

SCHOOL OF THE WORD
PROPHETS
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Prophets 3

Programme

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| • What's a "prophet"? | Oct 11 |
| • Amos: Justice (i) | Oct 18 |
| • Amos: Justice (ii) | Oct 25 |
| • Who is/are Isaiah? | Nov 8 |
| • Isaiah and justice | Nov 15 |
| • Isaiah and liberation | Nov 22 |
| • Isaiah and hope | Nov 29 |
| • Isaiah: New Testament | Dec 6 |

Sequence

PART 1

- Amos again
- The central oracles
- Amos 4-6

PART 2

- Close reading of 4-6
- Group work

PART 3

- Overview of 7-9
- Judea "edition"
- What is Amos about?
- Can it speak to us today?

A reminder

- **Remember**
 - Prophet = someone called to speak uncomfortable truths.
 - Modern term: whistle-blower?
- **Remember**
 - The writer / the novel / the movie
 - The prophet / the book / the book as received

Amos again

- Usually dated between 760 and 750 BC, after Jeroboam's military successes in Gilead (2 Kgs 14:25; cf. Amos 6:13) and before the rise of Tiglath-pileser III made the Assyrian threat obvious.
- The most important aspect of the historical setting of Amos is an event that occurred after the the book had been formulated: the end of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, for the impending death of Israel is the essential message of the book.

Outline

- I. Amos 1:1–2:16, The Divine Warrior
- II. Amos 3:1–4:13, Israel's Inability to Hear
- III. Amos 5:1–27, The Death of Israel
- IV. Amos 6:1–14, Life as Usual—with Disaster Near
- V. Amos 7:1–17, Visions and a Confrontation.
- VI. Amos 8:1–14, The End Has Come
- VII. Amos 9:1–6, No Escape
- VIII. Amos 9:7–10, Lord of All
- IX. Amos 9:11–15, After the Judgment

So as to enjoy it more

- **Individual units**
 - “Thus says the Lord”
 - Sins (e.g. 2:4–5; 3:10–11; 5:11), exhortations (4:12; 5:4–6, 14–15; 5:21–24), visions (7:1–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4), promises (9:11–15)
 - Fragments of hymns (4:13; 5:8–9; and 9:5–6)
 - Mock invitations to worship (4:5; 5:4–6, 14–15)
 - Fragment of a (mock) funeral song (5:1–2)
- **Larger units**
 - 8 oracles against the nations in 1:3–2:16. Other series appear in 3:3–8; 4:6–12; 7:1–9.
 - 7 disasters to befall the Israelite army in 2:14–16
 - 5 efforts to escape from God in 9:2–4.
- The call to hear is frequent: 3:1, 13; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4
- **Earlier in chapter 3**
 - Exodus and election (of Israel) were recalled.
- **Amos remembers this but takes a different view.**
 - Election = more, not less, responsibility.
 - Theme 1: social injustice
 - Theme 2: condemnation of the cult at Bethel.
 - Theme 3: the “Day of the Lord” (meaning uncertain)

The central oracles

- Working in groups
 - Amos 3:1-12
 - Amos 4:1-5
 - Amos 5:1-6, 14-15
 - Amos 5:18-24
 - Amos 6:1-8

Amos 3:1-12

Amos 3:1 Listen, you Israelites, to this message which the Lord is proclaiming against you! This message is for the entire clan I brought up from the land of Egypt: **2** “I have chosen you alone from all the clans of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”

3 Do two walk together without having met?

4 Does a lion roar in the woods if he has not cornered his prey?
Does a young lion bellow from his den if he has not caught something?

5 Does a bird swoop down into a trap on the ground if there is no bait?
Does a trap spring up from the ground unless it has surely caught something?

6 If an alarm sounds in a city, do people not fear?
If disaster overtakes a city, is the Lord not responsible?

7 Certainly the sovereign Lord does nothing without first revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

8 A lion has roared! Who is not afraid?
The sovereign Lord has spoken! Who can refuse to prophesy?

9 Make this announcement in the fortresses of Ashdod
and in the fortresses in the land of Egypt.

Say this:

“Gather on the hills around Samaria!
Observe the many acts of violence taking place within the city,
the oppressive deeds occurring in it.”

10 “They do not know how to do what is right.” (The Lord is speaking.)
“They store up the spoils of destructive violence in their fortresses.

