

## Amos 3:9-4:3 – Four Oracles Against Samaria

- Amos 9-11
- Amos 3:12
- Amos 3:13-15
- Amos 4:1-3

The luxury the wealthy leaders of Samaria enjoyed is contrast with the horrifying punishment they will suffer.

Similarities of these four oracles:

1. Each is a **quote from Yahweh**
  - a. 3:11 – “Therefore thus says the Lord God”
  - b. 3:12 – “Thus says the Lord”
  - c. 3:15 – “declares the Lord”
  - d. 4:3 – “declares the Lord.”
2. Each identifies **wealthy Samaria’s corrupt lifestyle**
  - a. 3:9 – “see the great tumults (*social conditions before the Assyrian invasion meaning “panicked confusion”, the opposite of safety; violence*) within her and the oppressed in her midst.
  - b. 3:12 – “corner of a couch and part of a bed”
  - c. 3:15 – “winter house...the summer house...the houses of ivory...the great houses”
  - d. 4:1 – “oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’ ”
3. Each **sarcastically or mockingly identifies Samaria’s complacent attitude** that is reinforced with extravagance and wealth
  - a. 3:10 – “They do not know how to do right,” declares the Lord, “those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.”
  - b. 3:12 – “so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.”
  - c. 3:14 – “I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground”
  - d. 4:1 – “you cows of Bashan”
4. Each oracle ends with a **detailed prophecy of a curse** from the Mosaic Covenant
  - a. 3:11 – “An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered”
  - b. 3:12 – “shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued”
  - c. 3:15 – “I will strike ...perish...come to an end.”
  - d. 4:3 – “you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead and you shall be cast out into Harmon”
5. Each predicts/**assumes a foreign invasion** of the capital city of Samaria
  - a. 3:11 – “An adversary shall surround the land”
  - b. 3:12 – “so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued”
  - c. 3:14 – “on the day I punish Israel...3:15 – “shall come to an end”

- d. 4:3 – “the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks you shall go out through the breaches...you shall be cast out into Harmon”

**Amos 3:9-11:**

3:9 - “**Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst.”**”

3:10 - “**“They do not know how to do right,’ declares the Lord, “those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.”**”

3:11 – “**Therefore thus says the Lord God:**

**“An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered.”**

- **3:9** - Amos is instructing heralds to call witnesses from Ashdod (Philistines) and Egypt (Egyptians) “fortresses” or “strongholds”. This word “stronghold” or “fortress” is used 4x:
  - “strongholds in Ashdod”
  - “strongholds in the land of Egypt”
  - Samaria “store up violence and robbery in their strongholds”
  - Samaria “strongholds shall be plundered”
- Witnesses from Philistia and Egypt are to assemble on the mountains (hills) that surround the hill of Samaria. The mountaintops surrounding Samaria are higher in altitude than Samaria itself so the witnesses could get a good look at the corruption happening inside Samaria.
- The witnesses are to observe the corruption (social tumult and social oppression) taking place in Samaria that will result in Samaria’s judgment.
- “great tumults” or “great terror” refers to panicked confusion in a time of war, but in this use it refers to the poor in Samaria’s society before the invasion. There was no peace or safety for the poor because of the violence they faced from the wealthy
  - Proverbs 15:16 – “Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil. (NIV) (or, “...than great treasure and trouble with it. – ESV) (“treasure” also appears in Amos 3:10)
  - 2 Chronicles 15:5 – “In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.” (ESV), or “In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil.” (NIV)
- “Oppression” refers to control of the powerless poor by the small population of the upper-class.
- The people were kept in check by the wealthy rulers with fear and oppression
- **3:10** - “right” refers to what is just, honest, decent. Which means Samaritan society had no idea of common morality or conscience. They had entered the black out of the soul phase.
- “violence and robbery” describe the breakdown of society also in:
  - Jer. 6:7 – “As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her evil; violence and destruction are heard within her; sickness and wounds are ever before me.”

- Jer. 20:8 – “For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.”
- Isaiah 60:18 – “Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.”
- Ezekiel 45:9 - “Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD.”
- Hab. 1:3 – “Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.”
- 3:11 – The name of the destroying adversary (Assyria) is not named by the Lord to Amos.
- Because of Deuteronomy 17:7 Amos may have assumed the adversary administering God’s judgment on Samaria would be the Philistines or the Egyptians (or, both) since they are the witnesses that will be called to testify:
  - “The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” – Dt. 17:7
- The adversary will bring the siege and then the plunder. What the wealthy had done to their society, the Assyrians would do to Samaria.

