

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO AMOS 3

In this chapter the prophet goes on with his prophecy against Israel, whom God had highly favoured, and yet sinned against him, and therefore must expect to be punished by him; and the rather, since he and they were not agreed; and therefore there could be no communion between them, (^{<310B>}Amos 3:1-3); and by various similes are set forth the cause of divine judgments, the certain design of them, and their continuance, till the end is answered; which should be attended to, since every thing of this kind is of God, who giving his prophets notice of it, they are under an absolute necessity of declaring it; nor should they be blamed for it, (^{<310B>}Amos 3:4-8); and even the Heathen nations are appealed unto as witnesses of the sins of Israel, that caused such a denunciation of wrath; their tumults, oppression, injustice, violence, and robbery, (^{<310B>}Amos 3:9,10); wherefore an adversary is threatened to be sent among them, that should utterly destroy them, so that few should escape, (^{<310B>}Amos 3:11,12); particularly their idolatry and luxury seem to have been reigning sins, which had a great hand in bringing on their ruin, and for which the Lord would punish them, (^{<310B>}Amos 3:13-15).

Ver. 1. *Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel*, etc.] The prophecy against Israel begins in the preceding chapter, where notice is taken of their sins, at least some of them, and of their aggravated circumstances, and sure destruction; and here they are called upon to hearken and listen to what the Lord by his prophet had spoken, and was about to speak unto them; and to “receive” this word, as the Targum; to receive it as the word of God, and not men, and with all humility and reverence; and to take it, and apply it to themselves, to whom it justly belonged; and to make a proper use and improvement of it by humiliation and reformation. A word this was,

against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt; it was but a family that went down into Egypt, and, though it greatly increased there, it was no more when it was brought up from thence: a family under the peculiar care of Jehovah, as the bringing them out of Egypt, out of the

house of bondage, when greatly distressed there, abundantly shows; and which was a wonderful blessing and favour; and therefore often mentioned, and led on to many other blessings and mercies: a family which was the Lord's own, and therefore he had a right to chastise and correct them for their sins. It seems by this phrase, "the whole family", as if the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were included: though the prophecy seems chiefly intended against the ten tribes, which went by the name of Israel, ever since the breach in Rehoboam's time, as distinct from Judah;

saying; as follows:

Ver. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*, etc.] All the families or nations of the earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are known by the Lord, as he is the omniscient God; but none had been known by him as a family, or a nation, with that love and affection as this family had been, or distinguished by his favours and blessings as they, not only temporal, but spiritual; besides the land of Canaan, and all the good things in it, they had the law of the Lord, his word, worship, and ordinances, among them; he chose them for himself above all people, and gave peculiar marks of his affection to them, and special instances of his goodness, and of his care over them, and concern for them; (see ^{<B006>}Deuteronomy 4:6-8 ^{<B006>}7:6,7 ^{<B079>}Psalm 147:19,20 ^{<B004>}Romans 9:4,5);

therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities; or "visit upon you"^{f99}; or "against you"; in a way of chastisement and correction; they were a family he had highly favoured, and yet departed from him; children he had brought up in a tender manner, and brought out of a most miserable condition, and yet rebelled against him; he had followed and loaded them with his benefits, and they had proved ungrateful to him; he had given them a revelation of his mind and will, and they had rejected it, and therefore knowing, and not doing it, were worthy of more stripes; their sins were more aggravated than others, being against goodness and mercy, light and knowledge; and therefore the Lord was determined to make an example of them; (see ^{<B047>}1 Peter 4:17).

Ver. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?*] Unless they meet together, and appoint time and place, when and where they shall set out, what road they will take, and whither they will go; without such consultation and agreement, it cannot be thought they should walk together; and not amicably, unless united in friendship, and are of the same affection to each other, and of the same sentiments one with another; or it

