

Amos presses home his message

Amos 3:1–8 belongs with 1:2–2:16. This is clear for two reasons.

(i) Amos ends with the same point with which he began. Yahweh has roared like a lion ^{□1}. ‘A lion has roared. Who will not fear?’ ^{□2}. This is a common way of winding up a section of writing. You finish off confirming the point with which you started.

(ii) A further reason is to be found in the content of 3:1–8. Amos is pressing upon his readers the message of what was said in chapters 1–2; so it belongs with what precedes, not with what follows.

1. Being chosen by God has dangers to it

1. Being chosen by God has dangers to it. Amos is now stressing the urgency of the matter.

*‘Hear this word which Yahweh has spoken against you, you people of Israel, against the family which I brought up from the land of Egypt: ^{□1}
“You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” ^{□2}*

Predestination is not favouritism! It is being chosen to be God’s people. Israel was chosen uniquely, but this will mean that God will be all the more determined to get the nation to be the holy people of God.

2. There is a covenant-relationship between God and Israel.

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‘Will two walk together unless they have come to an agreement?’ ^{□1}

If two people are walking down the road together, then there has been some kind of arrangement between them. Either they had agreed to meet, or they met by accident and then agreed to walk together. God had ‘met’ Israel at Sinai and they had agreed to walk together.

3. God’s threats are aroused by human sinfulness.

3. God’s threats are aroused by human sinfulness. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between sin and judgement. Amos has a string of questions which – except for 3:2 – come in pairs.

‘Will a lion roar in a forest when there is no prey for him?’ ^{□1}

God is like a roaring lion! But there is a reason for it. He is not angry without a cause; God’s anger is always a reaction to human sin. If God the lion is roaring, it is because sin is His prey. God’s anger is not without cause. He takes no delight in His anger. The lion is roaring for one reason only.

‘Will a lion growl in his den, unless he has caught something?’ ^{□1}

□1 1:2

□2 3:8

□1 3:1

□2 3:2

□1 3:3

□1 3:4a

□1 3:4b

The picture moves on to a period a little while later. The lion is now in his lair growling contentedly over the prey which he has taken. It is important to notice that there is a time-gap between verse 3a and 3b. In verse 3a the lion is roaring but the prey is not taken yet. This is the way it was in 760 BC or thereabouts, 'two years before the earthquake' ^{□2}. The lion was roaring but there was still time for repentance. But in Amos 3:4b the situation has changed. The lion is now contentedly growling over its prey. 'For three transgressions ... and especially for four...'. After three transgressions the lion starts roaring. By the fourth transgression it is all over; the lion is feasting on the remains. But there was a time-gap between the roaring and the growling! God is roaring against sin; there is just a little time to escape – and then there will be nothing but the dead body.

□2 1:1

4. God gives a last warning

4. God gives a last warning. 'For three transgressions... and especially for four'. Judah and Israel are getting very near 'the fourth transgression'.

'Will a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait for it?' □1.

□1 3:5

The bird is fluttering around a deadly trap, but the trap could spring upon it at any moment. Again there is a time gap. The trap has not yet sprung.

'Will a trap spring up from the ground if it actually captures nothing?' □2.

□1 3:5b

Maybe the bird will fly away! But God is giving a last warning. The bird is flying dangerously near the trap!

5. God is in control of history and brings His judgements in His own time

5. God is in control of history and brings His judgements in His own time. Amos is giving a last warning.

'If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not also be afraid?' □1.

□1 3:6

Amos is like a man blowing a trumpet of warning. But again there is a time gap between verse 6a and 6b. The calamities mentioned in Amos 1:3–2:16 have not happened yet. The trumpet blast is a last warning. Will the people respond in fear and put right the wickedness of the nation? If not, soon calamity will fall.

'If there is calamity in a city, has Yahweh not done it?' □2.

□2 3:6b

God will soon bring disaster upon the wicked nations. It will be His doing. The disasters that fall upon the nations are not accidents. God is in total control. God brings judgement at times when He sees judgement is appropriate. But there is a time gap! The calamity had not come at the point where Amos was preaching.

6. The situation is now an open one – but it will soon close down

6. The situation is now an open one – but it will soon close down. God is announcing what will happen soon.

'Surely Yahweh does nothing unless He reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets' □1.

□1 3:7

The people are getting a warning. God has given a predictive message to Amos. He has announced what is soon about to happen.

'A lion has roared. Who will not fear?' ^{¶2}

^{¶2} 3:8a

Because Amos knows he has been given a revelation and a call from Yahweh, he has no choice but to preach what he knows is God's word for the hour.

'Sovereign Yahweh has spoken. Who will not prophesy?' ^{¶3}

^{¶3} 3:8b

Judgement or renewal – which will it be?

At this point it is appropriate to go back to verse 3, and notice that it did not have a completion, as did the pairs in verses 4, 5 and 6.

'Will two walk together unless they have come to an agreement?' ^{¶1}

^{¶1} 3:3

– said Amos but then he stopped there. He could have added a second question, but in that verse he did not. It is a way of leaving the matter open. Israel and God were meant to be 'walking together'. An arrangement was made on Mount Sinai. God offered to make Israel a special treasure among all the peoples of the world. ^{¶2} But will Israel continue the arrangement. It has committed 'three transgressions' already. What will come next? Will the lion get its prey? Will the trap spring upon the fluttering bird? The situation will soon close down – in judgement or renewal. Which way will Israel follow?

^{¶2} Exodus 19:5



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