

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO AMOS 2

In this chapter the prophet foretells the calamities that should come upon the Moabites for their transgressions, (<sup><3111></sup>Amos 2:1-3); and the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their iniquities, (<sup><3115></sup>Amos 2:4,5); also the judgments of God that should come upon Israel the ten tribes for their sins, which sins are enumerated; their oppression of the poor, their lewdness and idolatry, (<sup><3116></sup>Amos 2:6-8); and which are aggravated by the blessings of goodness bestowed upon them, both temporal and spiritual, (<sup><3119></sup>Amos 2:9-12); wherefore they are threatened with ruin, which would be inevitable, notwithstanding their swiftness, strength, and courage, and their skill in shooting arrows, and riding horses, (<sup><3123></sup>Amos 2:13-16).

**Ver. 1.** *Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Moab*, etc.] Or the Moabites, who descended from the eldest son of Lot, by one of his daughters; and, though related, were great enemies to the Israelites; they sent for Balaam to curse them when on their borders, and greatly oppressed them in the times of the judges:

*and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof*; (see Gill on <sup><3103></sup>Amos 1:3”). Idolatry, as well as the sin next charged, must be one of these four transgressions: the idols of Moab were Chemosh and Baalpeor; of the former (see Gill on <sup><2487></sup>Jeremiah 48:7”); and of the latter (see Gill on <sup><2310></sup>Hosea 9:10”);

*because he burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime*; either like “to lime”, or “for lime”; he burnt them thoroughly, till they came to powder as small and as white as lime, and used them instead of it to plaster the walls of his palace, by way of contempt, as the Targum; and so Jarchi and Kimchi: this is thought probable by Quinquarboreus<sup>f84</sup>, for which he is blamed by Sanctius, who observes, there is no foundation for it in Scripture; and that the ashes of the bones of one man would not be sufficient to plaster a wall; and, besides, could never be brought to such a consistence as to be fit for such a purpose; yet, if it only means bare burning them, so as that they became like lime, as the colour of it, it could

not be thought so very barbarous and inhuman, since it was the usage of some nations, especially the Romans, to burn their dead: no doubt something shocking is intended, and which usage to the dead is resented by the Lord. Sir Paul Rycaut<sup>f85</sup> relates a piece of barbarity similar to this, that the city of Philadelphia was built with the bones of the besieged, by the prince that took it by storm. Kimchi thinks, as other interpreters also do, that it refers to the history in (~~1200~~2 Kings 3:27); where the king of Moab is said to offer his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead for a burnt offering; which he understands, not of the king of Moab's son, but of the king of Edom's son, here called a king, because he was to have succeeded his father in the kingdom; but it seems rather to be the king of Moab's own son that he offered; nor is it likely that the king of Edom's son was in his lands; for he would have broke through into the king of Edom, but could not; and then did this rash action; not in wrath and fury, but in a religious way. The prophet here refers to some fact, notorious in those times, the truth of which is not to be questioned, though we have no other account of it in Scripture; very probably it was the same king of Moab that did it, and the same king of Edom that was so used, mentioned in the above history; the king of Moab being enraged at him for joining with the kings of Israel and Judah against him, who afterwards falling into his hands, he used him in this barbarous manner; or very likely being possessed of his country after his death, or however of his grave, he took him out of it, and burnt his bones to lime, in revenge of what he had done to him. This was a very cruel action thus to use a human body, and this not the body of a private person, but of a king; and was an act of impiety, as well as of inhumanity, to take the bones of the dead out of his grave, and burn them; and which though done to a Heathen prince. God, who is the Creator of all, and Governor of the whole world, and whose vicegerents princes are, resented; and therefore threatened the Moabites with utter destruction for it.

