

## Amos 3:1-10

Amos 3:1-2 is a short oracle of its own. These two verses introduce the longer announcements of judgment coming in chapters 3-6.

**Amos 3:1 - Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:**

**Amos 3:2 - “You only have I known  
of all the families of the earth;  
therefore I will punish you  
for all your iniquities.**

- “Hear this word” is a call to listen to an important prophecy or announcement from the Lord. What follows will be the revealing of some truth, principle or teaching that the people are to pay attention to.
- Amos is speaking to all 12 tribes (Israel and Judah). This is the family that came out of Egypt.
- Other nations (ALL nations) had their history determined by the Lord who, like Israel, may have brought them out of one country to another. Examples are in Amos 9:7:
  - Philistines from Caphtor
  - Arameans from Kir
- **“You only have I known”** - Israel is unique because the Lord gave Israel a unique covenant. The Lord chose Israel; He loved Israel; God entered into a suzerain covenant with Israel who would exist as a vassal under their
  - “Only you” is the direct object placed in the sentence before the verb “have I chosen”
  - The direct object “Israel”, “only you”, is placed first for emphasis when compared to all the other nations, or “of all the families of the earth.”
  - “to know” is a technical legal term.
    - “to know” is used in ancient Near East vassal treaties (Akkadian use “idu”; Hittite use “sak” – both meaning “to know”)
    - The technical legal meaning of “to know” in a vassal treaty such as the Mosaic Covenant (and, other suzerain treaties of this time) is, “to recognize as a legitimate suzerain or vassal in a legitimate treaty with binding treaty stipulations.”
- **“of all the families of the earth”** – This expression is only found one other place. It is in the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:3 and 28:14:
  - “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” – Genesis 12:3
  - “Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” – Genesis 28:14, spoken by the Lord to Jacob at Bethel
- The point of Amos 3:2 is “only you have I selected as my covenant partner.”
- 3:2 is making the point that the Lord is going to bring the punishment.
- This section is NOT about WHY Israel is going to be punished, but about WHO is going to punish Israel.

- The point: Israel has entered into a covenant with the Lord. The results were simple and obvious:
  - Israel was to obey.....the Lord would bless
  - Israel disobeyed.....the Lord was going to punish
- The Lord was obligated to punish Israel. That's it. It is final. So be it.
- One of the themes and purposes of Amos' ministry was to communicate the fact that the Lord not only took care of his people, but he would also punish them. This was surprise information for Israel. Examples showing that the people believed the Lord was unconditionally on their side are seen in Amos:
  - 9:10 – “All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.'”
  - 6:1 – “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!”
    - Or, the New Living Translation: “What sorrow awaits you who lounge in luxury in Jerusalem, and you who feel secure in Samaria! You are famous and popular in Israel, and people go to you for help.”
  - 5:14 – “Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.”
  - 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!'”
  - 6:4-6 – “Those who recline on beds of ivory  
 And sprawl on their couches,  
 And eat lambs from the flock  
 And calves from the midst of the stall,  
 Who improvise to the sound of the harp,  
*And* like David have composed songs for themselves,  
 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls  
 While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils,  
Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.”
  - 6:12-13 – “But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood - you who rejoice in Lo-debar, who say, “Have we not by our own strength captured Karnaim for ourselves?””
  - 5:18 – “Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,...”
- Israel had developed a theology (based on Pagan standards) that their god would only do good to his people.
- Amos is prophesying an entirely different conclusion than the other prophets of his time (with the exception of a soon arising Isaiah and Elisha who died before Jeroboam II came to the throne (2 Kings 13), and possibly a few of Elisha's students including possibly Jonah.)

What follows is a list of natural associations of cause and effect.

- The main focus is on association.
- The lesson is leading to these points:
  - disaster comes from God and God will reveal it to his prophet.

- If God reveals it to his prophet, the prophet is going to say something.
- So, Amos' ministry is the only logical outcome of Israel's behavior and the Lords covenant response.

