

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #8: The Minor Prophets
Session #7: Amos, Chapters 1-2
Tuesday, February 14, 2017

Introduction to Amos

- Amos (אֲמוֹס) means “supported (by God)” The root *‘amas* (אָמַץ), which means ‘to support or carry a load.’
- A compilation of sayings attributed to the prophet Amos, who was active in the first half of the 8th Century BCE (760-753 BCE), during the peaceful reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel (788-747) and Uzziah of Judah (785-733).
- Amos was probably a contemporary of Hosea. In some biblical manuscripts, including the Septuagint, Amos follows directly after Hosea. However, in the Masoretic Text and in English translations, Amos is linked to the book of Joel that precedes it because of identical phrases (Joel 3:16a & Amos 1:2a) and to Obadiah which follows it because both refer to Edom (Amos 9:12 & Obadiah v. 1)

Summary

Amos is a shepherd and a fruit picker from the Judean village of Tekoa when God calls him, even though he lacks an education or a priestly background. Amos' mission is directed to his neighbor to the north, Israel. His messages of impending doom and captivity for the nation because of her sins are largely unpopular and unheeded, however, because not since the days of Solomon have times been so good in Israel. Amos' ministry takes place while Jeroboam II reigns over Israel, and Uzziah reigns over Judah.

Amos can see that beneath Israel's external prosperity and power, internally the nation is corrupt to the core. The sins for which Amos chastens the people are extensive: neglect of God's Word, idolatry, pagan worship, greed, corrupted leadership and oppression of the poor. Amos begins by pronouncing a judgment upon all the surrounding nations, then upon his own nation of Judah, and finally the harshest judgment is given to Israel. Judah and Israel's transgressions differ from those of the other nations, because of their covenant relationship with God. His visions from God reveal the same emphatic message: judgment is near. The book ends with God's promise to Amos of future restoration of the remnant.

Outline of Amos

- A. Superscription (1:1)
- B. A speech against the nations & peoples (1:2 – 2:16)
 - 1. Damascus (1:3-5)
 - 2. Gaza and Ashdod (Philistia) (1:6-8)
 - 3. Tyre (1:9-10)
 - 4. Edom (1:11-12)
 - 5. Ammon (1:13-15)
 - 6. Moab (2:1-3)
 - 7. Judah (2:4-5)
 - 8. Israel (2:6-16)
- C. Judgment speeches against Israel (Chapters 3-6)
- D. Amos' visions (Chapters 7-9)

Notes for Chapters 1-2

A. Superscription (1:1)

- Tekoa was a town in Judah, approximately 10 miles south of Jerusalem.
- “He saw” – visions were common among prophets from Judah.
- The earthquake is mentioned in Zechariah 14:5. Some archeologists and geologists have surmised that there was a large earthquake of approx. Magnitude 8 sometime in the mid-8th Century BC (ca. 750), the epicenter of which was north of Jerusalem, somewhere in Lebanon.

B. A speech against nations & peoples

1. Damascus

- Capital of Syria (Aram)
- Gilead was Israelite territory in northern Transjordan, vulnerable to Syrian aggression.
- Hazael & Ben-hadad II were Syrian rulers (2 Kings 13:3)
- Valley of Aven = Beqa region of Lebanon
- Beth-edon was a city-state on the Euphrates River.

2. Philistia (Ashdod & Gaza)

- Three of the five major cities of Philistia (Ashdod, Ashkelon, & Ekron) are here condemned for their slave traffic with Edom (2 Chronicles 21:16-17; Zephaniah 2:4-7)

3. Tyre (1:9-10)

- A Phoenician seaport north of Israel

4. Edom (1:11-12)

- A constant rival of Judah, especially in the exilic and postexilic periods (Psalm 137:7; Obadiah).
- It is said that Esau was the father of Edom, and that there was an ongoing rivalry between Edom & Israel (Judah)

