

Outline of the Book of Amos

Gregory A. Smith | March 1993

I. Prophecies concerning the nations surrounding Israel

A. Introduction (1.1-2)

1. Author: Amos (v 1)
2. Geographical setting: Tekoa (v 1)
3. Subject matter: A vision concerning Israel (v 1)
4. Historical setting: Reigns of Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam II (Israel), two years prior to a major earthquake (v 1)
5. Message: “The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem . . .” (v 2).

B. Prophecy concerning Damascus (1.3-5)

1. Sin of Damascus: “they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron” (v 3).
2. Judgment of Damascus (vv 4-5)
 - a) Fiery destruction (v 4)
 - b) Widespread death (v 5)
 - c) Death of the king (v 5)
 - d) National captivity (v 5)

C. Prophecy concerning Gaza (1.6-8)

1. Sin of Gaza: “they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom” (v 6).
2. Judgment of Gaza (vv 7-8)
 - a) Fiery destruction (v 7)
 - b) Widespread death (v 8)
 - c) Death of the king (v 8)

D. Prophecy concerning Tyrus (1.9-10)

1. Sin of Tyrus: “they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant” (v 9).
2. Judgment of Tyrus: fiery destruction (v 10)

E. Prophecy concerning Edom (1.11-12)

1. Sin of Edom: “he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever” (v 11).
2. Judgment of Edom: fiery destruction (v 12)

F. Prophecy concerning Ammon (1.13-15)

1. Sin of Ammon: “they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border” (v 13).
2. Judgment of Ammon (vv 14-15)
 - a) Fiery destruction (v 14)
 - b) Captivity of the king (v 15)
 - c) Captivity of the princes (v 15)

G. Prophecy concerning Moab (2.1-3)

1. Sin of Moab: “he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime” (v 1).
2. Judgment of Moab (vv 2-3)
 - a) Fiery destruction (v 2)
 - b) Widespread death (v 2)
 - c) Death of the judge and princes (v 3)

H. Prophecy concerning Judah (2.4-5)

1. Sin of Judah: “they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked” (v 4).
2. Judgment of Judah: fiery destruction (v 5)

II. Prophecy concerning Israel (2.6-16)

A. Sins of Israel (vv 6-8)

1. Greed (v 6)
2. Abuse of the poor and the meek (v 7)
3. Incest (v 7)
4. Idolatry? (v 8)

B. Intervention of God (vv 9-12)

1. Destruction of the Amorites (v 9)
2. Exodus from Egypt (v 10)
3. Calling of prophets and Nazarites (v 11-12)

C. Portrait of judgment: “Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves” (v 13).

D. Judgment of Israel (vv 14-16): sudden, powerful, irresistible and fearsome

III. Three Messages to Israel (3.1-6.14)

A. First message (3.1-15)

1. Introduction (vv 1-2)
 - a) The call to attentiveness: “Hear this word” (v 1).
 - b) The divine authority: “the LORD hath spoken against you” (v 1).
 - c) The addressees: the entire family of Israel (vv 1-2)
 - (1) A redeemed family (v 1)
 - (2) A chosen nation (v 2)
 - d) The message: punishment for sins (v 2)
2. Rhetorical questions (vv 3-7)

The prophet presents seven questions, all of which can be answered with a definite, “No!” Then, he affirms that just as definitely God will do nothing

without informing His messengers, the prophets. Thus Amos subtly claims divine authority for the message he is about to deliver.

3. Motivation (v 8)

Amos makes a disclaimer here. He was not presenting his own message. He would never have chosen to preach such a negative, unpopular message. Amos' determination to prophesy originated in God's commission, as portrayed by an illustration. As fear is the natural reaction to the roar of a lion, so prophecy is the natural reaction to the hearing of the voice of the LORD. Therefore, the prophet could not help but speak.