## Amos 3:3-8

- Amos now uses a heptad (a group of seven) obvious causes and their associated results as a base of logic that is undeniable by his listening audience.
  - Other places where Amos will use a heptad (a group of seven):
    - 2:6-8 –
      - 1) “they sell the righteous for money”
      - 2) “the needy for a pair of sandals”
      - 3) “pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless”
      - 4) “turn aside the way of the humble”
      - 5) “man and his father resort to the same girl”
      - 6) “on garments taken as pledges the stretch out beside every altar”
      - 7) “in the house of their god they drink the wine of those who have been fined.”
    - 2:14-16 –
      - 1) “flight will perish from the swift”
      - 2) “the strong shall not retain his strength”
      - 3) “nor shall the mighty save his life”
      - 4) “he who handles the bow shall not stand”
      - 5) “he who is swift of foot shall not save himself”
      - 6) “nor shall he who rides the horse save his life”
      - 7) “he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day”
    - 4:4-5 –
      - 1) “Come to Bethel, and transgress”
      - 2) “to Gilgal, and multiply transgression”
      - 3) “bring your sacrifices every morning”
      - 4) “your tithes every three days”
      - 5) “offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened”
      - 6) “proclaim freewill offerings”
      - 7) “publish them (or, “brag”, “boast”); for so you love to do, O people of Israel”
    - 4:6-11 –
      - 1) FAMINE: “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me”
      - 2) RAIN: “I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me”
      - 3) MILDEW: “I struck you with blight and mildew;

- 4) LOCUST: “your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me”
  - 5) PLAGUES: “I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
  - 6) SWORD: I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me,”
  - 7) OVERTHROW: “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me”
- 5:8-9 –
    - 1) “made the Pleiades and Orion”
    - 2) “turns midnight into dawn”
    - 3) “darkens day into night”
    - 4) “calls for the waters of the sea”
    - 5) “pours them out over the face of the land”
    - 6) “with a blinding flash he destroys the stronghold
    - 7) “brings the fortified city to ruin”
  - 5:21-23 –
    - 1) “I hate, I despise your religious festivals”
    - 2) “your assemblies are a stench to me”
    - 3) “Even though you bring me burnt offerings”
    - 4) “and grain offerings, I will not accept them”
    - 5) “Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.”
    - 6) “Away with the noise of your songs”
    - 7) “I will not listen to the music of your harps.”
  - 9:1-4 – “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said:
    - 1) “Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people”
    - 2) “those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape.”
    - 3) “If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them”
    - 4) “if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down”
    - 5) “If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them”
    - 6) “if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them”
    - 7) “if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.”
  - 9:5-6 – “The Lord God of hosts,...the LORD is his name.”
    - 1) “he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn”
    - 2) “all of it rises like the Nile”
    - 3) “sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt”
    - 4) “builds his upper chambers in the heavens”
    - 5) “founds his vault upon the earth”

- 6) “calls for the waters of the sea”
- 7) “pours them out upon the surface of the earth”
- The heptad that Amos uses in 3:3-8 is seven plus a surprising eighth. Amos is using a heptad, but surprises with an eighth part that itself draws a surprising conclusion. Other theological surprises that this culture should have already understood are also seen in:
  - Amos 3:2 – “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I WILL PUNISH YOU FOR ALL YOUR INIQUITIES.”
  - Amos 5:18 – “Woe to you who desire THE DAY OF THE LORD! Why would you have the Day of the Lord? IT IS DARKNESS, AND NOT LIGHT.”
  - Amos 9:7 – “Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?” declares the LORD. “Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?”

**3:3 - “Do two walk together,  
unless they have agreed to meet?”**

**3:4 - “Does a lion roar in the forest,  
when he has no prey?”**

**Does a young lion cry out from his den,  
if he has taken nothing?”**

**3:5 - “Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth,  
when there is no trap for it?”**

**Does a snare spring up from the ground,  
when it has taken nothing?”**

**3:6 - “Is a trumpet blown in a city,  
and the people are not afraid?”**

**Does disaster come to a city,  
unless the Lord has done it?”**

- The heptad of Amos 3:3-6 includes these seven:
  - “Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”
  - “Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?”
  - “Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?”
  - “Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it?”
  - “Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing?”
  - “Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?”
  - “Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?”
- The pattern of cause and result is progressive moving from:
  - Animal (predator) vs animal (prey) in 3:4
  - Animal (bird) vs human (snare, trap) in 3:5
  - Man (invader) vs man (besieged) in 3:6
  - Human vs Deity in 3:6
- The first five place the result or the effect first; the cause is listed second (3:4-5):
  - Two walk together (result);           having met (cause)
  - Lion roar (result);                   has prey (cause)
  - Lion growl (result);                 has food (cause)
  - Bird swoops down to trap (result); bait in the trap (cause)
  - Trap springs (result);               something tripped the snare (cause)

