

### Comments on Amos 3

This chapter continues the negative theme of curses upon all of Israel, not just Ephraim or Judah. While it is the Ten Tribes which compose the Northern Kingdom, which is whom Amos is sent to, this chapter starts out as a broadside against all of Israel, owing to their rebellions against the Lord. However, as the chapter moves on, it clearly funnels down to the Northern Kingdom in specific, as Bethel in specific is addressed in v. 14.

<sup>1</sup> Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, <sup>2</sup> You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

v1-2 The Lord states He has ransomed them and has chosen them, therefore they are in a special relationship. A relationship that requires punishment for iniquity.

<sup>3</sup> Can two walk together, except they be agreed? <sup>4</sup> Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? <sup>5</sup> Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? <sup>6</sup> Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it? <sup>7</sup> Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. <sup>8</sup> The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

v3-8 is a series of conditional statements all identifying cause and effect relationships. It starts out with simple secular sorts of causes and effects that are plain to see are true (v. 3-5), and then moves to the more painful spiritual causes and effects which are unpleasant to admit to (v. 6-8). The last set of statements makes it clear the Lord has warned them of the impending destruction through His prophets, and He would not have had to do so had they not deserved them.

The statements are negative, aimed at Israel. Verse 3 refers to the covenant relationship mentioned in v. 1-2. The Lord would not be dealing with them the way He is if He did not know their ways. Then, the statements become blatantly hostile, with lions catching prey (v. 4), birds being caught in traps (v. 5), cities being besieged (v. 6), prophets raising the warning cry (v. 7), and the Lord's roaring causing fear in those who hear (v. 8).

v3 The KJV translation is poor. The JPS renders this verse:

Can two walk together  
Without having met?

v6 "trumpet", not a trumpet of brass, but a ram's horn, a shofar.

v7 In context, the verse is stating the Lord warns His people through His prophets before He does something. This is talking about the impending invasion and destruction of Israel, owing to their terrible wickedness. For similar statements see 2 Kings 21:10, 2 Kings 24:2, Dan. 9:10, Rev. 10:7, also cp. Matt. 16:17.

The Church uses this verse in an acontextual fashion to imply this pattern applies to modern times as well, specifically us. It is noteworthy no modern canonical Scripture quotes this passage in this manner as a proof text. There are some close parallels (cf. D&C 1:3, D&C 76:10, D&C 101:32-34), but no clear quotation of this verse. The earliest quotations of this verse as a proof text used in this fashion that I could find were [George A. Smith](#) in 1859 and [Wilford Woodruff](#) in 1863.

<sup>9</sup> Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. <sup>10</sup> For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. <sup>11</sup> Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. <sup>12</sup> Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; 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. <sup>13</sup> Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, <sup>14</sup> That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. <sup>15</sup> And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

v9-10 summons the Philistines (maybe Assyrians?) and Egyptians to witness the wickedness of Israel (Ashdod was the capital of Philistia and Samaria was the capital of Ephraim). This is a massive insult as the Philistines and Egyptians were castigated in the Law as being the grossest of sinners (cf. Lev. 18). They

were generally abhorred by Israel as the absolute worst, and here they are being summoned as witnesses against Israel.

v9 "Ashdod", the Septuagint reads "Assyria" instead of "Ashdod".

v11-15 hurls a series of covenant curses from the Law or Moses at Israel as a result of their wickedness. An enemy that will surround and besiege them will be brought up (v. 11). Only a remnant will be left from the foreign invasion, even as only a couple of legs is left over after a lion eats a lamb (v. 12). The Lord tells His prophet to testify against Israel per v. 7 (v. 13), for on that day all Israel will be punished including the religious centers (v. 14) and the palaces (v. 15). None will escape.

This [sack of Northern Israel](#) was [historically fulfilled](#) under Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria.

v12 "in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch", an obscure phrase with difficult Hebrew. The JPS renders it "With the leg of a bed or the head of a couch". One would assume the imagery developed in the preceding text of the verse of only pieces being left is applied here as well. After Israel is sacked, of all of their belongings all that will remain is the legs off their beds and the cushions of the couch.

v14 "Beth-El", the religious capital of the Northern Ten tribes, established by Jeroboam as a foil to Temple worship in Jerusalem, cf. 1 Kings 12:29

Copyright © 2022 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.