

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Lesson 7, Chapters 3 and 4

We concluded our Amos study last time at chapter 3 verse 13. There, using the typical biblical metaphor of God behaving as a fierce lion, Amos explained how the wealthy and elite of Samaria...the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel...would be judged for their arrogance, and for their maltreatment of the poor and the common folk among their nation.

Although it may seem strange for Christians to hear, it bears notice that the way this act of God is framed is as a legal argument. Since Amos was a sheep breeder, then he explains the legality of God doing what he's about to do from the standpoint of the duties and responsibilities of a shepherd. It is important to keep in mind that all throughout Amos, as it was in Hosea, that the justice Yehoveh is administering to various people and nations is according that which is set down in the Covenant of Moses. Just as Israel is expected to follow the terms of that covenant, so God obligates Himself to do the same. The Father is not a hypocrite. The legal basis comes from the Torah instruction that a shepherd is legally responsible for the well-being of the sheep put under his care. Shepherds only sometimes owned the sheep they tended; more often, they were hirelings that worked for the sheep owner. Should he carelessly lose a sheep, he is responsible to pay the sheep owner for the loss. However, if a wild animal kills a sheep, he is not. Even so, evidence that a wild animal was the culprit in the loss is necessary in the form of presenting the remains of the sheep, however meager, to the owner.

CJB Exodus 22:9-12 ⁹ *"If a person trusts a neighbor to look after a donkey, ox, sheep or any animal, and it dies, is injured or is driven away unseen,* ¹⁰ *then the neighbor's oath before ADONAI that he has not taken the goods will settle the matter between them- the owner is to accept it without the neighbor's making restitution.* ¹¹ *But if it was stolen from the neighbor, he must make restitution to the owner.* ¹² *If it was torn to pieces by an animal, the neighbor must bring it as evidence, and then he doesn't need to make good the loss.*

This is why those specific details of a bit of bone and an ear being all that is left are provided in this passage of Amos; this is the required evidence that it is not

the fault of the shepherd (who, in this metaphor, is also God) that the sheep was lost. So, to be clear, God is pictured as switching roles from being the shepherd/protector over Israel, to being the lion that hunts them down, tears them apart, and devours them. God is absolving Himself for the responsibility of the destruction of the wealthy of Ephraim/Israel, especially since He is the one who is doing the destroying. All legal requirements as set down in the Torah are being met.

So that we maintain proper context, let's back up to verse 12 and read from there through the end of chapter 3.

RE-READ AMOS CHAPTER 3:12 – end

Towards the end of verse 13 we read: "Hear and testify against the house of Jacob says Adonai Yehoveh, Elohim of the hosts". I've mixed the original Hebrew with the English so that you better get the sense of what is literally stated. Yehoveh continues to identify Himself, by name, as Israel's God and also as the God over the hosts of Heaven (meaning God's angelic army).

Who, exactly, is God calling upon to hear and to testify against the house of Jacob? First, it is not entirely clear whether in this case "house of Jacob" means all 12 tribes as it usually does, or if it is only aimed at the 10 tribes of Ephraim/Israel. I believe in this rare case the context demands that God is meaning those 10 tribes and it doesn't also include the 2 tribes of Judah. As for who the listeners of this oracle are to be, the phrase is more just a literary formula or figure of speech of a forceful demand that all who hear this message are to pay close attention. And what follows in verses 14 and 15, as well the first verses of chapter 4, is what the wealthy and the elite of Israel need to understand is happening to them, and why.

At this point, the focus of social injustices changes to the severe faults in their worship practices and rituals. God says He will "punish" the altars of Bethel, which will include cutting off the horns of the altar. Altars, in God's Torah, served two functions: 1) as a place of ritual sacrifice to Yehoveh, and 2) as a place of asylum.

CJB Exodus 21:12-14 ¹² *"Whoever attacks a person and causes his death must be put to death. ¹³ If it was not premeditated but an act of God, then I will designate for you a place to which he can flee. ¹⁴ But if someone willfully kills another after deliberate planning, you are to take him even from my altar and put him to death.*

So, in addition to the 6 planned Cities of Refuge in the Land that a person might flee to for protection from an aggrieved next of kin, a person in danger of being killed for accidentally or unintentionally killing another may also run to the altar and grab hold of it. There was a specific way a person was to grab hold of the altar so as not to defile it.

