

# Amos

**WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT?** The prophet Amos preached to people who were self-satisfied and comfortable. His language was forceful about their need to wake up and do what was right.

**WHO WROTE IT?** Amos.

**WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** Around 760–750 B.C.

**WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** During the time of the divided kingdom.

**THE BREAKDOWN**

- Chapter 1: God's judgment on the nations
- Chapters 2–5: God's judgment on Israel
- Chapter 6: Israel judged for pride and injustice
- Chapters 7–8: Visions about Israel's future
- Chapter 9: Israel will be restored

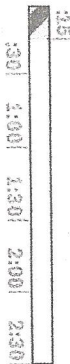
**KEY CONCEPTS**

- "The day of the Lord"
- Locusts
- A basket of ripe fruit
- A plumb line

**SCORECARD**

- Amos:** A shepherd-farmer whom God sent from Judah to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel
- Amaziah:** The priest of Bethel, who opposed Amos
- Uzziah and Jeroboam:** Two kings who ruled while Amos was prophesying

**READING TIME**



**WORTH MEMORIZING**

- 3:3  
Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?
- 5:21-24  
"I hate all your show and pretense—the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings. Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps. Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living!"

**THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE**

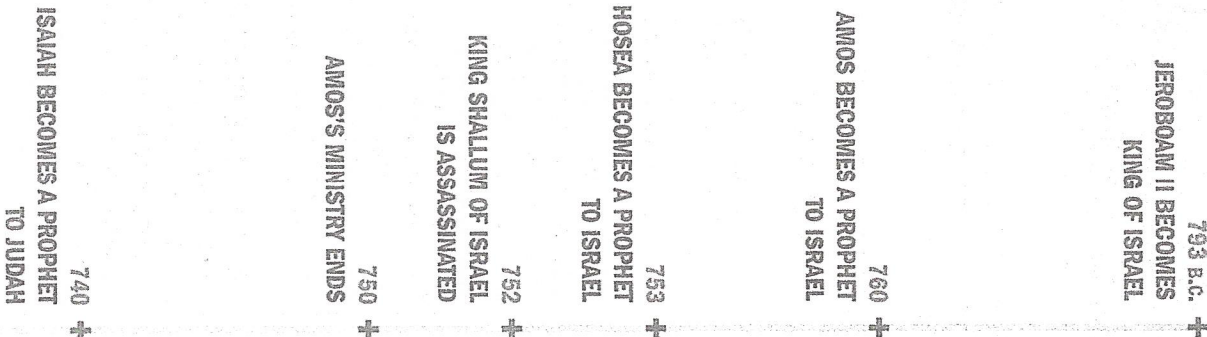
- **SERVING GOD.** If men try to get by with a bare minimum of religion, God will not be impressed. He doesn't want token worship or partial obedience. He wants our whole heart.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF Amos?  
+ + +  
It takes more than "religion" to impress God.

**1:3-2:3** All the people of the earth are accountable to God for their actions. There are certain boundaries of human behavior that God will not allow people to cross without punishment. Yet, as Jesus said, God shows grace even to the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). God will send judgment, but only after giving all people time to repent and change their ways. God does the same thing with us today. We may seem to prosper while going our own way, but this will last only a short while. If we do not admit our sin and turn back to God, we will eventually suffer the consequences of our sin.



**Timeline**





hen Paul Harvey gave his famous speech, "So God Made a Farmer," at a 1978 convention of the Future Farmers of America, he began: "God said, 'I need someone willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper, and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board.' So God made a farmer."

Well, I have a feeling Amos would have liked that speech. Amos was a farmer—a sheep breeder and fruit grower—from the town of Tekoa in Judah. In the eighth century B.C., when God needed a plainspoken man to deliver His message to Samaria, He chose a farmer—Amos. Amos traveled north and preached during a period of prosperity. Worship was hollow and injustice filled the land, with the rich trampling the rights of the poor. The book of Amos is a collection of sermons condemning the nations—including Judah and Samaria—for the absence of true worship and the presence of true injustice.

The first two chapters of Amos focus on God's judgment on the nations. The next several chapters warn of judgment on Judah and Samaria. The last half of the final chapter is a beautiful promise of hope and restoration.

Amos tells us God despises the exercise of empty religious ritual. Our conduct must always grow from an authentic desire to love others and please Him, and our lives should always produce a true harvest of justice and righteousness.



KEY THOUGHT:

God hates oppression. His justice will roll down like a river, and His righteousness like a mighty stream (see Amos 5:24).



KEY VERSES:

"The days are coming," says the LORD, 'when . . . I will bring back the captives of My people Israel . . . 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." Amos 9:13-15



KEY ACTION:

Our religious practices are worthless unless we treat others with integrity and compassion.



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, may I love others in the same spirit in which You love them, unconditionally and full of grace.

