

The Book of Amos

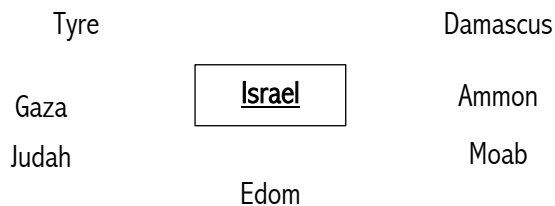
Introducing Amos	In a word, Amos is the epitome of “ordinary.” He ran in no priestly circles (unlike Ezekiel), nor was he known to kings (unlike Isaiah). He’s an ordinary prophet – from among the people – that God stirred to speak an important message in his day. That’s why I call him “unfamous Amos.” He was a shepherd and fig-tree farmer (Amos 7:14) who lived right near the border of the Northern Israel and the Southern Judah.
Target Audience	When God stirred Amos – the ordinary shepherd and fig tree farmer – to prophecy, he set his sights on the <i>Northern Kingdom (Israel)</i> and one king in the Northern Kingdom in particular: <i>Jeroboam II</i> . Jeroboam II was a very successful king in the eyes of the people. He was a very successful military leader. He captured Damascus in Syria and brought it under Israel’s rule and secured the border, making his people feel safe. Furthermore, he generated lots of wealth for the Northern Kingdom. Unfortunately, the wealth he generated was only going to the pockets of the already wealthy. As a result, the rich were getting richer and the poorer were getting poorer. Amos could see this with his eyes. The people and leadership could to, but they ignored it.
So Amos Rises	In the eyes of the wealthy, Jeroboam II was one the greatest kings of Israel. But in the eyes of the prophets, he was one of the worst, particularly from Amos’ perspective. From a spiritual perspective, Jeroboam II had created an environment of spiritual apathy that led directly to injustice and neglect of those who desperately needed help: the poor among them. He couldn’t take it anymore so he left his sheep and fig trees on the border and walked north into Israel until he arrived at the city of Bethel and began to prophecy.
Amos’ Message	Going through the motions of a relationship with God doesn’t please God when there is spiritual apathy among his people and injustice on the streets. What pleases God is <u>righteousness</u> (equitable relationships between people no matter their social differences) and <u>justice</u> (the actions that you take to correct injustice and create righteousness).
The Key Passage	<i>²¹ “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. ²³ Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ <u>But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!</u> (Amos 5:21-24)</i>
Ordinary, But Brilliant	Through Amos was an ordinary commoner, he was a brilliant preacher and prophet. We can see that from how the content of the book is arranged. It’s arranged in the form of a brilliantly crafted sermon

Sermon Point #1: All of Israel’s Neighbors are Guilty of Injustice. And You, Israel, are Responsible (chs 1-2)

This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent (1:3)
 This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent (1:6)
 This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent (1:9)
 This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent (1:11)
 This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent (1:13)
 This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent (2:1)
 This is what the Lord says, for three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent (2:4)
 This is what the Lord says, for three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent (2:6)

Though Amos targets Israel, he feels inclined to mention their neighbors first and save Israel for last. Why?

He creates a circle with Israel at the center.



You inspired the injustice of the nations surrounding you, oh Israel. You are at the center of it. There is greater injustice in the land than all the others combined. You allowed your people to be sold into debt slavery while being denied any legal representation. Your neighbors don’t even do that. This from a nation that was enslaved in Egypt and denied representation!

Sermon Point #2: Because You Had a Great Calling and Great Responsibility, I Will Punish You Greatly (chs 3-6)	
You Had a Great Calling	<p>“Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the Lord has spoken against you – against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: <u>You only</u> have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins (Amos 3:1-2)</p> <p>God told Abraham in Gen 12, that I will make you a blessing to the nations. Israel instead was the source of the curse of the nations.</p>
With It Came Great Responsibility	<p>¹¹ You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. ¹² For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. ¹³ Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil. (Amos 5:11-13)</p>
Therefore, I Will Punish You Greatly	<p>To demonstrate this Amos borrows a theme from Joel: the Day of the Lord. Israel longed for the Day of the Lord because they thought that was when God will judge their enemies. But Amos tells them its not something to look forward to.</p> <p>¹⁸ Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. (5:18)... ²⁶ You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god - which you made for yourselves. ²⁷ Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty. (5:26-27)</p> <p>Amos has in mind here the fall of Samaria (the capital of Israel) by the Assyrians. They conquered Israel and led them into captivity beyond Damascus (Assyria was north of Damascus) in 722 BC.</p>

Sermon Point #3: I Can See Visions of How the Day of the Lord Will Come. And It's Not Good (7-9)	
There Will be a Locust Swarm	<p>This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: He was preparing swarms of locusts after the king's share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up (7:1)</p> <p>Remember Joel saw this same vision about locusts. It happened just as they said.</p>
There Will Be a Scorching Fire	<p>⁴ This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: The Sovereign Lord was calling for judgment by fire; it dried up the great deep and devoured the land. (7:1)</p>
You Are Like Ripe Fruit Ready to be Picked in Judgment	<p>Then the Lord said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. ³ “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!” (8:2-3)</p>
And the False Temples You Should Have Never Constructed in Israel in Bethel in the First Place Will Come Crashing Down	<p>There was only one temple God considered acceptable: Solomon's in Judah. In Bethel, the Northern Kingdom constructed two more temples dedicated to the God's of the Canaanites like Asherah, Baal, etc. From Amos' perspective, this false worship is what inspired the immorality on the streets in the first place and caused the injustice. So they will fall as God's judgment.</p> <p>Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of the people (Amos 9:1)</p> <p>All this happened during the Assyria's destruction of the Northern Kingdom.</p>

Sermon Point #4: And The Only Thing I Can Say Good is that God is Good Because You are Not (9:11-15)	
<p>¹¹ “In that day “I will restore David's fallen shelter— I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins— and will rebuild it as it used to be...New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, ¹⁴ and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.</p>	
Remember Amos is prophesying to the Northern Kingdom. But here he sees David's fallen shelter. That's a reference to Judah's destruction that occurs in 587 BC (150 years after Israel's destruction).	<p>But in God's goodness and because of His promises to David, he will restore the land. You can see the scope of prophecy here. Judgment of Israel (not far out); Judgment of Judah (very far out) and the Restoration (even further out). Amazing.</p>

