

'Amos 1

Judgments on Israel's Neighbors

¹ The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Earthquake: same earthquake as in Z'khar'yah (Zechariah) 14.5.

⁵ Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley,
For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.
Yes, you shall flee
As you fled from the earthquake
In the days of Uzziah king of Judah.

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."

Judgment on the Nations

³ Thus says the LORD:

"For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron.

⁴ But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael,
Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.

⁵ I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven,
And the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden.
The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir,"
Says the LORD.

⁶ Thus says the LORD:

"For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they took captive the whole captivity
To deliver *them* up to Edom.

⁷ But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza,
Which shall devour its palaces.

8 I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
And the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon;
I will turn My hand against Ekron,
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,"
Says the Lord GOD.

9 Thus says the LORD:
"For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom,
And did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.
10 But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre,
Which shall devour its palaces."

11 Thus says the LORD:
"For three transgressions of Edom, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because he pursued his brother with the sword,
And cast off all pity;
His anger tore perpetually,
And he kept his wrath forever.
12 But I will send a fire upon Teman,
Which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

13 Thus says the LORD:
"For three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead,
That they might enlarge their territory.
14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
And it shall devour its palaces,
Amid shouting in the day of battle,
And a tempest in the day of the whirlwind.
15 Their king shall go into captivity,
He and his princes together,"
Says the LORD.

Summary of the Book of Amos

This summary of the book of Amos provides information about the title, author(s), date of writing, chronology, theme, theology, outline, a brief overview, and the chapters of the Book of Amos.

Author

Amos was from Tekoa (1:1), a small town in Judah about 6 miles south of Bethlehem and 11 miles from Jerusalem. He was not a man of the court like Isaiah, or a member of a priestly family like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He earned his living from the flock and the sycamore-fig grove (1:1; 7:14-15).

Whether he owned the flocks and groves or only worked as a hired hand is not known. His skill with words and the strikingly broad range of his general knowledge of history and the world preclude his being an ignorant peasant. Though his home was in Judah, he was sent to announce God's judgment on the northern kingdom (Israel). He probably ministered for the most part at Bethel (7:10-13; see 1Ki 12:28-30 and notes), Israel's main religious sanctuary, where the upper echelons of the northern kingdom worshipped.

The book brings his prophecies together in a carefully organized form intended to be read as a unit. It offers few, if any, clues as to the chronological order of his spoken messages -- he may have repeated them on many occasions to reach everyone who came to worship. The book is ultimately addressed to all Israel (hence the references to Judah and Jerusalem).

Date and Historical Situation

According to the first verse, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah over Judah (792-740 b.c.) and Jeroboam II over Israel (793-753). The main part of his ministry was probably carried out c. 760-750. Both kingdoms were enjoying great prosperity and had reached new political and military heights (cf. 2Ki 14:23 -- 15:7; 2Ch 26). It was also a time of idolatry, extravagant indulgence in luxurious living, immorality, corruption of judicial procedures and oppression of the poor. As a consequence, God would soon bring about the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom (722-721).

Israel at the time was politically secure and spiritually smug. About 40 years earlier, at the end of his ministry, Elisha had prophesied the resurgence of Israel's power (2Ki 13:17-19), and more recently Jonah had prophesied her restoration to a glory not known since the days of Solomon (2Ki 14:25). The nation felt sure, therefore, that she was in God's good graces. But prosperity increased Israel's religious and moral corruption. God's past punishments for unfaithfulness were forgotten, and his patience was at an end -- which he sent Amos to announce.

With Amos, the messages of the prophets began to be preserved in permanent form, being brought together in books that would accompany Israel through the coming debacle and beyond. (Since Amos was a contemporary of Hosea and Jonah, see Introductions to those books.)

Theological Theme and Message

The dominant theme is clearly stated in 5:24, which calls for social justice as the indispensable expression of true piety. Amos was a vigorous spokesman for God's justice and righteousness, whereas Hosea emphasized God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. Amos declared that God was going to judge his unfaithful, disobedient, covenant-breaking people. Despite the Lord's special choice of Israel and his kindnesses to her during the exodus and conquest and in the days of David and Solomon, his people continually failed to honor and obey him. The shrines at Bethel and other places of worship were often paganized, and Israel had a worldly view of even the ritual that the Lord himself had prescribed. They thought performance of the rites was all God required, and, with that done, they could do whatever they pleased -- an essentially pagan notion. Without commitment to God's law, they had no basis for standards of conduct. Amos condemns all who make themselves powerful or rich at the expense of others. Those who had acquired two splendid houses (3:15), expensive furniture and richly laden tables by cheating, perverting justice and crushing the poor would lose everything they had.

