

Introduction to Amos

Author Amos, a personality mentioned only in the book that bears his name; a shepherd from Tekoa (in Judah) whom God appointed as a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel

Date 760-750 BC

- Geisler pinpoints a date between 755-750 BC (231).
- Merrill places Amos “between 767 and 753” (383).
- Based on Amos’ reference to Uzziah (king of Judah) and Jeroboam II (king of Israel), Robertson and Armerding conclude that “we may safely take the years of their concurrent reign and put the ministry of Amos between 760 and 750” (115).
- According to Harrison, “by comparing the concurrent reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II it is possible to date Amos between 760 B.C. and 750 B.C.” (626).

Kings Mentioned

Judah Uzziah (1:1)

Israel Jeroboam II (1:1; 7:10)

Nation(s) Targeted

Primary Israel (e.g., 1:1; 2:6ff.; 3:12, 14; 7:9-17)

Secondary

- Syria (1:3-5)
- Philistia (1:6-8)
- Phoenicia, represented by the city of Tyre (1:9-10)
- Edom (1:11-12)
- Ammon (1:13-15)
- Moab (2:1-3)
- Judah (2:4-5)

Representative Texts 2:6-8; 3:7-8; 5:6-7; 5:14-15; 5:21-24; 6:4-7; 7:8-12; 8:11-12; 9:14-15

Core Message As the Lord of all nations, Yahweh will not overlook the sins of his own people. Israel has forsaken his covenant, engaging in idolatrous practices and abusing others through pursuit of material gain. Religious rituals are insufficient to deter God’s judgment; the only solution is to seek Yahweh and practice justice. Israel is not inclined to such repentance, and thus the nation will experience crisis: its king will die violently and its inhabitants will go into exile. Having turned their backs on the prophets’ appeals, they will experience the silence of heaven. Nevertheless, judgment will not be final, for in his mercy Yahweh will restore Israel to its land.

New Testament References¹

- 3:7-8 (Rev. 10:3, 7)
- 5:25-27 (Acts 7:42-43)
- 9:11-12 (Acts 15:16-17)

Features

The oracles of judgment pronounced against the nations surrounding Israel are presented in geographic order, following a counterclockwise circular motion (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 22).

The book of Amos exhibits rich literary features despite being authored by an agriculturist who lacked a prophetic background (21-23). Its overall style can be characterized as “informal satire” (22). The book is perhaps most distinctive due to the verbal cues that clearly delineate its structure. For example, the oracles of chapters 1-2 begin with the formula “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions ..., and for four’” (1:3; etc.), and the messages concerning Israel open with “Hear this word” (3:1; etc.).

Sources

Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Baker Academic, 2007.

Geisler, Norman L. *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*. Baker Book House, 1977.

Harrison, R. K. “Amos.” *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, Baker, 2000, pp. 625-37.

Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Baker Books, 1996.

Robertson, James, and Carl Edward Armerding. “Amos.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, fully revised, vol. 1, Eerdmans, 1979, pp. 114-17.

Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. InterVarsity, 1998.

¹ New Testament citations of texts from Amos were identified in part by consulting Beale and Carson’s *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.