## BASIC SURVEY

### AMOS

**AUTHOR:** Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa, near Bethlehem (1:1).

**DATE:** Approximately the 760s BC.

#### IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

Real religion isn't just ritual, but treating people with justice.

#### DETAILS, PLEASE

An average guy—a lowly shepherd, actually—takes on the rich and powerful of Israelite society, condemning their idol worship, persecution of God's prophets, and cheating of the poor. Though God once rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, He is ready to send them into new bondage due to their sin. Amos sees visions that picture Israel's plight: a plumb line, indicating the people are not measuring up to God's standards; and a basket of ripe fruit, showing the nation is ripe for God's judgment.

#### QUOTABLE

- > Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (4:12 KJV).
- > Seek good, not evil, that you may live (5:14 NIV).
- > "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (5:24 NKJV).

#### UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

A native of the southern Jewish kingdom of Judah, Amos was directed by God to prophesy in the northern Jewish nation of Israel.

#### SO WHAT?

How are you treating the people around you? In God's eyes, that's an indicator of your true spiritual condition. For a New Testament perspective, see James 2:14–18.

#### READ AMOS 1-2.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 151. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 151. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 149. →

## CLOSER LOOK

### A WORKING-CLASS PROPHET

Before he died, around 795 BC, Elisha had prophesied that Israel would defeat the Arameans (2 Kings 13:14–19), and around 775 BC, Jonah prophesied that King Jeroboam would restore Israel to its greatest extent

since the days of Solomon. Sure enough, "he restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD. . . which He spoke through His servant Jonah" (2 Kings 14:25 NASB).

The problem was that Israel and Judah considered their prosperity as a sign that God approved of their selfish lifestyles and was blessing them. They were "men of corrupt minds. . .

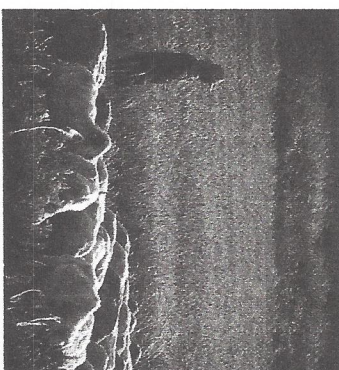
supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5 KJV). In actuality they were idolatrous, extravagant, and oppressors of the poor.

Amos was a common laborer—a shepherd and orchard worker—in the village of Tekoa, six miles south of Bethlehem in Judah (Amos 1:1; 7:14–15). God called him to prophesy against both Israel and Judah, so he went boldly to the religious center at Bethel and preached, "Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile" (Amos 7:11 NIV). He was bluntly warned to head back to Judah.

Amos's message was simple: God was about to bring devastating judgment upon His disobedient people. He had sent them repeated warnings with His prophets, but if the people didn't repent, they'd be conquered and carried into exile and cease existing as a nation.

#### READ AMOS 3 AND 7.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 151. →



Amos was a shepherd and an orchard worker. He repeatedly warned the people of Israel to be faithful to God.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## GOD'S MERCIFUL JUDGMENTS

God is merciful and doesn't immediately send complete destruction even when people persist in disobedience. As Amos explained, God often sends limited judgments as warnings. "I brought hunger to every city. . . I kept the rain from falling when your crops needed it the most. . . . I struck your farms and vineyards with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured all your fig and olive trees. . . . I sent plagues on you. . . . I destroyed some of your cities. . . . But still you would not return to me," says the LORD" (Amos 4:6–11 NLT). God is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV). But eventually, if people stubbornly refuse to repent, He will send final judgment.

READ AMOS 4 AND 8.



Amos explained that God used judgments such as failing crops to lead the people of Israel to repent.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

In Matthew 23, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and hollow religiosity. They thought that just going through the motions and performing the proper rituals would please God, but they failed to have love, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). This problem was nothing new. Nearly eight hundred years earlier God declared, "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:21–24 NIV). God wants heartfelt worship, love, and justice most of all (see John 4:23).

READ AMOS 5 AND MATTHEW 23.

Someone you  
Should know.

Amos

## When Prosperity Lies

CALL AMOS A RABBLE-ROUSER. Call him a preacher of doom. Call him a fig-picking shepherd with judgment on his mind. Just don't call him a prophet (especially a career one).

"I'm not a professional prophet," Amos insisted. "I was never trained to be one. I'm just a shepherd, and I take care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord called me away from my flock and told me, 'Go and prophesy to my people in Israel'" (Amos 7:14-15).

So Amos did as he was told. He left his home and fields about 11 miles south of Jerusalem and traveled north to warn the people of the northern kingdom that their materialistic and idolatrous ways would earn them God's fierce judgment. The nation had settled into a period of extraordinary prosperity, thanks to the decline of their longtime antagonists, the Arameans.

