

Amos

Amos was from the village Tekoa. Tekoa was about 10 miles south of Jerusalem & about 6 miles south of Bethlehem. So although Amos prophesied in the northern Kingdom of Israel, he was from the southern kingdom of Judah. Amos was both a shepherd & a dresser of sycamore-fig trees. It is likely he worked as a shepherd in his home of Tekoa. However, as a dresser of sycamore-fig trees, he must have done a fair amount of traveling. These trees do not grow above 1,000 feet above sea level, but Tekoa is more than 2,000 feet above sea level. This would have required Amos to travel to the lower lands of the Jordan Valley & on the shores of the Dead Sea & the Mediterranean. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, is only a day's journey from Tekoa.

Given this knowledge, it seems reasonable would have traveled through many parts of Judah, Israel, & bordering nations. During these travels, Amos likely learned a lot about these nations' history, culture, relations with each other, etc. that gave him some perspective when God called him to prophesy. The first verse of the book tells us that Amos' ministry was during the reigns of King Uzziah of Judah & King Jeroboam II of Israel. This info plus clues from the prophecy of Amos leads scholars to believe Amos prophesied in the early 760's. This places Amos' ministry about a decade earlier than Hosea's.

The first verse tells us the ministry of Amos was 2 years before the earthquake. No other description is given, it is just "the earthquake". This implies it was a great event the people in the area would be familiar with (ex: Americans & the terrorist attack). This earthquake is warned about in chapters 8 & 9.

Verse 2 tells us the Lord is roaring like a lion. Roaring signifies an attack. It is a warning to Israel of what is to come. Though the judgement is coming against Israel, the roaring & thundering is coming from Judah. Jerusalem is the capital of Judah & Zion is used to refer to the temple Solomon built & dedicated to the Lord. These warnings do not come from locations in Israel since Israel's first King, Jeroboam, set up golden calves for the people to worship in Bethel & Dan.

Verses 3-5 reference history from 2 Kings (2 Kings 10:30-33, 13:1-7). Damascus is a city in Aram, which is now Syria. The language in these verses suggests the Syrians literally rode over the defeated Israelites with threshing boards. Threshing boards are covered with lithic flakes (sharp rocks) or metal blades. Therefore the threshing boards would have peeled the flesh off the Israelites. God's promise of destruction is fulfilled through the Assyrians (2 Kings 16:5-9).

Next, God passes judgement against the Philistines (Amos 1:6-8). At the time, Gaza was the location most of the Philistines lived in. God's anger at the Philistines is not simply for selling some of the Israelites into slavery. Rather, by selling the Israelites to the Edomites, they have assisted the Edomites in violating their covenant heritage with Israel. Israel & Edom both came from Isaac, Abraham's son (Gen 25:21-30). Both sons would have been circumcised, following in the covenant made by God with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14). Because of their role in this, God states they will be punished with fire in divine judgement. About 30 years later, in 734 B.C., Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria, used fire to burn down the walls of Gaza. He conquered the town, Gaza's King fled to Egypt, & the Assyrian King imposed tribute upon them.

God's judgement against Tyre is quite similar to that against Gaza, but with one difference (Amos 1:9-10). Unlike Gaza, Tyre broke a treaty with Israel to sell them into slavery (2 Sam 5:11-12) (1 Kings 5:1, 12). Hiram was the King who reached out to both David & Solomon & made a treaty. In this time, when Kings made a treaty with one another, they entered into a covenant of brotherhood. However, years after forming a treaty with Israel, Hiram was displeased with Solomon (1 Kings 9:10-13). Assyria took control of Tyre & forced them to pay tribute around the same time the conquered Gaza.

After passing judgement on the two nations who sold the Israelites, God turns to the nation who was buying them (Amos 1:11-12). The Edomites & Israelites have had a long history together. Not only did the two spring from the same patriarch, but the nations were in conflict for generations. Eventually, David was able to conquer Edom (2 Sam 8:13-14). However, Edom was able to regain their independence & then hostilities continued (2 Kings 8:20-22). These harbored hostilities continued into the future so that the Edomites rejoiced when Jerusalem fell (Psalm 137).

The Ammonites are next to receive judgement (Amos 1:13-15). Similar to the Edomites, the Ammonites are also relatives of the Israelites as they are descendants of Lot (Gen 19:36-38). God blessed the Ammonites by giving them their own land similar to the Israelites (Deut 2:18-22). Though the Israelites heeded God's command to not move against the Ammonites, the Ammonites did not follow suit (Judges 3:12-14). They even went so far as to cut open pregnant Israelite women in the pursuit of enlarging their territory. Through a series of military campaigns, the Ammonites are conquered & forced to pay heavy tribute by the Assyrians & Babylonians until they finally disappear from history.

Judgement now comes for Moab, descendants from the other grandson of Lot (Amos 2:1-3). Because the nations of Israel + Edom both sprang from Isaac, Moab had the same covenant of brotherhood with Edom that they had with Israel. During these times, when a person died, their remains (mostly bones) were handled with respect + buried properly. This practice was thought to guarantee peace in the afterlife + possibly immortality for the soul. Moab's act of burning the bones of Edom's King demonstrated intense contempt + hatred for Edom. Burning his bones indicated a desire to deprive him of peace for eternity or even to destroy his soul. These feelings of hatred + disrespect apply not only to the King, but to all the Edomites. Moab receives judgement for a punishment typical for covenant-breaking nations.

