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Woe to You Who Add House to House

5: 8-10

Woe to you who add house to house DIG: This sermon elaborates on what God said about the condition of the people in the last verse (5:7b). What have the people in the first woe done that is so offensive to the LORD (see 3:14-15)? How would you react if you reaped only a tenth of what you had sown? How does this curse contrast with the promise of blessing in Amos 9:13-15? Why will judgment come upon these people?

REFLECT: When was the last time you wanted something for the mere pleasure of having it? When is enough, enough for you? When enduring hard times, do you blame the LORD, or run to His arms for forgiveness? I am not being sarcastic. Many people blame God for their own sinful lifestyle or persecution by the devil. Why?

The problem that **Isaiah** addressed in **5:8-17** is the emergence of a wealthy, land owning class that turned its attention more and more to extravagance. The northern kingdom of **Isra'el** had experienced the same thing earlier, as seen in the prophecies of **Amos (Amos 3:15 to 4:3, 6:1-8)**. This was not a new problem, even in **Isaiah's** day, but the rich of Jerusalem were driven to possess more and more, and spend more and more, only to please themselves. **Isaiah's** reply to this financial disease can be summed up in the words of **Yeshua: What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul (Matthew 16:26)?**



This is **the first woe** that **Isaiah** will prophesy against Judah. **He** declared: **Woe to you who add house to house, and join field to field, till no space is left and you live alone in the land (5:8)**. The first **woe** is against the greedy landowners. Selling houses permanently in a walled city was allowed under the Torah, but selling **land** or **houses** in unwalled cities had its limits. The permanent confiscating of the inheritance of others was in direct violation of the Torah. It did allow the taking of **land** or **houses** for certain debts, but eventually the Torah forced a return of inherited **land** on the Year of Jubilee (**Leviticus 25:23-28** and **Ezeki'el 46:16-18**). What's happening here is that the principle of the Torah had been discarded and the poor were being driven out. These greedy landowners did not need this **land** or even use it; they merely reveled in the mere possession of it. It is hardly a coincidence that the last of the Ten Commandments deals with covetousness (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Dt - You Shall Not Covet Anything That Belongs to Your Neighbor**).

But in the final analysis, covetousness is always self-defeating. The paradox of biblical teaching is this: to acquire is to lose, to give is to get (**Matthew 16:25**). So, **Isaiah** pronounces a judgment for this first **woe** in an unusual way; **he** whispers in the ear of the prophet, which is often the manner in which a special revelation was given. **ADONAI, the LORD of heaven's armies (CJB)**, whispered **in my ears**, saying: **Many houses** that they once enjoyed **will be brought to ruin; large, magnificent ones left empty (5:9)**. The great **houses** that were built after the smaller ones were destroyed ended up abandoned. Because of this sin, **they** ended up living alone because **they** crowded everyone else out (**Micah 2:1-2**). **They** ended up **empty**, to the extent that **they** were desolate, totally unoccupied and under the ban of **God (Jeremiah 22:13-17)**.

Not only will the great mansions be empty, but **the Land** will also be infertile. Many poor people would be killed for **their land**, and as a result, the Torah said that **their** crops would fail (**Deuteronomy 28:20-24**). **For a ten-acre vineyard will produce only five gallons of wine, and seed from five bushels of grain will yield but half a bushel (5:10)**. As far as the **land** itself, famine will follow the depopulation. Instead of producing tenfold, which the Torah promised in cases of obedience, it will only produce one tenth of its capability. The wealthy had forgotten that **the land** belonged to **the LORD**. When **they** treated it as **their** own and did with as **they** pleased, **ADONAI** removed **His** blessing (**Leviticus 26:14-20; Deuteronomy 28:15-35; Micah 6:12-16**).