5:23; see 1 Sam. 16:15–23 and 2 Sam. 23:1). Their whole lifestyle was a mockery of all that was honest, good and true. They covered themselves in expensive perfumed ointments, thinking that they would hide the stench of their foul breath and atrocious behavior.

All this was done by those who thought of themselves as leaders of the people—yet they did not shed one tear over the ‘ruin of Joseph’—Israel’s wretched condition. This phrase reminds us of the patriarch Joseph, whose brothers cast him into a deep, foul pit, caring little for his distress. Even Reuben, who wanted to rescue Joseph, did nothing (Gen. 37:23–25 and 42:21).

Amos makes it clear that these ‘notable men’ of Israel demanded preferential treatment and recognition. And that is exactly what they got. God promised that they would be the first—but the first to be dragged off as captives (6:7). In fact he declared that they would be ‘at the head of the defeat march into captivity’.<sup>21</sup> Now, instead of drunken revelry, they would discover that the party was over and the end had come.<sup>1</sup>

**Verse 6:8** “By himself” (*běnapšô*, “by his soul”) means “by the Lord’s own person,” the most binding form of commitment. The Lord’s character, integrity, and power stood behind the oath. Amos identified the message to follow as an oracle (*ně’um*) of “the LORD God of hosts” (literally). God’s authority and resources supporting this oracle made it awesome. The target of the three verbs (“abhor ... detest ... deliver”), though stated variously, is primarily Samaria.

**Verse 6:9** The imperative (“Hush!”) and the instruction not to mention the name of the Lord perhaps anticipate a possible response to prayer or lamentation in the face of the disaster. S. Paul explains that to invoke the name of the Lord in prayer or lamentation would risk additional disaster by the Lord’s appearance in response to the mention of his name.<sup>268</sup> Or perhaps the idea is that funerary rites in the Lord’s name would be inappropriate since these have apparently died under the judgment of God.<sup>269</sup> Another interpretation is that it is too late to pray for deliverance since all the men are dead (“we must not mention” is an interpretation of the negated infinitive “not to mention”).<sup>2702</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bentley, M. (2006). *Opening up Amos* (pp. 80–81). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, B. K., & Page, F. S. (1995). *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Vol. 19B, p. 122). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.