

# AMOS

—prophet from Judah to Israel, middle of 8th century BC

## 1. Date

Amos 1:1 mentions the chronological setting.

Uzziah of Judah, 790-739, sole ruler 767-750; son and co-regent after 750, Jotham, not named

Jeroboam II of Israel, 793-753, sole ruler 782-753

earthquake unknown today (remembered in Zech. 14:5, ca. 500 BC), but he prophesied two years before the quake (8:8; 9:1-6) as a judgment. Yigal Yadin says records at Hazor imply a quake about 760 b.c.

possible allusion to solar eclipse in 8:9,10; eclipses occurred in 784 and 763

Thus Amos's date is near the middle of the 8th century, perhaps just after Jonah's ministry in Israel (2 Kings 14:25; cf. 15:1).

## 2. Conditions in Israel

Reign of Jeroboam II; great prosperity, but great wickedness, and judgment soon coming

Continuation of idolatry instituted by Jeroboam I in Dan and Bethel (2 Kings 14:24; cf. 1 Kings 12:29); Jeroboam II built magnificent steps to the temple in Dan—Amos 3:14; 4:4-5

Period of great conquest and prosperity (2 Kings 14:25, 28)—Amos 6:1-6

Period of moral corruption—Amos 3:9-10, 14

“As their economic well-being and national strength continued to foster their security, an internal decay was eating at their vitals. It was primarily moral because it involved a basic violation of the covenant established by God at Sinai.” —McComiskey in *EBC*, p. 269

## 3. The prophet Amos

Name = *somig* `amos (“burden, load”); not same as Amoz (Joma ‘*amots*), father of Isaiah (Isa. 1:1)

Lived in Tekoa, Judah, 10 miles south of Jerusalem, 5 miles southeast of Bethlehem, a village named for a descendent of Caleb (1 Chron. 2:18, 24) —Amos 1:1; 7:12. Tekoa means “trumpet” and was a look-out city (cf. Jer. 4:5) on the ridge overlooking the approaches to Jerusalem.

Earlier Jehoshaphat had a great victory there against Moab and Ammon (2 Chron. 20:20).

Not originally a prophet or the son of a prophet, Amos 1:1

his own testimony, 7:14-15: “I was no prophet, Nor *was* I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’”

thus a “missionary” to the north from Tekoa of Judea; cf. Jonah’s being sent forth

Brave in the face of opposition, 7:10-17

Stern prophet of righteousness (curse on Amaziah the false prophet) 7:17

Good classical Hebrew — lyrical like another shepherd, David

Many “nature” and “country” references and figures

2:13 –“a cart pressed down”  
3:5, 12 – shepherding  
4:2, 9; 5:8  
6:12 – plowing  
7:1 – locusts  
8:8 – quake  
9:9 – sifting grain  
9:13-14 – reaping and harvesting

#### **4. Outline of Amos**

##### **(1) Judgments against many nations, ch. 1-2**

6 foreign cities; climax with impending judgment on covenant people of Judah and Israel. Judgment introduces the message of the book; this will be balanced by the theme of restoration at the end. Significantly, the gentile nations that did not escape God’s justice will also be involved in the ultimate restoration (9:9-12), a fact that implies God’s covenant mercies being extended beyond elect Israel (3:2).

Notice the “international” sins mentioned, whereas Israel is more accused of “social” sins, related to covenant Law.

The high accountability of Judah on account of its privilege under the Davidic covenant (“Zion” vs. the “Carmel” of the Baal prophets, 1:2) calls for a blast against Israel’s southern neighbor and serves as a reminder to Israel of covenant obligations.

Numerical Collocation = a linguistic device for emphasis: “3 → 4” = “far too many”

E.g., 1:3: “Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.”