With no more need to maintain a standing army, they funneled their resources into business pursuits, expanding their trade routes and reaping skyrocketing profits. Commoners enjoying new wealth began to build mansions formerly within reach of only the nobility. Archaeological digs of the time have unearthed many examples of the opulence Amos decried on God's behalf. "I will destroy the beautiful homes of the wealthy—their winter mansions and their summer houses, too—all their palaces filled with ivory" (3:15).

In place of empty religious shows and meaningless acts of piety, Amos demanded that God's people treat the poor with justice and the oppressed with mercy. "I want to see a mighty flood of justice," he proclaimed, "an endless river of righteous living" (5:24).

Naturally, the comfortable and the smug didn't take kindly to his message. "Get out of here, you prophet!" they demanded. "Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there! Don't bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel!" (7:12-13).

But Amos kept on preaching, and the people refused to heed. How could such disaster ever strike us, they wondered, when we enjoy such tremendous prosperity? Didn't Elisha, some 40 years before, prophesy these good times (2 Kings 13:17-19)? And didn't Jonah reiterate them more recently (2 Kings 14:25)? They snickered at Amos. The big surprise came in 722 B.C., when the savage Assyrian army tore through the complacency of Israel, torching her cities, slaughtering her soldiers, and carrying off into distant captivity the few dazed citizens who remained. And so were fulfilled the unwelcome but reliable predictions of a fig-picking shepherd: "The time will come when you will be led away with hooks in your noses. Every last one of you will be dragged away like a fish on a hook!" (Amos 4:2).

A professional prophet? No, indeed. Just a dead-on accurate one.

**THE POINT:** When justice goes begging, judgment comes calling.

# INTRODUCTION

## AMOS

Amos's prophecy, one of the longer books of the Minor Prophets, brings to light the backsliding present within Israel during the eighth century B.C. Amos, a shepherd from the southern kingdom of Judah, spends most of the book prophesying against the northern kingdom of Israel. At the time, Israel was enjoying prosperous times; yet the people were spiritually corrupt and in danger of igniting God's anger.

Initially, Amos pronounced judgment against several nations surrounding Israel, repeating the phrase "for three crimes, even four" (1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6). This was a reference to the fact that these nations did not just sin against Israel once, but that they sinned over and over. Amos lists their sins, which included disobeying the Lord, taking and keeping captives, and committing violence against others.

And then, midway through chapter 2, Amos turns his prophecy upon Israel. Even though God had chosen them from among all the peoples of the earth and had delivered them from the hands of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites still rejected Him and turned their backs on Him.

The middle chapters of Amos deal with the many sins of Israel, which included economic injustice, sexual sins, and worshipping false idols. God gave them many opportunities to admit their wrong and return to Him, but the Israelites continued on their destructive path.

But as we read so many times in the Bible, God does not give up on us. In fact, He pursues us with a relentless passion.

Amos's prophecy then turned to a call for repentance. Amos wrote, "Seek good and not evil so that you may live, and the Lord, the God of Hosts, will be with you, as you have claimed. Hate evil and love good; establish justice in the gate. Perhaps the Lord, the God of Hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (5:14-15). This is a clear warning for the Israelites, as it is for us. God loves justice and

wants us to pursue righteousness. By dismissing these calls, we disobey God and run afoul of His commands.

Even though Amos received visions of Israel's destruction, God promised an ultimate restoration in Jesus Christ: "In that day I will restore the fallen booth of David; I will repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old" (9:11) and "I will plant them on their land, and they will never again be uprooted from the land I have given them. Yahweh your God has spoken" (9:15).

God's anger toward Israel was tempered by His ultimate restoration: sending His Son to restore all that He promised those who love Him.

### Author: Amos

**Date:** During the time of the kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel—prophesying between 765–760 B.C.)

### What in the world is going on?

793 B.C. Jonah is called to be a prophet to Israel and to Nineveh

792–740 B.C. Uzziah (Azariah) rules in Judah (overlap with Amaziah from 792–767 B.C.)

782–753 B.C. Jeroboam II rules in Israel

776 B.C. First Olympic games held in Greece

775–750 B.C. The first Greek colony in Italy is founded

770–476 B.C. The Spring and Autumn period of China gets its name from the title of a book about the era (*Chunqiu*)

765 B.C. Amos, a herdsman from Tekoa (in Judah), becomes a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel

754–746 B.C. Ashur-nirari V is king of the Assyrians

753 B.C. Zechariah reigns in Israel

ca 753 B.C. A group of villages merge to become the city of Rome

# THE BOOK OF AMOS

## INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

AMOS PROPHECIES DURING A PERIOD of national optimism in Israel. Business is booming and boundaries are bulging. But below the surface, greed and injustice are festering. Hypocritical religious motions have replaced true worship, creating a false sense of security and a growing callousness to God's disciplining hand. Famine, drought, plagues, death, destruction—nothing can force the people to their knees.

