

Amos Chapter 1

Title and Time:

Amos 1:1 – “The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds 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.”

1. Amos is identified by:
 - a. Occupation – Shepherd –
 - i. same word is used in 2 Kings 3:4 and in Ugaritic to refer to small cattle (sheep, goats) raiser and small cattle (sheep, goats) breeder.
 - ii. Amos calls himself a “large cattle breeder” in Amos 7:14
 - iii. Amos likely worked breeding and raising sheep, goats, oxen and cows
 - iv. Amos was likely wealthy and owned land and a business. He was trained and educated.
 - b. Home town – Tekoa, six miles south Jerusalem
2. Dating – two sources – ultimately 762 is a good date for the major portion of Amos’ words, but his ministry may have extended past that original date.
 - a. Days of the Kings:
 - i. Uzziah of Judah – 791-740 BC
 - ii. Jeroboam, son of Joash (grandson of Jehoahaz, great-grandson of Jehu) – 793-753 BC
 - b. Earthquake
 - i. Mentioned again in Zechariah 14:5
 - ii. An earthquake struck about 760 BC (+/-20 years) according to multiple archaeological sites.
 1. It began in northern Syria and is traced south through Hazor, Israel, Judah and into the Dead Sea
3. Amos could have prophesied anywhere between 767-742 BC with the latest date for the earthquake being 740
4. “Words” is a technical term which means “oracles” meaning they were not Amos’ personal words, but prophetic words given to him by God. Same word used in Hosea 1:1, Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1 and is similar to “revelation” used in Isaiah 1:1 and Obadiah 1
5. “Saw” combined with “words” is not unlikely in Hebrew because it carries the sense of “perceiving a revelation”: and is used this way in Isaiah 2:1; 13:1 and Ezekiel 13:8.

Yahweh Begins to Speak from Temple:

Amos 1:2 – “And he said:

“The Lord roars from Zion

and utters his voice from Jerusalem;

the pastures of the shepherds mourn,

and the top of Carmel withers.”

1. This is a curse announcement. God is proclaiming judgment from the temple in Jerusalem. Following will be his specific announcements to the individual nations. Yahweh begins to speak in Amos 1:3.
2. Yahweh “roaring” is presenting a picture of Yahweh as a lion as in Hosea 5:14, “I am like a lion to Ephraim...” and not in a good way, but in a lion stalking and devouring prey.
3. The “utter his voice” refers to the words Amos will be speaking for Yahweh.
4. “Jerusalem” was the proper center of Yahweh worship. The mere mention of Jerusalem when addressing Israel in the north was meant to identify their entire worship system as based in a false religious system. Northern Israel’s worship was illegal according to the Mosaic Law.

5. "Voice" means more than "voice" or "sound". The plural is translated as "thunder" in Exodus 9:23. The combination here of "utter" and "voice" means "thundering"
 - a. The voice of God in the Bible is thunderous-
6. "Shepherds" represents the kings (shepherds of the people), not merely the shepherds in the field.
7. "Carmel" – the Carmel range of mountains is a lush area where fields are green and water could be found there three years after Elijah's drought (1 Kings 18:33-35. Carmel is in the NW part of northern Israel, on the opposite side diagonally from Jerusalem which means when God speaks the effects are total.
8. If an earthquake took place through this region 2 years later it would give legitimacy to these words of Amos.

Eight Individual Oracles Against the Nations Are Spoken by Yahweh (1:3-2:16):

1. There is one God over all the nations. Every nation is held accountable to God for a commonly known standard of behavior.
2. The general format of each oracle:
 - a. The messenger introduction – "This is what Yahweh said"...
 - b. The certainty of a well-earned punishment
 - c. Presentation of evidence of specific crimes committed against humanity.
 - d. The announcement of the curse/punishment
 - e. The concluding formula which is basically "Yahweh has said" or "oracle of Yahweh." (but, this is not used in Phoenicia, Edom or Judah)
3. These oracles are spoken likely at Bethel at the Gold Calf/Yahweh Temple. It is not hard to imagine that Amos presented these messages more than one time.
4. The "specific crimes" all seem to be committed during border wars between these countries sometime in the past before the time of Amos or very recent in Amos' day. Here is an example of the sins of the past being judged in a future generation if there is no repentance since these crimes were likely not committed by the same generation that received the punishment.
 - a. Exodus 20, The Ten Commandments, #2 – "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."
 - i. From page 60-61 of "Hope for America's Last Generation"

"God says he "punishes children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him." The word "punish" is the Hebrew word *paqad* (*paw-kad*) which means "to visit with friendly or hostile intent." The word indicates that God is "overseeing, looking after, inspecting, or examining." So God is inspecting and examining the sin of the fathers to see if it carried into the third and fourth generation. Why does he stop at the fourth generation? Why not go on to the fifth and sixth? We will see that by the fifth generation a father's sin has been dealt with in one of two ways. Either the fourth generation has made the necessary corrections, as mentioned in Ezekiel 18:14-17, or God has destroyed the society. There would be no fifth generation for that culture. This is a principle of divine judgment—it is called the four generation cycle of judgment, and it is used by God to control history by judging specific cultures that have become corrupt and sinful. He no longer has to destroy the whole world as he did in Noah's day or disperse the earth's population as he did in Nimrod's day in order to preserve his plan in the earth. Instead he can just discipline the cultures that threaten to destroy his work.