**Ver. 2.** *But I will send a fire upon Moab*, etc.] Either on the whole country, or on some particular city so called, as in all the other prophecies; and there was a city called Moab, now Areopolis, (see Gill on ~~2400~~“Jeremiah 48:4”); though it may be put for the whole country, into which an enemy should be sent to destroy it, even Nebuchadnezzar:

*and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth*; a principal city in the land of Moab; according to Kimchi, it was the royal city, and therefore mention is made of the palaces of it, here being the palace of the king and his princes;

(see <sup><4824></sup>Jeremiah 48:24); though the word may be rendered cities, as it is by the Septuagint and Arabic versions; and so the Targum,

“and shall consume the palaces of the fortified place;”

and so may signify all the cities of Moab, and their palaces: or however may be put for them:

*and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, [and] with the sound of the trumpet:* that is, the Moabites shall die, not in their beds, and in peace, but in war, amidst the howlings of the wounded, the shouts of soldiers, the clashing of arms, and the sound of trumpets,

**Ver. 3.** *And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof,* etc.] Either from the midst of Moab, the country in general; or from Kerioth in particular, so Kimchi; meaning their principal governor, their king, as Aben Ezra; for kings sometimes have acted as judges, took the bench, and sat and administered justice to their subjects:

*and I will stay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord;* the king, and the princes of the blood, and his nobles; so that there should be none to succeed him, or to protect and defend the people; the destruction should be an entire one, and inevitable, for the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. This was fulfilled at the same time as the prophecy against the children of Ammon by Nebuchadnezzar, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>186</sup>, which is next threatened.

**Ver. 4.** *Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Judah,* etc.] With whom Benjamin must be joined; for the two tribes are meant as distinct from the ten tribes, under the name of Israel, following. The prophet proceeds from the Heathens round about to the people of God themselves, for the ill usage of whom chiefly the above nations are threatened with ruin, lest they should promise themselves impunity in sin; though, if they rightly considered things, they could not expect it; since, if the Heathens, ignorant of the will of God, and his law, were punished for their sins, then much more those who knew it, and did it not, (<sup><1247></sup>Luke 12:47); and he begins with Judah, partly because he was of that tribe, lest he should be charged with flattery and partiality, and partly because of the order of his prophecy, which being chiefly concerned with Israel, it was proper that what he had to say to Judah should be delivered first:

*and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof*; the prophet retains the same form as in his prophecies against the Heathen nations; his own people, and God's professing people, being guilty of numerous transgressions, as well as they, and more aggravated than theirs; (see Gill on "<sup>308B</sup>Amos 1:3");

*because they have despised the law of the Lord*; a law so holy, just, and good, and so righteous, as no other nation had; and yet was not only not observed, but contemned: other nations sinned against the light of nature, and are not charged with breaches of the law of God, which was not given them; but these people had it, yet lightly esteemed it; counted it as a strange thing; walked not according to it, but cast it away from them; which was a great affront to the sovereignty of God, and a trampling upon his legislative power and authority:

*and have not kept his commandments*; or "statutes"<sup>f87</sup>; the ordinances of the ceremonial law, which he appointed them to observe for the honour of his name, as parts of his worship; and to lead them into the designs of his grace and salvation by the Messiah:

*and their lies caused them to err*; either, their idols, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; which are lying vanities, and deceive, and by which they were made to err from the pure worship of the living and true God to superstition and idolatry; or the words of the false prophets, as Kimchi; the false doctrines they taught, contrary to the word of God, directing them to seek for life by their own works; and promising them peace, when destruction was at hand; and daubing with untempered mortar; and as no lie is of the truth, but against it, so one untruth leads on to another:

*after the which their fathers have walked*; after which lies, idols, and errors, as in Ur of the Chaldees, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and even in later times: this was no excuse to them that they followed the way of their ancestors, but rather an aggravation of their guilt, that they imitated them, took no warning by them; but filled up the measure of their iniquities, and showed themselves to be a seed of evildoers, a generation of wicked men, the sons of rebellious parents.

**Ver. 5.** *But I will send a fire upon Judah*, etc.] An enemy, Nebuchadnezzar, who should burn, waste, and destroy, all that were in his way:

*and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem;* the chief city of Judah, the royal city, where stood the temple, the palace of the most High, and the palaces of the king and his nobles; these were burnt with fire when it was taken by the Chaldean army, about two hundred years after this prophecy, (~~2523~~Jeremiah 52:13).

