

Book of Amos

Chapter 3:1-15

¹Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: ²"You only have I known among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your wrongdoing."

Hear > Utley > This is the Hebrew verb *shema*, which means "to hear so as to do"

Hear this word > Weirsbe > Now that Amos had the attention of the people, he proceeded to deliver three messages, each of which begins with "Hear this word" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). By using this phrase, he reminded them that they weren't listening to a mere man making a speech; they were listening to a prophet declaring the living word of God.

Constable > After announcing that God would judge Israel, Amos delivered five messages in which he explained more fully why God would judge the Northern Kingdom. These five messages expand on what he had said in 2:6-16. Appeals for repentance and explanations of how to avoid judgment appear within these messages. The first three begin with the word, "Hear" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1; cf. Prov. 8:32), and the last two begin with "Alas" (5:18) and "Woe" (6:1), both being translations of the Hebrew word *hoy*.

Against the entire family > The Lord through Amos opens this chapter with an indictment against both tribes.

Utley > One reason modern western people misunderstand the OT is its focus on corporality, while most westerners focus on individuals. The ancient people lived or died together. They lived for the good of the aggregate.

It is hard for moderns to fathom this sense of corporality. It involves corporate sin and guilt, but not corporate righteousness. Righteousness was an individual matter of faith, repentance, obedience, and worship. God's judgment of His people impacted both the sinful and innocent.

You only > Constable > "You only" is in the emphatic first position in the Hebrew sentence

Weirsbe > (The Lord did not choose you) because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers" (Deut. 7:6–8 NKJV; see Ex. 19:1–5).

Weirsbe > This principle of gracious election also applies to the church. Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16 NIV) ... God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (**Eph. 1:4**), and it was purely an act of grace.

Ephesians 1:4-6 > ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before ^[d]Him. In love ^{5 [e]}He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved.

Known > Utley > The term "chosen" is literally "known" and has the connotation of personal relationship (e.g., Gen. 4:1; 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 11:28; 1 Kgs. 8:39; Ps. 139:4; Jer. 1:4; Hosea 5:3). It is this intimate acquaintance with God and His Word (e.g., Deut. 34:10) that makes their sins so repugnant.

You only have I known ... therefore ... the responsibility

Luke 12:47-48 > ⁴⁷ And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accordance with his will, will receive many blows, ⁴⁸ but the one who did not know it, and committed acts deserving of a beating, will receive only a few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

I Peter 4:17 > ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Punish > Utley > The verb can mean "punish" or "visit." Possibly the Israelites expected YHWH to "visit" them with covenant blessing, but instead He came to punish them for their flagrant covenantal violations (cf. Amos 5:18-20). Covenant violations bring violent covenant curses

³ *Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet?*

⁴ *Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?*

Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?

⁵ *Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it?*

Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?

6 *If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble?*

If a disaster occurs in a city, has the LORD not brought it about?

Constable > Amos asked seven rhetorical questions in verses 3-6 in order to help the Israelites appreciate the inevitability of their judgment. In each one, the prophet pointed out that a certain cause inevitably produces a certain effect. The five questions in verses 3-5 expect a negative answer, and the two in verse 6 expect a positive one. Verses 7-8 draw the conclusion.

The comparisons start out peacefully (two people walking together) but increase in intensity (to a city under attack). This creates an ominous rhetorical tone.

Weirsbe > Amos replied to their ridicule by arguing from effect to cause.

- If two people want to walk together, they have to appoint a time and place to meet (Amos 3:3).
- If the lion roars, it's because he's caught his prey (v. 4).
- If a trap springs, it means the bird has been caught (v. 5).
- If the people in a city are terrified, it's because the trumpet has blown, warning them of danger (v. 6).

These are obvious facts of life that any thinking person would acknowledge. Now for the final thrust: If an untrained rustic farmer is preaching God's Word, it means God has called him. This isn't a vocation Amos would have chosen for himself; it was chosen for him by the Lord. Amos said, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:14-15 NIV).

3 *Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet?*

4 *Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?*

Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?

5 *Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it?*

Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?

6 *If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble?*

If a disaster occurs in a city, has the LORD not brought it about?

⁷ *Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret plan to His servants the prophets.* ⁸ *A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?*

He reveals His secret plan to His servants the prophets > Sunukjian > 3:7-8. Just as one event does not take place unless another necessary event has already happened, so the sovereign LORD does nothing regarding the history of Israel without first revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. But once this revelation has occurred—once the lion has roared and attacked (cf. 1:2; Hosea 5:14; 11:10; 13:7), once the sovereign Lord has spoken—Israel's judgment is sure to follow.

Secret plan > (This is something I didn't know) *Strong's* > From *yacad*; a session, i.e. Company of persons (in close deliberation); by implication, intimacy, consultation, a secret -- assembly, inward, secret (counsel).

Barnes > The same word signifies "secret" and "secret counsel with a friend."

Prophets > *Strong's* > a spokesman, speaker, prophet

⁹ **Proclaim** on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and **say**, **Assemble** yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and **see** the great panic within her and the oppressions in her midst.

Utley > There is a series of (**commands**) in this verse.

