



[Amos 8:4-6](#)

(4) Hear this, you who swallow up the needy,
And make the poor of the land fail, (5) Saying:
"When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
That we may trade wheat?
Making the ephah small and the shekel large,
falsifying the scales by deceit,
(6) That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals—
Even sell the bad wheat?"

New King James Version

To enlarge their coffers, merchants opened their shops for business the minute the [Sabbath](#) and holy days passed. They used nonstandard weights and measures to cheat their customers of a few ounces of grain. Some cheated the people to the point that they had to sell themselves into slavery to pay their debts! At the end of the day, the businessman would sweep up the bad wheat berries left on the floor, and sell them to the poor as first-quality wheat when business resumed in the morning!

Their problem lay in their personal attitude toward [sin](#) and [holiness](#). [God](#) looked at their hearts and saw nothing of His righteousness and holiness. Whenever He finds a lack of these elements in His people, He becomes very concerned. The Israelites manifested their godless attitude in their domineering ways, their penchant to exploit, and their insatiable feeding of their own indulgences. Although God appears to attack mainly the rich and powerful throughout the book, the poor and needy probably had the same attitude but lacked the power to carry it out. Thus, God will punish both "the great house"—the rich—and "the little house"—the poor ([Amos 6:11](#)).

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Amos 8:4-6 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

Israel's attitude toward the things of God was one of total disrespect and indifference. When [Jesus](#) cleansed the Temple ([John 2:13-16](#)), one thing that angered Him was how [the priests](#) disqualified the peoples' sacrifices without legitimate grounds, forcing them to buy animals far above fair market value. Sincere worshippers would have no choice but to pay fifteen or twenty times the normal price for another sacrificial animal that the priests had already proclaimed acceptable. The Israelites of Amos' day exhibited the same attitudes in their normal business practices.

The sin that underpinned these attitudes is [covetousness](#), causing them to turn everything in life to self-advantage. As in America, competition was the lifeblood of the people, the vitality of the nation, and they felt they had no alternative but to lie, cheat, and steal to keep their "competitive edge." "The end justifies the means" was their motto. God says that they did not have to approach business this way. The nation was very wealthy—there was enough for everyone.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

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

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