

Amos Chapter 7

Verses 7:1 – 9:10: Amos introduced 5 visions, with a historical interlude (7:10-17). The first two depict the Lord's commitment to spare a remnant, while the last 3 announce the inevitability of judgment.

Verses 1-6: These first two visions ("locust swarms" and "fire"), represent the Lord's rescue of a remnant from judgment. After the first vision, Amos prays to God to "forgive" the people. After the second vision, Amos is so overwhelmed by the coming destruction that he asks the Lord to "cease" from judgment.

Amos 7:1 "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, [it was] the latter growth after the king's mowings."

The Lord also showed me the following things. Here the prophet mentions the first of five prophetic representations of what was coming upon this people.

Each of the visions is introduced with closely resembling words. For "grasshopper," read locusts. The phrase "king's mowings" suggests that the king claimed tyrannically the firstfruits of the hay harvest, which was ordinarily followed by the early "rain upon the mown grass." (1 Kings 18:5).

"The king's mowings" of the first crop may signify the distresses of the people of Israel, in the times of Jehoahaz king of Israel. By Hazael and Benhadad kings of Syria (2 Kings 13:3), when things revived again. Like the shooting up of the later grass in the reign of Joash. And especially of Jeroboam his son, who restored the coast of Israel, the Lord having compassion on them (2 Kings 13:25).

But after his death things grew worse. His son reigned but six months and he that slew him but one. And in the reign of Menahem that succeeded him, an invasion of the land was made by Pul king of Assyria (2 Kings 15:19); which is generally thought to be intended here.

This is like a vision, or either a knowing within Amos. We do know that God showed this to Amos, regardless of how it came. God uses things like grasshoppers to carry out His judgment. Everything and everyone are in the control of God. It appears there was some sort of taxation on the crop. We see this comes after the king has his portion of it. Grasshoppers are locusts that devour the crops.

Amos 7:2 " And it came to pass, [that] when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small."

That is, the locusts; when in the vision it seemed to the prophet that almost all the grass of the land was eaten up, and they were going to seize upon the corn, and other fruits of the earth and

spreading themselves over the land, threatened it with desolation, as these locusts seemed to have wholly consumed all the grass of the land.

“By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small”: Or "little", like the first shooting up of the grass. Or, as Noldius renders it, "how otherwise should Jacob stand?" and so Kimchi, how should there be a standing for him? That is, unless God forgives his sin and turns away his wrath, how shall he stand up under the weight of his sins, which must lie upon him unless forgiven?

And how shall he bear the wrath and indignation of God for them? And so if any sinner is not forgiven, how shall he stand before God to serve and worship him now; or at his tribunal with confidence hereafter? Or sustain his wrath and displeasure to all eternity (see Psalm 130:3).

We see Amos intercedes for the people, after he has this vision. He pleads with God to lift this judgment on the people. He does not know how they will live, if God does not. He is afraid this plague of locust would totally destroy the family of Jacob (Israel).

Verses 3-6: Just one person’s prayers can make a difference (Gen. 18:22-23): The Lord “relented”, agreeing to spare a remnant because of Amos’ intercession.

Amos 7:3 "The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD."

“The LORD repented”: Much like he did at Abraham’s pleading over Sodom (in Gen. 18:22-23).

God heard the prayers of Amos and did not bring this last plague on Israel. To say the "LORD repented", means that He changed His mind about this punishment.

Verses 4-6: Under the figure of fire, the second vision concerns a devastating drought, causing the underground water supplies to dry up and the fields to be consumed (Deut. 32:22). Amos again pleaded Israel’s cause (verses 2-3).

Amos 7:4 "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part."

“Great deep” means the vast reservoir of underground water, as well as the sea. Such a fire would be inextinguishable (Gen. 7:11; 8:2; 49:25; Isa. 51:10).

Now we see the prophet is shown a vision, or a knowing within himself, of another, more devastating plague that God will bring upon Israel. This fire would also be a judgment from God. It appears this fire was on the ocean and would dry up a portion of the ocean itself.

Amos 7:5 "Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small."

From destroying the land; suffer not this calamity to proceed any further; using the same argument as before.

"By whom shall Jacob arise?" for he is small" (see Amos 7:2).

We see Amos praying for Israel, again. He reminds God that He might destroy all of them with this judgment and they would not be able to overcome this.

Amos 7:6 "The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD."

He heard the prophet's prayer, and desisted from going on with the threatened destruction.

"This also shall not be, saith the Lord God": The whole land shall not be destroyed, only a part of it carried captive.

Again, God heard the prayer of Amos and changed His mind. He decided not to do this terrible thing to His people.

