

Starving for Words from God

International Bible Lesson

Amos 8:1-14

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“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” (Amos 8:11—KJV).

“The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11—NRSV).

Why would God do such a thing as send a famine “of hearing the words of the LORD”? First, the Israelites had brought the famine upon themselves when the politicians and priests persecuted the true prophets of God and made them stop preaching the words of the LORD. Second, after God sent Amos from Judah to the Kingdom of Israel to speak His words, King Jeroboam and the priest Amaziah commanded Amos to “never again prophecy at Bethel,” because the “land is not able to bear all his words” (Amos 7:10-13). Third, the political and religious establishment led the people to worship Baal and other idols at the festivals meant for the exclusive worship of the LORD. After the Israelites committed themselves to turning from the LORD and from listening to His words, God quit raising up and sending any true prophets to them. Then the people experienced the famine of hearing the words of the LORD and their lack of divine bread had a spiritual effect on them similar to a famine of bread and water. For this reason, God declared through Moses and Jesus emphasized, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). True prophets of God speak holy words more valuable than pearls, and Jesus said, “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you” (Matthew 7:6).
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Thinking Further

1. Name some of the ways God communicated with Amos and the Kingdom of Israel.
2. What kind of vision did God give Amos when He said that the end has come upon His people?
3. Why would the songs of the temple become wailings?
4. Why did many Israelites look forward to the new moon to be over?
5. What kind of famine did Amos say God would send upon Israel? Why do you think God said He would do that and how do you think would He do it?