

The Sins of Israel

The terrible thing about Israel's wickedness was that they were sinning against God's mercy and grace. God had done so much for them, and they were sinning so unnecessarily. God had given them so much.

1. Against previous victories

1. They were sinning against previous victories, as we have already seen. God had enabled Israel to defeat all their enemies ¹

¹ 2:9

But there is more.

“It was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and I led you in the wilderness for forty years, so that you could take possession of the land of the Amorite.” ¹

¹ 2:10

2. Against redemption

2. They were sinning against redemption. God had redeemed them out of bondage, released them from the oppression of Pharaoh and his officials, and had taken them out of the land they had lived in. He gave them a new life altogether. Yet now they had fallen into such awful sins.

3. Against God's leading

3. They were sinning against God's leading. For forty years God had given them His guidance while they were in a dangerous wilderness. The pillar of fire and the pillar of smoke had led them step by step taking them to places where there was food or water.

4. Against God's purpose

4. They were sinning against God's purpose for their lives. God had a good purpose for them. He wanted them to take possession of the land of the Amorite, and be a light to the rest of the world by the way they lived in their new land. But in the way in which Israel was living they were far from being a light to lighten the Gentiles.

5. Against God's word

5. They were sinning against God's word spoken and written. Amos continues his list.

“I raised up some of your sons to be prophets, and some of your choice young men to be Nazirites. Is this not really the way it is, you people of Israel?” It is an oracle of Yahweh! ¹

¹ 2:11

God had sent prophets to the nation. Some of them, including Amos himself, would have their prophecies put into writing. The sins of Israel were sins against God's word, spoken and written.

6. Against examples of godliness and discipline

6. They were sinning against examples of godliness and discipline. God had appointed some people to be 'Nazirites'. They were people who specially separated themselves from the ordinary affairs of life, so as to be able to give themselves specially to God's work. They abstained from drinking wine or intoxicating drinks. They avoided any kind of uncleanness. Some Nazirites were consecrated in this way for their whole

lifetime. They provided an example for the rest of Israel of people who lived supremely for Yahweh.

But, says Amos, even these great gifts were despised and misused by the people of Israel.

*“But you made the Nazirites drink wine!
To the prophets you gave commands, saying,
‘You shall not prophesy!’”* ¹
*So now God announces His judgement against Israel just
as He has done against the other nations.
“So look! I am groaning beneath the burden you
are to me,
just as a cart that is fully loaded with sheaves groans with
the weight.”* ²

¹ 2:12

² 2:13

**Judgement
- no escape!**

God can bear it no more. There have been ‘three transgressions by Israel’ and even more! God must now bring His judgement upon them, and there will be no escaping it.

*“Flight will fail the swift,
and the mighty will not prevail with his strength,
The warrior will not save his life. ¹
The archer will not stand his ground.
The fast runner will not save himself.
The charioteer will not save his life ²
Even the bravest among the warriors
will run away naked on that day.”* Yahweh has spoken! ³

¹ 2:14

² 2:15

³ 2:16

**• The
surrounding
nations
exterminated**

It is to be noticed that the punishment facing Judah and Israel is different from the punishment facing the six surrounding nations. The six nations of 1:3–2:3 will be exterminated; they will cease to exist. ‘I will send fire against the house of Hazael, and it will consume the citadels ... I will cut off the sovereign ... it will consume its citadels ... the Philistines will perish even to the remnant ... I will send fire against the wall of Tyre... it will consume its citadels ... I will send fire against Teman ... it will consume the citadels ... I will send fire against the wall of Rabbah ... it will consume its citadels ... I will send fire against Moab ... it will consume the citadels of Kerioth ... I will destroy the nation’s ruler, and will kill all the nation’s officials with him’ ¹.

¹ 1:4,7,8, 10,
12, 14; 2:2, 3

All of this is the language of annihilation. There will be a total extinguishing of these nations so that they no longer exist on planet earth. Similar language is used of Judah. ‘I will send fire upon Judah, and it will devour the strongholds of Jerusalem’. At least temporarily the temple fortress at Jerusalem will be raised to the ground. Yet for Judah and Israel Amos will envisage some kind of survival, as we shall see. The six surrounding nations of 1:3–2:3 which have sinned against conscience – will be annihilated. The people of God will not.

**• Judah and
Israel will
survive**

**• Yet – Israel
will experience
God’s
inescapable
judgement**

Yet nothing will bring deliverance in that day when God acts against Israel. Speed will not help; flight will fail the swift. Mighty strength will be of no use. Powerful weapons will fail. Skill and techniques will do no good. The bravest of the brave will become cowards on the day God takes action.

• **God is still Lord of the nations**

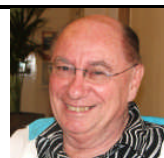
• **Christians can swing the destiny of a nation**

God is still the Lord of the nations. He can still wipe a wicked nation out of existence any time He chooses. He can still send the severest calamities upon any people who disregard the privileges God has given to them. What can Christians do amidst the vast numbers of the nations? We can speak. We can train our children. We can pray. We can make it clear that we will not cooperate with the world's way of doing things. We can be involved in the society in which we live. It only takes a determined handful to swing the destiny of a nation. Meanwhile God judges the nations, often enduring 'three transgressions' but then there comes a time when His longsuffering comes to an end and He decides to act.



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