

Amos Chapter 1

The book of Amos was penned by the prophet Amos. He was a shepherd, and a dresser of sycamore trees by trade. His prophecy was by inspiration of God, and lasted a very short time. Some scholars believe he prophesied just a few days. He prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam the second in Israel, and Uzziah in Judah.

He used the expression "thus saith the Lord" 40 times. He did not claim to be a professional prophet, but actually admitted his lowly beginning. The name "Amos" means burden, or burden-bearer. He was of the tribe of Judah. He condemned the luxurious living of the wealthy.

He prophesied about 750 B.C. This was a time of much affluence in their land. Amos' message of coming punishment was not very well accepted.

Verses 1-2: "Two years before the earthquake": While earthquakes are not uncommon in Palestine, the one to which Amos refers must have been unusually severe; for it is mentioned again by Zechariah in his prophecy (Zech. 14:4-5), more than two hundred years later. It stands as a reminder of God's great power in nature and is a warning of His judgment that is about to overtake Israel. Amos begins his prophecy with words taken from Joel (verse 2; with Joel 3:16).

Amos 1:1 "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen 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."

"The earthquake": Mentioned by Zechariah (14:5), Josephus (Antiquities, IX 10:4) connects it with Uzziah's sin of usurping the role of a priest (2 Chron. 26:16-23). An earthquake of severe magnitude occurred (ca. 755 B.C.).

Tekoa was a town about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. It was in a very rough area. The words came from the mouth of Amos, but he had seen this miraculously. The Words then, were from God spoken through the mouth of Amos. An earthquake is God dealing in judgment toward man. The following is another reference to this earthquake, even though the historical books have not mentioned it.

Zechariah 14:5 "And ye shall flee [to] the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, [and] all the saints with thee."

Amos 1:2 "And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither."

“Roar”: In Joel 3:16, the Lord “roars” against the nations; here His wrath was directed primarily toward Israel (Jer. 25:30). Amos, a shepherd, courageously warned the flock of God’s pasture that they were in imminent danger from a roaring lion who turned out to be the ultimate Shepherd of the flock (3:8).

“Carmel”: Known for its bountiful trees and lush gardens. “Carmel” means “fertility” or “garden land” and refers to the mountain range that runs east to west in northern Israel and juts out into the Mediterranean Sea (9:3).

Notice, this voice comes from Jerusalem, and from the church (Zion). The "roar of the voice" is speaking of a thunderous voice. This is a warning from Jerusalem, even to Carmel, that judgment is coming. Mount Carmel was a beautiful green pastureland. It had been the sight of Elijah calling down fire from heaven to prove that God is God. Now even Carmel will not be spared.

Verses 3-5: Damascus is the capital city of Syria and is to be especially stricken in judgment because of the cruelties Syria had inflicted on Israel.

“For three transgressions ... and for four”: (which introduces the message of judgment to all of the nations, including Israel), is a rhetorical way of saying that the offender has been guilty of an incalculable number of offenses.

From (verses 1:3 – 2:3), Amos began with Israel’s enemies, and thereby gained an initial hearing. When he turned to God’s judgment on Israel, the leaders tried to silence him (7:10-17).

Amos 1:3 "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:"

“Three transgressions ... for four”: This rhetorical device is repeated in each of the 8 messages, differing from a similar pattern used elsewhere. These are specific mathematical enumerations (e.g., Prov. 30:18, 21, 29), emphasizing that each nation was being visited for an incalculable number of infractions. With 3, the cup of iniquity was full; with 4 it overflowed. This judgment was to fall on Syria, whose capital is Damascus.

“Threshed Gilead”: Large threshing sleds which, when dragged over grain, would both thresh the grain and cut the straw. Gilead, located in the northeastern, Golan Heights region of Israel, was vulnerable to Syria’s cruel attacks (2 Kings 13:7; 18:12).

Damascus was a large city in Syria. They were opposed to Israel, and took advantage of every opportunity to destroy them. They are enemies of God, because of their foul treatment of God's people.

Amos 1:4 "But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad."

“Ben-hadad”: Apparently a throne name, meaning “son of Hadad (the god).” Ben-hadad II was a son of Syrian king Hazael (841-801 B.C.).

