

Amos 2 - Judgment on Moab, Judah, Israel

II. Eight prophecies of judgment against the nations (Amos 1:3—2:16)

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(A) Because they rejected God's law (2:6-12)

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(iii) Provision of spiritual leadership (2:11)

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(i) Made Nazirites drink wine (2:12a)

(ii) Silenced the prophets (2:12b)

(B) God will crush Israel (2:13-16)

Amos 2

(6) Moab (2:1-3)

(A) Because they desecrated the tomb of Edom's King (2:1)

1 This is what the LORD says: "For three offenses of **Moab**, and for four, I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he **burned the bones** of the king of Edom to lime.

1 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

1 This is what the LORD says: "For three transgressions of Moab because they cremated the bones of the king of Edom, burning them to lime.

1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:
- "...Moab" - another nation descended from Lot (Gen 19:30-38)
— God promised to not revoke His punishment of Moab because of its brutal treatment of the corpse of an Edomite king
— It's significant that Amos here pronounced a punishment from God for a social crime involving a non-Israelite. In his other oracles the crimes were, for the most part, against the covenant people. Amos understood that an aspect of God's law transcended Israel.
- "...burned the bones" - burning the bones of a dead person dishonored that individual, since there was then nothing substantial left of him
— Burning the king's bones indicated a desire to completely destroy the peace and even the soul of Edom's king for eternity. This was a despicable crime in the ancient Near East, where a peaceful burial was the hope of every person.
— This treatment of a dead corpse also reflected a lack of respect for human life, life made in the image of God (Cf. 1 Sam 31:10)
— It is likely the Noahic Covenant that provides the background for the Lord's indictment (Gen 9:5-7; Cf. Is 24:5)

(B) God will judge Moab's ruler and her officials (2:2-3)

2 "So I will send fire upon Moab And it will consume the citadels of **Kerioth**; And Moab will die amid the panic of *battle*, Amid war cries and the sound of a trumpet.

2 "So I will send fire upon Moab And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; And Moab will die amid tumult, With war cries and the sound of a trumpet.

2 So I will send down fire upon Moab, and it will devour the fortified citadels of Kerioth. Moab will die in the uproar of battle, with a war cry and with the trumpeting of the ram's horn.

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

- "...Kerioth" - a major city in Moab, it may have been the capital (Is 15:1; Jer 48:24,41,45)

3 "I will also eliminate the judge from her midst And slay all her leaders with him," says the LORD.

3 "I will also cut off the judge from her midst And slay all her princes with him," says the LORD.

3 I will execute their rulers among them, killing all of their officials as well," says the LORD.

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

- Nebuchadnezzar conquered Moab shortly after 598 BC, which opened the way for Arab tribes to occupy its land

Most, if not all, of the crimes mentioned in Amos 1:3—2:3 can be placed under the heading of disrespect for human life or the image of God in human beings.

Crimes against humanity [not just against Israel] bring God's punishment. This observation is a powerful motivation for God's people to oppose the mistreatment and neglect of their fellow human beings.

However dimly and falsely men may draw the boundary, there are such things as absolute right and wrong based on the nature of the Creator and Ruler of all.

When a society acquiesces in and welcomes an evil, knowing it is evil, that society is doomed.

(7) Judah (2:4-5)

(A) Because they rejected God's law (2:4)

4 This is what the LORD says: "For three offenses of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they **rejected** the **Law of the LORD** And have not kept His statutes; **Their lies** also have led them astray, Those which their fathers followed.

4 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they rejected the law of the LORD And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, Those after which their fathers walked.

4 This is what the LORD says: "For three transgressions of Judah —and now for a fourth— I will not turn away; because they rejected the Law of the LORD and did not keep his statutes. Their own lies made them wander off, following along the same path their ancestors walked.

4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

- "...rejected" - *ma'as*, "to reject, to despise, to have an aversion for, to condemn, to have contempt for"

- "...Law of the LORD" - *Torah Yahweh*, Judah actively repudiated God's Law and passively despised it by not keeping it. Consequences if rejected (Lev 26:14-16):

(1) Despising of His holy and life-giving Law

(2) Consequent breaking of His commandments and regulations concerning worship and life

(3) Consequent self-deception that ignoring God's regulations did not matter much in daily living. These brought divine wrath upon Judah.

— God treated Judah with the same justice He promised Israel's neighbor nations

- "...Their lies" - *kazib*, listening to false prophets and worshipping idols (the "lie") were major evidences of their apostasy (Cf. Deut 6:14; 7:16; 8:19; 11:16,28)

(B) God will destroy Jerusalem (2:5)

5 "So I will send fire upon Judah, And it will consume the **citadels** of Jerusalem."