**Ver. 6.** *Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Israel,* etc.] The ten tribes rent from the house of David in the times of Rehoboam, and who departed from the true worship of God, and set up calves at Daniel and Bethel:

*and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof;* the following part of this prophecy is taken up in pointing at the sins and punishment of Israel; now the prophet is come to the main business he was sent to do:

*because they sold the righteous for silver;* meaning not any particular person, as Joseph sold by his brethren, for in that they were all concerned, Judah as well as the rest; nor Christ, as others<sup>f88</sup>, sold for thirty pieces of silver; since the persons here charged with it, and the times in which it was done, will not agree with that case; but the sense is, that the judges of Israel were so corrupt, that for a piece of money they would give a cause against a righteous man, and in favour of an unjust man that bribed them:

*and the poor for a pair of shoes;* that is, for a mere trifle they would pervert justice; if two men came before them with a cause, and both poor; yet if one could but give a pair of shoes, or anything he could part with, though he could not give money; so mean and sordid were they, they would take it, and give the cause for him, however unjust it was.

**Ver. 7.** *That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor,* etc.] Either were greedy after money, the dust of the earth, and even that small portion of it the poor were possessed of; they could not be easy that they should enjoy that little of it they did, but were desirous to get it out of their hands by oppression and injustice: or they were eagerly desirous of throwing the poor upon the earth, and trampling upon them, and dragging them through the dust of it, thereby filling their heads and covering their faces with it; and caused them to put their mouths in the dust, and be humble suppliants to them. Some think there is an allusion to an ancient custom, which Joseph ben Gorion<sup>f89</sup> speaks of, that a guilty person should stand before the judges, clad in black, and his head covered with dust; and

this these judges desired here might be done by the rich, that the poor might be accused by them from whom they expected gifts:

*and turn aside the way of the meek*; decline doing them justice, pervert it, and hinder the course of it, denying it to those who are humble, meek, and modest; or else by one means or another turned them from the good ways in which they were walking, and by degrees at length brought them to such impudence and immodesty as is next expressed, so Aben Ezra:

*and a man and his father will go in unto the [same] maid, to profane my holy name*; that is, will be guilty of such uncleanness, as not only to have and enjoy the same harlot, but of such incest, as that the son would lie with his father's wife, and the father lie with his son's wife; a sin which was not named among the Gentiles, (~~4181~~ 1 Corinthians 5:1); and whereby the name of God was blasphemed among them, as if their religion taught them and encouraged them in such filthy actions; (see ~~4124~~ Romans 2:24).

**Ver. 8.** *And they laid [themselves] down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar*, etc.] That is, the clothes they took in pledge of poor people, which they should have restored before sun setting, (~~4225~~ Exodus 22:26,27); these they spread by every altar, of which they had many erected to their idols, and on these as on carpets they slept by them, as was usual with the Gentiles; who not only in common used to lie and sleep on garments, or carpets, or skins spread on the floor<sup>f90</sup>, but upon such in the temples of their idols, in order to obtain good dreams; so in the temple of Amphiarus in Greece, after purgations and sacrifices to him, and to the gods whose names were engraven on the same altar, they slew a ram, and spread the skin, on which they laid themselves down, and had dreams, the signification and events of which they presently interpreted<sup>f91</sup>; and Jerom says<sup>f92</sup>, they used to spread the skins of the sacrifices, and lie upon them, that they might by dreams know things to come, which custom in the temple of Aesculapius continued to his times; and this custom might be imitated by the Jews; and so they are described by such, "who sleep in the temples of idols", in the Vulgate Latin version of (~~2384~~ Isaiah 65:4); (see Gill on "~~2384~~ Isaiah 65:4"); but very false it is what Strabo<sup>f93</sup> says, that the Jews were taught this custom by Moses; telling them that such as lived soberly and righteously ought to sleep in the temple, where they might expect good dreams for themselves and others, as good gifts and signs from God, which others might not expect: or else the sense is, they laid themselves down on these clothes, and feasted on them; it being their custom at meals not to sit