Syria fell from its place of prominence during his reign. The palaces were speaking of the palaces in Damascus. This fire was probably a literal fire that destroyed them.

Amos 1:5 "I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the scepter from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD."

“Plain of Aven” Meaning “valley of wickedness,” it may refer to Baalbek, the center of sun worship, located north of Damascus.

The “house of Eden”: Meaning (“House of Pleasure”). It was located in eastern Syria across the Euphrates.

“Kir”: Apparently the original home of the Syrians. It was a region to which they were later exiled (2 Kings 16:9). “The precise location of “Kir” is unknown.

The bar mentioned here, is possibly the bar closing the gate. If it were gone, it would make easy entrance into the city. There seemed to be worship of the sun going on at Aven. Eden will be included in this area that is cut off. This is speaking doom and desolation from God on Aven, Eden, and Syria. God is angry with them because of their constant conflict with Israel.

Amos 1:6 "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver [them] up to Edom:"

“Gaza”: Philistia’s most prominent merchant city ideally situated between Egypt and Israel, here used to refer to the Philistine nation.

“Carried away captive the whole captivity” (Jer. 13:19). Possibly during the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16-17, Joel 3:3; ca. 853-841 B.C.).

These lands were so opposed to Judah and Israel, that they would have done anything to help their enemies destroy them. Gaza is an area that contained five Philistine cities. The Philistines had always been enemies of God's people. The giant, Goliath, was representing the Philistines, when he came against God.

Verses 7-8: Four of the five major cities of Philistia are mentioned. The fifth, Gath, was not mentioned because it had been destroyed earlier by Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6).

Amos 1:7 "But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:"

An enemy that shall pull down and destroy the walls of it: this was fulfilled in the times of Uzziah, under whom Amos prophesied. And very likely in a very short time after this prophecy, went out and warred against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gaza (2 Chron.26:6).

Or else in the times of Hezekiah, who smote the Philistines unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, (2 Kings 18:8).

As also in the times of Alexander the great, who, after he had taken Tyre, besieged Gaza, and after two months' siege took it, as Diodorus Siculus relates.

The wall being undermined and thrown down, he entered in at the ruins of it, as Curtius says. In the times of the Maccabees the suburbs of it were burnt by Jonathan, and the place taken.

This fire occurs during one of the wars that came against this area. It seemed as if God had a special punishment for each area, according to the injury they had done to others.

Amos 1:8 "And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the scepter from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD."

The mention of "Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron," and the "remnant of the Philistines" lets us know that the prophecy is directed against Philistia as a whole. Their crime was the taking of a whole population captive and delivering it over to Edom. (Joel 3:3-8), fills in the details that Amos's prophecy lacks.

Ashdod was a city about 35 miles from Gaza. The Philistines had been a strong enemy of Israel and Judah. They were an idolatrous people. Ashteroth was their most prominent false god.

Samson won great victories for Israel over these same Philistines. God had ample reason to destroy them. We see again, "saith the LORD God". Ashkelon was a city near Gaza. Ekron was a city about 11 miles from Bath. All of these were Philistine cities. God is taking vengeance Himself for the Israelites.

Amos 1:9 "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:"

Tyre "remembered not the brotherly covenant" which their king Hiram had made with David and Solomon. This covenant had been long-standing (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:2-6, 15-18; 9:11-14), and no king of Israel or Judah had ever made war on Phoenicia. Judah honored its side of the treaty; Phoenicia had sold Israelites to others (Joel 3:4-8).

Brotherly covenant": A longstanding brotherly relationship existed between Phoenicia and Israel, beginning with King Hiram's assistance to David in building his house and Solomon in the building of the temple (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 King 5:1-12; 9:11-14). And later cemented through the

marriage of Jezebel to Ahab (1 Kings 5:16-31). No king of Israel ever made war against Phoenicia, especially the two major cities, Tyre and Sidon.

Tyrus is the Greek form of Tyre. This was the great Phoenician city of trade that was under siege 13 years by Nebuchadnezzar. They were into many types of false worship. Much of it was of the sensual type. They were very wealthy from their trade center here. They were greatly opposed to God's people. The condemnation that came upon them was for their worship of false gods, but also because they were opposed so fiercely to God's people.