CJB 1 Kings 1:49-51 ⁴⁹ *At this all Adoniyah's guests grew frightened; they got up, everyone going his own way. ⁵⁰ Adoniyah too was afraid because of Shlomo; he got up, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. ⁵¹ Shlomo was told, "Here, Adoniyah is terrified of King Shlomo; he has grabbed hold of the horns of the altar and is saying, 'First let King Shlomo swear to me that he will not have his servant executed.'"*

So, altars had protrusions on each of its 4 corners called horns, and those horns of the altar were what a person fearful for his life was to grab hold of. Thus, in Amos 3:14, God is saying that the altar in Bethel will no longer be a place of asylum. Thus the end of the altar means that the people will have no place to expiate their sins, nor will they have a place to run to for immunity from prosecution. In truth, while apparently in Ephraim/Israel that tradition of the altar as a place of asylum and sacrifice was in practice, Yehoveh didn't recognize it as valid to Him. Why? Because of its location. Here the place of the altar is said to be Bethel; Bethel is not a legitimate location for an altar to Yehoveh. The punishment for violating this Torah law is found in Leviticus 26:

CJB Leviticus 26:30-31 ³⁰ *I will destroy your high places, cut down your pillars for sun-worship, and throw your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols; and I will detest you.³¹ I will lay waste to your cities and make your sanctuaries desolate, so as not to smell your fragrant aromas.*

Hopefully, by now, it is starting to really resonate with you how God precisely follows the law He gave to Moses for determining both crime and the punishment for each crime. Remember this because as we watch the world around us, today, rapidly decay into rampant immorality and sin, just refer to the Law of Moses to see what God is going to do as His punishment; He doesn't deviate from it. It's there for all to see but because the Church long ago decided to ignore the Law of Moses...even declaring it faulty and bad...then this resource is not used or believed. My advice: start believing it and start paying attention to it!

Notice how God says "For WHEN I punish Israel's crimes...." This means the punishment is not immediate but rather is an unspecified future time. What has been going on is that for decades and decades Ephraim/Israel's sins and apostacies have been piling up (there hasn't been a single event or two that has caused God's judgment to fall). And, practically speaking, it also means that the people who are alive and will be affected by these punishments and curses may not be the ones who committed some of the offenses, for many of the sins will have occurred in the past and thus some of the sinners will be long dead and gone. This pattern of God delaying punishment of a generation, and then punishing a current generation not only for their own sins but also for those of a previous generation (when those sins of that previous generation were not punished) is called Vertical Retribution. It is a rather common understanding in many religions of the ancient Near East and can be read about in Exodus, Leviticus, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah and more so it is actually quite a standard biblical topic and principle.

Verse 15 includes as part of the future punishments the opulent homes of the wealthy aristocrats of Samaria. All the decadent pleasures the rich enjoy with their multiple residences, parties, sex orgies, drunkenness and more are going to come to an end. The mention of ivory houses doesn't mean the house was made of ivory. Rather, it speaks of decorations and furnishings of enormously expensive and ornate items made of ivory. A valuable lesson to be learned to those who are in power and those who have amassed enormous wealth is that sooner or later it will all be brought to nothing. The corruption that has gone on in the highest government echelons will be dealt with by the Father, and a simple "mea culpa" and apology won't do. Let's move to chapter 4.

READ AMOS CHAPTER 4 all

Yehoveh's diatribe against the unconscionable behavior of the wealthy continues with His disdain of high society women. Beginning with the phrase "Hear this word" God returns to issues of social injustices. The cows of Bashan is a rather sarcastic title that refers to the rich society women of the Northern Kingdom. These women are disrespectful to their husbands (demanding that their husbands serve them "something to drink"), and constantly demand their spouses to give them everything they desire. Often these selfish desires lead to driving poor people even further into poverty. These cows of Bashan are named as the number one culprit behind the exploitation of the poor and defenseless. So, in essence, these women were entitled and completely self-concerned, and they made life hard on those they lorded over (house servants and the like) and those who *should* have lorded over them (their overly-indulgent husbands).

Bashan was an amazingly fertile place located on the west side of the Jordan River. It was famous for its abundant pasture lands and (as a result of the availability of a large food supply) the beauty and size of their cattle... thus the "cows of Bashan" epithet God bestows upon these arrogant and domineering women of Samaria.

