

Yahweh roars! Listen to Him!**Read Amos, chapters 1 & 2****I / INTRODUCTION**

We are going to conduct a brief survey through the **Old Testament Book of Amos**. Amos is one of what we call '*minor prophets*.' There are twelve of them altogether. You will find them at the end of the Old Testament beginning with Hosea and concluding with Malachi. We call them '*minor*' prophets, not because they are less important than the '*major*' prophets, but rather because they are shorter, briefer. But each of these twelve '**minor**' prophets was a very '*major*' voice and influence during the times they prophesied – or declared Yahweh's '*major*' messages to His intended recipients.

II / CHAPTER 1.1 / WHO IS AMOS?

1. **Amos was not called by Yahweh to be a prophet as the primary vocation of his life.** He tells us that himself in **chapter 7.14-15**. By occupation, he was a sheep-breeder/rancher/wool merchant. The word used here in verse 1 for '*shepherd*' is not the common word for tending one's personal flock. It is used only one other time in the OT in **2 Kings 3.4** and refers to a sheep-breeder/rancher who owns and runs a substantial business. Most likely the '**dresser of sycamore figs**' [**ch 7.14-15**] was an auxiliary business he had to raise food for his flocks. He was faithfully working his business and livelihood when Yahweh called him to deliver His messages to the northern kingdom Israel. We might even say he was an 'unlikely prophet' and a surprising choice for Yahweh's messages ... even a 'one-hit wonder' of a prophet. *Just be faithful doing what God gives you to do – and when He wants you to do something else, He'll let you know and lead you into it.*
2. **He came from Tekoa, which is in the northern part of the southern kingdom Judah.** Tekoa was about 10-11 miles south of Jerusalem and 5 miles south of Bethlehem. But Yahweh was going to send him north across the border between the two divided kingdoms to deliver His messages '**concerning Israel.**' There had been intense rivalries between these two divided kingdoms ever since they split from one another. A lot of bad feelings for one another and even wars had been fought across that border. But Amos faithfully obeyed and went ... disregarding the consequences.
3. He delivered his messages to Israel in **Bethel / ch 7.10-12**. Bethel was only about five miles north of the dividing boundary between Judah and Israel ... and it was a center of their idolatrous worship. Jeroboam I had erected one of his two 'golden calves' in **Bethel / 1 Kings 12.25-33**.
4. Amos conducted his brief prophetic ministry '**in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel.**' If you want to find out what was going on in each of these two kingdoms at that time, you can find **Uzziah's** [also called Azariah] **record in 2 Kings 15.1-7 & 2 Chronicles 26. Jeroboam II's reign is described in 2 Kings 14.23-29.**
5. His brief prophetic ministry makes him a contemporary of: Isaiah, Hosea, Jonah, and Micah / **Isaiah 1.1; Hosea 1.1; 2 Kings 14.25; Micah 1.1.**
6. If you look at the dates of the reigns of these two kings, it will become apparent that **this period of time is only 30 or so years immediately before the northern kingdom Israel was invaded by the Assyrians and carried off in exile to Assyria [722 BC]. Amos prophesied probably 760-750 BC.**
7. However, it will help you to understand the significances of his messages if you'll keep in mind that in both of these kingdoms, they were experiencing one of the most prosperous periods they had enjoyed since the days of King Solomon. This was a 'golden age' for both kingdoms. Let's just summarize that period of time as:
 - a. *a time of national disunity and rivalry* [if you want to get a feel for the bad blood between these two kingdoms, read **2 Chronicles 25.14-28** ... this event went down between the fathers of these two current kings ... about 20 years before the 'southerner' Amos delivered his messages to the 'northerners' in Israel...]
 - b. *a time of military strength and superiority* [leading to their pride & downfall / **ch 2.14-16**]

- c. *a time of economic prosperity* [though much of it was ill-gotten through greed, abuses of power, injustices toward the weak and the poor, and oppression of their neighbors and kinspeople – this is one of the MAJOR themes of Yahweh’s messages through Amos]
 - d. *a time of religious activity* [though it was a mixed-gods kind of worship and practiced in hypocrisy and superficiality...as we shall see]
8. Amos also makes it a point to date his ministry and messages ‘**two years before the earthquake.**’ While the event of this earthquake is not described elsewhere, it is mentioned again in **Zechariah 14.5**. Both of these mentions are made to make it clear that Yahweh sent that earthquake as another strong sign to try to get their attention that His judgment was about to fall on them. But, they didn’t pay any mind to either His messages through Amos or the earthquake.

