

ELEVEN

THE GOD OF JUDGEMENT¹

For the Lord is a God of knowledge,
And by him actions are weighed.²

A main point in the following Section is that the God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of universal justice. He respects neither persons nor peoples, and least of all his own.

It should be read in close conjunction with the preceding. The Jews of the Bible are the only 'chosen people' who, through the mouth of their prophets, have called for judgement on themselves. They have also, and in good measure, received it.

Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? it is darkness, and not light.

As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?³

Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or where is the God of judgement?

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare

¹Mal. 2: 17.

²1 Sam. 2: 3.

³Amos 5: 18-20.

the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire.¹

The Lord will enter into judgement with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof: It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.²

In thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor: I have not found it at the place of breaking in, but upon all these.

Yet thou saidst, I am innocent; surely his anger is turned away from me. Behold, I will enter into judgement with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.³

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after the which their fathers did walk: but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes: that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father

¹Mal. 2: 17-3: 2.

²Isa. 3: 14-15.

³Jer. 2: 34-35.

will go unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.¹

Forget not the life of thy poor for ever.

Have respect unto the covenant:

For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of violence.

O let not the oppressed return ashamed:

Let the poor and needy praise thy name.

Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.²

The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples.³

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron. . . .

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole people, to deliver them up to Edom. . . .

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole people to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. . . .

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever. . . .

¹Amos. 2: 4-8.

²Ps. 74: 19-22.

³Isa. 3: 13.

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.¹

Then he cried in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye through the city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly the old man, the young man and the maiden, and little children and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.²

They rebelled, and grieved his holy spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.³

¹Amos 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 13.

²Ezek. 9: 1-6.

³Isa. 63: 10.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.¹

Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, An end: the end is come upon the four corners of the land. Now is the end upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will bring thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord God: An evil, an only evil; behold, it cometh. An end is come, the end is come, it awaketh against thee; behold, it cometh. Thy doom is come unto thee, O inhabitant of the land; the time is come, the day is near; a day of tumult, and not of joyful shouting, upon the mountains.

Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger against thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will bring upon thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I the Lord do smite.²

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against

¹Amos. 3: 2.

²Ezek. 7: 2-9.

the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers.

Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks. For, lo, I will stir up and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken.¹

Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him: and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.²

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.³

Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

¹Jer. 50: 6-9.

²Jer. 50: 17-18.

³Mic. 6: 9.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and I have brought down as a valiant man them that sit on thrones: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped.

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if a rod should shake them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood.¹

. . . he whose might is his god.

Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained him for judgement; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his meat plenteous.

¹Isa. 10: 5-15.

Shall he therefore empty his net, and not spare to slay the nations continually?

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint.

And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.

Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.¹

O Lord, thou God to whom vengeance belongeth,
Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.
Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth:
Render to the proud their desert.

Lord, how long shall the wicked,
How long shall the wicked triumph?
They prate, they speak arrogantly:
All the workers of iniquity boast themselves.
They break in pieces thy people, O Lord,
And afflict thine heritage.
They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
And they say, The Lord shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob consider.

Consider, ye brutish among the people:
And ye fools, when will ye be wise?
He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?²

¹Hab. 1: 11-2: 4.

²Ps. 94: 1-9.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.¹

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.²

¹Isa. 55: 8-11.

²Hos. 14: 9.