

Amos 2:6

- The eighth oracle
- This should be considered the main oracle since it is:
 - Longest
 - Last
- The general format of each oracle:
 - a. The messenger introduction – “This is what Yahweh said” – **Beginning 2:6**
 - b. The certainty of a well-earned punishment – **Part of verse 2:6**
 - c. Presentation of evidence of specific crimes committed against humanity. – **2:6-12**
 - d. The announcement of the curse/punishment – **2:13-16**
 - e. The concluding formula which is basically “Yahweh has said” or “oracle of Yahweh.” (but, this is not used in Phoenicia, Edom or Judah – **End of 2:16**

Amos 2:6 – Messenger Introduction and Certainty of well-earned punishment:

2:6 - **Thus says the Lord:**

“For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—

Amos 2:6-12 - Evidence of specific crimes committed against humanity:

- Three parts provided in this evidence section:
 - 2:6-8 - Israel’s recent sins
 - 2:9-11 - God’s past gracious action towards Israel
 - 2:12 - Israel’s response
- Israel is convicted of four kinds of crimes:
 - One – unjust legal action to profit rich (2:6)
 - Two – confiscation of land (2:7)
 - Three – sexual oppression (2:7)
 - Four – self-indulgent use of possessions/property taken in corrupt legal system (2:8)

2:6 - **because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—**

- “sell the righteous for silver” likely a reference to selling innocent Israelites into slavery or servanthood as a result of corrupt legal action.
- The word “sell” is used two ways:
 - Kidnaped people sold into slavery
 - To sell oneself to a creditor for a period of time to pay off a debt
- This is most likely a reference to the wealthy corrupting the legal system to gain control of people for profit.
- Proverbs 14:31 – “Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”
- In 2:6-7 “the righteous”, “the needy”, “the poor” and “the afflicted” are the same people.
 - “righteous” here in this context is describing a person who is legally innocent in a court of law. Other places “righteous” can refer to a person who is religiously righteous before the Lord in regard to the Mosaic Covenant. But, these “righteous” people are innocent, yet treated as guilty by a corrupt system that afflicts them and impoverishes them.
- “pair of sandals” could be referring to one of two things:
 - A very small amount or a very low value as is seen again in Amos 8:6 – “buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.”

- A legal court procedure as is seen in Ruth 4:7 with Boaz in the city gate buying a field, which means to give some legality to a business transaction. In this case a corrupt business transaction that enslaves innocent people to help prosper the rich.
- The basis of wealth or poverty should be consider not only with the view of money, but also involving honor and shame that came with a person’s possession of land, social standing, economic security and community influence.

2:7 - Those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;

- Northern Israel’s crimes against humanity also included these things seen in 2:7-8:
 - The unjust driving of the middle class into poverty
 - The sale of these people into slavery
 - Oppression of these poor
 - Sexual abuse of these same people
 - Exploitation of those now in debt
- These “poor” are being driven from their middle class positions as land owners and small business operators by the wealthy. These “poor” are not the lower class people who were born into poverty and exist in poverty. These are those being trampled into poverty when they unjustly lose the land, positions and freedom by a corrupt justice system.
- Social injustice “stepped on” people (or, “trample”)
- “turn-aside” or “turn-aside of the road” is a literal statement that the wealthy hindered the progress of the poor which referred to the poor being denied access to legal justice in these corrupt cases. (Remember Naboth and his vineyard being taken by Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 21).
- “girl” refers to a young maiden who in this case was sold into servanthood and used as a concubine. This word is not the usual word used for a cult prostitute, which could be found in a similar situation. This is sexual abuse of those unjustly driven into poverty.

2:8 - They lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

- People who took their religious commitment very seriously were still guilt free in their twisted conscience.
- Garments could be taken in pledge (or, guarantee of restitution), but had to be returned in the evening. Taking a garment in pledge was not meant to be a means for the rich to collect more property and become more wealthy:
 - Exodus 22:25-27 – “If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.”
- Characteristic of the Canaanite and Pagan religions the worship of their gods was focused on pleasing the gods and not on character, morality or doing “right”. Even the gods themselves could be corrupt, thus the worshippers were not concerned about character.

2:9 – “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

- This refers to total destruction
- This was the overthrow of a people because they were corrupt...just like Israel was now
- The Canaanites (Amorites) were entrenched in the land like trees. But, still destroyed.
- The Canaanites (Amorites) were a strong people like an oak tree is a strong tree.

2:10 – **Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.**

- Notice the use of the second person pronoun instead of the third, as in the first seven oracles, this whole book was spoken to Israel.
- Israel's identity came from the fact the Lord had rescued them from slavery and given a homeland because of God's favor.

2:11 – **And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?" declares the Lord.**

- Prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Jonah and many more had been sent to Israel.
- Prophets had been scorned or prohibited from speaking by Israel:
 - 1 Kings 17-19 – Elijah rejected
 - 2 Kings 2:23 – Elisha jeered
 - Amos 7:10-17 – Amos told to stop speaking

2:12 – **"But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'**

- Nazirites were consecrated for service to the Lord by:
 - Not cutting their hair, a mark of separation
 - Abstinence from wine, a mark of self-denial
 - Avoiding the dead, a mark of purity (Numbers 6:1-21)
- By making the Nazirite drink wine the Nazirite was forced to violate their dedication to the Lord. They were forced to be part of the culture that was living in disobedience

Amos 2:13-16 - The announcement of the curse/punishment:

- Israel's judgment will be total defeat that will involve situations that create mass panic with ineffective responses to the threat. Israel will be bogged down and running away with no ability to fight.
- The Assyrians will be too much for the Israelites to stand against
- This is the inability promised at the end of the fourth generation in Lev. 26:36-39: "As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their ancestors' sins they will waste away."

2:13 – **"Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down.**

- Bogged down like a cart that is loaded cannot move.
- The people will stay in place even though they desire to move, run, flee

2:14 – **Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life;**

- The swift will not be able to run
- The powerful will not be able to use their strength
- The national defense, or the soldier, will not even be able to save his own life.

2:15 – he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life;

- The archer will not be able to shoot accurately due to fear
- The runners, who are not warriors but part of the military communication system, will not be able to use their speed for their own advantage.
- The “rider”, could refer to horseback rider, but most likely refers to the charioteers driving the war chariots of Israel, will not be able to function due to fear

2:16 – and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,” declares the Lord.

- When Assyria comes the bravest of the skilled warriors will drop his weapons and run away naked stripping off anything that hinders his flight
- Israel will basically run from the battle against the Assyrians

At this point in the book of Amos there is no promise of restoration. This will appear later. As for now, the focus is on Israel’s sin and defeat.