Amos, the farmer-turned-prophet, lashes out at sin unflinchingly, trying to visualize the nearness of God's judgment and mobilize the nation to repentance. The nation, like a basket of rotting fruit, stands ripe for judgment because of its hypocrisy and spiritual indifference.

The name *Amos* is derived from the Hebrew root *amos*, "to lift a burden, to carry." Thus, his name means "Burden" or "Burden-Bearer." Amos lives up to the meaning of his name by bearing up under his divinely given burden of declaring judgment to rebellious Israel. The Greek and Latin titles are both transliterated in English as *Amos*.

### WATCH WORDS

- **satisfy** (fill; cause to have plenty)—4:8
- **seek** (inquire of; ask)—5:4
- **wormwood** (something with a bitter taste and deadly result)—6:12 (also 5:7)

## CONSCRIPTION

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed? —Amos 3:3*

**N**ow this is what is known as a rhetorical question; it is equivalent to a positive declaration that two cannot walk together except they be agreed, and for two to walk together they must be in some sense one.

They also have to agree that they want to walk together, and they have to agree that it is to their advantage to travel together. I think you will see that it all adds up to this: *For two to walk together voluntarily they must be, in some sense, one.*

I am talking now about how we can cultivate the Spirit's fellowship, how we can walk with Him day by day and hour by hour. . . . I am going to give you [a] few little pointers to help you into a better life.

Point one is that the Holy Spirit is a living Person. He is the third Person of the Trinity. He is Himself God, and as a Person, He can be cultivated; He can be wooed and cultivated the same as any person can be.

—How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

### BACKGROUND

A false sense of security, complacency, and optimism pervade the northern kingdom of Israel at the time of Amos. Many people maintain a luxurious lifestyle, even as the poor suffer (4:1; 5:11–12; 8:4–6). Idolatry and corruption (5:10, 12–13; 6:12) abound. Amos is sent with a message: God's judgment of their sins is about to take place.

Amos is generally believed to be the author of this book. His name means "burden" or "burden-bearer." His hometown is the rural village of Tekoa (1:1), some twelve miles south of Jerusalem in Judah. Since he is from the southern kingdom and opposes popular practices in Israel, Amos is unpopular among the people of the northern kingdom (7:10–13).

### MESSAGE

Israel and Judah are at peace with each other and both are experiencing economic and political success. Amos's

### OUTLINE

- I. God's Judgments**
  - A. Other nations 1:1–2:5
  - B. Israel 2:6–16
- II. God Accuses Israel**
  - A. God rebukes Israel's defiance 3:1–4:13
  - B. Israel's self-indulgence 5:1–6:14
- III. Symbols of Israel's Future**
  - A. Locusts and the plumb line 7:1–17
  - B. Basket of summer fruit 8:1–10
  - C. Famine of the word of God 8:11–14
  - D. Temple pillars 9:1–10
  - E. Israel's restoration 9:11–15

message, primarily directed to the

northern kingdom, reveals distressing developments. Immorality and injustice are increasing. Amos proclaims a clarion call for righteous living and justice; God will judge Israel "because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (2:6). The strength of the nation of Israel and the weakness of potential powers such as Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt give Israel a false sense of security; they ignore Amos's prophetic warning of destruction and exile (3:11; 4:2; 7:11) and fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

### TIME

The phrase "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah" and the mention of an earthquake (1:1; see also Zec 14:5) place Amos's ministry between 767 and 753 B.C. during the reigns of Uzziah (767–739 B.C.) and Jeroboam II, King of Israel (782–753 B.C.). Amos spoke two years before the earthquake.

## A Tool for Understanding Biblical Parallelism

Read: Amos 5:20 | Habit: Understanding Scripture

**W**hy do we need to understand Biblical poetry? The primary reason is that there's so much of it in Scripture: between one-third and one-half of the Old Testament is written in a poetic style. Certain Old Testament books—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Lamentations, Song of Songs—are almost entirely composed of poetry, while parts of others—like the Major and Minor Prophets—contain poetic passages. Because so much of Scripture occurs in poetic shape, learning the distinguishing characteristics of Biblical poetry helps us to become better readers of the Bible.

One helpful tool for understanding Biblical poetry is identifying parallelism. Parallelism occurs when two (or sometimes more) lines are paired in such a fashion that the meaning of one line relates to the meaning of the other line(s) in one of several predictable ways.<sup>1</sup>

Go through a poem and mark it with one of three letters to identify the relationship between the two lines: *E*, *C*, or *XL*.<sup>2</sup>

If the second line is equal to or echoes the first line, mark it with an *E* (for echo or equal). We find an example of this type in Amos 8:10:

I will turn your religious festivals into mourning  
and all your singing into weeping.

If the second line is used to qualify the first line, and help bring the first line into greater clarity or more completeness, mark it with a *C* (for clarity or completeness). We find an example of this type in Amos 5:20:

Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light—  
pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

The second line clarifies the meaning of the first line.