11 Therefore,” says the sovereign Lord, “an enemy will encircle the land.
He will take away your power;
your fortresses will be looted.”

12 This is what the Lord says:

“Just as a shepherd salvages from the lion’s mouth a couple of leg bones or a piece of an ear,
 so the Israelites who live in Samaria will be salvaged.
 They will be left with just a corner of a bed,
 and a part of a couch.”

Amos 4:1-5

Amos 4:1 Listen to this message, you cows of Bashan who live on Mount Samaria!
 You oppress the poor;
 you crush the needy.
 You say to your husbands,
 “Bring us more to drink!”

2 The sovereign Lord confirms this oath by his own holy character:
 “Certainly the time is approaching
 when you will be carried away in baskets,
 every last one of you in fishermen’s pots.

3 Each of you will go straight through the gaps in the walls;
 you will be thrown out toward Harmon.”

The Lord is speaking!

4 “Go to Bethel and rebel!
 At Gilgal rebel some more!
 Bring your sacrifices in the morning,
 your tithes on the third day!

5 Burn a thank offering of bread made with yeast!
 Make a public display of your voluntary offerings!
 For you love to do this, you Israelites.”
 The sovereign Lord is speaking!

Amos 5:1-6, 14-15

Amos 5:1 Listen to this funeral song I am ready to sing about you, family of Israel:

2 “The virgin Israel has fallen down and will not get up again.
 She is abandoned on her own land
 with no one to help her get up.”

3 The sovereign Lord says this:
 “The city that marches out with a thousand soldiers will have only a hundred left;
 the town that marches out with a hundred soldiers will have only ten left for the
 family of Israel.”

4 The Lord says this to the family of Israel:
 “Seek me so you can live!

5 Do not seek Bethel!
 Do not visit Gilgal!
 Do not journey down to Beer Sheba!
 For the people of Gilgal will certainly be carried into exile;
 and Bethel will become a place where disaster abounds.”

6 Seek the Lord so you can live!
 Otherwise he will break out like fire against Joseph’s family;
 the fire will consume
 and no one will be able to quench it and save Bethel.

Amos 5:14 Seek good and not evil so you can live!
 Then the Lord, the God who commands armies, just might be with you,
 as you claim he is.

15 Hate what is wrong, love what is right!
 Promote justice at the city gate!
 Maybe the Lord, the God who commands armies, will have mercy on those who are
 left from Joseph.

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| Amos 5:18-24 |
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- Amos 5:18** Woe to those who wish for the day of the Lord!
Why do you want the Lord's day of judgment to come?
It will bring darkness, not light.
- 19** Disaster will be inescapable,
as if a man ran from a lion only to meet a bear,
then escaped into a house,
leaned his hand against the wall,
and was bitten by a poisonous snake.
- 20** Don't you realize the Lord's day of judgment will bring darkness, not light—
gloomy blackness, not bright light?
- 21** "I absolutely despise your festivals!
I get no pleasure from your religious assemblies!
- 22** Even if you offer me burnt and grain offerings, I will not be satisfied;
I will not look with favour on your peace offerings of fattened calves.
- 23** Take away from me your noisy songs;
I don't want to hear the music of your stringed instruments.
- 24** Justice must flow like torrents of water,
righteous actions like a stream that never dries up.

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| Amos 6:1-8 |
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- Amos 6:1** Woe to those who live in ease in Zion,
to those who feel secure on Mount Samaria.
They think of themselves as the elite class of the best nation.
The family of Israel looks to them for leadership.
- 2** They say to the people:
"Journey over to Calneh and look at it!
Then go from there to Hamath-Rabbah!
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines!
Are they superior to our two kingdoms?
Is their territory larger than yours?"
- 3** You refuse to believe a day of disaster will come,
but you establish a reign of violence.
- 4** They lie around on beds decorated with ivory,
and sprawl out on their couches.
They eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the middle of the pen.
- 5** They sing to the tune of stringed instruments;
like David they invent musical instruments.
- 6** They drink wine from sacrificial bowls,
and pour the very best oils on themselves.
Yet they are not concerned over the ruin of Joseph.
- 7** Therefore they will now be the first to go into exile,
and the religious banquets where they sprawl on couches will end.
- 8** The sovereign Lord confirms this oath by his very own life.
The Lord, the God who commands armies, is speaking:
"I despise Jacob's arrogance;
I hate their fortresses.
I will hand over to their enemies the city of Samaria and everything in it."