III / WHERE WE’RE GOING OVER THE NEXT FOUR LESSONS...

1. **I want to at least read all of Amos together with you over the next four lessons.** I want us to read it like I hope you will continue to read it at home. If I just try to pick out four texts from sections of Amos, you won’t get the feel for the connection and flow of the whole book.
2. So I’m going to divide up the nine chapters of Amos into four lessons and title each lesson after a common theme in each section:
 - a. **chapters 1 & 2: Yahweh roars! Listen to Him!** From **ch 1.2** [also **ch 3.4, 8**] Yahweh will ‘roar’ with eight specific judgments against eight kingdoms/nations.
 - b. **chapters 3-5: Yahweh calls! Return to Him!** see the themes of ‘yet you did not return to Me’ in **ch 4.6, 8, 9, 10, 11** and ‘Seek Me and live’ in **ch 5.4, 6, 14**.
 - c. **chapters 6 & 7: Yahweh shows! Plead with Him!** From ‘**This is what the Lord GOD showed me...**’ in **ch 7.1, 4, 7; 8.1** and also **9.1**.
 - d. **chapters 8 & 9: Yahweh restores! Hope in Him!** From **9.11-15**.
3. Obviously, we won’t be getting into a lot of details in these Lesson Notes or even in our class time together ... but I do want to outline the lessons for you to have ... and we’ll try to give as many explanatory comments as we can while we read Amos together to give you the gist of understanding Yahweh’s powerful messages through His prophet Amos.
4. His over-arching themes throughout all his messages are:
 - a. [1] Yahweh is sovereign LORD over all nations and their peoples and will call them all into account to Himself;
 - b. [2] Yahweh commands and deserves our whole-hearted devotion and obedience to Him;
 - c. [3] Our worship of God must be sincere, pure, spiritually authentic, and justly applied;
 - d. [4] We must faithfully live out and consistently act out our faith in God through Scriptural social concerns, action, and justice: **“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” / ch 5.24 / see also ch 5.7, 15 & 6.12**
5. *“Amos condemned Israel for an inability ‘to do right’ (3.10). The prophet affirmed the ‘internal’ aspects of covenant relationship with Yahweh, including loving God with a whole heart and obeying His statutes. He also clearly understood the ethical implications of covenant relationship with Yahweh for individual and corporate behavior. His impassioned pleas for the socially disadvantaged (i.e., the poor, needy, and afflicted; cf. 2.6-7; 4.1; 5.11-12; 8.4, 6) and his denouncement of their affluent oppressors (i.e., rich women, dishonest merchants, corrupt rulers, opportunistic lawyers and judges, and false priests; cf. 4.1; 6.1, 4; 7.8-9) have earned him a reputation as God’s spokesman for social justice (cf. 5.7, 15, 24; 6.12).”* Andrew Hill/ John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*
6. **By the way, about Amos’s grasp of literature, vocabulary, and literary style ...** yes, Amos was a rural farmer and sheep-breeder as his rural allusions reveal [**ch 3.3-8, 12**], but he is no uneducated bumpkin. Here’s what some scholars have said about Amos’s writing: *“Amos makes use of a wide range of literary devices in presenting his oracles: metaphors, simile, epithets, proverbs, short narratives, sarcasm, direct vituperation, vision, taunt, dialogue, irony, satire, parody – a virtual*

anthology of prophetic forms” / Leland Ryken ... and “*He is the author of the purest and most classical Hebrew in the Old Testament*” / George L. Robinson.

IV / chapters 1 & 2 / LET’S OUTLINE AMOS’S MESSAGES IN THIS FIRST SECTION OF HIS PROPHETIC WARNINGS TO ISRAEL ... THE JUDGE & THE JUDGED