5 "So I will send fire upon Judah And it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem."

5 So I will send down fire upon Judah, and it will devour the fortified citadels of Jerusalem."

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

- "...citadels" - *armon*, a high tower, fortress, the strongest point in a palace or castle

— The citadels of Jerusalem were destroyed in the Babylonian invasions under

Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC, 597 BC, and 586 BC, on the Ninth of Av (*Tisha B'av*)

— The Temple of Solomon was looted, torn down, burned, and the city itself razed, with all its towers pulled down by Babylonian ropes (2 Chr 36:11-20)

Verses 4-5 are directed toward Judah; the remainder of the Book of Amos is addressed to Israel.

Judgment on Judah

Uzziah was the king of Judah, he "did right" (2 Kings 15:3). However, he did not remove the "high places." Pride led to his usurping the authority of the priests: he entered the Temple and burned incense on the altar (2 Chr 26:16). Uzziah was followed by Jotham "who did right," but he also did not remove the high places (2 Kings 15:34-35). Jotham was succeeded by Ahaz (bad news: 2 Kings 6:2). Ahaz was followed by Hezekiah, who *did remove the high places*, and broke up the bronze serpent (2 Kings 18:1-4). Reforms were short-lived: Manasseh followed (2 Kings 21:2). Josiah affected another reform more far-reaching than Hezekiah's (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chr 34-3)...yet no deep and lasting results were affected.

(8) Israel (2:6-16)

Amos now turns to his primary focus: Israel. There are four sections to this oracle: (1) Israel's recent sins (v6-8), (2) God's past gracious activity on Israel's behalf (v9-11), (3) Israel's response (v12), and (4) Israel's consequent punishment (v13-16). After this oracle, Amos will then give three sermons on judgment.

(A) Because they rejected God's law (2:6-12)

(a) Sin (2:6-8)

(i) Social injustice (2:6-7a)

6 This is what the LORD says: "For three offenses of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for money, And the needy for a pair of sandals.

6 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals.

6 This is what the LORD says: "For three transgressions of Israel —and now for a fourth— I will not turn away; because they sold the righteous for money, and the poor for sandals,

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

- Not all the sins that Amos identified appear in v6-8; two more appear in v12, for a total of seven sins. The previous oracles provided just one sin.

- The first sin identified by Amos was that Israel took advantage of "righteous" and "needy" people for their own personal advantage, and sold them into slavery (perhaps into debt, 2 Kings 4:1-7)

— They would even sell into slavery someone who could not pay the small price for a "pair of sandals"

(ii) Sexual immorality (2:7b)

7 "These who **trample the head of the helpless** to the dust of the earth Also divert the way of the humble; And a **man** and his **father resort to the same girl** So as **to profane** My holy name.

7 "These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name.

7 moving quickly to rub the face of the needy in the dirt. Corrupting the ways of the humble, a man and his father go to the same woman, deliberately defiling my holy name.

7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

- "...trample the head of the helpless " - the Israelites were perverting the legal system to exploit the poor; the Mosaic Law called for justice in Israel's courts (Ex 23:4; Deut 16:19)

— The courts were siding with creditors against their debtors, oppressing the poor; the oppressors longed to see the poor reduced to extreme anguish

— This was as painful and humiliating as having someone trample on one's head as it lay "in the dust"

- "...man...father...resort to the *same girl*" - fathers and sons were having sex with the same woman; this was tantamount to incest, which was punishable by death (Lev 18:7,15; 20:11)

- "...to profane" - *in order to* profane my holy name: preposition *li-ma'an*, expresses purpose and intention
- They sinned on purpose, with the intent to profane God's Holy Name

(iii) Religious hypocrisy (2:8)

8 "And on **garments seized as pledges** they stretch out beside every altar, And *in* the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

8 "On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

8 They lay down beside every altar, on garments pledged as collateral, drinking wine paid for through fines imposed by the temple of their gods.

8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

- "...garments seized as pledges" - the Israelites failed to return garments they had taken as a pledge (collateral for a debt owed to them)

— It was prohibited to keep a garment taken in pledge after the sun goes down (Ex 22:25-27; Deut 24:12-13)

— They were even taking these garments and displaying them at public feasts in order to honor whatever god they worshipped

(b) Forgot God's past deeds (2:9-11)

(i) Destruction of enemies (2:9)

9 "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height *was* like the height of cedars And he *was as* strong as the oaks; I also destroyed **his fruit above and his roots below**.