- Amos suddenly switches the order of presentation from **result/cause** to **cause/result** in 3:6 for the last sixth part of the heptad forcing the interruption of order and thought:
  - 6) “Is a trumpet blown in a city (cause), and the people are not afraid (result)?”
 This is because with the seventh part of the heptad Amos will now present the premise of his argument and the justification of his prophetic ministry. The now irrefutable premise is:
  - 7) “Does disaster come to a city (result), unless the Lord has done it (cause)?”
- **3:3 – “Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”**
  - The only one in the heptad that is a normal, daily activity instead of a threatening situation of conflict or survival.
  - Since a heptad (seven) is an odd number one of the seven will not be able to have a matching parallel.
  - It captures the essence of the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel...they must agree to be together.
  - “to meet” does not include any planning or design or agreement to meet at an appointed place/time. It would refer to a random, non-arranged meeting along the way. Amos’ example begins with a chance meeting, so his illustration is before you walk together you have to meet (be it by appointment, prearranged or randomly, by chance). So, if two people are walking together they first had to meet at some point and begin walking together. This is an incontestable example. No exception is possible.
- **3:4 – “Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?”**
  - Two rhetorical questions
  - Two phases of the hunt:
    - First, pre-hunt...the lion is quiet and stalking his prey. Then, roars to startle the prey when the attack begins. This is the roar of confrontation.
    - Second, post-hunt...the lion roars or growls after having captured or eaten the prey since they are no longer concerned with the quietness of stalking during the hunt. This is the roar of contentment.
    - Ezekiel 22:25 has the same three themes in the same order: “The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.” (ESV) or, “Your princes plot conspiracies just as lions stalk their prey. They devour innocent people, seizing treasures and extorting wealth. They make many widows in the land. “ (NLT)
- **3:5 – “Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing?”**
  - Two different statements about two separate stages of catching a bird.
  - The first preposition means to “swoop” or “plunge down upon”
  - Why does the bird “swoop” down into a trap or “plunge down upon” a trap? The answer is, “For the bait placed in the trap.”
    - This same word is used in 1 Samuel 18:21, ‘Saul thought, “Let me give her to him, that she may be a **snare** (or, “**let her be the bait that lures him**”) for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ ’
- **3:6 – “Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?”**
  - Amos now moves closer to his point by using two more examples of cause and result.

- The alarm is caused by the bowing of the ram's horn which alerts the people of an approaching enemy.
- The second result and cause example makes sense, but is contrary to the people's false belief as is seen in these verses in Amos. They believed that:
  - The God, the God of hosts, was actually with Northern Israel (Amos 5:14)
  - The Day of the Lord would be one of light for Israel (Amos 5:18)
  - They felt confident and secure enough to hold to the doctrinal statement that, "Never shall the evil overtake us or come near to us." (Amos 9:10)
- The second (and, the seventh) statement proved Israel's understanding of the character and nature of the Lord as deficient.

**3:7 - "For the Lord God does nothing  
without revealing his secret  
to his servants the prophets.**

**3:8 - "The lion has roared;  
who will not fear?"**

**The Lord God has spoken;  
who can but prophesy?"**

- 3:7-8 is a surprise because the heptad continues into an eighth part with a phrases that also include cause and result that present insight that is surprising in its content.
- Amos' point is to say that as surely as the first seven in the heptad are obvious and the truth self-evident, so also, this surprising eighth (or, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> cause and effect statements) are absolutely true.
- Amos is saying here another obvious truth: The Lord is going to reveal his plans to his servants the prophets.
  - It is worth noting that Amos is not talking himself into a corner where he is "the only prophet", but indicates there are plural "prophets" to who the Lord is revealing his plans.
- This section (3:3-8) begins and ends with "roaring". In 3:4 it is the roar of a lion. In 3:8 the roar of a lion is paralleled with the speaking of the Lord God.
  - The book of Amos begins with the Lord roaring from Zion.
- The roaring lion, or the speaking Lord God, is the climax and ultimate purpose of this section. The Lord has roared, the Lord has spoken which means things are going to happen and Amos is here to announce them.
  - The prophet does not choose the profession of a prophet. The Lord chooses the man to be his prophet.
  - The prophet does not create his own message. The Lord gives the prophet the message to declare.
  - Once commanded to speak, the prophet has no choice.
  - Likewise, it is useless for the people, the leaders, even the king, to command the prophet to not speak on behalf of the Lord. The prophet can do nothing other than prophecy.
- POINT: Amos' ministry is not his profession. Amos is a sheep breeder, a cattle raiser and a keeper of fig trees. The Lord took Amos away from his profession to prophecy. Amos did not come on his own with his own message.
  - Thus, no one will be able to stop Amos from prophesying.
  - No one will be able to stop the prophesied word from coming to pass.

## 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.”

- “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
- “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
- “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.”

### **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.”

- Only fragments of the once extremely wealthy, complacent society will remain.

### **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)

#### **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