Verses 7-9: The true spiritual nature of Israel was here tested (and found wanting), by God's plumb line of righteousness in this third of 5 visions. The sword of judgment was to come from Assyria.

The next three visions (8:1-3; 9:1-6) declare the certainty of the Lord's judgment on the unrepentant. In the vision of the "plumb line," Israel is portrayed as a misaligned wall that is leaning and ready to fall over.

Amos 7:7 "Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall [made] by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand."

This vision lets the prophet know that all hope for Israel has been exhausted, and judgment must come. The purpose of the "plumbline" is to illustrate how far Israel has strayed from God's righteousness, and that it must be destroyed.

This "plumbline" is a measuring device. This means that God has come and examined them Himself. He has measured their sinfulness.

Amos 7:8 "And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:"

"What seest thou?" (2 Tim. 2:19). God had twice heard the prophet. Two judgments upon His people He had mitigated, not upon their repentance, but on the single intercession of the prophet. After that, He willed to be no more entreated. And so, He exhibits to Amos a symbol, whose meaning He does not explain until He had pronounced their doom.

"The plumbline", as used in pulling down, as well as in building up, whereby Jeremiah says:

"The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He hath stretched out a line; He hath not withdrawn His hand from destroying; therefore He made the rampart and wall to lament; they languished together" (Lam. 2:8).

"He shall stretch out upon it the line of barrenness" (as in Genesis 1:2), "and the stone of emptiness" (Isaiah 34:11; as in Gen. 1:2): and God said of Judah, "I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab" (2 Kings 21:13).

"Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting" Daniel 5:27, so God here applies the plumbline, at once to convict and to destroy upon conviction. In this Judgment, as at the Last Day, God would not condemn, without having first made clear the justice of His condemnation. He sets it "in the midst of" His "people," showing that He would make trial of all, one by one, and condemn in proportion to the guilt of each. But the day of grace being past, the sentence was to be final.

"I will not pass by them," literally, "I will not pass over" (that is, their transgressions), "to them (as in Amos 8:2), anymore." That is, I will no more forgive them.

This measurement has proved that God's judgment of them is correct. God is exacting with His building and He is exacting with His destruction. He measured Israel's conduct and found them out of line. God needs no further evidence of their inconsistency.

Amos 7:9 "And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

Such as the ten tribes of Israel, who descended from Isaac, built at Beersheba, in imitation of Isaac, and pleading his example. Who worshipped there, though not idols, as they, but the true God; and in commemoration of his being bound upon an altar on Mount Moriah. But these, as the Septuagint version renders it, were "high places of laughter", ridiculous in the eyes of the Lord, despised by him, and so should be made desolate.

“And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste”: The temples built for the calves at Dan and Beth-el, and other places:

“And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword”: Or, as the Targum, "I will raise up against the house of Jeroboam those that slay with the sword". This was fulfilled by Shallum, who conspired against Zachariah the son of Jeroboam, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, which put an end to the family of Jeroboam (2 Kings 15:10).

The high places were associated with idol worship, as they were all over Israel. Even in the sanctuary, they had set a calf up to be worshipped as God. Jeroboam was the king when this happened, in fact he did it. God will punish this to the utmost. This is the breaking of the first commandment. One thing God would not overlook was the worship of false gods.

Verses 10-17: The words of Amos cut deep into the heart of Israel's leadership, causing them to accuse him of conspiracy against the king (Jer. 26:11; 37:11-13; 38:1-6).

Amos' confrontation with "Amaziah", the priest of Beth-el, leaves no doubt in his mind about God's purpose in judging Israel.

Amos 7:10 "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words."

This was a priest not of the tribe of Levi, but such a one as those were whom Jeroboam I had consecrated to perform the idolatrous services at Beth-el (see 1 Kings 12:31).

"Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst": That is, in an open and barefaced manner. He represents the prophet as exciting sedition, because he denounced destruction against the kingdom, and threatened the house of Jeroboam. The same crime was objected to (Jeremiah 26:9-10); to Christ (Luke 23:2); and to Paul (Acts 24:5).

"The land is not able to bear all his words": The friends of the government cannot patiently hear his words, and the enemies of it will take advantage from them to make some disturbance. If he proceeds to speak in this manner, the inhabitants will be moved to take up arms against each other.

We see that Amaziah, the priest in Beth-el, has suddenly realized that Amos is prophesying against them. He sends word to king Jeroboam, that they must stop these words of Amos before he stirs up the people. He tells Jeroboam that the prophecies are directly against him, to get Amos in trouble.

Amos 7:11 "For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land."

