

## **The Visions of Amos the Herdsman Amos 1:1 – 2:16**

### **Introduction**

From the fields of Tekoa, the Lord called a herdsman named Amos. He was not a prophet or the son of a prophet and no one would ever have expected him to be called on to proclaim the Word of the Lord to the Northern Kingdom. He was not considered a shepherd either; he was a herdsman, the lowest rank of those who worked the sheep.

In the fields of Tekoa, Amos saw visions of the future for Israel and the nations that interacted with her. The main purpose of Amos's preaching was to specifically detail the events that must transpire before the day of the Lord's Second Coming. After seeing the visions, Amos traveled to the town of Bethel, where he stood in the streets and proclaimed what he had seen.

The preaching of Amos was interrupted by Amaziah, the priest in Bethel, who told Amos to leave Israel and go to Judah to do his preaching. Amos's response broke from the vision of the future to rebut Amaziah and foretell his coming family troubles. Amos then continued to preach and completed the prophecy concerning Israel's eminent exile. He then shared a prophecy about the Second Coming.

Almost every sentence in the book contains multiple phrases and each phrase refers either to a significant historical or future event in Israel's existence. Each phrase is important and each prophecy must be fulfilled before the Second Coming of the Lord occurs.

### **Before the Earthquake**

**Amos 1:**<sup>1</sup> The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Amos's entire ministry occurred when Uzziah was the king of the South and Jeroboam II was the king of the North two years before the great earthquake. Zechariah also mentions this same earthquake, but he does not give any pertinent information that reveals an exact time.<sup>1</sup> With nothing else to go by, we must be satisfied with just knowing that it occurred sometime during the concurrent reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II which transpired from 801 BC to 778 BC or sometime within that 23 year period.

### **Roar from Zion**

**Amos 1:**<sup>2</sup> He said, "The Lord roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up."

It was time for the words of the Lord to be heard. As King of kings, He roared from the political citadel of Zion and He spoke in a normal voice from within the walls of Jerusalem because He is both Priest and King. As Priest, His voice caused the grassy pastures to

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<sup>1</sup> Zechariah 14:5

grieve; as King His voice caused the mountain range of Carmel to dry up and wither away in fear. These words alone struck fear in Israel's hearts because this mountain range was extremely fruitful.

### **Damascus**

**Amos 1:**<sup>3</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron. <sup>4</sup> "So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael and it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad. <sup>5</sup> "I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden; So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir," Says the Lord.

Damascus has always been the capital of Aram, known as Syra today. The sins of Damascus have been recorded in heaven and they will not be forgiven. Too many sins had transpired for the Lord to relent. Its kings, Hazael and his son Ben-hadad, attacked Israel's northern land, known as Gilead, and ravished it just as this prophecy predicted.<sup>2</sup>

Jeroboam II fought back and captured not only Damascus but also Hamath.<sup>3</sup> He broke through the city bars to capture its inhabitants. Jeroboam II also captured Aven, a small town in a valley near Damascus. <sup>4</sup> Much later, when the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria, the people of Aven, including their king and the people of Beth-eden, were carried off to Kir, a city near the Caspian Sea. This prophecy was fulfilled according to 2 Kings 16:1-9.

### **Gaza**

**Amos 1:**<sup>6</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they deported an entire population to deliver *it* up to Edom. <sup>7</sup> "So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza and it will consume her citadels. <sup>8</sup> "I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines will perish," Says the Lord GOD.

As He had with Damascus, the Lord had His fill of Gaza. This city was and is one of the five major towns of the Philistine/Gaza Strip. The other four cities are Ashdod, Ekron, Askelon and Gath, and all except Gath are mentioned in this warning. Gath is also not mentioned in the parallel prophecy in Zechariah 9-11.

During times of "so called" peace, Gaza captured the Israelites and deported them to the old deserted Edomite territory.<sup>5</sup> Askelon, Ekron and Ashdod participated with Gaza in this sin. The Philistines were enemies of God and He sent Alexander the Great to destroy the people of these cities in 333-332 BC. Only Gath escaped his destruction. The Philistines from Gath intermarried with the Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon and repopulated the towns. Caesar Hadrian mispronounced the name of their tribes and called them Palestinians, a term still used today. This prophecy was fulfilled in 333-332 BC.

### **Tyre**

**Amos 1:**<sup>9</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they delivered up an entire population to Edom and

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 10:32, 13:7, 8:12

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 14:25-28

<sup>4</sup> Jeroboam II was successful in reclaiming the land taken away from Israel chiefly because of the ministry of Jonah who ministered in the capital of Assyria and won them to the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chronicles 21:16

did not remember *the* covenant of brotherhood. <sup>10</sup> "So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels."

The Lord was tired of Tyre as well as Damascus and Gaza because they had participated in the exiling of people to Edom with Gaza. Tyre had forgotten its special relationship between its former kings, David and Solomon. During his reign, Solomon paid the salary of Hiram, the king of Tyre.<sup>6</sup> The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah cover Tyre's destruction.<sup>7</sup> This prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar finally broke through the city walls after a 13 year siege. However, the city was rebuilt, so the Lord sent Alexander the Great to decimate it in 333 BC. His siege took five months.

### Edom

Amos 1:<sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever. <sup>12</sup> "So I will send fire upon Teman and it will consume the citadels of Bozrah."

