
AMOS 6: 1 Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who are secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!

The prophet reproves his people for indulging themselves in luxurious ease, and forming alliances with their powerful idolatrous neighbors, Amo 6:1. He asks if their lands or their lot be better than their own, Amo 6:2, that they should choose to worship the gods of the heathen, and forsake Jehovah. Then follows an amplification of the sin which the prophet reproves, Amo 6:3-6; to which he annexes very awful threatenings, confirmed by the oath of Jehovah, Amo 6:7, Amo 6:8. He next particularly specifies the punishment of their sins by pestilence, Amo 6:9-11; by famine, or a drought that should harden the earth so that it could not be tilled, Amo 6:12; and by the sword of the Assyrians, Amo 6:14.

Verse 1

Wo to them that are at ease in Zion - For השאננים hashshaananim, "who dwell at ease," it has been proposed to read השעננים hashshaananim, "who confidently lean," the two words differing only in one letter, an ע ain for an א aleph. They leaned confidently on Zion; supposing that, notwithstanding their iniquities they should be saved for Zion's sake. Thus the former clause will agree better with the latter, "leaning upon Zion," and "trusting in the mountain of Samaria." Those that are at ease may mean those who have no concern about the threatened judgments, and who have no deep concern for the salvation of their own souls. Houbigant would read, "Go to them who despise Zion, and trust in Samaria." So the Septuagint, reading שנאים soneim, hating, instead of שאננים shaananim, being at rest, tranquil Calmet first proposed this conjecture; Houbigant follows him.

Are named chief - Newcome renders, "That are named after the chief of the nations;" and observes, that the Hebrew word נקבי nekubey is an allusion to marking a name or character by punctures. See on Isa 44:5 (note). They call themselves not after their ancestors, but after the chief of the idolatrous nations with whom they intermarry contrary to the law.

Perhaps the words here rather refer to the mountains and their temples, than to the people. The mountain of Zion, and the mountain of Samaria, were considered the chief or most celebrated among the nations, as the two kingdoms to which they belonged were the most distinguished on the earth.

AMOS 6: 2 Go to Calneh, and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?

Verse 2

Pass ye unto Calneh - This is, says Calmet, the Ctesiphon on the river Tigris.

Hamath - The same as Emesa. Hamath was a city on the Orontes, in Syria.

Gath - A well-known town, and head of one of the five seignories of the Philistines.

Be they better - You have no more reason to expect exemption from the consequences of your sins than they had. They have been punished; so shall you. Why then will ye trust in their gods, that could not save their own cities?

AMOS 6: 3 Those who put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

Verse 3

Ye that put far away the evil day - Wo to you who will not consider the day of approaching vengeance; but continue in your iniquity, and harden your hearts. Ye bring your iniquities nearer, and still suppose your punishment to be at a greater distance.

AMOS 6: 4 Who lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves on their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

Verse 4

That lie upon beds of ivory - The word הַי הוי, wo, is understood at the beginning of each of the first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth verses. The beds mentioned here may be either sofas to recline on at table, or beds to sleep on; and these among the ancients were ornamented with ivory inlaid. They were called lectos eburatos by Plautus, lectos eburnos by Horace, "ivory beds." Probably those ornamented with shells, or mother-of-pearl, may be intended. Several works of this kind may be still seen in Palestine and other places. I have before me a cross brought from Jerusalem, incrustated all over with mother-of-pearl, and various figures chased on it.

There must have been a great deal of luxury and effeminacy among the Israelites at this time; and, consequently, abundance of riches. This was in the time of Jeroboam the second, when the kingdom had enjoyed a long peace. The description in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses, is that of an Asiatic court even in the present day.

AMOS 6: 5 who strum on the strings of a harp; who invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;

Verse 5

And invent to themselves instruments of music, like David - See the note on 1Chr 23:5; and see especially the note on 2Chr 29:25 (note). I believe that David was not authorized by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the Divine worship of which we read, and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet; and I farther believe that the use of such instruments of music, in the Christian Church, is without the sanction and against the will of God; that they are subversive of the spirit of true devotion, and that they are sinful. If there was a wo to them who invented instruments of music, as did David under the law, is there no wo, no curse to them who invent them, and introduce them into the worship of God in the

Christian Church? I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity. The late venerable and most eminent divine, the Revelation John Wesley, who was a lover of music, and an elegant poet, when asked his opinion of instruments of music being introduced into the chapels of the Methodists said, in his terse and powerful manner, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither Heard nor Seen." I say the same, though I think the expense of purchase had better be spared.