Also, 1:6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6. Cf. in Prov. 6:16; 30:15, 18, 21, 24, 29

Judgments fulfilled:

Damascus, 2 Kings 10:32-33; 16:9

Gaza, the “outpost of Africa and the door of Asia” Jer. 47; Obad. 11; 2 Chron. 21:16-17; it served as a slave trading center

Tyre, times of Alexander the Great who sold 30,000 citizens

Edom, Obad. 14 (Assyrians, Nabatean Arabs, Romans)

Ammon, Amos 1:13; Ezek. 25:1-7

Moab, Ezek. 25:1-7 —desecration of the dead

Judah, 2 Chron. 36:14-21 — failure to be an international witness

Israel, 2 Kings 17:1-18

2:6-8 —abuse of law, of poor, of religion

## (2) **Three judgment sermons (“oracles”) against Israel, ch. 3-6**

Sermons have formulaic pattern, “Hear this word . . . therefore”

ch. 3

ch. 4

ch. 5-6

Some notes:

3:2, responsibilities of election and [fore]knowledge defined

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

3:6, Tekoa means “trumpet”

3:7,8, ministry of prophets; illustration of nature of office of prophet: compulsion to be His spokesman

3:15, 200 ivory plaques found in storeroom of Samaria

4:1-3, “The [Very] First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women”

4:13, God the Creator, אר6B6 bara’

4:4-5; 5:21-23, false and empty worship (cf. Judah, Isa. 1:11-16)

chpt 5 = Funeral lament for Israel in the midst of the festival

5:5 = pun based on sound: “Gilgal to the gallows; Bethel be bedeviled!” (per Moffatt)

5:15 = key verse

“Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”

5:18, the day of Yahweh

5:24, Poetic imagery used in the U.S. civil rights movement

“But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.”

6:8, God’s oath—captivity; cf. 5:27

6:13, assonance: “L”s and “H”s

**(3) Five visions of judgment against Israel, ch. 7 - 9:10**

1) locusts, 7:1-3

2) fire, 7:4-6

3) plumb line, 7:7-9

— interlude, Amos and Amaziah, 7:10-17

4) ripe fruit, ch. 8

-solar eclipse 8:9,10 (784 or 763)

5) the Lord by the altar, 9:1-10

Some notes:

7:17, personal prophecy against Amaziah

\*8:2, pun: “ripe fruit” = Jy1q5 *qayits*; “end” = Jyq2 *qetz*

\* The land is “over-ripe” for judgment, implying that the end is near.

8:11, ultimate famine of the Word of God

‘Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD.’

9:9, purpose of captivity

(4) **The theocracy to be restored, 9:11-15**

James cited this passage during the Apostolic Council in Acts 15:16-18, perhaps from the LXX (except LXX does not say “after these things;” LXX follows the MT, “in that day”), or from a Hebrew version not preserved in the MT.

<b>Amos 9:11-15</b>	<b>Acts 15:16-18</b>
<p><sup>11</sup> “ On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; <sup>12</sup> That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” Says the LORD who does this thing.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> “ Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it. <sup>14</sup> I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. <sup>15</sup> I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,” Says the LORD your God.</p>	<p><sup>16</sup> ‘ <i>After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;</i></p> <p><sup>17</sup> <i>So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’</i></p> <p><sup>18</sup> “Known to God from eternity are all His works.</p>

Probably the Hebrew text of Amos that James was familiar with agreed with the LXX, rather than with today's Massoretic Text, since there is a very small change needed in the Hebrew letters of the MT to generate the LXX rendering, and also since there was no objection by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at the time (see Archer and Chirchigno, *OT Quotations in the NT*, 155).

Following the LXX and James in Acts 15, the variant reading of Amos 9:12 would require the verb  $Wvr4d4y1$  *yidreshu* ("they will seek") instead of today's MT,  $Wvr4yy1$  *yireshu* ("they will possess"), and a subject  $,d6a6$  *adam* ("mankind") for  $,oda8$  *edom* ("Edom").

To show that James was not spiritualizing the text, see Allan A. MacRae in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 110 (1953), 309-320.

An important conclusion of this understanding is that neither James nor the NT record follows an allegorizing hermeneutic in this interpretation of the OT.