4. Judgment (vv 9-15)

a) Evident sin (vv 9-10)

(1) Oppression (v 9)

(2) Violence (v 10)

(3) Materialism (v 10)

b) Imminent destruction (vv 11-15)

(1) Defeat in battle (vv 11-12)

(2) Purging of idolatry (vv 13-15)

(a) The altar of Bethel (vv 13-14)

Jeroboam I set a golden calf in Bethel (1 K 12.26-29), and instituted a false system of worship there (1 K 12.32-33). Such idolatry was cried against by an unidentified prophet from Judah (1 K 13.15). This calf remained in Bethel, as did the false worship system for which it was made (2 K 10.29). Jeroboam's idolatry was apparently terminated by king Josiah of Judah, shortly before the deportation to Babylon (2 K 23.15).

(b) The houses (v 15)

The houses mentioned here appear to be sites of idolatry. See references to "houses of the high places" (1 K 12.31; 2 K 17.29; 23.19), and to the "house of Baal" (2 K 10.21, 23, 26-27).

B. Second message (4.1-13)

1. Introduction (vv 1-3)
 - a) The call to attentiveness: “Hear this word” (v 1).
 - b) The addressees
 - (1) “Cows of Bashan” (v 1)
 - (2) Inhabitants of Samaria (v 1)
 - (3) Oppressors of the poor (v 1)
 - (4) Seekers of pleasure (v 1)
 - c) The message: judgment (vv 2-3)
 - (1) Its certainty: “The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness . . .” (v 2).
 - (2) Its nature: captivity/subservience to an enemy (vv 2-3)
2. Condemnation (vv 4-5)

The LORD condemns, by way of sarcastic remarks (?), the ungodly system of idolatry practiced in Beth-el.
3. Discipline (vv 6-11)

The LORD describes His efforts to bring Israel back to Himself.

 - a) Lack of food (v 6)
 - b) Drought/insufficient water supply (vv 7-8)
 - c) Pestilence (v 9)
 - d) Insect plagues (v 9)
 - e) War casualties (v 10)
 - f) Overthrowing (v 11)
4. Convocation (vv 12-13)

The LORD calls Israel to prepare to meet Him. Israel had sinned, and had failed to respond to any of God’s disciplinary measures. The LORD promised He would call them to give account for their rebellion. In a very real sense, Israel would have to prepare to meet its God. Verse 13 gives a small description of that God Israel would encounter: sovereign over nature, omniscient, omnipotent, “The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.”

C. Third message (5.1-6.14)

1. Introduction (5.1)
 - a) The call to attentiveness: “Hear this word” (v 1).
 - b) The message: lamentation (v 1)
 - c) The addressee: the house of Israel (v 1)
2. Judgment appointed (5.2-3)
 - a) Its finality (v 2)
 - b) Its devastation (v 3)
3. Repentance advised: “seek the LORD” (5.4-9)
 - a) Because of the frailty of man (vv 4-5)
 - b) Because of the fierceness of God’s judgment (v 6)
 - c) Because of the power of God (vv 7-9)
 - (1) His power in nature (vv 7-8)
 - (2) His power in weak men (v 9)
4. Transgressions specified (5.10-13)
 - a) Intolerance of the upright (v 10)
 - b) Abuse of the poor (v 11)
 - c) Affliction of the just (v 12)
5. Righteousness commanded (5.14-15)
 - a) Source of life (v 14)
 - b) Source of divine blessing (v 14)
 - c) Source of grace (v 15)
6. Sorrow foretold (5.16-17)
7. The Day of the LORD described (5.18-20)
 - a) Extreme darkness (vv 18, 20)
 - b) Inevitable tragedy (v 19)

8. Consecration demanded (5.21-24)
 - a) Ritual rejected (vv 21-23)
 - (1) Feast days (v 21)
 - (2) Sacrifices (v 22)
 - (3) Music (v 23)
 - b) Righteousness required (v 24)
9. Idolatry denounced (5.25-27)
Cf. Acts 7.42-43
10. Complacency condemned (6.1-6)
This section begins with the words, “Woe to them that are *at ease* in Zion. “ Israel had come to a point of notable affluence (vv 4-6) , and had set God aside. Israel was enjoying the good life, but God said, “Woe to them . . .”
11. Devastation prophesied (6.7-14)
The devastation here foretold, it is said, would be a direct consequence of the complacency denounced in vv 1-6. Note the connective *therefore* in v 7. The certainty of the destruction is established in v 8: “The LORD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts. . . .” (cf. 4.2; Heb 6.13). And, indeed, the prophecy would be fulfilled in the Assyrian captivity in just one generation!

