



[Amos 4:1-3](#)

(1) Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria,
Who oppress the poor,
Who crush the needy,
Who say to your husbands, "Bring *wine*, let us drink!"

(2) The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness:
"Behold, the days shall come upon you
When He will take you away with fishhooks,
And your posterity with fishhooks.

(3) You will go out *through* broken walls,
Each one straight ahead of her,
And you will be cast into Harmon,"
Says the LORD.

New King James Version

"Cows of Bashan" ([Amos 4:1-4](#)) is a figure or symbol for the Israelite women in Samaria. Amos implies that these women are the trendsetters and leaders in Israelite society, a course Judah also took before she fell ([Isaiah 3:12](#)). Apparently, when nations degenerate, leaders of society, who should be setting the standards, are replaced by women and children (or the immature), who, Isaiah says, "cause [them] to err, and destroy the way of [their] paths."

In the United States, women have traditionally been the guardians of moral standards. In general, women have had high standards, while many men have held double standards. Amos, however, shows that the women of his day had slipped so far that they were "leading the pack" in immorality. And in America, the same is true: Women are becoming just as immoral as men. Between 1990 and 1991, according to the *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States*, the female crime rate increased 15.2 percent while the male crime rate increased by 17.4 percent.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Amos 4:1-3 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

Apparently, [God](#) built safeguards into women to ensure that some measure of right ideals, standards, and practices are passed on to the next generation. This gives a measure of stability to a society. Men, with their mind-set of aggressive ambition and their desire to compete and conquer, tend to focus on achievement, often at the expense of morality and ethics. In general, women are not designed for this role, and when they begin to fill it, a nation is on its way down very rapidly.

Besides this, a growing number of women today pursue full-time career positions for reasons of "fulfillment," personal ambition, and social advancement, diminishing their high calling as wives and mothers. Womanhood, marriage, and homemaking ([Titus 2:5](#)) have become subservient to the selfish accumulation of things. Unfortunately, many women have to work these days just to make ends meet. Primarily, Amos is speaking to the selfish, power-hungry, ruthless women we often see portrayed on television and in movies.

Amos impolitely calls them a very demeaning name: a bunch of well-fed cows. Like cows, they are just following the herd. They are content with an animal existence; that is, they are completely carnal in their outlook ([Romans 8:5-7](#)). Their concern is only for the beautification, care, and satiation of their own bodies. They live only for themselves, not for God. Isaiah captures their attitude in a word—complacent ([Isaiah 32:9-11](#)).

Like their husbands, these cows of Bashan oppress the poor and crush the needy. By demanding more things, they push their husbands to succeed—at the expense of the weak. With the attitude shown in this passage, though, they probably did not care as long as their "needs" were met.

The word translated "fishhooks" (verse 2) is quite obscure in the Hebrew, but it suggests that these lazy women will be ignominiously herded into captivity. Some have suggested it means carried away on the shields of their enemies or pulled on a leash.

In any case, those who formerly lay on the beds of ivory and on plush couches, pandering to themselves, will be led in humiliation through Samaria and into slavery. Isaiah also describes the same scene in [Isaiah 3:16-26](#). Because of their oppression and their haughty self-concern, their riches and beauty will be stripped away, and they will be left with nothing.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Prepare to Meet Your God! \(The Book of Amos\) \(Part One\)](#)

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