### **Amos 3:12:**

**3:12 – “Thus says the Lord: “As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.”**

- Amos was a shepherd and so very familiar with this practice. The legal practice that was observed in Amos’ day (before and after) in several countries was if a shepherd can produce evidence that an animal from his flock had been torn up by beasts then the shepherd would not be financially responsible for the loss.
  - Exodus 22:12-13 – “If it is stolen from him (by the neighbor), he (the neighbor) shall make restitution to its owner. If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.”
  - Genesis 31:39 – “What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night.”
  - 1 Samuel 17:34-35
  - Also, found in several places in ancient laws of the time in Mesopotamia, Sumeria
- The only thing left of the lamb in the example are:
  - “two legs” – which means “part of the hind leg of the lamb found between the knee and the ankle.”
  - “piece of an ear” – the cartilage forming the ear or often understood to be the “ear-lap” or “tip of the ear”
  - These two example means the lamb had been totally devoured from its head to its feet.
- Only fragments of the once extremely wealthy, complacent society will remain. Israel will save from their enormous wealth mere insignificant fragments:
  - “corner of a couch” – both “couch” and “bed” are synonyms. This first one refers to the front corner of the head of the bed. (paralleled with “piece of an ear”)
  - “part of a bed” – This likely referred to a piece from the foot of the bed (paralleled with the lower leg bone of the lamb).

### **Amos 3:13-15:**

**3:13 – “Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,”  
declares the Lord God, the God of hosts,**

**3:14 – “that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions,  
I will punish the altars of Bethel,  
and the horns of the altar shall be cut off  
and fall to the ground.**

**3:15 – “I will strike the winter house along with the summer house,  
and the houses of ivory shall perish,  
and the great houses shall come to an end,”  
declares the Lord.**

- “hear” and “testify” are not addressed to Samaria or national leaders, but are instead legal terms of a covenant lawsuit. Yahweh is summoning witnesses to consider the evidence and agree with his verdict.
- The Lord identifies himself twice in this oracle. The first time as “Lord God, the God of hosts” which means “Lord Yahweh, God of the (heavenly) Armies” used only here in Amos.
- The fact these altars exist indicates the problem.
- Four types of houses are mentioned and in parallel
  - Winter house and Summer house
  - Ivory house and Great house (mansion)
- The Lord is destroying two “houses”:
  - The sacred houses (altars, temples, sacred precincts)
  - The residential houses of the wealthy

### **Amos 4:1-3:**

**4:1 - “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan,  
who are on the mountain of Samaria,  
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,  
who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’**

**4:2 – “The Lord God has sworn by his holiness  
that, behold, the days are coming upon you,  
when they shall take you away with hooks,  
even the last of you with fishhooks.**

**4:3 – “And you shall go out through the breaches,  
each one straight ahead;  
and you shall be cast out into Harmon,”  
declares the Lord.**

- Women of Samaria are addressed metaphorically to the fat cows living across the Jordan in the fertile fields of Bashan.
  - Isaiah also addresses the vain, arrogant, complacent women of Jerusalem a few years later in Isaiah 3:16-4:1
- These women are failing God’s directives in two areas:
  - Mistreating their inferiors: oppress the poor and crush the needy

- Misaligned with their superiors: “Masters” means “husbands”. The women have forsaken their normal social responsibility and position in the home to lounge and drink wine while commanding their husbands. These cows of Bashan are dominating their families as well as the poor and needy
- The end of these women will be brutal:
  - Their dead bodies will be in the streets
  - Picked up like dead flesh with hooks
  - Small, separated body parts will be picked up like litter with a spiked stick
  - Taken out to the dump through an opening in the broken down wall
  - Others left alive will be deported

## Amos 4:4-13

Outline:

1. Sarcastic Call to Illicit Worship (4:4-5)
2. Identification of Curses Already Sent (Obvious) as Warnings, but Missed by Israel
  - a. 4:6 – Famine
  - b. 4:7-8 – Drought
  - c. 4:9 – Agricultural (Economic) Disaster
  - d. 4:10 – Pestilence and War
3. Historical Example that God’s Judgment is Consistent (4:11)
4. Promise the Fifth Cycle of Judgment is Coming (4:12)
5. Written Record of an Old Hymn from Samaria’s Past Culture that Recognizes the True God (4:13)

Review Leviticus 26

## Ivory from Megiddo



**Altar from Northern Israel:**



**Four Horned Altar in Beersheba:**