is much if they do not fall out by the way. The design of these words is to show, that without friendship there is no fellowship, and without concord no communion; as this is the case between man and man, so between God and man; and that Israel could not expect that God should walk with them, and show himself friendly to them, and continue his favours with them, when they walked contrary to him; when they were so disagreeable to him in their sentiments of religion, in their worship, and the rites of it, and in the whole of their conduct and behaviour. And to a spiritual walk with God, and communion with him, agreement is requisite. God and man were originally chief friends, but sin set them at variance; a reconciliation became necessary to their walking together again; which was set on foot, not by man, who had no inclination to it, nor knew how to go about it if he had, and much less able to effect it; but by the Lord, the offended party: it began in his thoughts, which were thoughts of peace; it was set on foot by him in the council of peace, and concluded in the covenant of peace; and his Son was sent to bring it about; and through his obedience, sufferings, and death, through his sacrifice and satisfaction, the agreement is made on the part of God, his justice is satisfied; but still it is necessary man should be agreed too; this is brought out by the Spirit of God, who shows the sinner the enmity of his mind, the sin and danger of it, slays this enmity, and puts in new principles of light, life, and love; when the soul is reconciled to God's way of salvation, and loves the Lord, and delights in him; and both being thus agreed, the one by the satisfaction of Christ, and the other by the Spirit of Christ, (see [Romans 5:10](#)); they walk comfortably together: the saint walks with God, not only as in his sight and presence, but by faith, and in his fear, in the ways and ordinances of the Lord; and particularly is frequent in prayer and meditation, in which much of his walk with God lies: and God walks with him; he grants his gracious presence; manifests his love and favour to him; talks with him by the way; discloses the secrets of his heart; and indulges him with nearness and communion with him; but all is founded on mutual agreement. And so it must be between men and men, that walk in a religious way; regenerate and unregenerate persons cannot walk together, there being no concord, ([2 Corinthians 6:14,15](#)); nor can all sorts of professors; they must agree in the way Christ, and in the fundamental principles of religion; and in worship, and the manner of it; and in all the ordinances of the Gospel, and the manner of administering them.

Ver. 4. *Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?* etc.] He will not, unless he has it in his sight, or in his paws; he roars when he first sees it, whereby he terrifies the creature, that it cannot move till he comes up to it; and when he has got it in his paws, he roars over it, to invite others to partake with him. Now prophecy from the Lord is compared to the roaring of a lion, (^{<300>}Amos 1:2); and this is never in a way of judgment without a cause; the sin of men, or of a nation, which makes them a prey to the wrath and fury of God;

will a young lion cry, or “give forth his voice”;

out of his den, if he have taken nothing? that is, if the old lion has taken nothing, and brought nothing unto him; which signifies the same as before; unless by the young lion is meant the prophets of the Lord, who never prophesy but when they have a commission from him, and a people are pointed out to them as the just prey of his wrath and vengeance. All the images here used are very natural; the lion is for the most part in woods and forests, hence called the “lion out of the forest”, (^{<286>}Jeremiah 5:6); as he is by Theocritus^{f100}; where his voice is heard, but not unless he is in sight of his prey, or has got it, even though ever so hungry; but when he has it in view, he roars so terribly, that, as Basil^{f101} observes, many animals that could escape him through their swiftness, yet are so frightened at his roaring, that they have no power to move; and they have their dens either in caves or in thickets, where are the she lioness and the young lions, to whom the prey is brought; (see ^{<341>}Nahum 2:11,12).

Ver. 5. *Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin [is] for him?* etc.] No, there must be a snare set, or a bird can never be taken in it; and that is done, not by chance, but with the design of the fowler; yea, with the knowledge and will of God himself, (^{<400>}Matthew 10:29); the design of this is to show, that no judgment or affliction comes upon a people, or they into one, by chance, or without the appointment of God; they are his nets and snares, which he on purpose spreads and sets for persons, to take them in; and unless he did do so, they would not fall into any; (see ^{<886>}Job 5:6,7 ^{<824>}23:14 ^{<623>}Ezekiel 12:13);

shall [one] take up a snare from the earth; the Targum adds, out of its time:

and have taken nothing at all? when men set a snare to catch anything, do they take it up before anything is caught? they do not; they let it stand till

something is ensnared in it, and so their end answered, and then they take it up, and not before. And thus when God denounces or brings a judgment, or an affliction, upon a people, does he remove it before the end is answered by it? he does not; if the end is to bring men to a sense of sin, and humiliation for it; or to bring near to God who have been wandering from him; or to try their graces, or take away their sin; when such an end is answered, then, and not till then, is the snare taken up, or the affliction removed; till such an end is brought about, the distress is continued, or the threatening of it; and of this Israel is hereby assured.

