

## Amos

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February 2, 2022



Amos 1: 1-10

Vs. 1

- Amos tells us right off the bat the date of his ministry: "in the days of Uzziah King of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, King of Israel, two years before the earthquake." This places him in 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Jeroboam ruled from about 783 BC to 745 BC. The comment about the earthquake doesn't help too much except that this earthquake is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5 as having taken place during the reign of King Uzziah where the prophet says that when the final battle comes the people will flee as they did during the earthquake.
- Likely Amos begins his ministry and his first sermon at Bethel, King Jeroboam's sanctuary.

Vs. 2

- Both in Joel 3:16 and Jeremiah 25:30 we hear that the Lord speaks with a roar. Here Amos is setting the theme for his work. It is not about him. It is not he who is speaking but God. He is merely the mouthpiece.
- A lion's roar would send shudders down the spine of a shepherd and it is fear of the Lord that Amos' message seeks to instill.
- And the voice of God does not come from Bethel, but from Jerusalem, down south, the capital of the Southern Kingdom. Being from the south himself, Tekoa, there would be no where else Amos would expect to hear the roar of the Lord.
- The last two lines speak of drought. With no rain the pasture dies and there's no grass for the sheep. And Carmel refers to Mt. Carmel, which juts out into the Mediterranean Sea. It was heavily overgrown with vegetation and here even all of that has dried up.
- God roars and his initial judgement comes in the form of a devastating drought.

Vss. 3-5

- Amos comes to the Northern Kingdom with a message of God's judgement but he doesn't begin there. Instead he begins a long sermon of judgement against Israel's enemies. People always prefer to hear sermons about other people's sins.
- But the implication is that God is Lord of all. He is not just sovereign over Israel and Judah, but he is sovereign over the whole world.

- A sermon that starts off condemning Damascus and the nation of Syria would have instantly been a hit with the people and would have quickly gathered a crowd. Syria was Israel's strongest neighbor and biggest rival, with a long history of bad blood between them.
- "Three transgressions": Three in Jewish thought means "enough", full, complete; four implies more than enough. Sin can build up cumulatively. Sin stacked on top of sin, until its just too much.
- The final straw was what the Syrians did in Gilead. Gilead refers to a territory east of the Jordan, between the Arnon and Yarmuk rivers. The Hebrew word for "threshed literally means "to trample on". Various passages in the Old Testament shows us that threshing was done by the feet of animals as they trampled out the grain. So it seems that the Syrians took heavy sleds with jagged teeth on the bottom intended to cut straw to pieces and dragged the sleds over the conquered people of Gilead.
- The "House of Hazael" refers to the family dynasty of Hazael who were kings over Syria beginning in 842 BC. The second king was Ben-hadad who came to the throne in 802 BC (2 Kings 8:7-13).
- Fire refers to the flames of war, suggesting that God's judgement on Damascus means war will come to Damascus and all the strongholds and palaces the Hazael kings have built will be destroyed.
- The gate bar would be the city gate. Aven and Beth-eden refer to the places of worship of the Syrian sun gods.
- Amos ends the Syrian part of his sermon saying that its people will be exiled to Kir. There whereabouts of Kir is unknown, but it was believed that Kir is where the Syrian people came from before settling in Damascus. So God's judgement included sending the Syrians back to where they came.

#### Vss. 6-8

- Amos shifts his gaze from Israel's enemies to the northeast to enemies to the southwest, their ancient adversary, the Philistines. These were seafaring people who had settled on the coast near Egypt who had come from a place called Caphtor (9:7), which was likely what we know as Crete. Today, the word Palestine is derived from the Hebrew word for Philistine.
- Gaza was one of the five cities of the Philistines. When the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses III (1175-1144 BC) drove the Philistines out of his territory, he created a vassal state for them, using them as mercenaries, and placed them in 3 coastal towns: Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod. Later the Philistines conquered 2 cities in the interior of the country, Ekron and Gath. Gath is not mentioned here, but is mentioned in 6:2 where it is implied that it had been destroyed.
- Gaza is called out here because it was the largest of the 5 cities (and the whole region is now named for it) but may have also been the most guilty. Here the charge is not a war crime but human trafficking, slavery. They are charged by God with capturing an entire tribe of people and selling them as slaves to the King of Edom.
- For punishment, fire meaning war, will come to Gaza and destroy her. The same will come to Ashkelon and Ekron until the last of the Philistines are destroyed.
- If speaking judgement on Syria gathered the crowd, speaking judgement on the Philistines had the crowd cheering!

Vss. 9-10

- From Gaza to the southwest, Amos now looks north to Tyre, one of the most important cities of the ancient world. Located on an island about a half mile off the coast of Lebanon, the ancient Greek writer Herodotus says that Tyre was founded in the 28<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Ancient writings from around the Mediterranean say that Tyre founded Tarshish (where Jonah hoped to flee) in Spain around 1100 BC as well as the great city of Carthage in North Africa around 700 BC. Her sailors circumnavigated the entire continent of Africa around 600 BC, some 2000 years before Vasco da Gama. Tyre's King Hiram, a contemporary of King Solomon, built a great harbor and massive fortifications that withstood countless attacks until Alexander the Great arrived in 333 BC. Alexander built a giant causeway from the mainland to lay a proper siege to the city. When the battle was over some 8000 people in the city were dead and 30,000 were sold into slavery, all this because the King of Tyre disrespected Alexander and refused to surrender his city without a fight.
- That 30,000 were sold into slavery was ironic for like Gaza the sin of Tyre was human trafficking. They too had delivered up an entire tribe of people to the King of Edom. So the people who say the Bible never says anything against slavery has never read the Bible very closely. The sin of Tyre seems to have been more grievous than that of Gaza because Tyre broke "the covenant of brotherhood", implying they had betrayed a neighbor, perhaps even from Israel, and captured and sold them as slaves.
- So fire and war will come to Tyre and destroy her palace and fortresses. That it took roughly 400 years is inconsequential. We want to see God do everything on our timeline, but not only are God's ways not our ways, His time is not our time.
- But to hear such a judgement on Tyre would now have had the people dancing!
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**THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH**  
1 KINGS 12

