Amos - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 603. Damask Covering

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Amos 3:12. So shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

Instead of “Damascus,” some commentators read “damask,” making the word refer to the rich silk-woven stuff with raised figures of flowers and other patterns, and not to the place where it was made, and whence it derived its name. Thus the text would read, “a damask couch,” or “a couch of damask.” The allusion here is to the luxurious couches which are on the divan in Eastern houses, for a description of which see note on 2 Kings 1:4 (#325). The corner of the divan is the most convenient place for repose, and is considered the place of honor. Hackett says: “A divan, which I saw in the palace of the late Mohammed All at Alexandria, furnishes an apt commentary on this verse. It was arranged, after the Oriental fashion, along the entire side of the room. It was capable of seating a great number of persons. A covering of the richest damask silk was spread over it, and hung in folds over the outward edge; while the magnificent cushions, adorned with threads of gold at the corners, distinguished those places above the others as the seats of special honor” (Scripture Illustrations, p. 61).