Ver. 6. *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city*, etc.] Meaning not any trumpet blown, as the silver trumpet for the gathering of the people to worship, or the jubilee trumpet, which proclaimed liberty to them, or any other, expressive of joy and gladness; but the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war, or what is blown by the watchmen on the walls, describing an enemy, or some danger, near:

and the people not be afraid? they must, they usually are, lest their lives, and their children's, should be taken away, and their substance become a prey to the enemy: or, "and the people not run together"^{f102}; into some one place for shelter, or to consult together how to provide for their safety, and secure themselves from danger. So when the prophets of the Lord, by his order, lift up their voice like a trumpet, to show his people their transgressions; or when, as watchmen, they blow the trumpet, to give notice of approaching danger; can they hear such denunciations of his wrath for their sins, and not tremble at them, or not take some ways and methods to escape it?

shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done [it]? which is not to be understood of the evil of sin, of which God is not the author, it being contrary to his nature and will; and though he permits it to be done by others, yet he never does it himself, nor so much as tempts men to it, (⁵⁰¹³James 1:13,14); unless the words should be rendered, as they may be, "shall there be evil in a city, and shall not the Lord do" or "work"^{f103}? shall sin be committed in a city, all sorts of sin, in the most bold and extravagant manner, and will not the Lord do something to show his resentment of it? is it not time for him to arise and work for his name's sake? will he not visit for these things, and be avenged on such a city, and the inhabitants of it? but this may be interpreted of the evil of affliction or judgment; which, wherever it comes, is by the order and appointment of God, and is inflicted

by him; thus evil, as well as good, comes out of the mouth and hand of the most High; and he creates the evil of adversity, as well as makes peace and prosperity; (see ^{<B120>}Job 2:10 ^{<B188>}Lamentations 3:38 ^{<B107>}Isaiah 45:7).

Ver. 7. *Surely the Lord God will do nothing*, etc.] In the world, in a nation or city; no remarkable event has happened, or shall happen, to the sons of men:

but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets; what he willed and determined to do, which was a secret in his own breast, till revealed; and this generally, and for the most part, he makes known to those that fear and serve him; and especially to whom he employs in public service, as his prophets and ministers, previous to his accomplishment of it: thus he revealed to Noah the drowning of the old world by the flood; to Abraham the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; and to the same servant and friend of his the affliction of his posterity four hundred years in a strange land, and then to be brought out with great substance; to Abijah the Shilonite the rending of ten tribes from the house of David; to Jeremiah the seventy years' captivity of the Jews in Babylon; to Isaiah their deliverance from thence, through Cyrus by name; to Daniel the four monarchies, the nature, rise, and fall of them; and to John, the disciple of Christ, all the material things that should come to pass, relating to the church and world, from the first times of the Gospel to the second coming of Christ; which that book is a revelation of that bears that name; (see ^{<B187>}Genesis 18:17); and so that grand affair, which God has brought about in the world, the salvation of his people by his Son, which was a secret hid in his heart before the world began, this he revealed to his servants before it was effected; not only the scheme of it, but the author of it, whom he very early gave notice of; and who was spoken of by the mouth of all the prophets, from the beginning of the world; declaring who and what he was, the Son of God; that he should be incarnate, and born of a virgin; when he should appear, and where, and in what part of the world; also in what way and manner he should obtain salvation, by his obedience and sufferings; and all the circumstances relating thereunto are most minutely and exactly declared by him. Yea, God reveals unto his saints in common the secret of his purposes, respecting their election, redemption, and regeneration, which is made known in the effectual calling; and of the blessings of his grace in the covenant, and also of his providences; and of his love, grace, and mercy; and of his Gospel, and the mysteries of it; thus he deals with them as his friends, rather than as his servants; (see ^{<B254>}Psalms 25:14 ^{<B155>}John 15:15).