5. Ammon (1:13-15)

- Condemned for atrocities against Israel.
- Rabbah = modern-day Amman

6. Moab (2:1-3)

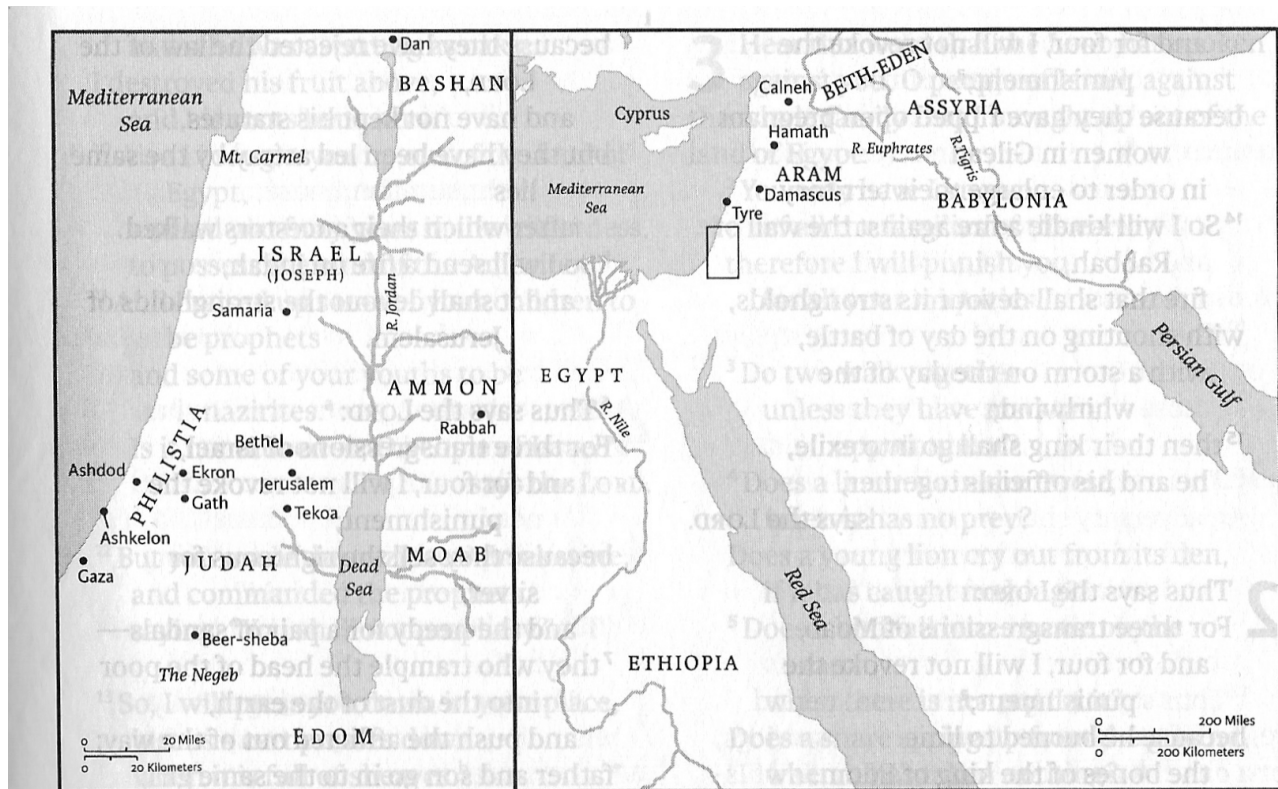
- Israel's neighbor and rival.
- Denounced for desecrating a corpse by disinterring and incineration.

7. Judah (2:4-5)

- Amos' criticism now turns to transgressions against God. All nation must stand accountable before God.
- This section may have been a literary insertion. Possible Deuteronomistic source (meaning focused on legalities).

8. Israel (2:6-16)

- Harshest criticism is directed at Israel, who is in a covenant relationship with God.
- They are due for judgment because of oppression of the poor and immorality.
- Nazirites = consecrated individuals who undertook vows, including abstinence from wine (Numbers 6:2; Judges 13:5)



Chs 1–2: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.

Resources

Notes & map from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), 2010

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

Notes from The CEB Women's Bible, 2016

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007)

“Book of Amos,” <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Amos.html>

“The Scientific and Scriptural Impact of Amos' Earthquake,” <http://www.icr.org/article/scientific-scriptural-impact-amos-earthquake/>