In swearing by His own holiness, Yehoveh, in verse 2, vows to do to these women exactly what He says He's going to do. It will not be retracted, and it is as inevitable as the sun coming up in the morning. They will eventually come to ruin and reap their just reward for their irresponsibility and haughtiness. I have spent much time speaking to men about our responsibilities to our families and to our God; responsibilities that much too often we either ignore or give to our wives (or at times allow our willing wives) to bear. Here, then, I suppose I ought to pause and speak for a few minutes to the women about your responsibilities to your families and to God; but I'm not going to do that right now. That said, I do want to caution that the self-indulgences and demands placed on husbands to provide the material pleasures and privileges that you may seek, or for you to demand to control some responsibilities that in God's economy fall within the roles of males, are what Amos is talking about right now and God is condemning. Just as not all the women of Samaria behaved in that way, many did as it had clearly become but a cultural norm for Israel's upper class so it never occurred to many of these

women that they were doing anything wrong. And, probably many...likely most... of the women listening to this are not of the ilk of these cows of Bashan. But for those of you who might be, or even suspect that you are, take notice of how our God looks upon you. This is not trivial and it won't be forgotten. Divine justice will inevitably come upon you (even though our Western society may well applaud you for your behavior), and the consequences are probably going to be unimaginably awful. So do the simple, but not necessarily easy, thing that these Samaritan women did not: humble yourselves. No matter how able you are, humble yourselves before God. No matter how beautiful you are, humble yourselves before your husbands. No matter how well off or in charge you are, humble yourselves to those who may serve you. Just as those haughty angels rebelled and left their sphere in Heaven, crossing over a boundary that was not to be crossed, and caved-in to the temptations of women on earth...producing quasi-humans called **Nephilim**... so it is for you to rebelliously leave your sphere and the accompanying roles as godly wives, and to inject yourself into a different sphere and take on accompanying roles that God has set apart for husbands.

What is this in verse 2 about these women being "dragged away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks"? The truth is that these words have always caused Bible translators problems and so various solutions have been offered. We won't go through the list of possibilities; but here is what I think is the best attempt to translate in a way that we can actually extract the intended meaning. Shalom M. Paul writes it this way: **"..when you shall be transported in baskets and the very last one of you, in fishermen's pots"**.

Very likely the image that Amos was trying to capture (which, I suspect, his ancient readers would have readily understood) is the way fish were typically caught, packed, and then shipped in such vessels as baskets and pots. Various ancient sources speak of recently caught fish being packed, layer by layer, into baskets and pots. There is some evidence that when it was freshwater fish that were being shipped, it was done in woven baskets while for saltwater fish transportation was accomplished in clay pots. And, it was also a common metaphor in the ancient Near and Middle East to speak of captives in terms of fish being caught in nets. So, the overall idea was that these grand women of Samaria, with their glorious homes and all their privilege and wealth, would be

reduced to being captured and then transported elsewhere in the same manner as dead fish were; the ultimate humiliation for them.

Verse 3 prophesies that the city walls of Samaria will have been breached by the invading enemy in so many places, that one could quite literally walk into or out of the city but simply walking straight ahead from wherever they might have been standing at the time. We see this same scenario in play when Joshua led the Israelites to attack Jericho and its walls were so thoroughly destroyed.

CJB Joshua 6:5 ***⁵ Then they are to blow a long blast on the shofar. On hearing the sound of the shofar, all the people are to shout as loudly as they can; and the wall of the city will fall down flat. Then the people are to go up into the city, each one straight from where he stands."***

Verses 2 and 3 work together to explain that the invaders of Samaria will have no trouble winning their battle against Israel, accessing and ransacking the city, or in capturing its residents. However, the statement that the women will be sent off to Harmonah is puzzling; no one has a good viable guess as to where this place was located. It is possible that the word is Hermon (Mt. Hermon), but that is only speculation; one of several other speculations.

In the end, the last few verses of chapter 3, along with the first 3 verses of chapter 4, are depicting an abrupt and polar opposite change of circumstance for the women of the elite class of Samaria. Overnight, they go from wealthy and privileged to utterly ruined and penniless. Many will be killed; many captured; many unceremoniously transported to far away places. All will be reduced to the same status as the servants and the poor they oppressed for all those years.