Ver. 8. *The lion hath roared, who will not fear?* etc.] Amos said this from his own experience, who, having been a herdsman in the wilderness of Tekoa, had often heard a lion roar, which had put him into a panic, both for himself, and the cattle he kept; the figure is explained in the next clause:

the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? whether it be to foretell future events, which the Lord has made known shall come to pass; or to preach the word, which is to prophesy to edification, to exhortation, and comfort, (^{<414B>}1 Corinthians 14:3); or to perform the more private exercises of religion, as singing of psalms, praying, etc. (^{<425D>}1 Chronicles 25:1-3) (^{<410B>}1 Corinthians 11:4,5); these things who can forbear doing, to whom the Lord has spoken either in a dream or vision, or in his word, and by his Spirit; and to whom he has given a call and commissions, and gifts and graces, qualifying them for such service? who that has the fear of God in his heart, and his glory in view, and the good of others, that can refrain from it? nay, it is of dangerous consequence to refuse it; for if the roaring of a lion is so terrible, and if the wrath of an earthly king is as the roaring of a lion, much more the wrath and displeasure of the King of kings. Jonah declined prophesying when the Lord spoke to him, but what was the consequence of it? the prophet by this seems to justify himself in prophesying, and that he ought not to be blamed for it, seeing the Lord had given him the word, and therefore he ought to publish it. This may be particularly applied to the ministers of the word, who have a call, a charge and gifts from Christ, and on whom there is a necessity laid to preach the Gospel; and who should not shut, to declare it on any account; nor can they, who have it in their hearts, and as fire in their bones; who have seen and heard, and handled of the word of life, let what will be the consequence of it; (see ^{<438D>}Psalm 68:11 ^{<440D>}Acts 4:20 ^{<445D>}5:20,29 ^{<441G>}1 Corinthians 9:16).

Ver. 9. *Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt,* etc.] This is spoken to the prophets, to publish and declare in all the courts of the Philistines and Egyptians, and among all the princes and great men therein, the sins of the people of Israel, and the punishment God threatened them with; and let them, even these very Heathens, judge whether there was not a just proportion between them, and whether their sins did not deserve such calamities to be brought upon them, the Lord by his prophets had denounced;

and say, assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; the metropolis of the ten tribes, (^{<230B>}Isaiah 7:9); and which was built upon a mountain, and several others were about it, and joined to it; where these princes of Ashdod or Azotus in Palestine, and of Egypt, are called to leave their courts, and meet together, to behold the iniquities committed by Israel, and to sit in judgment upon them, and declare their sense of what was just and fitting to be done to such a people:

and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof; the riots of its inhabitants, the noise of the mob committing all manner of outrages and wickedness:

and the oppressed in the midst thereof; the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, injured in their persons and properties, plundered of their substance, or defrauded of it.

Ver. 10. *For they know not to do right, saith the Lord*, etc.] What is just and fight between man and man, no, not in one single instance; they did not regard it, or advert to it; they were under no concern about it; and were so much under the power of their lusts, that they knew not how to do it; and had used themselves so long to such wicked and unjust ways, that they had lost at least the practical knowledge of doing justice; they knew what was right in the theory, but not in the practice; bribes blinded their eyes; for this seems to design judges, civil magistrates, such who had the administration of justice and the execution Of the laws in their hands. The Targum is,

“they know not to execute the law;”

(see ^{<240E>}Jeremiah 4:22);

who store up violence and robbery in their palaces; treasured up riches in their palaces, gotten in a violent way, by oppression and injustice; and which was no other, nor better, than robbery. This shows that persons in power and authority, that lived in palaces, in great splendour and grandeur, are here meant.

Ver. 11. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God*, etc.] Because of these tumults and riots, oppression and injustice, violence and robbery:

an adversary there [shall be] even round about the land: not Tyre, as Theodoret renders the word; but the king of Assyria, who invaded the land

of Israel in the days of Hoshea, took Samaria, and carried Israel captive, and placed them in foreign countries, (^{<12716>}2 Kings 17:6);

and he shall bring down thy strength from thee; take away their riches, demolish their fortresses, and strip them of everything in which they put their confidence:

and thy palaces shall be spoiled; plundered of the treasures laid up in them, and pulled down to the ground; and a just retaliation this for their being the repositories of ill gotten substance and wealth.