"Amos saith": Which was not saying truth; for Amos said not that Jeroboam should die by the sword, but that God would rise up the sword against his house or family. Nor did Jeroboam die by the sword, but his son Zachariah did.

"And Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land": This was true; Amos did say this, and he afterwards confirms it. This is the amount of the charge brought against the prophet, which has some truth and some falsehood mixed together; and by which method the priest hoped to gain his point, and get the prophet either banished or put to death.

Amaziah does not recognize Amos as bringing a message from God to the people. He speaks as if the message that Amos brings, is a fabrication of his own imagination. Amaziah believes that Jeroboam will have Amos killed and get him hushed up, when Jeroboam hears that he prophesied of his death by the sword. Jeroboam is a self-centered man and Amaziah is depending

on that to get Amos stopped. He speaks of Amos prophesying the land will be taken captive, but fails to mention that it is a judgment of God upon them.

Amos 7:12 "Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:"

Jeroboam treated the charge made by Amaziah with indifference, or perhaps with awe: at least, with silence. And so the priest of Beth-el takes upon himself to dismiss the prophet from the kingdom. The word for "seer" is here chozeh, one who has visions, a word not used in a contemptuous sense here or in the Old Testament generally.

The expression "there eat bread and prophecy" means "there live on your profession as a prophet," not here.

Amaziah tries to frighten Amos into leaving Israel and going to Judah to prophesy. We do not hear that Jeroboam followed Amaziah's advice. Jeroboam could have been fearful of a revolt of the people if he came against this prophet. He just did not do anything. Even the evil kings feared the prophets.

Amos 7:13 "But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it [is] the king's chapel, and it [is] the king's court."

"Prophesy not again" as a friend I advise thou do not, and as having authority from the king, I do declare thou shalt not, prophesy in Beth-el (see notes on Amos 2:12). At Beth-el, Amaziah wants to be let alone at least in his own residence.

"The king's chapel": Beth-el was preferred by the king to Dan, the other seat of the calf-worship, as being nearer Samaria, the capital, and as hallowed by Jacob of old (Gen. 28:16, 19; 35:6-7). He argues by implication against Amos' presumption, as a private man, in speaking against the worship sanctioned by the king, and that in the very place consecrated to it for the king's own devotions.

"King's court": That is residence, the seat of empire. Where the king holds his court, and which ought to have reverence. Samaria was the usual king's residence: but for the convenience of attending the calf-worship, a royal palace was at Beth-el also.

We see from this, that the worship of this calf as god is the king's preference. He worshipped the calf instead of God. This is all too familiar today. The compromise that is going on in some churches, to please the wealthier and more powerful of its members, is very similar to this. Nevertheless, this type worship displeases God. They are preaching to itching ears.

Amos 7:14 "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I [was] no prophet, neither [was] I a prophet's son; but I [was] a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:"

So soon as this false accuser had under the guise of friendship given advice, and withal intimated his resolution to use his authority to make Amos desist if he did not do it voluntarily. Amos gives him answer readily, boldly, and yet smoothly, and outshoots the court pontiff with his own bow.

"I was no prophet": Not originally, or by succession, or by study, or by any human designation and preparation, as many have been.

"Neither was I a prophet's son": My father was no prophet, nor was I bred up in the school of the prophets (such as 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:38; 6:1). Though you call me seer, whether ironically or seriously, I matter not, but assure you I am not such by art, trade, or for a livelihood.

"But I was a herdsman": By breeding, choice, and occupation I was and still am a herdsman and have my concerns in that mystery in or near Tekoa in Judah, on which I can live. Though I prophesy without stipend or salary, I needed not to run into the prophet's work for my bread.

"And a gatherer of sycamore fruit": The tree and fruit is known by one name. Palestine abounded with both; and the fruit was sweet, not large, yet good for food for man or cattle, as some fruits are with us. On these I could still, as I formerly did, live and be content.

Amos reminds Amaziah that he did not train to be a prophet and that he, Amos, is called of God to prophesy. He was a herdsman by trade, and made his living that way. God sent him to prophesy. If Amaziah does not accept the message, he is actually going against God.

Amos 7:15 "And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."

Or "from behind" it; a description of a shepherd, such a one Amos was, and in this employ when the Lord called him and took him to be a prophet. He did not seek after it, nor did he take this honor to himself; by which it appears that his mission was divine, and that he did not enter on this work with lucrative views.

Thus, God took David in a like state of life, and made him king of Israel; and Elisha from the plough, and made him a prophet. And Christ took several of his disciples who were fishermen, and made them fishers of men, or ministers of the word. And so, their calls appeared more clear and manifest.

"And the Lord said unto me": In a vision or dream by night; or by an articulate voice he heard. Or by an impulse upon his spirit, which comes from the Spirit of God.

