



The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Virginia



Committee on Masonic Education

DEO Presentation Program Paper

AMOS, WHAT SEEST THOU?

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What are the lessons taught by the Walking Scripture from the Fellowcraft Degree (Amos 7:7-8) – which as you recall goes like this:

Thus he shewed me: and behold the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said a plumb line. Thus said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will not again pass by them any more.

First, let me tell you a bit about Amos. He was a Judean shepherd, who lived in the mid 700 B.C.E., in a small town in Judah named Tekoa, located in the southern kingdom of Judah. Tekoa was at the center of a large farming district and located about six miles south of Bethlehem, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and eighteen miles west of the Dead Sea. Living there, it was natural that Amos would come to raise cattle and sheep and grow fig trees. He often travelled to the northern kingdom of Israel to market his animals, and while he never became a citizen of Israel, he grew to know a great deal about the land and the people, and his advice was frequently sought.

It was a time of great economic well-being in the northern kingdom (Israel) and peace with the southern kingdom (Judah). The increases in wealth led to an extensive building program. The simple brick of earlier days gave way to buildings of hewn stone and ivory decorations. The people had “winter houses” and “summer houses” (Amos 3:15). They had houses of “ivory: (Amos 3:15) and houses of “well-hewn stone” (Amos 5:11). They reclined on “beds of ivory” (Amos 6:4); sprawled on couches; ate and drank to their fill; anointed themselves with the finest oils; were surrounded by music (Amos 6:4-7); in short they were “at ease in Zion.”

There were elaborate religious ceremonies, and the shrines were crowded, but the faith was shallow. Amos was chosen by God to be a prophet, and he come into this panorama of self indulgence and sinful conduct with a message from God warning the people of Israel that unless they repented their sinful ways, their destruction was assured, in short, to repent or perish. This warning has echoed throughout history and is relevant far beyond the Israelites.

Amos is described as one of the Twelve Minor Prophets. The term “Minor Prophet” simply relates to the length of each book of the Bible named for each of them. These books ranged from one to fourteen chapters.

Amos expressed God’s message in terms that a Craftsman would readily understand. He described a vision shown to him by God. In this vision, God represented to Amos the judgments he was about to bring upon the people of Israel for their many iniquities. Amos, verses 7 and 8, describe God’s illustration to Amos of His attitude regarding the sins and transgressions of the people of Israel.

In the verse used in the Degree of Fellowcraft, the Lord, standing on a wall made by a plumb line, signifies the laws and commandments He has communicated to the people of Israel in order to build them into one people in a just and upright nation. The plumb line in His hand symbolizes the strict justice that he will visit on them according to their iniquities.

“I will not again pass by them anymore.” Or said another way, God will no longer show them any mercy.

Amos was a reformer who preached justice and righteousness, but his time as a prophet, which he spent in the city of Bethel (Amos 7:10), lasted but a little more than a year (Amos 1:1). He was denounced by Amaziah the priest, and forbidden to preach in Israel.

The underlying theme of this Scripture, as it applies to the Degree of Fellowcraft is to admonish the candidate that he is now crossing the threshold from youth to manhood. As an adult member of society, he will be expected to exemplify the highest standards of behavior and uphold the civil laws. And, as a member of the Masonic Fraternity, he will be more strongly bound to the Fraternity by strict moral guidelines.

As an Entered Apprentice, he was introduced to the most basic moral principles, loyalty, trust and charity, which serve as the foundation upon which to build strong relationships. His development as a Fellowcraft exposes him to greater responsibilities that require a stronger discipline.

Of course, this Walking Scripture speaks to us not only as a candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry, but also as Master Masons. Just as the plumb line was set in the midst of His people, Israel, symbolizing God’s standard of divine righteousness, so the Plumb line is

equally in our midst to guide us on toward a straight and upright path in our various stations before God and man. The Plumb is a symbol of uprightness of conduct whereby we develop the conscience by which each person must live. This idea is closely tied to the concept of Justice, for in truth, Justice is giving every man his due.

In summary, Masonry teaches the necessity of morality. It requires us to be good men and true, charitable, truthful, and honorable. We are to be just in our dealings with our fellows and patient with the erring. We are to be righteous when tried by the Square, upright when tried by the Plumb, and keep our passions in due bounds by the Compasses.

These are not meant to be high sounding but empty aspirations. Every candidate must possess such character in order to be qualified for admission, and every Mason must strive to perfect his character throughout his life.

Reference:

The Degree of Fellowcraft, William Mosley Brown, P.G.M.
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