The word הפרטים happoretim, which we render chant, and the margin quaver, signifies to dance, to skip, etc. In the sight of such a text, fiddlers, drummers, waltzers, etc., may well tremble, who perform to excite detestable passions.

AMOS 6: 6 who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Verse 6

That drink wine in bowls - Perhaps the costliness of the drinking vessels, more than the quantity drank, is that which is here reprehended by the prophet. Drinking vessels of the most costly materials, and of the most exquisite workmanship, are still in use; and as to precious ointments and perfumes among the Jews, we have a proof that the contents of one small box was worth three hundred denarii, at least seven pounds ten shillings sterling. See the case in the Gospel, Joh 12:5 (note), and the note there.

AMOS 6: 7 Therefore they will now go captive with the first who go captive; and the feasting and lounging will end.

Verse 7

With the first that go captive - The house of Israel shall be carried into captivity before the house of Judah.

AMOS 6: 8 "The Lord GOD has sworn by himself," says the LORD, the God of Armies: "I abhor the pride of Jacob, and detest his fortresses. Therefore I will deliver up the city with all that is in it.

Verse 8

The Lord God hath sworn by himself - בנפשו benaphsho, by his soul, his being, existence.

AMOS 6: 9 It will happen, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

Verse 9

Ten men - they shall die - All shall be cut off by the sword, or by captivity, or by famine.

AMOS 6: 10 "When a man's relative carries him, even he who burns him, to bring bodies out of the house, and asks him who is in the innermost parts of the house, 'Is there yet any with you?' And he says, 'No;' then he will say, 'Hush! Indeed we must not mention the LORD's name.'

Verse 10

A man's uncle shall take him up - Bp. Newcome says, this obscure verse seems to describe the effects of famine and pestilence during the siege of Samaria. The carcass shall be burnt, and the bones removed with no ceremony of funeral rites, and without the assistance of the nearest kinsman. Solitude shall reign in the house; and if one is left, he must be silent, (see Amo 8:3), and retired, lest he be plundered of his scanty provision! Burning the body, and then collecting the ashes, and putting them into an urn, was deemed the most honorable mode of burial.

AMOS 6: 11 "For, behold, the LORD commands, and the great house will be smashed to pieces, and the little house into bits.

Verse 11

He will smote the great house with breaches - The great and small shall equally suffer; no distinction shall be made; rich and poor shall fall together; death has received his commission, and he will spare none. Horace has a sentiment precisely like this, Carm. Lib. i., Od. iv., 5:13.

Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum

Tabernas, Regumque Turres.

With equal pace impartial fate

Knocks at the palace as the cottage gate.

But this may refer particularly to the houses of the poor in Eastern countries; their mud walls being frequently full of clefts; the earth of which they are built seldom adhering together because of its sandiness.

AMOS 6: 12 Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plough there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness;

Verse 12

Shall horses run upon the rock - First, they could not do it, because they were unshod; for the shoeing of horses with iron was not then known. Secondly, If they did run on the rock, it would be useless to their owner, and hurtful to themselves. Thirdly, And it would be as useless to plough on the rock with oxen; for there it would be impossible to sow with any advantage. Fourthly, Just as useless and injurious would it be to put gall in the place of judgment, and hemlock in the place of righteousness. You have not only been laboring in vain for yourselves, but you have also been oppressive to others; and for both ye shall suffer.

AMOS 6: 13 you who rejoice in a thing of nothing, who say, 'Haven't we taken for ourselves horns by our own strength?'

Verse 13

Ye which rejoice in a thing of naught - In your idols: for an idol is nothing in the world.

Have we not taken to us horns - We have arrived to power and dignity by our strength. Horns were the symbols of power and authority. So Horace: -

Vina parant animos: tum pauper cornua sumet. "Wine repairs our strength, and furnishes the poor with horns."

At such times they think themselves as great as the greatest.

AMOS 6: 14 For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, house of Israel," says the LORD, the God of Armies; "and they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah."

Verse 14

I will raise up against you a nation - The Assyrians under Pul, Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser, who subdued the Israelites at various times, and at last carried them away captive in the days of Hosea, the last king of Israel in Samaria.

From the entering in of Hamath (on the north) unto the river of the wilderness - Besor, which empties itself into the sea, not far from Gaza, and was in the southern part of the tribe of Simeon.