

SCHOOL OF THE WORD
PROPHETS
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Prophets 2

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 I**
- ▶ In the readings
- ▶ In history

- ▶ **PART II**
- ▶ Dating Amos
- ▶ As the book stands
- ▶ Amos himself
 - Section 1
 - Section 2
 - Section 3

- ▶ **PART III**
- ▶ A bit of work for you
- ▶ Finally, altogether

In the readings

Amos 6:1a, 4-7	26C	Luke 16:19-31 (Rich man and Lazarus)
Amos 7:12-15	15B	Mark 6:7-13 (The sending out of the Twelve)
Amos 8:4-7	25C	Luke 16:1-13 (The dishonest steward)
Amos 2:6-10, 13-16		Week 13, Monday
Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12		Week 13, Tuesday
Amos 5:14-15, 21-24		Week 13, Wednesday
Amos 7:10-17		Week 13, Thursday
Amos 8:4-6, 9-12		Week 13, Friday
Amos 9:11-15		Week 13, Saturday

In history

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.

- 2 Amos said:
- “The Lord comes roaring out of Zion;
 from Jerusalem he comes bellowing!
 The shepherds' pastures wilt;
 the summit of Carmel withers.”

- ▶ Earthquake: cf. 760 BC
- ▶ Uzziah, king of Judah: 783-743 BC
- ▶ Jeroboam, king of Israel: 786-746 BC

Politics and Economics

- ▶ The extraordinary length of the reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah gives some clue to the historical situation during the early to mid-8th century BC.
- ▶ This was a period of peace and expansion for Israel and Judah.
- ▶ The wars that threatened the two kingdoms during the reigns of the predecessors of Jeroboam and Uzziah were over.
- ▶ Assyria and Egypt were both on the decline and were no threat to the smaller nations of Syria-Palestine.
- ▶ Israel and Judah took the opportunity to expand their borders to those of the old and revered Davidic-Solomonic empire.

- ▶ The most important annexation for Israel was Gilead and the Transjordanian cities of Lo-debar and Karnaim (6:13–14).
- ▶ The King's Highway, the major trade route from the Tigris-Euphrates river valley to the Gulf of Aqaba and Egypt, ran through Gilead and the Transjordan.
- ▶ Thus, Gilead had been continually contested by Israel and Aram (Syria).
- ▶ Jeroboam annexed the area of Gilead and occupied the Transjordan and Judah.
- ▶ Israel thus controlled the major trade route in the area and thereby reaped great wealth.

- ▶ This was therefore a period of great prosperity for Israel.
- ▶ The stability of the region allowed for the safe conduct of caravans down the King's Highway, which was in Israelite hands. Trading with Egypt and Arabia in the S and Byblos and Syria in the N greatly increased the wealth of Israel and Judah.
- ▶ Amos describes this wealth, which is also evidenced in the archaeological remains of the time.
- ▶ Over 500 ivory fragments from the 9th and 8th centuries have been found at Samaria (cf. Amos 3:15).

- ▶ The heart of the issue in the 8th-cent. socioeconomic reality is the growth of large estates in the hands of a minority class of landowners.
- ▶ The small plots of land to which the common peasants had access for residence and cultivation of staples were taken away by the landed elite.
- ▶ This phenomenon is related to and is a result of various factors.

- ▶ Growth of urban centres
- ▶ Militarisation
- ▶ Extraction of surplus
- ▶ Lifestyle of the upper class
- ▶ Trade and commerce
- ▶ Market condition
- ▶ Indebtedness of the peasants
- ▶ Role of the creditors
- ▶ Role of the courts
- ▶ *In a word: rampant social injustice*

Part II

- ▶ Dating Amos
- ▶ As the book stands
- ▶ Amos himself
- Section 1
- Section 2
- Section 3

- ▶ 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 1:1)
- ▶ Earthquake? This refers to a well-known earthquake that occurred during the first half of the 8th century BC
- ▶ Uzziah was a co-regent with his father Amaziah from 792–767 BC and ruled independently from 767–740 BC.
- ▶ Jeroboam II was a co-regent with his father Joash from 793–782 BC and ruled independently from 782–753 BC.
- ▶ Amos' mission to Israel and the earthquake which followed occurred between 767–753 BC

As the book stands

- ▶ Amos: 9 chapters
- ▶ He was from Judah (Tekoa)
- ▶ Prophesied Israel (Bethel, 16km north of Jerusalem)
- ▶ Did the border matter to him?
- ▶ Was he really loyal to Judah/David and as a result highly critical of Bethel?
- ▶ Our final version is pro-Judean
- ▶ Yet, Amos himself was critical of *all people in power*

Amos 7:10 Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel: "Amos is conspiring against you in the very heart of the kingdom of Israel! The land cannot endure all his prophecies. 11 As a matter of fact, Amos is saying this: 'Jeroboam will die by the sword (didn't happen) and Israel will certainly be carried into exile away from its land.'" (did happen)

Amos 7:12 Amaziah then said to Amos, "Leave, you visionary (hozeh)! Run away to the land of Judah! Earn your living and prophesy there! 13 Don't prophesy at Bethel any longer, for a royal temple and palace are here!"