Amos 1:10 "But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof."

"Tyrus": Alexander the Great conquered this stronghold (ca. 330 B.C.; Ezek. 26:1-18).

This city was great in its architecture. They were very wealthy, and their homes were like palaces. Their palaces were some of the most magnificent. They could not withstand the judgment of God, and they were burned.

Amos 1:11 "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and 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:"

"Pursue ... cast off all pity": More than mere fighting, Edom pursued his brother, stifling any feelings of compassion. (See notes on Obadiah 1-14), for a more complete description of Edom's judgment.

Esau was the founder of Edom. Esau had never forgiven Jacob for getting his birthright. He held anger in his heart and this anger descended to his children and grandchildren. Edom is accused of their inhuman treatment of their relatives the Hebrews of the 12 tribes of Israel. The bitterness he felt for his brother lived on, and had never diminished. Soon after Amos wrote this, the Edomites as a separate people, vanish from the pages of history.

Amos 1:12 "But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

"Teman": The grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11), after whom this town in northern Edom was named.

"Bozrah": A fortress city of northern Edom, about 35 miles north of Petra.

Teman is the southern portion of Edom, and Bozrah was its capital. This is destroyed as well by God Himself.

Verses 13-14: The Ammonites killed pregnant Israelite women to keep the population under control in hopes of conquering the Israelite region of Gilead.

Amos 1:13 "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and 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:"

“Children of Ammon”: Descendants of Ben-ammi, the son of Lot and his younger daughter (Gen. 19:34-38).

“Ripped up the women with child”: Such inhumane treatment in wartime was not an uncommon practice (2 Kings 8:12; 15:16; Hosea 13:16).

It seemed the Ammonites were extremely cruel in battle toward the women and children of Israel. Ammon was descended from Lot. The Ammonites and the Moabites were descended from Lot and his 2 daughters. They were also accused of removing the sacred marker of the land.

Amos 1:14 "But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:"

“Rabbah” (literally, “The Great”), was the capital city of “Ammon.” Amos prophesies that it will be totally destroyed, and the king and his princes taken into captivity for its unspeakable atrocities against God’s people.

This fire, even though from God, is during a battle. We studied in another book how the war came against the tents like a great whirlwind and destroyed them.

Jeremiah 23:19 "Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked."

This speaks of a judgment of God.

Jeremiah 49:2 "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD."

Amos 1:15 "And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD."

Not only shall the common people that are left of the sword be carried captive, but their king also. This was, Baalis their last king, who was accessory to the murder of Gedaliah (Jer. 40:14); whom the king of Babylon had set over the remnant of the Jews left in Judea. Which might provoke him to send Nebuzar-adan, his general, against him. Who put his country to fire and sword and destroyed his chief city Rabbah, and carried him and his nobles into captivity.

Jeremiah 49:3 "Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, [and] his priests and his princes together."

We see from these two Scriptures, that the king was taken. Some believe this is also speaking of their false god being taken, as well as the king. It does not matter. God passed judgment on them, and they fell.

Amos Chapter 1 Questions

1. What did Amos do to make a living?
2. How long do most people believe Amos prophesied?
3. Who were the kings of Judah and Israel when he prophesied?
4. How many times does he use the expression "thus saith the Lord"?
5. What does "Amos" mean?
6. When did he prophesy?
7. Where was Tekoa?
8. An earthquake is for what?
9. What is the "roar of the voice"?
10. What wonderful thing had happened at Mount Carmel?
11. Where was Damascus?
12. What does the name "Ben-hadad" mean?
13. Who was the father of Ben-hadad II?
14. What is the bar mentioned in verse 5?
15. Who were the Philistines always enemies of?
16. Where is Gaza?
17. Where was Ashdod?
18. What were the names of some of the Philistine cities?
19. What was another name of Tyrus?

20. How many years was Tyrus under siege?
21. How was Tyrus destroyed?
22. _____ was the founder of Edom.
23. Who were the enemies of Edom?
24. Why was Esau continuously with his wrath against the Israelites?
25. Who were the Ammonites?
26. _____ was the capital of Ammon.
27. Who passed judgment on them?