Verse 4 begins a new section of Amos. It seems to be directed towards the people of Ephraim/Israel in general, and it begins with some obvious sarcasm. The people of Ephraim/Israel are invited to come to Bethel and to Gilgal in order to continue in their ritual transgressions by illegally worshipping and sacrificing at that unauthorized place. There seems to have been 3 major worship sites in Ephraim/Israel: Bethel, Gilgal, and Dan, all founded by King Jeroboam. Why Dan isn't mentioned I don't know. Interestingly, there was a time in Israel's past when Bethel and Gilgal had been legitimately used to worship God; all at a time

before the Temple had been built by Kings David and Solomon. The problem is that after united Israel split into 2 separate kingdoms, King Jeroboam had, for political reasons, led his Priests to create temples for his people in the Northern Kingdom to worship at in order to directly compete against the Temple in Jerusalem of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

It is probably meant almost comically when the people of Israel are invited to "...come to Bethel and commit crimes, come to Gilgal and commit more!" In other words, from Yehoveh's perspective to even go to Bethel and Gilgal counts as sin against Him...no matter how sincere in intentions the people doing this might have been. Since Amos, a resident of Judah, is speaking against the religion and the religious organization that the residents of Ephraim/Israel were practicing, one has to ask just what the relationship between Prophets and Priests was at that time? That is, were God's Prophets and the Priests enemies of one another? Let's step back for a moment and examine this important matter that flavors all of what Amos wrote.

Interestingly, up until not terribly long ago, most Bible historians and translators believed that the Prophets and the Priests were unfriendly rivals, and so there was continuing animosity if not outright dislike between the 2 groups, since it seems the Prophets regularly attacked what they saw as wrong actions of the Priesthood; naturally the Priests didn't like these attacks. On the other hand, more recent Bible scholarship has pointed out (correctly, I believe) that just as later in time (perhaps 500 or more years) when the Synagogue was born as a separate organization from the Priesthood, there didn't seem to be much open antagonism between Prophets and Priests even if their relationship wasn't entirely comfortable. Each group, provided they stayed within their agreed sphere of responsibility, had their roles to play in the practice of the Hebrew faith. Even so, it also appears that, on balance, the Prophets could be characterized as the theological innovators of the Bible era while the Priests were the guardians of the religious status quo. So, there had to be some friction erupt at times between Priest and Prophet, although the degree of it ought not to be blown out of proportion.

Further, while the Priests stressed the doing of ritual procedures properly, the Prophets tended to focus on the general moral and ethical nature of people's lives

and actions. Perhaps we could overly simplify it a bit and call it strict rules-following versus the condition of the heart as the emphasis. That is, from the view of the Prophets, obedience to God begins with the right heart-attitude and inner condition and not the other way around. On the other hand, the Priests tended to stress proper righteousness in terms of following the written code of the Torah as perfectly as possible. Biblically speaking, they were both correct. While the Prophets emphasized *being* completely devoted to Yehoveh, the Priests emphasized *doing* the scripturally required ritual devotions correctly. In the end, it was not an issue of either or, but rather an issue of difference in priority. God expects our devotion, but at the same time He expects our obedience to Him through the devotions of our Torah-based worship requirements and restrictions. It's a balance that is to be achieved in God's worshippers and one that Christians and Jews have had the hardest time finding and maintaining.

I'm telling you this because what we don't want to do is to characterize Amos as a religious reformer whose goal was to react negatively and work against the **concept** of Temple and Priesthood. There are a number of modern-day Bible scholars who are currently attempting to construct a new and different picture of Amos as a Prophet that railed on God's behalf against the entire concept of Israel even having a Temple, a Priesthood, and ritual worship practices, and I want to make it clear that this is in no way the case. The reality for Amos was that there were 2 separate Israelite Priesthoods existing in his time; the legitimate one in Judah, practicing at the Temple in Jerusalem. And the illegitimate one in Ephraim/Israel, practicing at the several temples at such places as Bethel and Gilgal. The issue of what was going on with the legitimate Priesthood in Jerusalem is not particularly pertinent to the bulk of the Book of Amos. Rather, the issue primarily concerned Ephraim/Israel's illegitimate Priesthood that had seriously gone off track by thinking immorally and unethically, which led them to doing improper ritual beginning with erecting bogus altars wherever they pleased, establishing illegitimate temples according to their own thoughts and pleasures, and then compromising the Law of Moses by means of adopting and blending some of the worship practices of the local pagan religions with what was instructed in the Law of Moses. Both Priesthoods claimed all along to be worshipping Yehoveh, God of Israel, but the worship of the Ephraim/Israel Priesthood clearly wasn't compatible with what God demanded in the Torah.