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| Amos 8:1-14 |
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Amos 8:1 The sovereign Lord showed me this: I saw a basket of summer fruit.

Amos 8:2 He said, “What do you see, Amos?” I replied, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the Lord said to me, “The end has come for my people Israel! I will no longer overlook their sins.

3 The women singing in the temple will wail in that day.”

The sovereign Lord is speaking.

“There will be many corpses littered everywhere! Be quiet!”

4 Listen to this, you who trample the needy,
and do away with the destitute in the land.

5 You say,

“When will the new moon festival be over, so we can sell grain?

When will the Sabbath end, so we can open up the grain bins?

We’re eager to sell less for a higher price,
and to cheat the buyer with rigged scales!

6 We’re eager to trade silver for the poor,
a pair of sandals for the needy!

We want to mix in some chaff with the grain!”

7 The Lord confirms this oath by the arrogance of Jacob:

“I swear I will never forget all you have done!

8 Because of this the earth will quake,
and all who live in it will mourn.

The whole earth will rise like the River Nile,

it will surge upward and then grow calm, like the Nile in Egypt.

9 In that day,” says the sovereign Lord, “I will make the sun set at noon,
and make the earth dark in the middle of the day.

10 I will turn your festivals into funerals,
and all your songs into funeral dirges.

I will make everyone wear funeral clothes

and cause every head to be shaved bald.

I will make you mourn as if you had lost your only son;

when it ends it will indeed have been a bitter day.

11 Be certain of this, the time is coming,” says the sovereign Lord,
“when I will send a famine through the land—

not a shortage of food or water

but an end to divine revelation!

12 People will stagger from sea to sea,
and from the north around to the east.

They will wander about looking for a revelation from the Lord,
but they will not find any.

13 In that day your beautiful young women and your young men will faint from thirst.

14 These are the ones who now take oaths in the name of the sinful idol goddess of Samaria. They vow, ‘As surely as your god lives, O Dan,’ or ‘As surely as your beloved one lives, O Beer Sheba!’ But they will fall down and not get up again.”

Finally, evidence of a later, Judea edition

Amos 1:1 The following is a record of what Amos prophesied. He was one of the herdsmen from Tekoa. These prophecies about Israel were revealed to him during the time of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Amos 2:4 This is what the Lord says:

“Because Judah has committed three covenant transgressions—
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.

They rejected the Lord’s law;

they did not obey his commands.

Their false gods,
to which their fathers were loyal,
led them astray.

Amos 4:13 For here he is!
He formed the mountains and created the wind.
He reveals his plans to men.
He turns the dawn into darkness
and marches on the heights of the earth.
The Lord, the God who commands armies, is his name!”

Amos 5:8 (But there is one who made the constellations Pleiades and Orion;
he can turn the darkness into morning
and daylight into night.
He summons the water of the seas
and pours it out on the earth’s surface.
The Lord is his name!
9 He flashes destruction down upon the strong
so that destruction overwhelms the fortified places.)

Amos 9:5 The sovereign Lord who commands armies will do this.
He touches the earth and it dissolves;
all who live on it mourn.
The whole earth rises like the River Nile,
and then grows calm like the Nile in Egypt.
6 He builds the upper rooms of his palace in heaven
and sets its foundation supports on the earth.
He summons the water of the sea
and pours it out on the earth’s surface.
The Lord is his name.

Amos 9:11 “In that day I will rebuild the collapsing hut of David.
I will seal its gaps,
repair its ruins,
and restore it to what it was like in days gone by.
12 As a result they will conquer those left in Edom
and all the nations subject to my rule.”
The Lord, who is about to do this, is speaking!
13 “Be sure of this, the time is coming,” says the Lord,
“when the ploughman will catch up to the reaper
and the one who stomps the grapes will overtake the planter.
Juice will run down the slopes,
it will flow down all the hillsides.
14 I will bring back my people, Israel;
they will rebuild the cities lying in rubble and settle down.
They will plant vineyards and drink the wine they produce;
they will grow orchards and eat the fruit they produce.
15 I will plant them on their land
and they will never again be uprooted from the land I have given them,”
says the Lord your God.

What is Amos about?

- Social in justice
- The delusion of worship
- The call to hear

Can it speak to us today?

- Justice is a wide term
- No separation of justice and worship
- Hearers of the Word