The Edomites were cousins of the Jews, but they called each other brother in those days. They were descendants of Jacob's twin brother, Esau, through his grandson, Teman. When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, the Edomites joined forces with the Babylonian King.<sup>8</sup> Teman and Bozrah were two chief settlements of the Edomites which were later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. They will be rebuilt and repopulated before the Lord's Second Coming. The destruction described in this passage will occur at the Second Coming.<sup>9</sup>

### Ammon

Amos 1:<sup>13</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead In order to enlarge their borders. <sup>14</sup> "So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah And it will consume her citadels Amid war cries on the day of battle, And a storm on the day of tempest. <sup>15</sup> "Their king will go into exile, He and his princes together," says the Lord.

The Ammonites were a tribe who lived in the area called Gilead which was on the east side of the Jordan. They were barbarians and struck fear in the hearts of the Israelites by inflicting brutal acts on them. Rabbah was its Capital and from there soldiers were sent to do such things as rip open the bellies of pregnant women to convince their husbands to be in servitude to Ammon. Finally, its king and his sons were overtaken by Nebuchadnezzar in 612 BC, fulfilling this prophecy.

### Moab

Amos 2:<sup>1</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. <sup>2</sup> "So I will send fire upon Moab and it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; And Moab will die amid tumult, with war cries and the sound of a trumpet. <sup>3</sup> "I will also cut off the judge from her midst And slay all her princes with him," says the Lord.

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 5:12

<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel 26-28; Zechariah 9-11

<sup>8</sup> Obadiah 1:11-14; Ezekiel 25:12; 35:5; Psalms 137:7

<sup>9</sup> Habakkuk 3:3

Moab lay to the east of the Dead Sea. Second Kings 3:26 tells the story of Edom's joining Judah and Israel to defeat Moab, but they were unsuccessful. The king of Moab took 700 men and searched the city for the king of Edom in order to kill him. Not finding him, the Moab king took the Edomite king's son and offered him as a burnt offering to the Moab god. Nebuchadnezzar overthrew the Moabites and captured the land. Later, during the Persian control, the Moabites recovered but never returned to the pre-Babylonian level. At the Second Coming, their land will be overrun by the Israelites who will gather their wealth and settle in their cities for the 1,000-year-kingdom.

### Judah

Amos 2:<sup>4</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they rejected the law of the Lord And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, Those after which their fathers walked. <sup>5</sup> "So I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem."

From the days of Solomon to the days of Uzziah, Judah was guilty of three sins. One, they rejected the whole law. Two, they did not keep the Lord's statutes. Three, the leaders were liars. Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar's control in 606 BC and he destroyed it and the temple in 586 BC. In 536 BC, Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. For a time Israel repented and served the Lord, but their repentance soon came to an end and they returned to the practice of the three sins that brought Babylon upon them in the first place.

### Israel

Amos 2:<sup>6</sup> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals. <sup>7</sup> "These who pant after the *very* dust of the earth on the head of the helpless also turn aside the way of the humble; and a man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane My holy name. <sup>8</sup> "On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

Israel's crimes against God are summarized in this prophecy.

- Her leaders took bribes for just about anything from the purchase of righteousness to the withholding of a pair of shoes for the needy.
- Her leaders were unmerciful towards the poor and downtrodden, showing neither justice nor mercy.
- Her leaders were extremely harsh toward the weak and afflicted.
- Her leadership performed abominable acts upon women.
- Her leaders took financial advantage of the poor.
- Her leaders taxed the people in the house of God.

These six sins were still being committed in Jesus' day. He came to change the circumstance of those who could not stand up for themselves. He would liberate the poor in spirit with salvation just as He liberated the Israelites from Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land.

### Land of the Amorite

Amos 2:<sup>9</sup> "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, though his height was like the height of cedars and he was strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.<sup>10</sup> "It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and I led you in the wilderness forty years that you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.

The Lord reminds the Israelites of all the great and marvelous things He did for them. The Israelites could not have defeated the Amorites; that was the Lord's doing. The Israelites could not have escaped from Egypt; that was the Lord's doing. The Israelites could not have survived 40 years in the wilderness by themselves; that was the Lord's doing.

### Nazirites and Prophets

Amos 2:<sup>11</sup> "Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets and some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?" declares the Lord. <sup>12</sup> "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'

It was expressly forbidden in the Mosaic Law for a Nazirite to drink wine.<sup>10</sup> Israel's leadership was guilty of forcing Nazirites to break their vows by drinking wine. Prophets were called by the Lord, but Israel's leadership would not listen to their messages, going so far as to kill many of them.

### No Life Saved

Amos 2:<sup>13</sup> "Behold, I am weighted down beneath you as a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves. <sup>14</sup> "Flight will perish from the swift, and the stalwart will not strengthen his power, nor the mighty man save his life. <sup>15</sup> "He who grasps the bow will not stand *his ground*, the swift of foot will not escape, nor will he who rides the horse save his life. <sup>16</sup> "Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day," declares the Lord.

The Lord was burdened by the actions of the Israelites. The leadership of Israel can run but not fast enough. They can make a stand, but they will not be strong enough. They can arm themselves with weapons and ride the fastest steed, but their weapons will be useless and the horses will be too slow. The bravest of their brave will not be brave enough when the Lord brings judgment upon them. Israel's leaders who oppose the Lord will not be able to save their lives. They will perish with two-thirds of all the Israelites at the Lord's Second Coming.

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<sup>10</sup> Numbers 6:1-3