God's imminent judgment on Israel would not be a mere punitive blow to warn (as often before; see 4:6-11 and note), but an almost total destruction. The unthinkable was about to happen: Because they had not faithfully consecrated themselves to his lordship, God would uproot his chosen people by the hands of a pagan nation. Even so, if they would repent, there was hope that "the Lord God Almighty (would) have mercy on the remnant" (5:15; see 5:4-6,14). In fact, the Lord had a glorious future for his people, beyond the impending judgment. The house of David would again rule over Israel -- even extend its rule over many nations -- and Israel would once more be secure in the

promised land, feasting on wine and fruit (9:11-15). The God of Israel, the Lord of history, would not abandon his chosen people or his chosen program of redemption.

The God for whom Amos speaks is God of more than merely Israel. He also uses one nation against another to carry out his purposes (6:14). He is the Great King who rules the whole universe (4:13; 5:8; 9:5-6). Because he is all-sovereign, the God of Israel holds the history and destiny of all peoples and of the world in his hands. Israel must know not only that he is the Lord of her future, but also that he is Lord over all, and that he has purposes and concerns that reach far beyond her borders. Israel had a unique, but not an exclusive, claim on God. She needed to remember not only his covenant commitments to her but also her covenant obligations to him. (See further the prophecy of Jonah.)

Outline

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. Introduction to Amos's Message (1:2)
- III. Oracles against the Nations, including Judah and Israel (1:3;2:16)
 - A. Judgment on Aram (1:3-5)
 - B. Judgment on Philistia (1:6-8)
 - C. Judgment on Phoenicia (1:9-10)
 - D. Judgment on Edom (1:11-12)
 - E. Judgment on Ammon (1:13-15)
 - F. Judgment on Moab (2:1-3)
 - G. Judgment on Judah (2:4-5)
 - H. Judgment on Israel (2:6-16)
 1. Ruthless oppression of the poor (2:6-7a)
 2. Unbridled profanation of religion (2:7b-8)
 3. Contrasted position of the Israelites (2:9-12)
 4. The oppressive system will perish (2:13-16)
- IV. Oracles against Israel (3:1;5:17)
 - . Judgment on the Chosen People (ch. 3)
 1. God's punishment announced (3:1-2)
 2. The announcement vindicated (3:3-8)
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 - A. Judgment on an Unrepentant People (ch. 4)
 1. Judgment on the socialites (4:1-3)
 2. Perversion of religious life (4:4-5)
 3. Past calamities brought no repentance (4:6-11)
 4. No hope for a hardened people (4:12-13)
 - B. Judgment on an Unjust People (5:1-17)
 1. The death dirge (5:1-3)
 2. Exhortation to life (5:4-6)
 3. Indictment of injustices (5:7-13)
 4. Exhortation to life (5:14-15)
 5. Prosperity will turn to grief (5:16-17)
- V. Announcements of Exile (5:18;6:14)
 - . A Message of Woe against Israel's Perverted Religion (5:18-27)
 - A. A Message of Woe against Israel's Complacent Pride (6:1-7)
 - B. A Sworn Judgment on the Proud and Unjust Nation (6:8-14)
- VI. Visions of Divine Retribution (7:1;9:10)
 - . Judgment Relented (7:1-6)
 1. A swarm of locusts (7:1-3)
 2. A consuming fire (7:4-6)

- A. Judgment Unrelented (7:7;9:10)
 - 1. The plumb line (7:7-17)
 - a. The vision (7:7-9)
 - b. Amos challenged and vindicated (7:10-17)
The basket of ripe fruit (ch. 8)
 - a. The vision (8:1-3)
 - b. The exposition (8:4-14)
The Lord by the altar (9:1-10)
 - a. The vision (9:1-4)
 - b. The exposition (9:5-10)
- VII. . Restored Israel's Blessed Future (9:11-15)
 - . Revival of the House of David (9:11-12)
- A. Restoration of Israel to an Edenic Promised Land (9:13-15)

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