"Go, prophesy unto my people Israel": For so they were by profession, and notwithstanding their apostasy; as yet they were not tallied "Loammi" (Hosea 1:9). To these the prophet was bid to go out of the land of Judea, where he was a herdsman, and prophesy in the name of the Lord to them. Therefore, what he did was in obedience to the command of God, and he did his duty. And what he in this verse and (Amos 7:14), declares, is a sufficient vindication of himself, his character, and conduct. And having done this, he has something to say to the priest.

Amos was not a professional prophet. It is interesting to note, that those that should have been speaking of the sin in the land, had fallen down in their duties. God picked up an unknown, and sent him with a message to these people. He was not influenced by position of power. He spoke the Words God put in his mouth.

Amos 7:16 "Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not [thy word] against the house of Isaac."

Amaziah then was in direct rebellion and contradiction against God. He was in an office forbidden by God. God's word came to him. He had his choice; and, as people do, when entangled in evil courses, he chose the more consciously amiss. He would have had to resign his lucrative office and to submit to God speaking to him through a shepherd, or to stand in direct opposition to God, and to confront God. And in silencing Amos, he would silence God.

"Prophecy not against Israel": When God has bid me prophesy.

"And drop not thy word against the house of Isaac": Say nothing against it, though in ever so soft and gentle a manner. It designs the same thing as before, only in different words; and is a prohibition of the prophet to prophesy against the ten tribes that descended from Isaac, in the line of Jacob.

It is as if Amos is telling this supposed man of God, that he had better listen. Amos expresses again, that this is the Word of the LORD, not Amos' words. The priest has not done his duty and is trying to stop Amos. Amos says I will listen to God and not to you.

Amos 7:17 "Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land."

"Therefore": Because thou hast so directly and strenuously opposed the Lord.

"Thy wife shall be a harlot": These were, and still are, among the horrors of war. His own sentence comes last, when he had seen the rest, unable to hinder it. Against his and her own will, she should suffer this. Jerome: "Great is the grief, and incredible the disgrace, when the husband, in the midst of the city and in the presence of all, cannot hinder the wrong done to his wife, for the husband had rather hear that his wife had been slain, than defiled."

What he adds "thy daughters" (as well as his "sons") "shall fall by the sword," is an unusual barbarity, and was not part of the Assyrian customs, which carried off women in great numbers as wives for their soldiery.

"Thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword": Which in all likelihood intimates their slaughter by Shallum when he slew Zachariah, Jeroboam's son, with whom no doubt but his friends fell, among which this family was. Or else by the sword of Menahem, who slew Shallum.

“Thy land shall be divided by line”: Thy estate, which no doubt was large, shall be shared among the soldiers and courtiers of Menahem.

And thou shalt die”: Thy dishonor by a lewd wife, the childless loneliness, and poverty shall come on you before you die. It is probable he fled to save his life.

“In a polluted land”: Among the heathen, where thou may be sure my word was true. Israel, the ten tribes, shall surely go into captivity from off his land (9see Amos 7:11).

Priests were supposed to have wives that were pure. To tell a priest his wife would be a harlot, is more than he can comprehend. When the city is taken they will suffer all of these things. This is a judgment of God against a people who are far from God. The priests were even guiltier than the people because they should have known better.

Amos Chapter 7 Questions

1. How did God make Amos aware of this prophecy?
2. Where did the grasshoppers come from?
3. What was meant by "after the king's mowings"?
4. What does God control?
5. What are the grasshoppers like?
6. What is Amos doing in verse 2?
7. Who does Amos call Israel in verse 2?
8. Did the LORD listen to Amos?
9. What is meant by the "LORD repented"?
10. What was the next thing God showed Amos?
11. What would happen with this fire in the deep?
12. What was Amos' reaction to the plague of fire?
13. What did God do about this second plague?
14. What is a "plumbline"?
15. What did God measure?

16. What did the measurement prove?
17. What will happen to the high places?
18. What had they put in the sanctuary to worship?
19. Who was king at this time?
20. Who was the priest at Beth-el, when Amos prophesied?
21. What was the priest's opinion of Amos?
22. What does he tell Jeroboam, to get Amos in trouble?
23. What does Amaziah say, that Amos said about the king?
24. What does the priest fail to mention to the king?
25. Where did Amaziah tell Amos to go?
26. Did Jeroboam do anything about Amos' prophesying?
27. Why did the priest tell Amos not to prophesy at Beth-el?
28. What was Amos' reply to Amaziah?
29. What did Amos speak?
30. Amos expresses, again, that these are not his words, but _____.
31. What prophecy did Amos make against Amaziah?