IV. Three Visions of Judgment (7.1-9)

A. The grasshoppers (vv 1-3)

The LORD revealed to Amos a vision of judgment—of grasshoppers devouring the grass of the land. Seeing the devastation, Amos interceded for Israel and God deferred this severe form of judgment.

B. The fire (vv 4-6)

The LORD revealed to Amos a second vision of judgment—consuming fire. Amos again interceded for the nation and God repented of that form of judgment.

C. The plumbline (vv 7-9)

The LORD revealed to Amos a third vision of judgment—a plumbline. This judgment, He said, would not be deferred. And, as a human plumbline would reveal structural inaccuracy and weakness, so God’s plumbline would make evident moral inaccuracy and weakness. The LORD stated that His judgment would have two primary targets: the idolatrous religious system of Israel, and the corrupt political leader—Jeroboam (cf 2 K 14.23-24).

V. Resistance to Amos' Prophetic Ministry (7.10-17)

A. Amaziah's attack (vv 10-13)

1. Accusation (vv 10-11)
Amaziah, the priest of an ungodly system of idolatry at Beth-el, tried to influence Jeroboam II. He accused Amos of prophesying the death of Jeroboam and the captivity of the nation. Both of these accusations were accurate: Amos had foretold both events by the word of Jehovah (3.11-12; 4.2-3; 7.9).
2. Confrontation (vv 12-13)
Amaziah proceeded to threaten the prophet, and to urge him to move back to Judah to prophesy there.

B. Amos' response (vv 14-17)

1. Humble circumstances (v 14)
Amos described himself as a herdman and gatherer of sycamore fruit. He clearly stated that assuming the office of a prophet was not even in his wildest dreams.
2. Holy calling (v 15)
Amos testified that, as he had been about his duties, God had commissioned him to prophesy to Israel.
3. Horrible condemnation (v 16-17)
Amos prophesied that, because of his resistance to Jehovah's word, Amaziah would see his wife become a prostitute, his children killed by the sword, his land taken from him, and his nation taken into captivity.

VI. A Fourth Vision of Judgment (8.1-9.10)

A. The vision: A basket of summer fruit (8.1-3)

In these verses Jehovah gave Amos a final vision of the judgment which was about to be executed on Israel. The symbolism of the summer fruit is apparently the idea of a harvest, i.e., a reaping of deeds (seeds) sown. A basic interpretation of the vision is given in vv 2-3. God would no longer defer His judgment on Israel, but would turn Israel's songs into howlings by bringing great destruction upon the nation.

B. The explanation (8.4-9.10)

It is apparent that Amos' prophecy was not given as a call to repentance, but rather as a sentence of judgment. The judgment pronounced here, especially as found in these last two chapters, does not seem to be avoidable.

Jehovah begins His explanation of the vision by rehearsing Israel's sins—essentially materialism and greed (8.4-6). He swears that their works will not be forgotten (8.7). He promises to bring all Israel to mourning (8.10). He looks ahead to the day when He will no more speak to the nation, and characterizes this time as one of hunger and thirst for “hearing the words of the LORD” (8.11).

The LORD promises to execute judgment on all (9.1-4), and yet His mercy and faithfulness are not invisible, for He declares that, though He will judge Israel fiercely, yet He will not “utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD” (9.8). And so the prophecy concludes with anticipation of restoration (9.11-15).

VII. A Glimpse of Restoration (9.11-15)

The final five verses contain what is absent from the rest of the book: *hope*. Here we find hope of rebuilding (v 11). Here we find hope of dominating (v 12). Here we find hope of abounding (v 13). Here we find hope of reinhabiting (v 14). And, finally, here we find hope of remaining (v 15). Israel's only hope lay in the mercy of the God against Whom she had sinned. Praise God for His mercy in spite of our sin!