1. **“Yahweh roars! Listen to Him!”** This theme is announced in **ch 1.2 / And he [Amos] said: “Yahweh roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem...”** Yahweh is compared to a lion – the indisputable king of beasts [see also **3.4, 8, 12; 5.19**]. There are numerous references in the OT histories of lions being in their regions and were a constant threat to their populations, flocks, herds, and livestock. Since Amos was a breeder of flocks and herds, he would have had first-hand experience with their ravenous ways – especially the terrifying, paralyzing power of a lion’s roar.
2. Yahweh is going to **‘roar’** against the sins of *eight specific kingdoms/nations* ... we will take them in order as they come.
3. **Eight indictments** / think of these next eight sets of charges as Yahweh’s righteous indictments against these kingdoms. Yahweh will preside as both the sovereign Judge and the Prosecutor.
4. Each specific bill of indictment or set of charges will follow the same pattern: [1] **Verdict: “I will not revoke the punishment”**; [2] **Evidences [nowadays, we say ‘I have the receipts’]: “because...”**; [3] **Sentence: “So I will...”**
5. There is a common formula that Yahweh **‘roars’** to announce each kingdom’s sins: **“for three transgressions...and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because...”** ... and then Yahweh will proceed to enumerate the specific sins of each neighboring kingdom that He condemns – and for which He would judge them ... and what He will do to judge them.
 - a. the numbers of these transgressions are not specific – there were certainly more than three or even four ... nor are they random – Yahweh is not just throwing out numbers
 - b. but they do convey the message that Yahweh had recorded all their transgressions and would call them into account for every one
 - c. also...if you add **3+4=7**...and 7 is the number of completion or fullness. Yahweh is testifying that His **‘because’** of their judgments are both verifiable and more than sufficient evidences for His judgments / **see, for example, “Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel? [2.11]**
6. Yahweh is also testifying to His patience and longsuffering toward every kingdom before He sends His judgments on them / **compare Romans 2.5 & 11.22.**
7. **All of these kingdoms were neighbors of Israel** ... and each kingdom had long histories of animosities, warfare, atrocities, and even oppressions against Israel ... and also toward their own peoples. *God cares how we treat our neighbors and each other and will call us into account for every transgression, not only against Him, but also toward others. Every kingdom, every nation is under God’s indisputable sovereignty, and He will judge every nation for their injustices and oppressive treatments of all other peoples.*
8. So what Yahweh will do with these pronouncements of judgments is throw out a web [or a noose, if you please] and begin to draw all the surrounding nations into His court of judgment and pass His sentence of **‘punishment’** on each one – **until He calls in Judah in His 7th judgment – and then finally begins to pronounce judgment on Israel themselves in His 8th judgment.**
9. ALSO [and please note this very carefully], I know that often when we read the OT prophets, it is all so ‘foreign’ to us – all the names, places, events, histories, etc – we can’t make heads or tails or sense of it. It is all kinda like ‘prophetic gibberish’ to us ... like some kind of cryptic, secret code or something. We don’t ‘get it.’ But, believe me, those who heard these words from Yahweh and His prophets understood them very well. They ‘got it.’
10. If there was some way to transport Amos to our 2022 world [“Beam him in, Scotty”], and transpose and translate his messages into the events we are experiencing in our culture, society, nation, and international affairs, his messages would be just as crystal clear to us as they were to them.

V / HERE ARE THE EIGHT JUDGMENTS: THE JUDGE & THE JUDGED...**[1] ch 1.3-5 / DAMASCUS [or Syria/Aram] / Treating people as if they have no worth...**

1. Damascus was the capitol of the bordering kingdom of Syria [or Aram]. They were situated to the NE of Israel.
2. Their transgression was **“because they have threshed Gilead with the threshing sledges of iron.”** Gilead was the Israel territory east of the Jordan River just to Aram’s south where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settled when they entered the Promised Land.
3. Aram [or Syria] had been Israel’s oppressors for nearly 100 years at the time of Amos’s prophecy.
4. These **‘threshing sledges of iron’** were instruments they would use during their grain harvests. Oxen would pull the wooden sledges [or sleds] over the grain to break the husks loose from the kernels and also to chop up the straw stalks with iron spikes that would drag across the grain.
5. But Aram is said to have **threshed Gilead** with these sledges of iron, either by their constant warfare or maybe even by dragging these threshing sledges over the captives and prisoners of war they had taken. Either way, it was an act of atrocity with no regard for the worth or value of a human being.
6. *“War or no war, Hazeel had no liberty to treat people as if they were things. It is the first absolute principle for which Amos campaigns: people are not things ... ‘Threshing’ is what a man does to a thing, a grain crop, in order to extract profit from it. This is what Hazeel did in Gilead. He treated people as things. But found no sympathy, allowance, or forgiveness in Heaven.”* / J. A. Motyer
7. Yahweh sentences them to be devoured by fire [just like you would burn the left-over chaff], and they will be taken off into captivity themselves.
 - a. NOTE: in every one of these first seven of eight judgments Yahweh pronounces, **“I will send a fire”** is included in the destructions that will come upon them. Watch for it...
 - b. Burning the city down was not only one of the most common and convenient ways to wreak destruction on those who were conquered – but it is surely a precursor to the final judgment all evildoers and unbelievers will suffer in Hell ... the lake of fire / **Revelation 19.20; 20.10, 14-15; 21.8.** ‘Fire’ is mentioned nine times in Amos / **also ch 5.6 & 7.4**
8. That’s why we emphasize in our treatments of all people that they are ‘image-bearers’ of God’s image. People have worth because of God’s image they bear—and God will judge every person or people who treat human ‘image-bearers’ as merely a thing—as if they have no worth. / **see James 3.9**