upright, but to recline on couches; or as the manner of the Turks and other eastern nations to sit on carpets; and it was also the custom of the Heathens to feast in their temples, and by their altars, in honour of their gods. So Herodotus relates<sup>f94</sup>, that at a festival of June with the Argives, the mother of Cleobis and Biton prayed the goddess, whom they had drawn to the temple, oxen not being ready, that she would give to them what was best for men; after which prayer, it is said, they sacrificed and “feasted”; and the young men falling asleep in the temple, never rose more, but finished this life: the deity judging it better for a man to die than to live; and this custom of feasting in idols’ temples obtained, in the times of the apostles, as appears from (~~4880~~1 Corinthians 8:10); and which was now observed by the Israelites, with this aggravation of their sin, that they laid themselves on the garments of the poor they had taken for a pawn, when they were performing their idolatrous rites; which must be very provoking to God:

*and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god:* either wine which used to be given to condemned malefactors to cheer and refresh them; which custom among the Jews was founded on (~~2806~~Proverbs 31:6,7); (see Gill on “~~2806~~Proverbs 31:6”); (see Gill on “~~2807~~Proverbs 31:7”); The manner was to put a grain of frankincense into a cup of wine, which they gave to the malefactor just as he was going to be executed, that his mind might be disturbed and become insensible; and which was usually the free gift of honourable women, out of compassion to the sufferer; and if they did it not, it was provided at the expense of the public<sup>f95</sup>; but this seems to be done rather to intoxicate and stupefy them, that they might not feel their pain and misery, than to cheer; and is thought to be the potion which was offered to Christ, and he refused, (~~4153~~Mark 15:23); but whether such a custom obtained in the times of the prophet is a question; nor does it seem very likely that these men would choose such sort of wine; wherefore rather wine bought with the money they received by the fines and ameracements of those they unjustly condemned is intended. The Targum renders it the wine of rapine; and this they were not content to drink only in their own houses, but drank it at their festivals in the temples of their idols, such as were built for the calves of Daniel and Bethel, and other idols.

**Ver. 9.** *Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them,* etc.] Here the Lord by the prophet reckons up the many favours and blessings he had bestowed upon Israel, which was an aggravation of their sins, and showed them to be

guilty of great ingratitude, and a justification of him in his punishment of them he drove out the seven nations of Canaanites from before them, to make way for them, and destroyed them, of which the Amorite was a principal, and is here put for all the rest:

*whose height [was] like the height of the cedars;* being both tall of stature, and in great honour and dignity with the other nations, and in very opulent and flourishing circumstances:

*and he was strong as the oaks:* not only like the tall cedars of Lebanon for their height and largeness of stature, but like the sturdy oaks for the strength of their bodies, being of the race of the giants, (<sup><041328></sup>Numbers 13:28,32,33 <sup><041311></sup>Deuteronomy 3:11);

*yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath;* that is, utterly destroyed him, root and branch, so that nothing of him remained; still persisting in the metaphor of a tree. Jarchi interprets it of their superior and inferior princes; but it seems best to understand it of children with their parents, the one being the fruit, the other the root; and, both being destroyed, there must be utter ruin.

**Ver. 10.** *Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt,* etc.] Where they were bond slaves, and in great affliction and distress, and unable to help themselves; but the Lord wrought deliverance for them, and brought them out of this house of bondage with a high hand and a mighty arm:

*and led you forty years through the wilderness:* going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night; providing them with all things necessary, with food and raiment, and protecting them from all their enemies:

*to possess the land of the Amorite;* the whole land of Canaan, so called from a principal nation of it.