Therefore, for a Priest or a common person to perform even a legitimate, Torah-based ritual act, but whose heart was corrupted, was deemed by Amos as NOT acceptable to Yehoveh. So, indeed we will soon find Amos clashing with the illegitimate Priests of Ephraim/Israel, but not so much with the Priests of Judah.

Verse 4 continues with:

CJB Amos 4:4-5 ...bring your sacrifices in the morning and your tithes after three days; ⁵ burn leavened bread as a thank offering; brag in public about your voluntary offerings; because that's what you love to do, Isra'el!" says Adonai ELOHIM.

So here we have God mocking Israel and sarcastically telling Israel to go right ahead and continue to do their rituals that they felt so very good about. Bring their sacrifices to the altars in the morning; bring tithes to temples; burn up bread with leaven as part of the thank offering. But then, go off and brag to everyone about your great piousness in giving more offerings than are required, because (from Yehoveh's perspective) they are doing this all in vain. Ironically, as intensely religious as these people were, they were only intensely increasing their sin. They were sincere; but they were sincerely wrong. I'll say this another way. Amos reveals Israel's true love, but it isn't about loving God with all their strength, or loving neighbor as themselves. Rather, they are showing love (allegiance) to a manmade system of religion that actually goes against the system that God gave to them on Mt. Sinai. From Amos's Prophet-viewpoint, no amount of ritual can ever replace correct moral and ethical thought and behavior, and illegitimate ritual makes the attempt to do so even more ludicrous and sinful.

Starting in verse 6 is a series of punishments that God inflicted on Israel, in hopes that the people would recognize that what they were doing was wrong, and so they would repent and return to the lovely ways of Yehoveh, as expressed in the Torah. Israel, because of their close ties and friendships with pagans, had come to expect the God of Israel to behave the same way as Ba'al gods. In exchange for their devotion to their religious rituals they expected God to provide blessings of fertility, protection, and abundance. As I have mentioned a few times, it was their version of the modern Christian notion of a Prosperity Doctrine whereby the more faithful we seem to be, the more material wealth God

is obligated to give to us. Therefore, our level of wealth is an outward indicator of our faithfulness to God. So, the Israelites were shocked when, despite their passionate devotion to their religious rituals, their lives and their nation were falling apart.

In verse 6 God says that He made "their teeth clean of food". This was an ancient idiom that meant they had no food. One's teeth were clean because they had not chewed food. This is speaking of severe food shortages in Israel's cities and villages that God says He caused to happen. This and all the other punishments God is speaking of to close out chapter 4, are things that happened in Israel's past. But rather than the people who experienced these events seeing them for what they were...heavenly discipline to get them to pay attention and return to God... they ignored it and blamed it on other things like weather or enemies. Five times we will see the words "yet you did not return to Me". Israel has not learned their lesson nor did they change their ways.

The next curse God inflicted upon Israel was drought. In verse 7, God says that for 3 months leading up to the harvest He withheld rain. The harvest season begins with barley, and then a few weeks later wheat. Because the critical time for sufficient watering of the fields was the weeks leading up to harvest, then due to lack of rain the crop yields were small causing great hardship on the public. But even more, God inflicted frustration on the people because it seemed that one field would get rain, but one nearby wouldn't. One city would get rain, but another wouldn't. It made no sense. Again, the people just cursed their bad luck and ignored Yehoveh's purpose to get them to see their wrong behaviors and return to Him.

Verse 8 explains that the lack of rain didn't just impact the grain harvest, it also caused cisterns and wells to run dry of drinking water. The mention of the city people staggering around is about the effects of dehydration (like we see in Hollywood movies of thirsty people stranded in the desert walking erratically and about to collapse). And, take notice of the use of the numbers 2 and 3. The verse says "from 2 or 3 cities they would stagger". This is another case of what is called staircase numerical parallelism. Recall in a previous lesson that I explained the use of the numbers 3 and 4 together were meant to symbolize everything, everywhere. All inclusive. But, 2 and 3 together are a way of

symbolizing a few...several...perhaps even a randomness. So, we are not to understand this literally as if there were only 2 or 3 cities in all of Ephraim/Israel that experienced this severe lack of drinking water. Rather at various places around their kingdom this occurred.