[2] ch 1.6-8 / GAZA [or Philistia/Philistines] / Human trafficking ... using people for profit...

1. Gaza was one of the principal cities of Philistia or Philistines, along with Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, [and Gath]. All are named in this indictment. They were situated to the SW of Israel.
2. They were one of the longest-running and best-known oppressors of Israel.
3. Their transgression was **“because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.”**
4. They were like the Syrians – they treated people as mere things – except that their transgression was compounded by their human trafficking of the people they took captive. They would take the captives and sell them as slaves to other nations – in this case, **“to deliver them up to Edom.”**
5. Yahweh sentences them also to be burned up by fire and utter destruction, **“and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish.”**
6. This same sin of human trafficking is a prevalent and pervasive perversion of human beings in our own world ... whether it is for financial profit or sexual pleasure. / **see Revelation 18.13**

[3] ch 1.9-10 / TYRE [or Phoenicia] / Breaking one’s word to a brother to use him for a profit...

1. Tyre was a prominent city in Phoenicia and was situated on the Mediterranean coast to the NW of Israel because they were the professional sea-going peoples and merchants of that day.
2. Their transgression was **“because they delivered up a whole people to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.”**

3. Apparently, they had made an alliance [**‘the covenant of brotherhood’**] with another kingdom [which was well-known at the time], but when an opportunity arose, they betrayed that covenant for a profit. They not only broke their word, but they did so out of greed. They gained the trust of a neighboring kingdom, and then betrayed and sold them as slaves. *“In addition, as appalling as that sin was [slave trading/human trafficking], their wickedness went deeper because the very people they sold were their friends. Their debauchery was compounded by their treachery.” / T. J. Betts*
4. Again, as with the Philistines, in this case also, **“they delivered up a whole people to Edom...”** This is now the second time Edom is said to be complicit in and benefactors of another kingdom’s transgression. *“It is possible they [Phoenicia] were in collusion with Gaza and Edom’s slave trade.” [T. J. Betts].* Edom’s turn is coming...wait for it...
5. What Yahweh is demonstrating here in all these indictments is, not just His displeasure with all these kingdoms’ transgressions ... *but He is also demonstrating His own character. In this case, Yahweh is a God truth and faithfulness, and He commands the same from all His ‘image-bearer’ creatures.*
6. Lying, breaking faith, renegeing on your word of promise, and betrayal of trust is a transgression for which Yahweh says, **“I will not revoke the punishment.” “...and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.” / Revelation 21.8**

[4] ch 1.11-12 / EDOM [or Edomites] / Unrestrained hatred and spite toward a brother...

1. Edom was situated SW of Israel around the southern tip of the Dead Sea.
2. The Edomites were actually blood brothers with the Israelites. They were the descendants of Esau, Jacob’s older brother and Isaac’s other son. Yahweh had forbidden the Israelites to despise the Edomites because of this blood relationship: **“You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.” / Deuteronomy 23.7**
3. Their transgression was **“because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.”**
4. There was a constant family feud and warfare going on between the Israelites and the Edomites. But there may have been a specific, more recent event at that time when the Edomites committed some kind of unrestrained atrocity against Israel – in spite of the history and legacy of their brotherhood. They abandoned any expression of human sympathy or pity and perpetuated their hatred and spite with violence when they had the opportunity.
5. Because of this transgression ... along with all the other transgressions with Philistia and Tyre in which they were complicit ... Yahweh decrees **“I will not revoke the punishment”** they deserve.