God's judgement against Judah is the only one in this list listing only crimes against God and none against other people (Amos 2:4-5). God waited over 150 years after this prophecy to bring punishment. Judah's consuming fire came by way of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8-11).

All judgement + attention now turns to Israel, + God is clearly angry (Amos 2:6-16). Not only were the Israelites mistreating people, but God had provided them with the Law through Moses giving very particular guidance regarding the administration of justice + the care of the poor. They are practicing sexual sin which profanes God's name. God gave the Israelites a detailed list of sexual sins followed by a warning of their dangers (Lev 18:24-30). The wickedness of the Israelites should not come as a surprise, though, because we become like the objects of our worship. Though God raised up prophets + Nazirites from among the people, the Israelites rebuked + corrupted them. Note that Israel's punishment is harsher than what the surrounding nations received.

In chapter 3, God reveals why Israel is being judged so harshly (Amos 3:2). Verses 3-6 are a series of rhetorical questions demonstrating a cause-and-effect structure, which culminates in a concluding principle (Amos 3:7). These are the same prophets God said the Israelites were commanding to not prophesy. Verse 8 is 2 more rhetorical questions. This cause-and-effect question explains the presence of Amos in the northern Kingdom.

In the next 2 verses, God says to call the surrounding nations, for them to gather & see the unrest & wickedness of Samaria. Ironically, the locations listed in the summons were pagan nations known for their oppression & wrongdoing. The implication here being that Israel's wrongs outdo their own. Finally, God reveals the punishment in store for Israel (Amos 3:11-12).

Chapter 4 begins with God giving Israel more warning of what is to come. He appears to give them over to their sins in verses 4-5. The problem in these verses is that the Israelites are merely putting on an outward show & boasting about it, which God says they love to do, rather than having a change of heart. The rest of this chapter is God lamenting at the efforts He has made to turn Israel from their sin to no avail (Amos 4:9).

Throughout chapter 5, God accuses Israel of more sins & directs them to repent & return to Him. At the end of the chapter, though, He reveals the fate waiting for them (Amos 5:25-27). As can be expected, God does not issue a hollow threat (2 Kings 17:5-8). Chapter 6 is a continuation of the warnings & accusations directed at Israel.

The remaining chapters, 7-9, detail visions that Amos received from God. He shows Amos 2 future disasters, but then relents (Amos 7:1-6).

Each time, God relents after Amos, who was walking with God, prayed + interceded on Israel's behalf. God does relent from the next vision, however (Amos 7:7-9). Note that Amos did not pray for God to relent. During verses 10-13, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, complains about Amos + tells him to go back to Judah. Amos shows he is more concerned with what God thinks than men (Amos 7:14-17).

In chapter 8, God gives Amos another vision (Amos 8:1-2). God is using the imagery of fruit, which has been left until the proper time has come to deal with it (eat it), to explain Israel has sinned long enough + God is coming to deal with them for it. Only now does God reveal the worst part of Israel's punishment (Amos 8:11-12). God showed the Israelites long ago that His word was what they needed more than anything else (Deut 8:3).

Amos receives his final vision from God in chapter 9. God is standing by the altar, which is likely the altar at Bethel - a site of idol worship. God uses the altar, which He strikes + shakes apart, to kill the people there. This seems to be symbolic of the people's devotion to a false god being the cause of their destruction. After the disaster, however, God reveals a plan for restoration (Amos 9:8-12). It is in verse 12 that God declares all people, not just Israelites, who call on His name will receive saving grace. (Acts 15:12-18). The apostles use this verse to justify bringing Gentiles into the church. ↗

† בְּחָנִינוּ, בְּחָנִינִי pron. 1 pl. we (abbrev. from אָנַחֲנוּ; cf. the forms נָשָׁן, נָשָׁנִי, נָחָנִית, just cited; also As. *nîni*) Gn 42¹¹ Ex 16^{7.s} Nu 32³² La 3⁴². (In 2 S 17¹² is 1 pl. perf. Qal from נָחַן.)

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† חָנֵן, n. [m.] plummet (cf. words in cogn. lang. for *lead*, *tin*, etym. dub., perh. foreign; Ar. آنْكُ (v. Frä¹⁵³) Syr. حَمْرَة, Mand. אָנְכָא, As. *anâku* Lyon Sargontexte⁹²; v. Lag Arm. Stud. § 103 cf. Id. BN¹⁷⁵) — חָנֵן exc. once Am 7⁸ — plummet Am 7^{7.s.s}; חָמֶת אָנֵן, i.e. a vertical wall v⁷.

† אָנֹכִי pron. 1 sg. v. supr. sub אָנִי.

† אָגַן vb. only Hithpo. complain, mur-

preposition is broad and its sense is largely determined by the structure of the context. חָמֶת אָנֵן (a wall of tin): חָנֵן (tin) is a *hapax legomenon*. The meaning of this word, earlier conjectured to be either tin or lead (so BDB, p. 59), and hence plummet or plumbline; KB, p. 69, Senkblei, plummet), from Akkadian *anâku*, which was likewise thought to mean either tin or lead (so von Soden, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*, vol. 1, p. 49), is now known to mean tin only, like its Akkadian original (so Landsberger, "Tin and Lead," followed by CAD, 1/2 [A], pp. 127–30; see the discussion of the history of interpretation in Holladay, "*>anak = 'Tin,' Amos 7:7–8*"). It is thus possible that חָמֶת אָנֵן connotes a wall of tin. References to walls of