9 "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height *was* like the height of cedars And he *was* strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.

9 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorites in front of them, though their height seemed like a cedar, though their strength seemed like an oak, but whose fruit I destroyed from above and the roots from beneath.

9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

- Amos now reminded the Israelites of God's past blessings on them. This made the heinous nature of their sins even clearer.

- The Israelites had previously breached the covenant in spite of God having driven the giant Amorites out of the Promised Land for them (Cf. Num 13:22-33)

— The implication is that if God drove the Amorites out of the land, He might also drive the Israelites out of the land

- "...is fruit above and his roots below" - left no possibility of future life from seed

(ii) Guidance after the exodus (2:10)

10 "And it was I who brought **you** up from the land of Egypt, And led **you** in the wilderness for forty years So that **you** might take possession of the land of the Amorite.

10 "It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And I led you in the wilderness forty years That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.

10 Furthermore, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, leading you in the wilderness for 40 years, to take possession of the land of the Amorites.

10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

- Going back further in history, God reminded Israel that He had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt and led them safely through the wilderness for 40 years

- "...you" [3x] - by using the second person "you" rather than the third person shows that these oracles were originally spoken to Israel

(iii) Provision of spiritual leadership (2:11)

11 "Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets, And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, you sons of Israel?" declares the LORD.

11 "Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?" declares the LORD.

11 I also raised up your sons to be prophets, and from your young men I raised up Nazirites. Is this not true, people of Israel?" declares the LORD.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD.

- In the land, God raised up prophets and godly Nazirites from among the Israelite's sons

— Prophets relayed God's messages to them and Nazirites were examples of ordinary citizens who dedicated themselves completely to the Lord

— These individuals were blessings to the nation because they encouraged the people to follow the Lord faithfully by their words and deeds

(c) Pervert spiritual leadership (2:12)

(i) Made Nazirites drink wine (2:12a)

(ii) Silenced the prophets (2:12b)

12 "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, And you commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'

12 "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'

12 "But you forced the Nazirites to drink wine, and commanded the prophets, 'You are not to prophesy!'

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

- Even though God gave Israel the Nazarites and the prophets, they encouraged the Nazirites to compromise their dedication to God and told the prophets to stop prophesying.
— These were the sixth and seventh sins that Amos enumerated (Cf. v6-8)

(B) God will crush Israel (2:13-16)

13 "Behold, I am making a rut *in the ground* beneath you, Just as a wagon makes a rut when filled with sheaves.

13 "Behold, I am weighted down beneath you As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves.

13 "Oh, how I am burdened down with you, as a wagon is overloaded with harvested grain!

13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

- Israel's sins had become like a rut in the ground created by a cart overloaded with grain...

14 "Refuge will be lost from the swift, And the strong will not strengthen his power, Nor the warrior save his life.

14 "Flight will perish from the swift, And the stalwart will not strengthen his power, Nor the mighty man save his life.

14 So the swift runner will not escape, the valiant will not fortify his strength, and the mighty warrior will not save his life.

14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

- Running fast would not provide escape from God's coming judgment; resisting it would not enable Israel to withstand it

15 "The one who grasps the bow will not stand *his ground*, The swift of foot will not escape, Nor will the one who rides the horse save his life.

15 "He who grasps the bow will not stand *his ground*, The swift of foot will not escape, Nor will he who rides the horse save his life.

15 The skilled archer will not be able to stand, the swift runner will not survive, and the mounted rider will not preserve his own life.

15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

- Archers who opposed God would not be able to prevent Him from advancing against them
- Quick runners would not be able to flee
- Riding a horse could not remove them from the scene of judgment

16 "Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked on that day," declares the LORD.

16 "Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day," declares the LORD.

16 Even the bravest of elite troops will run away naked at that time," declares the LORD.

16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

- When God judges Israel, even the bravest among them would be fearful and ashamed
- The fulfillment of this seven-fold description of Israel's panic came when the Assyrians besieged and destroyed Samaria, Israel's capital, in 722 BC and carried many of the people into captivity.

These oracles teach the modern reader that God is sovereign over all nations, and holds them accountable for their conduct toward other human beings, as well as for their response to special revelation (Cf. Gen 9:5-6). They also teach that God is patient with sinners and will only punish when the measure of human sin has exceeded His predetermined limit. The oracles also teach that God is impartial in His judgment; He will punish sin in His own people, as well as sin in those with whom He has established no special relationship.