[5] ch 1.13-15 / AMMONITES [or Ammon] / Ambition and uncontrolled violence against the helpless...

1. Ammon was situated due E of Israel and S of Aram [Syria].
2. The Ammonites also were distant relatives of the Israelites. They were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew, by a drunken, incestuous liaison between Lot and his younger daughter / **Genesis 19.30-38.** [The other one, by the way, was Moab...coming up next...]
3. Their transgression was **“because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.”**
4. This was just another inhumane and violent atrocity [war-crime] often committed against conquered peoples, but Ammon committed it specifically against the Israelites who lived in Gilead, bordering them on the west solely **“that they might enlarge their border”** and expand their territory.
5. Yahweh pronounces **“I will not revoke the punishment.”**

[6] ch 2.1-3 / MOAB [or Moabites] / Showing contempt for others...

1. Moab also was situated SE of Israel, sandwiched in between Edom to the S and Ammon to the N.
2. Moab was a brother to Ammon from another incestuous liaison between Lot and his older daughter.

3. Their transgression was **“because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom,”** in other words, they didn’t just conquer and subjugate the Edomites, but they intentionally desecrated his corpse by burning it, and then used his ashes to make common whitewash – utter contempt.
4. For this transgression, Yahweh says, **“I will not revoke the punishment.”**

[7] ch 2.4-5 / JUDAH / Unfaithfulness to God and His Word...

1. Now, Amos introduces Judah into Yahweh’s denunciations. Judah is Israel’s estranged brother kingdom to the S.
2. Their transgression is **“because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.”**
3. [Since we have just concluded an extensive study of Judah’s transgressions and eventual destruction, I will refer you to our lessons from 1 & 2 Kings...especially this one:
<https://daveparksblog.com/2022/08/27/the-fall-of-the-southern-kingdom-judah-aka-treacherous-sister-jeremiah-3-6-11/>]

[8] ch 2.6-16 / ISRAEL / NUMEROUS BREACHES OF COVENANT & SOCIAL INJUSTICES

1. Now, keep in mind that Amos is delivering these denunciations and pronouncements of Yahweh’s judgments on Israel’s neighboring kingdoms in Bethel, one of the most prominent centers of Israel’s idolatrous religious activity [see ch 7.10-17]. As Amos throws out the web of Yahweh’s **“I will not revoke the punishment”** sentences to their neighboring kingdoms, they begin to listen with increasing interest, and they like it. Then Amos indicts even Judah, and the cheers of *“Right on! Yes! Go get ‘em! Bring it on!”* begin to erupt... [This is called *“rhetoric of entrapment”* or ‘gotcha’]
2. They didn’t suspect that Israel would next up in the queue of Yahweh’s docket – but here it comes! **“For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because....”**
3. Since these charges and indictments will be the subjects of Amos’s successive messages, and we will develop them in the following lessons, we will just summarize the charges here:
 - a. **vv 6-8** / They abused their power and perpetrated egregious injustices – financially, sexually, legally – to exploit the weak and helpless for their personal profit and pleasure ... and in so doing, they actually chose to follow in the ways of those who formerly had oppressed them
 - b. **vv 9-11** / They failed to recognize their debts of gratitude they owed Yahweh for all of His past covenant mercies, deliverances, prosperity, and providences ... He had made them all they were and given them all they had: **“yet it was I...”** / v 9; **“Also it was I...”** / v 10; **“And I...”** / v 11. They deliberately abandoned Yahweh and chose to worship other gods
 - c. **v 12** / They persecuted those who were committed to faithfully serve Yahweh [*Nazirites*] and oppressed those who faithfully delivered Yahweh’s Word and warnings against their transgressions [*prophets*]. ***Rebels against God will oppose [cancel] those who live for God.***
4. So Yahweh passes His righteous and just sentence on them:
 - a. **v 13** / **Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down...** *Just like a wagon or cart breaks down when it is overloaded beyond its capacity, so they are filling up and overloading the ‘cart’ of their guilt with their transgressions and injustices until it breaks down under the weight of Yahweh’s punishment.*
 - b. **vv 14-16** / **Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; ¹⁵ he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; ¹⁶ and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,** declares the LORD. *All of their superior military strength and prowess in which they trusted – all of it will fail in the day of Yahweh’s punishment. They are going down...*

“LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVER-FLOWING STREAM” / ch 5.24