

## Overview of Amos

**Author & Date:** Amos lets us know that he was a “business man.” Specifically, he was a sheep herder from Tekoa, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. The name Amos means “burden” or “burden barer” and he bears up under the burden of proclaiming judgment to rebellious Israel. Amos lived in a time of material prosperity and the prophecy of the book of Amos began around 762 B.C. This date is based upon the statement of Amos 1:1 that it was two years before “the earthquake” which occurred during the reign of Uzziah. This quake is also mentioned by the prophet Zechariah over 200 years later (Zech. 14:5). Archaeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria provide evidence of a significant earthquake around 760 B.C. further confirming the record of scripture.

**Purpose:** The book of Amos contains prophecies of judgment against 8 nations (including Judah and Israel). The vast majority of the prophecy however is directed against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The prophecy is God’s roaring as a lion to get the attention of Israel (1:1, 3:3-4, 8 and 5:19). Amos emphasizes that God’s judgments are not without basis – as seen in the phrase repeated for each nation “For three transgressions...and for four...(ch 1 and 2)”. The message is that God will not let the guilty go unpunished, yet he ends with the hope of restoration for Israel.

### Outline for Amos

- I. Introduction
  - A. Date of the prophecy 1:1
  - B. The source and tenor of the prophecy (Lord “roars”) 1:2
- II. Judgment on the Nations (1:3 – 2:16) (this includes Judah and Israel)
- III. Judgment Against Israel
  - A. Abuse of Covenant Privileges (3:1-15)<sup>1</sup>
  - B. Rejection of Divine Warnings (4:1-13)<sup>2</sup>
  - C. Lament for Israel and a call to Repentance (5:1-15)
- IV. Warnings of Woe (5:16 – 6:14) (Note “woes” in 5:18, 6:1, and 6:3)
- V. Five Visions of Judgment
  - A. Locust (7:1-3) Locust to destroy the fields –but the Lord relented
  - B. Fire (7:4-6) Fire to devastate-but the Lord relented
  - C. The Plumb Line (7:7-9) Israel doesn’t measure up, they are not plumb
    1. Interlude: Amos Challenged
  - D. Summer Fruit (8:1-14) The time is ripe for judgment
  - E. Vision of the Lord (9:1-10)
- VI. Promised Restoration (9:11-15)

### Key/Interesting Passages:

- 1:2 And he said: "The LORD roars from Zion, And utters His voice from Jerusalem; The pastures of the shepherds mourn, And the top of Carmel withers."
- 3:12 “As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion...” (God uses Amos experience and the “Lion” imagery to show his judgment) – v. 14 “That in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions...”
- 5:4-15 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "Seek Me that you may live. 5 "But do not resort to Bethel, And do not come to Gilgal, Nor cross over to Beersheba; For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity, And Bethel will come to trouble....Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

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<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, David Allan; *Joel and Amos, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, D.J. Wiseman, General Editor, vol. 22b, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1989 p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

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- 7:2-3 And so it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: "O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, For he *is* small!" 3 So the LORD relented concerning this. "It shall not be," said the LORD. (cf. 7:5-6)
- 7:14-15 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I *was* no prophet, Nor *was* I a son of a prophet, But I *was* a sheep breeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'
- 9:12b ... And all the Gentiles who are called by may name...

### Food for Thought

1. Amos describes himself and his call in 1:1 and in 7:14-15. How can we relate to the prophet Amos? In 7:15 the phrase "as I followed the flock" (NKJ) is literally "from behind the flock," what conclusion can we draw about Amos's call and how can we apply that to the work God calls each of us to do?
2. What "tone" or image to you get from the Lord's words in 1:2? How does this fit with the rest of the prophecies in the book (see 3:3-4, 8, 12, 5:19, and 9:4)?
3. Identify at least three justifications God gives for judging each of the nations listed in the first two chapters. What do these examples tell you about God's justice?
4. What is the essence of God's complaint against Israel in 2:11-12? How might this show itself today? (consider Rom 15:1-2, Heb 10:24, 1 Cor 8:9, 2 Cor 6:3)
5. What warnings did God give Israel that they were not following him, 4:6-13? What does this tell us about the Lord's patience and justice? (consider Exod 34:6-7, 2 Pet 3:9)
6. God has clearly stated in Amos his intention to bring judgment on Israel (see 4:2), yet in 5:4-15 he calls Israel to repent. What sins does God point out in this section and what does God call them to do?
7. Why does God relent from the calamity of the visions of locust and of fire in 7:1-6? (see outline above for a brief explanation of the meaning of each vision)
8. What desire do the people demonstrate through their cries in 8:5?
9. Amos prophecy of judgment is strong, yet he ends with a word of hope not only to Israel, but to all the nations (9:8-15). How will this be an encouragement to Israel in 40 years from the date of the writing and how can these promises encourage us today?