Verse 9 is yet another attempt by God to get Israel to repent. He sent diseases and pestilence upon their food crops. This is once again a direct consequence for their sin as listed in the Torah.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:22 ***22 ADONAI will strike you down with wasting diseases, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, drought, blasting winds and mildew; and they will pursue you until you perish.***

Hot winds are nothing new to arid regions. They go by various names. In the Middle East they were known as ***sirocco***. Another name was ***chamsin***. Because of their extreme dryness, wind speed and high temperature, these winds could quickly suck all the moisture from plants and trees, leaving them either barren of leaves and fruit or damaged to the point they died. Insects were also sent to devour Israel's orchards and their vegetable gardens. Most English Bible versions use words like cutter-worm, palmerworm, even caterpillar to describe the insect. The Hebrew word is ***gazam*** and the better translation is simply locusts.

In verse 10, a memory of the plagues of Egypt is evoked, and it is linked to war. These, of course, are among the many curses for disobedience as stated in the Law of Moses. Israel's best troops were killed by the sword, and even the best military weapon of the era...horse and chariot...were captured by the enemy. Although it is a bit vague as to the meaning of the stench of the army's camps, this most likely refers to the rotting corpses of soldiers.

In verse 11, much as God is trying to bring to mind the horrid conditions of Egypt and what He did to the Egyptian people in order to redeem Israel from them, now He reminds them of the horrors of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Probably for the Hebrews the most radical and severe of all the historical destructions that God visited upon earth was to the cities of plains (as we read in Genesis 19). And despite God's wrath on Israel, where many perished, still like rescuing a burning stick from a fire in order that it would not be entirely

consumed, God had mercy and didn't entirely destroy Israel despite their deserving it. And still stubborn Israel wouldn't give glory and credit to God and return to Him.

These listings of punishments that God has inflicted in the past...building in intensity and ferocity to a crescendo...are now used in verse 12 as examples of what He is about to revisit upon Ephraim/Israel, soon. Nothing God had tried produced any meaningful repentance. Certainly the people would have prayed more, they would have sacrificed more, they would have given more to the Priests and the Temple...but always their actions were illegitimate and therefore worthless to Yehoveh. What is proposed is terrifying, partly because the event itself isn't fully disclosed. Because nothing that God has used to try and produce repentance...things of nature...now He is going to take matters into His own hands and deal directly with Israel. Whereas up to now all these afflictions were meant to result in repentance, the actions coming are meant to produce nothing but destruction. The time and opportunity for Israel to repent has passed. The door to deliverance is closed, tight. All that remains is judgment. God will not stay His hand; the entire range of horrors that He is able to inflict will come upon all Israel, everywhere, all at once. Let those with ears, hear.

Verse 13 is called by most Christian Bible commentators a doxology.

CJB Amos 4:13 ¹³ *him who forms mountains and creates wind, who declares to humankind his thoughts, who turns the morning to darkness and strides on the heights of the earth- Adonai ELOHEI-Tzva'ot is his name.*

Naturally, among scholars there is a debate as to whether this is original or was added later. And equally naturally, there is utterly no way to prove this case either way. Rather, all depends on the opinions of these scholars and nothing else. The bottom line is that there is no basis whatsoever to claim this wasn't written originally by Amos. No version of Amos ever found excludes this doxology.

In a nutshell, these final words tell Israel (and us) something we must always remember: God is in control of everything. He is able to, He has, and He will destroy the unfaithful at will. The entire Creation, everywhere, at all times,

reports to Him. And just so Ephraim/Israel (who includes the worship of other gods in their religious practices) understands who it is that is warning them about what is coming, the words "Yehoveh, God of the (heavenly) armies" are used to make it abundantly clear. In saying that He declares to humankind His "thoughts", it means that He has given us various ways to know His will and His ways. From the Natural Law that He has infused in our very DNA, to the Law of Moses in which He wrote down in an understandable and orderly way, His immutable definitions of morality and how we are to properly relate to Him and to our fellow man, we have no excuse to behave wrongly...to sin against Him. But more, there will come a reckoning whether we believe it will or not, and it will include everyone, everywhere, from every era and generation.

We'll take up chapter 5 next time.