

Amos

The Twelve Minor Prophets · Biblical Prophets

From Tekoa in Judah, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, Amos ministered as shepherd and gatherer of sycamore fruit before God called him to prophesy against northern Israel during the prosperous but morally corrupt reign of Jeroboam II (c. 760-750 BC). Unlike professional prophets trained in prophetic guilds, Amos declared, 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit: and the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.'

This rustic background, far from disqualifying him, authenticated his message as coming purely from divine commission rather than institutional credentials or inherited office. His prophecies exposed Israel's social injustices during an era of unprecedented prosperity—the wealthy who 'sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes,' oppressed the needy, perverted justice in the gates, and combined luxury with religious formalism.

He pronounced oracles against six surrounding nations—Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab—before focusing judgment on Judah and especially Israel, showing that proximity to God brings greater accountability. Amos's famous declaration 'let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream' established the prophetic principle that God values justice and righteousness over religious ritual.

When confronted by Amaziah the priest of Bethel, who commanded him to flee back to Judah, Amos fearlessly proclaimed Israel's coming exile. His visions—locusts, fire, plumb line, summer fruit, the Lord standing upon the altar—conveyed divine judgment's certainty. Yet even Amos concluded with

restoration promises: the tabernacle of David raised up, Israel replanted in their land never to be uprooted.

Note: Amos's rhetorical style employs numerical parallelism ('For three transgressions...and for four') and rhetorical questions demonstrating cause and effect. His humble occupation as 'gatherer of sycamore fruit' involved piercing the figs to hasten ripening—detailed agricultural knowledge pervading his prophecies through metaphors of plowing, threshing, sifting, and harvest. James's quotation at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:16-17) of Amos's promise concerning David's tabernacle validated Gentile inclusion in God's purposes. Archaeological evidence confirms the eighth century BC prosperity and injustice Amos condemned.

Key Verses

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

Amos 5:14

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Amos 5:21

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Amos 5:24

But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Amos 7:14

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

Amos 9:11

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