Amos 7:14 Amos replied to Amaziah, "I was not a prophet (nabi) by profession. No, I was a herdsman who also took care of sycamore fig trees. 16 So now listen to the Lord's message! You say, 'Don't prophesy against Israel! Don't preach against the family of Isaac!'

17 "Therefore this is what the Lord says:

'Your wife will become a prostitute in the streets

and your sons and daughters will die violently.

Your land will be given to others

and you will die in a foreign land.

Israel will certainly be carried into exile away from its land.'"

The Book

- ▶ Section I: 1:3-2:16, a series of oracles against various nations, including Israel
- ▶ Section II: chapter 3-6, a series of short oracles
- ▶ Section III: chapters 7-9, a series of vision reports, including the confrontation with Amaziah

Part II: a bit of work

ARAMEANS / DAMASCUS

- Amos 1:3** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Damascus has committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my
 decree of judgment.
 They ripped through Gilead like threshing sledges with iron teeth.
4 So I will set Hazeel’s house on fire;
 fire will consume Ben Hadad’s fortresses.
5 I will break the bar on the gate of Damascus.
 I will remove the ruler from Wicked Valley,
 the one who holds the royal scepter from Beth Eden.
 The people of Aram will be deported to Kir.”
 The LORD has spoken!

PHILISTINES / GAZA

- 6** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Gaza has committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 They deported a whole community and sold them to Edom.
7 So I will set Gaza’s city wall on fire;
 fire will consume her fortresses.
8 I will remove the ruler from Ashdod,
 the one who holds the royal scepter from Ashkelon.
 I will strike Ekron with my hand;
 the rest of the Philistines will also die.”
 The sovereign LORD has spoken!

TYRE

- 9** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Tyre has committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 They sold a whole community to Edom;
 they failed to observe a treaty of brotherhood.
10 So I will set fire to Tyre’s city wall;
 fire will consume her fortresses.”

EDOM

- 11** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Edom has committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 He chased his brother with a sword;
 he wiped out his allies.
 In his anger he tore them apart without stopping to rest;
 in his fury he relentlessly attacked them.
12 So I will set Teman on fire;
 fire will consume Bozrah’s fortresses.”

AMMONITES

- 13** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because the Ammonites have committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 They ripped open Gilead’s pregnant women
 so they could expand their territory.
- 14** So I will set fire to Rabbah’s city wall;
 fire will consume her fortresses.
 War cries will be heard on the day of battle;
 a strong gale will blow on the day of the windstorm.
- 15** Ammon’s king will be deported;
 he and his officials will be carried off together.”
 The LORD has spoken!

MOAB

- Amos 2:1** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Moab has committed three crimes—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 They burned the bones of Edom’s king into lime.
- 2** So I will set Moab on fire,
 and it will consume Kerioth’s fortresses.
 Moab will perish in the heat of battle
 amid war cries and the blaring of the ram’s horn.
- 3** I will remove Moab’s leader;
 I will kill all Moab’s officials with him.”
 The LORD has spoken!

JUDAH

- 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.
- 5** So I will set Judah on fire,
 and it will consume Jerusalem’s fortresses.”

ISRAEL

- 6** This is what the LORD says:
 “Because Israel has committed three covenant transgressions—
 make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.
 They sold the innocent for silver,
 the needy for a pair of sandals.
- 7** They trample on the dirt-covered heads of the poor;
 they push the destitute away.
 A man and his father go to the same girl;
 in this way they show disrespect for my moral purity.
- 8** They stretch out on clothing seized as collateral;
 they do so right beside every altar!
 They drink wine bought with the fines they have levied;
 they do so right in the temple of their God!

- 9 For Israel's sake I destroyed the Amorites.
They were as tall as cedars
and as strong as oaks,
but I destroyed the fruit on their branches
and their roots in the ground.
- 10 I brought you up from the land of Egypt;
I led you through the wilderness for forty years
so you could take the Amorites' land as your own.
- 11 I made some of your sons prophets
and some of your young men Nazirites.
Is this not true, you Israelites?"
The LORD is speaking!
- 12 "But you made the Nazirites drink wine;
you commanded the prophets, 'Do not prophesy!'
- 13 Look! I will press you down,
like a cart loaded down with grain presses down.
- 14 Fast runners will find no place to hide;
strong men will have no strength left;
warriors will not be able to save their lives.
- 15 Archers will not hold their ground;
fast runners will not save their lives,
nor will those who ride horses.
- 16 Bravehearted warriors will run away naked in that day."
The LORD is speaking!

Conclusions

- ▶ The complaints are not limited to Judah and Israel.
- ▶ Amos is argues on humanitarian / humanistic grounds.
- ▶ Treatment of peasants, pregnant women, neglect of the poor, desecration of graves, wholesale deportation.
- ▶ Even the attacks on Judah and Israel are based on human rights.
- ▶ In the case of Judah and Israel, he does evoke the Law of Moses.