If the first line is used to introduce the second line, and the second line expands or completes the first line, mark it with an *XL* (for expanded line). Amos 7:11 is an example of this:

Jeroboam will die by the sword,  
and Israel will surely go into exile,  
away from their native land.

This set of verses lays out a series of events: line one happens and then line two. By marking the poetic forms, you'll soon start to recognize the Biblical patterns.

**PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY:** Understanding Biblical parallelism is essential to understanding and interpreting Scripture.

For your next reading, go to page 1092.

1090

## Why Self-Examination Is Essential to Sanctification

Read: Amos 7:7-8 | Habit: Self-reflection

**T**o illustrate how Israel failed to measure up to his standard, God gives Amos a vision:

This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, "What do you see, Amos?"

"A plumb line," I replied.

Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer."

Since at least the time of ancient Egypt, plumb lines have been used to ensure that constructions are perfectly "plumb," or vertical. A plumb line is a tool that consists of a small, heavy object attached to a string or rope. When held from the top of a construction, such as a building, it provides a way to see if the construction is straight.

God's law was the plumb line, the perfect standard that the people were measured against. Since the time of Amos, though, we've seen given another plumb line: Jesus Christ.

Christ is our standard of comparison for holiness, the objective of our sanctification. As Wayne Grudem explains, "Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."<sup>3</sup> This is why self-examination is essential to the process of sanctification: it shows us how we measure up to Jesus.

Christian self-examination is not a form "navel gazing." We are not to be self-absorbed and looking inward to see how we feel about ourselves or how we compare to other people. Instead, we are to look inward to see how we measure up against the plumb line of Jesus. As Megan K. McNally explains,

Self-examination should not be an introspective self-obsession, but a humble, clear-minded assessment of ourselves through the gospel. It means looking to Scripture [to] see God's commands as the Holy Spirit points out the sins we harbor that are contrary to the Truth.<sup>4</sup>

We should regularly engage in the process of self-examination so that we're aware of how we measure up against God's perfect standard.

**PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY:** Self-examination is the process by which we measure our sanctification; we compare ourselves to the perfect plumb line—Jesus Christ.

For your next reading, go to page 1096.

1092

## A. THINGS THAT OFFEND GOD

- (1:1 — 2:16)
1. Inhuman Conduct Between Nations (1:1 — 2:3)
2. Rejecting God and His Laws (2:4 — 5)
3. Oppressing the Poor and Helpless (2:6 — 8)
4. Rejecting God's Pleas to Repent (2:9 — 16)

## B. WARNINGS FROM GOD (3:1 — 6:14)

1. The People Break the Covenant (3:1 — 15)
2. The People Refuse to Change Their Behavior (4:1 — 13)
3. The People Must Choose Life or Death (5:1 — 27)
4. Danger in Putting Confidence in the Wrong Things (6:1 — 14)

## C. GOD'S LOVING PUNISHMENT (7:1 — 9:15)

1. The Con text for Punishment: Merciful Love (7:1 — 6)
2. The Tim e for Punishment: The Near Future (7:7 — 8:14)
3. The Extent of Punishment: The Entire Nation (9:1 — 6)
4. The Result of Punishment: Restoration (9:7 — 15)

## THE BIG PICTURE

God is righteous and just, yet he always expresses his justice in the context of his love and compassion. God expects us to act in the same way toward others, showing mercy and understanding. In Amos's day, Israel was a prosperous nation. But with Israel's prosperity came corruption, injustice toward the helpless and religious apostasy. God had given his people laws for governing human relationships, but they had refused to obey these laws.

God called Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa, to awaken his people from their spiritual sleep. Sadly, their sinful behavior was worse than that of some of their pagan neighbors! Amos warned them of the painful consequences that would follow their sinful behavior. He confronted the people of Israel with their ill treatment of the poor and oppressed. God warned his people of their impending punishment so that they might change. They were reminded of their responsibilities as God's chosen people. He wanted them to act mercifully and with justice.

But God's people refused to repent. So Amos's predictions for Israel's future were dark and dismal. God would allow his people to suffer a period of destruction and exile. Despite his predictions of doom, however, Amos also spoke about a hopeful future. If only the people would admit their sin and ask for forgiveness, God would purify and restore them completely. It is never too late to seek spiritual renewal. God eagerly waits for us to repent and recognize how helpless we are and to call out to him for his loving help.

## SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

### COMPLACENCY LEADS TO A DOWNFALL

When life is going smoothly, we must be careful. An easy life makes us ripe for complacency and a downfall. In Amos's day, the people of Israel were prosperous and began to think they could succeed without God. This attitude led them down a path toward destruction. Even when our lives are successful, we still need God. He is the source of our spiritual renewal; all success must be attributed to him. A complacent, self-sufficient attitude will lead only to a fall.

### CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP

The people in Amos's time believed they did not need other people. They exploited the weak and poor and were indifferent to the pain of those around them. They enslaved

the helpless through extortion and heavy taxation. God has created us to live in relationship with others, not in isolation from others. God urges us to recognize our need for others and do what we can to make restitution to those we may have hurt.

### GOD HONORS UPRIGHT HEARTS

Many of the people of Israel kept up the outward appearances of religion even though they had abandoned their faith in God. There is the danger that we may fall into the same trap. We may perform religious rituals to obtain the approval of others but never allow a genuine internal change to take place. We may hide our sins from others, pretending we are faithfully following God's way when we are not. God wants us to have genuine hearts that seek to know and trust him. He is not as concerned with how we appear on the surface; he sees through our false appearances even if other people don't. God cares about the attitudes of our hearts.

### SPIRITUAL RENEWAL BEGINS WITH SURRENDER

When the people of Israel went into captivity, their lives were crumbling about them. They could finally see the truth. They knew that they needed God. The dark times of life often lead us to recognize our need for God. Our helplessness breaks apart our spiritual blindness, opening our eyes to reality. When our lives are out of control and crumbling around us, our attempts to deny that we need God are futile. We must acknowledge our need and be open to his saving power before true spiritual renewal can begin.

## Essential Facts

**PURPOSE:** To confront the people of Israel with their sin, calling them to confession and repentance.

**AUTHOR:** The prophet Amos.

**AUDIENCE:** The people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

**DATE WRITTEN:** Between 760 and 750 BC, when Jeroboam II was king of Israel and Uzziah was king of Judah.

**SETTING:** The northern kingdom of Israel during a time of material prosperity and spiritual complacency.

**KEY VERSE:** "In that day I will restore David's fallen sheket — I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins — and will rebuild it as it used to be" (9:11).

**KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:** Amos, Amaziah the priest at Bethel, the people of Israel and the Edomites.

**KEY PLACES:** Samaria, the northern kingdom's capital and the temple at Bethel.

## ON SCENARIOS

*Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.* — Amos 5:15

If we are committed, consecrated Christians, truly disciples of the crucified and risen Christ, there are some things we must face.

We cannot love honesty without hating dishonesty. We cannot love purity without hating impurity. We cannot love truth without hating lying and deceitfulness.

If we belong to Jesus Christ, we must hate evil even as He hated evil in every form. The ability of Jesus Christ to hate that which was against God and to love that which was full of God was the force that made Him able to receive the anointing—the oil of gladness—in complete measure.

On our human side, it is our imperfection in loving the good and hating the evil that prevents us from receiving the Holy Spirit in complete measure. God withholds from us because we are unwilling to follow Jesus in His great poured-out love for what is right and His pure and holy hatred of what is evil.

—Jesus, Our Man in Glory



# Amos

<b>Timeline</b>	799-753 BC	792-740 BC	767-753 BC	765-760 BC
<b>World Events</b>	Reign of Jeroboam II, northern kingdom	Reign of Uzziah, southern kingdom	Amos's prophetic ministry	Earthquake at Hazor
<b>Biblical Events</b>				

*"For the Lord says to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live!" (5:4).*

Who wrote Amos?  
The prophet Amos (1:2; 7:14)

Who were the recipients?  
While the book of Amos mentions surrounding nations, the heart of its message is aimed at the northern kingdom of Israel, which was engaging in idolatry and unjust social practices.

When was Amos written?  
767-753 B.C.

Where did it happen?  
Amos, a prophet from Judah, did not proclaim God's words to his own people so much as he did to those in the northern kingdom of Israel and particularly to those in Samaria. This was during a time of prosperity for Israel and most likely a time of peace between the two kingdoms during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II.

What is Amos about?  
Injustice is a major theme in the book of Amos, which testifies to Israel's guilt over rejecting God's covenant.  
The Lord is awesome and is to be greatly feared. The Lord's judgment upon Israel and her enemies is terrifying to behold.

Why should women read Amos?  
"Fat and happy" is a phrase that describes the people and more specifically the women in Amos. The self-indulgent and self-focused women of Judah had no concern for the poor and needy around them. The prophet, speaking the words of God, called them "cows." Amos is a reminder to women that God is not so much concerned with our happiness as He is our holiness or right living. While the Israelites were the "people of God" in name, their

actions belied such a blessed title. As you read, ask yourself, "Am I living to please myself or the Lord?"

How do you read Amos?  
Nearly the entire prophecy of Amos is poetic. Amos draws on vivid images from the animal kingdom and from agriculture. He also uses a wide variety of literary forms, including numerical sayings in order to express the fullness of iniquity (1:3, 6:9), rhetorical questions (3:3-8), imperatives (3:9), irony (4:4-5), humor (5:19-20), personification (5:2-3), and hyperbole (5:21-23).