1. Proclaim
2. Say
3. Assemble
4. See

Ashdod (Gaza) ... **Egypt** (another enemy) > The Lord invites them in to see the destruction about to take place in Israel (under 40 years).

Barnes > The city, being built on the summit and terraced sides of the hill, unfenced and unconcealed by walls which, except at its base, were unneeded, lay open, unsheltered in every part from the gaze of the besiegers. The surrounding hills were one large amphitheater, from where to behold the tragedy of Israel, and enemies were invited to be the spectators. They could see its famine-stricken inhabitants totter along those open terraces. Sin had brought this chastisement upon them.

This verse needs to be tied to verses 13-15 > ¹³ *Hear and testify against the house of Jacob, Declares the Lord GOD, the God of armies.* ¹⁴ *For on the day that I punish Israel's offenses, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off, and will fall to the ground.*

15 I will also strike the winter house together with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish, and the great houses will come to an end," Declares the LORD.

Panic > Strong's > confusion or uproar > tumult, confusion, disquietude, discomfiture

Oppression > Strong's > oppression, extortion

***10 But** they do not know how to do what is **right**," declares the LORD, "these who **store up** violence and devastation **in their citadels**."*

But > Barnes translates this as "for" and adds the word "and" in parentheses. The Septuagint uses the word "and". Both "for" and "and" tie this verse to the previous one.

Right > Utley > The term "right" is literally "straight." This is a play on the Hebrew word for a "measuring reed." This was a Mesopotamian construction tool which was used to measure the horizontal straightness of walls or fences. It became imagery for God's character. Therefore, all the words for sin are a deviation from the standard.

Barnes > "straight-forward"

***Jeremiah 4:22** > "For My people are foolish, they do not know Me; they are foolish children and have no understanding. They are skillful at doing evil, but they do not know how to do good."*

Store up > Barnes > literally, the "storers"

In their citadels > Constable > The Israelites were different from their aggressors because they plundered and looted **their own fortresses** rather than those of a foreign enemy. (Anybody want to visit New York City right now??)

11 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: "An enemy, one surrounding the land, will take down your fortifications from you, and **your citadels will be looted**."

Your citadels will be looted > Utley > The verb "will be looted" refers to the spoils of a defeated foe that are distributed among the victorious soldiers. These spoils would include people, livestock, clothing, valuables, etc., all the possessions of the conquered people.

12 This is what the LORD says: "Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, so will the sons of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away ... with the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!"

Constable > Yahweh also predicted that only a small remnant of the people would survive. The situation would be similar to when a shepherd snatched a remaining fragment of a sheep, a couple of leg bones, or a small piece of an ear, from the mouth of an attacking wild animal. It would be like when someone stole everything in a house and the owner could only hold onto a fragment of his bed or a bedspread. Similarly, an overpowering enemy would steal away the people of Samaria, and only a few would escape.

Amos 5:15 > ¹⁵ *Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of armies will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

Amos 9:8 > ⁸ *Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will eliminate it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally eliminate the house of Jacob," Declares the LORD.*

Utley > The comparison seems to be that as a small piece of the sheep is rescued from the lion as a legal sign to the sheep owner, so too, a small remnant of Israel will survive. God's judgment is a legal sign of the validity of His word.

Exodus 22:10-13 > ¹⁰ *"If someone gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is injured or is driven away while no one is looking, ¹¹ an oath before the LORD shall be taken by the two of them that he has not laid a hand on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not be compelled to make restitution. ¹² But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³ If it is all torn to pieces, have him bring it as evidence; he shall not be compelled to make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.*

¹³ *Hear and testify against the house of Jacob," declares the Lord GOD, the God of armies. ¹⁴ "For on the day that I punish Israel's offenses, I will also punish **the altars of Bethel**; the horns of the altar will be cut off and will fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will also strike **the winter house together with the summer house**; the houses of ivory will also perish, **and the great houses will come to an end**," declares the LORD.*

Utley > This is typical lawsuit terminology. The two pagan nations of Philistia (Ashdod) and Egypt (Amos 3:9) are going to observe the judging of God's people as the two required legal witnesses (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

The altars of Bethel > Utley > Bethel is the southern site of the worship of the golden calves which were set up by Jeroboam I (cf. 1 Kgs. 12:26-33). It was located about 10 miles north of Jerusalem and was an ancient holy site for the Hebrew nation, related to Jacob

"Bethel" > "House of God"

The winter house together with the summer house > Barnes > "So wealthy were they," says Jerome (345-419 AD), "as to possess two sorts of houses, "the winter house" being turned to the south, the "summer house" to the north, so that, according to the variety of the seasons, they might temper to them the heat and cold."

Constable > The fact that many Israelite families could afford two houses, and yet were oppressing their poorer brethren, proved that they lived in selfish luxury.

And the great houses will come to an end > Utley > The Septuagint has "and many other houses also." The Hebrew term (BDB 912 I) can mean (1) "great" or (2) "many." This phrase seems to be a summary statement and not another type of house.

Amos 3:15 (LXX) > ¹⁵ *I will crush and smite the turreted-house upon the summer-house; and the ivory-houses shall be destroyed, and many other houses also, saith the Lord.*