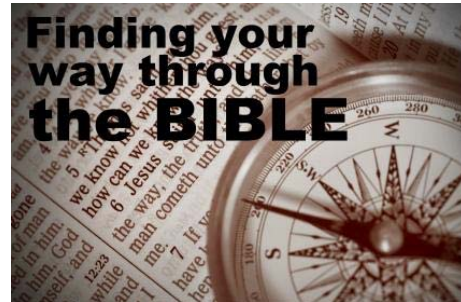


Amos

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](#)). 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 worshiped.



The book brings his prophecies together in a carefully organized form intended to be read as a unit. 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.

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.

Outline

- Superscription ([1:1](#))
- Introduction to Amos's Message ([1:2](#))
- Oracles against the Nations, including Judah and Israel ([1:3–2:16](#))
- Oracles against Israel ([3:1–5:17](#))
 - Judgment on the Chosen People ([ch. 3](#))
 - Judgment on an Unrepentant People ([ch. 4](#))
 - Judgment on an Unjust People ([5:1–17](#))
- Announcements of Exile ([5:18–6:14](#))
 - A Message of Woe against Israel's Perverted Religion ([5:18–27](#))
 - A Message of Woe against Israel's Complacent Pride ([6:1–7](#))
 - A Sworn Judgment on the Proud and Unjust Nation ([6:8–14](#))
- Visions of Divine Retribution ([7:1–9:10](#))
 1. A swarm of locusts ([7:1–3](#))
 2. A consuming fire ([7:4–6](#))
 3. The plumb line ([7:7–17](#))
 4. The basket of ripe fruit ([ch. 8](#))
 5. The Lord by the altar ([9:1–10](#))
- Restored Israel's Blessed Future ([9:11–15](#))
 - Revival of the House of David ([9:11–12](#))
 - Restoration of Israel to an Edenic Promised Land ([9:13–15](#))