

# Amos

## Author

Amos was not a priest like the prophets Samuel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Nor was he a king or a high political leader like the prophets David, Joseph and Daniel. Amos was instead one of the shepherders from the small Judean town of Tekoa. Amos also tended sycamore trees (see Amos 7:14). Like Elisha who was a farmer when God called him to be a prophet, Amos was an ordinary worker.

God called Amos to go to the northern kingdom of Israel to be one of His prophets and spokesmen. Amos 7:14-15 records what Amos said to Amaziah, the compromising Israelite priest of the city of Bethel: *“Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: ‘I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, “Go, prophesy to My people Israel.””*

Amaziah was the priest who presided over the foolish religion of worshipping both the Lord and the golden calf at Bethel.

## Date

The Book of Amos was written approximately between 767 to 753 B.C. Amos 1:1 refers to the fact that King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel were ruling in the two separate kingdoms when God called Amos as one of His prophets.

## Background

Amos spoke God’s messages to the northern tribes of Israel for two years before they suffered an earthquake (see Amos 1:1) and after these northern tribes had experienced an expansion of their territory and a long period of God prospering them. God gave them these later blessings despite their great sin, mixing of pagan idolatry with the worship of God and following of wicked pagan ethical standards.

God prospered them because He felt great compassion for them (see 2 Kings 14:26-27). He told the prophet Jonah to prophesy this expansion of territory under King Jeroboam II (see 2 Kings 14:25).

## Amos’s message to surrounding cities, nations and Israel

God told Amos to declare that God was going to punish the surrounding pagan cities and nations because of their sins (see Amos 1:3-2:3). God said He would punish Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. Here again we see that God held pagan nations in ancient times accountable for their actions.

Then God told him to predict that God would punish the nations of Judah and Israel (see Amos 2:4-16). By mentioning the predicted punishment of Israel together with prophesied punishments on pagan nations, Amos was emphasising that God did not ignore the sins of the Israelites and only punish pagans. In Amos 3:2, God stressed that because He had a special relationship with the descendants of Jacob, He would punish them because of their great wickedness and moral corruption: ***“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”***

This verse reveals that having a special relationship to God is no excuse for deliberating continually sinning. Amos risked death because he also prophesied that King Jeroboam II would die by the sword (see Amos 7:11).

One common modern theory is the idea that because the New Covenant has replaced the Old Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:1-10:18), God no longer holds nations accountable for their sins and does not punish them here on Earth. But this is false because prior to the commencement of the New Covenant, pagan nations were not under the Mosaic or Old Covenant. Despite this, God still held them accountable and punished them when their sins reached a certain level. Only God knows what level this is.

Similarly today, only those with saving faith in Jesus Christ in each nation are under the New Covenant. Every or almost every nation on Earth has more unbelievers than believers. God holds all of these unbelievers in these nations collectively responsible for their sins and sometimes punishes them here on Earth when their sins reach a particular level.

Amos told the people of the northern tribes of Israel that God had over previous centuries punished them with drought, famine and hunger, war and disaster (see Amos 4:6-11). But He also warned that because these punishments did not result in them returning from their known sins to Him, He would in future punish their nation even worse. He said that they would suffer worse military defeats, destruction and exile to another country (see Amos 2:14-16, 3:11, 3:14-15, 4:2-3, 5:3, 5:27, 6:7, 6:11, 6:14, 7:9, 7:11, 7:17, 8:3, 9:1, 9:4 and 9:8-10).

God said that the Israelites had ignored His previous lesser punishments which He had sent as warnings.

## **The Israelites had a false sense of security**

Amos 9:10 reveals the Israelites were deceived into thinking that God and/or their gods would never permit a calamity to come on their nation: ***“All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake us nor confront us.’”***

## **Amos’ message for Judah**

Amos told his own nation of Judah that God would punish them ***“Because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments...”*** (see Amos 2:4).

## **Reasons for God’s punishment of Israel**

The prophet Amos told the Israelites that God was going to punish them severely because:

1. they were living as compromising hypocrites by trying to worship the Lord (see Amos 4:4-5 and 5:21-24), while at the same time worshipping the idols at Bethel and Gilgal (see Amos 3:14, 4:4 and 5:5).
2. violence and robbery was common in their palaces (see Amos 3:10).
3. many Israelites cheated customers with dishonest weights and measures (see Amos 8:5).
4. they were practicing injustice and not living right in God's eyes (see Amos 5:5, 5:10-12). In Amos 6:12, God said: ***“Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.”***
5. they hated any who spoke with integrity. Amos 5:10 records: ***“They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.”***
6. they would not listen to God's prophets (see Amos 2:11-12).
7. they encouraged Nazirites to break the vows of abstinence (see Amos 2:11-12). God called Nazirites not to drink wine (see Numbers 6: 1-21). Samson was an earlier Nazirite (see Judges 13:2-5).
8. their wealthy women were drunks who oppressed the poor and the needy (see Amos 4:1).
9. they practiced sexual immorality (see Amos 2:7).
10. they had great pride in their own abilities without God (see Amos 6:8 and 13).
11. they refused to turn from their sins back to Him. In Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10 and 11, God five times told the Israelites through Amos ***“Yet you have not returned to Me.”*** The Israelites were offering burnt, peace and grain offerings to God, were having feast days, were singing to God and playing their musical instruments to worship Him. But because they were living evil lives and would not turn from their sins, God hated all their above religious activities (see Amos 4:4-4, 5:21-24 and 8:10). Amos 5:14-15 reveals that God was willing to continue to be gracious to the Israelites only if they fulfilled the following conditions: ***“Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”***

## **Amos' final prophecies**

In Amos 9:11-15, God declared that in future He would:

1. raise up a descendant of David.
2. have Gentiles or non-Israelites called by His Name. (At the Church Council of Jerusalem, the Apostle James quoted Amos 9:11-12 as relating to the Church and non-Israelites being saved (see Acts 15:14-17.)
3. restore the nation of Israel.

These are basically restatements of parts of God's promises in the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants.

## **Amos on God's prophets**

Amos 3:7 states: ***“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”***