



Overview for Amos

Purpose: The Book of Amos was a proclamation urging Israel to repent of violence, social injustice, and idolatry as well as inward attitudes of pride and ritualistic worship. It also prophesied of the coming Messianic age.

Author: Amos, a shepherd from the Southern Kingdom (Judah). He lived in Tekoa, a small hilltop town overlooking the Dead Sea, located ten miles south of Jerusalem. The name *Amos* means “burden” or “burden bearer.”

To Whom Written: The Northern Kingdom of Israel, and those associated with its idol worship at Bethel.

Date Written: Text references reveal that Amos prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam II (793 B.C. through 753 B.C.) and the southern king Uzziah (790 B.C. through 740 B.C.). Most scholars date his ministry to about 760 B.C.

Setting: The wealthy Jews of the Northern Kingdom were enjoying peace and prosperity. They had become complacent and were oppressing the poor, even selling them into slavery. The righteousness of God and His teachings had been replaced with selfishness.

Key People: Amos, Amaziah, Jeroboam II, and the people of the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

Summary: Amos was a humble herdsman who farmed sycamore (fig-bearing) trees, but also a man of God. God gave Amos a vision, and he traveled to the temples of Israel, where the rich vacationed rather than worshiped, to proclaim God’s condemnation of their wicked values and to warn them of the judgment to come.

The inspired words written by Amos give a glimpse of God as One who cares intensely for the poor and has a deep commitment to personal and social justice. The word *justice* in the Old Testament is also translated *righteousness* in our English versions (Amos 5:7, 5:24, 6:12). Its basic meaning is a standard by which right and wrong can be measured. In the Old Testament, this standard is God’s Law.

Israel’s territory almost reached the borders of the united kingdom of David’s day at the time Amos proclaimed his message. Great economic success accompanied prosperous military endeavors. Israel was in control of ancient trade routes, and expansion had given rise to a new social class of wealthy merchants.

Wealth created a demand for the many luxuries available from all over the known world.

This surge of prosperity caused class distinctions that occurred at the expense of their poor. The rich piled up profits and exorbitant prices were charged. The poor farmers were evicted from their land so that the rich could build up great estates. These luxuries were enjoyed by the wealthy, whose eyes were closed to the afflictions and needs of the poor (Amos 6:6).

In political circles, there was tumult and oppression, violence and robbery (Amos 3:9-10). People hated any judge who would reprove them or speak uprightly (Amos 5:10).

Then, suddenly, against this background of prosperity and oppression, a man who knew poverty appeared from Judah. For a few short months, he denounced the sins of Israel and promised judgment.

Amos was distressed by the moral, social, and religious situation, so he stood at Bethel and denounced the lifestyle of Israel. In a series of scathing proclamations, he confronted the wicked rich and ruling classes, exposed their sins, and pronounced punishment from God if they would not repent. The wicked of Israel did not repent. To these sinful men, Amos seemed fanatical and out of touch with the times.

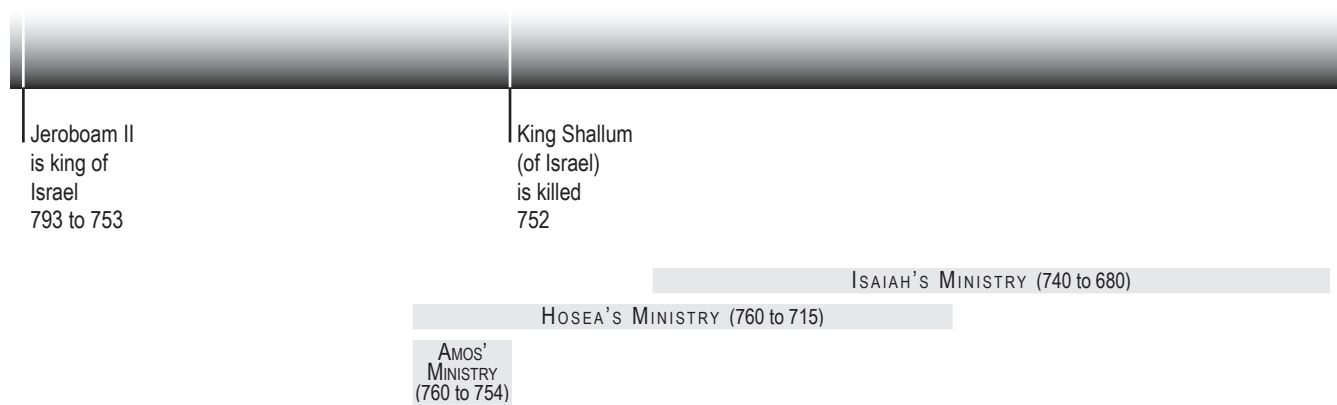
Amos continued by proclaiming the coming punishment of the “day of the Lord,” which was already looming. There was threat of invasion by Assyria, which did happen in 722 B.C. Amos was the first to teach that there would be a faithful remnant that would survive.

In Amos 7:7-9, the Lord spoke to Amos and showed him a plumbline. Through the books of the Law and the judges, God demonstrated His will through signs and wonders. Since His Law had been written and demonstrated for hundreds of years, God announced to Amos that he would no longer direct man by signs and wonders as in times past. From then on, man would be judged by the plumbline (the written Word of God). Indeed, from that time until now, God has revealed His will for man mainly through His Word.

After proclaiming judgment for the sins of the people, Amos concluded with a message of hope: there is coming a time when God will restore His people and make them great again (Amos 9:8-15).

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. Title (1:1)
 - B. Theme (1:2)
- II. The announcement of judgment upon the nations (1:3—2:16)
 - A. Judgment upon the surrounding nations (1:3—2:3)
 - B. Judgment upon God's people (2:4-16)
- III. The reasons for the judgment of Israel (3:1—6:14)
 - A. Present privilege brings responsibility (3:1-15)
 - B. Past chastenings unheeded (4:1-13)
 - C. Future judgment sure (5:1—6:14)
- IV. The visions of judgment upon Israel (7:1—9:10)
 - A. The vision of locust plague (7:1-3)
 - B. The vision of devouring fire (7:4-6)
 - C. The vision of the plumb line (7:7-9)
 - D. Historical parenthesis: Amaziah's reaction (7:10-17)
 - E. The vision of the basket of summer fruit (8:1-14)
 - F. The vision of the Lord beside the altar (9:1-10)
- V. The promise of the restoration of Israel (9:11-15)
 - A. The nation restored (9:11)
 - B. The possessions restored (9:12)
 - C. The land restored (9:13)
 - D. The people restored (9:14-15)