Amos is among the "writing prophets," who left behind books bearing their names (e.g., Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah). The message of Amos was not an easy one to hear for two important reasons. First, Amos was from the southern kingdom (Judah), yet his main message was aimed at the northern kingdom (Israel). Second, the message was given to a people who were living quite well, a people who were free from external oppression and blessed with wealth and prosperity. Amos was calling the northern kingdom of Israel to repent of their social injustices and their empty religious practices or else go into exile.

The book of Amos can be roughly divided into three main parts. The first section (chapters 1-2) announced that Israel's sins demanded swift judgment. The nation could not call for any special treatment in light of the egregious sins they had committed against the covenant. The second section (chapters 3-6) is the Lord's judgment upon the nations, Judah, and Israel. The final section (chapters 7-9) ends on a note of hope. The question remained in the end: Will God abandon His people? The answer of the book of Amos is a resounding "No!" The final message of Amos is that God will show mercy and compassion to Israel and remain faithful to His covenant. But this does not mean that Israel will not suffer consequences for its unfaithfulness.

## Outline

- Amos and His Message (1:1-2:16)
  - Heading and Theme (1:1-2)
  - Israel's Guilt and Judgment (1:3-2:16)
- Words of Warning and Woe (3:1-6:14)
  - Breach of the Covenant (3:1-15)
  - Failure to Repent (4:1-13)
  - Choice of Life or Death (5:1-17)
- Visions of Judgment and Salvation (7:1-9:15)
  - The Lord Has Spared (7:1-6)
  - The Lord Will Spare No Longer (7:7-8:14)
  - The Lord Will Spare None (9:1-6)
  - The Lord Will Restore His People (9:7-15)
- Woe to Zion (5:18-6:14)

## Misheard!

Mormons believe that their top leader is a prophet and that he receives modern-day revelations from God. Mormons use Amos 3:7 to support this belief, but in reality it has nothing to do with establishing an unending reign of prophets. Instead, it foretold that God would raise up prophets whenever He was ready to bring judgment against His people, as He was preparing to do in Amos's day. And while the OT prophets were important, Luke 24:19 says Jesus is the ultimate Prophet, "powerful in action and speech." Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son . . ." Jesus and His teachings should be our focus. And while the NT shows that some believers in the early church had the prophetic gift, it was always necessary to weigh their utterances against Scripture. Since the Mormon prophets have distorted and denied basic teachings of Scripture, Christians should not follow their teachings.

## SPEAK THE TRUTH

### The Plumb Line

Amos 7:7-8

When we assess our moral character, we must base our measurements on truth. If we measure ourselves against a faulty standard, we won't be able to see the truth and make an honest confession of our sins to God.

The Lord wanted the Israelites to acknowledge their sin and used the analogy of a plumb line to get their attention. "I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer" (Amos 7:8). A plumb line is a length of string with a weight tied to one end. When the string is held next to a building or structure with the weighted end hanging down, gravity ensures that the string is perfectly vertical. This vertical plumb line provides a sure standard by which to measure the building's position. Unless a building is built in line with the plumb line, the walls will not stand as straight and true as they should.

In the spiritual realm, God's Word is our spiritual plumb line. We can't change the spiritual laws revealed in the Bible. It is to our advantage to measure our lives by the plumb line of God's Word. When things don't measure up, it is important that we admit there is a problem and start rebuilding accordingly.

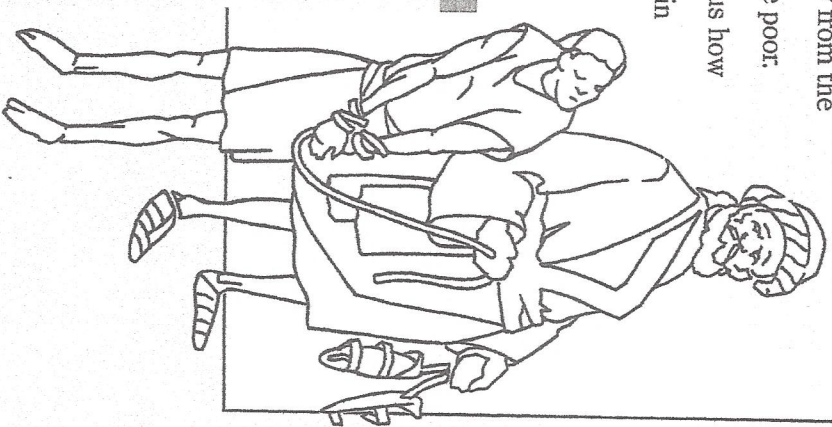
Turn to Zechariah 9.

# AMOS

The prophet Amos was a sheep rancher who lived in Judah. God sent him to warn the rich people of Israel that God was angry because the Israelites had turned away from the Lord and were cruel to the poor. Amos' message shows us how much God cares for those in need. And because God cares, we should, too!