Ver. 12. *Thus saith the Lord, as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion*, etc.] Or what the lion has left, to show to his master that it had been seized and torn by a beast of prey; for otherwise it is a most daring thing, and not usual, for a shepherd to take anything out of a lion's mouth, though David did: and here it is said to be not a whole sheep, or a lamb, but

two legs, or a piece of an ear; the body of the creature being devoured by the lion, only some offal left he cared not for; two shanks of the legs that had no flesh upon them, and the gristle of the ear, as the Targum; having satisfied his hunger with the best of it: signifying hereby that only a few of the Israelites should escape the enemy, and those poor and insignificant, he made no account of; and this in a miraculous manner, it being like taking anything out of the mouth of a lion, to which a powerful enemy is compared, and particularly the king of Assyria, (^{<2617>}Jeremiah 50:17);

so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria; only a few of them, and those the poorest; and their escape will be next to a miracle, when the city will be taken; even such as are weak and sickly, or faint hearted: being

in a corner of a bed; who either through sickness lie there, or slothfulness, danger being near; or through poverty, having only a corner or a piece of a bed to lie on; or through cowardice they hid themselves in one part of it:

and in Damascus [in] a couch; or "in a bed of Damascus"^{f104}; the chief city in Syria, taken much about the same time as Samaria was; and where some of the Israelites might betake themselves, and think themselves secure as persons laid on a couch: or at the bed's feet^{f105}, as some render it; or "in a corner of a couch"^{f106}, as before. The Targum paraphrases it,

“that dwell in Samaria, in the strength of power, trusting in Damascus.”

Ver. 13. *Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob*, etc.] The prophets and priests, whose business it was to speak to the people from the Lord, and declare his will to them, and to admonish them of their sin and danger, are here called upon to hearken to what the Lord was about to say, and to testify and publish it to the people of Israel, the posterity of Jacob, though sadly degenerated:

saith the Lord God, the God of hosts; the eternal Jehovah, the Being of beings, the God of the whole earth, the God of the armies above and below; and, being so great, ought to be heard with the greatest attention and reverence in what follows.

Ver. 14. *That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him*, etc.] The three or four mentioned in the preceding chapter, the great multitude of them, their profaneness, uncleanness, and luxury, their injustice and oppression of the poor; when he should visit and punish for these sins, as he would by the hand of the Assyrian, he would not forget their idolatry; though no notice is taken of this before, in the appeal to the Heathen princes, who were likewise guilty of it:

I will also visit the altars of Bethel; where one of the calves Jeroboam made was set up and worshipped; and where was an altar erected, and sacrifice offered on it, (^{<1128>}1 Kings 12:28-33); and here the plural number is put for the singular; though it may be, that in process of time more altars might be set up as they increased in idolatry, and as seems from (^{<381>}Hosea 8:11 ^{<300>}10:1); and now the Lord would show his resentment at them, and punish those that worshipped and sacrificed there. So the Targum,

“that worship at the altars in Bethel;”

and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground; for it seems this altar was made after the form of that at Jerusalem, with four horns at the four corners of it; and which were reckoned the more principal parts of it, and the more sacred, where the blood of the sacrifices was poured, and to which persons in distress fled and laid hold of for refuge; but now these should be of no use unto them, since they would be entirely demolished by the enemy, and laid level with the ground.

Ver. 15. *And I will smite the winter house with the summer house, etc.]* Both the one and, the other shall fall to the ground, being beat down by the enemy, or shook and made to fall by the earthquake predicted, (~~<3000>~~Amos 1:1); as Kimchi thinks: kings and great personages had houses in the city in the winter season, in which they lived for warmth; and others in the country in the summertime, to which they retired for the benefit of the air; or they had, in one and the same house, a summer and a winter parlour; (see ~~<0000>~~Judges 3:20 ~~<3000>~~Jeremiah 36:22); it signifies that the destruction should reach city and country, and deprive them of what was for their comfort and pleasure:

and the houses of ivory shall perish; or “of the tooth”^{f107}; the elephant’s tooth, of which ivory is made. Ahab made a house of ivory; and perhaps more were made by others afterwards, following his example, (~~<1229>~~1 Kings 22:39); not that these houses were made wholly of ivory, only “covered” with it, as the Targum here paraphrases it; or they were cieled or wainscotted with it, or were inlaid and covered with it, and were reckoned very curious work; but should be demolished, and perish in the general ruin:

and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord; the houses of princes, nobles, and other persons of figure and distinction; houses great in building, or many in number, as Kimchi observes, and as the word^{f108} will bear to be rendered; these, which the builders and owners of them thought would have continued many ages, and have perpetuated their names to posterity, should now be thrown down, and be no more; of which they might assure themselves, since the Lord had said it.