**Ver. 11.** *And I raised up of your sons for prophets,* etc.] Such as Moses, Joshua, and the seventy elders, and others; not only to foretell things to come, but to teach and instruct the people in the doctrines and duties of religion, and to warn them of their sins, and the danger of them:

*and of your young men for Nazarites:* as Samson, Samuel, and others; whose vow not only obliged them from shaving their hair, but to abstain from drinking wine, and eating grapes, which the youthful age is inclined



unto; but such grace was given them, as enabled them to deny themselves sensual gratifications, and to be examples of piety and constant attendance on the service of God, and instructing the people. The Targum is,

“of your young men for teachers;”

these were the spiritual mercies, as the former were the temporal ones, the Lord bestowed on these people, for the truth of which he appeals to them:

*[is it] not even thus, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord?* can ye deny it? the thing was too notorious to be contradicted.

**Ver. 12.** *But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink*, etc.] Contrary to their vow and calling, and in contempt of it, and to make them like themselves; they either persuaded them, or forced them to it:

*and commanded the prophets, saying, prophesy not*; hard and heavy things, judgments and denunciations of vengeance, only smooth things; by this authoritative language it appears that this is said of the rulers and governors of the people, as king, princes, and priests; (see <sup><3072></sup>Amos 7:12,13).

**Ver. 13.** *Behold, I am pressed under you*, etc.] With the weight of their sins, with which they had made him to serve, and had wearied him; his patience was quite wore out, he could bear them no longer:

*as a cart is pressed [that is] full of sheaves*; as a cart in harvest time, in which the sheaves of corn are carried home; when one sheaf is laid upon another, till they can lay no more, and the cart is loaded and overloaded with them, and ready to break, or be pressed into the earth with them: thus. Jehovah represents himself as loaded and burdened with the sins of these people, and therefore would visit for them, and inflict deserved punishment. Some render it actively, “behold, I press”<sup>f96</sup>, or “am about to press your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth”<sup>f97</sup>; the horse or horses which draw it, especially the last; or the ground it goes upon; or as a cart stuck with iron spikes, and loaded with stones, being drawn over a corn floor, presses the full sheaves, and beats out the grain, which was their way of pressing it: so the Lord signifies he would afflict and distress this people, bring them into strait circumstances, by a close siege, and other judgments, which should ruin and destroy them; and which was first begun by Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and finished by Shalmaneser, who carried away the ten tribes captive. So the Targum,

“behold, I bring distress upon you, and it shall straiten you in your place, as a cart is straitened which is loaded with sheaves.”

**Ver. 14.** *Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift*, etc.] They should be so straitened and cooped up, and be so loaded with pressures, that those, as swift of foot as Asahel, should not be able to make their escape by fleeing:

*and the strong shall not strengthen his force*; should not increase it, or muster it up, and exert it to such a degree, as to be able to defend and secure himself from the enemy:

*neither shall the mighty deliver himself*; “his soul” or “life”; a soldier, a man of war, an expert and courageous officer at the head of his troop, or even the general of the army; (see <sup><9316></sup>Psalm 33:16).

**Ver. 15.** *Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow*, etc.] That is, at some distance, and can make use of his instruments of war afar off; yet will not think it safe to stand his ground, but will betake himself to his heels as fast as he can to save himself:

*and [he that is] swift of foot shall not deliver [himself]*; this is repeated, lest any should place confidence in their agility, and to show how complete and inevitable the affliction will be:

*neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself*; by fleeing on horseback, no more than he that is on foot; no ways that can be devised or thought on would preserve from this general calamity; (see <sup><9317></sup>Psalm 33:17).

**Ver. 16.** *And [he that is] courageous among the mighty*, etc.] Or “strong in his heart”<sup>98</sup>; one that is of a great heart, famous for courage and bravery, that excels in it among the mighty; the most valiant soldiers and officers:

*shall flee away naked in that day*: shall throw away his armour, nay, put off his clothes, as being both a hinderance to him in his flight; and that he may make the better speed:

*saieth the Lord*: which is added to show the certainty of all this; it might be depended upon that so it would be, since the Lord God of truth had spoken it; and it was fulfilled about eighty years after this prophecy.