## Headlines

- SHEEP RANCHER SHOUTS "FIRE!"**  
Amos 1, page 1246
- RICH SAMARITANS ARE CALLED NAMES**  
Amos 4:1, page 1249
- GOD OFFERS LIFE INSURANCE**  
Amos 5:14, page 1252
- YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM GOD!**  
Amos 9:1-4, page 1256



WHO THOUGHT PEOPLE WERE LESS IMPORTANT THAN A PAIR OF NEW SHOES? SEE AMOS 2:6.

## Be Concerned About Others

The selfish people in Amos's time just didn't care about the poor. They were more interested in helping the poor than in helping them (see Amos 8:4-6). That way the selfish rich people could buy more for themselves! God doesn't want us to be like that! People are more important than possessions. Since God cares about poor people, we should, too.

### The Day of the LORD

When Old Testament prophets spoke of "the day of the LORD," they meant a time when God would act to change history. Often, the phrase refers to the end of history. Amos warned the people of Israel that the day of the LORD would bring judgment to their sinful nation.

How should a person get ready for the day of the LORD? The message of Amos was that sinners should beware. But those who love God and do right can look forward to blessings.

### Fair to the Poor?

Is it fair for some people to be wealthy and other people to be poor? Some people say we should take money away from the rich and give it to the poor.

It's wrong to be selfish and not care about people who have needs. But it's also wrong for people who can work and take care of themselves to be lazy. How did God solve this problem?

In Old Testament law, God told the wealthy to be generous to the poor. Wealthy people were to let the poor pick up any grain or fruit left in the fields. The wealthy people were also to give or loan money to people who had no food. The wealthy also could "buy" a poor person. For seven years the poor person would work for the wealthy person and learn a trade. After seven years the wealthy person would give the poor person money to get a fresh start.

Did the poor people work to help themselves? Yes. Poor people went out in the fields to pick up the leftover grain and fruit. People didn't sit at home and expect wealthy people to bring them food. When people "sold" themselves to a wealthy person, they worked hard for those seven years to learn a new trade.

God's way is to care about the poor and to try to help them. But poor people are supposed to help themselves, too.

## In It For Me?

GOD CARES ABOUT PEOPLE IN NEED. . . .

- GOD FOR EVERYONE.
- GOD WHO ARE UNFAIR.
- GOD FOR THE POOR.
- GOD ME TO FOR OTHERS, TOO.

# AMOS

## What's in a Name?

The name Amos means "to carry" or "carried by God."

### BY THE NUMBERS

9 CHAPTERS  
146 VERSES  
3,796 WORDS

## EQUIPPING THE CALLED

Amos did not have a background in ministry but was a shepherd and farmer when God called him to go prophesy to Israel (7:14–15).

## DID YOU KNOW?

▶ The last chapter predicts both the fall of Israel and its eventual restoration, many years before the Assyrians took the people of Israel captive.

**A DARK DAY**  
It is believed that the event documented in Amos 8:9 was a solar eclipse: "In that day," declares the Sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight."

# KEY VERSE

*"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD." (8:11).*

## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW AMOS?

# AMOS IN REVIEW

### NOT SEAT

1. I told Amos to stop prophesying against Israel! After all, I am the priest and you'd think he would listen to me, but he keeps speaking against the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom. Who am I?

### TIME TRAVELER

2. You are the king of Judah when Amos has this vision. What is your name?

### WHO SAID IT?

3. "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees."

- A. Amaziah
- B. Jeroboam
- C. Amos
- D. Cushites

### WHO DUNNIT?

4. What nation "pursued his brother with a sword," which caused God not to forgive even three or four of its sins?

### MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

- 5. About which nation did God say, "The swift will not escape?"
- A. Moab
- B. Israel
- C. Assyria
- D. Babylon

### MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

- 6. Israel's "town that marches out a hundred strong" will have only how many people left?
- A. 50 people
- B. 10 people
- C. 2 people
- D. 25 people

### TIME TRAVELER

7. You are a mighty nation, but because you burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king, God has declared he will send a fire on you! Who are you?

### WHO SAID IT?

8. Who said to the king of Israel, "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words?"

- A. Amaziah
- B. Jeroboam
- C. Israelites
- D. Cushites

### MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

9. "All the sinners among my people will die by \_\_\_\_." (Fill in the blank.)

### MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

10. God told his people, "Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew." What did he say devoured their fig and olive trees?

### WHO SAID IT?

- 11. "Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!"
- A. Amaziah
- B. Jeroboam
- C. Amos
- D. Cushites

### "?" CRYPTIC PHRASES

12. The name "Lo Debar" means "nothing" in the following passage: "You who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, 'Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?' What does "Karnaim" mean?"

- A. Horns
- B. Weakness
- C. Abundance
- D. Chevrolet