

Offending God's Holiness
Amos chapter 4

1. Define the attribute of holiness as it pertains to the character of God. Consult a theological dictionary if necessary.

Open Your Heart: O Holy One of Israel, teach us what it means in practical terms to live every moment of our life in holy communion with You.

For those who truly long to know God, His holiness provokes awe and humility—it stirs up in us a desire for obedience and righteousness—it inspires purity and compassion. God's holiness also creates a sense of unworthiness and an intense longing for the Spirit to transform us.

With these images of holiness in mind thoughtfully **read** Amos 4:1-5. Locate Bashan on Map 2.

2. What is your first response to the gripping word picture Amos paints in this section?

Note: The area of Bashan was a very fertile plain on the east side of the Jordan River. The very best breed of cattle were raised in Bashan; they were well-fed and fat.

3.
 - a. How are the wealthy women of Samaria portrayed by Amos in 4:1? And why?
 - b. What does the Sovereign LORD swear to do to the “cows of Bashan?” (4:2-3) State in your own words the penalty that would eventually come from the just and holy God.
4. What do you think God would point to in our culture that would be comparable to the “cows of Bashan?”

Consider the contrast in behavior of the women in Amos 4:1 (the “cows of Bashan”) with the pattern outlined in Proverbs 31:10-31 and 1 Peter 3:1-6.

5. What is the challenge of the holy God to you from Proverbs 31 and 1 Peter 3? List several ways you could begin to implement these challenges today.

It is interesting that Amos offers a fresh portrait of the moral corruption in Israel in chapter 4 since he has already spoken about that corruption in the previous chapter. *But here the corruption is shown to coexist alongside Israel’s fervent religious practices!*

6. **Reread** Amos 4:4-5. Here the word “sin” (*pesa*) carries the basic concept of “rebellion.” With what shocking command does Amos address the people (4:4-5)?

7. 1 Kings 12:26-33 provides the background for how this corrupt form of worship came about. What do you discover from this passage that makes their worship so detestable to God?

Bethel and Gilgal are specifically mentioned because of the manner in which they had perverted the places that held the most sacred memories to Israel.

8. Summarize the amazing things God had done for His covenant people in prior generations at Bethel and Gilgal. (See Genesis 35:1-19 and Joshua 4:19-24.)

In the next segment of chapter 4 Amos relates a series of events from Israel’s past that he interprets as God’s divine interventions. **Read** and carefully observe Amos 4:6-11. *For us they can be important lessons from history.*

9. What were these harsh conditions designed to achieve in the lives of the Israelites?

Amos 4:6-11 amplifies the theme that was introduced in Amos 3:6—“When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?” One commentator offers the following insights about these verses. “The striking feature of these events is its presentation as Yahweh-history. The God of Israel is speaking in the first-person and proclaims these disasters as His own deeds in the past. His narrative takes the separate sporadic hardships of Israel’s life in Canaan and makes them coalesce into a continuous cohesive record in which Yahweh’s personal dealings with Israel are disclosed. Reciting this narrative as a record of Israel’s failure to respond to Yahweh assumes that Amos had a basis for recognizing the blows as the personal overtures of Yahweh and that the people should have recognized them as such and responded.” – Mays

10. With this background in mind summarize each disaster and response that the LORD discloses.

Verse 6

Verses 7 and 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

Verse 11

11. How does God act towards His children today when we offend His holiness by refusing to let go of sin in our lives (Hebrews 12:5-6; Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12; Revelation 3:19)?

12. What is your attitude toward God’s loving interventions in your life? Supply an example.

The LORD is now prepared to declare to Israel the consequences of such long standing opposition to Himself and His will. His words have an aura of finality.

13. Consider the command issued to the people in Amos 4:12. What is the meaning of “**prepare to meet your God, O Israel?**” What could “prepare” imply?

